

Andi Surratt Oral History LGBTQIA+ Interview

Interviewer: Madelyn Lisis

December 16, 2020

00:00:00.000-00:18:12.288

START

00:00:00.000

00:00:03.430

Andi Surratt: Shut up! [laughs]

Madelyn Lisis: [laughs] Okay.

00:00:18.230

ML and AS: [laughs]

ML: Okay, [laughs] my name is Madelyn Lisis, my pronouns are she or they and I will be the interviewer.

00:00:29.310

AS: My name is Andi Surratt, my pronouns are they, them, I'm the interviewee.

00:00:35.860

ML: Okay, so for my first question. How old are you when you realize that you weren't straight?

AS: I started, like questioning and being like *Mhm, maybe I don't just think women are aesthetically pretty* when I was like 13 and that kind of pushed out to the back of my mind like *Nope, not going to think about that right now* and then when I was like 14/15 around the time that gay marriage was being legalized, I was like. *Mhm, women.* [laughs]

ML: [laughs] Yeah.

AS: And there was that! And then from the ages of like 15 to like- From 15 to about 16 or 17, I was like *yeah, I'm bisexual or pansexual* or whatever I identified as back then. And then for like a solid six months I was like *no, I'm a lesbian* and then I saw a boy and I was like *no, I'm bi* and now like three years later, I am a lesbian [laughs]

00:01:48.120

ML: I'm proud of you!

AS: Awe thanks! So yeah, it was a weird roller coaster. I- you were there. I figured out I was a lesbian, but I was in a relationship with a man. I still feel bad about that.

00:02:04.600

ML: I think it's so funny [laughs]

AS: I do too, but I still feel bad because he wasn't like the worst boyfriend I've ever had.

ML: [laughs]

00:02:17.500

ML:I- I found out I was like bisexual when I was dating my ex-boyfriend. I didn't like feel bad about it for the most part because I was still like bisexual so they were still like that *oh okay, I can still date him*, but I was like *I'll never know what it's like to kiss a girl* and then like half a year later, we broke up and I got a girlfriend.

00:02:47.510

AS: I still want girlfriend. I'm not ready now.

ML: I'm engaged to a man.

00:02:55.000

AS: White man, no!

00:02:59.160

ML: Yes, a white man!

AS: It's a Ticktock audio.

ML: I know. Anyway-anyways.

AS: [unclear] [laughs]

ML: [laughs] I'm sorry Doctor Ricky. Anyways, okay. So, you said you were around 13-ish when you started, you know, questioning your identity and your sexuality. So how old are you when you finally like came out?

00:03:32.030

AS: I am still in the closet for the most part. Like come to my friends and stuff, I'm out 100% nonbinary lesbian if you called me by my deadname, I'll punch you in the throat. So yeah, my friends all know, and like your parents and your family knows, and they're super respectful and

I love them. But I'm not out to anyone in my family because they're all like super homophobic so-

ML: Even like your sister?

AS: My little sister knows that I like girls but like, yeah. When I first was like coming out, she was like *I'm going to tell Mom* and I was like *don't tell Mom. She will kick me out or something like that.* She's like *no, she won't, she probably won't even care.* And then I got like almost kicked out and grounded for like nine months.

00:04:27.960

ML: Remind me to never meet your mom.

00:04:30.489

AS: My mom's c- I'm not going say the word.

ML: Don't! We're recording [unclear] [laughs]

AS: [laughs] My mom is a person who I do not like very much, but she gives me money.

ML: Me too.

00:04:48.590

AS: So yeah, there's that.

ML: Okay. So, when you first were looking at schools, did you- Were you like any sort of like interested on how they, you know, treated their LGBT students, or like if they had any programs or something?

00:05:12.770

AS: A little bit. For the most part when I was looking at schools, I was looking at costs because I'm poor and like financial aid that they gave and I really love Stouts financial aid programs, but I definitely looked at like the Qube's website and stuff and I looked into like joining or becoming part of the staff there. So yeah, there was that, but it definitely wasn't like on my top ten reasons- well, it was on my top ten reasons, but like it wasn't like the most important because I didn't want to go to some yee-yee school where I would get hate crimed.

00:05:46.570

ML: You did not just say yee-yee school for my final project interview.

AS: [laughs] Yes, I did. It's fine. [unclear]

00:05:54.730

ML: They are going to watch like Grace and I's and be like *oh, okay basic interview*. Then they'll watch ours and be like *what?* [laughs]

00:06:02.270

AS: It's fine, Doctor Ricky is cool. We love Doctor Ricky.

00:06:05.760

ML: I wish I could have met Doctor Ricky.

00:06:11.350

AS: True. She's pretty great. We're not just sucking up, but like.

ML: I mean... No, I'm just kidding! [laughs]

AS: [laughs]

ML: We're going to have to record it again!

AS: No, we're not, it's fine.

00:06:25.970

ML: I'm sorry. Okay, I'm sorry, not very professional. Okay. So. When you were looking at Stout and their queer programs were you ever looking at how they treated LGBT students in the past like either good or bad, like were you ever looking at like any past mistakes or something?

00:07:00.900

AS: Not really, because like I said, the queer programs and stuff weren't like the most important thing for me to look at. So, I don't- I couldn't really tell you anything about Stout's like past. I can tell you that at one point, like during the 70s and 80s, they were probably pretty homophobic with the HIV pandemic going around because everyone was and like every institution was. So, there definitely probably like stains from the past on there, but it's nothing that's going to affect like what I choose in a college.

00:07:45.090

ML: Well, I'm glad that you feel comfortable here.

AS: Exactly.

ML: Anyway, okay. So, you mentioned earlier that you wanted to, maybe apply to be in the Qube. Were there any other like programs that Stout has that you really utilized whether it was like the Qube, GSA (Gender Sexuality Alliance) or the living Out@Stout floor.

00:08:17.910

AS: I want it to be on the Out@Stout floor, but I'm, you know, I didn't get in because it's- it's not like picky and choosy, but it's kind of a first come first serve and they didn't allow for like single rooms as far as I was aware. I wanted to do that, and I went to like three GSA meetings and it definitely was not what I wanted. I was looking for, I guess, more of like a support group for gay kids and that was definitely more of an educational kind of thing.

ML: [nods] Mhm.

AS: Other than that, I think I donated to the Qube's like the closet that they have for trans students. I think I donated to that a couple times, but other than that, not really.

00:09:05.720

ML: I like- you have pins from there.

00:09:07.790

AS: Yeah, I have pins from there, but that's really all I go in there for is like the free stuff.

00:09:13.690

ML: Yeah! [unclear]

AS: Also, they don't have the lesbian flag on anything which makes me kind of upset.

ML: They don't?

AS: They don't! And I was like *oh, do you guys have like the lesbian flag for any of these* and they're like *no, we have the gay flag* and I was like *that's not what I asked but thanks anyways!*

00:09:29.910

ML: Weird! Okay because they've got like flags that I've never seen before.

AS: Yeah, that's-

ML: [unclear] one of the ones- because I was- I went there looking at like gender fluid flag. They said *no, but if you have a preference, we can print you out one*. So maybe that's one they- that's really strange because they have- Stout has a really big lesbian population. I'm curious as to why they don't specifically have the lesbian flag.

00:09:53.820

AS: I was not aware they had a lesbian population. Please point me in the direction of that because I would like to meet other lesbians. [laughs]

ML: I know so many lesbians! [laughs]

00:10:02.870

AS: How do you know so many lesbians and I know none? [laughs]

00:10:06.740

ML: Dance.

AS: Ah shit- you're right.

ML: [laughs]

AS: I can't dance. This is why. I got to learn how to dance if I want a girlfriend.

00:10:22.920

ML: [laughs] Okay, anyways. Sorry if I'm like looking down a lot-

AS: No you're fine!

ML: -I'm just going out like the timer to see if we're making the time limit.

AS: Got you.

ML: [pause] Sorry, I'm like trying to read. Okay, so my question is, do you feel like Stout was a welcoming environment for you as a member of the LGBT community?

00:10:52.750

AS: I think so, yeah. A lot of the professors here are very open about like how they support their LGBT students like many of them ask for your pronouns at the beginning of the year. Stout has a fantastic like name changing thing, which I was really grateful for when I started- when I came out as nonbinary and change my name because I can't legally but having it in like Accessed Stout and Canvas as Andi instead of my deadname really helped a lot. So, yes.

ML: I'm so glad that's like available. I was kind of talking about that in my interview because I was like they- it's very easy to use.

AS: Yeah, it's very user friendly. I do wish that I could get my ID change though. As far as I'm aware I'm not allowed to though.

00:11:44.961

ML: I'm not sure specifically if you can change the name on your ID, but it is you- you- They did change down like your email, right?

AS: Yeah, that's all [unclear]

ML: Well-

AS: They don't have it like it's Surrent E and not Surratt A.

ML: Okay!

AS: But yeah, they change like my sign in name and stuff like that.

ML: That's cool! At least you know what you- what you can change.

AS: Yeah!

00:12:11.670

ML: Yeah, I think the card is like a legality issue, especially with because it's a voting ID as well.

AS: [nods] Yeah.

ML: But when the time comes for you to legally change your name, if you ever decide to.

AS: I'm going to!

ML: What?

AS: I'm going to! Change my last name and everything.

ML: You can change your last name on the Stout forums as well. I think that's really cool too.

AS: Oh yeah, it is cool.

00:12:39.030

ML: Yeah, I really like how accessible everything is.

AS: Except for Duo Mobile.

00:12:49.010

ML: Okay. I'm not talking- I'm talking about like within LGBT stuff.

AS: I know, I know. I'm just saying they did not think about their disabled students.

00:13:01.370

ML: That is not what this interviews about, thank you!

AS: I don't care.

ML: [laughs]

00:13:05.800

ML: Anyways, that's all whole another project.

AS: [laughs]

ML: So, I really like how it's like really accessible because like the Qube is right there on the front of the Commons. Big gay flag on it. And you're allowed- you were allowed to change your name and you can have your pronouns on Canvas. I don't know, I just think that's really cool and I'm really glad that that was there for you, because making you feel comfortable makes me feel comfortable. So, like it's cool!

AS: Thank you. Hell yeah!

00:13:42.120

ML: My next question do you feel comfortable sharing your identity with those on campus?

AS: Yeah, for the most part, like if I see a Trumpie walking across the lawn, I'm going to like move to the other side of the street. But like other than that I- I wear like a lesbian pride necklace every day. Most people don't know what it means, but I see another lesbian on the street and they're like *hey, like you necklace*. [laughs]

00:14:13.410

ML: [laughs] Most people don't know what that means? That's sad!

AS: A little bit! Because it's like- it's two of the Venus signs, so I feel like this is quite obvious.

ML: Yeah.

AS: Also worked with how I dress and have my hair and stuff, I feel like I make it quite obvious that I am not a heterosexual.

00:14:34.297

ML: And like with that like everyone knows what those signs are because you see all the time at like baby showers.

00:14:38.950

AS: Yeah!

ML: So, people know what they are.

AS: Yeah, but yeah, for the most part like unless I see someone who's like very obviously going to hate crime me. I'm very open about my sexuality and identity.

00:14:50.758

ML: I'm glad that that's like available for you to be comfortable. It's important!

AS: It is!

00:15:00.262

ML: And then kind of, my last question- we kind of touched on it, but, overall, do you feel safe and comfortable at Stout?

AS: Yeah. I would say so. There's like sometimes where I'm like *Mhm, I don't want to be over there because there's people with MEGA hats*. There are plenty of, yikes people on this campus. But yeah, for the most part I feel safe. If not, I have my pepper spray.

ML and AS: [laughs]

00:15:39.870

ML: Yeah, I think it's really cool that Stout has very- anyone is really welcome, but there is no hate welcome.

AS: Yeah- [unclear]

ML: So, you know, people can wear their MEGA hats, but as soon as they start anything, you know they're- they can be reprimanded and even expelled.

00:16:05.940

AS: Well, I don't know if you remember last year, but there were drag show flyers up-

ML: Oh!

AS: And someone had taken them down and Stout was like *unacceptable we're going to find you. You're going to get disciplined.* And yeah, that was like over within like a week and I found that really comforting because it's like *oh hey, if I did hate crimed, I can press charges.*

00:16:31.620

ML: I totally forgot about that.

AS: Yeah.

ML: Because- Grace and I were talking about how when she was a sophomore or freshman, she had been told that there was a conversion therapy incident.

00:16:52.750

AS: Oh, yeah, that was like two years ago.

ML: Yeah, and there was like an ad for it in the MSC (Memorial Student Center) and that didn't go over well.

00:17:03.590

AS: Yeah, it was one of the religious groups on campus.

ML: And I had never heard of that. Oh! Was it a religious group on campus? I'm-

00:17:13.130

AS: It was like the Catholic- I don't know if it was a on-campus religious group, but I know it was like a- a religious group.

ML: Yeah, we were talking about how that- it was- it was like a church, but I don't know the details enough to speak about it.

AS: That's fair.

ML: I just know that that had happened and- But I had never heard of it, so like it Stout, their- likes to keep- you know, they like to keep things hush, obviously like everyone does, but they are, you know they- they show that they care about students.

AS: [nods] Mhm.

ML: Is there anything else you would like to add?

AS: Not that I can think of.

ML: Okay.

AS: Cool [thumbs up]

ML: [thumbs up]. I got to figure out how to-

AS and ML: [laughs]

END

00:18:12.288