

Nicole LeFavour

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Transcript

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VOICE RECORDING

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DINA DENNEY

All right, so in this interview, I will be talking to Senator Nicole LeFavour, and I want to start off by thanking you for taking the time to discuss your personal story with me, and if at any time I ask you a question you don't want to answer, please feel free to let me know, and we can pass it.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Okay.

DINA DENNEY

Okay, and then at the end I have an informed consent that we'll look over, and you'll sign if you agree.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Okay, sounds good.

DINA DENNEY

All right, so to begin with, what is your full name and what do you prefer to be called?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

It's Nicole LeFavour. I don't have a middle name, and I just go by Nicole.

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome. All right, and then, when and where were you born?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I was born actually in Aspen, Colorado--

DINA DENNEY

Okay.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

--in 1964.

DINA DENNEY

Awesome. Awesome, okay, so this segment is going to talk about family. So what was most important to you growing up?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

My family always lived in kind of wild places. Aspen might not sound like a very wild place now, but at the time it had dirt streets, and we lived half an hour out of town, at the end of a dirt road two miles from any pavement. And we had horses, and we could just walk a couple feet and we were on forest service or BLM land, and just wander up into the trees and play in aspen groves or sagebrush or all kinds of different things, in a pond, and I spent a lot of time outdoors. My sister and I, we would go over the mountains, see what's on the other side, and took a lot of long hikes. My parents owned a restaurant.

DINA DENNEY

Oh, cool.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

And, so they worked a lot in the ski season, and they had an off season, and we would sometimes travel. And so, I was really lucky. I got to see quite interesting places in the world when I was young.

DINA DENNEY

Sounds like an adventure.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Always.

(Both laugh)

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

My dad's an adventurer. He explored northern Canada, he dropped out of college to go on a canoe trip, and someone died on the trip and all these things, so he's a very adventuresome person. So is my mom.

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome. That's awesome. Okay, so to discuss some things, I've researched about you. You were involved in the It Gets Better Project.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yes. I recorded a video for It Gets Better. I just think the world of that project, I think it's great.

DINA DENNEY

It was amazing. I was looking into it just researching you, and it had some pretty powerful messages. It was awesome. So, I just had a couple questions about the video you posted, and you were discussing that, when your mother came out, you were determined after that that you didn't want to be gay. So, how did that experience impact you?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I think it had a pretty major impact because it was kind of at a formative time, and I kind of put up some walls, like "I am never going there." I mean, obviously people don't like gay people. They've told my mom she needed counseling, she lost friends, things like that, and obviously she got a divorce. My sister had a really hard time with it, and so, I think I didn't realize what kind of walls I made. I said, I'm never gonna be gay, and I'm not even gonna think about it. So, I proceed through college, without even really realizing all these little walls have been built. A lot of my friends, it turns out, were gay, and I gravitate towards rowing on the women's crew team, which is full of lesbians, and things like that.

(Both laugh)

But, it wasn't until I got back to Boise and was starting to get involved politically. The No on One campaign hadn't quite happened. The anti-gay initiative wasn't filed yet, but I was helping the ACLU do some research on some of the legal issues that might come up with if there were anti-gay measures proposed in Idaho. And I met Mary Rohlifing and Jen Ray, they were really the first adult lesbian couple that I really ever knew well, and I started to realize all the walls I'd put up, and that I really had kind of made this little place I wouldn't go. For a while, I'd kind of been saying, "It's not about the gender of the person you love." And of course, with my mom being gay, I would be very accepting and always interested in working on gay issues and supporting causes and things like that, but at that point, I kind of started to realize that I had really very much told myself there was a place I wasn't going. And when the campaign actually began in 2004, or prior to that, I was hired as a staff person, and I met my first girlfriend on the campaign. And so, that was pretty wonderful, and I remember little conversations with our campaign manager, and especially with Jen and Mary, about, so, is it okay if I start to say, "We gay people," now, kind of a thing--

(Both laugh)

--instead of "they" as an ally. Just that whole thing, and Diane Sands, who's a legislator in Montana now, she was our campaign manager, and she came back from a trip and brought me my first Pride necklace, and I still have that, and I wear that sometimes. But that was kind of cool.

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome. That's a great story. Okay, so in relation to what we were just discussing about your childhood, you said that during that time, you received a lot of support from educators in your school. So how did that impact you, just having their support?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Our school, I wouldn't say that we talked a lot about gay people, but I can say that any kind of taunting or negative attitudes towards kids would be really frowned upon. And I wouldn't say that there were incidents that I can remember that are really striking in the school, but I think we all were really aware that you just didn't treat people that way, and that gay people were okay, that one of our teachers was gay. It was not openly talked about a lot. It actually was fairly quiet and, there were some issues to school. It certainly wasn't perfect. There were some things that happened there I think, that are totally inappropriate. Things like that. But the school really did have an atmosphere where you just, you knew you wouldn't treat gay people badly.

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome, that's great. Okay so, just to shift gears, how old were you when you did become aware of your sexual identity? Do you remember?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

It was during the No on One campaign in 1994. So, I think I was 30. Yeah, I'd just turned 30.

DINA DENNEY

Awesome.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I waited all those years. I can always say, I have said this before, that I made a really good try at being heterosexual.

(Both laugh)

I really did. I tried for a good 10 years.

DINA DENNEY

Better late than never. That's awesome. Okay, so were you at all resistant to claiming this new identity once you'd found it?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well yeah, for 10 years pretty much. I mean, once I kind of relaxed and realized that I'd really intentionally put up walls, it felt good just to be able to be more comfortable with somebody. There is a real difference. I mean, I never really felt that comfortable, and things just didn't work as well, trying to be a straight, heterosexual person. And so, meeting my first girlfriend, and seeing what that was like was kind of a revelation. It's that "Aha moment." Like, "Oh, this is what was missing."

(Both laugh)

DINA DENNEY

Okay, so, what you've talked about, the campaign you were on, that kind of brought this awareness to you. So, was that your influence in coming out, or what was your influence?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I think meeting gay people who lived wonderful lives and were great human beings and community leaders that I respected deeply. John Hummel and Brian Bergquist were on the campaign, another wonderful couple that you couldn't help but respect and think the world of. I had really wonderful people to really get to know. Of course, my mom had partners, and one of her partners, who she ran a café with in Chalice, is still up there. I talked to her on the phone the other day. She's just like a stepmom to me, in a way. And, my mom's current partner is just an amazing person. I love her dearly, and I think, I definitely put some walls between myself and my mom a little bit, but not as much as maybe my sister did. And so, I always did hang out with my mom, and I knew her as a gay person, but your mom is different. Your mom is your mom, and your mom's girlfriends, they're a step-parent, and they're not going to be the same kind of example to you. You're going to have your own resistances against step-parents, especially if they try to tell you what to do.

DINA DENNEY

Yeah.

(Both laugh)

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

So, I just think it was really important to get to know other gay people, and to realize that I didn't have anything to be afraid of, and there wasn't a reason to build all those walls and say what I couldn't be.

DINA DENNEY

It sounds like a relief.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yes, I think you could say that.

(Both laugh)

DINA DENNEY

Sounds like a relief. Okay, so when you came out, how did your friends and family react? That friend you had at the time and...

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

A lot of my friends were involved in the campaign, so I had a really good progressive community to be part of. People who I'd worked with in other nonprofit organizations. I'd been a staff member for the Snake River Alliance. I'd worked on other environmental organizations. I'd worked in Idahoans for Peace. I had been a teacher. All of those environments at that point were full of supportive people, and that's a wonderful thing about Boise, and about living in the community I did live in. When I told my dad, he kind of surprised me. I thought he'd be a lot more supportive, and it's because his first comment was, "Oh, Nicole I can't believe you're attracted to young ladies," like it was just so appalling. And he is the most loving person in the world, but I know he had a hard time with my mom. She was his best friend. They were wonderful together in many ways, and had a lot of adventures together, and it was really hard on him. And in fact, I remember him crying during the movie *The Rose*, when she goes and has an affair with a woman. And just things like that just kill you. But, he's been amazing since then. I said to him, when he said that, I said, "Dad, it's not about the gender of a person you're with, it's about love." And he's like, "Oh yes, of course it is."

(Both laugh)

So, it was like a two second lapse for him, and then it was great. I was really, really lucky. Not everybody has that. I mean, most people of my age didn't have that at all. I mean, at all. They had horrible things to go through, and losing churches and families, and homes and all those things.

DINA DENNEY

It made it a lot more difficult, for sure. Okay, so, when you came out, it sounds like you were within the right community. So, was it difficult at all to meet partners after you decided to come out?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

No. I'm sure it gets harder as you get older, but I've been with my partner Carol for 11 years now. And so, she is absolutely phenomenal. She has this sense of humor that just keeps me going. I just couldn't do what I do without her, because she's so smart, and then at the same time, just so able to just knock off some comment about something that will make me laugh, in the hardest of moments, when I'm most ready just to tear my hair out. She'll text me when I'm on the floor of the House or the Senate, over the years, something funny at a perfect moment. She's watching on the live-feed or something. Or she sometimes would call and answer a question somebody had on the floor. I'll never forget one time, when Shirley Ringo asked something, or somebody asked Shirley Ringo something, and I sit next to Shirley, and so Carol calls me, and she goes, "This is the answer."

(Both laugh)

She's so amazing. But meeting other people, I dated a bit over time. Actually right after I came out, I went to Australia, and I actually was traveling with my first girlfriend at first, and that didn't work out, kind of mid-trip, that didn't work out. And I ended up kind of just parting ways with her in Australia. And I met these two wonderful women in a pool hall, and they offered to have me stay with them because gay and lesbian Mardi Gras was coming up, which is the most gigantic, like thousands and thousands of gay people, like tens of thousands of gay people in Sydney, Australia. And that I should stay, and volunteer for it, and just get to experience it. And they were so sweet. Barb and Em, in Sydney. And I lived with them for, I think like a month or something, and took care of their dogs a little bit. I must have been a terrible houseguest, when I think about it. They found me a little job in a deli and things like that, and I did get to experience being single in a city where no one knew me, and that was a cool thing. I did date a woman down there, and that was really nice. And I found her on Facebook recently, and we've kind of conversed and stuff, but I feel really lucky I did get to kind of go away and kind of just discover myself a little bit more in a really free atmosphere where I didn't have to carry around all my history with me, or anything like that. So, it was kind of nice.

DINA DENNEY

So this mardi gras, what was that like? I can't imagine.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Oh, unbelievable. We don't have anything on that scale. We probably do in big cities now, I'm sure, but it's hard to describe. Part of it is this gigantic parade. Somebody can look up the numbers. It was an unbelievable number of people, like 100,000 or something like that. I mean, it's just huge. And it's this gigantic parade down the middle of Sydney, Australia. Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, all the drag queens and the floats. This was right at the time of that movie, so it was just spectacular. And then this huge fairgrounds full of different party venues where there were different types of dance music, and I volunteered a little bit, and got to know the people doing the organizing. But it was a huge undertaking, what they put on. It was probably very similar, basically, to one of the really huge city Pride events. Although the evening party thing, I've never quite seen a scale like that. That was something else.

(Both laugh)

DINA DENNEY

That sounds awesome. That sounds like great timing. Okay, so as you were coming out, or once you came out, were you given any advice from anyone in the gay community to kind of help you along?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I am sure that Jen and Mary gave me lots of good advice. They are so funny. Like you could tell that it was what they would say, "baby dike," or somebody that just doesn't realize it yet. I mean, you always see those folks who think, "Oh boy, that person's probably going to figure things out before long here." But I don't remember any specific pieces of advice. I don't think I've thought about that too much. My mom has always been way more than open about things, sometimes, and it's one of those, "La, la, la, la, la!" I don't want my mom talking to me about anything.

(Both laugh)

I can't really think of anything.

DINA DENNEY

That's cool. Okay so, now after you came out, at any time did you ever feel like your safety was threatened?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Oh yeah.

DINA DENNEY

Really?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Oh yeah. I'll remember being in the parking lot of the Albertsons on 16th Street, that original Albertsons one time, and someone in a car driving by and yelling things, and that's always a little bit scary. You just don't know, are there many people in that car? Are they going to stop and hurt us? Do they have a gun? You worry about things like that. But the worst thing that happened was when Carol and I were in Salt Lake one time, for Mormon conference night, and a night when the city is really full of people, and we were just coming out of one of the brew pubs, and I think I stopped and just gave her a peck on the cheek at this one spot in the sidewalk. And there was a car kind of waiting there, and they kind of pulled forward in front of us, and we went around, and Carol looked back over her shoulder, and mumbled quietly to herself, something about them, probably not nice. But the next thing you know, they kind of rev their engine and they start to follow us. And there were a bunch of people in the car, and we didn't know if they had baseball bats or what, but it was dark. There was no one anywhere. Those streets are huge and empty at that point, because everybody was downtown. And I'm sure these weren't LDS folks, or they're probably not practicing. I don't know who they were, but they weren't at the conference, that's for sure. And we ran. We just ran as fast as we could, and we tried to dodge through blocks. We went into a McDonald's, and when we came out, they were waiting. And they would go around the block, and then come back around us and rev their engines. And, I guess a rational person would say, "Why don't you just stop and confront them?" but, when there's no one around, and there are a bunch of guys in a car, and the two of you are alone, you don't do stuff like that.

DINA DENNEY

No.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I mean, and we're yelling to the people in the McDonald's, "Could you call the police?" Stuff like that. And no one's doing anything. People are kind of looking at us, and we're trying to get out of there because we're afraid. We're just trying to get to our hotel room. And we told the hotel desk when we finally got there, and we just were afraid in our room all night, and afraid for our car because our car had stickers on it, and things like that. And that was really scary.

DINA DENNEY

So, even though you were telling people, they didn't try to reach out to help you, like by calling the cops?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

No. Well, it's late at night, and people in big restaurants like that are used to crazy people wandering out and in all the time. I don't know, I mean, there's so many stories of people being murdered, basically, in front of other people, and people just have this sense of not wanting to get involved. But that was the most imminent physical threat of anti-gay violence I think I've ever experienced. There was a website for a while called Pass the Ammo, and it had this Boot Nicole LeFavour page on it, which is kind of like short for Shoot, and it was just people talking about, basically, "She should be dealt with," and basically talking about killing me on this blog. And, that was creepy. I think the state--

DINA DENNEY

How was that legal?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Oh, people have sites, and they're anonymous, and they move them or they do whatever, and I think the state police did try to shut it down. It's not up there anymore. But it was for quite a while, and people were aware of it. There are anti-gay attitudes out there, and I'm a pretty obvious person. I mean, there isn't anybody, really, doesn't know that I'm gay. So, there's bad stuff over time like that.

DINA DENNEY

That's scary.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yeah, I can't say I exactly lost a lot of sleep over it because you can't live like that. You just have to live. You have to do your thing. If you worried about it and worried about stuff happening to you every day, we wouldn't be able to do stuff. And I'm not gonna waste my life like that. Somebody's gonna hurt me, they're gonna hurt me. It's probably not gonna be anything I can do about it. You'd be smart and stuff and don't be stupid. But--

DINA DENNEY

So, if you were to give advice to somebody who is worrying about those things what would you say? Because I would find it'd seem almost impossible not to be scared of something.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

It depends on what it is. If it's somebody who really is saying they're going to hurt you, I would worry about it, and I would always call the police, and make sure there are other people who are watching out for you. And I mean, I wouldn't necessarily give other people the advice,

but I can't live like that. I can't live in fear. But I think that people have to take good care of themselves. Some people live in rural parts of the state that aren't safe, where there are people with really sinister attitudes. I remember in elementary school, one of my classmates saying, "My daddy says if he ever sees an n—" you know, a Black person, "he's going to shoot him." There are people with pretty scary attitudes in rural parts of the state, about things that they just don't know, and the things that are foreign, and things they don't understand. And there have been times when those are exacerbated by politics and by people who organize hate groups.

But during the No on One campaign, I think that kind of sentiment has a really damaging effect on communities and on people's feeling that it's acceptable to be violent towards gay people. I mean, we've had a rash of hate crimes at Boise lately, and we've had more than five people injured downtown in the last six months. And so, in two cases, they were couples, and one person— actually, one person wasn't downtown, she was just near her apartment complex. But that stuff, unfortunately, it still happens, and unfortunately happens all the time, and most people don't report it because they're afraid that they might lose their job if it became known that they were gay. They know there's no protection, that we're not included in the Hate Crimes Act, although we are included federally, now. But after these incidents, I've recently learned there has to be some sort of interstate commerce connection before the U.S. attorney's office can do anything.

DINA DENNEY

I was reading about that. That makes no sense.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, the federal government doesn't have jurisdiction in a state unless there is some sort of interstate connection, and so that's how that works.

DINA DENNEY

Wow. So, these crimes, I haven't heard about them. Are they making the news, or--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Like, you know—

DINA DENNEY

Are they being recorded?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Not really, until I actually put out a Tweet on Twitter about the rash of them, and then some of the victims were willing to talk to reporters. Two of the victims did. One of them apparently broke his jaw, and he's out of state now, and has had a really difficult recovery. One of the victims, Braden Jessor, came out and said that he was a victim, but the other woman that was with him, she's very worried. She has a business, and she had a really hard time after the incident. I saw her still bruised at one meeting where they were going to meet with the mayor. And unfortunately, the mayor hasn't met with this group of people again, which really surprises me about Dave. I knew that the election just happened, and they're probably a little focused on that, but I'm gonna get involved again with that, because the Boise police are taking it very seriously, and they're gonna do an educational video and a bunch of training for their officers, because a lot of times when the officers have been responding, they've been saying, "Oh, that's not a hate crime." And you say that to a victim, and then you don't write down that at least the victim thinks it's a hate crime, then it's never going to be recorded as that. I mean, just because the officer doesn't think it is, it's not appropriate for them not to at least record it somehow, because the victim may know extenuating circumstances, and just because the victim walked in front of somebody at the wrong time, or even swore at somebody, doesn't mean that the person coming after them didn't do it, and felt comfortable doing it, because they were gay. If it had been a straight person, maybe they wouldn't have, because they wouldn't have dehumanized that person and seen them as a potential victim deserving of their violence. And so, those things are complicated, and I think the police are going to work to handle them much better. I'm glad about that.

DINA DENNEY

So, do you think by them working towards that, it'll make people more comfortable to report, or do you think that it'll still be something--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yeah. I think if the police are more respectful of people when they take their reports, and there's also going to be an effort to educate people about what's involved in reporting a hate crime, and that you can remain anonymous – at least until it goes to trial – and that there are protections for victims, federal law, and that there are things that try to take care of you if you're a victim.

DINA DENNEY

That's great. That's very necessary. Okay so, getting to the It Gets Better Project, you discussed in your video that, talking to lawmakers 16 years ago, about what it was like to be gay in the community, and how some of them weren't very friendly. So, what's it like to be 16 years later and working with some of those people that weren't very friendly?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

One of them is probably one of my best allies in the Senate, and he seems like a tough and scary guy, but he is really pretty amazing. And he's given me great advice on strategy and just on hanging in there. And I have other co-sponsors, like Tim Corder, who's been phenomenal. He's one of my best friends in the Senate, and he carried the bill the one year that we did get a print hearing. We've never gotten a public hearing. But now, 16 years later, one of the people that I spoke to who said that he didn't know that it was not illegal to fire somebody because they're gay, and he thought that it should be, was our now pro tem, Brent Hill, and last year when I asked him if he would support the seat, he said he couldn't.

And so, some things have gone forward and other things, I don't understand, but they go backwards. And maybe it's something to do with the LDS Church and his role as a leader in the Senate, and he is expected to hold a certain line on gay issues, though it doesn't have anything to do with marriage, and I thought the LDS Church was okay with employment protections and housing protections. But if he's going to continue to say no, I can only suspect that the Church has told him to say no, because from what I understood, he got this issue, and he realized that people shouldn't be fired for being gay. So, politics can make for some really sad... failure of backbone, sometimes. And I hope to see this body, both the House and the Senate, be brave, because when I went down my list of legislators yesterday in my office here, I know that it's very likely we would have the votes in both the House and Senate to pass the Human Rights Act Amendment, adding sexual orientation and gender identity to Idaho's Human Rights Act. But the thing that always gets in the way is people's own fear that the state is anti-gay, and their fear of each other and of political primaries, where people would run against them just because they voted Yes on a gay issue.

Well, the national Republican party has polled, and they recognize that this is a toxic issue. Somebody who runs on an anti-gay platform goes down. People don't like that. They don't feel comfortable with that. Almost 64% of Idahoans think it should be illegal to fire somebody for being gay here in Idaho. A majority of republicans even think that in this state. And yet, here we are, still, with this incredibly fearful and, in some cases, spineless response to the need to really protect people from what are horrible consequences, just because they're gay. Just trying to live their lives and provide for their families. So, I know we still have a majority in here

who believe it's probably the right thing to do, or at least certainly wouldn't have any problem with it. I just need to get them to be brave, and I'm hoping that maybe the Add the Words campaign and what we've been doing this year will make a difference in that. To some extent, they need to feel that support out in the community to be brave, and there are times when the issues are more talked about and times when they're less, but the more they're talked about, I think the more comfortable lawmakers will see the public is with the issue, and the less they'll fear taking a stand on it. And so, that's part of our job, is making them feel like their districts care.

DINA DENNEY

Wow. Okay so, and then in a blog that you had you discussed, it was about a co-worker, and he was writing some anti-gay editorial in a local paper, and it definitely frustrated you. And I don't want to say how you felt, but obviously it didn't sit well with you. So, what advice would you give to someone?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Bowers, right? Yeah, and he lost his next election. That anti-gay stand of his, I think it cost him the election. He became very ostracized in the House, and I just think his extremism and the response of the public and the media to that type of hateful attitude really, I think it caused him problems. And that was a really good time for me in the House, to see that response, and see the consequence. I think that we get distance from that, and people forget that the public, that's not where they feel. That's not what they feel, that's not what they think is right. I mean, what people say, "This is a good Christian state." Well, people think that you should let people live.

DINA DENNEY

Yeah.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Live and let live, too, here. And you know, whatever. But really hateful attitudes I don't think are going to be popular, and especially in this day and age, when everybody has a gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender friend or family member or co-worker or something. In this place, I have talked to so many people, and they all know I'm an openly gay person, and I talk to them about these issues, and I learn a lot about their families, and how many of them have gay sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters, and uncles, and it's like a huge, huge number. Huge. And they don't talk to each other about this. They don't tell each other about their brother who died of AIDS, even though there may be two people who sit just a couple seats away from

each other who both have brothers who died of AIDS. They may not even know that about each other. And just to sit in this place and watch, and know that we have to get it to a place where people talk about it more.

And I had a great conversation yesterday with one member about that, and saying that, you all need to talk to each other more about it. And I think that there is a lot of misunderstanding about how the Human Rights Act works, and the fact that there's the Human Rights Commission that mediates and investigates and does all these things, and currently oversees race discrimination and age and gender and religion, and the walls aren't falling down, that the sky isn't falling, and it would just add gay people. That's really not a big deal, and he said, "Nobody's ever explained that to me. You should explain that to more people. They don't know how it works." And I feel like I've had that conversation a million times, but there hasn't been debate on the floor about it.

There has never been a hearing in a committee on it. Not a public hearing, ever once, on this bill in the six years it's been presented. Once there was a print hearing, which is a hearing for introduction, no public testimony. And I got to speak at that. And Tim Corder got to speak, and Leslie Goddard from the Human Rights Commission. But that was one committee, and never did the public get to come and speak. So, it's no wonder that people have a lot of misunderstanding about how all this works, and how this would work if it passed. And just this year, I'm determined. We're going to have a lot more conversation. In fact, my plan for next week is to buy between 50 and 70 copies of Brokeback Mountain and send them as holiday gifts to all my colleagues--

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

that I think it's worth spending time on, probably. There's kind of a swing middle that I'll send them to, with a note, and personalize it, because I need to say something different to each of them when I send it. Some I can just say, "Hey, enjoy it." And others I need to say, "I know what you've heard about this movie, and there is one place that makes it an R, but the rest of it is PG. There's no nudity and no sex. It's suggested at one point that there's sex, and I'm going to tell you where that is, and you can close your eyes or skip over it or whatever, but I would really, really deeply appreciate it if you'd watch this movie." It's very sad. Very, very sad. Nobody can watch it and not say it's sad.

DINA DENNEY

Yeah.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

And so, I want to try everything, this year. I'm doing absolutely everything. Poor Carol, it's hard when I get like this, fixed on making— and determined, because I work all hours in the night and day, and I'm gone. But she's wonderful. She knows that it's got to be done. She's there, she helps me with stuff.

DINA DENNEY

It's amazing you're making that sacrifice like that.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

It's for my own benefit and the benefit of a lot of other people. It's not like I don't stand to gain. But you try to see what it would take to do something. And then you just have to make it happen. And for a lot of years, I really wanted the nonprofit organizations to take a certain role, and I just know they don't have the capacity. I mean, we've had coalition after coalition after coalition, and these are folks with— like the Idaho Women's Network has a huge mission. They have a ton of other things they're supposed to work on during the legislative session. I can't expect them to lead up a giant public education campaign. And they don't have money, and they're strapped for staff, they don't have organizers. I mean, same with your family, friends, and neighbors, or Idaho Equality or the ACLU. All those organizations have just had such hard times lately, and so this year we're just starting something from scratch, all of us who have any time to devote. And then I'm putting a ton of time into it, and Mistie Toleman, and all these great people, and Cody, and Janet Lawler from the police. She's the LGBT liaison for the police, and she sends out her press releases and does all this wonderful work. And Emilie Jackson-Edney, who's been in there forever. And we're doing a ton of work on transgender issues, and on making people understand that they have a gender identity, and just trying to, for those people who feel like gender identity is an obstacle, to try and overcome that this year. Just thinking about everything it would take to do this, and trying to do all of it, so we're gonna do it.

DINA DENNEY

That's a lot.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I'm determined. I'm so determined. If we can't do it now, I don't know when we will.

DINA DENNEY

Well, I wish you luck. I want it to happen. We need it.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, you're gonna be here helping.

DINA DENNEY

Yes, I will.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

You're going to be in the middle of it all.

DINA DENNEY

Yes, it's going to be awesome.

(Both laugh)

DINA DENNEY

Okay so, now you're working on several human rights issues, and one of which is the Add the Words campaign, and so, once this legislation passes, and I hope it does, how do you perceive this will affect the relationship between the gay community and the straight community?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I don't think people are always all that aware of laws. I mean, I really don't. I don't think that changes culture. I think other things do. I think Idaho's culture is there. I think they're ready for things like that. I mean, the polling we have was 63% thought it should be illegal to fire somebody gay in 2007. This is five years later. I'm sure even more people think that now. And they probably are much more accepting on a whole bunch of other gay issues. But we've just not done the polling. I think maybe actually the ACLU is doing polling this year, and that will be really wonderful, to have new numbers. But I don't know that the law will change things so much.

I just think that the work changes things, and people interacting, and I do think that in workplaces, for people not to have to live in fear, where they can put a picture of their partner on their desk and know they have a right to do that, that it's not a reason to get them fired, then that will change things, because more people will be aware that they work with gay people. Right now, a lot of people don't know they work with gay people, even though they do. It's kind of like the military. We've been there all along, it's just now you might just happen to notice that it's obvious, or more obvious, or they can actually say what everybody knows. So, I

think it will make a huge difference for LGBT people, because they don't have to worry every day, go to work thinking, "Oh god, did I put two earrings in?" Or, "Do I have a skirt on?" or, "Oh my god, is my hair too whatever?" Or, "Oh, I can't wear that pink shirt; they'll think I'm gay." Or, whatever. All those little self-censorship things you do when you know that it's maybe a reason you could get fired, if people knew. That has to end. It's not a way to live.

DINA DENNEY

No. That's scary. I mean, I never have to think about those things, and I can't imagine all the extra stress, like in the second-guessing what you just said, or what you just did. I can't imagine what that would be like. I wouldn't wish that on anybody.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

No, and it's even in your language, when you talk about what you did for the weekend, did you accidentally use he or she? You're thinking which pronoun you use. You have to be careful of things like that. It's not even material things. It's just passing stuff about the gender of the person you spent the weekend with. Or I mean, how to practice doing that. And there are people who've done it for lifetimes. Lifetimes. Still do.

DINA DENNEY

That's sad.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

It is. It is.

DINA DENNEY

That's sad. Well, hopefully that will soon be in the past. Okay so, as a gay person, what or where is a place that you feel comfortable in Boise?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I feel really comfortable downtown. I feel comfortable in the North End. Like I said, I'm a pretty brave person. I also do kickboxing, so I'm not really afraid of people maybe as much as I should be.

(Both laugh)

But I think if somebody these days is trying to mess with Carol and I, I would feel pretty comfortable just saying, "Look, back off." But if somebody has a baseball bat or something like that, or a gun, it doesn't matter. They're going to hurt you if they want to. But I really feel safe in this town in many ways. And I mean, I'm lucky. I'm a really obvious person. If

somebody looked out a window and saw me, in my district, they would probably go, “Oh my god, my senator is in trouble.” Or, “Somebody’s messing with her.” But that doesn’t happen to everybody. I’m lucky in that way. But I think this district is phenomenal. I think it’s full of gay people, full of people who are used to living with gay people, and people who care about gay people. I have gay family members, friends, co-workers, classmates, and know they do, and are good with that, and I think most the state is like that, too. There are some places where you might run into somebody who isn’t going to be okay with it, and might do something about it, and people might not stand up for you.

My friends Jen and Mary were beaten in the middle of the night in Stanley, Idaho, where I went to elementary school. Somebody came into their cabin with a piece of wood and started bludgeoning them in the middle of the night. And, when you have incidents like that happen, it just shakes the foundations of everything you trust and everything you do, when you travel or when you go outside your home, or even when you’re sleeping in your bed. I mean, the effects on them for years afterwards were just so dramatic and so sad. And anybody who’s been a victim of a hate crime, things are just not the same. And I was trying to explain this to Nate Shelman, who’s a conservative talk radio host, a couple weeks ago. I’m like, “If you had ever been a big victim of violent crime, you would understand.” And he’s like, “Oh, I have been. I’ve been in a fight.” I said, “No, not a fight. Something where someone’s coming after you with a baseball bat, or someone has the power to hurt you, and you don’t have anything.” And I think he finally got it, maybe by the time we were off the air.

But it’s very hard for people to understand that feeling of powerlessness that happens after somebody hurts you, when you don’t want them to hurt you, they hurt you, and you couldn’t do anything about it. And it changes your trust in the world. And there’s so many gay people out there who’ve been hurt by parents, by just people in bars, by people on the street. I did a survey in 2003 on the LGBT statewide Idaho survey, and I was partnering with the Tobacco Cessation Program at Health and Welfare, and I went around the state and talked to 1,500 people about hate crimes and safety in churches and families, and employment discrimination, and their use of tobacco and drugs and alcohol, and their experiences with suicide, and all those things. And it was just so eye-opening what number of people have had horrible things happen to them. And the older people are, of course, the more they’ve had. And young people I think have a little bit of a hard time grasping what some people have been through just trying to live as a gay person in this state or this country over the last half century. It’s sobering.

But there is a surprising amount of violence out there, and an awful lot of people, and especially transgender people, who just suffer the worst, I think, many times, and lose jobs so often, and take their lives so often. And, I just hope that, out of all this, the more we talk about

this, I think, the more the straight community understands as well, and the more they, I think, realize that they have to stand up for their neighbors. And I think that helps. It makes the whole place safer over time.

DINA DENNEY

Definitely. It's a lot. Okay, so, what place would you feel – you've talked a little bit about Stanley – but what place would you avoid or would you say that makes you feel uncomfortable?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I feel a little iffy about Salt Lake right now, at night. But it's actually supposed to be a great city. I should say, I mean, I've traveled the world and a lot of places alone. I have hung out in parts of India by myself. I've been to the top of peaks at 17,000 feet. I've backpacked in the wilderness by myself for 10 days at a time for four years in a row. I am not a very afraid person.

(Both laugh)

I think it's safe to say that. I've hitchhiked. I've done really stupid things. Yeah, In Alaska, I hitchhiked a bunch. I once got picked up hitchhiking, and I get... You finally have an experience that scares you. You're lucky if it just scares you, and it doesn't hurt you.

DINA DENNEY

Yeah.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I am one of those people a lot of people probably describe as stupidly trusting. But I've lived a good life for it. You know that, "I've always relied on the kindness of strangers." But people have been good to me. And I have to say, I'm not really afraid of a lot. But where would I be afraid to hold Carol's hand, or something like that?

DINA DENNEY

Yeah.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I know Carol. I used to tease her when we first got together. I said, "You should start your own Act Up chapter," because she was the type of person who, we're in The Balcony on jazz night when Governor Batt is playing the saxophone, and all those folks are up there. Yeah, I think he plays the saxophone or the trumpet or something. Anyway, and everybody, all these stately

couples are dancing to the jazz. And Carol wants to dance with me. She's like, "Oh yeah, we're going out there. We're dancing." And I'm just like, "Oh, I don't know about right now." And me of all people, kind of like the propriety of it, and she's like, "No, we're dancing." I'm like, "Okay, all right, we're going." And she really isn't afraid of a lot. I think to some extent, we're willing to be that first couple people happen to see, "Oh my god, there are lesbians in our town." And I guess, just crazy enough to take the risk, but at the same time, with the kickboxing. We don't carry a firearm or anything like that. If somebody wanted to take us out, they could. We're not gonna have firepower back. But, again, I guess I just can't live too afraid. We've got stickers on our car. You can tell we're gay from a mile away if you want. I think it says "gay" on there somewhere.

(Both laugh)

DINA DENNEY

Well that's so--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I think you can pretty much say we've been gay in about every town in Idaho.

(Both laugh)

DINA DENNEY

Well, you're fortunate to feel safe like that. Well, I wouldn't say safe, but to where you don't let that affect you.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

It's a luxury. It's a privilege. It totally is. I think gay men are much more at risk, because I think straight men are much more threatened by gay men. That idea that they could be the object of somebody's desire, or something like that – or affection or approach or advance – freaks them out. And so, I think gay men are far more often victims of hate crimes, physical hate crimes, just from random strangers. I think straight men sexually violate lesbians many times as a kind of power thing. It's a very different type of violence, but I think gay men get the random stuff a lot more often. And anybody who cross-dresses. We have tons of folks who do drag in this community, and a couple was apparently attacked this summer, too. That's not on record anywhere. I think a bystander told someone about that.

DINA DENNEY

So, is this purely because people are scared to report? Is that why they're not--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yeah, and because, for example, with Braden. Braden was like, "I reported another incident earlier in the spring, and they told me it wasn't a hate crime and didn't do anything about it." Well, the police say, "Oh yeah, that was a bar fight." And Braden's like, "Come on, somebody started yelling sh** at me, and attacked me, yelling anti-gay things." I suppose that you can have different definitions of a hate crime. Maybe it has to be the only factor in an attack. Or does it have to be that the attack escalated to a level of violence that it wouldn't have if the person weren't gay? I mean, where do we draw the line? People are victims of much greater violence when they're gay. I mean, to that extent. Or when they're Black and they're in a community where they're not welcome, or Latino, or immigrants. And, I mean, there is a factor to some crimes that I think really has to be taken into account.

DINA DENNEY

Hopefully that all changes with this new education, because I can't imagine feeling like my crime wouldn't be validated, or seen as valid, because their perception isn't the same as mine. That would be really discouraging from trying to protect myself.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yeah. And so, people don't report them. They're just kind of like, "Well, why would I bother?" Especially because it's traumatic, if you have had something happen to you, and then someone says, "Well, it isn't what you think it is." That is just an incredible violation on top of that violence. And I hope that the police understand that better now. On a conference call, I try to make that point really clear, and I think the police chief understands that very well, but I want every freaking officer to understand that. It doesn't matter what you think. Save it, write it in the report, but also write down what they said.

DINA DENNEY

Do you know if there's going to be repercussions if they don't follow this new training? Like, say I said I was a victim of a hate crime, but they didn't feel it was, so they don't document my statement, or do they have things to--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I'll have to ask Janet how that's going to work. But I am guessing that they will be much more serious with people about at least writing down what the victim says was the case.

DINA DENNEY

That's important. It's the least we can do.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, our community is watching too, now. We really are. We want to make sure that the situation gets better. And so, you've got Duane Quintana doing awesome work with Boise Loves, and a bunch of people getting involved. Doug Flanders, who's one of those longtime community leaders, who I've known forever, since I first came out. And he's been working on that a bit too, and doing lip sync, and they are just some good people out there.

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome. We need them.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

We do.

DINA DENNEY

Okay so, let's see. Now, you like writing, and you're also an educator. So, may I ask what sparked your curiosity in writing?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I have always written. I don't know. I started writing poems when I was pretty young, probably because my dad, he's a writer, and always had a lot of books and things around the house, and things. I don't know. I wrote about the natural world more, at first. Like I said, I've been out there in the wilds a lot. So, there's a lot of things that inspire you when you're out there. You see amazing things, even if it's just an insect in the bottom of a pond, or the way moisture forms on grass blades in the morning, or spider webs or anything. All those things, all that wonder you see in the world.

DINA DENNEY

Awesome. Okay, well I just have a couple more questions, and then I'll let you go. So, were there any historical experiences that have inspired you in your life, with your journey?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

History has always been my weakest subject, and I actually recently spent the last year and a half working on getting a social studies credential for teaching, because I felt like I now understand government on a level that I think is valuable to teach to young people, and I would like to be more versed in history. But I have a very non-linear mind, so remembering dates and things just always made history impossible for me. It was my most hated subject. In fact, I remember I was given an option to write a paper, and I chose to write on radiocarbon dating, because I love science, and it didn't have anything to do with, really, history, and I thought,

“There we go.” But... well, Frank Church is up there, on my wall. And that's actually on the ranch that my parents bought when we moved to Idaho. Robinson Bar Ranch. And the Churches owned that. They had to sell it because Frank was working on the Wilderness Bill, and that picture is taken right on a wagon that probably still sits in the front yard. Carol King owns it now, and she's been really nice and has let me come back up, and has invited both Bethine and I to go up together, but Bethine was sick and didn't get to go. But I go up there every now and then and stuff.

But Frank, he has reminded me always that politics change, and also the individuals sometimes can rise through and above political attitudes, and through the partisan mess that we end up in. Certain individuals can rise above that and persevere, win elections. But, also that politics change. I mean, there have been times in the state where people voted for democrats, and things shifted rapidly because republicans overstepped, and in here, I kind of have to try and think that it won't always be permanent, it won't always be like this, where we are this tiny minority that they can pretty much ignore. And I don't just mean on LGBT issues, because those are bipartisan issues. I have a bunch of republican co-sponsors on the bill, and always have. But just as a politician, I like to have a time to look back in this state and to know what is possible and what has been possible, and he was just such a great statesman.

I met him once, kind of, maybe. He and Bethine flew into the ranch when we owned it in a helicopter. I don't know if he hadn't flown in a helicopter, if I wouldn't remember it, because that never happened right out in my duck ponds, where my geese were. And the helicopter lands, and they got out and stuff, and I don't remember interacting with them or anything like that. But you look at that smile on that person and think about what he accomplished, and just how bright he was. And Bethine awes me. I just feel like an idiot around her. She's so smart, and she's seen so much. I try to keep my mouth shut a lot because I figure I'll just put my foot in it in ignorance.

(Both laugh)

But I'm more a student of science than of history, and so, lots of science inspires me. I love that.

DINA DENNEY

Since you brought it up, science inspires you, what would you say has been one of your bigger inspirations from science?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I wrote my thesis on the evolution of hierarchical structures and living organisms in human evolution, and my major was an individual major in the evolution of cognition. And so, I was very interested in how single-celled organisms formed into multicellular organisms, and how actually certain types of organelles within single cells originally were autonomous creatures themselves, and this whole evolution of complexity, and how things have evolved into ever more complex life forms over time, and that moment of change, from where things are autonomous and interdependent, to where they become one unit capable of reproducing itself as a whole. And, just the genetics of that, and really the psychological and biological processes of interdependence and of reproduction.

And just looking at humans from that point of view, and our degree of interdependence now. It's intense. Most people, you would set them out somewhere, even in a pretty place, like in the tropics with lots of food, they might not last very long. And in most climates where we live, they wouldn't last at all. Very few people have the skills they need to survive independently anymore. They just don't. And so, we're a really interdependent creature, and very social. You look at a bee colony, we're a little like that. We can't even probably reproduce very easily, without all of our medical technology and things like that. We still can, but now we've reached the capacity with some of our genetic engineering that we probably could reproduce a society of humans somewhere else without people to give birth to them. We would need people to carry them still, at this point. But that whole ability, that technological development or that change in an organism's ability to understand its own reproduction and manipulate that, it's just fascinating to me.

It also fascinates me how much people lose their autonomy and their independence and their freedoms, in a sense, when they operate in a really specialized function, in a unit, or in a whole. And so, that kind of tension between what is quality of life and freedom, and what is the best for a society as a whole, or as an organism as a whole. Those questions are all things that just fascinate me, and have since high school. So, I spent a lot of time in college getting to explore them. And I went to Berkeley, and it was a perfect place for that, because you had graduate level courses in linguistics and psychology and philosophy and neurobiology, neurophysiology, so I could study with some of the great physics folks and great folks in lots of fields, and kind of explore those ideas on all different levels. So, it was a really neat education. I was lucky.

DINA DENNEY

It sounds amazing. That sounds amazing. Wow. Okay so, these last two questions are you giving advice. So, I hope you're comfortable with that. What resources would you suggest to someone who's considering coming out?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Good friends. Friends you know you can trust. I think in this day and age, thankfully young people, most of them know gay people. But if they're in a small town where they don't know of other gay kids, it's a lot harder. So, you need to have somebody you can trust and someone you know doesn't have a problem with gay people, and that can be really hard to find. These days, there are support groups and things online, and you can find good resources online, someone to talk to. But you have to be careful, because online there are a lot of people who are, I would say, predators, as well. Or who are just looking to hook up with somebody. So, you really want good friends. You want people you can trust.

You certainly don't want to reveal that you're gay to somebody you're in love with if you don't feel you have another support system, if they're your only support system, your best friend. I worry so much about young people who do that, and who then end up so vulnerable, because the person who could give them the best support, their best friend, is now a little freaked out and feeling they need distance. So, I hope people are careful of that and take good care of themselves, because that's something that might need to happen another way. And you need to have somebody to support you.

For older folks, oh my. So many people have been married so many years, like my mom and my uncle, and lots of people in the world. And then they realize, "Oh, I built these walls," and they kind of get a second chance at their life. And it's hard on their families. But, again, people you can trust. And I think making sure to keep that idea of finding a partner a little bit separate from being who you are. You don't have to be with somebody to be gay, and you don't have to rush into a relationship feeling like you have to for it to be real, or something. Take your time. Find somebody good for you. And men are so different from women too. We're all about the emotion and the attachment and the U-Haul, and men, a fair bit more about sex. But it's true of young people of all genders.

But, people coming out as transgender, I see a lot of that and hear a lot of stories. There's Tri-State's transgender group, and there are resources you can find online, people you can talk to. And I think it's important to have some support system. But just know that you're fabulous, and you're part of people who've walked the planet as long as every people, I'm sure, and that you just can't let anybody tell you you're not fabulous.

DINA DENNEY

That's awesome. That's awesome. So, you mentioned a couple sources, like you were saying you could go online. Do you happen to know...?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

There are youth groups, and some schools now have GSAs, so Gay-Straight Alliance. Some of them call them Diversity Clubs. Sometimes universities are a good place to go. If there's a university town near your town, or a campus in your town, go there and look for resources. There might be a gay community center, or a human rights group. Sometimes they're listed as, like, the Canyon County Human Rights Task Force, or the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Rights, or something like that. People there, in human rights organizations, typically are wonderful. And they will know if, perhaps a PFLAG – Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Although, I have to say, our PFLAGs in Idaho have kind of faded away a lot, lately. I think there's some people starting some new ones in Boise, now, which is good. And Twin Falls had lost theirs, and so many towns lost their PFLAGs, and I think maybe some of it is because there is more acceptance for young people, and there are fewer parents who are finding themselves completely freaked. It's that generation of people who are parents now have kind of already known about gay people, and so it's not quite as much a shock when their child is.

Still, for many people, I mean, if you're LDS, there are a lot of obstacles. The Church, the way its whole idea of the afterlife and what goes on is formed, makes no place for same-gender couples to exist. There's no way. Everything is so gender-role oriented and so completely about male role and female role, that there's just no way. They would have to change everything to make gay people fit, and that's why they're holding out, and going to hold out to the end. And so, I know parents know they are going to, in some way, lose their children from the religion, and probably from their community, because they're going to want to live somewhere where people don't think that they shouldn't exist, and that they're a threat to the Church or propriety or a good life in the hereafter. So, that's tough. I mean, I think there are so many young LDS people I know who just struggled so hard and listened to that understanding that the family's so important, but then watch where their families are split apart.

So, there are some affirmation groups that are supportive. And there are some resources online. But PFLAG is great where they exist. The human rights groups I think. Really good to look for groups on campuses. Unitarian churches are, if you really feel like you need sort of a faith support, Unitarian churches, UCC churches, those are places where you'll probably find some really wonderful support, as well.

DINA DENNEY

You brought up the reaction of parents, and how we're luckier today, if you're coming out, that it's a little more accepting.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

A lot more accepting.

DINA DENNEY

Would you have anything to say to a parent that maybe will be listening to this in the future, then their child just came out? Is there anything you would want to say to that parent?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I would. I would just say, you know they're the same child you've always had. It's just a part of them. It's just a part of them. It's always been there, and they're still the wonderful young person that was tiny, and a toddler, and then a teenager, and I don't think any parent would feel it's really worth losing their child, because they can't handle or don't want them to be gay. Suicide is a real risk for young people who are rejected by their families. And really, losing your child is a possibility, especially if they're really isolated. So, you have to take really good care of them, and love them, and recognize you can't change them. There are plenty of people who knew they were gay since they were very tiny, especially men or transgender, and you can't change that. All you can do is love them. And, the more you love them, probably the better life that they'll have, and the more likely that you'll have that life with them. And maybe kids and everything you want to have, too, grandkids. I mean, lots of gay people want to have kids, and that can be really beautiful, so you don't lose what you think you might lose. It can be wonderful and beautiful, and the more accepting you are, probably the more likely you'll be part of that beauty.

DINA DENNEY

That's great advice. That's awesome. Okay, I'll give you my last question, and I'll let you go for the day. So, what advice would you give to someone that is considering coming out?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Didn't you just ask me that one?

DINA DENNEY

Did I?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

I think so. Yeah.

DINA DENNEY

I know I asked you about resources, okay.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Oh resources. Advice.

DINA DENNEY

Yeah.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, I kind of gave advice, I guess, just to make sure that you have a supportive person that you can talk to. But, yeah. I think I kind of covered that.

DINA DENNEY

Touched on it.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yeah.

DINA DENNEY

Okay, perfect. Well, thank you so much.

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, and just that, yeah, you're fabulous and part of this long history of amazing people. There are a lot of gay people in history who've done phenomenal things. It's pretty neat.

DINA DENNEY

Well, I want to thank you so much for taking this time--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Oh, thank *you* for doing this.

DINA DENNEY

to create this educational material. And I'm sure it's gonna--

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Yeah, so what are you all doing with it?

DINA DENNEY

Let me stop this real quick, sorry.

DINA DENNEY

Okay, so earlier you were discussing some walls you'd put up after finding out about your mother being gay, and how it made you never want to be that way. Can you discuss a little bit what you mean by that?

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, when I say I put up walls, I think it's important to understand that I kind of put a line saying, "I am never going to let myself imagine being gay. I won't let myself imagine myself dating or being with a woman. I'm just not going to go there," because obviously the consequences are so grave. I mean, look what's happened to my mom. And people build different kinds of walls, but to some extent, before you do something, you usually kind of imagine what that would be like, and think if that would work. Well, to not let yourself even think about it makes, in a certain sense, a certainty that you won't do that, and you won't go there. And so, that mental line or that mental wall that I built was really effective. It just wasn't an option, and it wasn't something that was in the realm of possibility. I mean, at the end I finally started to kind of be, well, I'll be with somebody and not be gender specific about it. It was kind of like, well, I guess that possibility's out there, but I still really hadn't imagined myself going there. I wouldn't let myself think about that. And in that, I almost got so used to that, that it never occurred to me that I had even told myself that I couldn't think about that, or I wouldn't think about that. I think in the end, if you do it for long enough, it's not even conscious anymore.

DINA DENNEY

So how do you know if you've done that? Like—

NICOLE LEFAVOUR

Well, I mean, for example, people have fantasy lives and things. And if you don't include a certain spectrum of things in that, if you know that you've never even thought about going there, then does that work for you or not? And I mean, the mind tries a lot of things out in the world. Everything that we do, to some extent. And in our dreams and things, we kind of try out

the world and try out different parts of ourselves. But once I realized I had that wall, and I let myself go there, I was like, "Oh, this is what I was missing," like I said. And I think that's... where you figure that out.

DINA DENNEY

Awesome. Well, thank you for sharing that with us.

END OF TRANSCRIPT.