

Lee A. Merkle-Raymond '86
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
SpeakOut
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[CAROLINE W.]

CASEY: Hi. This is Caroline Casey. Today is Wednesday, May 1st, 2019, and it's 4 p.m. I'm in the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. Today I am interviewing Lee [A.] Merkle-Raymond on the phone for SpeakOut.

Lee, where are you today?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I am now in Palo Alto, California.

CASEY: Great. So first off, Lee, thank you so much for participating in this project. It's great to talk to you. To start off, I just wanted to ask you some biographical questions, so where were you born?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I was born in Greenwich, Connecticut.

CASEY: And what were your parents' names, and what did they do?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: My dad is [William D.] "Bill" Merkle [Class of 1951; Tuck Class of 1952], and he was a management consultant and HR [human resources] professional. And my mom is Trudy Merkle, and she has a Ph.D. in comparative literature, but she was primarily a homemaker, and she also taught language classes at local schools.

CASEY: And did you have any siblings?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes, I'm one of six.

CASEY: Oh, wow!

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So I've got three older brothers—yeah! Three older brothers and two younger sisters, so I'm the oldest daughter.

CASEY: Wow. And what was your childhood like? Was it generally happy? Were you close with your siblings and your parents?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes. I mean, it was generally happy. It was—had an overlay of a lot of focus on the Catholic Church, so we would go to church every Sunday. But, a big focus on—on doing well in school and being kind to each other. But, we—we generally, I guess you would say, had a normal childhood with the typical sibling squabbles. Most of my brothers were older by the time I got to—by the time I got to high school, they were out of the house.

But we rotated chores and had full family dinners every night that my—my dad was home, and did things together on the weekends, did a lot of sailing and skiing in the summer—sorry [chuckles], skiing in the winter, sailing in the summer.

CASEY: And—and did you like school growing up?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes, I liked school growing up. School was a—a place where I excelled. I really enjoyed it.

CASEY: And how did you end up at Dartmouth?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I applied to Dartmouth because I had seen it when I was younger. My dad was Class of '51, so we went to his reunions. I specifically remember, maybe when I was sometime around ten years old, we went, and I always compared every other college campus to what Dartmouth looks like. And none ever looked any better. It's a beautiful campus.

CASEY: So did you apply early decision at Dartmouth?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I don't remember them having early decision.

CASEY: Okay.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So I applied to a few schools, and I got into Dartmouth and another school, and I remember when I asked my dad if I could go down to North Carolina to visit the other school, he said, "Would you ever really consider going there instead of Dartmouth?" And I said, "No." And he said, "Well, then, I'm not paying for you to go visit."

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So it was—it was well in my mind that if I got into Dartmouth, I would go.

CASEY: Yeah. And so did you remember hearing a lot about Dartmouth in your childhood, or was it a big part of your dad's life?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: It was a reasonably big part of the family life. My dad also went to Tuck [School of Business], but he did his final year well after—it was during the Korean War, and so it was well after he had done his first year, so by the time he went back for the final year at Tuck, he had done service in France for the [U.S.] Army. My mom was in France. They met, they got married, they had my three brothers, and it wasn't until all my three brothers were born that they went back to Hanover and my dad finished up business school. So Hanover had lots of history and lots of stories in my family.

CASEY: And so how long after your family—your dad graduated from Tuck were you born?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: About seven years.

CASEY: Okay.

And so what was it like when you first got to campus—coming from hearing so much about Dartmouth, growing up, to transitioning to actually being a student at Dartmouth?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So it was generally my first time on campus was, *Oh, this is where my family used to live, down in the apartments. This is where my dad used to go to school.* But it quickly became where *I* was at school and became mine. It didn't feel like I was walking around my family shadow at all.

And I really got into sports initially. I rode crew the first freshman fall. I really loved the Freshman Trips [Dartmouth Outing Club First-Year Trips] that we did. And—excuse me a moment [to deal with a ringing device]. Really enjoyed Freshman Trips and the people that I met through that so that we had—we had connectivity at the beginning of freshman year,

And then rowing crew was a good base for me to have a set of friends for freshman fall. And then just the dorm life was—was also a real basis for connection with other—with other students.

CASEY: Definitely. Where did you live your freshman year?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I was in Gile Hall.

CASEY: Okay.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And actually, if you are on campus and you go down Tuck Drive, if you look up at the top of Gile Hall, there's a big round window—

CASEY: Mm-hm.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: —on the fourth floor, and that was—that was my bedroom.

CASEY: Oh, wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah, so it was pretty distinctive.

CASEY: Yeah.

And just—sorry to go back a little bit, but before we get to far into Dartmouth, just touching on—on your LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] experiences before coming to Dartmouth, I know you were raised Catholic, and so I was wondering, were you—kind of where you were at with your sexuality before you came to Dartmouth, what you knew, what you'd been exposed to.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, I was pretty clueless about my sexuality. The first time I had ever given it any consideration was when I was working at a summer job, and a guy who was a little older, maybe twenty, was saying, "Well, haven't you ever had a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Don't you think you might be a lesbian?" And I looked at him, and thinking, *No, absolutely not*. I said, "Well, I go to a school where you just focus on school and sports and whatever it is that's going to get you into the best college, and relationships like boyfriends and

girlfriends—that’s always a distraction, so it’s never occurred to me that my lack of a boyfriend or girlfriend was because of my sexuality.”

CASEY: Right. So do you remember knowing other lesbians or gay people growing up, or hearing about it from people around you?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: The music teacher was purported to be gay, but clearly it was an era when you—you didn’t—you couldn’t be out about it, so there was no one that I knew that was a known gay or lesbian person.

CASEY: Okay. And did that change when you got to Dartmouth your freshman year?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Oh, yes. I—I met people who were—who were gay and lesbian, and that was definitely a change. It was still, in the broader society, not okay to be out, for the most part. There were—I think if you were to—if I were to Google who were the celebrities who were coming out—this is well before Ellen [I. DeGeneres]. Ellen was, like,—Ellen DeGeneres was probably the first Hollywood celebrity to come out. Billie Jean King was rumored to be a lesbian. But these—a lot of those things were way off in the distance. So it was still not a everyday occurrence to run into someone who was gay or lesbian, and so I would not say it was a common thing when I arrived at Dartmouth.

CASEY: Yeah. And so then you—you were on the crew team? Am I correct about that?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah, I rode—I rode my first year.

CASEY: And did you enjoy that?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes, I loved the camaraderie of the team, and I liked the workouts, and I enjoyed being out on the water. I would say that I wasn’t, like, particularly good at it, so I didn’t pursue it past my first—past my freshman year, but I—I really enjoyed the interaction and the training, and I did get particularly close to one of the other rowers on the team, so that was another reason that I enjoyed the rowing.

CASEY: Yeah. Could you tell me more about that person?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So the sophomore when I was a freshman. She was also in my dorm, so that was part of how the interaction started with just going back and forth to practice together. So—someone who was a year older. I don't think she had had any other same-sex relationships before. But, from an urban area, and this seemed a lot more worldly than I was, from the suburbs, so there was a lot of—it was just a really fun interaction and someone a little bit older and wiser, who I enjoyed spending time with and learning from.

CASEY: Yeah. And so did y'all date?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, we—I mean, we did become—we did become a couple.

CASEY: Mm-hm.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah, we would go out. We would do things together. We were—and ultimately we were—she was the first person that I had a—a lesbian relationship with.

CASEY: Right. And were y'all out? Was she out at that time?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: People knew us as a couple, and my—my definition of “out” kind of changed over the years, right? Because I would say, *Oh, this is just this one person. I'm not really a lesbian. I just happen to have found one person that I love, and this person happens to be a woman. That doesn't make me a lesbian.*

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: *That makes me in love with her.* That was kind of my rationale my—my freshman year, and certainly the—the first time that I spent the night in her dorm room instead of in mine, that was pretty earthshaking for me—from the—partly the Catholi- —Catholic aspects, partly the—you know, *What do I tell my roommates. What's gonna happen with the other friends in the dorm?* And just a lot of the whole homophobic, self- —internalized homophobia that you have just coming out—coming out in spades.

So, no, I would not say I was out. I would say “Yes, I’m gonna do this with her, and we’re gonna go do these things together. And if I’m not in my room, go check her room go check her room” or whatever. But that would—I would not necessarily say that that made me out as a lesbian.

CASEY: Right. And so what *did* you tell your friends? Did they know?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah, they—they knew that we were—that we were al- —that we were often together, yes.

CASEY: And did she have the same outlook on—on just being with you, or did she see herself as out?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I would say that she saw herself more as out.

CASEY: Okay. And what was that experience like with your friends and with other people? Even if you weren’t entirely out having people more or less know that y’all were together?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, there was a fair amount of denial on my part, right? I mean, if we go through the broader, my whole college experience, my entire time at Dartmouth in many ways was just like this four-year coming-out process, because I ended up joining a sorority because, I’m, like, *I’m—I’m—I’m gonna prove that I can be straight*, so I went to the semi-formals and the formals and specifically dated a guy who I wanted to—who I thought was, like, a really nice guy. Well, he *is* a nice guy.

And—and was, like *I—I can do this. I—I—this was this one incident with a—with my freshman girlfriend was just a—a one-time thing; it’s not really—it’s not really real. I can move past this.* And so that’s all internalized homophobia. That’s all that whole concept of, *Oh, it’s just a phase. You’re gonna grow through it.* And I—I bought into that story.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And I tried to make it real. And then by my senior year—I think sort of the funniest element of this whole thing is by my senior spring, I—I had my second girlfriend, and I was, like, *Oh, okay, so it’s not just one person. This might actually be more about me than anything else.*

And when the fraternities and sororities had this concept of minimum standards, a guy named Dean [Edward J.] Shanahan—he was a dean, so Dean Shanahan required that the sororities and fraternities maintain minimum standards in order to stay on campus and be recognized by the college. And one of the requirements as part of minimum standards was that each quarter, you had to have some kind of cultural or educational events for your house.

And so in my senior spring, the educational-culture teaching was the Gay Students Association came and talked to—talked to my sorority group, and they were talking about how they came out and what—what resources they’ve found on campus or off campus, different situations that they had faced.

And I just kind of looked around at my sorority group, and I looked at the folks with the GSA, and I’m, like, *I belong with them more than I belong with the rest of these sorority folks*. So I—like, I left with them.

And one of the primary speakers was [Charles] “Chuck” Edwards [Class of 1986], who was a primary force in driving the growth of DGALA [Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association], and we walked across the [Dartmouth] Green to Robinson Hall, and I just kept chatting and chatting and chatting. And we’ve been basically friends ever since.

CASEY: Wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So—so my whole Dartmouth experience has a lot of my coming out story woven through it.

CASEY: Yeah. And so you literally—like, you went to this event—did you plan the event?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: No.

CASEY: Okay. Do you know who did plan the event?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I guess our programming chair.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I have no idea.

CASEY: And so you—you showed up, and then you literally left with—with the GSA?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Right.

CASEY: Wow. So then after that, did you get involved with the GSA for the rest of your—your senior year?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah, but by this time, it was, like, May?

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I mean, it was really close to June graduation.

CASEY: Yeah. And to clarify, what was your sorority?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: The sorority is Delta Delta Delta, or Tri-Delt [now Chi Delta], but I think it's no longer on campus.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And it's not on campus for what I think is a really unusual reason. They wanted to provide scholarships for students who couldn't afford some of the fees to be in the sorority, which I think is a really good thing, and the national—the national organization said, "Oh, no, we don't allow that." So they—they—they ceased to be a Tri-Delt house.

CASEY: Wow. And so other than Tri-Delt, what were your main—what were you involved in on campus?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So I ended up being an Asian Studies major, focused on Mandarin. And that ended up being a very large focus of my time. So I—it was not mandatory for sophomore summer to be on campus in Hanover, so my sophomore summer was FSP [Foreign Study Program] Beijing [China]. And then I—I stayed and went to Taiwan and studied Mandarin there, and then I came back my—that would be my junior spring, I guess. Came back my junior spring to campus.

And then we had a—an Asian Studies House. I don't know if it still exists, but it was across from the Occom Inn, as you walk towards Occom Pond on the left. It's just a regular, like, residential house. And we were able—it was almost—I would call it the first living-learning center. We had our professor from China, who had the master bedroom, and then we had enough room that were singles or doubles, depending on how big the bedroom was, and we had, I believe, eight to ten people who were all Asian Studies majors, who had been to China. And so the requirement was that you speak Mandarin in the house.

And then we would have group dinners from time to time in the kitchen, and we would have programs from time to time in the living room. So that was my—my primary focus, was the Asian Studies House.

CASEY: Yeah.

And then you mentioned dating someone else your senior year? Where did y'all meet?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Somebody off-campus.

CASEY: Oh, okay.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: In my hometown.

CASEY: Okay. Gotcha.

And then I guess I wanted to talk a little bit more about your perception of broader LGBT issues when you were on campus, which was—can you—so the years, again, that you were on campus?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah, so I arrived in the fall of '82, and I graduated in June of '86.

CASEY: Okay. And so in that time, do you—I guess do you remember, like, *The Dartmouth Review* being—being a big presence, or—

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes, it was huge. It was a driver, and it was the era when Dinesh [J.] D'Souza [Class of 1983] was—was running it. Laura [A.] Ingraham [Class of 1985], who now has the Fox channel show, for *The Ingraham Angle* and has been a TV host for years in the conservative circuit. They were running *The Dartmouth Review*, and there were a lot of issues on campus for divestment from South Africa as a way to influence the government of South Africa to—to end apartheid.

As part of that, there were shanties built on the Green to sort of represent kind of the poor conditions of people living under Apartheid. There was an attack on those shanties, which ended up with a big protest or sit-in at the administration building. And it was President [David T.] McLaughlin [Class of 1954, Tuck Class of 1955] at the time, who—he came from the Toro Lawnmower Company [sic; The Toro Company]. So he wasn't—he was more of a businessman than necessarily a—an academic-focused, philosophical guy.

So a lot of the decisions that were—that were being made seemed to be fairly businesslike or money-focused, as opposed to necessarily values based. So the attack on the shanties was, like, “Hey, c'mon, You gotta focus on the fact that there's a real world out there and get people ready for that world, not just get ready for people to go into business.”

Now, that's not LGBT at all, but it talks about—that speaks to the activism on campus, and *The Dartmouth Review* was a catalyst to a lot of conversations. And going back to—my girlfriend at the time was someone who, as I was saying, was sophisticated in a lot of different thoughts relative to my, I would say, fairly naïve, kind of white-bread, suburban views. And there would be things that I would say. “Well, I don't see what the problem is with that.”

And she would say, “Well, *this* is the problem with that, with going along with that line of thinking. Then you end up discounting this entire aspect of the population, or you're—you're limiting the ability for people who don't have your advantages to—to—to make—make their way in the world with any success. Or if you say no to this group, you're actually saying no to a much broader group of

disadvantaged—of people, when you just say no to certain individuals. And you have to recognize that these decisions have ramifications,” you know.

So—so those *Dartmouth Review* articles really prompted a lot of—and their actions—prompted a lot of conversation among a lot of people across dorms, the Afro-Am (Afro-American Society)—even within people just like on—on the crew team. It wasn’t, like, a huge topic, but people would say, “Oh, did you see that article? I can’t believe they wrote that and that they get away with that.”

And then I think one of the most polarizing events, certainly by the time that I was paying—paying more attention, the whole event where this young woman, at the discretion—at the—my understanding it from the story is that it was at the request of Laura Ingraham, who was then the editor of *The Dartmouth Review*, was she asked this younger student Teresa Polenz [Teresa A. Delaney (née Polenz), Class of 1987] to pose as a questioning—a person questioning her identity and to go to a GSA (Gay Students Association) meeting with a microphone and a tape recorder and to record the names of all the people at the meeting and the officers’ names.

And then that all got published in *The Dartmouth Review*, even though it was noted that the events at that meeting would be confidential. So she broke that confidentiality, which is obviously a really bad precedent for somebody in the press, and made people feel very exposed, to be open as gay or lesbian on campus.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And you have to understand that the GSA at the time had a very small room with, like, no windows. I mean, I think it was in the early eighties. It was probably a converted broom closet that had enough room for a chair and not—even, like, a high school desk so that somebody could write things down.

And then there was a phone. In the old days, you had wired phones. And it had a separate little box next to it that was the voice mail recorder, and so it was somebody’s job to go

and listen to the voice mails and see who was calling and write that down and then call the person back and help answer their questions.

But it wasn't like you an opportunity to just sort of drop in and chat with somebody, except for those GSA meetings. And so that was part of what was so frightening about having that one limited, safe space be violated so dramatically and have it all be published in *The Dartmouth Review*.

CASEY: Yeah. And so what year were you when *The Dartmouth Review* incident happened?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I believe I was a junior.

CASEY: Okay. And I guess you talked a little bit about it, but, like, beyond just the facts of the event, could you talk a little bit more about what it was like to see that happen and the reactions on campus to that incident?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, obviously, it—it was—it was both frightening and infuriating, right?—but one that *The—The Dartmouth Review*, which is also the place that was promoting the Indian as the true mascot of—of Dartmouth and had all this alumni money, was able get away with things that many of us thought was outright illegal.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And it's not clear what punishment either Teresa Polenz had personally or *The Dartmouth Review* had, and I think that there were editorials in *The Daily D* [The Dartmouth] that were much more supportive of the GSA, that was kind of indicating a little bit of a warmth on campus towards gay and lesbian students and trying to—[pause]—I don't want to say distance but admonish the actions of Teresa Polenz and say that that was wrong, and that creates a really—it creates an environment of—of fear and anxiety that shouldn't exist. And kind of the more mainstream view from *The Dartmouth* was very supportive of the GSA. So that was good.

And it was only because of the nastiness of that event that you could have anybody bother to be vocal about being

supportive of the GSA, so that was like a bit of a positive outgrowth, especially since it was still— in a broader environment—you know, think about the fact that this is 1985, and this is the era when HIV and AIDS is huge, and people seem to know that it's only transmitted through— through blood and bodily fluids, but patients are dying, and they're not being able to be touched. All of the nurses and the doctors in the hospitals are all wearing gloves and masks, and people aren't getting human touch.

And so it was considered the gay disease, and so if you are questioning your sexuality, you certainly don't want to come out and say, "Oh, I'm—I'm gay," and therefore most—there was a fairly direct link: "Oh, if you're gay, you're gonna get AIDS," right? So it was a very scary time in general, within the broader society.

CASEY: Yeah. Was AIDS—

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So having that—what's that?

CASEY: No, finish your thought.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I was just going to say to have that whole incident with *The Dartmouth Review* in the midst of that cultural backdrop just made it very scary.

CASEY: Yeah. I was just going to say, was AIDS a big topic of conversation on campus while you were a student?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: [Takes a deep breath and sighs.] I think it was—there was—to the extent that there was awareness of how it was transmitted—remember, this was still when they were figuring it out.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Didn't know if it was airborne, right?—if you could cough on somebody and spread HIV. So there was definitely awareness that it was a growing disease primarily in the gay community, among gay men. It was prior to it being widespread among prostitutes and HI- —and, sorry, and IV drug users, so it—it was a particularly scary time for—for the gay community.

And the—the pink triangle button, where it was “Silence Equals Death,” was—was becoming quite popular at that time, certainly in '85, '86 time period, because the conflict was the more that people knew other gays and lesbians, the more welcoming society could become with them, because it was not just them over there, those others, but, *Oh, that's my uncle, or my brother or my niece or my aunt or my sister*, you know. So Silence Equals Death was started by the AIDS community but also, more broadly, was targeted at having the LGBT community speak out on their own behalf to have other people recognize that there's a whole—the phrase, “We are everywhere,” you know?—that the LGBT community is everywhere.

CASEY: Right. And did you have other LGBT friends besides people that you dated in college before the end of your senior year?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah. So there would be—I think it was called Alpha Theta, the co-ed fraternity that had a few gays and lesbians there. But I would say for me it was just, like, a handful of people. It wasn't, like, a big crowd.

CASEY: Yeah.

And so while you were in college, did your parents know that you were dating women?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So do you want to try to test the equipment or you think it's working fine?

CASEY: I think it's working okay.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Okay. So did my parents know that I was dating—so at the end of my freshman year, I—in the spirit of—of true transparency, I told my parents that I had a girlfriend, but it was also in the guise of “I think it's just this one person. I'm sure it's just a phase. I'm sure I'll grow out of it, and I'll keep you posted.” So my mother is still waiting for me to find a man. [Chuckles.]

CASEY: Really?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: It's been ov- —it's been a very long time. She still thinks it's just a phase which is kind of sad. But by my senior year, I was ready to come out to myself so it took me that— it took me those three years to deal with it all. And I wouldn't say that—that Dartmouth was, quote-unquote, "helpful" in that other than once the GSA group came to my sorority and I felt like, *Oh, there's actually, like, other people here on campus. I can do this.* That felt—that felt very important to me.

And then by the time I had graduated and was finished with Dartmouth and I was clear to my parents that this was not—that this was not going away. That's—in some ways, my dad would tell you that he blames Dartmouth for me being a lesbian—

CASEY: Really?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: —because when I left—when I left, of course, I wasn't, but by the time—

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

MERKLE-RAYMOND: —I graduated, I was, so it's all Dartmouth's fault, which is kind of funny

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: But—so despite the fact that my mom is still very Catholic and still thinks that I am—I am not living according to God's will and that I am living in sin and all of those lovely things we still have a relationship, and I've had my partner now since—we met in 1989, so we've been together for thirty years and have two kids who are college age, and my mom still references her as my—as my friend.

CASEY: Wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: But oh well. I haven't let that stop me. I haven't let that stop me from having a relationship with my entire family, and that's just how my mom is, you know?

CASEY: Yeah. And what about your dad?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: He's not too much—he's not too far behind my mom in terms of acceptance. He—he's—he's a more jovial guy, but fundamentally he's—he would rather that I have a husband, I'm sure. But there's—there's no real strain between—between on us on that point.

CASEY: And so you met your partner in 1989. What did you do right after you graduated? Where did you move?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So when I graduated, I got an internship through one of my government professors to go work in the U.S. Trade Department, at the China Desk, in Washington, D.C., for the summer. And I also lined up a separate China business—basically, it's called the U.S.-China Business Council at the time. That was like a chamber of commerce for companies trying to do business in China. You have to understand, this is, like, when the cumulative China trade was probably measured in the hundreds of millions,—

CASEY: Wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: —not even, like, billions yet.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So it was very—very nascent, very early stages. So I did that for the summer, with the expectation that in the fall I would get to go back to Beijing and teach English in the English department of the school that hosted us, Beijing Normal University, that hosted us for the FSP program. And so that was my plan: go to D.C. for a summer, then go to Beijing and teach English

It turned out that the teaching position took an extra year to get organized, so I was in D.C. for almost a year and a half before I went to Beijing. And then I went and taught English for a year, and I came back I guess in '88 and actually taught Chinese in a Connecticut high school for a little while, and then I applied for jobs.

By then, I had realized I wanted to try to do international banking and got a job in Boston [Massachusetts].

CASEY: Where did you work in Boston?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: In Boston, I was at Bank of Boston.

CASEY: Gotcha. And is that where you met your partner?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes. We were both in the loan officer development program.

CASEY: And then how long did you live in Boston?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: About four, four and a half years we were in Boston, and then I had the opportunity to transfer with the bank out to California.

CASEY: Okay. And is that where you've lived ever since?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes. Except for two years, when we—I got relocated with the family to Australia.

CASEY: Oh, wow! Where'd you live in Australia?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: In Sydney.

CASEY: Okay. Cool. And what's your partner's name?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Kathy.

CASEY: Okay. And her full name is Kathy Merkle-Raymond?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Kathy—yeah, so once our kids were born, we both became Merkle-hyphen-Raymond.

CASEY: Okay.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So I was Lee Merkle, and she was Kathy Raymond, and now we're all four Merkle-Raymond.

CASEY: Yeah. And what are your kids' names?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Alex [Merkle-Raymond] and Nikki [Merkle-Raymond].

CASEY: Okay. And when were they born? Sorry, just to get more biographical information.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So they were born in '97 and 2000.

CASEY: Okay.

And so when—once you graduated and you were working, were you involved with Dartmouth people anymore and connected to the school?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah. So I stayed in touch with—with Chuck and part of what he was doing right around that time when he finished up his degree was he got in touch with—I think it was a guy, [Edwin H.] “Ed” Hermance [pronounced her-MANCE] Class of 1962], who had a list of—of alumni from Dartmouth who were interested in starting an alumni group like D Lambda [Dartmouth Lambda]. Lambda was a big—it was the Greek letter associated with gays and lesbians.

So he wrote a letter to the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* sometime maybe in 1983 and said he was going to start this alumni group, so Ed Hermance, who was a '62, is pretty much the one who founded DGALA, the Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association. And I think it's probably one of the first ones, maybe, like, maybe Brown [University] or Columbia [University] around the same time, but doing that in 1983 was—was quite early.

CASEY: Yeah. And so did you know about—

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And so Chuck Edwards got in touch with—got connected with Ed Hermance, and then Chuck became the leader of DGALA and kind of brought it to the next generation, so through Chuck I stayed involved. I was in Boston; he was in New York. There was, as most things, a bigger nucleus of people who were active in New York, but there was always a Dartmouth contingent who would walk together in Gay Pride [parades] in New York in June, so 1986 was my first time, and then '87, '88, thereafter. And that was always a—a good bonding opportunity.

And it was an era when—so I was also active in the gay and lesbian organization at my company, which was, at the time, pretty clandestine. It wasn't very out. Like now if you go to companies, you'll see that they've got—they've got a nondiscrimination policy that includes nondiscrimination

based on sexual orientation. That didn't exist, right? So we didn't have that protection. You could get fired for being gay or lesbian in the mid- to late-eighties.

So when I started at my—at the bank, I remember one of the managers said—you know, saw the pink triangle on my briefcase or backpack that I had, and she pulled me aside and said, “Hey, I just want you to know that, like, pink triangles aren't gonna make it to vice president in this company, in this bank.”

CASEY: Wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And I think it was a very well-intended and well-meaning counsel, but I think her being maybe ten or fifteen years older than me was—that was totally the rule for her, and I was just at the cusp of a group that was partly forging the changes that would make it possible for people to—to be more out in the workplace.

And so when we would go to Gay Pride marches and parades for—with—with the bank, you would see people at the gathering, and it was sort of this big “aha” moment, like, “Oh, I didn't know that you were part of Pride,” and “I didn't know you were part of Pride.” And now all of a sudden you had this new bonding back at the office. But you didn't know at the office that folks were gay or lesbian.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And this isn't really part of Dartmouth, but it is something that is kind of indicative of the time. There was a book that was—oh, wow, it wasn't printed until 1995—called *Out in the Workplace*. And it's *The Pleasures and Perils of Coming Out on the Job*. And the person who put it together is Richard [A.] Rasi, R-a-s-i. And the last section was all about the group of us who were at Bank of Boston together and how we were forming a employee resource group. And the work that we were focused on was trying to get same-sex partner benefits. And in the early—certainly the late-eighties and early-nineties, there—there weren't companies that had domestic partner benefits.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So that was a big effort to try to make it happen. And so there would be conferences, and people would go to conferences to try to learn how—I think AT&T was one of the first companies that had it, and maybe Apple Computer [now Apple Inc.]. And when we put our recommendation together, the chairman of the board very specifically said, “I got the board to agree to do this, but we’re not a very big bank, and we don’t want to be the first bank to do it, so once J.P. Morgan [& Co., now JPMorgan Chase] or Bank of America does it, then we’ll feel more comfortable doing it. But there’s a risk among the board—there’s a concern among the board that we’ll lose customers if we approve domestic partner benefits.”

CASEY: Wow! Should—

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And so—

CASEY: Oh, you could keep going.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So, then, once—once—I guess it was Bank of America was first before J.P. Morgan, and our bank followed pretty quickly thereafter, because we’d already done all the legwork, so—but there was a—there was a concern at the board level that if you had domestic partner benefits, which were going to recog- —give benefits to same-sex employees, then you were going to be saying that you support gay and lesbian relationships and that you would potentially lose a ton of customers and customers were going to boycott you. That was the risk at the board level.

CASEY: Right. And so did your involvement with DGALA and your involvement at your company kind of like influence the way that you—you were active in those respective spaces? Like, did you talk to people from Dartmouth about what you were trying to do with your company?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Oh, yeah. I think that the—the network of colleagues that we had within DGALA got me some contacts with people who were at other companies, who were working on the same thing. Yeah, that was definitely symbiotic. It would—the work helped—helped from both sides.

CASEY: Yeah.

And so when you first got involved with DGALA, what was its relationship with Dartmouth?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So the relationship was somewhat secretive. I mean, again, in the context of the broader social acceptance of gays and lesbians, people who joined DGALA—there was a box: “Do you want to remain confidential?” And over time, fewer and fewer people were signing that box, but initially it was how most people were willing to join, was that they didn’t want their name shared with the college.

And a fair number of people had had such negative experiences being gay or lesbian at the school that they didn’t want anything to do with Dartmouth, and it was the only way that they *would* be connected with the school, was through DGALA.

And so there’s a fair amount of bitterness and—and—and poor—you know, bitterness and bad feelings among—certainly among the older gay men, who were on campus when it was just an all-male school. It only switched over—I was in the tenth year of women graduating when I graduated in ’96. The first class of women was in ’86. Sorry, ’76.

So there were many years of just all-male students, and I think that the harm, both from a social perspective of it being a much more anti-gay era, right? The sixties or seventies was much less accepting of gays and lesbians than the—we got to in the nineties. And so there would be people who would—guys who’d be a little bit effeminate or slighter builds or whatever, and they—they had a very tough time at Dartmouth. And so they didn’t want anything to do with getting contacted by the college or being viewed as someone that the college wanted to reach out to as an alum because they’re, like, “No, we had a terrible time, and it wasn’t—it wasn’t something that we wanted”—that they wanted to reconnect with except through the context of DGALA.

CASEY: Right. And so did the college recognize DGALA when you first got involved officially?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: No, it didn't. I think there was—and, again, here Chuck Edwards was—was pretty instrumental in helping lead that charge. There was [Peter C.] "Pete" Williams [Class of 1976] and David [S.] Hamilton [Class of 1985], I think David [M.] Eichman [Class of 1982]. Somewhere in that crowd, someone was an attorney, and they got our 501(c)(3) status set up as a separate and independent not-for-profit.

But we were not recognized by the college, and also the college, among many organizations, did not want to recognize or accept gifts from donors that were known to be gay or lesbian donors. So you couldn't send in money and say, "Hi, this is from this—from me, and we would like it to go for gay and lesbian purposes on campus." They wouldn't accept that gift.

CASEY: Wow.

And so how did you—I know we talked earlier about the [Edward] Carpenter [Memorial] Foundation. Could you talk a little bit more about that?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Sure. So the Carpenter—it was kind of an outgrowth of that era, where a gentleman, Ralph [B.] Elias [pronounced eh-LIE-ess], E-l-i-a-s, who was actually a doctor, Class of 1932, and he had \$25,000 in 1986, which at the time—now that doesn't seem like such a big number, but 1986, my entire year of college tuition was—including room and board—was \$15,000. So it was a meaningful number. It may be a hundred grand now.

And he started this fund. He called it the Carpenter Foundation after a guy named Edward Carpenter, who was a British writer who focused on—on—on gay themes. And it was run separate from the college funds, and it was run by a board that was largely run by Peter [C.] Saccio in the English department, and then we had different board members. I—I was a board member for many years.

And we ended up using the funds from that gift to fund the student attendance at LGBT conferences or at Pride in New York [City] or Pride Parade in Boston, so that they could pay for gas or pay for a joint hotel room or something.

And then the ultimate gift from Ralph Elias grew later in time, and so there was even a greater amount of funding available through the Carpenter Foundation. So we would accept grant proposals, and we would fund projects, and that was kind of the forerunner to what we're currently doing at DGALA, where we actually have funds available for student projects if they—if they put together a one-page proposal and they say they would like money for something that's LGBT focused, that now DGALA can provide that, in the same way that the Carpenter Foundation did.

And it was probably around February of 2000, which is, so well past some of these time periods that we're talking about—if this was founded in 1986, it was almost fifteen years after the Carpenter Foundation was put in place that Dartmouth was willing to accept the—the funds from Carpenter Foundation as an openly-gay gift, which is—which has now been administered by the college, and it's been specified for use of LGBT-focused spending.

One of the first things that was put in place was a gay issues class or a gay studies class similar to women's studies classes. And so there was a professor who was hired to run a class on—on gay issues, and I think probably either part of psychology or sociology department.

And that was a huge deal for the Carpenter Foundation to basically become subsumed into the Dartmouth College funds, and that happened in—in 2000, which now feels like, hey, that's almost twenty years ago, but at the time, for me, it was fifteen years after I—after I graduated. *What's taking so long?* You know?

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So I think that my—my big-picture comment about this whole period of time from the time I entered Dartmouth, the time I graduated and recognized that I was a lesbian and came out as such, to then entering the workforce and—and now it's—it's so commonplace that it's—gays and lesbians are fairly well assimilated into many of the geographies and communities where they live, especially in the United States and in different cities.

There's been an incredible transformation in—from a—from a sociological perspective over a short period of time—thirty-four years.

CASEY: Definitely.

And so when Dartmouth accepted the funds from the Carpenter Foundation, what were the reactions from members involved in the foundation? Was it a positive experience, or were there some people that were resistant about handing over those funds to the college?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I would say that the—the general perspective was positive from the—well, the two sides: positive from the perspective of, Well, it's great that the college is now accepting LGBT gifts and recognizing them as such. That's a major step forward. And that they will administer the funds with an eye towards using them toward—for LGBT purposes. So that was the positive side.

And then the—the negative side was, Hey we're losing control. Gays and lesbians are losing control of this—of this funding.

But I think for the—for the folks who had been on the board for so long, it was—it just felt like it was the right timing, given changes more broadly in—in—in the society, that you could be out, you could name—you could talk about gays and lesbians openly. It—it seemed like the right time. And there wasn't really going to be a new—a new purpose for—for these funds separate from what the college was willing to use them for. So it seemed like it was the right time.

CASEY: Yeah. And so were you on the board at that time?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I don't—I was probably on the board, but I was not at the meeting when they did the transfer.

CASEY: Gotcha.

And just to clarify, were the Carpenter Foundation and DGALA connected, or were they separate entities?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: They were separate entities, but there were a couple of DGALA members or officers who were on the board of the Carpenter Foundation, just given the connection.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Given overlap of—of purposes.

CASEY: Right. And so were you—so you were on the board of the Carpenter Foundation?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Mm-hm. Yes.

CASEY: And then were you also—were you involved in DGALA on the board at all?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yes, I was. I was newsletter editor and president for a while. I don't remember the exact dates, but sometime between 1990 and '92.

CASEY: And what have you been involved in with DGALA in that time or since then?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So I've—I've been on the board—I'm on the board again now. It's how I learned about SpeakOut. And I don't know if you're familiar with the group called the [Dartmouth] Alumni Council.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: But Alumni Council takes representatives from different classes and from different affiliated organizations, and I was the first person named from DGALA to be on Alumni Council, as the DGALA rep. And I was actually on the Alumni Council at the time that the—the at-large roles were being converted to representatives from the affiliated alumni groups. So I guess the Native American, the BADA, which is Black Alumni of Dartmouth [Association]. I think the lawyers have their own group and representation, and—and DGALA has a—has a rep that goes to Alumni Council. And that cycles through. I think it's a three-year assignment. So now, since me, there's always been somebody from DGALA on Alumni Council, which is pretty cool.

CASEY: Yeah. And so could you speak a little bit more about what Alumni Council—the Alumni Council does and what it means to have someone from DGALA represented on the Alumni Council?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So the Alumni Council largely provides a voice to the administration and the Trustees [of Dartmouth College] of what—what the alumni want. And also it provides a way for classes and—and organizations to have a voice back to Hanover. So it's—it's kind—it's primarily a—I would call it a communication tool and a way to keep everybody updated on—on both sides.

So the Alumni Council will have groups that—you know, like, there's a young alumni team, and then there's a team focused on, say, student networking and careers, and then there'll be somebody focused on maybe facilities or something. And they—the Alumni Council members meet in these groups and talk about their topic, both how it affects students today and if they have any input on how they might think it would be helpful to make changes or recommendations that could help students in the future.

And that's the primary purpose, is how to make— how to make Dartmouth a better place and keep it at the forefront of education.

CASEY: Yeah.

And so I know one of the bigger projects DGALA has been a part of in recent history has been the construction of Triangle House.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Mm-hm.

CASEY: Were you involved in that at all?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, just limited to fundraising. I didn't actually pick up any hammer or nails,—

CASEY: [Chuckles.]

MERKLE-RAYMOND: —but I think the Triangle House is a great step, and I think it is one of the early living-learning centers that has

been put forth on campus as—as a model of having a theme to the dormitory and the living environment so that students have some commonality and then also some—some programming affiliated with whatever their theme is.

So Sylvia [R.; Dartmouth Graduate School 2013], who works in the development office at Blunt [Alumni Center], largely reached out to folks in DGALA and kind of gave us a—we worked together to come up with a target of what was a reasonable amount of money that folks in DGALA could contribute, because the school was—had committed to doing the Triangle House.

But it would be even better if there was alumni commitment to it and there would be—it would be a better project and it would be more representative of the broader Dartmouth community if you—if you could get the alumni actively engaged in fundraising and funding for the—for the Triangle House and get folks aware of the fact that it was happening and—kind of build goodwill among the alumni that, Hey, all of your work over the years and teaching the college of the importance of a positive environment for LGBT students on campus—that's been heard, and we're going to have this Triangle House as a dedicated place for students who want to live in community with other gays and lesbians or transgender folks. And Triangle House is going—it's going to be built, so help us make it happen.

And so there was fundraising amongst the alumni. Folks within DGALA talked about it and tried to get others to commit. And then it was a real celebration when it was—when it was opened and—and the first students moved in. So that was a—that was a real accomplishment for both the college and for the whole LGBT community within Dartmouth, both undergrad and alumni.

CASEY:

Yeah. And I guess kind of thinking back to when you were a student and thinking about having something like Triangle House, is that—I guess, like, in the—in the way that it ultimately came to fruition, do you think it's reflective of what you hoped to see from Dartmouth in terms of supporting LGBT students, or is there more that you'd like to see? If that makes sense.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, I think that what I would have wanted at the time and what's needed now are kind of different, right?

CASEY: Mm-hm.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I mean, the—the—the overall need for a distinct and protective and safe place for the LGBT community—that need is much less than it was in the eighties.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: If it had existed at the time, would that have been welcome? Yeah, but I think that it—I mean, I don't want to say it would have been out of place [chuckles], but it—it would—it's hard for my—hard for me to wrap my brain around the idea that something as nice as Triangle House would have existed in—at the time that I was in school, just from the perspective of so many people were opposed to gays and lesbians, and being out was fairly taboo. You know, to have an entire house that said, "Here's where the gays and lesbians are" and "We think it's okay for them to be here, but don't bother them"—it would have been a very unusual construct.

But I am certainly very pleased that it—that it exists, and I think that it speaks to a lot of the progress that's been made within the Dartmouth community that the Triangle House was built and funded. And it also speaks to the broader community and how much more accepting the society is to having—you know, you could do all the letters, LGBTQ—Questioning and Intersex and Allies. And that whole range and continuum of—of sexuality is now a topic of conversation that it wasn't thirty years ago. And that backdrop is—is phenomenal compared to—to where things were thirty, thirty-five years ago.

Right now we have a former president of DGALA, [S.] Caroline Kerr [Class of 2005]. She was the president of DGALA when Triangle House was opened, and she's now a trustee for Dartmouth.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And there may have been other gay or lesbians who were trustees in the past, but I don't know that there was ever one who was out.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Yeah. So that's—that's also a big development.

CASEY: Yeah.

And I guess, looking forward a little bit, is there anywhere that you see Dartmouth or DGALA going that you're excited about or anything that you really think needs to happen now?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Good question. I think one of the things we're trying to do within DGALA is have more connectivity, from a networking perspective, between the students and what they might want to be doing work wise, and trying to have more of a professional network connection. So that's something that we're working on within DGALA.

I think that because it's fairly accepted and that whole non-discrimination clause that was pushed through on a company basis, to have sexual orientation be protected as—you couldn't be dismissed based on your sexual orientation once that got adopted. And I think it was called the Employee Non-Discrimination Act that was ultimately approved, like, at the congressional level.

All of that stuff—all of those pieces of progress and all of those steps have taken a lot of work by a lot of people in a coordinated way, and while I don't want to say there's no purpose anymore, I think that if you look at San Francisco, and the [San Francisco] Bay Area, I think that in some ways is a model where it's almost hard to have folks do something with DGALA because everyone's, like "I don't identify as gay and lesbian. I am my kid's parent. I am whatever, part of a running club. I am part of a hiking group, whatever. And all of these places that thirty years ago wouldn't let me be out, they're fine with me being out."

So gays and lesbians are totally assimilated into the broader national society that there doesn't have to be as much

segregation of groups where it's safe to be out. And I think in many ways, that's kind of the end game, where you can be who you are and your true self and be accepted and loved for that and respected and be a contributor and have your sexuality just be like a piece of you and not your main focus that has to be how you define yourself.

And I think it's important to keep organizations like DGALA and Triangle House in place to—because not everyone grows up with that same sense of acceptance and might need to—to learn it from—from new sources, so it's important to have in place. But I think that the need for it kind of levels off a bit compared to where the need was twenty, twenty-five, thirty years ago, in part because of having those organizations during that time period and everybody working on all of these various issues, we've made so much progress that it's—that the hard fights in many ways have been won, right?

Any company you go to, for the most part, unless you go work for a nonprofit that's a very conservative organization, is going to have—allow you to sign up for domestic partner benefits. You can—you can have—you can get married in many states. There are so many things that can happen for same-sex couples that weren't possible, that one of the few places left that's a problem is—is adoption of kids.

CASEY: Right.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: You know, can-can same-sex couples adopt kids? Not as easily as hetero couples.

And I think that another part of the forefront is the whole transgender community and determining a person's gender on the whole range between male, female and in between, you know? That's—that's kind of, I think, the next forefront after gay and lesbian issues have largely been, I would say, addressed.

CASEY: Yeah.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: So it's—it's been a really exciting time, and being able to have two daughters and have them grow up understanding that when we first got married it wasn't marry.

We had a commitment ceremony in a church, and we weren't married at all, but then we were able to have a domestic partner certificate in the state of California, and then—that still wasn't marriage. And then Gavin [C.] Newsom allowed gay marriage in San Francisco, and we skipped.

We all got ready and went up—it was like February 14th, around Valentine's Day, and we all went up to City Hall in San Francisco to try to get in line for a marriage certificate, and they—they'd seat a certain number and then they were kind of done, and then they—the state called it off.

And then for our first daughter, it was a Republican governor in the state of California, and when we went all the way through the—I had the daughter; I had both girls, but when my partner wanted to adopt them, we had to go through the regular home visits and regular adoption process.

CASEY: Wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And the woman told us at the beginning, "I have to deny you. No matter how good you are as parents, I will get to your whole thing and say, 'This is a great household. These women are great parents, but given the statute, I must recommend declining the adoption as not in the best interest of the child because it's two moms.'" So we had to go to court and override that and get—find a judge who would grant adoption to my partner, despite that ruling.

CASEY: Wow.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: And then three years later, yeah, when our second daughter was born and I had her and my partner was going to adopt her, it was the same social worker, and she was beaming when she came in, and she said, "I'm so excited! I don't have to—I don't have to deny you. Let's go through the whole process again, and this time I can recommend you for approval for adoption because the law has changed," you know? And that was just between '97 and 2000 in California.

CASEY: Yeah. And so during that time period—the fifteen years since you graduated and then kind of the last nineteen—nineteen or so, when a lot of those big fights have been won,

particularly where you live, has the role that your sexuality plays and your identity and the way that you think about that changed, too?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: [Pause.] Let me give that a moment's thought. Hold on.

CASEY: Absolutely.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: [Pause.] I think that the role that my sexuality has played in my definition of myself or in how I interact with other people maybe has—has diminished a bit. I mean, I think that when I was first getting into banking, it—the people that I hung out with and the way I spent my time outside of work was a hundred percent with gays and lesbians, pretty much, without a doubt.

And I wasn't—I was pretty open at work, that I was—that I was lesbian. But at the same—and now it's, like,—in part because I've been working and I've changed jobs, but each time I've changed jobs, I've changed jobs with somebody who already knew me. It has never really been a factor, you know.

In transferring from Boston to California in 1993, was probably the time that my sexuality was the biggest topic of discussion because when they offered me to move, to transfer from Boston to Palo Alto, I said, "That's great, but I need to talk to my partner," and my new boss was, like, "Well, what's the deal with your partner?" I said, "Well we live together. We own a house together. I want to make sure, if we're going to move."

And the response was, "Oh, just—just buy her out." And I'm, like, "No, no, no. This is, like, my life partner. Like, my wife." And it was, like, "Ohh! I had no idea!" I was, like, "Of course you had no idea. I wouldn't have any reason to tell you."

And I still have—like, I don't—I don't have any reason to tell clients unless it comes up. But it's not something that—in the nineties, you would sort of change—some people would change pronouns, and—or you could say "we" without divulging whether it was a man or a woman and things like that. And now it's much more casual and open, and I think in

general it's much easier to be—to be out and open with your sexuality.

But as you get older in general different things are a bigger factor. I'm more a parent and a manager than I am a person known for my sexuality, one way or the other.

CASEY: Definitely.

I think we've covered a lot. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about?

MERKLE-RAYMOND: I just wanted to thank you and the other folks from SpeakOut for—for doing this. When we get off line, I would love to hear more specifics about how we could get some other people interviewed.

But I think in general, I feel lucky to have been born at a time when all of this change would be happening during my lifetime. I mean civil rights for—for blacks was a big thing for the sixties and seventies—and largely still is and needs to be. But in my timeline, the LGBT evolution has been, I think, prominent for—as the social movement of the day. And I've been both—some would say cursed or lucky to have been part of it.

And I've been grateful that—that there's been such—so much change, and I hope that people who are not living in places that are as open as the cities in the United States are able to find ways that they can be themselves and be accepted for their whole self, wherever they are. And that's what these organizations are—are still around to help do.

CASEY: Definitely. Definitely. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this program and for taking the time to interview. This has been a wonderful conversation.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Well, thank you. Look forward to taking to you soon.

CASEY: Okay. Thanks.

MERKLE-RAYMOND: Bye-bye.

[End of interview.]