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Nov. 3, 2023

LGBTQ+ Communities in Wheeling, West Virginia CONTEXT NOTES

In 2021, The Friendlier City Project, an LGBTQ+ organization formed in Wheeling, West Virginia, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting LGTBQ+ individuals and allies. When I first started this project to document LGBTQ+ communities and visibility in Wheeling, I was curious at how such a new organization succeeded where other similar organizations had failed.

I lived and worked in Wheeling for a year (Aug. 2020 to Aug. 2021) as an AmeriCorps service member at Wheeling Heritage, a local nonprofit. Wheeling Heritage partners with The Friendlier City Project, but I did not personally interact with the founders during my time in Wheeling. I used those relationships at Wheeling Heritage to contact The Friendlier City Project via email to gauge if anyone would be interested in participating in my project. Mikaya Green, one of the leaders of The Friendlier City Project, agreed to record an oral history with me.

Before interviewing, we corresponded through email numerous times to set up expectations and arrange details. While I did not provide Mikaya with specific questions, I did list potential topics that I wanted to talk about. I specified that she should not answer any questions that she did not want to or feel comfortable answering. Since the interview was virtual, there was no non-verbal communication off-camera. Our first attempt at an interview, a few weeks before, had to be rescheduled because of technical difficulties on TheirStory. After the later successful interview and recording, we had limited email exchange--Mikaya sent me her signed release form and I provided the interview transcript for her review.

While I no longer live in Wheeling, I spent a year working with communities in the city and broader Ohio Valley to record and share their histories. I have relationships and have built trust as a public history professional in the city.