



UNHEARD VOICES

Stories of LGBT History



Interview Transcript



Terry Boggis was one of the founding members of Center Kids, Center Families, a New York City based LGBT families program, in 1988. That same year, her son, Ned was born.

Here, Boggis talks about parenthood.

Terry Boggis: I've always been the kind of woman who was a baby person, and I always wanted babies, surrounded myself with babies as a little kid. And also as a little kid, I had an awareness of being a lesbian really quite young. So I sort of shelved motherhood. I think as my biological clock ticked is when I started to say, "Oh, if I wanted to have a family, how am I going to do that?" And as it is I didn't have a kid until I was thirty-seven, so it was somewhat later in life.

Telling him I was gay or that his other mother was gay was not a hard conversation. He knew it from the cradle, and it was very normalized and very celebratory in spirit in the household. But then later when kids leave home and they're going to school for the first time, suddenly the larger culture starts weighing in. And he came home and he said, "Are there two kinds of gay people? Are there good kinds and bad kinds?" Because he had heard it used positively and negatively.

I remember when he was going off to day camp and he was wearing, you know, these little rainbow like freedom rings, the little gay symbol, and I thought, "Oh man - this could really not go well." You know? I was trying to rehearse with him and not, and not say, "You can't wear those to camp, someone might beat you up." So I said, "What if someone asks you what your rainbow rings mean? What will you say?" And he said, "I'll say they mean gay pride." And I said, "Well that's good, but... and then what if they ask you if you're gay?" And he stopped walking and he said, "Well, I'll say yes because you are, so I am, too." And I said, "Well, you know, you're not necessarily. Like Grammy, she's not gay, but I am, and she was my mom. And so you might be different from me, but you don't know that yet."

Once when he was still little enough that he was sitting in the backseat of the car in a car seat and we were driving somewhere and he goes, "Mom, we're lesbians right?" And I go, "Wait no. Not actually, no." And then later on he sort of came out of the closet, he said, "I'm not gay or straight. I'm a bachelor." He was like eight. And I said, "Well, okay. That'll do for now."

I feel like LGBT people are really changing what families can look like. It's been really exciting to watch kids come of age and instead of us saying how it is for them, they're telling us what's good for them. That's been a blast.