Dennis Prudhomme and Madison Broussard

June 24, 2023

Lafayette, LA

Interviewed by: Zack Stein

Transcriber: Gabrielle Hoffpauir-Rosatto

Editor: Zack Stein

Ethnographic Preface:

As part of the ongoing LGBTQ+ Archives Project, Special Collections of Edith Garland Dupré Library and the Guilbeau Center for Public History are collecting oral histories documenting the region’s LGBTQ+ community. Project Co-Director Dr. Zack Stein and Undergraduate Research Assistant Gabrielle Hoffpauir-Rosatto attended Pride Acadiana 2023 and interviewed various attendees for an oral history harvest.

TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer initials: [ZS]

Interviewee 1 initials: [DP]

Interviewee 2 initials: [MB]

ZS: It's June 24, 2023 at Pride Acadiana 2023. This is Zack Stein, from UL interviewing. Just to let you know, I'll ask you some questions--if there's a question you're not comfortable answering, you don't need to answer it. And if you want to opt out, you can at any time.

DP: Okay.

MB: Okay.

ZS: All right. So just an introductory question, please state your name and when and where you were born.

DP: Oh, I’m Dennis Prudhomme, and I was born March 8, 2001, in New Orleans.

MB: I’m Madison Broussard; I was born May 9, 1997 in Bossier City.

ZS: And do you identify as LGBTQ+ or an ally?

MB: I'm a lesbian.

DP: And I'm an ally.

ZS: Okay. So, I guess the first question is describe what it was like growing up LGBTQ+ in Louisiana.

MB: I didn't actually figure out I was any kind of anything until I was like 22 or so; it just didn't even register that women were an option for me until then. Already grown up. It was still weird to figure out, though.

ZS: Once you figured it out, what was the process like?

MB: It was just kind of like wonder like, "Oh, my God. What?" … Little fear, obviously on the Bible Belt.

ZS: And for you, what's the best part of being LGBTQ+?

MB: The community. The freedom of living out and about, and just being myself.

ZS: What about being an ally?

DP: I think … really my main group of friends, which I love to death, I consider them my family. I don't think I could live without them. And just seeing things that a lot of LGBT [people] have to go through and having to constantly deal with especially a lot of hatred in Louisiana. I feel like it does make me pretty passionate about gay rights, and just making sure my friends and everyone else has like this sort of freedom to be who they want to be. It's very important to us. And I believe that I should try and make a difference as much as I can and support them in their journey.

ZS: For both of you, what does Pride mean to you? And why is it important in Louisiana?

DP: (*points to MB*) I’ll listen to her first.

MB: (*looks down at sheet with questions*) I missed the first part.

ZS: What does Pride mean to you?

MB: Just, the freedom of being open. I mean, at least lessening the fear. And that's why it's important because people shouldn't have to be afraid to live their truth. Since it is a problem still for some people to be accepting, it's important to be visible, and that's the opportunity that Pride provides.

DP: I definitely feel the same way. I also think it's so nice, especially in like, a red state. It's just so belittling to a lot of people with a lot of [the] Don't Say Gay bills and stuff like that. It's the opportunity to come out and just celebrate who you are as a person and, you know, being with the community, with other people because it's very reassuring. You know, you're not the only one going through this. There's a strong community here. And that Louisiana “can say gay". It's not just a red state full of people who want gay people out.

ZS: Do you see a difference in the way that LGBTQ+ individuals in Louisiana live now versus when you came out?

MB: Yeah, I think so. I was part of one of my college's first marches. We went from one area to in front of the [Student] Union, and it was one of the first couple that they had done. And then now I'm here, where we have Pride. And it's not like, "Oh, are we gonna be allowed to do this?"

ZS: We talked a little bit about some of these bills that are coming out, but I kind of want to maybe go a little further. How do you feel about the recent political actions taken against LGBTQ+ people in Louisiana, for example, book bans, legislation, sports bans?

DP: It's a horrible thing. You shouldn't be banning people because of what sexuality [they identify as]. This has nothing to do with anything for sports, you know, for just existing and being a person, it should not matter at all. And it's kind of just disgusting how some people are so degrading over it. It shouldn't be a boot on people's necks about this kind of thing. I believe America preaches freedom, but meanwhile, they're constantly trying to take away the freedoms of other marginalized groups, and it's just very upsetting to deal with. And I find it very annoying to have to sit here and be like, "Alright, I can try and help as much as I can." But, you know, if we're going one step forward, two steps back, it can just be very aggravating. And I feel like we've been recently taking a lot of steps back. But I am hopeful that we can prevail through this and really just squash that. I think eventually in the future, we will get there. Yeah, I feel like it's just a matter of how quick.

MB: And I think there's a lot of hypocrisy going on. It's tiring. It weighs on the soul.

ZS: What can you share about your experience of queer spaces in Lafayette?

MB: Well, I mean, I don't have a whole lot of experiences because I'm kind of more of a homebody. But I've heard good things, and I know that there are resources, and just seeing all the organizations here today that I didn't even really know about, but now I do. That's exciting. (*cheers in the background*) Like now.

DP: Yeah. I feel everybody should be happy about it.

ZS: In your experience, what support have you seen from schools and other educational institutions?

MB: Not much, in terms of grade school; we had some support at my college, Nicholls State University, down the bayou. We had the LGBTQ support group that I was part of, and that was such a great resource; that really helped me not lose my mind in the process of figuring things out. As far as Lafayette goes, I don't know that much, because I never went to school here. As far as I'm aware, [there's] at least some support. There's Pride; there's a lot of UL students that I've seen.

DP: I feel like it's stronger than most other cities I’d say in Louisiana.

MB: Regionally, it's a good point. It's a good regional stronghold.

DP: The only other one I can really think of is New Orleans and stuff, but I grew up in Alexandria, and it was so bad there, so I'm very happy there are places in Louisiana that could be considered safe spaces.

ZS: Okay, and final question. What is your hope for the future of the LGBTQ+ community in Lafayette?

DP: I hope that eventually, Lafayette could be like known as all over the state as somewhere that gay people can move to and not be afraid of getting hate-crimed or experiencing a lot of hate in any way, just in general. Because everybody knows from Louisiana, it's not always the best spot, especially in these rural areas. So I really hope that Lafayette can be this kind of melting pot for everybody. And just learn how to love each other, and just be together.

MB: A growing hub.

ZS: Before we conclude, is there anything else you'd like to add?

DP: I just want to say, I think coming out here, and experiencing everything is so nice. And it does make me happy that I can go out and see people smiling and being who they are because I feel like in Alexandria, where I'm from, a lot of people didn't have that opportunity. I had a friend named Pete, they're transgender. And they were ridiculed all throughout high school. And it was very upsetting. I love Pete to death. He's one of the funniest people I've ever met. And he still stood his ground and stayed strong, but I know, it could've not gone that way, just because of how much ridicule he had to see, especially in his earlier years during transition. So, I'm happy in spaces like this, but I do definitely wish that Louisiana could improve in other areas because not everybody can live in Lafayette or New Orleans or around these bigger cities. So, I am definitely looking forward to improvements in certain areas.

MB: This is just a place where you can feel the love and the joy and excitement of being able to live as you are. And it [the love] does need to be spread.

ZS: Thank you both very much.

MB: Thank you.