

Interview with: Dr. JoAnne Myers

Marist University

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Lola-Dillon Cahill

For the Marist University Archives and Special Collections

JoAnne Myers

Interviewee: Dr. JoAnne Myers

Interviewer: Andre Beliveau

Interview Date: 11 July 2018

Location: Fontaine Hall

Topic: Andre Beliveau interviews Dr. JoAnne Myers to get input on her experiences being a member of the LGBT+ community in the Hudson Valley, and a professor of political science at Marist.

Subject Headings: Marist College History

Marist College, Poughkeepsie NY

Marist College BiGALA

Marist College Department of Political Science

Summary: In this interview, Andre Beliveau has a conversation with Dr. JoAnne Myers about her experience growing up as a member of the LGBT+ community, and how it impacted the direction in which she took her life. Myers speaks about her own life experiences working with LGBT youth in the Hudson Valley as a co-founder of the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Youth Center. They also discuss her time as a Marist College professor, the struggles she faced in gaining respect from certain students and colleagues, her influence in founding Marist's BiGALA, and her opinions on the Marist culture in 2017, as well as where she sees it going in the future.

JoAnne Myers

00:00:05;02 - 00:00:07;26

AB

Just double check. Make sure we're good.

00:00:07;29 - 00:00:08;21

JM

Okay.

00:00:08;23 - 00:01:03;00

AB

All right. I think we're all set. So today is Wednesday, July 11th, 2018. It is about 1:30 in the afternoon. We are in the Fontaine building of Marist College, and I am here interviewing associate professor of political science, Doctor JoAnne Myers. Or, as her students affectionately call her, Doctor Jam. so thank you for meeting me today, Doctor Jam. And, my name is Andre Beliveau, and I'll be conducting the interview. So, Doctor Jam, if you could just maybe, we'll start off with just a little bit of background about you coming to Marist. What brought you here? What has your academic career been like leading you to come to Marist and since you've been here?

00:01:03;12 - 00:02:48;29

JoAnne Myers

JM

That's a mouthful. <Laugh>. So, I've actually been at Marist for thirty-two years. Prior to coming to Marist. I realized that if I wanted to teach what I'm the most interested in, basically, how do you better liberal democracy and make it more inclusive for all, I would have to practice what I understood. So, before I came to Marist, I worked on the county and, Rensselaer county level, New York City level, Department of sanitation, the mayor's office. Then on the state level, New York state level in the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, doing rent administration and transition. And then I worked for Governor Cuomo doing the Fort Drum expansion before I came—you know, said to him—I've done everything I can do. It's time for me to now go teach. <Affirmative>. And when I interviewed, it was late in the interviewing season. And I actually had, two interviews, one at Yeshiva down in New York City and one here at Marist. The one at Yeshiva. I actually, aborted because the department didn't know what they wanted. They didn't have any idea of exactly what skills they needed to fill in their department. They were fighting amongst themselves. And who wants to be in that position?

00;02;48;04 - 00;02;49;22

AB

<Affirmative> Right, yeah. Understood.

00;02;49;24 - 00;03;18;23

JM

JoAnne Myers

Marist, on the other hand, had a great reputation of being inclusive. They had taken faculty from other institutions during the Vietnam War who had gotten dismissed because of their anti-war activities. And I like the teaching philosophy. So I interviewed here and, that's basically all that she wrote.

00;03;18;26 - 00;03;21;12

AB

<Laugh> And what year did you start here?

00;03;21;12 – 00;03;22;00

JM

Eighty-six.

00;03;22;05 – 00;03;25;00

Eighty-six. Okay. Where did you get your PhD?

00;03;25;14 - 00;03;27;13

JM

At Rensselaer Polytech Institute.

JoAnne Myers

00;03;27;15 - 00;03;28;27

AB

Okay. And that was in political science?

00;03;28;27 - 00;03;36;05

JM

No, it was in urban environmental studies and public policy communication. It was an interdisciplinary degree.

00;03;36;10 - 00;03;58;09

AB

Oh, very cool. Well, awesome. So, a little, I guess a little bit about yourself, personally, can you talk a little bit about your personal journey, as a lesbian woman? Your personal coming out and what that was like for you maybe growing up? And things like that before coming to—before your time at Marist College.

00;03;58;12 - 00;04;22;10

JM

JoAnne Myers

So, before my time at Marist, I actually knew that I was not straight back when I was in seventh, eighth grade. <Affirmative>. And I probably came out about that time. But then I also covered.

00;04;22;12 - 00;04;24;03

AB

Right.

00;04;24;06 - 00;05;03;28

JM

You know, so I had, you know, boys and girls, and it was okay. And for a second, I thought that that was who I was, but I realized I was a little bit more feminist than that. And, in 1970—'70, yeah, '70, my English teacher gave me a copy of, Kate Millet's Sexual Politics, and that sort of made the, the scales fall from my eyes—

AB

Right.

00;05;04;02 - 00;05;14;26

JM

JoAnne Myers

About feminism. I always knew that I was a strong advocate for equality. In fact, in fifth grade, I was going to be the first woman president.

00;05;14;28 - 00;05;18;16

AB

<Laugh> How great would that have been? That would have been—that would have been awesome.

00;05;18;19 - 00;05;47;13

JM

Yes and no <laugh>. It turns out that I'm very good at advising people and showing them their options, you know, that you can go from policy A or B or C, and if you do this, here's what might happen. Here are the consequences. Here are the unintended consequences. I have an idea about how do you get to, to point X if that's where you're going.

AB

Right.

00;05;47;14 - 00;06;03;16

JM

JoAnne Myers

And it's something that I've always thought that, you know, teaching a class in political science or teaching a class in public administration, that I don't want to just teach students to regurgitate.

00;06;03;19 - 00;06;05;13

AB

Right.

00;06;05;15 - 00;06;10;28

JM

Or fill in the blanks. I want to teach them to have a vision. And then how to implement that vision.

00;06;10;29 - 00;06;29;23

AB

Right. I think that's great. And I think that, like that personality trait that you talk about, I think that just translates well to being an educator in general. That's, really awesome. And, you certainly have a knack for it. I know your students, the ones that I've talked to, anyway, have nothing but high praise. So I'm sure those are the ones that did well in your class, right? <Laugh>

JoAnne Myers

00;06;29;24 - 00;06;56;09

JM

But you know what I what I tell my students is that, when I was in undergrad, I was a double major in government and philosophy. The class that I actually learned how to teach, or really how not to teach, was my international relations class, where the professor just wanted us to memorize what does NATO stand for, what year was Tito signed in to be-- instead of talking about the context.

AB

Right.

00;06;56;11 - 00;07;10;15

JM

Yeah. Because I—and I would say to him, and this is way back, where you had to actually walk to the library and look up, you know, something in an index or get an almanac. You probably don't even know what an almanac is.

00;07;10;17 - 00;07;11;04

AB

<Laugh> It's a book, right?

JoAnne Myers

00;07;11;04 - 00;07;14;02

JM

It's a book. <Laugh> A book of facts.

00;07;14;02 - 00;07;16;18

AB

A book of facts, right. How rare that is these days.

00;07;16;21 - 00;07;35;14

JM

Yeah <laugh>. So, you know, you could always look up, you know, dates and signatories. What's more important is the context and the reason for it to actually exist. <Affirmative>. And I would fight with this professor. I'm sorry. My phone is barking at me.

00;07;35;14 - 00;07;35;27

AB

Oh. That's okay.

JoAnne Myers

00;07;35;27 - 00;07;47;15

JM

To, resist. <Laugh> sorry. I'm going to just [pause] because if I don't do this, it will keep on telling me that I have to.

00;07;47;18 - 00;07;51;28

AB

No problem <laugh>.

00;07;52;01 - 00;08;15;09

JM

So, I learned how not to teach. I learned that I didn't—you didn't want someone just to memorize and regurgitate facts and dates. You wanted them to actually be able to use that information. <Affirmative>. So, I got a C in that class because I fought with Forte every single Tuesday evening because that's when the class met.

00;08;15;13 - 00;08;25;25

AB

JoAnne Myers

Right. Well, sometimes you have to do that, I think, and find your voice. Right. And find your vision, as you said, to be able to transmit that to your students. That's really cool.

00;08;25;24 - 00;08;31;19

JM

Yeah. So, I learned—that grade to me is more important than any of the other grades.

00;08;31;19 - 00;08;33;15

AB

Sure. That's an important lesson I think, too.

00;08;33;21 - 00;08;45;22

JM

Yeah. So, and I think that our students right now, value their GPAs more than they value content.

00;08;45;24 - 00;08;46;29

AB

<Affirmative> That's a good point.

JoAnne Myers

00:08;47;01 - 00:08;52;18

JM

And to me I think that they're losing something. So, they don't—they don't challenge themselves.

00:08;52;20 - 00:08;53;11

AB

Right.

00:08;53;13 - 00:08;56;29

JM

And I say that, if you already know something why even take a class in that.

00:08;57;01 - 00:09;00;23

AB

Right. Yeah, challenge yourself, learn something new. Expand. Expand your vision.

00:09;00;26 - 00:09;22;14

JM

JoAnne Myers

And what if you—yeah—so what if you—if you—I will never be a Russian speaker. But I tried Russian, right. You know, so you fall out. You know, college is a place where you know, you do examine what you know, you take out the idea and you look at it and you say, yes, no, maybe. Problematic. <Affirmative>. Or, you keep it. <Affirmative>. And expand on it. And you learn what you can do, and you cannot do. And if you learn what you cannot do, then you can surround yourself with those people who can do that.

00;09;37;24 - 00;10;03;12

AB

Right. That's got some great wisdom, a lot of wisdom packaged in that simple statement. But I think very, very true and profound at the same time. That's really cool, I think that the undergraduate experience should be all of that. And someone who now myself, I'm looking into, you know, my grad school options, it's definitely now I when I look back, I'm like, yep, that it was, you know, a different approach to undergraduate studies than I think to graduate studies and like you said, just kind of, challenging yourself and, and examining what you know and more importantly, what you don't know <laugh>.

00;10;10;22 - 00;10;19;18

JM

And so, when you, when you're going off, you know, when you're going for your undergrad degree, you're not really looking at, oh, who will be teaching me.

JoAnne Myers

00;10;19;23 - 00;10;20;14

AB

Right.

00;10;20;16 - 00;10;30;20

JM

Right, you're looking at, oh, what a beautiful campus. Oh, look at it. I can—look at the dining hall. Right. <Laugh> Oh, sorry, you probably didn't get that gesture.

00;10;30;22 - 00;10;36;26

AB

Right <laugh>.

00;10;36;28 - 00;10;57;10

JM

Instead of saying, who's going to be teaching me? <Affirmative>. And as I tell my students, whether or not I own a husband or a wife has nothing to do with who I am standing in front of a

JoAnne Myers

class. It is the fact that I have a PhD behind my name, right. So, I always say, you don't call me Mrs. Meyers because that would be very scary.

00;10;57;12 - 00;11;07;21

JM

And my mother's been dead almost nineteen years now. I'm pretty scared—she was scary when she was alive, she would be scary now <laugh>.

00;11;07;23 - 00;11;26;01

AB

Indeed. So, you're—talk a little bit about, if you can, outside of Marist, your personal involvement in like the greater LGBTQ community, I know you're very involved, locally and have been for many years. So, can you talk a little bit about that?

00;11;26;01 - 00;12;55;17

JM

So, as I said, I was very much, a feminist when I went off to Skidmore College. It was a woman's college and went coed while I was there. And I was very much against that because as a women's college, women had to be the dumbest and the smartest. They had to be the manager of the newspaper, and they had to be the writers on the newspaper. Right. The minute men showed up

JoAnne Myers

on campus, the men got to be the business people. They got to. You know, I watched women sort of snuff down their voices. So, that was that was an interesting phenomena to watch that. When I went to RPI, the opposite happened because now I was a female in what had been predominantly a male school. So, I would get, oh, and Miss Myers, you know, what is a women's perspective on X? Whatever X was. And I would say I don't know about all women, but I can speak from my position. <Affirmative>. Yeah. So, I learned about, you know, the fact that we look at the other as a, monolith. We would never say all American men do X.

AB

Right.

00;12;55;11 - 00;13;12;06

JM

But we say all black men do X, or all women do y. And I think, for instance, McCain, in picking Sarah Palin did the same thing. Oh, she has a vagina, right <laugh>. All women will vote for her!

00;13;12;06 - 00;13;16;02

AB

Vote for her, right <laugh>. Not so much, I don't think.

JoAnne Myers

00;13;16;02 - 00;13;37;13

JM

No, not so much. I like to say vagina, because here at Marist, one of the things when we were doing The Vagina monologues, the, campus powers only wanted us to say the V monologues. Because vagina is [pause] I don't know.

00;13;37;13 - 00;13;42;04

AB

It's just so mystical, and unknowing, right <laugh>. Yeah. So, we can't talk about it in real life.

00;13;42;05 - 00;13;45;22

JM

No, but we can have a president nowadays who grabs pussies.

00;13;45;26 - 00;13;49;04

AB

That's right. <Laugh>

00;13;49;06 - 00;13;51;15

JoAnne Myers

AB

How times have changed <laugh>.

00;13;51;22 - 00;14;28;09

JM

So anyway. Oh, my. Whatever <laugh>. Anyway, so, when I was in New York City, I had a lot of gay men friends in this—and actually, one of my best friends was one of the first victims of Aids. I did take part in, gay protest, in front of City Hall, but I was at that point, working in city government. So, I was pulled out saying, oh, I couldn't do that.

00;14;28;26 - 00;14;30;14

AB

Yeah. What year was that?

00;14;30;17 - 00;14;35;21

JM

That was '79.

AB

JoAnne Myers

'79, okay.

JM

'79, '80.

00;14;35;23 - 00;14;39;21

AB

And what about now? What's your involvement locally in the LGBTQ community?

00;14;39;25 - 00;14;47;08

JM

So, I was one of the founding members of the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center.

00;14;47;10 - 00;14;48;21

AB

That's in, that one in Kingston?

00;14;48;21 - 00;15;01;25

JoAnne Myers

JM

Yes. Okay. And that actually serves from, northern Westchester up to Albany. And we are—and it is the largest rural community center.

00;15;02;02 - 00;15;02;24

AB

Oh, wow.

00;15;02;26 - 00;15;24;27

JM

You know, and so there are a lot of issues in, non-urban areas. Ellenville, for instance, in southern Ulster County, has a lot of trans teens who get kicked out of their homes.

00;15;24;29 - 00;15;25;20

AB

00;15;25;23 - 00;15;31;17

JM

JoAnne Myers

We have a huge homeless population when it comes to LGBTQ youth.

00;15;31;22 - 00;15;32;21

AB

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

00;15;32;23 - 00;15;43;04

JM

And now as people are aging in, a lot of our elders, are going back into the closet.

<Affirmative>. Which is problematic too.

AB

For sure.

JM

Right. So, I was very lucky my, life partner, who I actually met at Kate Millett's farm, which is on the outskirts here. She had been in the woman's music business.

00;16;02;04 - 00;16;45;13

JoAnne Myers

JM

She signed the first all-female band—rock and roll band to a major label, Fanny, which David Bowie in 2000 said was the most—the band that should have been known the most. Anyway, so she had done, Great Dames Productions, which was filming and productions, and she, we were out at the Cape for one of my birthdays, I don't know which one. And we went to see a Pat Bond film—movie. No, not a movie, I lie. A play, a one woman play about Lorena Hickock.

00;16;45;26 - 00;16;46;16

AB

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

00;16;46;18 - 00;17;43;14

JM

Lorena Hitchcock is, Eleanor Roosevelt's intimate friend. And we went and we saw this, and then, okay, she took it upon herself and started touring the one woman play. She, Margerie (inaudible), and she and she took it up and down the eastern seaboard. And when she was doing the play in Kingston, the historian from Hyde Park came and watched and watched and, within the audience, and Patsy said, I don't know if this is really true because I knew Lorena Hickock. She lived across the street from me at one point in Hyde Park. But she, Patsy went and did some research and found out that Hick's ashes had never been, collected from the funeral home and eventually were, buried up in Rhinebeck in a pauper's grave.

JoAnne Myers

00;17;43;13 - 00;17;44;12

AB

Oh, wow.

00;17;44;14 - 00;18;20;07

JM

So, Patsy told us (inaudible) Elkay and I got some of our friends together, including Patsy and, and Blanche Wiesen Cook among them. And we got her grave marked with a tree, a dogwood tree, because she liked dogs, and she wanted to be buried under a tree. And with a marker that talks about her being, Eleanor's intimate friend and a really cool, stone bench.

00;18;20;12 - 00;18;21;03

AB

Oh, wow. Very cool.

00;18;21;03 - 00;18;51;16

JM

JoAnne Myers

Yeah. And now, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center. So, when, as a historian, you'd be interested in this. When, Lorena died, she left all of her letters that she had received from Eleanor to the library. To the FDR library, saying don't open them for X number of years. And when they finally got opened, all of a sudden Lorena's picture was basically cut out of—.

00;18;51;28 - 00;18;53;01

AB

Oh, wow. Yeah.

00;18;53;03 - 00;19;17;14

JM

So, we basically reclaimed Lorena. Or Hick, as she was known. You know, not the nicest of people. She had to learn not to be a, you know, racist. Right. You know which Eleanor taught her. <Affirmative>. But she lived in the in the White House, you know, in the little anteroom off of the Lincoln Bedroom, where—which was Eleanor's room.

00;19;17;18 - 00;19;21;06

AB

Right.

JoAnne Myers

00;19;21;08 - 00;19;29;14

JM

And in fact, the money's from Hicks books, actually helped put one of the granddaughters through college.

00;19;29;16 - 00;19;30;10

AB

Oh, wow.

00;19;30;12 - 00;19;44;27

JM

So. But anyway, so, we actually now some of—we collect money for scholarships in Hick's name. Social justice scholarships that go to young women at the girl's leadership workshop at the Eleanor Roosevelt center.

AB

Oh, very cool.

JoAnne Myers

00;19;48;02 - 00;20;06;16

JM

And, what's really cool is that her name gets carried out, her message gets carried on. Which is cool. And now her pictures are back. She's—there's pictures of Hick now, if you go through the tours in Valco, you'll see pictures of her on the mantel. So, we sort of reclaimed her.

00;20;06;16 - 00;20;08;09

AB

Brought her back to the forefront.

00;20;08;09 - 00;20;17;17

JM

Right. And then, okay. And another colleague of hers, started Inside Out magazine.

00;20;17;19 - 00;20;18;29

AB

Oh, right. Okay.

00;20;19;02 - 00;20;49;00

JoAnne Myers

JM

And, Inside Out magazine served the greater Hudson Valley, and it became the sort of the connecting tissue. And it was, because of Inside Out magazine that the first gay pride, parade march was held in New Paltz right after. So, we had the marriages that were performed by the mayor.

00;20;49;03 - 00;20;51;28

AB

Right.

00;20;52;00 - 00;21;04;29

JM

And then the, this march, and from the march is what actually germinated with the magazine, the need for the center.

00;21;05;02 - 00;21;19;27

AB

Right. I know it's very popular. I always see all their social media postings. I've not yet to go up there in person. I need to, but as part of this project, I've been in contact with a few of the people up there because I know they're looking to do some college outreach this year, so.

JoAnne Myers

00;21;19;27 - 00;21;39;17

JM

Yeah. And it's wonderful because they have a really prominent building, and people have been driving, you know, driving by and stopped and say, oh, you know. There's, you know, a story of a trucker who was driving by who would never come out until he saw this huge rainbow flag.

00;21;39;22 - 00;21;40;04

AB

Wow.

00;21;40;10 - 00;21;41;01

JM

Flying, so.

00;21;41;01 - 00;22;00;19

AB

That's great. I love hearing stories like that. They're usually all just so empowering. In this day and age it's still important—and coming out is still. And I feel like some people try to downplay

JoAnne Myers

coming out. I don't think that's fair. I think it's still very important—like and to celebrate that and, and see that as a very empowering thing. Even in 2018, I think especially now.

00;22;01;01 - 00;23;28;09

JM

Well, coming out is something that you do all the time. Because if you look at—I always play with how I look. Sometimes I have long hair, sometimes I have short hair, sometimes I you know, I have blond hair, sometimes now I have gray hair. <Laugh>. Right. You know, this is how I am. You know, there's nothing that says there's a great big L on her head that stands for liberal. I mean, lesbian or loser, whatever it's supposed to stand for. <Laugh>. So I, you know, you're always coming out, but I still will have students who, in writing their own political history, will say that they don't they don't approve of gays or gay marriage. And I always say, well, it's marriage equality, you know, so it's not really, you know. But we still live in a time where [pause]. Where we are, we have people who think that they can impose their views on somebody else. So, if you don't believe in gay marriage, don't marry the person of the same sex. If you don't believe in abortion, don't have one. But make sure that there's, you know, birth control. You know, if you don't, you know, don't just be pro-fetus. Be really pro-life if you want to be pro-life. You know, make sure that there's education and housing and—.

00;23;28;15 - 00;23;29;02

AB

JoAnne Myers

Health care.

00;23;29;03 - 00;23;38;06

JM

Health care, all of that, you know, for people. Don't just care about them while they're being incubated.

00;23;38;08 - 00;23;40;28

AB

<Laugh> Yeah. You—it just seems so logical, right. You would think.

00;23;40;28 - 00;24;00;11

JM

You would. But there's a group of people that, that so refer to—and unfortunately the governor did today the LGBTQ lifestyle. No, my lifestyle is to be a clutter. <Laugh> You know, my life is.

00;24;00;13 - 00;24;13;07

AB

JoAnne Myers

Yep. Big difference. And I think just how sometimes the verbiage is used. Like even when people say, like, preference I'm like, well yes, I, I do. As a matter of fact, yes, I do prefer this, but it's not--.

00;24;13;10 - 00;24;15;00

JM

Yeah, but I also prefer Chinese food.

00;24;15;00 - 00;24;20;28

AB

Exactly right. Yeah. <Laugh>.

00;24;21;01 - 00;24;24;21

AB

Yeah. The struggle sometimes, indeed.

00;24;24;23 - 00;24;50;26

JM

JoAnne Myers

So, here at Marist, we didn't even have a women's studies program because I was told there was no such thing as women's scholarship. And that's why we started the Women in Society Conference in '91. And luckily, Kate Millet was our first speaker.

00;24;50;28 - 00;24;51;27

AB

Oh, well, yeah.

00;24;51;29 - 00;25;16;05

JM

And, we basically built an international program. But I was also told, beware that when you have a women's conference, you're going to get 'that' type of woman. So, I walked out of the AVP's office holding the hands of one of my colleagues. Female colleagues I should say, yes, that type of woman.

00;25;16;08 - 00;25;20;02

AB

Right. <Laugh>

JoAnne Myers

JM

Whoops. <Laugh>

00;25;20;05 - 00;25;22;18

AB

Well, it's good to challenge the status quo, right?

00;25;22;18 - 00;25;32;03

JM

Yeah. And so, I always think that I'm here at Marist, because I'm going to be that grain of sand that's going to make the pearl.

00;25;32;03 - 00;25;32;24

AB

Right.

00;25;32;26 - 00;25;45;23

JM

JoAnne Myers

You know. Because it would be far easier for me to be at a Vassar or at a Smith or at a—at another school. A lot more liberal school than Marist.

00;25;45;25 - 00;26;22;13

AB

And it's interesting too, in my research I've found, you know we—because Marist seems to even today have a bit of a, you know, the conservative label seems to get applied to it, and but you know in talking to people, that wasn't necessarily the case in the 70s. <Affirmative> It was and I think, you know, even you said yourself, you know, there was a big antiwar movement on campus from the faculty and the students and, you know, very liberal, progressive mindset in the 70s. And then when we started to get into the 80s, and for sure, into the 90s, that's when the social change on campus seemed to seem so—to have changed.

00;26;22;16 - 00;26;49;18

JM

Yeah. And so, if Jerry White was here, you know, he had been here from '63 on, for way over fifty years teaching. He would say that the, when it was an all-male school, it was the male, male, and male, relationships all over the place.

00;26;49;21 - 00;27;09;09

JoAnne Myers

AB

<Affirmative> You know, can you talk a little bit about Jerry White? I know that he was very involved with a lot of, LGBTQ things on campus, both underground in the early days and involved later. And when you came to campus, I know you were both very close. So can you talk a little bit about Jerry and what you know of his involvement over the years on campus?

00;27;09;09 - 00;28;23;26

JM

So, Jerry basically had been out his whole life. He went to Catholic schools. He was in the Navy, had affairs left and right, stories. And his, he and his best friend who he met in the Navy. True best friends. Not lovers. Remained so until Saul passed, probably in, like, 2010 or so. [Pause]. It's just, so he said that, you know, life here on campus—so he came to Marist when he was working on his Ph.D. down at Fordham, and fell in love with the area. He liked to, nude sunbathe on in Minnewaska. <Laugh>. And he would take students with him out there. He was a big Giants fan, you know, kids would come over to his house for gourmet meals and to watch the game.

00;28;23;18 - 00;28;26;26

AB

Oh, yeah. That's great. <Laugh> Yeah.

JoAnne Myers

00;28;26;29 - 00;29;02;00

JM

And so, he took a lot of young men under his wing. In fact, he adopted one young man who was at Marist, whose family basically disowned him when he came out in the late 80s. And, unfortunately, Jose passed of, because of AIDS. probably in the mid-90s, probably like '95, '96.

00;29;02;00 - 00;29;07;14

AB

Right. And, Doctor Roy was out on campus, right? Was he--?

00;29;07;14 - 00;29;28;01

JM

Yeah. He in fact, how, he and Jose had become friends, and then adopted family was, one of the Brothers said, you need to go meet Mr. White. He is, you know, he's gay too. He'll help you.

00;29;28;04 - 00;29;41;26

AB

JoAnne Myers

Right <laugh>. Yeah. And I feel like a lot of people have said that, that he was sort of like the, individual on campus for a very long time that anyone, you know, identifying, you know, as gay on campus would sort of gravitate towards him.

00;29;41;28 - 00;30;04;28

JM

Yeah. So, at one point, anything that was gendered, about women or about, gay or lesbian, either went for—the gay staff went to Jerry, for the lesbian and the women's gender issues always came to me.

00;30;05;01 - 00;30;25;28

AB

And so, you guys were partners in crime in that, <laugh> in that way on campus. Yeah. And I know, we had talked about in some of our previous conversations and it's come up with some other people, but I know that Jerry used to organize meetings on campus, and off campus for you know, gay students or even what we would now call straight allies.

JM

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

JoAnne Myers

00;30;26;00 - 00;30;30;17

AB

I mean, can you talk a little bit about some of those things that may have gone on in the 60s and 70s and 80s?

00;30;30;19 - 00;30;51;24

JM

So, there were organizations all over the place, and some of them were just friendships, you know, and there, were gay bars in town that people would go hang out at and across the, the river, and Prime Time was a big dance club.

00;30;51;26 - 00;30;58;13

AB

Right. Actually, I remember Prime Time. It was on 9W, right? In Highland. <Affirmative>. Yeah, I remember <laugh>.

00;30;58;15 - 00;32;15;19

JM

JoAnne Myers

So, you know, everybody hung out at these seedy bars or clubs. And in the 80s, a group of LGBT, well now what we would call LGBT, students came to us and wanted a place to meet and wanted to form a club. And they would actually meet in the old Fontaine, which, you know, after nine at night, and we would stay around so they could get into the building and, when they wanted to actually form a club, they were told by Bob Lynch that they had to give up their Social Security numbers. Because before you had CWIDs, you had to use your Social Security number. And a lot of these young people didn't want any have their Social Security number out there, because that would mean maybe fifteen years from now, someone could find out that they were gay. That might still be, there was still a huge stigma. And so, we gathered faculty, Social Security numbers because we had to come up with ten of them.

00;32;15;17 - 00;32;16;12

AB

Oh, right.

00;32;16;14 - 00;32;16;25

JM

Yeah.

00;32;16;26 - 00;32;17;16

JoAnne Myers

AB

That's interesting.

00;32;17;16 - 00;32;21;06

JM

Yeah. So I think Jerry's and mine are the first two.

00;32;21;08 - 00;32;21;23

AB

<Laugh> wow.

00;32;21;25 - 00;32;28;05

JM

You know, so we did that to form the first club to get some funding.

00;32;28;08 - 00;32;53;26

AB

Right. I think if I recall, the first time it--that was the GLBSA. <Affirmative>. And the first time it was mentioned in the student newspaper was in '89. And then it went through a bunch of

JoAnne Myers

changes. I want to say it was '97, does that sound right? Where GLBSA became BiGALA? Yeah. And in '97 BiGALA became an actual recognized charter club, whereas before that it was known for things around campus. But it wasn't officially chartered until '97, which I think is pretty remarkable.

00;32;53;11 - 00;33;12;08

JM

Yeah. So, you know, I've been on campus since '86 and he was on campus in '63, just so that you have that. Yeah. One of the founders of the Gay Men's Health crisis center down in New York City was a Marist grad, too. So, you might want to research that.

00;33;12;08 - 00;33;13;00

AB

Sure.

00;33;13;02 - 00;33;13;22

JM

Yeah.

JoAnne Myers

00;33;13;25 - 00;33;14;26

AB

Do you remember his name?

00;33;14;28 - 00;33;21;15

JM

Not offhand, but he did leave some money to—like \$10,000, which was a nice sum.

00;33;21;18 - 00;33;21;27

AB

Right.

00;33;22;00 - 00;33;32;07

JM

For us to use for things. <Affirmative>. Bob Lynch might have his name. Because we had a hard time trying to get that money out.

00;33;32;09 - 00;33;32;24

AB

JoAnne Myers

<Laugh> right. For all—.

00;33;32;26 - 00;33;34;03

JM

No pun intended.

00;33;34;06 - 00;33;39;14

AB

Right. Okay <laugh>. Can you talk a little bit about Out of the Margins?

00;33;39;16 - 00;33;59;29

JM

So Out of the Margins was probably in the 90s. And, while we had a student group, there were a lot of faculty and staff that were also out, and we needed a place to discuss issues such as, for our partners, could we get health care?

00;34;00;03 - 00;34;00;28

AB

Right.

JoAnne Myers

00;34;01;00 - 00;34;08;22

JM

And in the late 90s, we did get health care for our partners. So, which was wonderful.

00;34;08;22 - 00;34;09;08

AB

Right, yeah.

00;34;09;11 - 00;34;29;13

JM

You know, we still had to prove that we had—were partners and we had co-mingled our, our moneys and stuff like that. We were actually living together and it wasn't just to—. Yeah, I think I was told, well you could get, you know, funding for your aunt. You know, health care for your aunt if she needed it.

AB

<Laugh>

JoAnne Myers

00;34;29;15 - 00;34;30;01

JM

Hmm.

00;34;30;03 - 00;34;41;08

AB

<Laugh> So now the, so that was—it was all faculty?

00;34;41;08 - 00;34;43;08

JM

No, it was faculty and staff.

00;34;43;08 - 00;34;44;07

AB

Faculty and staff.

00;34;44;09 - 00;35;06;00

JM

JoAnne Myers

Yeah. So there were, [inaudible], there were [pause]. Yeah, there were adjunct professors who were part of it. There were student life, housing. Yeah, you know. Guess what, we're everywhere.

00;35;06;11 - 00;35;08;19

AB

That's right. Yeah <laugh>.

00;35;08;22 - 00;35;10;03

JM

<Laugh> Who knew?

00;35;10;05 - 00;35;26;05

AB

Right, right. It is interesting that Out of the Margins even gets referenced a few times in the student newspapers in the 90s when, when they were talking about, BiGALA and the GLBSA forming. And it was mentioned that there was a faculty and staff group on campus. I was like, oh, wow <laugh>.

JoAnne Myers

00;35;26;07 - 00;35;34;07

JM

Yeah. So, Tim Massey, you know, was on campus. And so—and he basically was the head PR guy.

00;35;34;12 - 00;35;35;15

AB

Right.

00;35;35;18 - 00;35;49;22

JM

And he, basically he married when—I'll tell you his story. He started off life as a priest, but married his best friend, right, and they're still together.

00;35;49;25 - 00;35;54;00

AB

Though wasn't Jerry studying for the priesthood at one point in his life?

JM

JoAnne Myers

No.

AB

No?

JM

No.

AB

That was something someone had said.

00;35;55;08 - 00;35;59;14

JM

He went to—no, he basically gave up religion.

00;35;59;15 - 00;36;01;05

AB

Gave up on that pretty quickly <laugh>.

JoAnne Myers

00;36;01;08 - 00;36;06;21

JM

He gave—yeah. He went through, all the way through. Yeah. He was not going to—.

00;36;06;26 - 00;36;13;20

AB

Right. I know he was—I know he had some very strong opinions and was known to butt heads. A few of the Marist Brothers on campus from time to time <laugh>.

00;36;13;20 - 00;36;16;01

JM

A few, yes. And Father Lamorte. Yeah.

00;36;16;06 - 00;36;34;01

AB

<Laugh>. Yeah, yeah. Can you talk a little bit about, the forming of BiGALA and what the reception of that—in the 90s, what the reception of that was like from administration or what the, maybe some of the feelings from some of your colleagues and students?

JoAnne Myers

00;36;34;03 - 00;37;19;07

JM

And again, I think it's [pause] Even though we are almost fifty years from Stonewall now, today. In the—in the 90s, being out was still a phenomena. Yeah, it was still very much a stigma. And, I think with BiGALA, you know, again, there was, tension between—and there's always been tension between gay men and lesbians as they came together politically. Gay men have a, their issues have always been more [pause] of a sexual liberation, let's put it that way. Because as men, they were already privileged, right. So, they didn't need to get all their rights. Women, on the other hand, needed those rights. They needed economic rights. They needed custody rights. They needed—because if a woman came out, she lost custody of her children.

AB

Right.

00;37;52;01 - 00;37;55;07

JM

Men? Not so much.

00;37;55;09 - 00;38;30;16

JoAnne Myers

AB

Right. I think that's something that even like for us in the LGBT community, we forget that sometimes it's—I mean, for me, admittedly, as a gay man, there are some times where you forget. You forget that that there is, yeah, you know, there is a male privilege that I do have. Sometimes it's easy to slip your mind, I think. And it is important to kind of have that self-check and say, well, I am a gay man, but I'm still a man and there is a level. <Affirmative>. There is a level of privilege that, that comes with that, that our, you know, lesbian sisters and even our, you know, our trans brothers and sisters and non-binary friends, don't have that.

00;38;30;25 - 00;38;43;18

JM

Yeah. And that's very true. And if you look at right now it's mostly trans women that, that are, murdered for transgressing, for giving up their male privilege. For challenging that.

00;38;43;25 - 00;38;44;20

AB

Yeah.

00;38;44;23 - 00;38;51;20

JM

JoAnne Myers

Like, who would want to give up male privilege and become a second-class citizen?

00;38;51;22 - 00;39;00;19

AB

Yeah. It's true. The social dynamics of all that sometimes is a hard pill to swallow, as I say sometimes <laugh>.

00;39;00;21 - 00;40;34;17

JM

And our—the way our society is set up, it is very much set up that where the power lies—and this is part of the issue with, Trump and the Trumpettes. Is that, soon white males are going to be, a demographic minority and they don't want to give up the power and the privilege that they have because they think that if they are a minority, they are going to be treated like they treat minorities, which is the same issue in '91 [pause] oh, '92 with the first gays in the military. There have always been gays in the military. There have always been, you know, women who dress as men in the military. But to actually allow men in the military, gays in the military, and not to have them outed and then ousted, with dishonorable discharges because that's what would happen. And this actually started in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1919 when FDR was the assistant secretary of the Navy. In fact, one of your predecessors in history, Ben Benkert, actually wrote about that as his history thesis.

JoAnne Myers

00;40;34;05 - 00;40;37;03

AB

Oh, wow.

00;40;37;05 - 00;42;05;02

JM

And got it published in, the Harvard Lesbian and Gay Book Review, was what it was called at that point. Anyway, from that point on, you know, being gay in the military got you ousted with a dishonorable discharge. So, in the 90s, when, again, it's always been gay men in the military, even though there's gay women, you know—in fact, there's a story of Eisenhower, being told during World War II to get rid of all of his—the lesbians who are working under him. And this one lesbian, Tommy, who was his right-hand woman, said well, I'll give you a list but my name is going to be right up on top. And he sort of just said thank you and carried on, right. But it's again, it has always been straight men who say, oh, if there is a gay man in my battalion, he's going to treat me like I treat women. [Pause]. No. And I would always, you know, respond to that. No, because gay men are just like anybody else. They might only like redheads. They might only like beers. They might only, you know, whatever <laugh>. Right? You know, don't think that, you know, you are any catch.

00;42;05;26 - 00;42;06;25

AB

JoAnne Myers

<Laugh> Right. Don't just presume. Yeah.

00;42;06;25 - 00;42;08;17

JM

Just because you're male.

00;42;08;18 - 00;42;10;10

AB

Yeah.

00;42;10;12 - 00;42;16;09

JM

And so, in the 90s we had had that issue happening.

00;42;16;12 - 00;42;22;14

AB

Was there a lot of political activism on campus about that, about the don't ask, don't tell things about the military?

JoAnne Myers

00;42;22;18 - 00;42;58;27

JM

But again, at that point, we didn't have ROTC on campus. We would—did we have ROTC on campus? [Pause] Actually, we did have a ROTC for a second, we did have ROTC on campus because with Bush's, George Herbert Walker Bush, the first time we went into Iraq, we actually had a teach-in. And I remember one of my young, male students had come to me who he was using ROTC as a form of scholarship, and it was peace time, so it was okay.

AB

Right.

00;43;01;27 - 00;43;14;21

JM

And all of the sudden, we were now going to go in and protect Kuwait from an invasion from Iraq. All the Kuwaitis were going to go to Egypt because they didn't want to fight.

00;43;14;23 - 00;43;15;17

AB

Right.

JoAnne Myers

00:43:15;20 - 00:43:27;29

JM

You know, but we were going to go fight for them. And he didn't want to do that, and what that would have meant for him. So, we actually had some antiwar happenings on campus.

00:43:28;02 - 00:43:30;06

AB

Right. No large scale like sit-ins or—?

00:43:30;10 - 00:43:32;20

JM

No, just a couple of teach-ins.

00:43:32;23 - 00:43:35;24

AB

Can you talk about the teach-ins? Because I know they were very popular.

00:43:35;26 - 00:43:38;00

JoAnne Myers

JM

They were very popular in the 60s.

00;43;38;00 - 00;43;44;13

AB

60s and 70s. Yeah, a lot of alumni have talked about—and former faculty. But can you talk a little bit about the few that you experienced in the 90s here?

00;43;44;13 - 00;44;12;20

JM

So, we had a few. So that was, when did we go into Iraq the first time—early 90s. That was actually a big teach-in. And we took over the student center and all the rooms were filled and it was all day, all night. And that was probably the most successful teach-in.

00;44;12;22 - 00;44;17;02

JM

And I think it was, it was successful because it was also student generated.

AB

JoAnne Myers

Right.

JM

With faculty help.

00;44;21;06 - 00;44;28;00

AB

Yeah. I feel like the—that is something we are missing now on campus. I think that might be—.

00;44;28;02 - 00;44;32;08

JM

And, it goes back to the whole GPA thing.

00;44;32;11 - 00;44;32;29

AB

Right.

00;44;33;01 - 00;44;54;01

JoAnne Myers

JM

I want the best GPA I can get. I am not going to challenge myself. Oh, my goodness. I am not going to cause any waves. I don't want any black marks against my name. So, they don't get involved. They don't—and I always ask my students, you know, what have you done today that the government hasn't been involved in?

00:44;54;08 - 00:44;55;10

AB

Right.

00:44;55;12 - 00:45;16;07

JM

And I'll get, you know, finally, you know, they'll be silent, there will be a couple laughs. And finally, some young man will say, I took a leak in the, you know, outside, and I go, you sort of violated a public health, regulation. You could be arrested for public urination.

00:45;16;10 - 00:45;19;02

AB

Yeah. So, there's still government involvement there. Even if they're not intervening <laugh>.

JoAnne Myers

00;45;19;05 - 00;45;41;18

JM

Yeah. And I said if you went into our, into the bathroom, you were going into our sewer system. Who paid for that? Where did that come from? It was clean. You know. And so, you know, well, I was, you know, in my dorm sleeping. I said, well, you're sleeping with the government. Those "do not remove" tags.

AB

<Laugh> Yeah, that is right.

00;45;41;24 - 00;45;51;17

JM

<Laugh> Under penalty of the law, do not—you know. Yeah.

JM

I want to know who is actually checking those. I want to know who the inspector is.

00;45;51;20 - 00;46;01;19

JoAnne Myers

JM

So why we have those is so that if you go to resell that mattress, you can only resell it if it has that tag. And it has been fumigated.

00;46;01;19 - 00;46;05;14

AB

Interesting. That makes sense, I guess <laugh>.

00;46;05;16 - 00;46;08;20

JM

Yeah. Because who wants bedbugs?

AB

Well, sure yeah.

JM

And lice and other things.

00;46;09;20 - 00;46;11;21

JoAnne Myers

AB

Things like that. Yeah. No good <laugh>.

00;46;11;23 - 00;46;26;01

JM

Yeah. So basically, the only thing you know you—you're breathing air that we, we still have the EPA. Thank you, Mr. Nixon. No thanks to Pruitt <laugh>.

00;46;26;03 - 00;46;28;28

AB

Right <laugh>.

00;46;29;00 - 00;46;49;07

JM

But we do have, you know, air quality controls. We—you do drink the water and we do have water control. So, you know, basically the only thing that you can do without government intervention right now on any level is think. And as long as you don't think out loud Siri won't, you know, go order you something by accident, right? <Laugh>

JoAnne Myers

00;46;49;07 - 00;47;48;11

AB

<Laugh> Yeah. Yeah. That's very that's very true. And, you know, think about it in that light. And I feel like the political activism now on campus, especially looking at our campus' history. And not just for LGBTQ activism, I just think political activism in general, it's not as wide scale as it seemed to have been in the 70s and 60s. It seems now very much to be small pockets here and there. And any of the political activism that I have come across in the 90s have all been extremely conservative activism or trying to maintain a conservative stigma, whereas now the pockets they are still amongst the students and you know, my peers, I see pockets of both, you know, liberal and conservative. And most of the conservative students that I have come into that nowadays seem to be, you know, they might, they would be okay with, you know, with LGBTQ people and all that. They are like, I am, you know, fiscally conservative. And it's like, well what does that mean exactly? So, but—.

00;47;48;06 - 00;47;51;18

JM

You're still spending five dollars at your Starbucks <laugh>.

00;47;51;18 - 00;48;09;12

AB

JoAnne Myers

Right. <Laugh> Yeah. So, it's, there's pockets of it now, and there's obviously different groups on campus, but it just doesn't seem to be as widespread. And I mean, and I know—so in your experience, what do you think has really affected that change in the time you have been here, as far as the social and political consciousness?

00;48;09;19 - 00;48;33;15

JM

So, I think that a lot of students think that we already are equal. You know. Oh, we have access to contraceptives. Oh, we have, you know, access to abortion. Oh, we have equal pay. No, we don't.

00;48;33;15 - 00;48;34;13

AB

We have marriage equality, it's—.

00;48;34;13 - 00;49;32;29

JM

Yeah. We made all of these, basically moves towards, to become more inclusive, more equal. And we don't realize how quickly they can be taken back. <Affirmative> So, we actually had a group of students go down to one of the first, let's see, I'm going to tell you what one of the first, marches on Washington for abortion and reproductive rights. Let's see, if--we actually had a

JoAnne Myers

Marist bus go down, which was a first, because the Gender Equality Club was very active and so that must have—let's see—probably sixteen years ago. So, and sixteen years ago was the early 2000s. Right. So, you know, we—yeah, so we have these bursts.

00:49;32;03 - 00:49;37;14

AB

Right. Do you remember the first time Marist marched in the New York City pride parade?

00:49;37;16 - 00:49;39;09

JM

I think that was very recently.

00:49;39;11 - 00:49;43;21

AB

I think so too. Yeah. I'm inclined to say maybe even like 2014 or 2015.

00:49;43;23 - 00:49;45;05

JM

I'm going to say like 2016.

JoAnne Myers

00;49;45;05 - 00;49;45;14

AB

Oh, you think so?

00;49;45;14 - 00;49;51;29

JM

Yeah. I mean, I couldn't get them to come to the New Paltz Pride.

00;49;51;29 - 00;49;56;08

AB

Yeah, it's interesting if you go on the college website now, one of the first things where it talks about--.

00;49;56;08 - 00;50;03;05

JM

Not this website. <Laugh> Don't even let me go there. That's not populated by humans or faculty.

00;50;03;08 - 00;50;06;09

JoAnne Myers

AB

Right. <Laugh>

00;50;06;09 - 00;50;08;01

JM

Go figure. No books in the library either.

00;50;08;03 - 00;50;10;23

AB

That's right. Yeah. And well, there is no library right now, I think according to the— <laugh>.

00;50;10;24 - 00;50;15;03

JM

Yeah, I know. That was like my first thing was I couldn't get to the library.

00;50;15;05 - 00;50;24;20

AB

<Laugh>. But, one of the first things it says, I think on the even on the old website, one of the about Marist community is that they participate in the pride march. So I mean, I—.

JoAnne Myers

00;50;24;25 - 00;50;26;14

JM

Because it looks good, but I mean—.

00;50;26;17 - 00;50;27;16

AB

But they, they it's—.

00;50;27;16 - 00;50;28;16

JM

It's a new thing.

00;50;28;16 - 00;50;39;07

AB

It is a new thing. But I also think it's, still, even though it looks good and you know, we all will be like, well what's the motivation behind that? I still think there's something to be said about it being about it being so prominent on the—prominently displayed.

JoAnne Myers

00;50;39;14 - 00;50;51;29

JM

And look at the pictures. Right. How many pictures of persons of color versus how many persons are—you know. Yeah. So, it's we're trying to be inclusive, you know, by our pictures.

00;50;52;01 - 00;50;53;14

AB

But what's, how does that translate?

00;50;53;16 - 00;50;56;14

JM

Is there substance behind.

00;50;56;16 - 00;51;10;29

AB

Right. Also, I think that's something we can all work—try to work to bring that substance about. And that's why I think those pockets that exist today are there. But I'm just not sure what we can do to sort of get them to become more than just pockets <laugh>.

JoAnne Myers

00;51;11;02 - 00;51;40;19

JM

Yeah. Well, it was also to listen to everyone and to validate their experiences. For instance, when Cuomo was talking this morning about immigration, he said, you know, unless you're a Native American, you know, we're all immigrants. Well guess what, there were a whole bunch of people that were brought over to the United States, not on their own volition. <Affirmative>. They were sold into slavery. Would you call them immigrants? Not so much.

00;51;40;18 - 00;51;43;13

AB

Oh, yeah.

00;51;43;15 - 00;51;48;18

JM

Right? Yeah. So sometimes we actually have to stop and think about our language.

00;51;48;19 - 00;51;54;23

AB

Right. I agree, and I think how we talk about things sometimes, makes all the difference. Yeah.

JoAnne Myers

00;51;54;25 - 00;52;25;09

JM

And we have a whole, you know—so, a shameless plug for one of my classes. We have a class on politics of prejudice. Right. And we it's been on the books for—since the 70s. Carolyn Landale put it on the books. And it was basically, at that point was to look at anti-Semitism. You know, I've sort of expanded it to look at anti-everything.

AB

Right.

00;52;25;12 - 00;52;38;02

JM

Yeah. Because we have anti-Semitism, we have racism, we have homophobia, we have Islamophobia.

00;52;38;05 - 00;52;39;21

AB

And they are things that need to be talked about.

JoAnne Myers

00;52;39;22 - 00;52;49;06

JM

Yeah. We have, if you don't talk about them, I think—you know I'm lucky. My mother said never talk about sex, religion, or politics. That's all I talk about <laugh>.

00;52;49;08 - 00;52;55;29

AB

Right. So that's a, I don't go a day without talking about any of those things.

00;52;56;01 - 00;52;59;21

JM

Yeah. Religion maybe I could get away with, but.

00;52;59;24 - 00;53;23;28

AB

But the other ones, not so much. So, we've been kind of talking for a little bit about just the, like, how the campus climate, socially, what has it been like for you as an out lesbian professor on

JoAnne Myers

campus? As far as the good things, the bad things, has there been struggle? Like, what are some things you can talk about that the faculty experience of being out at Marist?

00;53;23;15 - 00;53;55;19

JM

So, I'm not a shy, retiring person, but I always say I'm the other-other-other. I'm not Catholic. I'm not a boy. I'm not straight. And so, I've had a lot of pushback, from my fellow faculty members who, as I told you, thought that women didn't do scholarship, that there was no such thing as lesbian scholarship.

AB

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

00;53;55;22 - 00;54;29;16

JM

Like, why study the lesbian liberation movement? So, the first time I was going—one of the first times I was going out for sabbatical to write *The Historical Dictionary of the Lesbian Liberation Movement*, a boring title <laugh>. I actually had members of the Sabbatical and Research committee not wanting to give me the sabbatical, even though I had a book contract, because who would read that book?

JoAnne Myers

00;54;29;21 - 00;54;30;18

AB

And what year was this?

00;54;30;25 - 00;54;55;00

JM

This was '90—[inaudible] let me reach over your head, and I'll tell you. I'll put my glasses on and reach over your head <laugh>. Not in that order [Pause] <Humming> 2003.

AB

Okay.

00;54;54;28 - 00;55;06;25

JM

So yeah. So that was 2003, 2013 was the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement. Yeah.

00;55;06;27 - 00;55;20;14

AB

JoAnne Myers

Which is, so it's interesting to me because I know, one of the things you said coming here, you know, one of the things that brought you to Marist was because they were so inclusive and open, and that was definitely a stigma of the college in the 70s here and, you know, the early 2000s, something like this. So, you kind of see this ebb and flow and the pendulum swinging.

<Affirmative>. Where do you think we're at now in 2018?

JM

Well, can I—back up?

AB

Oh, sure.

00;55;25;24 - 00;55;48;05

JM

Because, one of the things I think that, in fact, I just saw, Doctor Zuccarello, who had hired me, back in '86. And he—his theory was that the, when it was still the Marist—predominantly the Marist Brothers, they were more liberal than the lay faculty.

00;55;48;05 - 00;55;51;04

AB

JoAnne Myers

That seems to be the case of, I would think, pretty empirically <laugh>.

00;55;51;05 - 00;56;11;05

JM

And so lay faculty trying to prove their point would actually become more doctrinaire. And so that was, you know, in fact, Doctor Zuccarello, one of his best friends came out who was a priest and, you know, so was—told me that, you know, that coming out story.

00;56;11;09 - 00;56;12;06

AB

Right.

00;56;12;08 - 00;56;46;17

JM

So yeah, we're everywhere—and as I said, you always have to continually come out. I have had students who write, you know, they don't want—you know, they don't believe in, you know, gay marriages. I just had a, one of our alums who got her Ph.D., was just told recently. She just told this story on Facebook how, some of her students don't, don't like lesbians. So she goes, well, guess what? You're learning from one right now.

JoAnne Myers

00;56;46;01 - 00;56;47;14

AB

Yeah. Right, yeah, it's—.

00;56;47;14 - 00;56;52;25

JM

You don't have to like me. And I'm not like Tinker Bell.

00;56;52;28 - 00;56;58;16

AB

<Laugh> Right. And I am a real person. I'm actually here. I'm not a, you know, a fictional character in a book somewhere.

00;56;58;19 - 00;57;08;27

JM

Yeah. So, I think that, you know—as people become friends, you know, learn that there are there are different types of people out there.

00;57;09;00 - 00;57;14;13

JoAnne Myers

AB

Sure. So, where do you—I mean, so where do you think Marist is now in 2018 as far as all that?

00;57;14;13 - 00;57;41;18

JM

So, 2018 we've made a huge step not having—. So, in the 70s when the school was still a Catholic school, the Marist Brothers had basically gone into the red. So, one of the things that happened was that they said, let's become secular and we can get state money and federal money.

AB

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

00;57;41;21 - 00;58;08;22

JM

And literally some of the brothers were told, go off and get married. And they did. Right. So now you had a whole bunch of married brothers. And they hired—that's when they hired Dennis Murray, the youngest college president. And then he had this sort of, you know, he made Marist more corporate over the course of the, his term.

AB

JoAnne Myers

Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

00;58;08;25 - 00;58;13;07

JM

It's a long term, right. Over what, thirty something years?

00;58;13;07 - 00;58;13;28

AB

That sounds about right, yeah.

00;58;17;28 - 00;58;26;00

JM

Right. And now we have David Yellen, he's not Catholic, but we thought, you know, he was a dean at a Catholic. Law school.

00;58;26;02 - 00;58;29;05

AB

Was it Loyola that he was at?

JoAnne Myers

00;58;29;07 - 00;58;44;28

JM

Yeah. Married to a black woman [pause] who believes in social justice. Well, you know, now I want to see him practice that a little bit more. Yeah, but, you know, changes are starting, starting to happen.

00;58;44;28 - 00;59;01;16

AB

I think so, too, yeah. I know they just did that, the campus climate survey, and they brought in people with, you know, different groups to talk. So, I think the fact that things like that are existing and yeah, as someone who's active now on, Fox Pride in our which, you know, came which was born out of BiGALA in the 90s.

00;59;01;16 - 00;59;02;00

JM

Yeah.

00;59;02;00 - 00;59;22;16

AB

JoAnne Myers

To just see the acceptance that we do get from you know, from the top, from a top-down perspective, is encouraging. I think now we have to just sort of boost the bottom-up perspective and get some of our students to not just say, oh you know, sort of be, you know, complacent to it, but maybe start getting a little bit more active and involved.

00;59;22;22 – 01;00;04;09

JM

And, and partly it's because I don't, students [pause]. When you come to, when you go to a college, you know, you for the longest time you've been under the thumb of your parents and then all of the sudden you have all this freedom, you know, and you actually have to think about what all of this freedom, you know, when do I study, when do I party, when do I—you know. And there's still a lot of pressure to belong. To conform and in our society, our hegemonic norm is still heterosexual.

01;00;04;21 - 01;00;06;05

AB

Yeah.

01;00;06;08 - 01;00;15;12

JM

JoAnne Myers

And so, there's that tension there. And so, for a lot of our students, they don't want to rock the boat.

AB

Right.

01:00;15;14 - 01:00;19;19

AB

Yeah. And I think whether they identify as gay or straight, I think that that goes both ways.

01:00;19;19 - 01:00;37;27

JM

It goes for all of them. And then for a long time, with BiGALA, there were, it was mostly lesbian women and straight allies. <Affirmative>. Because the gay men, I'd see gays, see gay men and students out dancing. But going, they wouldn't come out on campus.

01:00;38;00 - 01:00;59;27

AB

JoAnne Myers

Right. Or they wouldn't get involved in any of the clubs that were emerging. <Affirmative>.

That's interesting. A few of the alumni that were involved in BiGALA said the same thing. It was very, you know, straight allies and women and lesbian focused, for sure for the longest time in the 90s. And I would say that's almost probably still some truth to that now. I would say to, like to Fox Pride today I think that's a fair thing to say.

01;01;00;02 - 01;01;18;22

JM

And partly again, it's our hegemonic norm about male privilege and power. You know, why would you want to give up, you know, that that top position to say that you were you are not accepting it all, as a gay male?

01;01;18;24 - 01;01;57;12

AB

Mm-hmm. Yeah. That's true. So, we've covered a lot of ground. <Laugh> A lot of different things. Is there anything else that you could think of you'd want to share as far as like, any of the groups on campus or as far as you know, when we're talking about LGBTQ history on campus? Are there any big highlights or moments in your time that you have been here, or things that you have heard about before your time that you feel that stand out, that should be, that people should know about, and something that should be preserved and, maybe something that's mainstream or maybe not so mainstream?

JoAnne Myers

01;01;57;14 - 01;02;30;15

JM

I think that it is [pause]. So, a long time ago, I had a student who wanted to do—look at gay history and gay political movement, and she did it as an independent study, and she wanted to call it that. And the registrar did not want to call it that, because what would happen, you know, ten years from now, they would see that on her transcript. Right.

01;02;30;17 - 01;02;32;28

AB

<Laugh>. Mm-hmm.

01;02;33;18 - 01;02;40;07

JM

Yeah. So, you know, it is still bucking a lot of these norms.

01;02;40;14 - 01;02;41;16

AB

Right.

JoAnne Myers

01;02;41;19 - 01;03;07;25

JM

You know, and then there is also the issue for some people who just, you know, college time, and again, college is a privilege, right? And we are still elite, you know, going to college, you know, whether or not you come from a working class background or part of the 1%, you are still at a private school, you're not over at Suny New Paltz.

AB

Right.

01;03;07;28 - 01;03;10;02

JM

Right. Or you're not working.

01;03;10;04 - 01;03;10;16

AB

Right.

JoAnne Myers

01;03;10;18 - 01;03;36;22

JM

Right. You're not in the military working your way through school. Yeah. So, there's a whole bunch of issues here that we have to talk about our privileges, that [pause]. I lost my train. Uh-oh. I have no idea where I was going <laugh>. Lost in her own mind. A horrible place to be. Anyway—oh I know where I was going, so. So, part of being at school is you get to experiment, too. And you get to try on different personas. And, so there are a group of people who might, for instance, only be lesbians in college, right? Yeah. Because again, where the privilege is still to catch yourself a husband and get a dishwasher—I don't know, I am making this up.

AB

<Laugh>

01;04;04;15 - 01;04;21;29

JM

But there still are in our cultures, in all the different cultures there are still a lot of married men who are on the down low. <Affirmative> [Pause] Because our society still says you have to, you know, these are your markers, right?

01;04;21;29 - 01;04;24;03

JoAnne Myers

AB

The white picket fence, the dog, the kids. Yep. Yeah.

01;04;24;05 - 01;04;32;16

JM

Yeah. And so, people do that. Yeah. Most people still get, you know, kids the old fashioned way, right.

01;04;32;18 - 01;04;37;08

AB

That's right. That's very true.

01;04;37;10 - 01;04;46;19

JM

Yeah. And so, [pause] the thing is that people have to have that array of knowledge.

01;04;47;02 - 01;04;56;19

AB

JoAnne Myers

Right. And do you think from the time you started to the time now, do you think we are doing that effectively here at Marist?

01;04;56;22 - 01;06;08;20

JM

I think we are, but I think we still have, a problem where if a professor talks about [pause], black history or talks about labor history or talks about, LGBT history or talks about, women. Just this little bit, this much they, you know, <gasp> that's all they talked about in class. I actually had a student who overheard a conversation I had during break with another student who asked me about the women's music festival in Michigan. And we were out in the hall, and that's what this person wrote in my evaluation. All I talked about were lesbian things. No, I was not—I do have a lesbian voice. But everything I say, even if I am talking about straight men, I am still talking about lesbian. And it is still a lesbian voice saying this.

01;06;09;10 - 01;06;11;18

AB

Right. So, there is still that challenge.

01;06;11;20 - 01;06;39;29

JM

JoAnne Myers

And it still is that much so that I mean, one of the issues with diversity, in the classroom is, you know, if you look at my Politics and Prejudice class, you'll see that that class is probably the most equally divided among males and females and different races, right. But not, but there are a whole bunch of people that should be taking that class that do not take that class.

01;06;40;01 - 01;06;59;27

AB

Right <laugh>. They're not there. Yeah. So, if, let's say to the out and proud professor or the out and proud student that comes across this piece of oral history ten, twenty years from now, what's your advice at Marist? What is your advice to them?

01;07;00;04 - 01;07;25;03

JM

My advice to them is, is to keep on learning and to challenge yourself. You know, and to realize that, it is not a straight line, no pun intended <laugh>. Right. And that you actually have to push at ideas and people to try to make what you really want to happen.

01;07;25;05 - 01;07;30;20

AB

That's great advice <laugh>. Well, do you have anything else you'd like to offer?

JoAnne Myers

01;07;30;21 - 01;07;36;13

JM

No, if I think of anything else, I'll jot it down or send you an email.

01;07;36;15 - 01;07;43;15

AB

Very good. We'll add it onto the transcription documents <laugh>. So, Doctor Jam, thank you so much for this. This interview was great.

01;07;43;20 - 01;07;45;13

JM

And if you think of any questions.

01;07;45;15 - 01;07;46;16

AB

Yeah, I'm sure, I'll have some.

01;07;46;16 - 01;07;50;13

JoAnne Myers

JM

Like we did, literally nothing was, a straight line in that interview <laugh>.

01;07;50;15 - 01;08;05;18

AB

Right? Yeah. We went down some tangent rabbit holes, but that's great. No, that's what I wanted. I wanted to just kind of to hear that. I think it is important to hear, you know, your voice and the experience from your years here. And I think that all came through. So, thank you for that. Okay. And we'll definitely follow up <laugh>.

01;08;05;25 - 01;08;08;17

AB

Okay. Coolness.

END OF INTERVIEW