

## Queer Newark Oral History Project

**Interviewee:** Eyricka Morgan

**Date:** November 12, 2011

**Location:** Rutgers University – Newark

EYRICKA MORGAN:

Well having the childhood to me was like kind of difficult thing. I grew up in a home with my grandmother and grandfather and all my brothers. So I was basically like a boy in the house. I was tougher than all my brothers, I was rougher than all my brothers. I was able just to go do things that they couldn't do but I was always feminine.

Everybody noticed it like elementary school that I was feminine. No matter how much effort, no matter how much stuff I started, no matter how many girlfriends I had they always sense like ugh, he's going to be gay, he's going to be gay, he's going to be gay.

So anyway, as my years of just growing up I just basically just try to fit in with society with my brothers and them, try to do the things they was doing. My grandfather was like really strict on me because he was from the south. So I used to always dance because I survived wrestling and then I used to watch Nitro Girls. He used to see me doing a dance. He used to kick me. He say boys don't dance like that.

So I kind of knew like if I wanted to be gay then I knew I was like, oh I wish he... I hate to say this, I wish he'd die so I could be gay. I wish he'd do this so I could be myself. So, he always say that if you'd be gay we're going to send you down south. You're not going to be up here with us because we don't want no gay people that's why your other gay, faggot, any cousins can't come around you because they're gay and leave them in Virginia.

So as like, when I got to fifth grade, you know, I found myself like the other two over here found themselves. My grandfather passed when I was in the fifth grade. So my grandfather that I was in fifth grade I just became like more, like I was like, oh this is it. My grandmother, just me, her, my two brothers or whatever so I just basically just like running around, this is great.

I hated it though, I still had girlfriends but I was becoming more feminine. I would look in the mirror and say, oh maybe I want to get long hair. So I tried the S curl. I tried like all the stuff like all the boys was doing like the regular stuff. And then like when everybody came, I told my mother like, I want to get girl pants and she said you can't girl pants. I said why and she said because they're more for girls. I said nobody will say that in the store I went to and then she said yeah they're more for girls. I said all right then I'm just not going to ask her to get it.

So then like I started sneaking out going to The Globe. I used to sneak out. I used to climb down the fire escape and tell my brother don't say nothing. I used to have my clothes in a bag. I used to change, put my clothes on. And then one day I went and got my nails done and I forgot that I had nails on because I still was in boys clothes and I just used to get my nails done and my grandmother had came in and she made me some breakfast and I grabbed the plate. When I grabbed the plate of food, she didn't say nothing and I wasn't unaware that I still had nails on.

So therefore when I came out my whole family was sitting there and that's when they got like very tough

on me where I had to make decisions either to be myself or let them control me. And my grandmother... my whole family my mother slapped me to the floor and my brothers was there, my uncles and everybody.

And my mother said this to me, you know why I don't want you to be gay I said why, she said all faggots die from AIDS and I don't want my son dying from AIDS. I said how do you know I'm going to be a faggot and she said yeah because you went nails, you're going over here, you're going to buy this stuff and then it was a big thing, basically she said, if I wanted to stay a gay male it was acceptable but since I wanted to be a transwoman it was out.

So at 14 or 15 I just packed all my stuff up and I just kindly went. So that was my childhood.

[VIDEO CUT]

**TYNESHA MCHARRIS:** Same question. So school where did you find safe spaces, in some ways how, in other words how was it not safe and then where other, outside of school, did you find community?

**EYRICKA MORGAN:** Well in high school for me it wasn't really like no organizations for gay people. So it was like all the gays that was basically there when I was there we all are like transwoman now so I take that as like we was like popular in our school because we would like I want to be in... we went to go cheer. We just would like... it's like super gay.

So the boys it was like those faggots they're crazy. They come to school with pocket books and stuff. So nobody like really messed with us because majority of

us like we lived like in a hood. So it was like our brother already was... or with homies or whatever. So basically we just got by or whatever. We found like safe spaces like me and friends that are gay Project Wow, AAOGC or whatever. We just used to go there and meet up and get counseling and stuff and hangout and basically like get to talk or whatever.

But it was like... umm, how could I put it? As a safe space we basically just had each other like to talk to, to counsel because there was nothing for like trans. There was nothing for me. Everything was like gay man only and we didn't feel like comfortable with identifying as being a gay man because a gay man can't relate to a transwoman.

So therefore with like safe space was like us just coming together, sneaking out going to the Globe, seeing the night at each other house climbing through the fire escape and stuff like that. We created our own safe space for transwoman.

**TYNESHA MCHARRIS:** Can you talk about Project Wow and AAOGC?

**EYRICKA MORGAN:** I started attending Project Wow like 10 years ago and it was like a little small, a little space on the third floor or whatever and it was for men who want sex with men. It was basically like just the finding out self at Project Wow.

So Project Wow I'm saying it wasn't for me then because I see that is focused more on gay men and with becoming transgender it was like kind of like shaky. So we're happy when we were going through our changes the office... the African-American Office of Gay

Concern just was coming into existence with Gary Paul Wright.

So me and my friends we start coming down there. We didn't care if we were young. We were off the hook into hair stores snatching their hair. So it was basically just doing like briefly just doing like all the negative stuff but he always like... his office was always open for us to talk or we know we need is come somewhere downtown anything.

We know that we could come near we can say and we could talk. They like never ran us away. He never liked made me feel as though that it was wrong being a transgender or because they were then funded for transgender then that we weren't allowed and things like that. So it was pretty cool.

[VIDEO CUT]

EYRICKA MORGAN: Well, growing up in a high school and stuff I didn't really have a mentor or anything I had like organizations like I mentioned earlier AAGOC and Project Wow that I went to, to talk to people and like I miss like a lot of years of my youth due to something that I did so I wasn't really around like for my youth years. But like now...

[VIDEO CUT]

EYRICKA MORGAN: ...since I'm here and I'm doing the things that I have to do I would say like mentor would have to be my gay daughter because without her, I think she pushes me like to want to do better. When I see her and I think that I know everything and she makes me realize like, um what you see in yourself, you're seeing somebody else she made me realize like you could do so much better.

Don't be like the rest of the transgender women, you don't have to go do that. She just motivates me. Like when I think of just turning back she always makes sure she gives me that extra push when I need it.

So my mentor would have to be my gay daughter.  
Thank you.

[VIDEO CUT]

EYRICKA MORGAN:

I would like to say that growing up in a Christianity home, I would have to say like the church was like a safe place. I forgot to leave that out. All my sisters was in church who was like six and seven, we used to know what time to meet up to go downstairs when the pastor was about to preach or whatever. So I...

Church was like basic like my grandmother she made me go to church every Sunday. It wasn't no, yes, it wasn't no, no. It was like go. Close out Saturday night, **[unintelligible - 00:07:28]**. She didn't care if we were sleeping in church she didn't care. Her main thing was to look good, everybody church.

So we basically was this church stuff, I used to get dressed. I used to say I want to buy new dress clothes because every year they get smaller and smaller. I just used to go and go and go and then one day she noted like me and this boy we just started hanging together but she just used to watch us and say why are you hanging out with Ms. Jerry's little grandson. I say he's my friend. She say yeah he look like he's going to be gay. And I say why do you say that and then she say yeah because you going to be gay too I bet you. I used to be like no, no, no, no.

For then one year like she knew like at the summer camp she knew like they was going to teach like a certain lesson, I guess the pastor already because they were like going to ministry board. So I guess the pastor knew like to send the young boys like this little church little retreat thing or whatever and they was talking about like how gays getting like it was an abomination against Christ and all this stuff.

But it never occurred to me that... I never thought of myself as being gay. Like Natalie earlier she always thought herself as being a woman. So therefore like I always took myself out the equation because I was like those faggots, I'm not a faggot. So I never looked at it like it was like **[unintelligible - 00:08:47]** and me and so I never felt as though... it's like still to this day I don't like the Village because I don't like to see two men really.

So therefore like in church I never used to like understand. I used to see like the guys and I like to see them like singing and stuff and I used to wonder, are they going to be girls like me. And I used to always think but then I realized no they're more like gay men.

So basically church to me was like another home. I used to get up and like let's go to church, let's go to church and my brother was like you want to go to church so much, why do you want to go to church so much. Because I knew like joining the choir in the back you see all the people like you going one on the trips church gets, all the boys stay in one room and stuff.

So it was basically after like finding out like as I got older or whatever and I started seeing it like I started seeing church different because like my grandmother

she just like talking. When I started bringing my gay friends around, the bull daggers and the lesbians and stuff she'd be like them bull daggers.

And I'd be like, well some of them go to church and so she stopped going to the church too because she found that I was talking to one of the people that was like the big people to church and I ended up telling her the wrong thing to do she then left the church and everything.

So I just will just say that religion... it doesn't matter like who you choose to call God even if you believe in yourself like you said that it was a god or goddess in you. I think the thing is that just to have faith and just believe, you know? That's my main thing of religion. Just have faith and believe.

[VIDEO CUT]

EYRICKA MORGAN: Well, like years ago I used to party at the Globe when it was like on Broad Street or whatever, but like now the trans community we may be able go to the Pacemaker on Lines Avenue the strip clubs. So just for the intimacy.

[VIDEO CUT]

EYRICKA MORGAN: With the older generation I would like to give thanks to Natalie that spoke earlier because I've never had a chance to meet an older woman that did something positive with herself because I hear she's at school and she did all these things. I look now like my generation and generation that's after me and it's like no school, like no nothing.

So to sit in audience to hear her say that she was educated and she did what she had to do without prostitute and no



sex work, no nothing she just left one place and went to another place without nothing just to be able to be the woman that she is today. So I'm really thankful. Thank you, Natalie.