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**SPEAKERS**

Joshua Moton, Mattie Cart

**Mattie Cart**

Yeah, so, I didn't really know I was part of the LGBTQ [community] or gay--I'm a lesbian. But I didn't know I was until about sixth grade. And even then, I was a very devoted Christian. And as soon as I found out, I was like, "Oh, this is bad; I'm just gonna ignore it." But growing up, as far as just from then and now, it was hard. But thankfully, I have amazing parents. My mom's still having a hard time with it; my dad is much more accepting than I thought he was gonna be. But the overall experience was, you know, rough around the edges; it's a little different compared to some states up North, where they're more comfortable with that kind of idea. But I'm very thankful that I had people around me that love me, no matter what I identified as or even if I was part of the LGBTQ community.

**Joshua Moton**

I'm curious, what do you feel like is the best part of being LGBTQ+?

**Mattie Cart**

Probably the best part is just in general, the love that everyone feels for each other, the acceptance, just the variety, as well. The LGBTQ community, in my opinion, is really good about accepting anyone for their hobbies, or just for the way they live: like [if you're] trans, for example, whether you're gay or anything. Some of the best friends I've ever had, I've met through the LGBTQ community; they're some of the nicest people I've ever had the opportunity to interact with being part of it as well.

**Joshua Moton**

I'm curious about your own personal definition of Pride. What does that mean [to you], specifically?

**Mattie Cart**

Personally, I think it means just going out there and being true to yourself, not having to hide who you are. For a very long time, I did that. And the fact that I'm out now, and I'm able to express myself the way I want to, it makes me very happy. And for the first time in my life, ever since I did come out, I've really just been the healthiest I've been. I've struggled with mental health a lot throughout the years. But as soon as I came out, and I was who I'm meant to be, it really just opened up a whole new life to me as well.

**Joshua Moton**

Pride is really important to you.

**Mattie Cart**

It is. Not having to hide that part of myself from my family anymore, or anybody.

**Joshua Moton**

Do you feel like it's important in Louisiana specifically, because you talked about how this area is not as accepting as the North. I feel like it's really important, especially down South.

**Mattie Cart**

Yeah. We've actually come a long way. In my opinion, we're probably the most progressive state right now in the South in some ways. Like I know, Texas and Florida right now are very much having their political issues from the laws they're passing. And I'm thankful that some of the stuff going on there hasn't really made its way to Louisiana yet. And I feel like Louisiana is trying its best to start becom[ing] progressive and more accepting. And so, this event itself is proof of that; I've only ever seen two protests so far--two people that were here. And that's it.

**Joshua Moton**

Two is a good number, especially (??). You talk a lot about how in this area, in Louisiana, is probably the most progressive. I'm curious to know if you've seen a difference in the way LGBTQ+ individuals are treated today, you know, in the South, than you did maybe when you were younger.

**Mattie Cart**

Definitely a big difference. My mom used to always say--and that's part of the reason why whenever I was younger, and I did realize that [I was a lesbian], why I was so scared to come out. Because my mom was a very big advocate of, "It's wrong. It's not right." My family, from the very get go, they were like, "It's wrong, it's sinful, there's nothing you could do--if you're a part of that community--to save your soul or whatever. But as far as like coming from then to now, I think a lot more people are open-minded, they're doing research, they're realizing that it's not really as big of a thing as they thought it was. I feel like a lot of people, especially some of my family, they thought it was just a sexual thing. And now that some of their family members, including me, are part of the LGBT community, they realize now that it's not just about that. It's about so much more than that.

**Joshua Moton**

I hate to shift to a drop in tone, but you know, how do you feel about the recent political attacks in the community, everything from book bans, to banning trans individuals in sports? How do you feel about the recent attacks on the community?

**Mattie Cart**

I mean, it's a lot. I'm trying to be more active in the community. Since I came out, I've been trying to put myself in voting and participate more in those kinds of things, because I really do feel like we're going down... Or at least other states. I know it could come to us as quickly as it came to them. It's a really dark time right now. I see people on TikTok, I have a trans friend that lives in Texas. And they were talking about [how] they might have to move because of all the things going on right now. And it's scary. And I love Florida, don't get me wrong; it's a beautiful place. But I'm scared to go now, just because of the fact that all the stuff going on. I've heard so [many] rumors, but I really can't tell what's true and what's not right now, just because of all the scary things coming in and out of it. It is a dark time for us. But I think our community is strong, and we love each other. So as long as we stay together, and we fight for what we want, and we try to stay as positive and peaceful as possible in some situations, I think we're really just going to push those things to where we really need them to go.

**Joshua Moton**

What about queer spaces here, specifically in Lafayette? What has your experience been like, in terms of queer spaces and being a part of those spaces?

**Mattie Cart**

So like I said, I moved here maybe about a year ago, to Lafayette. And here in Lafayette, it's honestly probably one of the better places that I've come to know [with treating] the LGBTQ [population well]. Bolt is one of the probably the very first places I went that was very friendly in that aspect. And just Main Street in general. I love the community here. It's amazing. And they've opened up a lot of things to me that makes me feel more comfortable in who I am.

**Joshua Moton**

Happy to hear that. I'm curious about talk[ing] about schools and institutions. Have you seen any support from those sort of institutions?

**Mattie Cart**

From the schools? I'm actually engaged. I have a fiancee. She's amazing. She went to one of the colleges here, I forget which one--LSU I think. And she was able to actually have a bunch of community and stuff. I think at one point there was even a club, and she felt very welcomed in that safe space. And she met a bunch of friends that were part of the LGBTQ community as well. I think they're doing pretty well. But like I said, there's always room for improvement just because there's going to be people on both sides.

**Joshua Moton**

Before we close, I just want to know, what is your hope for the future of the community, especially here in Lafayette, but in Louisiana as a whole?

**Mattie Cart**

Yeah. Just acceptance, people not jumping to conclusions about what LGBTQ is and what we're part of. Just know that, you know, [the] LGBTQ community in general, we speak love. All we want us to be accepted. And all we really want is just to be part of Louisiana's culture, and I love Louisiana. It's something that I grew up very proud of. My grandpa, he's a very proud Cajun. And it just would warm my heart if the LGBT community was more accepted--and it's getting there--but we still have our struggles. And I just hope that in the future, we'll be able to pursue more things, and it'll be a safer place for everybody.

**Joshua Moton**

Thank you so much.