1996

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 a lot 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 person's 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.
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!!!

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.