

*Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles:
A History of LGBTQ Life at the University of Chicago*

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**INTERVIEW #5
STREED, CARL (1985-) BS 2007**

At U of C: 2003-2007

Interviewed: October 26, 2012 (1 session)

Interviewer: Ash Mayo

Transcript by: Lauren Stokes

Length: 50 minutes 46 seconds

[00:00]

AM: Why did you come to the U of C?

CS: I only applied to one, two, three...four colleges. Northwestern, University of Chicago, University of Illinois, and Southern California, University of Southern California. I just wanted to get to California. I don't know why that was the only place I applied to. Part of it was I needed to get away from my family. Very conservative environment. My parents weren't as religious as my community, but my father was still homophobic, so I'm like, okay, I'm going to go to an urban environment. I also had a very strong interest in sciences. I knew I wanted to do something in biology, chemistry, so I applied to the University of Chicago for that obviously. There eventually came a point where my mother just said I don't want you to move to California. I really took that to heart, so I chose University of Chicago, as my best option for all of that.

AM: Where did you grow up?

CS: I grew up in Zion, Illinois. It's about 50 miles north of here before you hit Wisconsin. And I always tell people it's named Zion because it was founded as a new Zion. It's very religious. All of the roads are set up like a British flag with all of the diagonals pointed towards the central church. Christ Community Church, which has a far reach. Most of the people in the town are Protestant. I was raised Catholic which comes with its own set of issues in that town.

AM: Did you continue to do religious things in college?

CS: No, I don't even know if my family knows this, but from a young age, I became an atheist. Part of it was around my sexuality, but part of it was I had a hard time reconciling sciences at that time. My religious upbringing, and just the culture of that, Irish Roman Catholic. I still kind of like the smells and bells of the church. When I came to the University of Chicago, we actually started a group called QueerReligious to address the intersection of, essentially, religious identities and queer identities. I was approached by

José Portuondo who was raised Catholic, but who was converting to Orthodox Judaism. During one of the first queer meetings on campus, we struck a conversation, and then went from there.

AM: Did the group get a lot of people?

CS: I thought we had a healthy number of core people who really wanted to talk. I think our conversations, when we had them, I think every month or so, it's really hard to remember that far back right now. I think we had eight people who showed up. Definitely more open from the Jewish perspective. It was actually a really great education for me, knowing nobody Jewish where I grew up. But also, when we would host bigger events, like we had Rabbi Greenberg, the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi. It was amazing. When we had him come talk, we filled up an entire Social Sciences lecture hall. Like, packed. It was great. Actually to get that off the ground, I was the treasurer of the group. I approached a lot of community churches, a lot of different organizations. Everybody was actually really supportive, so that was really refreshing.

AM: How long did it run? We just haven't come across it.

CS: You haven't come across it? It's not there?

AM: It might be—did you ever do anything in the *Maroon* with it.

CS: No, I don't recall ever doing much with the *Maroon*.

AM: Okay.

CS: But Queer Religious I know was around for at least another two years after I graduated. I was still on the listserv, and things were still active. I haven't seen anything on it in a while. That was definitely going when I left.

AM: There's actually a couple of people trying to start up something just like this.

CS: I'd be happy to put them in contact with some people—like José—who could provide them with far more history than I can.

AM: That'd be great. Just in terms of housing, what did you do throughout the years at Chicago?

CS: So, I definitely know I had to do the dorm life. I don't particularly like forced social situations, but, I realized college, everyone should go through dorm life at some point. I was in Alper. I think my year was the first year in Max Palevsky. I think. I can't be certain. That's where I stayed. Enjoyed it. Interesting experience. My roommates were accepting of me being out. Though for other reasons we didn't get along. Which is fine. Then I knew I wanted to transition into an apartment, so I did Stony Island my second year. Then my third year, third and fourth year, I had my own apartment on the other side

of Hyde Park. Stayed in the same apartment both years. It was a lot of fun. Never gone back to the dorms again. Even in med school.

AM: What year did you come out? Did you come out first year?

CS: I was out from the beginning. I don't think I had anything to show on my application that I was out. I might have hinted at it in my essay. But I was out. There was none of my "oh my girlfriend." Nothing like that. I thought Chicago was very welcoming for that.

AM: That's the next question. Do you think your core group of friends was very welcoming or do you think the community at large was also welcoming?

CS: Well, my core group were pretty much all queer at the University of Chicago which is I think a plus and a minus for most people that are gay at University of Chicago. You just sort of fall into that nice network. Yeah, I thought it was very open and welcoming. I knew of a few elements, students to avoid, there were some instances—I don't think there was a problem institutionally, as far as I could tell. I know they were really working to improve that as well. There were like one or two homophobic issues, but I felt comfortable being out.

AM: This may just be me not knowing my history, but was 5710 there yet?

CS: No, so I was invited to be on the committee that Bill Michel led up—I can't remember the full title. The title was enormous. Vice President of Student Life's Committee for Supporting LGBTQA students at the University of Chicago. Something to that effect. I was on that committee for being on the board for Q&A [Queers & Associates]. One of the recommendations coming out of that was 5710. 5710 opened a year after I graduated.

AM: Do you happen to know who and how Q&A started?

CS: Q&A was around for at least 30 years by the time I was there. Q&A is one of the—perhaps the, if it's still running...—the longest running student-recognized organization on campus.

AM: We can't find anything about how we started.

CS: Have you contacted alumni?

AM: We don't know who to start with. We're trying. We're asking everyone.

CS: I can contact John Gabriel; he was the president while I was there. He might—you're going to have to do a chain of individuals. Well, that was Naomi Sobel [Interview #77]. I could ask her who was before her. You'll have to find a lineage essentially. At Hopkins we have the same thing, and I finally traced it back to who originated our club in the 80's. There's no institutional memory. I think it's a problem with all student organizations, at any level. It's also just not giving a damn about the future sometimes.

AM: Academics—you did bio things?

CS: I couldn't decide when I came to the University of Chicago, between bio and chemistry. So I did biochemistry which I really enjoyed. Near the end I realized I wasn't going to do a Ph.D., which was my intention. So there were times where it sort of dragged on. Especially when I was doing my experimental physical chemistry, which is the bane of everybody's existence in chemistry at the University of Chicago. That was my worst grade. I barely passed that class probably. But there were plenty of opportunities, I really enjoyed it. I think later on did I realize how gay people were. Like the chemistry department is so gay. So gay. I'm not going to name names, but so gay. But biology, that was okay. I didn't have any problems being out or not.

AM: Did you ever do any sort of gender studies classes while you were there?

CS: No, I think the closest that would have ever touched on that specifically would have been "Love in the Time of Capitalism" by Professor Holly Swyers, who is now at Lake Forest. She had just finished her Ph.D. when I took her Sosc class. Was so enamored by her. I blame her for ruining my science career, really. I took this course, which was an anthropology course. It approached love from a variety of perspectives from a capitalist society, and LGBT issues were a part of that. But gender studies very specifically? Never. Biochemistry has 19 credits [required]. I think it's still the most credits at the University.

AM: Going on, do you mind if we go to life history? We're trying to see when people first realized they were gay. The usual coming out story.

CS: The usual questions. Essentially the coming out to yourself. When do you recognize—I actually had this conversation at my high school the other day. I was talking to their LGBT coordinator. It's amazing that one exists—I was the only one out at that time. Explaining to them, everyone talks about realizing something was different, then they eventually understand what that difference is. I would say around fifth or sixth grade, so that'd make me ten and eleven, and knowing something was off. Just the way I interacted with friends. I wasn't interested in girls the way other people are. It wasn't just late puberty thing. It's just not doing it for me. Of course, seventh grade. Locker rooms. You wonder, why am I looking at people that way? That way is sexually. Eventually, I made sense of that. So it was like twelve or thirteen when I knew what the word gay was and what it meant.

AM: When did you officially come out to other people? Was it a slow process? Was it college?

CS: I tell people I'm coming out every day. First friend would have been when I was fifteen. I came out to my sister when I was sixteen. I told my mom when I was, that would have been sophomore year going back to stony island after thanksgiving, so that would put me at nineteen. Then coming out to my father the summer before fourth year, which was the biggest I would say, which would put me at twenty.

AM: How would you characterize those receptions? You don't have to –

CS: The friend was okay. She later used the issue of me coming out against me, so we're no longer friends. My sister: totally fine. She knew the issue later on with my father, I'll explain. My mom was fine. She's a very quiet woman. She's like, I still love you. I always tell people if you feel safe enough doing this, come out in the car. Cause you don't have to look them in the eye, they don't have to look at you, they can't get away. So I came out to her when she was driving me back to Stony for Thanksgiving. We did fine. Talked about it for a little bit. I kind of explained to her, "I'm not going to date women, do you know why I'm not going to date women?" I said "I'm gay." She was like, "I kind of had an idea." When she dropped me off, she actually called me from the road saying even though it didn't come out of my mouth, I still love you and I still think everything you're doing is great.

Now, my father, I always preface this with I am Carl Junior. My father is Carl Senior. He was always named Butch growing up. He was always little Butch. Vietnam veteran. In a biker gang. Harleys. Lumber jack, personal business lumberjack. Construction worker like. The epitome of what we consider stereotypical masculine, and he was very anti-gay, very homophobic. When he would get into his drunken rages in childhood, he would rail against gay people. When Ellen came out, we couldn't watch *Ellen* anymore. I had to sneak around watching *Will and Grace*. It was quite ridiculous. When I decided to come out to him, it was right before I was going back to Europe with a friend. I had recently seen a theatre production by About Face Theatre. The title, I think, was *Home*. It was about youth who were homeless for being LGBT and got kicked out. I kind of used that as a segue. I explained the play and what it was about. I said I could relate to that because that's what I was worried about. Because I was gay. Flash of rage on his face. Went outside to the garage. I went out, I chased after him, and he just said, had a cigarette, "I still love you. You're still my son." And gave me a hug. I cried. I was like this is just not at all what I expected. He has always been to my face very welcoming. I know early on after I came out, my sister and my mother would tell me, my sister rather because my mother wouldn't tell me, that he would rail against it, still being very angry. Saying that he should know what he was doing, this is how he should act. My mom...would challenge him saying this isn't a choice, this is how people are born. And eventually he's come around, since [I was] twenty. About seven years.

He now calls my boyfriend his other son. He's very welcoming. Very loving. Took a few years. And, then, I was out in my med school application. If I had tried to go back in the closet for med school, it would have looked like I did nothing. So I was obviously out. I was out in my application for medical school, and they've brought it up. And I've been out the whole time there. There have of course been numerous situations where I have to negotiate how out I'm going to be. I always tell myself if they ask specific questions, I'll always give honest answers.

AM: I should know this, but where do you go to med school?

CS: I go to Johns Hopkins.

AM: The question that always makes us all a little awkward: did you date at the U of C?

CS: Yes, I was thinking, what sort of questions are they going to ask? Are they going to ask really salacious questions? Or not? Good. No, I did date at the University of Chicago. I had one relationship beforehand. Very down-low would be the term for it. At the University of Chicago, I started dating a fellow classmate. I dated a frat brother when I was there. Always interesting trying to negotiate that. Then, after that, I started dating people outside of the University of Chicago. Because the community gets too small.

AM: How big was the community?

CS: It was big. When I was there, there was still the gay mafia. I don't know if you've heard this from other interviewees. You will if you start testing a wide enough net. There was the gay mafia. That was their term. There was the gay mafia, and there were the gay boy parties which would always be very large and well attended. Pretty much a large party every quarter. Especially during my first year and second year.

AM: What exactly was the gay mafia? We have the lesbian mafia, and we don't really know where the term came from.

CS: I don't know the whole history of the lesbian mafia. I know it really came into power my third year and fourth year at the University of Chicago. I had a few lesbian friends. They had large groups. They had *L Word* watching parties. They would do a lot of the stereotypical things that people think of when they think of lesbians—like playing rugby and what have you. They also just hung out all the time, and were a really good support for one another. For the gay mafia, it was very much similar. There was a core group of people who were—I'm not going to name names—who had very tight knit social group. Who, in my mind—being thoroughly Midwestern—I describe as having very New York personalities. One of them always reminds me of Ortho from *Beetlejuice*, the way he would just hold court. But it mainly a social organization—like a social group of individuals and their purpose was to hold these parties, to be social, to be active in Chicago, but it was never political, never community oriented. I don't know what happened to it by my fourth year.

AM: So could you go through the LGBT things you did on campus?

CS: So I mentioned QueeReligious. I helped set that up with José. I just realized I named names anyways. QueeReligious—I was the treasurer of that. That was my first year. My second year I was the treasurer of Queers & Associates. Through there, I was invited to join the committee that Bill Michel [Interview #18] had started. After that, I kind of bowed out. I started volunteering by my fourth year at the Broadway Youth Center, which was connected with Howard Brown. I continued my work with them after

graduating. At the University, those were the three main things I did. I felt not so much burned as burned out by campus activism.

AM: How long did you stay in Chicago after graduating?

CS: I stayed for two years. I graduated in 2007. Moved to Wrigleyville. Stayed there for two years. Did a lot of --- activities. Then moved to Baltimore for medical school in 2009.

AM: We've been asking how people found out about organizations. Right now they're pretty mainstream—

CS: They were mainstream then. We started QueeReligious, and Queers & Associates was already pretty large. They always held a—their first meeting was always very well publicized and very large. It was known as meat market because you get to see all of the fresh meat.

AM: Where did it meet? Because now we have 5710...

CS: It would meet in the basement of Reynolds Club right where the office was. It was right across from where the Student Government office was. I'm not even sure if it's the same...I remember Bartlett Hall, as a cafeteria, had opened the year before I had gotten there. That's where the first meeting was my first year in one of the large theater spaces.

AM: Looking back do you think your experience was a typical one at UChicago?

CS: I think you'd have to describe what you mean by typical.

AM: Do you think most people experienced your level of being out and comfort in the community?

CS: That's hard because my select group of friends were as out as I was. Hmm. I think later on, eventually, there were younger people who were trying to come out or choosing not to so they had a different experience than I did. I can put you in contact with a few people who came out while at Chicago. I could ask them if they want to get involved with this because I think they'd provide a unique perspective.

AM: That'd be great. Do you think about college differently as you get farther away from it?

CS: I recall sleeping more in college. I was very sad to graduate because I was really happy at the University of Chicago. I still look back with nostalgia. I still donate. I still go to alumni events. I'm on the LGBT alumni board—I like Chicago.

I think as I get farther and farther away it'll get more idealized and I'll forget all of the troubles that were there. Yeah, it was a positive experience and I still think of it in a positive way. I remember it being very awkward, and every time I go back for an alumni event it's still very awkward. Still choosing the best kind of student.

AM: You mentioned a while back a few homophobic incidents. Were they personal or were they about campus wide attention?

CS: I don't know if they were really that big. Somebody—I wish I could remember the fraternity—the one that used to have Wednesday night drunk night—bar night—they were having a very large party. I was there with some of my frat brothers, a number of who were out, somebody was being kicked out for something. One of the frat brothers at that place, not one of mine, yelled “Get that faggot out of here.” Then I had to be held back before I punched somebody. So it would have been an interesting exchange. That was one of the few times I heard a slur.

AM: I think that one was actually mentioned in the *Maroon*.

CS: Really? That would have been at least after 2006—2005. Are you guys using the *Maroon* as a barometer?

AM: We're just trying to see what we can find.

CS: What's been documented. There was also one Student Government president who was in a fraternity who was out. He might be able to speak better to his experiences. I think he was the first out member of his fraternity.

AM: Now, I'm going to bring us back to after graduation. You said you worked at the Howard Brown Center—what sort of things were you doing there?

CS: After I graduated, I was unemployed for quite a few months. I couldn't find a job easily...even ones in the sciences. I was also quite picky about what I was looking for in terms of lab work. I was already doing a good amount of volunteering at the Broadway Youth Center. I started looking at Howard Brown and volunteering for their development. I began helping them with events. I became their go-to volunteer. The one who would organize other volunteers. That's how I got started.

I still had to find a way to make money. I did my MCAT over the summer. I did well, so Princeton Review hired me. So I was teaching on the weekends. I applied to work at a bar; I worked at Sidetrack. I still work there technically on occasion. I started working there, end of October. It was very rough—some Saturday nights were just horrendous. I eventually found a job at Howard Brown as a clinical research associate. I applied. They liked me. People knew who I was. I got hired to begin the beginning of January 2008. I did research for them. I volunteered for their events. I continued to do Broadway Youth Center on occasion. I just worked my way through the organization. Became the Clinical Research Manager. And then, I left April 15, 2009. I had helped them find a new manager. Then I remained on as a consultant to help with the transition before I left for med school.

AM: What made you choose Johns Hopkins?

CS: I got into a few different places. I applied to a lot of places, got into a few. What it came down to was choosing between Northwestern, here, or Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. The choice really came down to staying here in Chicago, stay with all the contacts and friends, or go to a better school. My residency will be decided before this goes public, but Johns Hopkins is by far better at least in medical school standards than Northwestern. That was the main reason I decided to go to Baltimore. Also, I was out in my application. All of my activities would definitely point in that direction. Even in one of my medical school applications at Duke was a question ‘what is a moral dilemma you face?’ and I said I lied when I donate blood. That got me rejected from that school pretty fast. At Johns Hopkins, they knew I was out, and the doctor recruited me. It was the only time I ever felt someone was recruiting me during an interview. He said, you can be out here, and we need help recruiting here. When I went back for revisit, this doctor set up a meeting with Joel Gallant who is known from *And the Band Played On*, he was mentioned in that, he was on the ground floor of HIV as well, he’s the major HIV person at Hopkins. He also had me meet the student group leader in charge of their LGBT group there. I was just enamored by them recruiting me, so I thought there were some possibilities there. A large part of it was career and that they knew all of me and they wanted all of that.

AM: What do you want to specialize in?

CS: I’m applying in internal medicine and primary care because I can’t decide exactly which way I want to go. If I do specialize, it would be in infectious disease, but I also have a very large interest in education and policy work. A lot of what I do extracurricular-wise is policy oriented in terms of training better doctors. I sit on the board of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association. I do work for the American Medical Student Association and the American Medical Association on LGBT issues.

AM: Are those all of your extracurriculars currently?

CS: That’s most of them. Those are the ones that take up the most time.

AM: How has your social network changed in medical school? Is it mostly LGBT like in college?

CS: No, it’s not. It’s much more diverse because there are so few LGBT individuals. Medicine is still a very conservative profession. Especially during training. People are still advised to go back in the closet for residency applications depending on specialty. I would say my professional network in terms of mentorship is very LGBT focused or very gay white man because that is just the unfortunate- I will never know how to find lesbians in medicine. I’ve been trying so hard, waiting for anybody to come out. That’s my main mentorship network is gay men who are doctors.

AM: Has that happened just through your extracurriculars?

CS: Mainly through my extracurriculars, and my being very vocal about working on these issues, and people pointing me in one direction or another. One of our deans of student affairs and one of the presidents of one of our hospitals is gay as well.

AM: So you were the fastest interviewee I've ever had. I'm impressed.

CS: I talk very fast. Feel free to ask other questions.

AM: Family relationships after college are good, but how have they taken you going across the country?

CS: Oh, it's so bizarre. By the end of undergrad, I was dating someone outside of the Chicago circle. That eventually ended. In retrospect, good that it did. I remained in my mind single for two years until I met my current boyfriend. I was dating a lot, especially working in a bar. There were plenty of opportunities one way or another as an active gay male. I did go on dates. We could never decide on terminology. If you've gone through the *Maroon*, you would know of Alexander Hivoltze-Jimenez. I met him at one of the LGBT mixers at the pub in 2008. Yeah, in 2008. I'm blanking now. Maybe 2009. We met there. Hit it off really well. We had a great time together. We went on vacation together. He took me on a business trip. He was consulting for the Episcopal Church, which was actually really fascinating, and we had great discussions about queer liberation theology.

A few days after his birthday he passed away. He was found in his apartment by one of his friends. He died of sepsis. That was one of the experiences, Chicago related, I think it definitely affected the community. I think Timothy Stewart-Winter was involved. Actually, my med school advisor at UChicago was the dean on call who got that call. I felt terrible when I heard that and I went to see her immediately.

AM: That's a rough call.

CS: I know—it's a very rough call to get. It's the call they're all trained for and hope to never get. After him, after I had my breakdown which I think was understandable, I was delicate with dating, trying to avoid relationships in a way. Then, April 15th, when I had quit my job with Howard Brown, I went to have a drink at Sidetrack where I worked to celebrate because I was so happy to be done, and it was the night before I was flying out to Hopkins for a revisit to meet everyone else who got in who was going to consider Hopkins seriously. Sitting next to me at the bar was my current boyfriend, Chad, he was good friends with one of the bartenders who was a friend of mine, and I was being flirtatious in a childish way, stealing his hat, and it kind of went from there. That's where we first met. That's what we consider our anniversary. And our relationship kept going from there. In a way, I already knew about him. He was a University of Chicago grad twice. He graduated 2000 undergrad and graduated 2007 from the Law School. I recognized him because I used to work at the law library. I recognized him because he has a patch of vitiligo on the back of his head—he has dark hair and then there's a white spot—and I recognized him because of that.

We're both very involved and try to stay involved with Chicago. We did long distance for my first year of med school, and then he moved out there.

AM: That's a great story.

CS: I left out some of the unusual parts! Actually, I could mention that. He wouldn't mind. I remember there was one time, again the spot, I knew who he was, when I was working at Sidetrack before we first officially met, and he came out Sidetrack one time, inebriated as patrons often were, and I used to wear my University of Chicago sweater when I was at the door because people assume you're a bouncer, you must be dumb as can be. A lot of people thought—I assume I'm not allowed to curse—“did you sleep with somebody at University of Chicago?”

AM: It's fine.

CS: “Did you fuck somebody at University of Chicago?” I always used to say “no, I went there,” and gave them a smug look. He [Chad] came out one time, pointed at my sweater, and said, “That's a great school!” I said, “yeah. You went there for law school.” He was walking away and just went, “What?” So that's how he remembers one of our interactions. Bizarre small world.

AM: U of C. It's a pretty small world.

CS: Oh my god. UChicago everywhere. So that's new. The University of Chicago has really worked on their—like Northwestern—Harvard always get more publicity because they have journalism. People are always going to mention their *alma mater*. The University of Chicago has worked very hard to address that, and I'm always glad to see University of Chicago everywhere now.

But I like this—I'm going to tell you one story. Freshman year. Rough transition. I'm like “I'm not smart enough to be here!” Rufus Wainwright, I was listening to one song by Rufus Wainwright to get through, and at the time I was there, his aunt, Anna Wainwright was going to be at the University of Chicago, and I had a chance to meet her. Then when I went to Spain as my study abroad for University of Chicago, it was the same quarter he was coming to Chicago. I was like, “You've got to be kidding me.” Then I realized his world tour was going through Madrid. So I went to Madrid to see his concert. Great time. Afterwards, I was waiting out front trying to see if there was anyway to get backstage because I knew there were some backstage passes. I started chatting with these two girls there. One of the girls was the cousin to the bass guitarist and her friend had applied to the University of Chicago. Through that, I got a backstage pass, and I got to meet Rufus Wainwright. So University of Chicago helped me meet Rufus Wainwright.

AM: What did you do in terms of the Sosc and hum core? Was it the same as it is now?

CS: I wouldn't know because I don't know what it is now. I should know this because I'm supposed to be interviewing prospective students. I did Philosophical Perspectives, which

was horrendous. I liked my last quarter because it was a lot of Hume and Emerson, and I liked that part of philosophy. So that was my philosophy experience. Straight B's all through out that. Then I did—Holly Swyers was teaching my Sosc class. It wasn't Power; it wasn't Human Being and Citizen...dammit. It was such a good one. It was great. I blame her for ruining my science career because she opened up a whole new way of thinking about sciences relating to people. I don't think she ever came out, but she was certainly queer in some way. She also then came out during her anthropology course that she taught.

AM: You had a major with tons of credits, but what extra courses did you take?

CS: So my advisor was amazing. Bonnie Kanter. I remember my first meeting with her, I went, "I'm going to be biochem, and I want to study abroad." We planned my next four years right then to a T to make time to go to Toledo as part of a language studies, and I think that was going to cover my art requirement in someway. Those were my big things. The sciences and that. I then started dabbling in anthropology once I did my Sosc. I decided to try and broaden it. I took classes by Jean Comaroff, I understand they've left, which is tragic. They developed medical anthropology, and that was a wonderful graduate level course. I tried doing some Sosc graduate levels, but those were boring. I continued doing some more Spanish studies to go on and do my proficiency exam, which was awesome. I think that was most of my—aside from the sciences and Spanish. I regret not having done one or two more classes in Spanish because I could have gotten a minor. They created minors while I was there. It was very contentious.

AM: Why?

CS: Because there were concentrations! The University of Chicago is concentrations.

AM: You're rolling your eyes at the old man.

CS: I don't know why they had to have majors and minors. You could have had a primary and secondary concentration.

AM: Terminology it's important. So, you said that you're still pretty involved, and you come back. Do you have a sense of how the LGBT community was different when you were there as compared to how you perceive it now?

CS: I don't know because I don't interact too much with the undergrads except for an alumni perspective. I've gone back every year except for my fifth year. I just couldn't make it work. I don't think I could have gone back. It was just after Bert Cohler had passed away. It would have just been too emotional. From what I gather, it's still the same number of people who are out. The same personalities, archetypes. However you want to think about queer individuals at the University of Chicago. I do know statistically 17% of people are out. The applicant pool is much more out. I just know that through alumni connections. I don't think the quality is less than when I was there. I am curious to learn how 5710 has affected the community as well either now or afterwards.

- AM: We can do that now, and make it part of a more organic conversation. I know that we use it more as a home base now. You can use it as a study space if your apartment is far away. Q&A meets there. QWORUM which is one of the Q groups—did they have Q groups then?
- CS: They had just started. Daniel Rabe [Interview #39] was one of the first facilitators with, I think it was, Amanda. I can't remember her name for the life of me. Bill Michel is someone to ask about this. A lot of history there. The Q groups started my third year after I came back from Spain. I remember Bill Michael asking if I could do it, and I couldn't. I was too burned out and just didn't have time for them.
- AM: So those meet now in that space.
- CS: How many are there? Like Lavender Maroon is still around?
- AM: I think there are—the Lavender Maroons, Pronoun Hoedown, QWORUM is the one for lesbian and bisexual women, there's one for bi women and men...
- CS: Is there one for questioning individuals who just want a safe space? I think we tried to start one of those, but it was difficult. By its nature, it's so hard to gather people who are like, I think I might be gay or not.
- AM: Maybe...and this is separate, I think the coming out support group might use the space. That may be all of them.
- CS: When I first started there, that was much more informal networks. Of course, there was the mentorship program, which Kathy Forde [Interview #9] had started. She was the only mentor for a while, and by the time I was there it was enormous. I had a mentor my first year. I think he was a fellow in the medical school. He was great the first year. Eventually, we realized that maybe I didn't need a mentor and he had a busy schedule and I had a busy schedule. We haven't contacted each other since second year. He was great though. He showed me around Boystown. He showed me everything that I couldn't actually go to yet. It was good to know it was there though. Kathy Forde had done a great job with that. They had started doing queer BBQs for graduation.
- AM: Was the Lascivious Ball still a very queer-
- CS: It was GenderFuck when I was there. I remember Bill Michel always having to explain how they were using University resources to make event bookmarks with the words GenderFuck. He was like, "We really need something that says GenderFuck."
- AM: It's actually still going on.
- CS: So there's GenderFuck and the Lascivious Ball. We had that once in the four years I was there. I think it had existed before we were there and they wanted to bring it back.

AM: It happens every year now.

CS: Still in Ida Noyes? Top floor?

AM: Yep.

CS: I love that space. The balconies were so great.

AM: When you were there, did a lot of people go to Boystown together?

CS: I would say yes, but it was more like pockets of groups. There was an older group of gay men in my fraternity who were close friends who would go together. I would go with my friends once we were twenty-one. I don't know how the lesbians would go. There was up in Andersonville- it closed down the year after I went to Chicago- it closed down the year after I left. It was the only lesbian only bar in Chicago.

AM: Were there queer spaces in Hyde Park?

CS: What do you mean by queer spaces?

AM: LGBT?

CS: I know there were—I never looked into this, I was never certain. People said there were bars for African American gay men on the south side. I think there were two there were reliable. I never went there which I think is sad.

AM: Time is a problem.

CS: Time, but also preference. We enjoyed Boystown. We knew Boystown. I think just being within our ridiculously racist bubble which I think is a quintessentially LGBT thing at UChicago. I think it was my junior year. Somebody decided to host a "Ghetto" Party. It would have been May House, I think. It was in Max Palevsky East. The party was winding down. I think the hosts were still there. The theme, I think, gives away how people were supposed to dress. Then some African American students showed up looking to hang out with some friends they had there. The party was dying down, and one of the hosts said something to the effect of, "Sorry guys, the party's kind of breaking up, but you all would have been the most ghetto ones there." Then shit hit the fan. Then multiple community initiatives were launched. The University of Chicago really tried its best to fix that. One of the results is that you all have Martin Luther King Day off now because of that. We didn't have that off my first few years there.

AM: Wow. That was a whole new piece of history.

CS: You should really look into that to make sure the facts are right.

AM: Do you know which year?

CS: I don't think it was Halloween. I think it must have been after I got back from Spain. It must have been 2006. If you can look up when MLK day was first observed in Chicago.

AM: Here is where I ask you if you have any UChicago paraphernalia from your organizations or anything.

CS: I'll have to look. I have a memorabilia box. I unfortunately do not have any artifacts.

AM: And, my last question, is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

CS: Anything else you'd like to know? You didn't know about the Ghetto Party.

AM: Any more big events that intersect with race and class?

CS: I think you should find out who was working the minority—as it was used at that time, race and ethnicity—who were the students working to try and get 5710 started. To get a diversity center started. Once LGBT issues tried jumping onto that there was some behind the scenes mending of bad blood between the two groups. I remember having a meeting with some women who were working with the minority students—of course, I was blindsided because I didn't know the history of what was going on—but they felt like we were encroaching on the work they'd already done. I can give you the contacts of some people who were at that meeting. I was like, I didn't know this history, and I was like, we really should have couched this in different terms.

AM: What was the history?

CS: They were trying to create a diversity center for many more years. It was OMSA and a group that had an Afrikaans word, it meant power, for their name. It was another group just about empowerment, which was quite moving which was very race and ethnicity center. They had been working to create a space with a fulltime staff. We were like, that's great! Can we join you? That was the contention there. Then, that was the conflation between LGBT issues and civil rights movement from a race perspective. Conflation was the term everybody liked to use at that time.

AM: Off the top of my head, there's nothing else I need to ask. We're also open to any stories or anything else.

CS: I think that's it. I've shared a fair amount. I think that's it! Thank you!

[50:46]

End of Interview