Interview keywords/topics: Ireland and Appalachia, Community

Interviewer: TQ
Interviewee: MM

TQ (00:01):

Hello, my name is TQ. Today's April 18th, 2024, 2:05 PM and we are in Appalachian State University's Belk Library, room 307. Can you please state your name and pronouns?

MM (00:16):

I'm MM and I use she, her pronouns.

TQ (00:19):

MM and I are here as part of an oral history project for Dr. Martell's, WRC 2202 Transatlantic Ireland course. We have discussed the history of both Ireland, Northern [00:00:30] Ireland, and the US South. Throughout the course, we have linked both Irish and Southern communities in regards to their sim-similarities. We have used oral history to study both places, and we are now creating oral documents of our own. MM, how would you describe your identities or identity in particular as a member of different groups or communities?

MM (00:53):

Um, it's kind of been a long and bumpy process of figuring out who I [00:01:00] am in regards to, like I know that I'm white, easy. I know that I'm from a middle class family easy, but getting down to like sexuality, gender, that's kind of been a, a weird process for me. And through the past couple of years, like halfway through high school, I figured out that I don't really actually care too much. Um, I kind of, I describe myself as like gender apathetic as to where like, [00:01:30] if people can perceive me however they want. If you, if you think that I am a woman and you want to use those pronouns for me sure. If you want to use they them, awesome. I don't really actually care too much. And then as for sexuality, I would, I would consider myself in the L-G-B-T-Q community, but I don't really label myself. I kind of just fall into a, um, I like who I like and I don't particularly need to [00:02:00] state explicitly who I like, so I, I just am kind of unlabeled.

TQ (02:05):

Okay. What do you want people to know about these identities years from now?

MM (02:10):

Um, I want them, that's a good question. I hope as we progress into the future, that um, labels become a lot less like, strict and people don't feel as though they have to fall into like each specific box because I don't know, not everyone fits into a box [00:02:30] and not every little thing about every single human needs to be perfectly wrapped up with a tiny little bow. So I hope in the future people can just kind of be whoever they want to be without feeling like they need to accurately be like, I'm this, this, and this and this. That's all.

TQ (02:47):

I completely agree. And I think especially during covid, whenever the use of TikTok, which is a right now a social media app where you can post videos, but um, that the idea of sexuality [00:03:00] and gender was really explored and like out there. And so people thought they had to be in a box. But I think we're

progressing in a way where we don't have to have labels and everything. So during the pandemic, like how did the pandemic and like other media outlets from being in a house, like how did that affect like your identity?

MM (03:20):

Um, okay, this is, this is crazy. So when Covid, like in the march, like 2020 when everything kind of first shut down, I was a freshman in high [00:03:30] school in New Kent High School, Virginia. And then when the lockdowns sort of like started being lifted and people started getting back into schools, my first time back into a school in person, I was a junior at Rolesville High School, North Carolina. And that was so crazy 'cause it had been so long. And not only did I have to come back and like see people in person, it's also people that I don't know, a school that I don't know, and just a completely new environment, which, [00:04:00] um, was interesting. But I also think, going back to what I said for the first question, it helped me be able to explore how I want to present myself and how like, it, I don't necessarily care about how people perceive me, like being able to start over like that pretty late in my life. Like, I was like 17 when I started figuring out who I am really. I think the COVID-19 pandemic definitely helped me figure out that it's not that serious to me. I don't, I don't know. I can just kind of go about my business [00:04:30] and live how I want to live.

TQ (04:32):

How did that, how did you learn about yourself and those around you and does it still impact you?

MM (04:39):

That's a good question. I started, this is so crazy. I started, um, makeup is like a big part of my life and I first started learning how to do makeup to like express myself. Um, I would, I learned from drag queens how to do makeup. Like, I was not watching like beauty influencer Tik Toks. I was [00:05:00] watching drag queens put on pounds of makeup on their face to go out. So my little junior year self was putting on so much makeup and, um, figuring out what looks good and what didn't. And I think a lot, um, COVID I think helped do that 'cause for better or for worse, I was on my phone more during Covid, which I think, again, for better or for worse, but I think for the better I was able to explore different communities and figure out [00:05:30] what, what I like, what I don't like, how I wanna present myself and things like that.

TQ (05:36):

It seems like during Covid you really had a chance to explore your own self without people around you and you were able to try out new things. So from the pandemic or what are you proudest of so far in your life? Like how, like how has your life? Yeah.

MM (05:55):

The proudest thing, when I first, like, I was looking at these questions and I was like, I don't know, [00:06:00] high school graduation, I guess. But I wouldn't necessarily say that. And then I figured out, I think, um, a big part of my life I have worked to become unbothered and I talk about this a lot. If you're one of my friends, you know, that I don't shut up about, oh, I'm unbothered, I'm so unbothered, don't nothing bother me. And I think that's one of the proudest things that I've been able to accomplish in my life. Um, also take this with a grain of salt, this is like relatively unbothered. Like, I feel like [00:06:30] a lot of people get hung up on like, little things throughout their life and then that will hold them back or like how they're being perceived or all of that. But I feel like I've been able to ascend to a part of my life where I can put on a stupid outfit and look crazy for a day because I, I don't actually care too much what

other people think of me. What people think of me, that's not my business. Mm-Hmm. So yes, unbothered-ness.

TQ (06:56):

Well, with you being, having this idea of like [00:07:00] moving through life without being like extremely affected, um, I know that politically a lot of people have been affected from Trump and Biden's election. So could you explain what are some main current events or political topics of '24, 2024 that you're interested in? These could be local, campus, national and or global.

MM (07:23):

I feel like, um, like the national state of things ties in a lot to the, um, campus [00:07:30] like climate right now with the drag bans that have been going on since, uh, I don't know, a couple of them got passed last year and it's like, definitely in Tennessee, Montana. I think those are the two strictest states about two drag bans, which is, it, it makes me so upset because not only is that damaging to like drag performers, but also it's, the law is such a new thing. Like I, I believe it's like [00:08:00] the law is described as any adult, like cabaret performer in public can be fined. But that's such a loose definition. And then a bit like trans people get put into, like if someone doesn't view them as their identity, they would be like, oh, that's, that's a cabaret performer. And then can lock that person up like so Yes, the drag ban laws, um, anti L-G-B-T-Q um, legislation, which [00:08:30] is also going on a lot on campus right now with the renaming of the Pride Week to Spring Fest and the canceling of a lot of drag events and not great so.

TQ (08:40):

And then Sherri Everts stepping down. Mm-Hmm. Which actually, she actually gets removed tomorrow. I think

MM (08:48):

So. Oh yeah, she does

TQ (08:49):

So well. Boone is regarded as extremely liberal and accepting to people who don't live here. So could you describe like the first few weeks of your undergrad experience?

MM (09:00):

[00:09:00] Yes. When I first got to App, I was so excited. I went to, of course any, any drag performance that was going on. I went to the App theater and saw the Boone Barbies perform, which was very nice. That was fun. That was like during the first like, syllabus week and then after that was interesting 'cause I found, like the first week I was like, yes, I have so much freedom and everybody here is chill and this campus, campus climate is awesome. But then I found myself kind of falling [00:09:30] into, like, my brain would be like, you need to do this, this, and this by this certain time. And if you don't then your life is about to go wrong. So I kind of like, I don't know, I fell into this weird routine and I needed to do things at certain times. And then I got Covid for the first time ever.

MM (09:50):

I avoided covid for three years. I never got it like when it was a big thing. But then in August, 2023, that's when I, my [00:10:00] body decided to get covid. So I had to go home for a week and quarantine, which I

know it's necessary, but I feel like it, it stunted a lot of what I, what I wanted to do. I missed a lot of, um, like interest meetings for different clubs and organization that I wanted to go to. And then, I don't know, after that I was just kind of like, well, I'll get 'em next year, I guess.

TQ (10:26):

Yeah. So from you being at campus for a week [00:10:30] and experiencing like the college life, quote unquote, then going back home because you had covid, how, how did you, did that enhance your, like, transition from home to campus and or moving in general? Could you explain that a little bit?

MM (10:45):

In some ways it was good 'cause I got to come back to my house and one pick up all the stuff I forgot, say hi to my parents, say What's up to my dogs. And, but I couldn't really, I couldn't get near my, I couldn't [00:11:00] see my friends at home and I couldn't really get near my parents. So I was in my room, in my bed. I had food being delivered to me. Like they would leave it outside my door and then knock, knock, knock, and then I get my food. I watched so many movies. It, it was so, it was so frustrating for me. 'cause I also saw on like all of the App state, like, like the Snapchat stories and the Instagram posts of all the people that were out on campus doing fun stuff for like the first couple weeks. And I was like, well, I'm definitely, I [00:11:30] go there too. But I, I'm sitting in my house watching more Cillian Murphy movies. So,

TQ (11:36):

So what is the biggest difference from being at home and going to high school than going to college and living in dorms?

MM (11:44):

This is an interesting question because in high school, so I, I'm a freshman, so I'm like, I'm new to this. At the time in high school, I felt like my life was more like not out of control, but there was so much going on and [00:12:00] I, I had a schedule, but it was not nearly as strict as it is as it is now, which is, I feel like the opposite of what a lot of people do. 'cause in high school I was like, I was in charge of a lot of stuff within my school. I was playing softball, I had, I was taking ridiculous ridiculously courses with so much homework course. It was ridiculous, I was doing something constantly. And then now coming to college and realizing I have like seven [00:12:30] hours of “what am I to do?” , I've figured out what time I need to go to bed exactly, what time I need to wake up, if I want to do this, this, and this. And so it's, I figured that I would have less control of what I'm doing. Like, oh, if I wanna stay up till two, then I'm gonna do that. But then when I do that, it's like, well no, now I'm tired the next day and that now that's not helpful. So I've been going to bed at like 9:00 PM every day because I have eight [00:13:00] ams and 9:00 AM So I, I don't know, I found myself in a very strict schedule, which I still abide by.

TQ (13:07):

Interesting. Because of during high school you have like an 8:00 AM to three or, some people go to 5:00 PM So it's being more strict at college is interesting. Is your college experience what you expected or like for led to believe?

MM (13:25):

Um, Kind of, I think I really love the class [00:13:30] scheduling and I've loved all my teachers so far, which is really great. 'cause I had some crazy teachers in high school. So I think that classes are similar to

what I thought they would be, especially with like lecturing styles and like presentations and papers and all that. I think it was, I think it's easier than I was expecting it to be, but that just be my, because my high school teachers work too much. They work way too much and I really want to name drop them, but I won't. [00:14:00] Um, so in that regard, it's similar. But then, like, me putting myself to bed at 9:00 PM every night, not exactly what I thought I would be doing, but hey, whatever works.

TQ (14:10):

So what is your major and minor book and what kind of classes do you take?

MM (14:15):

Okay, so because I'm a freshman, I came in this year and I said I'm gonna be an accounting major. Accounting, that's not true, advertising major. Don't know why I said that. I'm gonna be an advertising major and I'm gonna be a studio art minor because [00:14:30] one time I was walking in the mall and I saw a Swarovski, um, ad campaign and I thought it was really cool. I was like, oh, I want to do that. But then halfway through this year I realized I love to make, uh, videos. I love to make video content, I love to edit videos. And then I realized, wait, wait, wait, wait. What if I become an electronic broadcasting and media, um, major with, and then I got on my, um, advising meeting and my advisor was like, you could be a double minor in [00:15:00] studio art and sociology. Oh, okay. 'cause I, I do like the, there's really cool sociology classes here, I'm taking one next semester. So I think as of right now, electronic broadcasting and media with a double minor in studio art and sociology. But that is subject to change.

TQ (15:21):

That sounds like a lot, honestly. But you'll find your way. You're just a freshman. So you'll have a lot of experiences with teachers and classes. [00:15:30] Well then what has been the most challenging aspect of your time at upstate?

MM (15:35):

Hmm. I'm gonna sound like such a loser, but having fun <

TQ (15:40):

No, that's fair

MM (15:40):

I came here with like, but my parents have been talking to me about college since literally first grade. In first grade. My dad sat me down and was like, okay, you're starting real school now. You need to get good grades in elementary school. So that way you can be in the honors classes in middle school and then you need to do good in middle school because then they're gonna see you for the good, good classes [00:16:00] in high school. And then in high school you gotta take APs and honors so that way you can get into a good college. So I've been ready for college since first grade, essentially. So I, I came here being like, alright, I need to get good grades, which is true. I'm not saying that's not true. However, I feel like I shot myself in the foot by focusing on school so heavily because I, I have fun of course, but going to bed at 9:00 PM every [00:16:30] day hinders a lot of the things that you can do. Also, I miss my car. I think if I had my car I would be going a lot more places. Um, but also, that being said, focusing on school. I have a 4.0 at the moment, so I think, I don't think I'm doing too shabby. Next year I have an apartment and I'll have my car and I will have more fun next year, that's my goal.

TQ (16:54):

Do you think your dad's philosophy prepared you for college in general? Not just the classes, but the social [00:17:00] aspect and the like physical aspect of taking care of yourself?

MM (17:06):

I think he definitely prepared me for the workload. 'cause like in middle school I was, I was like, man, this is easy. I was expecting 20 pages of work. You're in middle school? Mm-Hmm. Why would you be expecting that? I don't think

MM (17:22):

I, I played softball my entire life and my dad really expected me to go into college and continue to play softball. But when [00:17:30] I realized I don't really want to, I don't wanna do that, I just wanna focus on school for like once ever. So I think he was kind of expecting me to do things through softball, which I don't really have now. So I was kind of prepared to like, I'm gonna go out with my team, I'm gonna do all this. But then what, freshman year of high school, I realized I don't that I have knee problems. I can't be doing all that. So I think it kind of set me up in a weird way, but I think I will figure it out eventually.

TQ (18:00):

[00:18:00] Yeah. Um, with everything going on with the expression tunnels and the change in Chancellor. How would you describe the current climate on campus?

MM (18:16):

People are not happy. Well now that, now that Sherri Everts, um, is stepping down, people are a bit more happy. I would definitely say there was an outcry of joy on like every social media platform when we all got that email [00:18:30] that Sherri was stepping down. Um, but yeah, with the expression tunnels, like they just, I I live in um, thunder Hill, which is on West side. So I need to get, like, I use those tunnels every day to get to the east side of campus. And they just shut, like, they closed the gate to work on one of them, like the one closest to my dorm room. So I'm having to like play Frogger to get to the other side of, um, campus every day. So that's, and it is also so sad seeing them come in with all the white paint and just like, they gentrified the tunnels. It's so sad. [00:19:00] Um, people are not happy about that. People are not happy about the um, like queer erasure going on with the Pride Fest. Uh, pride Week, spring Fest debacle. And then the art, because right now I'm a studio art minor, so I'm taking, in the process of taking a quite a few art classes with the concrete falling in Wey Hall and just like the working conditions going on at the moment, people are not happy about that. Is there another one? I don't know [00:19:30] if there's another one, but people are not happy.

TQ (19:32):

Did you ever hear like negative things about App Sate before coming here?

MM (19:36):

Mm-Hmm. I didn't know that App State was, um, a college until like halfway through my junior year of high school. 'cause I was, I would only look at, I was looking at Virginia Colleges 'cause I figured I was gonna go to school in Virginia, but whatever. But when I saw that App State existed and everything that I'd seen about it was like, it's, so it's the, the, the campus campus climate is accepting and it's, it's artsy [00:20:00] and it's very, very nice. Which I think is true and was more true at the start of this year than at

the end now. Um, I went to an SGA meeting when people were complaining or not complaining, well I guess complaining, about all this stuff going on around campus and someone, a lot of transfers are mad. Um, 'cause they said someone, I wish I remembered their name.

MM (20:22):

Someone stood up and said that um, App State, uh, App State is built on false advertising. And I think right [00:20:30] now that, that seems to be true. And I hope next year or the year after that or eventually they can turn around everything going on 'cause it's frustrating to sit here and have, well, right now we don't have a chancellor, but we had a chancellor that didn't really care too much. And the stabbing, I forgot about the stabbing. I knew there was something else. Uh, when was it? That was last Thursday, last Thursday, what day was that? That was April 11th. [00:21:00] There was a stabbing at Peacock Hall. Um, and they didn't do the emergency like, um, sirens. They sent a text out like 20 minutes afterwards. Which I was right by Peacock, like I was about to get on a bus and then I got that. And then I feel like they kind of just glossed over like, oh yeah, it's just a stabbing, its whatever.

TQ (21:20):

I Agree. It's really scary honestly

MM (21:23):

I, I hope that in the future we can fix some stuff.

TQ (21:29):

Well, besides [00:21:30] the social stuff going on, have you been satisfied with your classes in education here?

MM (21:35):

Yes. Definitely. Some classes that I really loved this semester or this semester and last semester, my first year, um, my math class was online. Which a lot of people I understand validly would not like it to be online. Yeah. But I love online math 'cause I, it, it feels like less of, it feels like a little online mobile game and I, I just have to solve the problems. And that's all that [00:22:00] that is. I liked that class. I like my, um, what is it? Evolution like gen ed science class. I really like that one. I love this class. What is our like, um, official class title?

TQ (22:16):

It's WRC 2202 Trans, Trans-Atlantic Ire, Ireland.

MM (22:21):

Like ask asking questions. Something I really like. I really like that his class. Um, my communications class, oh, my [00:22:30] public speaking class. I took one of those last semester. That was my 8:00 AM my public speaking class at 8:00 AM Um, not the best, but I think my teacher made it work. So yeah, I'm definitely, 'cause once all the social stuff started happening, my parents asked if I wanted to transfer. 'cause it's like kind of directly affecting me and like my identity and also part of my education. But I, I don't know. I like the classes too much and I like the campus too much [00:23:00] to transfer at the moment. And I hope that it stays that way.

TQ (23:04):

Yeah. I hope so too. Well, regarding this class, how has your understanding of Irish history and culture changed this semester?

MM (23:13):

I talk about this all the time in class and I'm a, I'm a get back on it, the movie *Breakfast on Pluto*, it came out in 2005 and it stars Cillian Murphy as a transgender woman in Ireland in the seventies and eighties and a little bit of the nineties. [00:23:30] I watched that movie a while ago and I didn't know anything that was going on 'cause it was set partially in Ireland. And then the back half takes place in London and then Ireland again. And people just kept exploding and I didn't understand. I was like, what is going on? Why is there so many bombs going off? 'cause I was, you're not taught about the, like the, the troubles in Ireland. You're not taught about that. So as we were going through the semester and we started talking about like that period of [00:24:00] history, it literally in my brain was like clicking like puzzle pieces were getting filled in.

MM (24:07):

And it also helped me understand a lot about like Appalachian stereotypes that come about. 'cause a lot of like, what's it, the, the drunk crazy, um, in stupid inbred, like a lot of that, the Appalachian stereotype is also a lot of things that people would say about Irish people. So in, in a lot of more [00:24:30] ways than one. It kind of helped me fill in the puzzle pieces of history of like how, how Appalachia came to be and this current like climate going on over in Ireland. Which I am not quite enough Irish, but I'm very Scottish and we're like close-ish.

TQ (24:50):

So do you, do you consider yourself Appalachian?

MM (24:53):

Um, not really. I technically am. 'cause I live in Appalachian. I'm going to for like the next three years. [00:25:00]. I, I connect myself more with the Chesapeake Bay. I'm more like a um, east coaster, but I'll be a mountain person. If someone said, ask me where I live I'll say I'm Appalachia.

TQ (25:14):

Has this class helped you understand Appalachian culture more?

MM (25:18):

Definitely. Especially like, like I said, going back to like the roots of Appalachia with like all the Irish settlers coming in and all the things that happened between then and now, definitely [00:25:30] helped me realize like it helped me fill in the timelines. Like there were like blanks where I was just like, oh, we skipped like a hundred or so years and then yeah, now we're here. It helped fill in like no, this is what happened and then this is what happened and then everybody got mad and then this is what happened. And you know.

TQ (25:46):

Yeah. I'm glad we have access to a course like this. 'cause I feel like a lot of people don't ever have the opportunity. Especially since our, um, library has so many good resources. But thank you so much MM [00:26:00] for your participation in this oral interview.

MM (26:03):

Thank you.