

Gay Culture Long Beach

Speaker 1: Joining me now on a telephone interview from san Francisco is matt aklan

Speaker 2: I'm here with ryan salazer Jr. at cal state long beach

Speaker 2: Where did you grow up?

Ryan: I grew up in the corona California, which is the inland empire

Speaker 2: When did you finally come out?

I came out this year 2008, in March, actually, March 6, 2008.

Speaker 1: Matt is 26 years old and matt and I are from the same town, and its called Visalia. Could you tell me a little about your experience in Visalia California?

Matt: I grew up in Visalia which is in the middle of the central valley. It's a small kind of religious neighborhood with about 300,000 people, surprisingly. My family is deeply, deeply religious. And I am there homosexual son. What I did there was I was created into a different person. Created a different character, played a character.

Speaker 1: Did you feel a difference between growing up in corona and kind of feeling that you were held back. Maybe they weren't as gay accepting there. Did you feel like long beach could help you come out more?

I definitely felt more accepted here in long beach than I did growing up. Just because I did get teased eventhough I wasn't out. Long beach state seems to have a more open community, which is kinda nice.

Matt: I moved to silver lake with my boyfriend. There was a larger homosexual community. I had west Hollywood and Silver Lake and therefore there was a lot more to do, a lot more networking, a lot more friends to be made. A lot more opportunities to just kind of build relationship. When I lived in new York, New York as a whole is such a melting pot for so many different cultures, many different religions, difference races. And you know, you have to co-exist there. And when I wanted to go out to a gay club I didn't just go to west Hollywood like I did in LA. It was like, oh there is one on 2nd and 2nd, and oh there is one on 51st and 9th. I was like, it was all over the city.

I definitely noticed that as well. Like when I lived there, that there was not a concentrated area that you could be walking by. Like something that was kind of known as a professionals parlor, you know were like a businessman goes to have a drink after work. And then right next door

there is drag queen bingo. There, you know... haha... And I think you make a good point that it is. Every space that you have in New York is shared space. Because the population and the way the city is structured. That it doesn't make sense to put up so many boundaries.

Do you think that we should not be as segregated, with the gay community here?

I would 100% agree with that. I mean in New York, I've never been there, but like he said you definitely you know, go around the corner there is a drag queen but right next to it is a deli for old people. But here you know that West Hollywood is for the gays, and Laguna Beach is for the gays. But it's like we have separate places.

If you were in Long Beach you went to 1 of 4 clubs in the gay neighborhood, if you went to Silver Lake you went to 1 of 3 places. In New York it was a completely different experience. You could go everywhere

I don't know if it's always necessarily from a communication perspective productive to gay people, lesbian people, transgender people, intersex people, bisexual people, and assume that all these people all engage in the same communicative practices. Or that all their communicative practices could be put under a single umbrella. And because I studied gay male culture, I know that gay male culture in a lot of ways is very different from lesbian culture, and different from transgender culture. Or you know, so... From a communication perspective I see a utility in being able to say that there are different identity positions that are socially constructed. And somewhat arbitrary but meaningful.

We all think about the history of the nation, and in just pop-culture and in gay culture.

Do you feel that there is a gay-culture out there, and how would you define it?

Umm... I think there is definitely a community out there. I don't know if there is necessarily a culture. We definitely have our own thing, if you know what I mean. But, umm, you know what I think the main part is us just to be accepted into mainstream culture. Which is what we are striving for.

What was your take in the prop 8 outcome?

Uh. I was disappointed obviously. I was really bummed the day after. But I, after thinking about it, feel like it's just the beginning. And it will happen eventually.

Well if you have an institution in the gay community that promotes monogamy. That helps curtail the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Beyond being even a rights issue, or an assimilation issue, was an issue of public health in my mind. And that's not to say that married people don't sleep around or married can't be promiscuous, certainly. But if you are trying to

promote a healthy sexual lifestyle it seems to me that like people should have an investment in marriage.

You know to not really share, it was almost unanimous I think for San Francisco because we have so many homosexuals in office here. And it is so widely kinda of accepted around here. It's not a place where any neighborhood really I would feel uncomfortable you know in any way. It was kind of surprising to all of us really, because we do live in such a liberal bubble. It was not surprising to me as it was to others. Because I came from Visalia, and I went home for my sister's wedding, 3 weeks before the election. And I saw, you know, "Yes on 8." All of this campaigning to basically defend this religious right. And really what it was a lot more just propaganda like turn because there is a lot more of a Christian community there.

What does it feel like for you to feel like someone. Your 26 years old, someone in your generation whose still having to fight for this? What does it feel like?

It, it. It's almost like are we still doing this. Like, why, why, why? I mean, in 1967 we couldn't have multiple racial marriage and that was not too long ago. But it's like, why are we marching for civil rights.

All of my mentors who were gay or lesbian identified as queers and I was like, I am going to do the same thing. And umm... They were really against the idea of marriage or anything that might mimic heterosexual relationship. Because again that was something that stressed likeness. And trying to get rights and acceptance through assimilation and and conforming to heterosexual paradises.

Do you have an opinion of how we have come a long way and there have been so many that have been second class citizens, and to be in 2008 that's a little outdated. Do you think that gays are going to not become such a sub-culture?

When I hear the term faggot I don't just associate that with the word by itself. I associate that with my head being thrown into a locker or somebody like punching me.

My uncle is gay and he's 40 something years old. And just hearing stories from him in him having to hide it all through high school. Having to go into parks and doing things that were not necessarily the best things to do. But, you know he had to hide things, I don't necessarily have to hide anymore. So I think we have come a long way and I think it can only get better.

Anything else you would like to add?

Uh, go rainbow.

We would like to thank everyone that contributed to make this episode of our podcast possible. Especially Dr. Regan Fox. He is a professor at California State University, Long Beach, in the communication department. He is the third voice heard in this interview session.