

Parrhesia

Feature Film Transcript

**DIR: SHAWN PATRICK & JOHN
BECKENBACH**

[TEXT: PAR*RHE"SI*AI N.
(RHET.) BOLDNESS OR
FREEDOM OF SPEECH]

[TEXT: PARRHESIA IS TO
SPEAK IN A SITUATION IN
WHICH ONE'S SPEECH
CARRIES A CERTAIN RISK TO
ONE'S REPUTATION OR
EVEN TO ONE'S LIFE ... [IT IS]
THE KIND OF SPEECH I HAVE
WITH MYSELF WHEN I
PLAINLY TELL MYSELF
THINGS I DO NOT REALLY
WANT TO HEAR, WHEN I AM
FACED WITH AN AGONIZING
DECISION, AND I FIND THE
COURAGE TO FACE MY
FEARS, MY UNCERTAINTY,
AND TO ASK MYSELF
WHETHER I AM REALLY
SPEAKING OR ACTING
ETHICALLY.]

[TEXT: PARRHESIA: I RISK MY
SELF IN ORDER TO BE
MYSELF, AUTHENTICALLY.
PAPADIMOS & MURRAY
(2008)]

GABY

I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, beautiful island of Puerto Rico. Till I was about 23 ... And then, I moved to the States, uh, to Colorado first ... and now I'm in Texas.

BECCA

I'm Chinese-American. I was born here in America, but my parents are from China, and Taiwan. So that's why I consider myself Chinese-American.

LANCE

Culturally, I identify multiracial. I am ... homosexual. Actually, I identify as homo-flexible. Um, which is predominantly homosexual, but acknowledging that there is ... a whole space where I could be ... (Inaudible-“not”?) homosexual. And so ... flexible.

MANDI

I'm White. My husband is Puerto Rican. So my kids then are the two of us. I grew up in a fairly low socioeconomic situation. Uh ... we traveled a lot, mostly out of ... financial necessity. By traveling, I mean we moved a lot. Did have some experiences of not living in a home as a child.

RICHARD

Ethnically, I identify as Caucasian. I was born in England,

and moved here to the United States, when I was a teenager with my parents.

JONNIE

As far as I identify myself as a straight woman. Ethnically ... I would say that I am an African-American woman, but I really believe in history. So I do identify as being African.

BRYAN

Culturally, I uh, identify as White. Um, male and straight. Things that I've been ... realizing more and more, kind of what all comes with that is harder to kind of put (Inaudible-“to”?) specific words to what that kind of means in terms of (Inaudible-“that”?) culture. But, ya I'm white.

VICKI

I'm Caucasian. I think I have Irish ... uh, background. I am ... a lesbian, uh, which, that's, you know, kind of new for me to say in my first introduction to people.

[TEXT: MEETING OPPRESSION]

MANDI

As a White person who is now in a more comfortable financial position ... From my eyes, it doesn't look like much. But when I look at it, as a mother of children who

are interracial, it looks like a lot of assumptions about ... who we are, who my husband is. For me, I ... often encounter surprise that my background is what it is. My husband does, too, but in the opposite direction. He was raised in a fairly well-educated family. Um ... and people are often surprised that he is as educated, articulate, intelligent, hard-working as he is. Um, whereas ... people are surprised that I didn't come from that kind of household.

RICHARD:

Oppression for me is ... a textbook issue. It doesn't really exist at all in my life. Um, I have ... really an opportunity to make the choices I want to make, to do the things that I want to do. So for me, oppression is what happens to other people. It doesn't really happen to me. And it's something that ... I've learned more about later in life, I would think. I mean, it was something I was always aware of, uh, but in terms of, of my own personal experience, it was never something that I, I really had to deal with.

VICKI

When I was younger, oppression ... was really uh, tied to

other people. Um, I saw it in, in my hometown. Uh, people who were poor or people who were uh, not White. Um, and, and I didn't have a very diverse town, but you know, we had people that were Hispanic and people that were uh, African-American. And, I saw them being oppressed. And I didn't realize that you know, what I was feeling inside, and as I grew older, th-that it would be tied in with oppression. And it probably has only been maybe in the last ten years that I really realized that you know, what I have gone through in my life as far as having to hide and having to be um, somebody other than I am w-, is really a form of oppression. That rea-realization, particularly in the last five years, uh, has really led to uh, a great deal of angst inside me.

MANDI

I'd never heard of White privilege until graduate school at I think I was 31 at the time. And .. you wonder first of all, how you get to be 31 and White and have never heard of this concept. And secondly ... how you never considered it. I really felt uh I felt like I was starting all over again. I felt like I was 18 again starting all over again, trying to work out what on earth is going on in this world?

GABY

When I moved to the United States, that's where I saw the segregation. Black communities, brown communities ... white communities. So if I will go-try to go to a community that it wasn't my color, then that's when I started experience it. That's when I started experiencing the oppression myself.

BRYAN

If there was an indicator that I was doing something that would be oppressive uh, I was pretty good at, at not acknowledging that. Uh, even though looking back on it ... I was absolutely doing a lot of that stuff. Even if it was as simple as using language that um, was oppressive. Like calling something gay. Like, oh that's so gay.

JONNIE

When I think about oppression, I think about some of the experiences that I have in my lifetime, where the person who's on top is the one who pulls the strings. And I have been oppressed by men, I've been oppressed by White people, and when I think about that I think about the rights

that are taken away, that everybody as a human being should have. It's about your skin color. You know. And ... I have education, but you know, somebody may still call me a nigger, you know. And so those are the things that, when I think about oppression and think about things that I've gone through, that comes to mind, because it's very ... you know, it's ... it's something that I have to live with. When I wake up in the morning and get dressed, it's not like I can take off this color.

RICHARD

As a child growing up in the 70s, early 70s, there was still this very strong idea of empire. And my parents' generation, my grandparents' generation ... sort of filtered that down to us. Uh, I think that mine was the first generation where that just wasn't a major part of daily existence. Uh, even after the Second World War when empire really didn't exist, for the most part, that was still part of my parents' understanding, part of their learning process. And it was just this idea that, again ... being the kind of people that we were, we weren't oppressing, necessarily; we were making lives better for other parts of the world.

JONNIE

In the 1960s, I lived in San Diego, in Long Beach, California. And we lived down the street from the Black Muslim, um, the Nation of Islam Mosque. And uh, you know, and the Black Panthers were right down the street. And living that, and being very afraid, because I didn't know what was going on when the riots started. And so it's always been that question in my mind, even as a child, what is going on? Why did my neighborhood all of the sudden change from being, you know, very, a nice neighborhood, there wasn't a lot of violence, to you know, violence all of the sudden? And so those questions have always been with me.

BECCA

One story in particular, one memory that is hard to forget (Laughs) is um, when ... um, students would push me down the stairs, saying racist things like ching-chong, ching-chong as they pushed me. Happened a couple times. Or I'd be in the hallway and students would just push me against the wall, and laugh. They'd knock my things over. Um, just shove me, you know, onto other people. And then just run away. And ... I think that was

the first time that I really realized that oppression was out there.

LANCE

When I was young, my, my dad was taking um, my brother and me to a friend's house. We were going to watch Star Wars, all of us. And my brother's in the back seat saying he's going to kiss Princess Leia, and I'm saying I'm going to kiss Luke. Because I thought Mark Hamill was attractive at, you know uh, this is like four or five years old. And uh, he explodes and is very much, you know, you do not do that. Um, very, very like ... direct. It, it's not allowed. You know, and this is my father talking to me. Um, and so ... uh ... I got a message very early on, that was not okay.

VICKI

When I got in college that was the first time that I was involved with a, a, a girl. And so that's when I knew that's what I was. And I remember ... we were always so scared. And uh, in fact, my freshman year, uh, rumors started about me on campus. And uh, I was called in to the head of the P.E. department ... office. And basically, you know, I lied. I had to lie. Because you know, he told

me that if I was like that, he was not going to let me graduate and be a teacher. And so that's the first time I knew that I had to lie to protect myself. He sent me to a, uh, a professor in the psychology department. I'll never forget because when I went in, there were all these gay boys sitting in the waiting room. And that was kind of the thing, it was this particular professor and the, the guys told me, you know, we got caught doing something, and we go in and we say we're never going to do it again, and so they let us stay in school.

RICHARD

Well, I realized that I, I grew up with certain ideas about sexuality and about women and about roles and all the rest of it. And ... there were comments that were made, I remember vividly (Inaudible) my father commenting about, I had posters on my walls as a teenager. And of course, they're all of women in bikinis. And he was talking about exploitation, and I sort of laughed it off like it, it's not, it's just pictures of women. It's not a big deal. And then really understanding what he was talking about, and really understanding what that really meant.

MANDI

The one that bothered me the most was sitting in a hotel bar with my husband, and ... well, then-boyfriend um ... and it was a really nice, upscale kind of place. And we were both dressed up and having such a good time. And someone stopped and asked uh, if he was bothering me. And I thought it should be pretty clear that he's not bothering me. We're a couple inches apart and we're laughing and talking. And yet someone's assumption ... was that we shouldn't be together. Uh, and that he was potentially a threat to me ... That just kind of blew my mind, you know. Um ... and there have been a lot of instances like that. Um, someone ranting and raving in a store about all the dirty Mexicans taking the White girls ... It's a strange feeling, you know, to love someone and to realize that people don't love you together. It wasn't the first time I began to notice oppression. It was the first time that it ... was about me. Um, or that it felt deeply painful in the way that only a personal attack can.

BRYAN

So around the time I was 18 or 19, I was with a friend, and a friend of his that he went to, to school with was hanging

out with us and some people were saying something was gay and uh something was retarded. And so she was trying to point out why you shouldn't say those sort of things. She was tryin-she was trying to advocate for social justice, essentially. And I remember actively being the protagonist, and I was like, making a point of doing the things she was saying not to do. Just to piss her off. Um, because I was like, whatever, that's stupid. Like you're being ridiculous. And now I'm going to just do it more because you pointed it out. And instead of being willing to listen, I just shut that off, and I was like no, there's no way. I kind of just uh ... I uh ... I was-I was a jerk.

LANCE

I was not as, as cemented in who I am in my right to speak until after I came to college. Because I came out when I was 16, but I went back in the closet my freshman year. Because I came to a school where I didn't know anyone. My roommate at one point had told me that people who are gay are naturally weaker, and that's why we didn't have any homosexual ... athletes. (Laughs) Which is funny, in retrospect. Um ... but um ... that was actually a big piece in me picking out, okay ... I can't

assume people are right anymore.

BECCA

In biology class in ninth grade, we had to raise tadpoles for a grade. So we were each given a bag with a tadpole and some water. And I remember, I set it down next to me one day on the bleachers in gym, we were having free time. And um, a White student just thought it would be funny to just run down and like stomp on my tadpole, killing it. And our teacher had said if we um, killed our tadpole, we would drop a couple letter grades on that project. And she just ran off. Just killed my tadpole. Was anything done? Nope. I told my PE teacher. Nothing was done. Even though you could easily say, oh that's a cruel kid. That was just a mean bully. But I couldn't help but feel like it was related to the fact that I was different. I was Chinese.

JONNIE

The first time I was called a nigger. I had never heard that word growing up in my household, but when a person called me that it just felt funny. Didn't know what that meant. Went home and asked my mother what does that mean? Because it was my best friend calling me that,

because she said her mother told her she couldn't play with me anymore because I was a nigger. And so those type of things where you don't know, but you know it's not right.

VICKI

The major step for me, uh, was when I was in class last summer. There happened to be a, a person in my class that ... made me not feel safe. And then I realized that I really wasn't in any other place than I had been before. You know, I was still there. I still had the fear. Uh, I let other people in class speak up. You know, if something was said about something gay, you know, it was safe to let the straight people speak up, because you know, they were ... you know, this girl next to me was cute, she was married, and she had kids. Very safe for her to speak up for gay marriage. Whereas I didn't say anything. You know? And, and- I sat there somewhat in shame, because I didn't speak up and say what I really thought.

JONNIE

I had moved-progressed to another job where I was uh, a bookkeeper in a doctor's office, and um, they hired

somebody else, and they uh, what they said is that, “You’re going to train this person.” And so I trained her. And she had a bachelor’s degree. Of course I had just high school. And after I trained her, they fired me, and I was very oppressed at that job, but I felt like I had to stay there because I had three kids. They were very ugly towards me because I was living in projects at that time. And so I could never dress good enough. If I was two minutes, five minutes late, I was docked. And it was because I was try-trying to drive my kids to school, I was still trying to navigate my way with three kids, and you know, do a, have a job and stuff. But the oppression, the things that I went through, it, in some ways it challenged me, it made me stronger, and it made me think, I never, ever had gotten fired from a job before in my life. It made me think ... is this the way I want to live my life-the rest of my life? Is to be at the mercy of people who are, who are oppressing me? Or am I going to do something to empower myself? Don’t know where I got that from. (Laughs) Where that came from at such a young age. But that’s what I thought. And that’s why I ended up in school.

BRYAN

There was the Obama election, whenever I was sitting with uh, Jonathan, who's the friend of mine that lives in Austin. There's multiple times in talking with him I can recall having-making a connection. Um, because he is not White, and we sat the day after he got elected, and he told me about um, some of the fear associated with, with being in an area where so many White people were um, opposing the election of Barack Obama. And what it was like for him to be somebody that wasn't White around all this hate against somebody that wasn't White. So I wasn't ... anti-Obama, but I'm surrounded by people that are. But they are going to assume, as I'm walking through campus as a White guy, they're not going to assume that I do support him, and they're not going to make any assumptions with that. I just blend right in. And then he's around, that same, walking through that same exact space, um, having to be very aware of the fact that a non-White president was just elected and people are mad about it. They are not happy about this election. And now ... do you go to class? Do you skip class that day? What do you do? And we're sitting there, and he's telling me

about this, and I just realized oh my gosh ... Like, I can't have that experience. Um, my experience is always going to be different because I'm a White guy in a society that was built for White guys. In that moment, I ... felt ... kind of angry um, about it. Because ... I had a role in that. Um, I participated in the things that made that be that way ... Like, I, I ... regardless of what I was doing at the time or what I've done since then, I mean, there was I've participated in ... maintaining the systems that create a setting in which someone being elected to office that isn't White could make for a hostile environment.

LANCE

There will be times where people, people will shout out of cars if I'm holding hands with another guy. How do you respond to that? Especially when they're passing by, um, and they can't hear you? it's usually, you know, "faggot", but we've gotten "butt fucker." Um, I've gotten, you know, people tell you go home or like, something like that. But it's ... I mean, y- ... I start to think where does that come from? You know, why do you have to shout something? Um, how is what I'm doing affecting you to the point where you have to speak out?

JONNIE

It had always been my desire when I was married to go to school, but my husband stopped me every time. Every time. That I need to be at home with my kids. I need to raise them and um, because he was an abuser, as you know, abusers, uh, they try to make you ... be awa-, away from family, away from friends. You know, and I was just there ... and there was nobody was telling me I was smart when my husband was telling me I was dumb. And you know, you kind of believe that if you hear that all the time.

MANDI

I'm aware constantly ... of my children saying things like "Spanish is bad." My daughter came home the other day saying, "Speaking Spanish is bad." That's part of her heritage ... That's her father's language, her grandparents' languageShe's three, you know? You wonder how ... how early does it have to start, that they have to question who they are? The good parts of themselves.

GABY

I think it was my first winter sto-, storm. Uh, in Colorado, I came back from work, and the bus took us to the Park

and Ride, the cars were all covered in snow. And of course, I'm an island boy, I have no idea how to deal with snow. So I didn't even turn on the defroster or the heater, at that point, I, I find out that there was a sno-snow scraper in the car. I was trying to scrape th-the ice, but it wouldn't come out because it was frozen. So, I drove off like that. And, I remember this car pulled behind me really, really close, and-but I couldn't see exactly who they were, because of the, the ice and then the windshield and stuff like that. I don't know exactly if they're following me, I don't know exactly who they are, but they're really close. So I sped up a little bit, but they were, kept moving really close to me. So, I sped up even more. Well, that was over, that was going over the speed limit already, and then I see a whole bunch of blue and red lights. The people who were really close to me, they were actually cops, but I couldn't tell ... I pulled over as soon as I saw the lights. And then the cops got out of the car. I remember there was one on my side, the other one on the other side. I'm trying to explain to the cop the best way I could ... uh, my incident with the whole snow, I couldn't see who was behind me. But it was-it was kind of hard to

communicate that ... They took me out of the car. I was upset, because I ... I -was just frustrated, because I, if I would've just take off the snow, I wouldn't have to be dealing with this right now. And I think I made a movement to grab the scraper, because I was like, I'm just trying to show you, I, I was just trying to clean this snow and I couldn't see you, and that's when they all took their guns out and then they dragged me to the sidewalk. They just left me there. and I remember after a long time, they just told me to get back in the car, but ... they gave me a really expensive ticket. So um, again, I, there I was trying to explain to the police officer, "hey, uh, I can I get out and can I try to clean the window, the back window?" And I remember just him being short with me and just be like "do whatever you want, and, but if you're going to do it, you got to get out of here." And ... again, I still had no idea about the defroster. And there I was, scraping the thing again. And then I remember ... like just them pulling to the side and just pretty much um ... to move and get away. just move and just go away. Just go, go. I wish (Laughs) ... I really wish they would've been like "hey, you know, the car has a defroster. Maybe you can try that" ...

An-that was one of the times that I felt like ... like that
wasn't fair

RICHARD

I mean, I, I even talk about the fact that I, I have the privilege-plus, because I'm White and male and I have an English accent. And in this country, that makes a difference. And things are given to me because I seem polite and nice and (Inaudible/Whispers-I just) really love the accent, we'll go ahead and help you out here. And it sounds ridiculous, but it happens all the time. And I understand that far better now, what that really means. And I-, so that, the privilege issue really didn't come up until much later for me, because it was just something I had never even considered.

MANDI

But there is an assumption about where we came from before we're even ... before we even open our mouths. And that ... now as a parent is what really affects me. That my children are raised to be polite and respectful and kind, but before they even open their mouths, there is going to be a judgment of them based on the way they

look.

LANCE

What that does to me emotionally is ... it fosters this feeling of dependence, and this feeling of I need you to tell me that it's okay to be me ... So that I can be me ... Um ... and there were points when it could have been anyone who said that, but nobody did ... And that does not that's not what a person should go through. Um ... especially not a kid. And that's the thing ... we figure this out at a young age. It's a discovery, it's not a choice.

BECCA

It affected my self-esteem, and it made me feel like I ... wasn't as worthy as maybe some of these other people. Um, and it hurt me ... I remember in middle school, just comin' home and just crying all the time. (Inaudible) I felt depressed, I didn't want to leave, um, my house. I just sat there and watched TV and ... ate. (Laughs) Um, I gained a lot of weight from that. I guess I just felt ... hopeless. I just felt like I didn't have anyone on my side. I felt alone. I felt really alone.

BRYAN

There was no way for me to experience that. That was a big point I think in my development. Was the re-, the realization that um ... my experience will always be different because I'm White. And it-, and that, and largely in that was that the ... oppression was ... was a key part of that.

VICKI

Back when I was in, in, particularly when I was in college, when I was really having a tough time, uh, no, it seemed very bleak. And you know, there were very, a lot of times that um ... you know, I, I probably needed to go and talk to someone, because I wa-, I was, I pondered suicide a number of times. When I was in high school, and I didn't know why when I was in high school, I just knew that there was something wrong with me. My first year of teaching, I had to resign my job, because um ... another teacher outed me. I never thought I would teach again. And so after that, I knew ... that if I wanted to teach and coach, that I had to lie. And so you know, I, I was always torn about feeling like I was being untruthful to this group of people. But at the time, it was like I have no choice. I have no choice. I, it was self-preservation. I, I, I wanted

to keep my job. And uh, you know, it's, it's living in ... fear all the time. It, it's like there's a large ax right over your neck, and doesn't matter how good you are. It doesn't matter what kind of a job I do. How I relate to the kids. None of that matters. Because what matters is if somebody decided that they didn't like me, then they could always use that against me ... It changed the direction of my career. Uh, it changed the risks I was able to take. I, you know, my dream was always to be a, a ... a head coach and, and be in the limelight, but after that, I didn't want to be in the limelight anymore. I didn't want my life to be under a microscope. I was always scared. So it, it, it changed me.

GABY

It put me in a spot where I was denying my feelings, or I was refusing to believe that that was really happening, the reality of it. I mean, I never got into a fight, but whenever I spoke my mind, it came out pretty aggressive. So of course, I mean, then it, it reinforces a lot of the stereotypes, too, with the ... see, there's another (Laughs) there's another brown person, um, or Latin person with, hot-blooded person ... Um, they're just hot tempered ...

Which, what I really felt was I wish, I just felt like I wasn't being heard. Like, like I could scream as loud as I wanted, but nobody seemed to hear me.

RICHARD

I, I don't have problems putting opportunities and resources together. That's not to say I don't work very hard, but the fact is I'm able to do that partly because of that privilege ... And it's a hard thing, because ultimately, and this is the difficulty, is ... if somebody said to me, "Oh, okay, well, we can wave a magic wand, and we can get rid of all of that for you, would you like to do that?" I think in my heart of hearts, the answer would be "Well, maybe next week. Maybe some other time."

BRYAN

I don't like the way that feels. I don't like ... knowing that there's a part of me that's okay with dehumanizing people for my benefit.

GABY

You come into this country to do good, to try your best, to, to succeed, to, to get a good education, but when you come here, you feel like ... You have to play by the rules. So as long as you follow those rules, like staying quiet,

being passive, not being radical or, talking against this oppression or just crazy ideas that, things that are not really happening, racism was 60 years ago, whatever, then you're okay, but the problem with that is that when you try to do that, that's not you. That's not you. So it becomes this struggle with yourself.

LANCE

I'm angry because a person in power should not be allowed to hurt people. Um ... and regardless of what you say ... I was hurt. I was a kid who was being told that I was wrong, because I was being who I was. That is not something a kid should have to figure out. We talk about protecting children from these horrible things in the world, but then we create things to add onto that. That is a part of my experience as a gay person that a heterosexual person does not have to feel. So that's the anger piece. I'm sad, because ... I don't have control over that. Or over my life ... And I should.

[TEXT: FINDING OUR VOICES]

JONNIE

I've worked jobs, all kinds of jobs. And I was working one day in, the kitchen of a hospital, I was a cook. And this

lady kept saying, "You know what? You're too smart to be doing what you're doing." I was like what? (Laughs) "Me? Smart?" She said "Yeah, you shouldn't be doing this. You should go to school." And I was like "no, I'm not going to do that. You know, I'm not going to be going to school. I've got to raise three kids". That stuck with me, she saw that in me that ... I wasn't a dummy, but you know, I just had some things that had happened to me that put me in that situation. And it really raised my self-esteem at that time, because I didn't think, I'm starting to cry (Laughs), I didn't think I had that. I really didn't think I had that. And at that particular time, it was just something I needed. And something I needed to hear. And that's all she ever said to me ... She didn't help me with my process of getting in school or whatever. It was just ... to me, it was that God sent her at that time ... I really believe that. Or else I probably would still be working in the kitchen or still living in projects, you know ... But it was just that.

GABY

Pedro Albizu Campos, which is a really, who was a really radical activist in Puerto Rico back in the ... 50s. And he

was dark skinned, too, and he was able to graduate from Harvard in the 1920s when it was really hard for a person of color to, to go to Harvard. And then he was like me, he was Puerto Rican, he spoke Spanish, and somehow he was able to go there and graduate from there ... and then come back to the island, and be such a strong voice and pull all these masses to fight for justice ... Um ... so I think that had influenced me, too. Seeing those ... role models that never gave up.

LANCE

When I was 16, I was at a retreat, uh, with my youth group. And it was ... I think in a heart talk, which is basically where people speak about what's on their hearts, and it's, it's you know, nothing leaves the group type thing. Uh, you're supported here, you're loved here. So it was safe. I knew that being in a safe spot with people who I knew were okay with it, my church was very supportive. That definitely helped, uh, me feel more comfortable being me, because they wanted that. Um, and so when I told them, uh, it was actually, it was celebrated (Laughs), which was not what I was expecting. Um, and uh ... I mean, the entire ride home was amazing.

JONNIE

When I was in school, and I started taking women's history classes, and just history classes in general and knowing more about me. And it's been like a journey for me. I wouldn't say oh, that was that moment. But that was the-the beginning of it, where I really understood, hey, this is not my fault. This is because of the way society views women. Or, this is the way society views African-American. Because growing up, nobody ever talked to me about my history, and told me that yeah, this was what happened to you, your, your ancestors. The only thing I heard is that they were slaves. So my, nobody ever told me it was because of the system and because of oppression that has gone on through the United States for years. I didn't know that. And then when it was taught to me was like oh yeah, they were docile. You know, and they just took what was given to them. And then I find out that hey, it was a lot of revolution going on.

VICKI

I remember talking to my brother, my middle brother. That was a big, big deal for me. And for him to accept me

... that was really major. So, I couldn't tell my parents when I was 22 years old about the most traumatic thing in my life that had happened, and that I had to resign my job. I couldn't tell them. I had to lie to them. I had to hide that. All the way 'till the day they died, they never knew that. So uh ... being able to know that there was someone in my family that ... loved me, then ... then there was, you know, there was somebody there for me. You know, I, I knew at that point that if everybody else walked out of my life, that at least I would have my brother ... So that was ... that was a big deal.

MANDI

The most important experience that brought me to a place where I could stand against oppression was understanding myself as an oppressor. And like I said, that, that didn't come until I really began to understand the concept of White privilege. And I, I think I had understood it intuitively my whole life, because ... there were so many doors open to me, in spite of coming from ... a low SES family, and in spite of um, being one of the first people in my family to even attempt, um, education past high school, uh, or middle school, for some. Um, in spite of all

those things, there were assumptions made in my favor, and (Clears Throat) those had opened a lot of doors for me. And understanding ... how my own very unintentional role oppressed others um ... kind of forced me ... to consider, to reconsider that role and whether or not I choose to keep it ... I think it's one of those things that once your eyes are opened, once you see it ... you can't un-see it.

BRYAN

I'm not okay with ignoring it anymore. And that happened pretty quickly for me. I don't know why it did. Um, I don't know if it's something unique or not unique to the experience, but for me, when I started to realize these things, it was no longer okay for me to just go about my business. Um ... and quite frankly, it'd be really difficult ... to go about your business and not also actively participate in the maintenance of these oppressive systems.

VICKI

I'm a very outspoken person. Really I am. But I haven't been outspoken on this issue. I've been outspoken on everything else. You know, I would stand up and fight for everything in the world. In that, in that class I realized that

I stand up and fight for anybody else and everybody else, but I had not fought for myself. That's what hit me like a ton of bricks. And, I was so angry. And I knew that I had to do something, because I was just, I couldn't ... take it anymore, and, but I didn't know exactly how I was going to do it. And uh ... you know, I was afraid that I was going to explode and be an idiot, and you know, yell and scream, and I knew that's not what I needed to do. And uh ... so when I ... confronted ... uh, this person ... it was scary. I was scared to death. Uh, and as soon as I said it, I wished, I mean, part of me wished I hadn't done it. And, and ... what I was really scared of is more the reaction of the other people in the room.

BECCA

I feel like it's still a process I'm going through. I can't stand here and say all those experiences don't still affect me today. They do. And that's why I feel so like adamant about like wanting for my kids to be knowledgeable and to have this understanding also, and to have an open mind about others and to respect each other ... Because I didn't get treated that way. And no one was there for me, to stand up for me. So I feel the need to do this for them.

and it still hurts to talk about those things in the past, obviously. Um, so I know that I'm still going through this healing process. And I don't know how long it'll take. Maybe the rest of my life. But um, as long as I keep doing what I'm doing, um ... hopefully one day I'll be healed from all the pain, and ... all the anger and all the hurt from when I was younger.

BRYAN

It's important for me to be educating myself and be aware of things that are going on, and that way I have the ability to point it out when it happens. One of the things that I was-, always wanted to be better at, uh, whenever I started to realize these things was the ability in that moment to point something out. And have uh, a base of ... of the ability to do that, to recognize it. Because a lot of times, 10, 15 minutes later, I'd be like dang it, that was something I should have pointed out.

RICHARD

It's equity through bringing everyone up to the same level, rather than trying to diminish what's there, because diminishing what's there is, as I said before, if somebody said to me, if you could give it up tomorrow, would you? I

don't know, I might not. And that's the thing: you can't get rid of these things. What you have to do is you have to build up that which is missing. And then when there is equity, and when there is ... a certain egalitarian sense about it, then yes, that's when it is no longer becomes an issue. When you're sort of affording it to everyone, it's no longer a privilege, because everyone has the same treatment.

JONNIE

The cause also is social justice. Um, that's one reason why I've been working in uh, the Multicultural Student Affairs office for almost so, it's going on 13 years, is because I do believe empowerment of people who have been marginalized, and giving a voice to the oppressed. Because a lot of times, they don't have that voice. And sometimes I have to be that vehicle to help them move forward. And um, I firmly believe in what I do. Pay's not great, but that's why I'm still here (Laughs), is because I firmly believe in that cause. For instance, one time for alternative spring break, we went to Memphis, Tennessee, to Birmingham, Alabama, and all those different places they hear about, but they never had

experience to go to see where MLK died. You know. So ... and it's not just African-American students. You know, it was a mixture of students that went, but it also is giving them that chance to really know ... that happened. And some of the students cried. Because they saw things that, you know, they read about but they've never seen. So it's a have-to for me, you know. Because if I don't do it, who's going to do it? You know. And I'm in that position to do that for them, so why not?

VICKI

When you asked me at the very beginning what my name was and to tell you stuff, saying that I was a lesbian was like, it was really hard for me to say that. Uh, that word still ha-, I still have a problem with that word. It still has negative connotations, you know, from way back. And I don't want it to, but it does ... Uh, it's still a label. But it, you know, it is another step, being able to sit here and you know ... say this and know that other people are going to hear this. It's scary.

RICHARD

it seems arrogant almost to say that seeing other people suffering has made me a better person ... and seeing

other people's pain is what's helped me to appreciate my own self. And I, I have no idea why it feels that way. It, it just does. Because I can almost imagine somebody saying "Well I'm having a hard time and you feel better? Well ... screw you." You know? What the hell is that all about?

MANDI

You know, it's difficult to find a way to discuss with your father something that he said that, that that I found offensive, oppressive, and still be respectful. One example is going to see him at work. And their tables and lockers are all sort of graffitied and little articles pinned up and, uh, often it's a big joke to have things like uh, I don't know ... a gay pride bumper sticker, and stick it on somebody's locker when they're not there. I don't even remember what I said. Something that I intended to be a very gentle, a very gentle rebuke. And said...you know, what-why is this so bad? Why is this a joke to say that one of your coworkers would be gay? And ... I think what I got in return was a sort of quizzical look, like clearly it's funny. You know ... no harm meant. And in taking it a step further than that, and pushing the, the how it is

harmful ... I got back um, some very clear we're-not-going-to-have-this-conversation kind of signals. Um, that I was being the uppity, college-educated, adult daughter come home. Um ... that it wasn't okay to have those conversations. And I keep having them, and they continue to be uncomfortable. Um ... it's ... slowly becoming an expectation that we will have them, but I think the idea of why that is still remains that I'm um ... feel superior in some way. That I am challenging ... my father. Um, and wrongfully superior, I think. Um ... it's a tough conversation. You know, to figure out the right way to go about it, I am still not there, but got to keep trying.

BRYAN

Sometimes you're just tired. Um, sometimes you might not want to be willing ... to accept that things are going on. For whatever reason, maybe because um, recognizing and being willing to say yes, that's happening, there's also this level of then why am I letting it happen, right there? ... Um, and, and that's not always fun. It's largely not fun, um, to do that. And sometimes you're just like, I just don't want to do that today. Today, I want to go with the flow. Um, today I'm tired. Whatever reason. I

have other things on my mind. And uh, I'm going to go back with the flow. Um, of course then, you know, later on you realize ... whoops ... uh But in that moment it's, it's a little bit easier to do it that way.

VICKI

I'm still taking baby steps, you know? I still, when I start to write something or ... I, I, I question, I wonder if this is what I'm supposed to say. So no, I haven't broken off all the chains. In my mind, I have, but in reality I haven't. I still have to be careful. Wh-The town that I live in, I, you know, I ... basically don't know anybody, you know? And I still don't live in the town where I teach ... Uh ... I still don't uh ... hold hands with anybody walking down the street.

BRYAN

There were certain people in my life, that if they realized I had jumped back into the flow, um, they weren't just going to be okay with that. (Laughs) They would tell me. And I think that was important for me. Because it is quite easy. Um, White, straight dude, I can blend in. It's not, it's not, it's not very difficult. I can go right into that flow really fast. Uh, sometimes without any awareness of it, as well.

Sometimes you can be going that direction, and then go
... oh, whoa. I just, I've been doing that and had no clue.
Um, so it was important for me to have some people
around me that um, would recognize that. And tell-be
able to tell me, as well.

JONNIE

I've had to really kind of let go of some people, because of
the way they felt about me or because I knew that they
were stagnant. And I would try to help them, but they
didn't want to come out of what the-they wanted you to be
the helper for them and rescue them, but they don't really
want to come out and empower them-their own selves.
So it was a lot of purging (Laughs), you know, people.

LANCE

If I were not to speak up, if I were to let everything
overwhelm me and then take me back and stop me, I
would still be suffering. And then there would be that
thing of you stopped trying. And that is not something I
can live with ... not just a personal thing, because I would
see all the pain that other people were going through and
know that I was not doing anything about it. Which is
how, -I do not understand how people can just sit there

and say that oh, just, it's ... that's your thing. Like you're, you are, you're really the, the advocate. It's, it's a political thing. I don't really want to um ... I just want to live my life.

GABY

A lot of people that did hurt me a lot, or that did oppress me in the past, or that sometimes unfortunately it still happens, most of them were White. But the people that are standing up against oppression right now with me? They're White. So ... for me, that's very powerful. It-it has been pretty helpful in the healing process.

RICHARD

It's just not making assumptions anymore. And not necessarily thinking that it's okay to be a certain way just because I think it's okay. Let's try to be considerate that there's more than just my own opinion and feeling in a situation. I mean, we live in a dynamic and complicated society by the fact it's a society there are other people than just me. It's a very personal thing, because it-it's such a fundamental part of who I am now. And I'm at a point in my life where I ... I sort of like who I am. The person that I am. That's really hard to say, because ...

yeah, it's really hard to say ... But it's ... it's a continuation of that. It's just wanting to be a better person.

BRYAN

My hope would be that other people would be comfortable because they know I'm out there, too. Uh, I think that makes it a little bit easier. Being involved in different organizations where people are, are doing that makes it a lot easier, too. Knowing that there's other people doing it makes it easier to do it yourself.

LANCE

I think a big piece was when I came out. I became more interested in being who I am. Because at that point, there's this whole power thing that I was missing, and when I said I am gay, and when I told the people in my life, and they supported me on top of that ... I was able to say this is me. And then at that point ... people could no longer use that as an insult. Because it was truth and it was out there, and you had to if you wanted to do something against me, you had to go beyond that.

MANDI

It's much easier to accept oppression when you think ... the only people being affected by it are adults, because

we have this impression of adults as being responsible for themselves. Responsible to themselves. And so if my husband faces oppression, I know that it's a 35-year-old man who, in theory at least, can combat that on his own. But becoming a parent really changed all of that, because now the recipients of, and the enactors of oppression, are kids. And they're vulnerable. So yeah, having those, those two little faces looking at me every day and feeling responsible for the world that they are growing up in, it's it's inspiring and it's energizing. Um ... and it really takes away any excuse you have not to act. Because they are ... depending on us to do that.

BRYAN

I would hope that at some level, the things I'm doing ... counteract ... the oppression that exists. Um, at a selfish level, I would hope the things I'm doing counteract the things I've done.

LANCE

When people used my experiences as examples of good things, it did a lot that I otherwise wasn't getting. And that was amazing. I think seeing how other people would listen to me helped, because at a point, I wouldn't have

spoken up, because I didn't think people cared what I had to say. So when that actually happened, when people started paying attention, it ... I mean ... you know had a little experience there.

VICKI

I believe that it has made me be a lot more honest and open, with my feelings. It has affected my, all my relationships. There's been some conflict in my life, because ... it's kind of like I opened up some doors and everything kind of just came rushing out at once. So sometimes those things weren't always the best in certain situations, but I feel like really for the first time in my life that I am one complete person ... That I am as I am to everybody. Now, I don't, I still don't have a rainbow sticker on my car. I do have one in my room, though, and that's (Laughs) that's a big deal for me. Uh, but it, it seems so much more hopeful.

BECCA

I mean, it's not, it's not like I could forget about those times, but maybe it's helping me ... to forgive and to let go of those situations. Maybe that's what I mean when I say I'm being healed. Because I used to be so angry and

upset at myself for not saying anything, not doing anything. But now I feel like, like through my students ... I mean, a bully is a bully, so I'm finally being able to ... stand up to the bully that I wasn't able to before. Help my students stand up to one. So I guess in a way it's helping me to deal with it, and to forget about it and let it go and move on. ... Hopefully.

GABY

I, I'm still trying to heal, and process those, and ... it's not that I cannot let go. I, I just really hope that uh, that people can really see how-how those type of aggression uh, can hurt an individual or how much they can affect a person. Not physically but emotionally and psychologically. Um ... because it's been years and I, and I, I'm still trying to ... to ... to kind of process it. Uh ... so ... uh I, I really hope to ... like I said before, send that message across. And, and I mean, I'm not here to complain or ... or to ... for people to feel pity. Um, I'm still, I'm, I'm, I'm really just trying to speak up against oppression.

[TEXT: OUR HOPES]

RICHARD

When my son is 20, what I hope he doesn't say to me is the sort of-sort of things that I heard coming out of my mouth when I was ... 20 before I'd really become self-aware about certain things. So it's not so much what do I hope I hear coming out of his mouth, it's more of what I hope doesn't come out of his mouth. What I'd like to hear coming out of his mouth is "Hey, Dad, ... can we talk about that? Dad, what do you think about that? Dad, what does that really mean?" That's what I (Inaudible-I think I'd like to hear) come out of his mouth.

MANDI

Having people around me that um ... that do experience oppression in ways that I individually do not, um, makes it a very personal experience. It's much more motivating and feels much more ... uh, immediate um, this need to see change. Uh, and to be a catalyst for that change. Standing against oppression ... it isn't just for those who feel oppressed. ... Um, and that it's an everyday kind of choice. That ... there can and will be opportunities to stand against all the time. And that it becomes ... it can become a way of life.

JONNIE

There are many voices out there not being heard. And I'm just one person. I don't feel like in a way that I'm doing anything special. I just think this is my journey. This is where I've been. I'm glad to share that. There's, there's been a time that I didn't share, you know. For years, I kind of kept a lot of this stuff bottled up in me, but I think as I've gotten older that I'm not as quite as timid as I used to be, and I'm, I'm quite vocal in what I believe. And I hope that if a person who is not a person of color that ... sees this, that they understand a little bit about the world that a person of color has to deal, what they deal with.

BECCA

I hope that anyone watching this ... after hearing my story and everyone else's, that they would do the same. They would be able to open up and share what they've been through. Um, share their stories. And ... stand up and fight with the rest of us. It means a lot to me to know that someone might be out there watching this, and that this could change them. And that's all I h-can hope for is that they would go out and do the same. People just need to keep opening up, sharing their stories, speaking out against oppression and fighting, um, together. We need

to stand together to be able to battle oppression.

BRYAN

There's still times where I'm intimidated by um, the amount of people that around me that are agreeing against things I completely disagree with, and that I'm not abl-always able to talk about it and to speak up. But I would hope that they would feel more comfortable after watching us talking about it. Because I think the more people that are, the more likely it is for there to come a time where it's that much easier to talk about it. Because there's-there is strength in numbers, and right now, the numbers aren't necessarily always on our side, um, so it can be scary. I would hope that would kind of remove some of that fear.

VICKI

People that are watching this that are ... anything other than heterosexual, I hope that they will ... be who they are, but you know, I, I always worry that ... sometimes people come forth ... as themselves, and they bring out hatred and bitterness that they have taken in. And so that makes them appear bitter and hateful. And it pushes people away and it gives people the idea that you are just

like I thought you were. So you know, my feeling is don't, you know, don't let your heart become hard. Don't become cynical just because you're treated badly. Because ... you know, those, there's, there's, there's flaws in those people. The people that treat you badly, there's flaws in them.

GABY

I think if we open up and we learn and, and get to know that other person, the other person's differences, we can be more at ease, and, and uh, and work together, and work together to, to bring that message out of like hey there's some oppression there. There's, there's some hateful things happening. There's some inhumane things happening out there that are really hurting people a lot. And when we speak out together ... Whites, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, I think people will listen more. Because now it's just not me being the angry brown person anymore ... we're in this together. Again, If you're oppressed, I'm going to be with you, and, and it doesn't matter who you are, we have differences. If you're a woman, if you're gay, if you have disabilities, I'm going to fight with you.

LANCE

I want people who are sitting back and not doing anything. Who are watching. Who are saying that is their problem. Or saying “oh, um it’s, it’s, it’s its a political thing.” Um, I want them to get up. I want them to do something. Because when you add your voice we become so much louder and we can do so much more so much more quickly.

[TEXT: PARRHESIA: I RISK MY
SELF IN ORDER TO BE
MYSELF, AUTHENTICALLY.
PAPADIMOS & MURRAY
(2008)]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

