

Mill Valley Public Library
Lucretia Little History Room
Oral History Program

GSA Roundtable:
Jess Lester, Chris O'Hara-Hay, Laila Campbell, and Adrian Garcia

An Oral History Interview
Conducted by Benja Thompson in 2023

TITLE: Roundtable Interview with Tamalpais High School GSA Students

INTERVIEWER: Benja Thompson

DESCRIPTION: Transcript, 21 pages

INTERVIEW DATE: June 7, 2023

In this roundtable-style interview, current students and members of Tamalpais High School's Gender Sexuality Alliance share their experiences and perspectives on growing up queer in Mill Valley and Marin County. They discuss the difficulty of 'coming out' as a process that continues beyond any one single moment and the strength that the LGBTQ+ community brings them all.

Even at a time and place when queer representation appears more visible than ever, the GSA members confront the surging wave of anti-gay and anti-trans sentiment growing around us. Undeterred by the rising opposition, though, these young folk share optimistic thoughts on the power of activism to provide safe spaces for themselves and each other. This oral history recording provides an incredible look into the next generation of worldmakers as they consider both their own personal journeys and how they can support a brighter future.

© All materials copyright Mill Valley Public Library. Transcript made available for research purposes only. All rights are reserved to the Mill Valley Library. Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the:

Lucretia Little History Room
Mill Valley Public Library
375 Throckmorton Avenue
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Index

Gender Sexuality Alliance...	p.1-4, 11, 15, 21, 22
HIV...	p.2
Milk, Harvey...	p.14
Mill Valley Middle School...	p.3
Spahr Center...	p.1-2
Tamalpais High School...	p.1-5, 8, 11, 21

GSA Roundtable
June 7, 2023

00:00:00 Benja Thompson: Today is June 7th, 2023. I'm Benja Thompson. And this interview is for the Mill Valley Public Library's Oral History program. Today, I'm speaking with members of the GSA at Tam High at the Mill Valley Library. Thank you all for joining me and contributing your oral histories to our community. I guess we could start with just introductions.

00:00:27 Adrian Garcia: Yeah, I'm Adrian Garcia and I use he/they pronouns.

00:00:32 Jess Lester: I'm Jess Lester. I use they/them pronouns. I'm 16, and currently the president at GSA.

00:00:41 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I'm Chris O'Hara-Hay. He/him. I guess, since Jess said, I'm 15 and a half. I'm, like, co-leader of GSA also.

00:00:50 Laila Campbell: I'm Laila Campbell and my pronouns are she/they, and I'm co-leader of GSA. And I'm 15... and not a half.

00:01:03 Benja Thompson: So what's GSA?

00:01:05 Jess Lester: Yeah well, GSA has been a club at Tam for I don't know how long, but a long time, many years. And it's just kind of a place this year where we, you know, have a safe place for all the LGBTQ people or allies at Tam, as well as being a place for opportunities to, like, get involved with the community or help other people or make change on campus. And, I don't know, this year it's been really great with a lot of like new freshmen, and hello freshmen. But getting to like, I don't know, do so much more this year and it's just something that I'm hoping to really expand upon with all the years that I have left and yeah, pass onto the next classes.

00:01:44 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah, GSA stands for Gay-Straight Alliance.

00:01:48 Jess Lester: It's Gender-Sexuality Alliance.

00:01:48 Laila Campbell: Yeah.

00:01:50 Jess Lester: Yeah, we updated it, to be more gender and sexuality, it's all talked about here.

00:01:53 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's cool because GSA has like got-- at least at the middle school it was less... like it was more a place to hang out. But this year there's a lot, like we're actually contributing to the community and raising money for various different nonprofit with bake sales and such. And it's been really good getting more involved and getting, like, presented with opportunities like this interview.

00:02:12 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Can you go into maybe one of those efforts or organizations you've partnered with?

00:02:18 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Oh yeah. We did two bake sales, I think. For the first one, we raised money for the Spahr Center, which is like a nonprofit organization.

00:02;31 Jess Lester: Well, the first time, yeah, that we raised money for Spahr Center, which is a nonprofit based in San Rafael, and they've been working to just like, create resources for like, you know, HIV testing and LGBTQ, like, support groups and events around Marin, things like that. Second time, we wanted to like, branch out and we did, like, Trevor Project at that time, which a lot of people know about. Like it's a really major nonprofit that just helps with everything in suicide prevention and it's just been really great because it's been super successful and it feels good to, like, even if we're not making like a bunch of money, but we're still, like, you know, trying to do our best to support, like, organizations like that. And it's been really fun to do that. Anyone else have something to say about that? Your amazing baking skills were used.

00:03;17 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah, it's--- sorry.

00:03;19 Laila Campbell: No, I wasn't--- but, yeah, the bake sales. I don't know. It's, like, fun to, like, do bake sales cause you're raising money for, like, non-profits and we, like, baked a lot of stuff.

00:03;30 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It feels nice that we're kind of, like, collecting our efforts into something that helps other people versus just like coming and chatting and having a space, like a safe space. That's nice expanding on that and, like, taking that energy and a bunch of people that are, like, all connected and passionate about the same things, kind of putting it towards something that helps other people and is productive.

00:03;47 Adrian Garcia: It feels good to help out the community.

00:03;49 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Mm hmm.

00:03;49 Laila Campbell: Yeah. And I didn't have GSA in my old school, but. but it's a nice first, like, GSA club.

00:03;58 Benja Thompson: Could I ask about that experience then, of going to a school that does have, like, something for this?

00:04;04 Laila Campbell: Yeah, it feels, like, more welcoming and there's like, like, I'm not, like, the only one there, I would say, because I went to a really small school. But yeah, it just feels like it's, like, nice to have, like, a safe space to go to.

00:04;18 Jess Lester: Yeah.

00:04;19 Adrian Garcia: It felt like whenever I went there, because my old school also didn't have something like that, it felt, I felt more welcomed at the school because I just moved here and I feel like being able to have a place like that made me feel more welcomed in Mill Valley, in this area, and at the school in general, knowing that there was other people who were also queer. So it was just really nice to have something like that or know that it's there.

00:04;41 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah, I feel like overall the queer community at Tam is very strong and active and everyone's really accepting and supportive of it, which is really nice. Like for Pride Month, GSA did a bunch of stuff and, like, put, like did chalk drawings and, like, flags around on campus and stuff. And it's really nice that we live in a community where that, we can do that and everyone's like totally chill about it.

00:05:03 Jess Lester: Yeah, I feel like the--- when we started off with just the bake sales, it really gave us more opportunities around like the community because people started seeing that we're trying to take action and things like that. So I feel like after that happened, I've gotten like reached out to by like so many different people about, 'Hey, do you want to participate in this event happening or do you want to work with leadership at Tam to do this?' And it's just been really awesome. Like how that kind of like fueled the fire for doing things and helping others and really being a part of this community instead of just like, I don't know, watching it from afar kind of because we just, especially with Pride Month happening, um, we were invited to work with like the PTSA for the school districts around here and organizing the Pride event at the community center, which was, that was my first time that I like actually got to help out in any, like not just school organization, like, and I just, I'm really happy that this is starting to grow into, like, more opportunities keep coming the more that we do.

00:06:05 Benja Thompson: Yeah. And it's so interesting how often the overlap I'm finding between like queer communities and like activism communities are. I guess could y'all speak on what seems like a new sort of wave of interest and activism. How it feels, I guess, to be a part of that?

00:06:24 Jess Lester: Yeah, definitely. With being in GSA, I've gotten way more interested in like using my voice and activism, stuff like that. Like definitely more inspired to try reaching out, like speaking on panels or talking to, like, administration and trying to get more change done to help others. Cause it's really helped with my confidence in like speaking abilities and how it just kind of makes me, you know, actually excited to talk to others about it and be more comfortable and confident with that part of who I am. And I don't know.

00:06:55 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I think GSA has helped me realize that, like I do have a voice and I can make an impact, even if it's like just raising a bit of money for a nonprofit, Like it's still making a difference and it feels really good to kind of be more interacting with it versus just kind of watching because at least at the--- because me and Jess both went to MVMS, Mill Valley Middle School.

00:07:14 Jess Lester: 'Jess and I.'

00:07:17 Chris O'Hara-Hay: And there was, there was a pretty large GSA community at the middle school, but at least compared to Tam, it was very different. It was way less organized, I feel like. And I get everyone was younger, but they didn't--- it wasn't like here where they're doing a lot of like activism and fundraisers and stuff, so it feels good to see the club as people kind of grow up and like evolve. The club is evolving and kind of maturing and, you know, doing more.

00:07:41 Adrian Garcia: Also for like, with the protests that were happening at our school, we've done gun violence protests and Earth Day protests. So there's just protests that are happening at school and with the clubs that they have for minorities at our school. I feel like it's making the entire school feel like a welcoming place for minorities and people who all need help. So it just... all of that stuff happening makes me feel welcome. I'm sure it makes a lot of other people feel welcomed with those protests happening.

00:08;15 Benja Thompson: And then that sort of makes me think of--- it's interesting to think of a safe space not as passive, but active, right? I guess, what does, what is the value, where do you find the value in, like, a safe space?

00:08;33 Jess Lester: I mean, I guess a safe space for me is not only somewhere you can go and feel like yourself and feel comfortable being around the people with you, but as well as somewhere where you're safe to, like, I don't know, like reach out to others and talk to others and try to do something that you're passionate about. Like it's a safe space such as like GSA or Tam entirely. Like it's just somewhere where you're allowed to really, I don't know, follow like, sounds weird, but like, follow your passions and what you're passionate about and the change that you want to see. You can, you know, talk about and really try to take action on that kind of thing.

00:09;13 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah, cause it kind of gives you, like, room to grow knowing you're supported by a really good group of people.

00:09;21 Adrian Garcia: I think of it as not feeling like self-conscious about what you're doing when you're around people. So for like, GSA, I never think about what I'm doing. I'm just making sure to be myself, while with other places that I don't feel like are safe places. I feel like you end up being more, more thinking about what you're doing. And I feel like for me, being able to have a place where I can go to and not have to worry about what I'm doing and just being myself is something that I find really important.

00:09;45 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's just comforting in general to be around people that you know, that understanding--

00:09;49 Adrian Garcia: --even if, like, you're not specifically talking about that with them, just like there's, like, this, like, subconscious like relation and it's just, it's nice.

00:09;57 Jess Lester: And I wish there's more of that. Maybe someday everywhere would be a safe space because then I feel like so much better, like change can happen if it's just comfortable.

00:10;06 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's a reason for activism. That's what I feel like, kind of going back to the first question why it's important, because there's been so much pushback, especially recently with like anti LGBTQ and trans laws and, like, that thing, like the Bud Light boycott and like Target protests and stuff and all that, that we kind of--- if they, if they push back, we also have to push back.

00:10;36 Benja Thompson: And then how would you characterize, I suppose, the, the LGBTQ+ community of Tam High, of Mill Valley, and then what would you say community means to you all?

00:10;53 Jess Lester: I mean, Mill Valley and Tam, the LGBTQ community, it's, I mean I see it and it's great. There's a lot of support and acceptance and people talk about it, but at the same time I feel like there's also that layer of, 'Oh, I'm going to try, like, to show like that I'm supportive.' But at the same time, people, like, say, you know, hateful things or just recently there was this, like, talk with city council, maybe not city council, but there's some meeting thing because some parents were complaining about Pride being celebrated and they didn't want that to

happen, so they had to discuss it. And I guess it's just -- we're super, super, super lucky to be in Marin and in the Bay Area because it's one of the most, like, supportive and accepting places, especially like, you know, for being LGBTQ because, you know, there's a lot of protection and acceptance, but I definitely think that there's still some division and some misunderstandings and hopefully one day, like, everyone can kind of work through that. And it's not a, like, political subject to discuss or anything. It's just another way of being human. I don't know.

00:11:59 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah. At Tam, there's, it's, it's really good. Like it's a really incredible, amazing community. But there's also, there is a lot of room I think to grow, like a lot of people do still say some things that are, can, are like kind of casually homophobic and they may not realize it, like just even in my classes and stuff, I hear, like, little remarks and stuff and it's just, it's, we have a lot, but there's also a lot more we can't have, if that makes sense.

00:12:22 Adrian Garcia: Yeah, it's not perfect. There's a lot of good things about it, but there's always room for improvement. Where things can still get better. I feel like that's what we're striving for, is to make sure that everyone feels welcomed in the places that they are in. And Tam's great, but there is so much room to be improved and I'm hoping in the next coming years we can get to that improvement.

00:12:41 Jess Lester: Mm hmm. What was the second part of the question?

00:12:44 Benja Thompson: What does community mean to you?

00:12:47 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Community?

00:12:49 Jess Lester: I don't know, I feel like community can mean, like, multiple things, but at least for LGBTQ community, it's really like this feeling that wherever you go, there's always going to be people who can understand what you went through and who can be there for you for a situation that some other people might never be able to understand. Like having this community, like, I didn't know you guys past, like, eight months ago and already we are, like, able to feel comfortable around each other and be super close because, like, we all struggled through different scenarios that, I don't know, maybe people in your family wouldn't understand. I mean, at least Chris, you have your parents who can understand, but... like, no one in my family ever talked about, like, LGBTQ things before. I had to talk to them about it. So having the community wherever I go is always like super important to me.

00:13:41 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I think it's just nice too, if you feel comfortable and community is going to be able to like, exist almost like unapologetically and just know that everyone gets you and understands you. Because sometimes if you are like any minority, and you're in a group where you're not part of that, like minority, like you're the minority. It can feel like just, you're just different, even if it's, like, no one's talking about it. And it's nice in a community that, even if people are different religions, like, feel accepted and supported and everyone has your back.

00:14:06 Adrian Garcia: You're bonding over a common struggle. Which I feel like whenever I meet other queer people, I naturally end up being to bond with them a lot more because we have that same struggle that we're able to just have in common where we can get

along a lot more than I could with someone else. Because being queer is a struggle that's hard to understand unless you are queer. So it's just, community is just having someone.

00:14;31 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Like another level of like deeper connection to someone.

00:14;33 Jess Lester: Yeah.

00:14;35 Jess Lester: My mom, like, brought something up because I was looking at, like, college housing, even though that's like a couple of years in the future. But I was looking at places like far, like away, like across the country and even that far away, like there was housing that was like LGBTQ, like they call it, like, the 'Love' house. So like, even like if you don't know anyone there, you can find your community and they're always there for you. And like, it's just, you know, you can go there and meet people who are similar to you and, like, you can talk to them about that and they don't have to have the worries about coming out to someone who might not understand or, like, the worry of not being accepted or I don't know, things like that. So just knowing community isn't like in one area, like communities everywhere, like that's just something really special about being in the LGBTQ community. I said community a lot there.

00:15;24 Benja Thompson: Yeah, no, but that's a beautiful idea of the community being everywhere. As well as, like, the power of shared experience to form bonds.

00:15;33 Jess Lester: It's very comforting to know that.

00:15;35 Benja Thompson: Mm hmm. And then would any of y'all be comfortable sharing, like, your, either your coming out processes or your, like, experience exploring, like, what your identity means to you?

00:15;55 Adrian Garcia: For me it was a really weird experience because my idea of coming out is that no one -- I think it's really stupid. It, in itself, because having to go up to someone and be like, "Hey, I'm gay." I think the idea of that is really stupid. So I wasn't planning on coming out to my parents because I didn't think it was important to them. It wasn't affecting them, and I was living my life And my way that I came out was that my dad confronted me because I was out with friends and my mom noticed my voice was high pitched, I was having fun with my friends. And the next day my dad confronted me and was like talking to me and we had this long discussion. And then he asked if I liked boys, and then I said no. And then he kept on asking it repeatedly until I finally just admitted that I was. And it was a long talk about him trying to understand being gay, because my parents were kind of shocked by it and for me it was just a really weird experience.

And then my dad talked about, and I talked to him because he wanted to know about the experience. And I talked to him about how throughout my entire childhood I didn't know that you could be gay. There was nothing around me that showed it. And my dad thought that was really weird because we had a gay uncle that I didn't know was gay. So he went on this rant about how being gay was so normalized, like he didn't have to go out of his way to show it to

me. And because I didn't notice it or I didn't know that I could be gay. And he was really weirded out by this. And he was annoyed. And then that was my last conversation with my dad about me being gay and then my mom the next day after that, she ended up coming up to me because my dad told her about it. And she had a long talk with me about my friends. And although she didn't blatantly say it, she inferred that my friends were influencing me to be gay. And it was just a really weird experience, one that I wasn't expecting to have, because I didn't ever want to come out. And by the end of it, they were all supportive, but a lot of the stuff that they said made me feel weird and I feel like my coming out experience wasn't one that I had control over with my parents. And I'm hoping with my biological mom not having come out yet, when I come out to her, it's going to be an experience that I keep control of instead of having it more so forced out of me.

00;18;30 All (Overlapping): I'm sorry. Yeah, I'm sorry. I like started to tear up -- [all laugh]

00;18;35 Benja Thompson: And exactly to your point, it's such a weird expectation that's placed on certain people that you have to, like, come out, like no straight person is like, "Oh, I got to tell, like, everyone I," you know.

00;18;49 Chris O'Hara-Hay: And it's like, it's annoying because they never, it's never just once. Like, it's usually you have to keep continually doing that your entire life.

00;18;56 Adrian Garcia: Which is something that I didn't realize at first because then, like, I moved. And realized I had to come out again. When I came out to some people, I had to come out to other people. So the idea of coming out, it's just really stupid because it's something that you have to repeatedly do over and over again, which isn't something that I realized.

00;19;11 Laila Campbell: Yeah. For me, I like, luckily I have, like, really supportive parents, but obviously, like, I was nervous because, like, like, I don't know, like, I just had to tell them this big thing that, like, I don't know, I just felt like I should. And how I came out is, I came out with a cake. I wrote --

00;19;37 All (Overlapping): [Laughter]

00;19;32 Laila Campbell: So I wrote, like, "I," like, "am," then, like, my sexuality, and then, like, I was like, "I have cake."

00;19;41 Jess Lester: How'd that go?

00;19;43 Laila Campbell: It went, it went, it went good. Oh, it was kind of awkward. They had to read it.

I might copy

Did they eat t

00;19;49 Adrian Garcia: I might copy that idea.

00;19;51 Jess Lester: Did they eat the cake?

00;19;53 Laila Campbell: Like it's really hard. Like, I don't know, to just like, say that. So I just wrote it on a cake. But they're all really supportive, but like, 5 minutes after, like, I went to my friend's house because it was really awkward. Well, just like, awkward for me. But

they were really supportive and, but I'm like, I'm really lucky for that. But it's true. You have to, like, come out, to, like, everyone. Like, if you're comfortable. or, like, some people just, like, ask like, "Are you part of the LGBTQ community?" And I don't want to lie, but it's more like casual for me now, especially at, like, Tam, like I'll make, like, jokes about being in the LGBTQ community and people like, yeah. Yeah.

00;20;37 All (Overlapping): I guess -- I can go. You want to go? Yeah, I'll go.

00;20;40 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I don't know, my coming out experience is probably a bit different because I am trans, so transgender. So I kind of had to, like, come out to, like, go through all that. But luckily my parents were chill about it. I feel like it was kind of, it was a bit overwhelming because I had all these like, feelings in my head for so long and then, yeah, just kind of, like, spewing them out and it was just like -- and I did get emotional because I didn't realize how much it meant to me. And it was like the first time saying it like out loud and stuff. Luckily they were very supportive, obviously, and I feel like it's been something I've been more comfortable to talk about recently because I came out when I was like 12, right before my 12th birthday, like a week before. So I was out for basically all of middle, like middle school. But I passed very well as like a cis-guy. So I kind of had the opportunity to not talk about it if I wanted. And I didn't do it for a while. Like I would talk about it at GSA, but just like I didn't feel as connected to it and I didn't say I was ashamed of it, but I just -- there were a lot of times where I just wanted to forget about the fact that I was trans and just, I don't know, kind of, like, assimilate back in, if that makes sense. But I feel like at middle school, or not middle school, I guess at high school, especially in the past year, it's something I became a lot more comfortable with talking about, even just with people that necessarily aren't in the LGBTQ community, just like knowing I've met so many amazing people at Tam that can, like, are supportive and understand and just get it and wouldn't judge me. So yeah, yeah. But also there are some people that I don't like at school that I can just tell. They would think it would be weird. So then I don't -- I'm careful not to mention it or anything. Yeah.

00;22;31 Jess Lester: I never, like, had kind of a coming out thing, which I don't know. I don't know how I feel about that because I wish I could have had, like, a simple, easy, "I'm coming out." But, um, I guess it just kind of -- it was also similar, like it was forced on me. Like, I guess my parents thought it was weird that I was trying to, like, dress more like how I felt comfortable and whatnot, and cut my hair and things like that. And eventually, I guess, like, I mean, I found out that they were all -- I have, like, four parents and they're all like, talking amongst themselves and like, guessing what I was and stuff like that. But eventually, like my mom confronts me at a bad time, I was like trying to go to bed. And she like, came down and started hammering me with like, well, she started off being like, "Once there was this young girl and she always played with boys and wore boys' clothes and she thought that maybe she was a boy, but then she grew up and felt comfortable," and she kept trying to force this narrative of, 'Oh, I'm just uncomfortable. I'm just like, my body is changing and I'm just like, don't like my body,' or something like that. And so at first she just over and over again attempted to like, force this kind of thing on me. Like wouldn't accept that maybe my gender identity isn't what I was born as. Like stuff like that. And she tried to make it clear. She's like, 'Oh, if you like girls, if you're lesbian, that's completely fine. I accept you,' stuff like that. And it just felt super frustrating because I wasn't comfortable talking about it. I tried.

I, like, would break down crying, was not able to. So I guess it just took months and months of those horrible conversations and she would like, you know, cry, be like. "No, I don't want to lose my princess." Stuff like that. She was like -- now, now she's really great. She's great now. She made progress, but it's just that whole time of my life was really not easy. But I don't know. I guess, like it was strange because my parents are divorced and like, I have stepparents and things, so having some of them being, like, accepting right off the bat, like helping me with, like, getting new clothes and stuff like that.

00;24;26 Jess Lester: But then having, like, a couple of parents, my mom, having that, like, kind of opposing point of view was just, I don't know, it made everything really not great. But I guess over time, with just conversations and getting better at those conversations took a while. But it happened eventually and just taking it step by step for like, I don't know, educating her and whatnot. Like over time she started being more accepting like after a few months after coming out to finally start using like different name and pronouns, like every once in a while. But I guess just hearing the excuse, "Oh, it's not from my generation," or, "It's a new thing and gotta get used to it. My mind's used to this kind of thing." Like, I guess she just tried to use that for so long until, I don't know, when everyone else was doing the right thing, like eventually she kind of made her way over to being a better, accepting person. But I don't know. I guess it's weird because that happened a long time ago and I can't point to a specific moment where I came out or anything like that. Like I haven't even discussed my sexuality with them. But I guess just coming out in my family is of a like, them figuring me out instead of me telling them who I am, which was, I don't know -- it's okay now. They became very accepting, like for me to get like medical treatment and advocating for me and other issues. Just being allies and, I don't know, trying to find how they can support others, even though they weren't the greatest like a couple of years ago. So I'm just happy that that happened. Yeah, that's about it.

00;25;56 Benja Thompson: It takes a lot of strength to hold that burden where you so often have to be like the, the point person, right? For like family members and people that you're close to. Like sometimes you are the first person of a identity that someone may encounter. And so that's like a... both a difficulty and also like a, sometimes for myself at least, it feels like a privilege to be able to like, introduce someone to an identity. Although certainly it can be burdensome.

00;26;32 Chris O'Hara-Hay: coming outs. It's really awful that both you guys kind of had bad

00;26;36 Laila Campbell: Yeah, I'm sorry.

00;26;39 All (Overlapping): So, so invasive. Guys, I feel so bad.

00;26;41 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Like, why do they feel like they have the right to know that and ask you questions? Because it's such an incredibly personal thing. And even if they suspected you were queer, they should have been like, respective of that.

00;26;52 Adrian Garcia: I think it's also a lot of parents, like they're entitled to know because it's their child and it's just so, such a bad way to think and that's why also I feel like the queer experience can change so much from person to person. Like, I still love my parents. They

are support-- supportive-ish now. So, but like, it just, there's a lot of things that go into the queer experience with coming out. It's weird.

00;27;18 Jess Lester: Like they ask you if you're gay because you spoke with a high pitched voice around your friends?

00;27;23 Adrian Garcia: I don't think it was just that because it was moreso, like, I remember the day before my mom was talking about my 'high pitched voice,' and then when my dad was confronting me, he also mentioned the 'high pitched voice,' and I guess it was more feminine. So he was like associating it with that stereotype.

00;27;37 All (Overlapping): Of being gay-- Gay men having a high-- That's so, that that's what they based it on. I don't know.

00;28;46 Jess Lester: I'm just glad that I feel like nowadays, as there is a bit more division of, like, extremes on both ends, but at least it seems like more people now, like, are educated on the LGBTQ community and identity and coming out and how you should navigate that, or at least like how to be respectful around it. And maybe back then they didn't really have that, so they didn't know, like, what they were doing was just, like, not good. So I don't know. I'm hoping, I'm optimistic that it's going to be easier and hopefully one day not even, like, have to come out or expect someone, like, to be straight or cis. I don't know, there should be more of, like, you know, understanding that there's variety to being, like, a person. Like, I don't know, hopefully it's not a thing to have to come out.

00;28;31 Chris O'Hara-Hay: People becoming more like accepted, like cis and straight is still, like, the baseline norm. And even if people are supportive, I just assume that everyone is that, like, so like, so it just puts a lot of pressure for you to be that. And then if you're not, it's like you're, like you're different. People are accepting, but you're still, you're still different.

00;28;51 Adrian Garcia: I feel like one of my moments this year that I was most happy with was when I was talking with someone and I was able to just casually mention that I was gay and they were so chill with it. Like, I feel like that was one of the moments this year where I felt really welcomed in the community. Where I can say something so casually like that and people don't just immediately assume and, like, pressure me about being straight, where it becomes harder to come out. Like there's one person this year where they were like-- I was talking with a girl and like, "Oh, you got the hots for her?"

00;29;23 All (Overlapping): [Laughter]

00;29;27 Adrian Garcia: And so it's like, it makes it harder to come out when they, like, immediately start talking like that. And so I feel like it's just one of those things. Where, if it's not assumed, if it's more casual-- I feel like coming out should be something that's either really casual, or it's just not needed at all.

00;29;46 Benja Thompson: Sort of on that, could y'all share moments of, like, almost like euphoria? Like gender euphoria is a big experience and moments of, like, sort of where you feel like happy to be able to express your identity or expression?

00;30;08 Jess Lester: Yeah. I mean, recently, like on the 30th of last month, there was the Pride event at the community center and I got to have a little booth there and representing Tam GSA and just seeing a bunch of little middle schoolers coming up. Everyone had, like, pronoun stickers on them and just getting to talk to people like that where everyone's just completely, like, I don't know, like nobody cares like what you are, who you are. Like, you just get to, you know, bring up, "Oh, I'm non-binary," and like, there's no anxiety surrounding that. And a couple of times that happens like at Tam. I don't know, I was working a lot with the, like vice principals at the school for like gender-neutral bathrooms and things like that. And just having that basis already set like, "Oh, I'm a non-binary person and that's fine and we don't have to make that a thing." Like just having those moments where I don't have to think about like, "Oh, what are they, like, expecting? Like, what are they assuming," kind of things. So it's just when there are those moments where you don't have to worry about, like, who you are or, like, coming out or anything surrounding that idea. Like, those are just the moments where I feel most confident, most comfortable and just euphoric and who I am.

00;31;22 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I think the experience of the bake sale, actually, like selling the goods that was really, that was really fun and just realizing how many people in, like, Mill Valley in general were, like, supportive of it. I mean, I don't know. I didn't, I didn't expect, like, people to go up and be like, "This is disgraceful and disgusting." But it's just chill that everyone was buying stuff. And I think we would kind of explain what the money was going towards, and a lot of people would, like, donate more and tip us a lot, and it was just really nice seeing just like, average, casual people in town being supportive. It helps a lot.

00;31;57 Adrian Garcia: For me, it was when I-- I had a lot of trouble saying the word 'gay,' and I was forced coming to terms with it and I felt like during my eighth grade year was when I was forcefully out and a lot of people I met in my eighth grade year helped me make, feel really comfortable with the term. Where, like I knew I was gay, but I didn't say it and I told them I was queer. I had trouble saying it in a weird way, so I-- by the end of the school year, I felt comfortable in it and be able to have people that made me feel comfortable. For me, that was my moment of like euphoria, of being really happy and being comfortable. Comfortable with myself was when people were just welcoming to me.

00;32;38 All (Overlapping): ...[Laughter]

00;32;42 Laila Campbell: Why's everybody staring at me? I don't know, just like being more casual about it this year. Like, I mean, it seemed like it was a big deal at first, but being in, like, GSA, like, I don't know, and at Tam I feel, like, more comfortable than, with just like saying it, like saying-- well, I'm unlabeled. But just like talking about it.

00;33;03 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I think back to the thing about words having weight. I kind of had that when I came out too, because when I first, like, talked about it, My experience, I don't know, it's kind of different than other trans people. I, I went to my parents and I kind of, like, explained all my feelings, but I don't think I ever used the word 'trans.' I just talked about like

clothes and stuff and like, how I don't feel comfortable as a girl, and I went-- this is kind of-- I had to go on this, in fifth grade, we had this trip to the Headlands. We had to stay in, like, a camp and it was like boys and girls dorms. And I just remember that was kind of an awakening for me because I was like, "Wow, I hate being in here and I want to be with all my guy friends." And it just, yeah, and I talked about that and I didn't use the word, like I didn't say I was trans and I wanted to like, change my name and stuff. And I kind of spent, because I came out to them at the end of fifth grade and then I kind of spent the summer, like, reflecting and figuring out, and then I kind of, I went up to them again and it was like, "So, I want to change my name."

00:34:01 Adrian Garcia: And pronouns and they were totally chill, and that's, by that point I did feel comfortable saying the word. But even with coming out to other people, kind of like what Adrian did, I would say I was queer, but I wouldn't necessarily say it because it felt so, like, heavy to say, I would say, in a way.

00:34:16 Laila Campbell: For me, I like, felt like I had to have, like, a label because at first, like, I came out as bisexual because I like girls and guys. But, like, now I just, I prefer being, like, unlabeled. I don't like putting, like, a label on things because I think I like, like everyone. And I don't know if that's like bisexual and it's just like I feel less pressured by not having a label.

00:34:44 Chris O'Hara-Hay: And so back to that, I get, I totally get not having pressure because I feel like a lot of times people, they get so, like, specific about what all the different 'bi' and 'pan' label means. And I've been, because I identify as pan now, but like I've been told when I explain it, they're like "Actually, that's bisexual," and I'm like, "Ah, okay, does it matter?"

00:35:02 Jess Lester: It's extra, like, weird figuring out labels for, like, attraction, like being non-binary, since I feel like, I don't know, I don't want to put a label that also intertwines, like, gender with who I, who I like kind of thing, but I don't know. I guess I also just use 'pan' because, like, I don't know, I like everyone. I don't know. I don't know. I'm like 16 and I don't have that much life experience in the world. I feel like I shouldn't be pressured to put names on all my, like, feelings and experiences because that's not what actually matters. It's like who you are and how you live your life and stuff.

00:35:34 Laila Campbell: Yeah, it's like, like, I don't know, like, I like everyone.

00:35:40 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I figured out my sexuality after my gender because I was like, "I want to focus on one thing at a time." And so after I kind of figured out, lowkey, wasn't a girl, was a guy. And then I kind of, I had this weird, like two year phase where I really wanted to be straight for some reason. Like, I knew I did not, I wasn't. But I just, kind of back to that thing about, I used to be more insecure about being trans in my identity. So I guess I thought, "Oh, if I'm a cis-passing guy and I'm straight, you know, people will think I'm, like, normal," and whatever. So I never talked about it even though I knew I wasn't. And then recently I became more comfortable and realized that, like, you know, I'm already trans anyway, like, like it doesn't matter. And then it's just, yeah, it's been nice being able to be more open with it and just having a part of me that was closed off for a while. Kind of just, yeah, I can talk about it more.

00:36:34 Benja Thompson: Yeah. Yeah. And the label thing, it makes it difficult to sort of accept it as a process. It can always be changing as well, and sort of-- it's an interesting thing,

the human language and the violence that it can do, in that it puts things in boxes. So... that's just so interesting to always be grappling with that, of like identifying as one thing really only means that you're not another thing. Right? So it's so cool to hear you all, like working through processes and, like, how not only it changes from person to person, but it changes, like, from, like, within you over time.

00:37;18 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Like it can be like, like constricting in a way to have, like, your identity, like your sexual preference or, like, your gender. Like it's this beautiful, complex human thing. And then sometimes it can be, like, hard to contain it into one, like, like a one sentence description, especially when, like, that one sentence is, like, means different things for different people and stuff.

00:37;37 Adrian Garcia: Like the community's supposed to be really welcoming, So we shouldn't be pressuring people to be labeled or correcting people on their own labels because we're supposed to just be letting everyone in the community feel comfortable, comfortable with themselves. So if someone says they identify as, like, lesbian, you shouldn't be correcting them saying, "Oh, that's not actually lesbian," or, "That's not actually pan," because I'm supposed to be comforting in the community. That's why we have the community in the first place. And labels and correcting people on labels, is just really stupid that people in the community are even thinking of doing that.

00:38;10 Chris O'Hara-Hay: There's so many better things to focus on, versus arguing over, like, what flag to use and what labels mean. Like, should put that effort into something, like activism, like we're doing.

00:38;22 Jess Lester: Like the labels also make it hard with, like, gender identity that isn't binary because there's obviously-- no one can know what you're feeling. I can't know what other people are feeling. So when I use non-binary some people are like, "Oh, and then doesn't that mean you want to be, like, gender-neutral?" Or, like, "Have people think you're a guy and a girl, and things like that?" And I like, I felt pressured for a long time to either say I'm just a trans guy or transmasculine or use he/they pronouns, thing like that, because I guess I, like, present masculine. So that was like what was expected by the community. But, um, I don't know, I guess I just kind of like taking a stand, being like, "No, I'm non-binary, but this is my experience. It's different from yours and that's fine." I don't know, labels are difficult because no one knows what another person's feeling. Like I don't even know. It's hard to define that.

00:39;12 Chris O'Hara-Hay: And it's kind of hypocritical if it's like, meant to be a welcoming space and then everyone's so caught up in, "Oh, if you identify with this label, then you have to look like this, and, you know, fit this description." And it just kind of defeats the whole purpose.

00:39;28 Benja Thompson: And then, I was interested in, if y'all are familiar with, like, queer history or you have, like, certain, like, queer icons, either of the past or the present?

00:39;46 Jess Lester: I don't know, like, past, before, like 2019, I didn't know anything about the queer community or history or people around me. So just having to learn it all on my own, like, it's a little bit, like, difficult to feel like I understand and I definitely, like, try to do my own research about, like, you know, the community's history, like how we came to be

kind of and especially local with, like, Harvey Milk being, like, the first elected, like, openly gay, like, official. But that's all I have, is from, like, the Internet, Like, I've never been taught, or I've never had people who have been in the community for a long time to like come and teach me about like what it used to be like.

00:40:27 Chris O'Hara-Hay: My dads.

00:40:28 Jess Lester: At least you have your dads.

00:40:30 All (Overlapping): Yeah, we were just talking about that. Could ask them, pull them in here.

00:40:34 Adrian Garcia: Like, it's also another thing, where in schools you're not really taught too much about it. Besides, when it's like, Trans Week or Pride Month, where, like, some good teachers might give, like, a history lesson on some queer people. But other than that, in our curriculum, there's not too much talk of queer people, or anything dedicated to them, besides when it's our month, or during certain days. So, it's just...

00:41:00 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I think it'd be really helpful to talk about that. Like, obviously it's important to talk about, like, what the different terms mean and stuff. But I feel like it would help people who are in the community just have a greater understanding if they kind of knew the history and where it came from and why it's important. Because I feel like a lot of people are like, "Oh, what's the point of, like, everyone being so, like, loud and proud?" Like, like, I know I hear that a lot, where it's like, "I'm not homophobic, but like, why do gay people have to, like, flaunt the fact that they're gay so much? Like, what's the point of Pride Month?" And I feel like it would help people understand so much more if they saw it like, "Well, we have it because, in the past, we faced so much, like, discrimination and it came out of that."

00:41:37 All (Overlapping): Yeah. Like, oh, go ahead. No, you can go. [Laughter]

00:41:40 Laila Campbell: Like Adrian was saying, I wish I heard more about it in school. Like, I, obviously, like, I knew that, like, queer people, like, were, like, existed, but, like, I knew that because of, like, like the Internet and stuff like that. But I wasn't like, per se, like, taught about it in school. Maybe like, like, like a mini-lesson or something, but it wasn't like a huge thing.

00:42:05 Adrian Garcia: I feel like it needs to be taught just so people know about it. Like, for me, I didn't even know you could be gay til fifth grade, where a lot of people knew before that through the internet, and I only found out you could be gay through the Internet. My parents never talked about it. So I feel like if people, if we have that in schools, it would make queer people who are trying to find themselves feel a lot more welcome. If they taught about it in the classrooms, if they just knew more about it, if people were talking about it more, it would just help people in general and we would know more queer people now in our history because a lot of the time they just brush over queer people in our history, when they should be talking about them more, and raising them up. So if anyone were to be asked, "Do you know any queer people in history," we would be able to name a lot.

00:42:55 Jess Lester: It kind of reminds me like, since I personally feel like I can't teach others about it since I don't really understand it or know anything myself. But there's

this-- as I said, like, many people have reached out to me after, like, trying to run GSA, but this kind of elderly person who lives in Mill Valley for a long time, he's been engaging in like LGBTQ, like politics or just California politics for like, so long. And he has a lot of interesting stories to tell about, like his experiences, like with new laws that have been passed and like advocacy for, like LGBTQ rights and it's just great because he was, he was showing his interest in me, talking to the club and sharing his experiences and his knowledge from, you know, being active in this over, like, many years. And I'm just excited that there's some opportunities where we can kind of get it from someone who lived through it. And I feel like that's more valuable than just having to find it on your own on some random like internet article thing.

00:43:52 Laila Campbell: Yeah, and like adding on to what Adrian said, like, like, how he found out in like fifth grade, like for sexuality. Like when I was younger, I thought it was just, like you could-- it's either like you're gay or straight, but there is, like, lots of sexualities. Like, like I said, I like boys and girls. I thought you could only like girls or only like guys. So yeah, we definitely, like, they should, like, teach us more about it in school. And yeah, with like, this question, like, all I know is like stuff that I've, liked, researched. Like, like, I was never, like, taught it.

00:44:26 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It would also help people feel more comfortable because even just like talking about it more, makes, like, if someone is questioning that and they are like, "Oh, well, no one's talking about it, there's no information on it." It may kind of imply or make them feel like, "Oh, I shouldn't be that because no one's, like, discussing it."

00:44:44 Jess Lester: It's kind of ridiculous, in my opinion, cause, like, families, I don't know, like mine, grow up being like, "Oh, you're going to grow up and to be a beautiful woman, like, wear a dress and marry a man," and stuff like that. And then when I find out about nonbinary and being LGBTQ, like online through my own searching, like then they'll be like, "Oh no, the Internet influenced you into being this way" or things like that, but like, how else is somebody-- if nobody talks about it at school, if nobody talks about it in your family, how else are you going to find out about it? And everyone's, like, demonizing the internet for just, like, being a resource to learn about yourself.

00:45:22 Adrian Garcia: It's also, I think, way too many parents think that their kids are getting influenced into being these things when it's really not. A lot of us don't have the choice of being queer. And so it's just really weird that there's still so many people that still think that, because a lot of people aren't educated on the queer experience, and I think if they just educated people when we wouldn't be having all the problems that we're having now.

00:45:49 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I think especially with, like, trans rights and stuff, so many people think like, kids go online and they're indoctrinated by the Internet. And it's just frustrating because it's so much more, it's like, it's so much more complex than that. And people getting resources online is not just, they're not being brainwashed.

00:46:10 Jess Lester: It's not my fault that I searched up "Not-want-to-be-a-girl, want-to-do-this," and then find the word transgender. And like, I don't know.

00:46:19 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's just like, I don't know.

00:46:22 Laila Campbell: I find annoying when, like, they say, like, the internet is, like, brainwashing you because, like, like, I wouldn't, like, choose to, like, like, because there's, there is, like, like, I get, like, sometimes I get nervous, like saying, like, I'm part of the LGBTQ community. Like, I wouldn't really choose that. Like, if I, like, I would want to be straight and like, not have to be, like, scared of that, but like, it's just not how it works.

00:46:47 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah its like such a, like, you're figuring out your gender and sexuality. It's such like a complex personal thing and it's not something you just see on the Internet one day and you're like, "Hmm, I like that."

00:46:59 Jess Lester: It's just, I know a lot of us struggle with, like, obviously the hard parts of that identity process of, like, having people tell us, "Oh, you just chose that, or you saw that and you wanted to do that, or you just want to escape something else." It's just frustrating and isolating and I just don't understand why that happens. And I feel like if people actually understood what it meant and what it's like, then it wouldn't be as much of this kind of outside, hateful perspective.

00:47:29 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Also it makes it so hard to be happy with your identity yourself. If you keep hearing from everyone else that it's, like, not valid and not true, or you're just confused, or you're too young to understand and it's like, well, how am I supposed to be proud and comfortable with myself if the world and the people around me aren't?

00:47:45 All (Overlapping): Hmm. Mm hmm. That's so sad.

00:47:49 Benja Thompson: Yeah, it's just, then it's like, when is the right age to know yourself? Then is the question, of like, okay, so when can I, like, be me?

00:48:00 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Especially with, like, trans laws and stuff, like the age that the laws are getting pushed for, like blocking gender, it keeps getting pushed up. Like first it was 18 and now I know some states are trying to pass laws where you can't get it until you're 25. And that's really terrifying to think about because it's like you're a full legal adult who can drink and buy a car and buy a house. And it's like you're being--

00:48:20 Jess Lester: You can buy a gun at 18.

00:48:21 Chris O'Hara-Hay: You get a gun at 18, vote, and it's like, it's getting worse.

00:48:26 Laila Campbell: It's like wrong and like weird to like put an age on things like that because, like, you just like know. Like I, I knew when I was, like, really young. But like, obviously I wasn't like, "Oh, I'm, I'm unlabeled."

00:48:38 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I don't know if this is universal. Everyone, I feel like, for me, I felt like I knew something was different from a really young age and even if I didn't have the words or really, I was confused about it myself. I just knew it was different. And I feel like it's the argument about, like, because that's the main argument I get from conservatives. Like, "Your brain doesn't stop developing until 25. So you're not like mentally complex enough to make those decisions."

00:49:02 Jess Lester: 'So you should suffer until you're 25, and then do it.'

00;49;04 Adrian Garcia: Like, my mom felt like I was too young to know when I came out. I feel like it's just one of those things where you're not too young to know because even when in middle school you're still developing crushes on people.

00;49;16 All (Overlapping): It's such a straight double standard.

00;49;18 Adrian Garcia: It is a really huge double standard where a lot of straight people are developing crushes. No one double checks that. But if a queer person is like, "Oh, I'm crushing on someone--" "You're too young to do that." It's just really stupid. And, like, cis people are also able to dress how they want. Like it's just really stupid, the way that they are holding a double standard for the LGBTQ+ community, that just isn't fair.

00;49;44 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah, like knowing, people like, "Oh, if you're young, you're too, you're too young to know." But it's like, you knew, it's like a, "How do you know you're not straight?" It's like, "How do you know you're not gay?" You just, you just know. And you've probably known from like a young age. And also, like, that double standard of, like, at least not in my family but I know other families are like, like Jess's family, "Oh, you're going to grow up and marry, like, a man," and stuff, and is like, just kind of enforcing that. And also like, "Oh, wow," like a six year old has, like, a crush, it's like, "Oh, he's such a ladies man"

00;50;15 Laila Campbell: And especially with, like, the crushes thing, like, yeah, like, people start developing crushes, like, in middle school. So like how, like, how do you know that you have a crush on someone but you don't think I know that I have a crush on like, like someone? Like, maybe they're the same gender as me, but like... like, you like someone too.

00;50;37 Jess Lester: Oh, right. I think it was something my mom brought up being like, "Well, I've never thought about my gender. I've never thought about me being a woman or something like that." And I wish they were like-- well, yeah, that's the thing. You didn't have to think about it because it was never something that felt wrong in your body or anything like that." So it's just when they're like, when you talk about, "Well, how do you know you're not gay?" Or, "When did you know you were straight as a young age?" They just don't understand that that's the privilege they get, of not having to think about and tell other people about it and how it's just something that that is expected for everybody. So it's just, I guess they just get confused of why everyone's thinking about their gender identity nowadays and things like that. But it was just like, I don't know, you don't have to, if it wouldn't be like if--

00;51;22 Chris O'Hara-Hay: --If your gender and sexuality is the standard by society that everyone expects, you don't have to consciously think of it because then it's like if you're queer, you're kind of defying the standard. So you have to think about it, has to be something you think about. But then if you're, if you're straight, obviously, you know you're straight. You never have to, it's never been seen as abnormal, so you don't have to really look into it as in depth necessarily.

00;51;43 Jess Lester: People think, "Oh, well, you need to think about it more. How do you know you're trans? Like you don't know what you are," kind of thing.

00;51;50 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Like I don't know what I'm thinking.

00;51;52 Jess Lester: It's ridiculous.

00:51;53 Adrian Garcia: Also I feel like, a lot of people have been saying that you need to be really old for it, when, for me, it was like I didn't know about it until I was in like fifth, sixth grade. But like, so many things that happened to me as a child, I would, like, look back at, and realized I was gay back then too, a lot of stuff that happened. So it just feels like one of those things where you can know at a really young age and come to terms with it because people develop crushes when they're young. Like even in elementary school. So it's just one of those things where conservatives, and all-- I cannot speak. All those people are like, "Oh no," it's just bad.

00:52;33 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's so, like, frustrating when people are, they want to limit, like how much LGBTQ is exposed to kids because they think, you know, and like, they're like, "I'm not, I'm not a hater, but like, I just think we shouldn't, like, expose that to children," because I guess they think if, if they keep kids completely oblivious to the fact that gay people exist, that they won't, like, come out until later.

00:52;53 Jess Lester: That's so much worse.

00:52;55 Laila Campbell: Yeah. Like they're just going to find out.

00:52;57 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah. They're going to find out later.

00:52;58 Jess Lester: They're just going to feel worse about themselves.

00:52;59 Laila Campbell: And then be like, yeah, and then be like, "Why were you hiding this from me?" Like the 'Don't Say Gay' bill, what is that?

00:53;06 Adrian Garcia: It's... one of the things that happened last week with my parents and I was like: put up a Pride flag. Bought my own Pride flag, put it up. And then last week my dad wanted me to take it down. And he was talking to me about my, one of the points he made was about my siblings and talking about how they were young and they were going to see the and I, like, I feel like a lot of them-- and then my dad before is talking about how he exposed me to queer things when I was young. I feel like there's such a big double standard with all of that stuff.

00:53;37 Jess Lester: I was exposed to straight things.

00:53;40 Adrian Garcia: Like my entire life I didn't know you could be gay and I'm so gay. So it's just there's so many evidence and proof of queer people just being queer without being influenced by other people. And they're still saying that, it feels like they're really just making excuses to be homophobic, transphobic and just hate on the LGBTQ+ community. And it just feels like people just need to stop hating when we have all this proof of people's experiences and all experiences that show what the experience is like and how we just need to be supportive and help out these people that are struggling and people just still aren't getting it.

00:54;21 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Also it's just like the whole thing about, like, "Oh, we don't want kids to be gay." That's, like, rooted in homophobia. It's like, why is it bad if a kid turns out to be trans or gay or bisexual or lesbian or whatever? Like, why? Why are you saying, why are you seeing, why are you talking about how like, oh, if they turn out like that, that's like a bad thing. Why are you trying to prevent that from happening? And that's just. yeah, it's frustrating.

00;54;40 Laila Campbell: Yeah, it's like hurtful to the community. Like, why's that like such a horrible thing to you when, like, that's, like--

00;54;49 Chris O'Hara-Hay: So what if a kid turns out to be gay, what, what's going to happen? And then they don't really have a response to that.

00;54;57 Benja Thompson: What are hopes that you might have for the future, either yourselves personally, as young people like in high school looking forward or for the culture at large?

00;55;10 Laila Campbell: I just hope like it's more like normalized. Like I said, like, everyone has to, like, come out if you're not straight and not cis. Which I just think, like, I just hope it's like not as much as a big deal because, like, like for me, like coming out, it's like a lot of pressure because I felt like, like I should tell them because I'm like, I'm like, really close with my parents and my family. And I, like, told my sister first so she could help me. And for it just to be more normalized, and, like, straight people and cis people don't have to come out, so.

00;55;42 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's annoying that there's that pressure at all. I think, I'm overall, I'm very, I think I like to look at things in an optimistic view. I feel like it is frustrating because progress in general, like just in America, can feel kind of two steps forward, one steps back. But I feel like if you look back in the past, like ten, twenty, thirty years, like we've made so much progress and I think it is kind of... if you get, like at least for me, I try not to look at the news too, too much because I get caught up in all the headlines and it just makes me depressed, honestly. But then just, if you take a step back, we have made progress and I think at Tam at least it's an extremely accepting school and I feel like all the efforts we're doing with fundraising in like slides during tutorial and just kind of raising awareness is helping a lot. So I think, yeah.

00;56;31 Laila Campbell: Yeah. And like hopefully in the future, like people won't try to like, hide like LGBTQ from like a young age because like, like I said, like in reality they're going to like, find out like you can't, like, hide them from the world and like, what people are.

00;56;47 Jess Lester: Yeah, I don't know. And just, of course, as Chris said, like with all the headlines and the media and everything politicizing like LGBTQ people, I'm just very grateful that I get to grow up here where I can gain my voice and gain my confidence and become who I am. And then when I'm off in the world at an age that people think is, you know, acceptable to be queer, then I can, you know, use my voice to help others like who are in the situation that I used to be in. And maybe I don't know, I'm just getting the confidence to try to make the progress happen because, I mean, of course, you know, right now, especially the past couple of years, there's just been a lot of, you know, reverse in progress. But I just think people are also gaining the ability to talk about it and to stand up, stand up for their communities. And I don't know. I'm also optimistic. I think that one day this will all like, I think people just want something complain about in the news because it gets views and stuff like that. So maybe as we keep making like small bits of progress, like as states become like safe havens where there's protections for people, um, I think once all the like media stuff kind of floats away, if that happens, then we can continue to make progress because that's just kind of what happens. Like you can't... I don't know, I don't think that it's going to happen where we just completely get rid of all safeties and all progression and all progress that we've made in the past like hundred years

even, because it's been so much and it's been so great. And like even with all the bad things happening, there's also been a lot more understanding and education, so at least people know about it. So it's not this completely like unknown, weird taboo thing that it was like 30 years ago, kind of.

00:58;37 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I feel like even if you kind of ignore that, like the super extremist headlines, the average person, at least in like the United States in this area, is a lot more informed and accepting and supportive than they used to be, which is really good. And I know it can feel like we aren't making progress with everything that's like happening in the news, but I think we are at least. I'm very, I'm hopeful for this. And also, like Jess said, I'm very grateful to live in this area and this town where it allows people to have a voice. And yeah, I think the community is definitely not going anywhere, like it's been, it's very historic and like lots of protests and stuff and it's always pushed through and endured.

00:59;16 Adrian Garcia: I love the progress we've made, but it also sucks that we even needed to make that progress and that we started at a point that was so bad for the community, which is why I'm hoping throughout the next, hopefully years, but like throughout the next decades, we come to a point where the queer community is not being oppressed and not having laws made about them, where they can just live their lives and not be scared when they were a young age of talking to their parents about it, of going to school and being scared of the people that are there. I just want to have a place for the next generations where they'll feel comfortable, comfortable in themselves.

00:59;53 Laila Campbell: What, yeah, like, one thing that I hope will change, like, it's really normalized, like, for example, it's kind of random, like for your grandma, like your grandparents to be homophobic. It's just like, "Oh, it's just because they're old."

01:00;05 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's not, it's not, like that generation is not that far away from us. Like it's only--

01:00;09 Laila Campbell: --yeah, and like, hopefully when we're grandparents, it'll be better.

01:00;19 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It is kind of, this is a little off topic. It is frustrating though, when like if an old relative or old person doesn't understand and people like, "Oh, they're from a different generation," and it's like that doesn't make sense to me because okay, sure, they were born, maybe they lived through a time where it wasn't accepted, but they've also lived through the past forty, fifty years and had time to like, grow and change their views.

01:00;42 Laila Campbell: Yeah, it's like, are you so set on being homophobic and not being open minded?

01:00;48 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It excuses it. It's like, "Okay, they're being prejudiced against a group of minorities, but they're old, so it's fine."

01:00;55 Jess Lester: We've been talking for a long time.

01:01;03 Benja Thompson: Is there anything else y'all would like to discuss or bring up or...?

01;01;09 Jess Lester: I'll just say that things like this are very important and having the opportunity to like, talk about all of this. And if like just one other person learns and feels like they can better understand people. And I don't know, I'm just really happy that this is able to happen because in some places it's not able to happen. So if we can start doing it here, then maybe one day it can, you know, other people around the world can be able to, you know, feel like they can talk about who they are.

01;01;35 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I'm just grateful for GSA in general and how much it's done for just me as a person and also just the community. And I feel like we've made an impact and just... yeah it's really great that it's helped me. I mean, like me personally. Meeting so many more people, it's just really helped me become more comfortable with my identity and sharing it. And it's just it's been nice to become more comfortable with that part of myself, but it's always going to be a part of me. So I have to, yeah.

01;02;01 Chris O'Hara-Hay: I'm hopeful for like the incoming, there's lots of incoming freshmen that are going to be like changed in the same way I was this year. Or just they feel like there's a safe space they can go to. And I know that, especially like if you're, if you're young, you know, you're going to a new school, it's really nice to just know you have that sanctuary to kind of lean on.

01;02;21 Adrian Garcia: I moved around a lot, moved around a lot. So I feel like I've been to a lot of places that weren't as welcoming, so being able to come here and have a place like this helped me feel really welcomed. And I feel like the LGBTQ+ community, if you're trying to help them out, it's not just money and donations that help. Having a place for us to go, like this, where we can talk, making LGBTQ+ people feel safe, is helping out the community in itself. Because just having GSA for me and so many other people helped us feel safe.

01;02;55 Chris O'Hara-Hay: It's cool to think that maybe someone will listen back to these recordings, some like queer LGBTQ person, and just feel connected in a way, even if they don't know us, obviously.

01;03;05 Jess Lester: All these words make me so happy that-- because I was super anxious about, like, taking over GSA from the seniors who were just like, "I'm out of here." And because I had a lot of issues with anxiety and, like, talking to people I don't know, so. But now I'm really grateful that I tried to take that chance of running and making it a club that was actually, like, valuable to other people. So, thank you guys.

01;03;27 Chris O'Hara-Hay: A very swell job.

01;03;28 Laila Campbell: And then we'll take it from you.

01;03;29 Jess Lester: Yeah, I'm out of here.

01;03;31 Chris O'Hara-Hay: Yeah get outta here.

01;03;34 Benja Thompson: Okay, yeah, thank you all.

01;03;36 All (Overlapping): Thank you so much-- Thank you so much for this opportunity. It's been really great. It's hot in here. [Laughter]