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H&H Committee Coming Out Speech

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Coming Out Speech

Coming out is a long process

I Could begin in **8th grade** when I had a crush on my best friend **Tammy Wiley**, but I'll **fast forward** through the **previews skip** right to my experiences at **URI**

I'd like to **focus** on how **professors**, believe it or not, have **created a safe environment** for me in my coming out process.

Fall 94: Women in American History
 Dr. Sharon Strom

- Dr. Strom included lesbian history in the course. She provided reading material and discussed things such as
 - Lesbianism during WWs I & II
 - Boston Marriages
 - Homophobia in the feminist movement of the 60s and 70s
 - Project:
 - write a historical short story.
 - Dr. Strom **created** such a **safe space** for me while **struggling** with my **bisexuality** that I chose to write a **story** about a **woman** who goes to **Wellesley** and falls in **love** with her **classmate**.
 - I thought I had done pretty well to write this story which included this type of relationship. But then, when we received our **papers back**, Dr. Strom decided it would be a nice idea if we all sat in a circle and **shared** a piece of our stories
 - I was very **nervous** about this
 - But as it turned out **5 other people** in the class had also written about same sex relationships and were comfortable enough to share that with the class.
 - I give **Dr. Strom** alot of **credit** for **creating** such an environment in a **Freshman class**.
 - This is the paper which my friend **Jeannie Powell** will be reading to you in a moment.
-

Spring 95: Feminist Utopias
Dr. Dana Shugar

- Two favorite Utopias:
 - Woman on the Edge of Time
 - included a **community** in which there were **no defined rules or expectations** about a **persons sexuality**.
 - The Wonderground
 - was about a **lesbian-separatist community**.
 - A lot of discussion in this class and Dr. **Shugar** made it very **clear** that **her class** was a **safe space**.
 - Our **final project** was to **write** our own **Utopia** and to **present** it to the class
 - Feeling **brave**
 - I chose to write and present a **lesbian-feminist-separatist Utopia** that even **included** a **lesbian sex-scene**.
 - Maybe I'll present that one **next year**.
-

Fall 95:

- This was when my **Coming Out** really **took off**.
- Met a really wonderful woman.
 - I got up the **courage** to **ask her out**
 - She said "**yes**" and I **finally** was **dating** a **woman**
 - That relationship **didn't last very long**, but it was a **wonderful first** experience and I'm one **friend stronger** now
- This made it **easier** for me to come out to **most of my friends** and **some family** members
- Also became involved in the **Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism**.
 - last year sat in the back of the room during the symposium. This year I helped to plan it.
 - For those of you now sitting in the back, there's a **sign up sheet on the table**

Women and Film
Dr. Jean Walton

- in this class we were lucky enough to **screen** and **discuss** a couple of **films** that included **lesbian** themes.
 - also, on Coming Out Day, **Dr. Walton** came out to the class. I was impressed by her security.
-

Spring 96: Women and Literature
Dr. Mary Cappello

- This class meets twice a week and I can safely say that we have **talked** about **lesbigay issues at least once a week.**
 - Dr. Cappello **doesn't just discuss** the issues, she **makes us question** our own **homophobia and heterosexism.**
 - Recently gave a wonderful **analogy**
 - "why got over '**ick**' about what parents do, but not about lesbian sex.
 - One day we were discussing the Gilda stories which is a lesbian vampire novel and she asked "**why can't we have a discussion where a student can say 'I'm gay and this is how I felt about the book'**"
 - I took a **deep breath, raised my hand** and said "**o.k. I'll have that conversation with you.**"
 - I'd **never come out publicly** before and it was a little scary. But, hey... it was **good practice for today!!!**
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- I'd now like to **invite my friend Jeannie Powell** to come and **read** "The Diary of Margaret" which I spoke of earlier. This story **means alot to me** and I'm **honored** that **Jeannie** has **agreed to read it for me.**