

Interview – Joe Montoya, Alan Cohn, and Camryn Montoya-Cohn

Interviewees: Joe Montoya, Alan Cohn, and Camryn Montoya-Cohn

Interviewer: Cecelia Parks

Interview date: August 25, 2025

Location: Joe, Alan, and Camryn's house in Charlottesville, VA

Length: 1:09:13

**START OF RECORDING**

Cecelia Parks (CP): [00:00:00] Right. The red light is on, which is a good sign.

Alright, so this is Cecelia Parks. I am here with Joe Montoya and Alan Cohn and their daughter Camryn is also sitting in with us. It is Tuesday, August 25th, 2025. And we're gonna go ahead and get started. So to start off, what words do you all use to describe yourselves? Do you say gay? Do you say LGBTQ? Do you say queer? How do you all describe yourselves?

Joe Montoya (JM): Yeah. I, I describe myself as a gay, cisgender man.

Alan Cohn (AC): Gay. The interesting thing about all of this is gonna be the generation differences with the younger group and our group. Okay. [indistinct]

CP: Yeah, that's one of the reasons that I ask is that some people, everybody uses different words.

JM: Yeah. Yeah.

CP: And what pronouns do y'all use?

JM: I really don't, but I identify myself as he, him and his. So, yeah. Yeah.

AC: Man.

CP: All right, sounds good. So before we get into the questions with Joe and Alan, I just wanna note that they both did an interview in 2019 that was really extensive, over an

hour that talked about sort of their history of getting to Charlottesville and having children and getting married and all these kinds of things. So if you haven't listened to that and you're listening to this, I would recommend listening to that. But just so we can sort of catch folks up, can you share a little bit about how you ended up in Charlottesville?

AC: Okay.

JM: Sure.

AC: I- Joe was looking to further his education and, uh, I was ready to leave my job. There was no room for opportunity to- to grow any further. So, I saw an ad in my national newspaper and put in an application and got called by UVA at the University of Virginia. And that was primarily it. So they flew me in looked at Charlottesville. It was absolutely gorgeous. And- and I missed the East Coast. We were in Colorado and- and I missed the four seasons and- and so on. So I came in for the interview. It was a two, three-day interview and they offered me the job before I left. Joe is- you know, because the nursing school was here there was no nursing school where we lived and he would've had to travel quite a distance to go. So, accepted the job, he got a job in the- at the- as a nurse in the hospital and here we are.

JM: Yeah. Basically sums it up. Yeah.

CP: Okay. And when was that? How long have y'all been here?

AC: We came here in November of 1991.

CP: Okay. Wow. So 34 years now. Yeah, almost. Yeah.

AC: Our intent was just to stay five years, build program, him get a degree and- 'Cause we'd never heard of Charlottesville. Yeah. Small community. We never thought we'd live in the South, but glad we're here.

CP: Yeah. Yeah. I've heard that a lot. "Oh, I thought I was gonna come here for school and then- Yeah. And I never left."

AC: Right.

CP: So, obviously your last interview was in 2019. What- how- how have your lives changed since then? What's- what's new for you all?

JM: Okay. Well, Camryn, you know, we- Camryn was born in- you know, we talked about Camryn's birth and all that stuff. You know, I think the big thing that big, you know, historical things that changed us, of course was this COVID and the pandemic and that, how that impacted us as a family unit. And Camryn going to high school and having to graduate through high school and then having to enter university, college and how that impacted her and impacted our lives.

I think everybody, you know- and then as my job as- as a nurse practitioner how- how I was caring for my vulnerable population during that time. So, you know, that was- and then sense of community, you know, how did we maintain that community that we had established for decades here in Charlottesville and how that impacted us, you know?

And- and then our relationship, you know, how, you know, we're like, you're embedded, you know, and so that type of thing. So yeah, that was, that was the major, you know, thing. And then again, the elections, not only the first Trump administration, how we felt that it was an awakening to our, to us as, as a gay family.

And then the relief during the Biden administration and seeing a lot of our values being implemented at the federal level, again, reinforcing the rights to gay marriage and to, gay people having children, raising children, adopting children, and the all the protections that came with the- with gay marriage to- to today, where we're facing the possible elimination of those rights, I- This uh, conservative Supreme [00:05:00] Court and the fear that this second Trump administration is instilling upon, not only upon LGBTQ+ peoples, especially trans peoples but everyday people, folks, in this country where we're seeing the erosion of our democracy and the potential eradication of what we know as, as, as American, as American and our citizens and rights.

So, yeah. Yeah.

CP: Alan, anything you would add? We're gonna sort of get into all of those, I think.

But anything you would add?

AC: Can you repeat the question?

CP: Yeah. How has your life changed since 2019? Just a little.

AC: I'm definitely older. I'm- I'm deep into retirement and- and so there's an age difference between Joe and I, which is 12 years, which developmentally has- not an impact, but certainly differences with him working and- and me retiring and him wanting to retire so we can spend time together. I think as since 2019, that has become on top of our agenda in terms of moving Joe into retirement next year and us having the time to be together and moving Camryn, who's graduated from Virginia Tech to New York City to get her start. Um, a lot has happened.

CP: Yeah, for sure. Well, let's dig into that. 'Cause obviously there's- there's a lot that- there's a lot that happened. So we'll just start sort of where you started, Joe. And maybe Camryn, if you wanna jump in, you're- you're welcome to. But what did it look like? How old was Camryn in 2019? Like you were in high school?

JM: 2003. So you were jun- junior. 16. 16.

CP: Yeah. Yeah. So what did- what did COVID look like for that time, for all three of you, like as a family in that sense?

JM: You were home. So tell her a little bit.

Camryn Montoya-Cohn (CMC): Yeah. I mean, when COVID happened in March, I was a junior and I just remember them saying like, schools are closed for like two weeks. And then obviously that prolonged then I think, at least for me at Monticello, and I think most public high schools. There wasn't really any update that the school gave. I remember I

was counting how many weeks of, oh, still no update. Still no classes. I think it went on for like two months or something.

And then we finally got school online and then finished that year. And then I had my whole senior year online, which I didn't even mind that much because I was very introverted in high school. And like, I think for me, I kind of enjoyed it being online, but I was, yeah, I was home for most of the time. I mean, I had horseback riding, so that got me out of the house.

AC: So she was an equestrian competitor.

CMC: Yeah. But yeah, I think at least as a family, we, like, we were very strict on like-

JM: Precautions. Yeah. Masking and-

CMC: Not going out unless we had to. We would do like walks down the driveway like multiple times a day and yeah, pretty much.

JM: Yeah. I think it's, yeah, just being locked in. Um, I worked for the federal government and- and so a lot of, I was doing a lot of telemedicine at that point, and so being isolated in a room in the house for 12 hours developed a- I created a gym in there. So not only was I there working, then I was there for exercising and I opened the door. I was like, "Oh, there's a world out there." So that's- so that isolation not only within the society and the community, but also within our home. And so we made a very strong effort to- to be together and spend that time together. And I think we did a good job. You know, we're still married and Camryn didn't run away, you know, so that was good.

AC: Or disowned.

JM: Or disowned. Yeah. So, yeah. Yeah. And then being, you know, how does that affect us as LGBTQ folks? I mean, again, it's, it's that, that, how do we maintain our social group with safety, you know, safety thing and being very creative of how did we you know,

maintain that contact? Either it was just by distance, you know, gathering. Our lovely friend would have parties at her home and she would mark out chalk out areas where -

AC: Six- six feet away from each other and-

JM: The family units would stay that group, you know, and so that we could socialize with each other. So just being very creative and maintaining those connections and checking in on each other and checking in on our neighbors to make sure that everybody was okay that had access to resources and, [00:10:00] and not feeling so socially isolated.

AC: Yeah.

CP: Yeah. Is there a particular story or memory that stands out from that time that feels like, wow, that was really- that was really 2020? Or, that was really COVID? Anything that stands out?

AC: Well, if you look to your right, you see a garden that's like a half a mile long. I have another garden over there by the shed. I have a really nice garden in the back and one on the side of the house. Yeah. And I also took the Master Gardener certification course, so I got into that and occupied my time and form of meditation. Because of the isolation, I- I'm an introvert and I had a really hard time in communication with my neighbors or whatever. It- there were days and weeks where I really wouldn't talk to anybody except for plants and they weren't very sociable. It was interesting to see how I struggled with that. And now I have no problem with it.

CP: So you were already retired at that point when COVID hit?

AC: I was retired.

CP: Okay.

AC: Was actually on adjunct faculty with the community college here teaching. And all my classes that I developed were experiential as well as academic, and then we hit with COVID and no more classwork, so I had to revamp everything. So it was a really good

experience to do that, getting used to- get an understanding of Canvas and- and interacting with students online. So- but once was enough.

JM: Yeah.

AC: I- the person- I like the intimacy of the classroom.,

JM: Right. And I just think, again, looking about a policy, how there was so much confusion, not knowing what was truth, you know, which was, you know, fake news supposedly and, and et cetera.

Yeah. To when finally, you know, the light opened up with the vaccines, COVID vaccines- and- and again in my- in my job, it was coming across people who didn't believe in vaccines and watching them die because of vaccine refusal and nothing that I could do, you know? And except educate and educate and educate and then- 'cause my- my patient population's very vulnerable. They're geriatric. And so that was the- that was the big take-home message is that how do I, as a healthcare provider who- who believes in science and who believes in vaccines and et cetera, know that they work, how do you- how do you have that shared medical decision with patients who don't have the same values, you know, and- and- and be able to provide care and service for them, even if they refuse it and watching them die.

You know, that was, that was a big eye-opener for me and how that impacted the way I practice. And even to today. You know, and again, we're seeing the same thing happening all over again with vaccines and, you know, and et cetera. So, and again, looking at pop-vulnerable populations, our trans groups, our LGBTQ youth who are- the suicide hotline is being taken away.

So it's, it's very difficult. I get emotional. Anyway. So again, how do you protect ourselves and find alternative resources for those vulnerable populations that are out there?

And yeah, and be very- how- be the- the advocate, not only politically, but you know, and in our community, find out what resources are out there.

We saw that UVA is- just closed their trans clinics, they- you know, and this whole thing with the president of the university, I mean, it's just like, oh my God. So again being a, a gay man. You know, we, it has reminiscence of what happened in- in the- in the- in the eighties with Ronald Reagan and AIDS, and Alan can talk about his experience with that. 'cause he was a strong advocate on, on working with AIDS support groups in Colorado and- and how we witnessed the- our community coming together and supporting each other during that awful time. And we're seeing the same thing happening again. History is revol- is- is- is- reliving itself and we're seeing things happening again with AIDS monies being taken, USAID being taken away from countries who need condoms, need HIV medications. And we're seeing all that go away because of- of a- of a belief system, you know? So yeah, I mean, it's just, it-

AC: The other is we,-we have an aging population and there's the, The Center here in town in Belvedere. I'm sure people have talked about that already. But we're the only ones that started an LGBTQ committee, which the Center accepted. It's the only one in the United States that has that component to it. And it was heartwarming when we opened it up to the public and more and more, um, gay, lesbian, bi, whomever, trans were [00:15:00] welcomed and it just began to grow.

And there, I remember this one woman whose part- partner, wife, had died and was isolated in Madison County. She didn't know anyone. There was no place to go. And she heard about this group and, and she came and she told her story and- and she was crying. Because this group was a form of community that she desperately needed and that went for, you know, men, women, whomever, and it continues to grow. So you just change course and

try to develop those kinds of resources to meets the needs of your own community and make it happen.

CP: Yeah, I think that is something that I was curious about. You know, you sort of discuss how your social life and your sort of personal communities changed during COVID. If, you know, you're having social distance gatherings, you're checking in on each other, maybe Zoom stuff, I don't know. How has the- how have those groups changed since coming out of the pandemic?

I mean, we're still in it. COVID still happening, to your point. Yeah. But you know, things have sort of gone back to normal. Do you found that, have you found that that sort of social circle has gone back to the way it was before the pandemic? Or how has that changed?

AC: Did we ever have a social-?

JM: No.

AC: No. We were family. We ever- sorry. We- we connected with other- others that had children, but our lives were no different than anybody, you know, straight gay, whomever. So a lot of our connections were, you know, our neighbor, you know, and, and others, Llezelle [Dugger] and- and it crossed over all boundaries.

JM: Yeah.

AC: But we had that, when Camryn was born, we got recognized as a family. I developed a program at UVA that served about 75,000 people here. And when we would go out I would introduce Joe, not as a partner, spouse, or whatever, but I'd always introduce him. And they would, you know, shake hands. But we were together all the time, so they would hardly recognize him or make recognition of him.

When Camryn was born, we went out and all of a sudden, you know, people changed and acknowledged him as my partner.

JM: Yeah.

AC: And they defined us differently and- and our friends became other families regardless of their gender or-

JM: Sexuality?

AC: Sexuality. Yeah.

CP: That makes sense. Did you all sort of define yourselves as a family before you had Camryn and it was just sort of the external perception of you all as a family or- or not?

AC: I don't think-

JM: He was always, you know, we've been together for so long at that point we were like, like 20 some odd years, I think.

AC: 17 years.

JM: Yes. That we had been together. And so, you know, I never really said he was my- my, I think I- I- like, I called you my partner. I called him my partner. Yeah. Partners, how we labeled each other. You know, we did a, a faux gay marriage in DC and-

AC: Gay Pride in 1993.

JM: And then, you know, and then everybody had that, you know, wedding. But you know, I still didn't call him my husband. I always said that I would not call him my husband until we officially were married. And since Virginia was home for us, you know, I said, I'm not gonna marry, we can't, I'm not gonna go someplace and get married.

You know, 'cause it- you know, it just doesn't mean anything, you know, it doesn't have that value that- so, yeah. But we- we always saw each other as, as, as a family. You know, he's- he was my partner, you know, and then when Camryn, when we got married and then Camryn, I mean, when Camryn was born and then we got married, then definitely that cemented us as a family.

AC: Such a lucky girl. Such lucky parents.

CP: So I think- that actually, I think, leads into something else that you were talking about, which is sort of, you know, the impact of the current political situation of the Trump administration. But before we get into the current thing, I think it might help to understand why it was so important for you all to get legally married in the first place. Because obviously, you know, to each other you had a very important, meaningful relationship. So why was it important? I believe you all got married on the- the first day that it was possible in Charlottesville in 2014, right?

AC: First men.

CP: Okay. The first men. Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. So why was it so important for you all to like get married, especially, you know, that day?

AC: I think the most important thing was for Camryn to have a married parents. I mean, that certainly came into play. I remember Joe making me get on my knees to propose. It's been 17 years! I mean-

JM: I did!

AC: And I guess- with the ring I said, "The ring's already on your finger." Go ahead.

JM: Well, again, we had legal documents to protect us in case, you know, financial, health wise, you know, power of attorneys, advanced medical directives, all that stuff, you know, but it wasn't enough. I mean, at any point anybody could have come in and- and prevented us- [00:20:00] me, or Alan from making any type of decisions, financial, medical, you know, whatever.

AC: Or taking Camryn.

JM: Or yeah- and then when Camryn was, was born, you know, came into our lives, you know, to, you know, separate us for whatever reason. Thank God our families didn't believe that, but you never- you know, society, you don't know. So it kind of offered protection, you know, getting married and so we again revamped those documents, you

know, several times we looked at 'em, and particularly today, we- we just went and had all of those legal documents, you know, cemented so that if anything should change, our family unit is protected. So, again-

AC: Wills and trusts and things like that.

JM: Yeah. You know, and all those medical documents that needed to be in place so that something happens, you know, 'cause we just- you just don't know what's gonna happen. Or if it happens, what's gonna change, you know, being- Alan is retired military, so one of the benefits I get is I get spousal benefits. Okay? What's gonna happen if- I didn't have that until we were able to get legally married. So what does that mean then with thousands and thousands of couples who are legally married, that's- what's gonna happen? Are we gonna be a separate class versus future gay people who are gonna get married? What does that mean to my benefits, my federal benefits?

Am my- are those gonna go away? You know, I'm lucky that I have my own health insurance and whatever. I don't have to worry about that. But there are other, again, vulnerable people who are gonna be potentially without those benefits and what's gonna happen. What's that safety net for these people?

Okay. That's my concern. And then Camryn, fortunately, Camryn's now an adult. Okay? So nobody can take her away from us. But again, the inheritance, you know, what happens with the inheritance and- or her being able to come in and help us when we are vulnerable, age- aging, and we need somebody to make decisions for us, you know, will the, will the law say, well, she's his child, but not my child, so she cannot speak to- for me in case I cannot, you know?

So, you know, those are the fears that we have in this political climate. Plus, I'm a Hispanic man. Okay. Hispanic origin. I'm- I'm a, you know, my family's been multi-generation in the United States, but my joke is, if I don't come home one day, look for me in,

in- in the- being in Florida, in the camp or, you know, deported to Uganda or something because of my- my ethnicity of my skin color, you know, and then add upon that, that I'm a gay man.

Oh my God. Look what happened to that poor gentleman who got- got deported to, I think it was El Salvador, right? 'Cause he was gay and he was, you know- anyway, you know, those are the- you know, those are the concerns that we have and the importance of having protection, you know, federal protection of our marriage, of being married and- and- and et cetera. Because we don't know what's gonna happen in this, with this, with this administration.

AC: I feel like we have a guardian angel. So he's right. When Camryn was born, the gay marriage wasn't in the picture. And so because of my military benefits, she would inherit all that insurance and, and whatever else. And so he put me down as the biological father on the birth certificate. And Kirsten, who's Camryn's mother, was obviously a biological mother. And- and that was how it went down. But then we also took it further where thankfully we got a lawyer and he took our case to court for us to have equal legal and physical custody of a newborn.

And the judge signed off on it and said, with our backgrounds, including her, Kirsten, her mom, it's a no brainer. It was a judge that worked with dysfunctional families. But yeah, so we got that. That's a legal document.

JM: We were like probably the only first and only gay couple in the state of Virginia to have legal and joint custody of- of a newborn. And we were in the right place at the right time. That's when Alan referred to as a guardian angel with us. Because we, we were purposefully because of our- our sexuality, we purposefully- and with Camryn's mother involved in all those decisions- decided how the birth was gonna happen, where it was gonna happen for those legal protections of us knowing that if we were, if Camryn was born in

Albemarle County versus Charlottesville city, it would- things would be different because then-

AC: It wouldn't have happened.

JM: The judicial system is different, the judges are different. And then having allies to guide us through that process and knowing the system where these documents are sealed. That again, we're protected. So again, it's then- bring it forward how- you need to be creative, you, how to know the system and how to protect your rights because your rights may or will be taken away.

How can you protect yourself as an LGBTQ+ [00:25:00] person? And so you need to be knowledgeable and know your allies and know your strengths. And that's the importance of community. Okay. And knowing the resources in Charlottesville, such as- as the senior center, you know, offering support to- as we age in place. Okay. As seniors- as gay seniors in this area. So, that's what's important about history, right. And building it forward. So, yeah.

CP: So, I am curious again, how, when you all first got here, how did you go about building that community that eventually got you to the point where you were able to have these people who helped you navigate the system and you know, got you to the point where- where you are now. Like how did you- how did you go about meeting people when you got here?

AC: That was, that was really difficult. I think because of the university is such a transient community, it's hard for people to really connect knowing that you're gonna be leaving at some point. In Charlottesville, it's- there weren't a whole lot of resources and- and so we ended up, somehow- a friend of mine had introduced us to a male couple and eventually they introduced us to others. And then you're invited to dinner parties and- and then that's- you start building your community. But it was like six to nine months before we made that kind of a connection [cell phone notification sound].

JM: Yeah.

AC: And then it just grew. Yeah. I've noticed over COVID- [cell phone notification sound] since COVID people communicate differently. Like most of our friends were, were lesbian, were women. Obviously they play together and uh, but now they, through COVID and more recent have communed within their own group and we're not a part of that anymore.

JM: Not as much as we were when we first moved to Charlottesville. It's kind of like things kind of changed.

AC: Yeah.

JM: We weren't in that little pod during COVID for some reason. For whatever reason it was just, you know, we weren't included in that. I think that kind of carried over. That kind of answers your questions of it's changed with COVID in our social group. We're still considered part of that group and we still meet, you know, but not as frequently. We're not- we're not invited to certain events, which is okay, you know, that's fine. But they're still considered our- our friends and our social group. The other thing is- I don't mean to cut you off.

AC: No, go ahead.

JM: Charlottesville has like little circles, little groups, and they overlap. Right. And so you meet somebody and they're in this social group, and then they're in another social group. And so you find that commonality and we recognized the lack of resources for LGBTQ folks when we moved here in the nineties. And so again, you know, there was all- there was the- the little nightclubs in the downtown if you were into that. And we weren't really into that. And that's okay. It had- it had its place and we understood that. And restaurants, there were certain restaurants that were owned by certain gay men.

And so, you know, that was where we would gather. Finally, because UVA was such a- a didactic type of community, transient community, there was that fear- that local fear, some smaller communities have of LGBT folks. And so we were able to establish a support group for not only for students, but for faculty. And he was involved in that.

AC: Lemme go into that. So, being on faculty at the university, I was also on faculty at the medical center and I also worked with both the university- and I worked with all of the departments and found out that there was an LGBT group for the residents in the medical school, that there was a group of faculty that formed their own group. The students had their own group. I'm sure there were other groups. And I had suggested to a couple friends of mine, why can't we bring everybody together, get the leaders of these different groups and begin to form some unity. 'Cause we have a lot to teach each other and rather than compartmentalizing and we wanna be among the same obviously, but, you know, coming together. So we did, we started out small with a number of the residents and the faculty and students. And one of the deans allowed us to use his- their- what do you call those houses?

CP: The Pavilions?

AC: The Pavilions. Yeah. So it was huge. And the first year- I mean, it took a lot of work and the first year we had about 30 people and then it just grew and the house was full.

CP: Was this UVA Pride or is this something else?

AC: It was- we had no real name for it. It was just the coming together.

CP: Do you remember who might have been involved? 'Cause I interviewed Claire and- I can't remember.

JM: Catherine Gillespie maybe.

AC: They weren't involved with that. And the people that were involved are no longer here. Jenny O'Flaherty was a pediatric anesthesiologist.

JM: She was more of a major-

AC: She was on it with me. I can't remember.

JM: That's, that's Charlottesville. People just move away. And so a [00:30:00] lot of times what happens is that because it's so transient, you have strong leaders, nobody replaces it. And so it kind of fades away, dissolves, and then it comes back, you know, and it comes back in different type, like pride. Okay? And we have Cville Pride now, you know, so those are the types of things- So you have strong leaders and as long as you have those strong leaders, it stays and it grows. But once the strong leader goes away, it kind of fades. So, right.

You know, right now I think we've got some groups out there with strong leaders are keeping things together. You see, Cville Pride has grown and we were- we- we saw that from its infancy to- to where- again, a small group of folks have, you know, had an idea. And they started really small and it just grew, grew, grew. And fortunately, another strong leader took over when the other ones stepped out, you know, and it's- look- look at what it is today. And you seen the same thing at the university, I think. Even though we're really not affiliated with the university anymore, we still see some of that.

AC: Well, we had a provost who was outwardly gay, who really did a lot in terms of advocating for all of us and made things happen. And we're doing the same thing again now. I mean, we're compartmentalized, you know, we had the senior center and then we have, I forgot his name. It's the 30-year-olds and 40-year-olds.

JM: Oh, Elliot.

CP: Oh, Jason Elliot. Get Out Cville, whatever he calls it. Yeah.

AC: Right, right. And who else know? I mean, I don't even know what else is out there.

JM: And also I think historically when we, we were not allowed to be married, and this is what Catherine [Gillespie] talked a lot about in her interview about André [Hakes], her- her- her- wife going to Llezelle Dugger, and before Llezelle you know, for Valentine's

Day and how we would get together and have the dinners, you know, to celebrate, you know, our- our- our relationships during that time. And that was another opportunity for people to gather and celebrate each other in a safe place. And then having a purpose, you know, and a goal, you know, and then- we don't do that anymore because there really is not a need because, well, we're- we're- we have gay marriage, well, it may change, you know, that may be the emphasis for us to get together again as a, as a community and a group for support, you know?

AC: And that's how, that's how community could- is formed. Right?

JM: Right. And it's evolved to like small- again, we're going back to that small group of people where we're going out to dinner in people's homes and things like that, but not a big community group like it was before. You know? And I think because we are aging in place, we value the senior center for offering those opportunities for us to get together. And it's- it's a lot. You just go to the website and you can find out about it. It's just- it's just amazing, you know? So.

CP: So are the people that you have met through the senior center, is that like a different group of folks than you sort of had met or been friends with in the past? Or is it kind of the same group of people now? You're all sort of older going to The Center?

JM: It's both. So people that we've known for years in Charlottesville who've aged in place with us, they're now members. And because a lot of people who retired to Charlottesville- Charlottesville's a big retirement community, for whatever reason, these people come to Charlottesville, either be closer to their families or they decided this is the place they want to live, whatever, regardless.

AC: They're alumni, a lot of-

JM: Oh, they- they're alumni. Yes. You know, Charlottesville always pulls you back. We're meeting new people again and yeah, so it's- it's great. You know, it's- and- and you're

finding people from all over coming here and we have all that commonality. There's a lot of commonality. They're bringing new ideas. Our experiences about how- what it is to age not only as a gay person, but also in this community, you know, and not only how fortunate we are to have resources like the university hospital, like The Center but also what- what's missing, what's not there. Okay. And what I'm finding is that there's the- the hidden community, our- our people who grew up in this community who are kind of like either socioeconomically depressed or just don't have that sense of community for whatever reason. What resources are there for them? Okay. And again, I'm going back. It goes- it goes like to our trans folks and to our youth and to our older trans folks. What's- what is missing for them? Healthcare wise, community wise, resources wise because I don't see a lot of people like that in the senior center. Okay. Where are they? You know, why are they invisible and what can we do to help support them? That's, that's a big missing piece in Charlottesville, Albemarle, and our surrounding counties for LGBTQ folks.

CP: Oh, where do I wanna go? [laughter] Well, I think you brought up, so- no, you've brought up so many interesting threads. I think one thing that I've been thinking about a lot, and I think you all mentioned it, is how this sort of era is in some ways reminiscent of like AIDS and Reagan and sort of the- the non-response, you know, in that, in that time period. So, I'm curious how, if you wanna talk- whatever you'd [00:35:00] like to share about sort of your experience with AIDS epidemic or you know, sort of community building or activism around that time. Um, and then how you're thinking about that and if that is informing how you're thinking about what's happening now. If it just feels like a- just a regression. Yeah. How that is affects, how that affects maybe the planning that you're doing. Yeah. I'm just really curious how you all are, sort of- what your experiences were and then how that's affecting what you're thinking about now.

AC: After I'm done, maybe you can make the connection with the AIDS and now are somehow similar. But we were in a- well, we were in living in a strong Hispanic Catholic community.

JM: In Colorado.

AC: In Colorado. I was in charge of a department there and I was getting phone calls from, I wanna say kids, 20 year olds, from San Francisco and other areas, they want to come home. Diagnosed with AIDS. So we had nothing. And it was gonna be the first time. Not only were their parents gonna find out about them being gay, but then they're coming home to die.

So it was pretty emotional. I went to the director of the health department and talked to him about it. Did the same thing that I'm known for. Pulled in 32 leaders in the community, from the police department to nursing homes, to um, Medicaid and social services. And we met. And out of those 33, 32 came, which I was really surprised for that, but, but they were invested in this particular- and then it blossomed and then we joined with another one and blossomed all over Colorado. But

JM: AIDS support groups is what he's-

AC: Yeah. But also developing the services. Mm-hmm. I have a funny story, but I won't tell you.

CP: We love funny stories, but it doesn't have to- you don't have to tell me. Yeah.

AC: So I'm not making the connection with, I mean, I don't compare AIDS- well, yeah. I compare AIDS to what we went through with COVID.

JM: I think the connection is again, talking about how federal and sometimes state and local agencies or leaders, either with their own value system had- they skewed it and they, we were marginalized or ignored, the resources weren't there. And unfortunately-

because of that, hundreds of thousands of millions of gay people died, you know, or suffered, you know, and their families.

And then, you know, how does that carry over to today? Well, we saw that with COVID. It was, it didn't have to be gay, you know, for that to happen. It happened to our country, and we still have a group of people, a group of people who just didn't have to, didn't believe in it, you know? And even today, how-

AC: They were glad that they were dying.

JM: Yeah, yeah. It was, you know, God's wrath, you know, things like that. And same thing that we're seeing today, the same mindset of dysfunction, not only at the federal level, state level, local levels, but also with communities of, again, taking away gay rights, taking away trans rights, and not understanding the impact of, not only of us, but community as a wide, because as the, as the saying goes, who's next?

You know? So, again, history is repeating itself and because it's been a distance and a lot of people don't, especially younger folks who didn't grow up with that, they forget. Okay. And so it's our responsibility as the seniors of our- of our groups is to not only be the historians, but the leaders, but also the allies, the teachers, the educators, you know, and not to place blame, but to help hold a hand and hand up so we cannot repeat or minimize the harm that we suffered- our- our- our group suffered. You know?

AC: That was a hard time.

JM: It was, it was, it really was awful. It's- it's gonna probably-

AC: It's gonna die off with us. I mean, the fifties were very difficult. We don't need to go back. But I grew up in fear. I think a lot of people now, they still have the fear, um, especially with the current administration, but it's- it's different. You know, back then it was, you know, conversion therapy. And gay women would go in, they were pregnant and give birth, they'd be sterilized without their permission. And so for me now again I'm Russian, I'm

Jewish, first generation, and, and there's this fear coming back again during the administration's first, you know, term of office, of the violence. And, [00:40:00] uh, now we're gonna see it. And which is one of the main reasons why, you know, we want to leave the country. We'd like to advocate, but we'd also like to pass that on, 'cause I'm tired. I've been advocating a lot. So-

JM: Yeah.

AC: So you talk, go ahead.

JM: So you talk about, you know, our safety and being there for our community, but again, we have to think about our family unit. Particularly as being a gay family. And our concern about not only our- our safety, but our daughter's safety.

AC: And the dogs.

JM: And the dogs, of course the dogs. And then- and what does that mean to us? Because there's- this administration has been in only in power for such a short period of time and look at how drastic change- things have changed and all the threats that are coming out even today of the militarization of, of our cities and towns, particularly of- of- of Democratic strongholds and the gerrymandering that's- that they're doing, taking away the votes, you know, their plans to eliminate mail-in voting and things like that.

So- so you have to be prepared and not only with legal documents in place, but if you have the means to maybe even leave the country so that you're safe. It's reminiscent of what happened in Germany, you know, and where- again, it, it's the ignorance of folks or the denial of folks that things were happening in the backyard, but it didn't happen to me. You know, we're seeing that. The- the foundation is happening and yes, there are protests that are out there, but they're not the right- they're, they're, I don't think that they're strong enough yet. It has to be an economic protest. When the dollar, the bottom line is the dollar, when we impact the economy, will the leaders start to listen?

And we're not at that point yet, you know, and as a federal employee, I can't participate in that because my livelihood is gonna be pulled away from me. Okay. And I've been told that. Okay. I'm not afraid to say it. It's well known. So again, you know, one of the options if you have- as a gay person, who values our relationship with values, our family unit is maybe we need to leave this country. And by- thank goodness some of us have the means, some of us don't. You know? So again, uh, we need to think about how we can prepare ourselves for, um, situations of violence because we're seen an up rise of violence against, uh, people of color. Trans people are being murdered. You know, gay youth, their increased amounts of suicide or potential suicide because the resources are being pulled away. You know, so we- we have to, you know, we have to think about what options are available to us. And I think that's what what you're saying.

CP: Yeah. That totally makes-

JM: How bleak this conversation has become!

CP: I know. Well, I think it's interesting, and this is why I asked the question, is because as someone who looks, who, you know, who sort of studies queer history, but obviously I wasn't alive during the AIDS epidemic. You know, I sort of look at that and I'm like, well, things have been bad before. And a lot of people obviously didn't survive, to your point. Like there were a lot of people who didn't make it, but in many ways, like-

AC: And rejected by parents.

CP: Yeah, yeah. And that, yeah, certainly not to minimize that time at all, but like, we made it through, you know? And so are we gonna, so looking to that as like, things have been bad before. They're bad now. We made it through then, we'll make it through now. Do you all feel that? Or does this feel different to you?

AC: It takes a crisis. I mean, that's what brings people together. It has, again, I mean, that's my experience and that's my belief. When it certainly gets to a point where it's imploding and you're at that- that crisis point, that's when people unite and come together.

JM: It's called a revolution. That was my point about the economics. You know, you have to have- you have to have something that's going to-

AC: Affect everybody.

JM: Affect the, the total, not just the few. Okay. My daughter. You know, I- I- I- I believe that how I spend my money, you know, if there is a, a company whatever that doesn't support DEI or LGBTQ, I don't spend my money there. Okay? Because it's my- the bottom line is I don't have to, you don't- you don't have- you don't deserve my money, so I'm not gonna spend my money for you. There are alternatives, okay? So we need to have that revolution and to say that, you know, not to minimize what happened to the AIDS population because things did get better.

It was a different time. People thought differently. There was a different political situation, okay? This political situation that we live in, it's nothing that we've ever seen in this country before. And you just have a group of people that are so entrenched in their belief systems on either side that we can't come together in the middle. And that's what's missing that- be able to, to come together and to give and take.

AC: It's like the north and the south.

JM: Yeah. I mean, you [00:45:00] know, so that you take care of the whole. Okay. And not just me. Okay. So I don't know. I want- I have hope. I really do have hope and I do have hope that hopefully with the next election cycle, uh, we can take over the House, hopefully the Senate if- if things happen, you know? Oh, okay. Like that election. Yeah. You know, so yeah, I mean, I do have hope, you know, even though I sound bleak and whatever, it's not gonna deter me to be who I am- my- to- to identify myself as a gay man to support my

family and to look to what I can do to be- to support my community and be out there and help them. Okay. Yeah.

CP: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Um, I'm curious, you all both sort of alluded to this, um, but how does being an interracial relationship sort of affect the planning that you all are doing? Has that affected your relationship or rather your experiences? You know, obviously as a, you said a first-generation Russian gay man and a- a Mexican,

JM: You were Jewish, is that what you said?

AC: Jewish and Catholic, yeah.

CP: Okay.

JM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

CP: So interracial and inter uh, religious. Religious, yeah. Yeah. So do you- how has that affected your relationship or even your experiences of just being like an out couple and then how is that affecting your planning for the future? If it is.

JM: Well, we also have a- a- a Buddhist monk who lives with us. So we have a shrine in our backyard. The only one between New York and Atlanta, Georgia. So Camryn was raised with the Buddhist monk with the Buddhist values. Okay. So that's the other thing to throw in that mix of, of multiculturalism in our family.

AC: Right. Well, and having the exposure to Mongolian and Bhutanese and sleepovers with Tibetans and-

JM: Yeah, that's Camryn as a kid, but how, how is our, our-

AC: Our relationship? You, I mean he, I just think of August- that whole August, uh, when he got surrounded. He-

JM: August 17th, uh, with the-

CP: The Unite the Right rally?

JM: Unite the Right rally. Yeah. Yeah.

CP: August 11th and 12th in 2017.

AC: I was raised Orthodox Jewish, so I was, you know, destined to marry a Jewish woman. And- and one with money. Of course, you know, so- and the Orthodox, it was fundamentalist back then. He was raised Catholic. And so with the relationship is, well, how are we gonna bring her up and which way do we go, you know? And my parents... we never really talked about or told them, although they would come and visit, stay overnight with us.

JM: And there's Joe.

AC: Yeah. And he courted my mother by sending her gifts all the time. So she was quite happy.

JM: I was a pseudo Jewish-

AC: Yeah.

JM: Daughter-in-law.

AC: And found out that, you know, it's kind of- although she didn't understand what a nurse- nurse practitioner was, it's like a doctor, okay, you're married to a doctor. And- and- then we found out he was part Ashkenazi and my prayers were answered. Jewish and a doctor, you know? So, so I don't think it's really- it was more my parents and me going through what I was going through in terms of where, what do I say and when do I really-

JM: It's more out of respect, you know, we respected- we didn't have to throw it in their face, you know, they know his- I cared for his father when he was going through throes of cancer. And so he and I developed a relationship and he knew our- Alan and I's relationship, but didn't have to really say-

AC: Didn't have to talk about it.

JM: And he recognized it and it was just- it was to honor him, you know, that was- that was the whole thing. And then-

AC: My mother was not a problem.

JM: No. She was like-

AC: The other part was Jewish mother- men, the men in my family were raised as the high priests, the kohen, so how we were looked upon and the example that we were supposed to demonstrate was- was high standards. So that was another factor that, you know, entered my world in terms of my dad and how he would react. But he came around on his own. He did come around on his own, yeah.

JM: Being respectful. And then I went, I think I've never converted to Judaism, but I went to- to the- to the shul. And I- I mean, I took classes to understand what the heck, what- you know, what is this?

AC: No, we do Christmas and we do Hanukkah, and-

JM: Yeah, we celebrate the, the holidays. But yeah, I mean, just again, having an understanding of, of who he is, the value that he- how he was raised with that, does that mean, and how do we put that together in our- in our relationship, you know? And I think that's part of the reasons why we, we, we've maintained this relationship for- for 40 years, right? [00:50:00] It's 40 years. It's just that acknowledgement of not only our similarities, but also the differences in learning from that, you know, and bringing us together. I- again, I was raised in a very strong Hispanic Catholic family and community. And when I came out, you know, my family was- they didn't quite understand it, but they were accepting because I was their son. You know, there was- they were not going to, you know, not accept me, you know, that was just not given, you know.

But then when Alan came into my life, that was just like, you know, my grandfather, he's- he said- he would always call Alan, "How's your man? How's- how's your guy doing?" You know? And then I think the cement part was, he told me after we'd been together for a while, he said, "You know, he's a really good guy. Don't you mess it up." [laughter] You

know? And I said, "Okay, there you go." I mean, I don't- I have nothing to worry about with my family, you know? So. Yeah.

CP: Yeah.

AC: Yeah.

CP: So this is a sort of a hypothetical question, but do you feel like an increased sense of urgency because of in this sort of current state, do you feel increased pressure because you are who you are? You know, because you sort of alluded to, because you have Mexican heritage and you're Jewish. Do you have- do you feel an increased sense of urgency around the, the preparations you're making? Or do you feel like you would be preparing differently if you were just two, like run of the mill white guys?

JM: Probably. So, I mean, again, I think the- the thing is that one we're- we're gay. Okay. Two, he's- you know- of our ethnicities. Okay. So, you know- and then again, our family unit. Yeah. And it's just this, you know, we- we see the signs, you know, we don't- we're not, you know, ignoring them. And so it's best to be prepared and we- we've always believed in that it's best to be prepared and how having a plan in place, so if something happens, then you can implement that.

So, you know, the take home message is, you know, it's- it's- it's you have to recognize the situation you are on. And one of the lessons that we've always pounded Camryn's head-

AC: Stay ahead, stay ahead of it.

JM: Is safety. Your safety is most important. And believe in that internal alarm. And so that you can recognize that when you are in harm's place that you'll know, then you can act, but have a plan in place so that you can act, you know, and, and extricate yourself from that situation. And I think that being gay men who are- who's Jewish and who's Hispanic, who has a- a daughter, that we are not ignoring those red flags, those signs, and we're- we're

acting on it. And so that's the take home message to anybody is- and regardless of the situation, we could have- this could have happened in the Biden administration, the previous administration. You know, things could have gone awry, you know, we would've acted the same way. Okay. But we know this administration is- is coming after- it's happening.

AC: I'm just- I don't- I am totally tired of living in fear. I mean, when we got married and we came down to steps and Channel 29 was there and the C-Ville was there and our pictures published all over the place, it's like, holy shit. You know? It's like they find out the address, what can happen? I mean, that's how it was when I was growing up. Orthodox Jew, you get beaten up, you get harassed, whatever. 'Cause it was an antisemitic community. I don't want- I don't want that anymore at my age. It's- it'll kill- it'll kill me.

JM: But it didn't happen. People honked the horns. They celebrated us. You know? I was not out, I was working in a medical practice in the [Shenandoah] Valley, and I wasn't out to those people because it wasn't the place for that. And I got calls from people that I would never expect, you know, to congratulate me on- on being married. You know? It was just- it was amazing, you know?

CP: Yeah.

AC: How- did you grow up with a lot of fear just being gay or-?

JM: Not being gay. I was- being Hispanic, I was always told by my grandparents "Avoid the authorities - police- as much as possible." You never want to be in a situation, particularly alone, being a Hispanic male. And that carried over into my adulthood, even to when I was working in Longwood University, driving home in the middle of the night, you know, on the back roads. They would have these random stops 'cause there was a big drug courier run from Florida through Virginia to New York being stopped in the middle of the night thinking, "oh my God, my family doesn't know where I'm at. I don't have cell phone service. I'm gonna be killed by this police officer." You know, didn't happen. But again, that-

that fear that it was brought up with being a Hispanic male. You know- you know, vomited back up, but not ever as a gay man, was I afraid of being gay?

AC: No.

JM: But again, I would not put myself in a situation of harm.

AC: Right.

JM: You know, so. Yeah.

CP: Yeah. Alan, you mentioned something that happened around the Unite the Right rally with you, JoeM. Yeah. Do you wanna talk about that?

JM: I'll try not to get emotional. I always do. Okay. So because we have the [00:55:00] Tibetan temple here on our property, the Tashi Choeling Buddhist Center, the Charlottesville Clergy Collective was reaching out for religious folks, leaders, to come together and to prepare for any future rallies that were planning to happen. And so I got involved in that and was involved with the St. Paul[s Memorial Church] being closed with the- the Torch- Torch thing- march.

CP: It would've been on Friday, the night before the rally.

JM: Right, exactly.

CP: Just for context, St. Paul's was right across from UVA, right?

JM: Exactly. That's where it was. Yeah.

CP: Yeah, it was right across from the Rotunda.

JM: Right. Yeah. Being- being locked into the building, the services, being escorted out by the police to my car being chased by people with, you know, because of who I looked like- what I looked like, you know-

AC: Torches.

JM: Hor- horrible stuff. Being spat at, you know. And that was the night before, you know, I was like, oh my God. You know, and getting home. And then the next day, going to

services at the First Baptist Church on Main Street, and being warned that there is a group of Nazi protestors that are outside the door, and then again, having to be escorted through the march. I participated by being in the first aid station, you know, and being available to anybody who got hurt regardless of the side, you know? And finding this young man being- bleeding on the side of the road, you know, reaching out to him and he said, "Get away from me, you know, expletive you know, whatever." Realizing, okay, you don't need my help. I'm sorry. You know, you know, you know, we're here if you need us.

And- and then coming home and seeing this car, you know- okay. Seeing this car, circling the streets of the downtown and then realizing that was the vehicle that killed the young woman, Heather [Heyer], you know, and avoiding that. You know, and then living through the trauma of all that and taking- having- you know, coming to put it in its place with- with support of my family. And some therapy and belief in our community and still being active, you know, even today where now there are groups that are gathering, again, forming a plan, you know, and we're seeing the protests in Charlottesville for-

The big thing is that I cannot actively participate in them like I did before, but I could still- I could still be there and present and offer my advice and my suggestions and my insight, you know? So, yeah, it was a-

And then the consequences of what happened after that, where we- so gathering together as a community to share our experiences with that and come up and hopefully come up with a plan. But again, things kind of stopped, you know? And so, you know, again, the- the further away it goes, the memory is missing.

And so again, we're- we're still dealing with the same problems, you know, with housing, with homelessness, and again, bringing it forward with the healthcare services for LGBTQ folks, those vulnerable populations, you know, it's still there. It never went away and we're still dealing with that. We, you know, and- but who knows, you know, the same groups

are now felt empowered because we're still in this administration and they're look what's happening with the Smithsonian and- you know, not recognizing, you know, DEI and- and all that stuff. So it's like, it's- it's gonna happen again. It's just a matter of time when it's gonna happen again and how we need to be prepared so that hopefully we don't have such hor- I- I don't have to go through such- That horrible experience again. Yeah, yeah.

CP: Yeah. So, you know, you've talked a little bit about the ways that you all have been involved with The Center and some of the needs that you see in the community for yourself and for other people, younger people, older people, whatever. What would you like to see in Charlottesville in terms of LGBTQ people in particular? Like, what are some of the big needs? What would you like to see? What's your ideal vision for the future here, either for you two or really broadly?

AC: When you say broadly? Oh, in terms of-

CP: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Like obviously like services for young trans people are not necessarily going to affect you two directly, but it is something that you- it's nice to have.

JM: And support.

CP: Yeah.

AC: There are- there are services for trans adolescents, which is nice to see after that in terms of more- what's the word I want- but that's it for trans that I'm aware of. I'd like to see more resources for them. I'd like to see more community where they're involved and integrated into us.

JM: I think for [01:00:00] the future for us, I think like I say, even though I- I sounded bleak, I still see some hope and there, there is some hope that we still have. And again I'm looking forward to retirement which means spending more time with my husband and getting ready for this next phase of our life. Helping our daughter on her next new adventure into New York and whatever that's gonna blossom from that, we're really excited about that.

Yeah. And then just what I see- a community wide- again, I think we need to see how we can find those invisible people that are lost. And need the help and finding the resources for them because not everybody can afford going to The Center you know, which is which would be great.

What's out there like Jefferson Area Board of Aging? Do they recognize LGBTQ folks? What resources are available for them? You know, we have patient- people who are socially isolated, particularly the elderly who are very vulnerable. How can we identify them? I've- I've seen wonderful programs where children, LGBTQ adolescents who are fostered in long-term care facilities, where they have mentors, and some of these LGBTQ folks are geriatric, so they have that intergenerational type of thing. So being- how can we be creative of not only finding the vulnerable population in our group and finding the resources that we can bring these vulnerable populations together and support each other. You know, Charlottesville is a great community to live in. It's beautiful.

AC: Diverse.

JM: It's very diverse. And a lot of us have the same value system, thank goodness. And so again, it's just how do we find each other and learn how we can support each other and 'cause I'm definitely gonna need it as I age here, you know? And- yeah. So that- that's what I'm hoping for the future of Charlottesville and for our community. Yeah.

CP: Yeah.

AC: Well said.

CP: What's one thing you all- or more than one- it can be however much you want, something you wish people knew about being gay in Charlottesville that maybe you think people don't know?

JM: Hmm. That's a really good question.

AC: What do we think people should know that they don't know?

CP: Yeah.

JM: Do you have any idea?

AC: Go- go ahead and maybe I'll spear off. I don't-

JM: I mean, again one thing that I found out of all of my experiences is that you- there are these small communities religious, sovereign- sovereign church, I think is what it's called. I've been through a couple services there. Loved it. You know, to The Center to the, some of the restaurants and clubs that are out there. I don't know if there's many any at all now in Charlottesville, but also university- UVA- hopefully still has some organizations together. You know, finding those niches and those niches that fit and work for you and then how you can bring them together, you know, is- is- is there repository of all of the resources? I dunno, maybe Elliot-

CP: Jason Elliot.

JM: Jason Elliot. He- he's- he knows how to do that. I don't know. I'm not-

AC: He's ahead of the game. I think the uni- have you talked with anybody from the university?

CP: Yeah, I talked to Gary Nimax.

JM: Oh, Gary. Yeah.

CP: And a couple of other folks who now of course I'm blanking on that.

JM: Yeah, that's okay.

CP: But yeah, I have spoken to Gary Nimax and a couple of other people who have been involved in- in the university.

JM: Yeah. Again, it's just, it's just finding those entities that are out there, you know, that fit you and then getting together, you know, and bringing 'em together. And I don't know if there's a- a- a resource, a directory, I don't know, a listerv or something, you know? I don't know. But yeah, I think that's, that's the one thing to be, to- to- to be able to survive in

Charlottesville as a queer person, LGBTQ person. It's- it's finding those- those- those resources, those niches, and then just going out there and, and being involved.

AC: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

CP: I think the aging question is interesting because- and maybe this is just because of who I am and like the fact that I'm in my thirties, I feel like there's- I know of a lot of things for people my age and younger, but if I was like a full- I also don't have kids. And so, you know, I feel like, yeah, I don't know if there's a lot for people who are 40 plus-

AC: Single.

CP: Really- yeah, single 40 plus. Like-

AC: When I was at UVA, that was- I ran an internal counseling center. That was one of the hardest, most difficult was people feeling isolated that were single.

JM: Right.

AC: How do I- where do I go? What, how do I find somebody? And it's even more so when you're gay. You know, at least you can go to church and fit in, you know, when you're gay and [01:05:00] you don't have any gay groups in church. So they- they either left or they found- they- they met somebody and they stayed and they're still here. Yeah.

JM: Yeah. I think, yeah, that was the biggest thing that we, you know, that we- we found, fortunately we had each other. We didn't have to go through that, you know? But yeah, that's- that's one of the most common comments I hear a lot, even to today. You know, it's- it's really hard being single and gay in Charlottesville. I mean, I don't- thank God, I don't want to go through that. But can you imagine being older, you know, being a widower or something like that? It's like, how do you do- how do you connect? I don't know. I, I don't ever wanna find that out.

AC: Well, that's what I mean, that's what's happened. And when I talk about this woman that-

JM: Yeah.

AC: You know, lost her partner and found this Center you, there's quite a few, right. And as you age, you're- you're social group is really mixed-

JM: Yeah.

AC: In terms of, you know, straight, but whomever. Yeah. And if you're a parent, that's an- that's even another group. You know?

JM: Right.

AC: So it's hard for them.

JM: Right. And I think, I mean, I serve a lot of rural patients that live in the rural communities here in Charlottesville, and they're isolated. I can't imagine being a senior gay person living in Buckingham County or Madison County or Green County or Louisa, where you're so isolated, how do you-

AC: And not accepted.

JM: And have no resources. And it's totally different world in these rural communities, you know? I mean, you know, how do we expand the loveliness that we have in resources that we have in Charlottesville out to these other communities? I mean, you know, it's just- it's just mind boggling. I can't imagine how- how to be gay and senior in these rural communities in Virginia. How to survive. Yeah. Amazing.

AC: I'm hungry.

CP: Well, thank- thankfully, my- my last question is- is there anything else you, any all- any of the three of you would like to share for the historical record? We've covered a lot of ground, but is there anything else that you wanted to, anything else you wanted to share?

AC: No, I'm, I'm not as hopeful as you, at least I'm not gonna see in my lifetime. I don't think you're gonna see in your lifetime the- the hope coming to fruition in terms of the change that you would like to see. All right. And we can talk about this at the

dinner.

JM: Dinner tonight. Yeah.

AC: It's gonna be a long time.

JM: It's going to- it's gonna take some time. It's gonna take some time and it's gonna take some effort, you know? And like you say, you know, we- history- we look at the Civil Rights Movement, we look at the AIDS epidemic, you know, and now we're looking at what's happening in today's world. You know, I have, I have-

AC: You all come together.

JM: Yeah. Yeah. I have hope. You know, it may not be the ideal, but I do, I have belief in America. And I may be having rose colored glasses or whatever, but I do believe there's the majority and not the minority will overcome what's happening, you know, and things can, will- will change. And, and I'm hoping for the- for the better for everyone, regardless if they're gay or not.

AC: We need hopeful people. I do believe there's gonna be a civil war. I do.

JM: Okay.

AC: And Tracy Chapman. Do you know Tracy?

JM: Singer?

CP: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AC: She has a song about that and it's true. Yeah.

CP: Camryn, anything you wanna add?

CMC: I don't think so.

JM: We make you feel sad?

CMC: I mean, a little.

JM: I know, I'm so sorry. Yeah. Will be joyful.

AC: Remember you- you are a different generation, and what we grew up with was a much more hostile and fearful environment than a lot of it is now. So, I'm not saying I don't have hope. I'm just saying this will trickle down for generations.

JM: Yeah.

AC: And you'll live with it. We lived with the politics that we went through. You know, and- and move on. You learn to integrate and become a part of it and define yourself and move forward. So no different. Maybe.

JM: Okay. Well thank you so much.

CP: Yeah, thank you all.

**END OF RECORDING**