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## Interview with Adam Hutchinson on August 12, 2021

Adam Hutchinson

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# Adam Hutchinson 8:12:21

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

haven, campus, students, university, people, lgbtq issues, sp, felt, conversations, community, point, sexuality, year, happening, church, human sexuality, LGBTQ, faculty, policies, administration

## SPEAKERS

Rebecca Cavanaugh, Adam Hutchinson

### Rebecca Cavanaugh 00:01

Okay. All right. Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up? Kind of the politics of the place, your family? Were they progressive? or traditional? Were they affirming or not? etc?

### Adam Hutchinson 00:19

Sure. So I grew up in a small suburban town in North Texas called Flower Mound, the town was named after a mound of flowers. It was definitely a conservative town, both politically and culturally, in a very religious area. So most people went to evangelical Christian churches, in this area of Christianity was very much sort of an open part of life there. You know, my family specifically, has always skewed kind of a little bit more liberal in terms of socially. And my parents, especially very open minded people. And so on most kind of social issues, whether it's sexuality or feminism, or, you know, different rights tend to skew more liberal, more affirming and accepting of things. So in terms of my personal childhood, I mean, I, you know, I definitely was aware of sort of social conflict around issues of sexuality and gender identity. I didn't necessarily personally encounter a lot of conflict, just because my immediate friend group, my immediate family, were all pretty accepting. For the most part, though, you know, I think my biggest reaction was just that it wasn't talked about a lot, right, any sort of just diversity across the board, but certainly, sexual identity was just not really discussed where I grew up. So, you know, I, truthfully, like I didn't even encounter anyone who is openly gay or openly LGBTQ, until I was well into high school. And so it was just such a removed part of my life, that it was not much of an impact on my childhood, I guess.

### Rebecca Cavanaugh 02:05

Yeah, that makes sense. And so you mentioned that your town was religious? Was your family also religious?

### Adam Hutchinson 02:14

We were religious. So we went to a non denominational Evangelical Church. It was theologically most closely related to the Baptist tradition. But definitely skewed on the conservative side, theologically. And

we were very involved with the church. My parents had, you know, been Christians their whole lives. I was very involved in church, went to church every Sunday and volunteered at the churches in the youth group. So definitely, definitely a religious upbringing. I was very comfortable within Christianity. And it was never really sort of a tension for me until sort of getting into high school and maybe starting to understand my own sexuality more, but then starting to really kind of question you know, what, what is it that that this church or this community that I've heard of, what are they preaching? What are they teaching? What is other people's viewpoints and understanding at that point, really, for the first time that it was different from mine, because just had never really come up in conversation never been discussed. And so that was the first time that I ever even really realized that there was a tension there between, you know, sexual identity, gender identity, myself, and sort of the faith that I was a part of.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 03:33

So, yeah, you've kind of just said this, but what did you necessarily understand about your sexual and gender identity before coming to SPU? Did you have a clear sense of anything before coming?

**Adam Hutchinson** 03:45

Yeah, so I fully identified as gay prior to coming to SPU. By the time I reached high school, I was fully identified as gay, I was more or less open again, in the sense that it was just not really discussed very much in my community. So certainly, very few people knew, but it was just sort of a thing. That it was what it was. And so you know, I didn't really interact with, I certainly didn't interact with any other openly gay people when I was where I grew up. But I was pretty confident in my own sexuality. As a gay man prior to coming to SPU.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 04:21

Did that impact your decision to attend Seattle Pacific in any way?

**Adam Hutchinson** 04:25

It did not. In hindsight, it probably would have. But I wasn't even specifically looking for Christian college when I went to university. SPU just sort of checked all of the other boxes for me. It happened to be a Christian College. I happen to be a Christian at that time, so it felt like a fine fit. It actually wasn't until I'd already committed to SPU, I was really excited about coming and everything. I started doing more research on the school. And I started SPU in fall of 2011, which was right after the spring of 2011, when Haven was no longer allowed to meet on campus, and a bunch of stuff had kind of gone down, and there was a lot of drama at the school around this. And then, you know, alumni had started writing and faculty written a letter about this. And there was a bunch of news about this. And I had zero idea. Until like, a few months before I was supposed to go off to college and realizing, oh, wow, I'm stepping into an environment that there's actually more conflict now than I'm used to around the idea of sexuality, sexual identity. So yeah, I was a little skeptical kind of stepping into it. But again, I wanted to go to SPU for a bunch of reasons. So I, it was a bit of a shock. But yeah, I mean, yeah, it didn't really influence me at all.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 05:48

And so you were a student? Correct? Can you tell me about like, what major were you in and what year you graduated? I think I need to clarify that.

**Adam Hutchinson 05:59**

Oh, yeah. So I was class of 2015. So I graduated spring of 2015. So 2011 to 2015. And I was an English major. I did my concentration in creative writing, and then I was a business minor. And I picked SPU specifically for that reason, I knew I wanted to go to college on one of the coasts, just because I wanted a different experience from what I grew up in. And I knew I wanted a liberal arts school where I could study both English and business. I knew I kind of wanted to go into the business world, but I have always been very passionate about writing and literature. So So SPU really kind of checked all those boxes, was a great school, sort of fell in love with Seattle when I visited. And so that was that.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 06:48**

What else was a question? Well, yeah, you got it. Okay. Now, I kinda want to ask, you know, what was your experience, like in your classes, and just with the University in general, during your time? This is a broad question. But yeah,

**Adam Hutchinson 07:06**

Yeah, yeah, I mean, all all very, very, very positive. For the most part, I'd say probably the thing that I have the fondest memory, for of SPU is the faculty. I just, you know, specifically within the Creative Writing Program, I mean, the professors in that program at the time I was there, just I mean, top of their field to the point of they were getting published in other universities, literary journals, and it was like a big deal for them to have our faculty published, right. And so it was, you know, just very cool to learn from these people. And who came from diverse backgrounds, and kind of diverse approaches to literature. So, so loved that. And even outside of my program, just a lot of the faculty members, even in some of the kind of the common core courses that I took, I mean, just really, really loved their experience, great people really connected with a lot of the faculty members.

You know, so that was fantastic. And I think just, as a whole at SPU like, I went, going into university thinking, I'm here to get my degree, start my career and move on. It was like four years in and out, let's do this as quickly as possible. I ended up sort of just falling in love with the experience of SPU, I was extremely involved in student leadership, and in campus activities, obviously, via Haven, which we can talk about, but I was I was working in the Student Programs department as an office assistant, my freshman year, I continued doing that the whole time, I was involved with the campus literary journal, I was president of the literary club, I worked with, you know, some of the orientation projects and stuff. So I really just ended up getting more involved than I ever thought I would as part of student government. Because, you know, it was just, it was a fun place, it was a group of people that I really connected with, right, these new viewpoints that I had not approached before, but people that were passionate about learning and, you know, discussing things together. And so that was really my experience.

So this view is, you know, really supportive faculty, a very exciting group of students that were all open minded for the most part and wanted to discuss things and learn together. And so overall, very, very positive. I think, you know, the one thing was really, I as I stepped into the university, and with some of

the drama I knew kind of coming into it was that the administration at SPU I'll just characterize as being you know, they they're very by the books tend to go back to what's the policy that's on the books, right. And that was sort of my experience at SPU the entire time, which was interesting even working in the Student Programs department because I got to interface with a lot of most of the administration while I was there, I got to know on a one to one basis and all lovely people one to one, but sort of their their mode of approaching their their jobs and the university was sticking to the policy and maintaining that status quo. Right. And, you know, but what struck me in all of that was just, if there's clearly conflict here, which there was right, and we can go into some of this, but there was clearly tension, right?

Having a job where you're really just sticking with the status quo is, I guess, a little bit shocking to me that if you're in this position, and day in day out if your job is really to kind of support the university and students wouldn't you want to be more open to dialogue and, and exploring other possibilities and alternatives versus the way that things have always been done. And I just got the sense the whole time that not in any sort of antagonistic way, or, you know, negative way, but it was just Well, this is how things are. So this is the way things need to stay. And it's very much like maintain the status quo type of thing with the administration. So that was probably if after they were negative experience, it was really that it was it was the way the university approached its own policies.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 11:05

Yeah, thank you for explaining that. I definitely, definitely want to get into the Haven stuff. I kind of want to get so like, thank you for explaining all that. I got a few follow up questions for that. But I want to touch first on a little bit more on your like, experience as a gay man on, you know, this Christian campus? Did you ever you know, seek out support or just like a group on campus? Or just friends? See, like, what kind of support Did you find on campus?

**Adam Hutchinson** 11:38

Yeah, I mean, there, there wasn't much support on campus. Besides until I found Haven. You know, it was very clear to me stepping in that. I mean, obviously, I read the code of conduct back and forth once I heard all the drama going on. So it was very clear to me that like, you know, I needed to be sort of, I guess, careful, or I guess, a little bit more reserved, you know, with my own sexual identity. I was open on campus, I mean, even from freshman orientation, you know, people were you talking, we'd be chatting about your relationships, or high school and all that kind of stuff. And I was just, like, Hey, I'm gay, right. And it was shocking to some people. It was like, Oh, really. But we just had an open conversation, I think my experience in general was, for the most part, like 95% of the time, the students, regardless of their own, you know, ideologies or beliefs, were very open minded, right, open to discussing really open to kind of maintaining a friendship, regardless of what their own beliefs were.

So I really, besides you know, one or two, maybe minor examples that I can think of never had a negative experience with the students at the University and even living in the dorms, I lived on campus, the first two years, never had a negative experience, besides the fact that, you know, just not being as visible as dating on campus, or, you know, just kind of not being too visible with sexuality, but was felt perfectly comfortable being open on campus. And same with faculty, right. Like all the faculty knew me, I was very close to the faculty. So that was that, but I did not feel like I really had a group like to talk to you. I certainly didn't feel like I had a group of other LGBTQ students on campus that didn't know who

they were. And even if I just needed to sort of discuss things right, or, like, how does sexuality and you know, LGBTQ issues intersect with Christianity, there was just nowhere to go have that conversation at all on campus. Until Haven, obviously.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 13:44

Yeah. Did you ever look for other types of support off campus as well?

**Adam Hutchinson** 13:50

Um, no, I didn't, I mean, I, you know, I, obviously, coming out of state, right. I wasn't very familiar with the Seattle area or anything like that. So, you know, my world pretty much revolved around campus. I did, you know, attended a few different churches during my freshman year, a couple that were openly affirming churches. That was a great experience. I did get to meet some of those pastors and have those conversations with those churches. But I think that never really replaced, right, that was still very much tied up in oh, this is a Christian institution body that didn't really replace having a community for me.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 14:27

And I mean, you've, you've said that your experience was mostly positive on campus. But did you ever consider leaving SPU for one reason or another?

**Adam Hutchinson** 14:37

I did consider leaving SPU after my sophomore year. And the main reason was, I mean, it was partly due to all of the LGBTQ issues that were going on on campus and sort of the response we were getting from the administration. It was more just like, several of my friends on campus at that time had left SPU, they transferred schools. And a lot of them it was for those reasons they wanted to be kind of more open with their own sexuality. They wanted to meet other people, diverse people. And so at that point, I was thinking, what if everyone, if other people are leaving? Should I really be here too what's the point? I ended up staying. One because academically it was the place I wanted to be. I was enjoying my coursework and everything. But there was still a good group of people that I was very close to at SPU at this point, I developed some really great friendships. And there were me as a sophomore there were some freshmen at this point. As part of, you know, I got to know through Haven and everything, who were seeking that same sort of group that I was seeking when I was a freshman. And I was like, well, I can't leave now. Like, let's create this, let's make this a thing at SPU. So that sort of became my mission at that point, was to stay and make that happen.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 16:09

Yeah, that makes sense. And so I'm not sure- clarifying question, are you? Do you still identify as a Christian? Or?

**Adam Hutchinson** 16:19

I do not, I do not identify as a Christian. So I, and that happened, actually, before I graduated.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 16:26

Can you tell me about that? A little.

**Adam Hutchinson** 16:28

Yeah, yeah, I'm happy to so you know, part of not feeling like I had a really strong community SPU. I was sort of looking, you know, like I mentioned, I tried a few different churches in the Seattle area, none of them really felt like I had a strong community where I could be me, right, fully me. And so there was one church that I did sort of end up at, that was really great kind of took me in, I ended up volunteering with them for a few months. But it was actually a non affirming church. So I could be open there. And they were very accepting of all types of people, but it was still theologically non affirming. And so there was still that barrier of I can't fully, you know, explore all these different aspects in this community. And so I ended up just getting to the point where realizing like, I was developing some deep friendships at SPU, I was really getting involved with this view at this point, you know, Student Involvement perspective. And I just realized, like, there's no additive, right, that I'm getting from this church community that I'm already getting in some of these other relationships. And so it just didn't, and it felt sort of disingenuous to me to be part of this church community when I didn't necessarily buy into all of it. Right. And so I at that point, it felt like, I felt almost like an imposter in this situation. But also, I'm not really getting anything out of it. And so let me take a step back. And so I stopped going to church completely at that point, this was the spring quarter, my freshman year, I stopped going to church completely.

And at that point, I mean, really, I was in this point of trying to reconcile sort of my lived experience with Christianity, what I have been taught, right? And so how do you bring those two things together? And I was okay, living in the ambiguity of it. But I needed there to be an answer, right? And to start to kind of work towards that answer. And what I did know very strongly was that my lived experience was true, right? And that I knew very strongly even coming into SPU, that like, as a gay man, like, I need to be fully myself. And this is not in conflict with my faith. However, there's this conflict with what I've been taught about my faith. And so there's some discrepancy there that I need to go figure out. And so the more that kind of kept probing on that, sort of unraveling the threads of my faith and my beliefs and kind of what that was all foundationally built on. And so in some ways you can characterize, like, my sexuality, I guess, as a, as a way of sort of getting beyond my faith, beyond Christianity. But it really wasn't even about that. It was just sort of the entry points towards exploring what my faith was, right? It was because I had this like, this cognitive dissonance, right? It's because I had that gap in my understanding that I started exploring what my faith was.

And there's, there's this beautiful poem, I'm sorry, it's gonna be a little bit of a tangent, but whatever. There's this beautiful poem by Kristen Fogdall called "Demas in love with this present world." And we actually read this poem as part of my poetry seminar that I had done in my sophomore year. And the poem itself, it's based on a verse in Second Timothy 4:10. For basically Paul, he's on one of his, you know, trips around the Mediterranean and he's writing back to Timothy, um requesting Timothy to come join him and for supplies and stuff. And basically the poem, or sorry that the verse itself, Paul mentions, I need you to come join me because Demas, who was one of his, you know, other associates at this time has abandoned him. And that's all it says in the verse. But this poet Kristen Fogdall basically took that and wrote a letter as if Demas was responding to Paul saying why he left the church. And in the poem, basically, what happens is Demas has, quote, unquote, "fallen in love with the present world," meaning his lived experience became so great and such a positive for him, that he couldn't continue

down this, this path of, you know, rejecting the modern world of rejecting sort of the culture, and looking forward to just some sort of afterlife, he really wanted to be able to live fully in the present. And so it's just this beautiful poem that kind of explores that idea. And that really kind of spoke to me at that time because that was the tension that I felt. And so I started kind of going even deeper and deeper into the book of Second Timothy, sort of Paul's letters that were this was all coming from, and I got to this point where I realized, you know, sort of the facade of it fades away. And it's Paul's writing this letter, because he's cold. He's asking for books and a cloak, just like all these very materialistic things. And it's, it just felt to me, like, how can you build some sort of belief system just off of these letters that are they're very human, very real, very important in a lot of ways, but are ultimately just letters. And so I, you know, it became, it got to this point where I just realized, like, it was less of a rejection of Christianity, in many ways, it was more just an embrace of kind of my lived experience and the world around me. And through that process, sort of everything else just sort of faded away. And so, you know, by the time I graduated from SPU, I mean, I no longer identified it as Christian. I wasn't as involved obviously, in that community. And it just sort of felt right. And I had the right community and I had other purposes in life at that point, other things that I cared about, that became much more important. And so since then, right, it's been, you know, I haven't really looked back, cuz there hasn't been a reason to, I've been very invested sort of into the things that I care about now.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 22:23**

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Thank you for sharing that. Um, cool. Let's, uh, let's move into now your involvement in, you know, Haven and activism on campus. You've kind of lightly touched on the fact that you have a lot to share, and I'm very interested in all of it. Um you sort of mentioned before, how you felt called to activism in that, creating that space for the people that were, you know, coming to the university. But could you expand on that a little bit for me?

**Adam Hutchinson 22:58**

Yeah, definitely. So, you know, I had heard about Haven prior to coming to SPU because of all the drama that had happened the year prior, with Haven being kicked off campus. And so when I joined freshman year, I didn't necessarily actively seek out Haven, but I was aware that it was there. And haven had tried to go to the orientation, the little club mixer at orientation. And they were, you know, not allowed, they got kind of kicked out of that. So I never actually met them there. But there was, as I kind of got more and more involved in the university, and I was getting involved in clubs and stuff, I ended up crossing paths with one of the co-leaders of Haven that year. And so we ended up meeting and talking. And so she encouraged me to come to one of the meetings. And so I just did kind of on a whim and I felt a little bit awkward about it just not because, you know, it was necessarily anything sensitive. It was just more like, well, there's this group, that's kind of all mired in controversy, and that's not really what I want I just kind of want to be the community and get to know people. Right. So I showed up to this meeting, and there were, you know, maybe a dozen people there. This was fall quarter freshman year. And, and ended up just being wonderful. There were all of these people we were meeting and it was Weter Hall in one of those those rooms. And it ended up just being a great just talk. We just had a conversation.

We got we went around the room and met everyone but as their backgrounds, you know, what are they doing at SPU? And then we just talked in general about things that were not related to SPU. Right. We



talked about LGBTQ issues on a broad scale, right, what was happening politically at the time, this was 2011.

Right. So this was right before, you know, Washington State had passed the Marriage Equality Act and right so there's stuff happening politically. It was just a really cool conversation and a very open conversation that I had never had before in my entire life. Right. And so that was just groundbreaking to me that like, there's this group of people out there that I can really connect with and be open with. And I enjoyed that so much that I ended up going to every single Haven meeting for the rest of the year. Even, there was a couple times that I was sick, and I still like, showed up and just sat in the back because I wanted to be there. And so it was, it was wonderful. And I just loved it so much.

But, you know, the 2011 2012 school year was, you know, I like to say it was a transition year for Haven. Haven had gone from, I would characterize it as an activist group on campus, to truly being a discussion group. Right. And we even didn't purposefully didn't use the term activism at all, for those first few years that I was on campus. Because one, we wanted to have a safe space for students to come and feel like they could just have an open conversation. And two we were, you know, very aware of, kind of the headwinds we were facing with university, and just, you know, didn't want to poke that at this time, it didn't feel like the right time. And so it was very much, you know, as my freshman year went on 2011-2012 school year, the attendance of Haven did dwindle, because I think there's some people that really wanted that, that just community aspect building of it. And there were some people who were looking for more, and this is my characterization, but I think there were some people that just maybe wanted Haven to be a little bit more visible, or a little bit more vocal. And it just wasn't, it was a transition year, it wasn't what we were doing at that time. And so the next year 2012-2013, my sophomore year, that same co leader who I met, the other co leaders had graduated. And so she actually invited me to be a co leader for that next year.

So I was a co-leader of Haven in my sophomore year of university. And that was really what we called our rebuilding year. And really, the point was, how do we reach more students, we know that there are more LGBTQ students on campus, we know that there are more straight students on campus that want to have these conversations, how do we reach them and create that environment. And so the two things that we really focused on that year was one just reaching more people and getting more attendance at our meetings. And then two setting more of a, you know, not necessarily a structure, but more just sort of an umbrella picture agenda of what Haven was going to be talking about. And so that's really what we started branching out beyond just sort of, you know, strictly LGBTQ issues and really started talking more about sexuality in general. Right. And so, you know, we had a whole meeting about safe sex, right.

And so when you take a look at safe sex outside of just straight, you know, hetero, normative experience, there's lots of other things you need to talk about. And so let's talk about the full breadth of it. Right? We did, we had a couple of events about, you know, obviously LGBTQ and Christianity and how those two intersect, we had a panel of different local trans activists in the Seattle area to talk about trans issues and what was going on there. And so just, you know, really kind of diversifying the topics that we're talking about, and even giving you a little bit more structure, and then inviting more people to come participate with us.

And so we really grew Haven back up to say, you know, about 20 or so people in that year that were regularly coming to meetings, participating in that discussion group. Throughout this time, though, I mean, the biggest blocker in this whole process, really was that there was no official status for Haven. And so right prior that year, prior to me coming to SPU, SPU had created a committee on human sexuality. And this committee on human sexuality was entirely invented out of thin air as a way to basically be the university's response to Haven and also sort of just like, fill in the gaps in terms of approving things for Haven in the short term.

And so what this committee did was essentially say Yes, okay, you can meet on campus again, because you have this committee's approval, right? Or if you want to host an event, and invites other students to it, like we did with our pastor panel, where we bring pastors in to talk about LGBTQ approaches in their churches, like this committee approved that and approved the agenda for pastor panel who would be visiting for pastor panel, right, and this committee was made up of administration and faculty together. And so it was, you know, fine, it worked. But the problem is, you just get the little things, right, like we had, we weren't allowed to post posters anywhere around the university. And so how do you get people to come to your meetings if you can't post posters, right? Of course, we weren't allowed to go to the orientation, you know, club event, so new students couldn't meet us, right. And so it's just a little we don't have a budget for like refreshments and stuff, right? So it's just like little tiny things like that, that just really stood in the way and like we weren't listed on the website, right, like just stupid little things like that.

And so it really did hamper us. But for the most part, I'd say we had two years of just sort of neutral interactions with the administration, just sort of letting Haven rebuild itself to be what it was, and, and just coexisting right in sort of a quiet way. And there was actually a Falcon article that came out about this, about how the fact that Haven was quiet, and what was happening, are they still around? And I was quoted in that article. And, you know, the funny thing is, there's just this, clearly, there's still a perception among the student body. That Haven wasn't around, or no one was talking about LGBTQ issues on campus. When we were and, actually, our membership was growing. And so that was a real wake up call to me, in my sophomore year, at the same time that like some of my friends started leaving, and I was thinking, you know, is this worth it? And it really became just crystal clear to me at this point, in my sophomore years, this was, you know, 2013. Haven needs to be more visible on campus, and we need to be a place where anyone at the university can come talk about sex and sexuality because those conversations just aren't happening. And this was the same time that that university started doing their let's talk about sex week. It's called let's talk about sex. I don't know if they still do that at all.

But it was a very forced, fit, awkward thing that they tried to do for a few years that the student programs department ran, and it was to talk about, you know, sexual health, you know, certainly with a lot of students at SPU coming from homeschool backgrounds, making sure people are kind of fully up to speed on the current culture, but also just discussing, you know, sexuality in a Christian context, right, which is just a good conversation to have. But zero sessions at these about any sort of LGBTQ issue, right is all from a heteronormative perspective. And so, you know, we used to joke it at Haven

that, like, they have, let's talk about sex week, we have let's talk about sex year. Right? It was just, we're the ones having these conversations, and otherwise, it just wasn't happening. And so that's really where, after my sophomore year, so we went into the fall of 2013, at this point. And I stayed on as a co leader, and then I brought in two other active members of Haven to be co leaders with me in that year. And we sat down and I just said, you know, look, we, it's time to be officially recognized on campus and figure out what this looks like.

And I think you need to push hard to become a club. Um, and this had, they had tried this in the past prior to me being at SPU and just complete, you know, complete shutdown rejection of that idea. But the times have changed a little bit, Haven had changed structurally, the administration had changed, there was a new president of SPU at this point. And we were also in a position where I was very, very involved in student leadership. So I knew everyone on campus, I knew all the administration, and my other two co leaders were also people who were very involved. And so we just, we had these good relationships really like this, that now seems like the right time to do this. And so we discussed it with a full Haven membership, everyone was super excited.

So we decided to just do it quietly. So we started with, let's just submit an application for club status and just see what happens. So we did it like second week of the of the school year and fall quarter. And immediately, we submitted this, and immediately the same day, I get an email from one of the senior members of the administration, who had known me in many other contexts. So he reaches out to me and says, Hey, Adam we need to find a time to meet and discuss this. So Okay, here we go. Um, so we sat down. And I mean, you know, the one area where I'll give this administration, the administration SPU a lot of credit was just that they were approaching this from a way of, we want to support the students who are a part of Haven, we just don't want to support Haven officially. Right, which is an awkward place to be, but like they were they were really trying to figure out, what is it that these students needed? Right. And so we had a really candid conversation about the fact that like, I had wished and my freshman year that I had seen a group like this more visibly. And I wish that I knew that these conversations were happening.

And that also like, there are other students at this school that need to be having these conversations. And so let's let Haven sit in between those two things and really serve that need. And so we got to a point where, you know, they were okay. And part of the reasons why we didn't call Haven an activist group was because it's really supposed to be a discussion group at this point. And so, and we really oriented ourselves around being a discussion group so like, is SPU really going to stop discussions? And I think the administration response was, Oh, you're right. We're not going to stop discussions on these issues. So they didn't really have ground to stand on anymore. And so, you know, we discussed, okay, we Haven can be a club and everything. But the one sticking point before all this happened was the statement on human sexuality, which had been a sticking point the whole time. And so the administration set a line in the sand and said Haven has to affirm the statements of human sexuality, which no other club has to do at SPU so that already felt, you know, very weird. And so we weren't going to do that. But we sat down and we said, Can we get to a place where we recognize where the university is coming from. And the university recognizes where Haven's coming from. And we're okay with disagreements. And we can let that come out in discussions by this group officially existing. And so

that's eventually where we landed. And so the exact, do you have the exact language in the Haven constitution? I can look it up real quick. The exact language is "Haven will abide by Seattle Pacific University policy, and as an inclusive club—recognizing SPU's Statement on Human Sexuality—Haven will neither advocate for nor against positions held by the university."

So we recognize that it exists, but that we're a discussion group. So we're not an advocacy group. We brought this to our membership and very mixed response from the other students. Some people thought we were, you know, giving away too much work capitulating too much. Some thought it wasn't a big deal at all, what we eventually just agreed on by sort of unanimous, you know, agreement in the group was there are a lot of students out there that still don't know that Haven exists. And there's another freshman class coming in, that needs to know Haven exists, this isn't going to change any of our discussions or programming. This allows us to get a bigger reach. That's the most important part right right now. And so we said, okay, let's do this. So we submitted that new constitution with that line in it for haven. And it got approved, it went through the hoops, it got approved. Very underwhelming, almost, a little email, that said we were approved as a club, we had a little celebration, someone made a rainbow cake, a bunch of faculty came, a bunch of alumni came, all of us cried, it was a very happy moment.

And Haven was officially a club. Shortly after that, I started getting emails from student leaders that were running LGBT groups at other evangelical Christian colleges, Azusa Pacific, among others. And they were all saying, how did you do this? How did you do this? And what I didn't realize I honestly did not realize SPU Haven was now the first officially recognized LGBT group on an evangelical Christian campus. Which I had no idea I didn't realize that and so that, of course, cemented to me how it important this was. I'm so happy that we did it. And it did sort of launch a cascading effect, I wouldn't, we're not gonna take credit for that at Haven. But like, you know, there were some other groups that later that year, and then the following year to get official status from the universities. So really exciting opportunity. And for Haven for us, it really didn't change much, we kept doing the same discussion topics. The only difference was now we put up some posters, and we had some cookies at the events, right? Like, it was not a big, big deal. The next year, we had a bunch more freshmen actually show up because they could see us, we were at the orientation. And so it was, it was all that positives, um, I stepped down from leadership position after that year. So my senior year, the year 2014-2015. I stayed involved in Haven, I still went to a lot of the meetings.

But we and my co leaders, we all stepped down and we passed it on to the next generation, we had some, a couple of really involved students that were a couple years below us, and we passed the reigns to them. And what we told them at the time was, look, the constitution that we wrote is not meant to sit in stone, this is going to evolve as the university is going to evolve. And if now's the right time, for Haven to be more vocal and more present on campus, go go do that. Right. That wasn't what we needed it to be at the time that we were there. But if that's what you need it to be, go for it. And I think it took a few years from my understanding for Haven to really start to get a little bit more visible on campus and to take more of an activist approach. But, you know, I think we did what we needed to do at the time to get Haven to where it is. In hindsight, I naively thought that the university was already progressing in a more affirmative direction. I am honestly shocked that we're sitting here today, and that the statement on human sexuality has not been changed at all. I would have thought that that would

have happened a couple years after I graduated. So I think in hindsight, there's probably more we could have done and should have done to lay the groundwork for the students coming after us to really push this issue, and not let the university get as fractured as it has been over this issue. Because it's just it is really unfortunate. But that aside, I mean, I think, really, for me, I think we accomplished a lot of the goals that we set out to accomplish, which was creating the space for students.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 40:46

That was a lot. Thank you so much for sharing all of that. I took so many notes. Okay, give me a moment to look over the questions to see what um, processing what, um. I'm going to just go back into some of my clarifying questions based on what you were just discussing. I am wondering, you know, with the space that you created with Haven, what were some of the most, like memorable or impactful events that you guys think that you held? You know, annually, or like quarterly? What did you feel like were the best events that you held?

**Adam Hutchinson** 41:55

Yeah, there, there are three that really stood out to me. So one is, we did a, what we called a trans community panel. And we did this annually, usually in the winter. And we invited some prominent members of the trans community in Seattle, primarily from activist circles, that were really fighting for certain issues, whether it be recognition, whether it be you know, discrimination laws, etc, in Seattle and Washington State. And so we invited them to come and one it was a chance for education. And I think a lot of the event really just focused on what are the different issues that trans individuals face?

But it was really a time to just understand, how can we, as members of the LGBT community who might identify as gay might identify as lesbian or bisexual? How can we get more involved with the trans community, be allies to them? Right. And I think that was really, really impactful for a lot of students, as well as a lot of our straight members that come to Haven, who just, you know, hadn't really thought about that, right? Hadn't really thought about that, that side of the activism movement. And so just really, really, eye opening and really great discussions always came out of that event. And for me, you know, that was like, peak Haven, right? Because it's an opportunity for all of us to get outside of our comfort zones and really having a discussion about it.

So that was great. Another thing that we did, every single year was, I mentioned, we did safe sex, kind of trivia. We do like a trivia night, around safe sex. And there's a lot of stuff that goes into it, right, especially if you just get beyond the basics. And so you know, each person would kind of pick a different area, and do some research and come in, and we do trivia together and just learn together, which was, which was always fun, right? Always good opportunity to learn. And then the third one that I'll just mention, was the Day of Silence. So you know, Day of Silence, a national movement, where students, typically in high schools, but also in universities, basically will be silent for a day as a way to raise awareness of discrimination that a lot of LGBTQ students still face, especially speaking out and being open about their sexuality. And so it's always just a really moving time.

And so what we did while I was while I was there is we would set up blankets in Martin Square the square in the middle near library. We'd set up blankets, we'd set up some signs, just kind of explaining

what we're doing. We do the thing we wear duct tape on your mouth, which is kind of a symbol that a lot of students use. And we just sit there and we'd kind of, you know, journal reflect whatever people would join throughout the day and then leave and everything. Some of us would stay all day. At the end of the day, we would do something called breaking the silence. We would all get into a room together. And we'd make a ton of noise and have a lot of fun and have a little dance party and everything. And then our faculty advisor at Haven is probably the most moving thing up, he would come around, he would wash everyone's feet. And it was it was a way of, you know, the same way that Jesus came around and washed the disciples feet. It was just incredibly moving, incredibly tender and intimate moment. And it was really his way of, and he was he was fairly kind of laid back when it came to being the faculty advisor for Haven but it is his way of really honoring us, and being involved in showing his support, and letting us know that we mattered what we were doing mattered. And so that was just always kind of my favorite moment.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 45:36**

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. I've heard about the feet washing from other discussions, and it just sounds so moving. So with your role in leadership with, you know, in other parts of university but specifically haven? What types of conversations or interactions did you have with other students or faculty, you know, that weren't involved in Haven, specifically about your leadership?

**Adam Hutchinson 46:09**

Yeah, I mean, it was almost all generally, positive, I think, you know, for the most part were things came down to is one people, a lot of other leaders on campus, whether it's student leaders or faculty on campus, just wanted to know, like, what was the priority for haven? How, and how could they support other LGBTQ students on campus? Right. And so, you know, there were other club leaders on campus, for example, that, like, wanted to invite Haven and Havens membership to the different events that they were doing, or how could we co host something together, right? A lot of faculty members, you know, talk about like, hey, do you do, we want to have just kind of like an informal meet and greet or go off campus and have lunch with some of the members, right, and just kind of get to know each other and be a support group. Some faculty members asked if they could come to meetings once in a while just to, to sit in and be present and also be a resource for other students who might want to come and so that was mostly honestly, my, my reaction with most of them. There were certainly some who were, I guess, skeptical that Haven was still sort of advocating for, you know, LGBTQ issues in a way that was incoherent with, you know, the University policies, and then in their perspective of Christian theology. And so there were some times where there was some pushback in terms of even being involved in things like Haven being present at other events that were going on, or Haven just being recognized along with other clubs. Because they viewed Haven as something separate, something different. Again, it was never coming from a place of necessarily malice, but it was just this sort of hesitancy of wanting to engage with LGBTQ issues. And so, you know, I think for the most part, it was about, okay, fine, we're gonna, we're gonna go do our own thing, you can do your thing.

But more often than not people were open to having the conversations or the discussions. And one thing that we did end up doing, the resident advisors on campus, as being part of Residence Life tended to be like a little bit more conservative just because of their roles. And a little bit more skeptical

on being affirmative of LGBTQ issues and Haven specifically. But one thing that we did was we went around to a few of the residence halls. And we basically said, okay, we host just a conversation about sexuality in the residence halls, not branded as Haven, right? But can we just have a conversation that's hosted by the residence hall, and some of us in leadership at Haven show up to be part of those conversations? And so we tried that a couple of times. And I mean, I'm glad we did, because it was really a good conversation. But definitely when we did that is when it starts to expose, there were definitely some students that had a lot of issues, even talking about LGBTQ issues, a lot of negative reactions to it. Right. And certainly, from the university's perspective, now, the resident advisors were very limited in terms of what they could say, or the policies that they were allowed to talk about. And so, you know, we try to find those other entry points, I guess, is my point. But there were still a lot of barriers, a lot of those barriers came back to the policies of the university.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 49:36**

Yeah, that makes sense. Thank you for sharing that. Okay, is there anything else about Haven specific that you forgot to mention or want to still mention before we move into a reflection part of the interview?

**Adam Hutchinson 49:53**

I don't think so. I mean, do you feel like you have a good kind of history of Haven and everything from all your interviews at this point?

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 50:00**

I mean, yours is very enlightening. I may follow up with you in an email or something, to clarify some things. But yeah, we're, we're slowly building this history. And everything that you've shared is, you know, more than we knew before. So it's really awesome. So let's see. Now on the reflection side. How do you think that your activism and or you know, identity at SPU, how do you, how did that impact your calling in life?

**Adam Hutchinson 50:38**

Yeah, I mean, so I post college, I've been very active politically, but primarily in local politics, issues around homelessness and climate change, issues around, you know, equitable access to services in the city. And so I'm involved in various groups here. I think, you know, for me at being an SPU and sort of being in the role that I was at there, it just really opened my eyes to the fact that every community needs to find itself, and then that community needs champions. Right. And so it's, it's those two prongs of it, right? It's like, if there's an underserved community, or a minority community, how do we create space for that community to come together, and, and be in a community together, right, which doesn't always happen. And but the second piece of that is, it can't just be the community that we have to go, try to make change and make things better. And so, you know, I think that was just what was really eye opening to me at SU. And really what followed by trajectory, was the first two years that was all about building community. The second tier is really about kind of more visibility and changing some of the policies and SPU and so I learned a lot from that. And that's sort of been my guiding passion since then, in terms of where can I make a difference? And how can I bring communities together to make change?

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 52:10**

That's inspiring to hear. Based on what you know, about, you know, what's still currently the policy still currently at SPU, what do you think still needs to be changed? In our future?

**Adam Hutchinson 52:24**

Yeah, I mean, the policies need to change. So I mean, the statement on human sexuality, I frankly, don't know why it exists, it shouldn't exist. I don't see why the university needs to have that policy at all. And I mean, that not from a sense that SPU needs to push the theologically, theologically different, but it's more about the fact that by having these policies in place, and on paper, it's discouraging any sort of engagement on the issue. And so regardless of what you know, SPU stance wants to be I, frankly, I just believe that they need to just remove these policies, remove the statement of human sexuality, remove the, you know, the, you know, no sex requirements from the Student Handbook, if you remove the, you know, sexuality statement from the employee handbook, and just allow those conversations to happen, allow the community to build around it. And I think the university will be in a much stronger position. So I think that's number one is just like the policies themselves need to go, right. They don't need to replace they just need to go. And then number two is I think, for more of a people level, I think they do need to start actively engaging by they I mean, the administration needs to start actively engaging on some of these issues, I think specifically around LGBTQ identity. And just what does that mean, have those conversations openly at the university, it actually hosts some of those conversations as University. Same as trans issues, same as just sex in general, right? What is a fully sexual person and a Christian? How do those two things interact? Because they're just doing a disservice at this point for the students, as well as the faculty that are at SPU. And I think it's a shame because for a lot of ways SPU is the leader among evangelical Christian colleges. And I think SPU can still be a leader in this space. But it's time for them to really address these issues head on.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh 54:40**

And what would you share or say to the LGBTQ+ community at SPU you know, as we're going through this current period, and, you know, our university's history, what would you say to them?

**Adam Hutchinson 54:53**

Yeah, I'd say, you know, I'd speak to the LGBTQ students specifically at SPU right now, I'd say remember, your time at SPU was short. For most students, it's going to be four years at SPU. And so find the things that you care about, make a difference where you can. But also remember that you're there to be a student first, right, and you're leaving one way or another after, after you graduate, and you're going to have a whole life ahead of you filled with activism, filled with things to fight for. And there's another generation of students by design coming right behind you, right. That's how universities work. And so don't worry about perfection. Don't worry about trying to solve everything, do what you can, and create space for the next generation of students to come in and pick up the pieces. I think what I would just say more broadly, two is that the world's changing. When I was at SPU, the world was not the United States, I should say it was not an activist society. At this time, there was no activism around LGBTQ issues, because marriage equality just passed in Washington State. And the Supreme Court a couple of years later, would grant marriage equality across the country, progress was happening. You know, the trans community was getting rights in terms of visibility and legal recognition



at this time. You know, access to abortion was becoming more common, right, just all these issues were moving in the, in a more progressive direction. And so there wasn't as much of a need for activism. And of course, in hindsight, of course, there still was, but it felt like progress was happening, the only main activist movement that was happening during my time at SPU, in the country was the Occupy Wall Street movement. And that had very little presence in Seattle, and certainly not on SPU campus at all. And so, you know, I guess, where I'm going with this is that we live in a very different time now. Where activism is part of like, how are you an activist is a question that a lot of people ask and get asked, right. There are movements to be a part of, if I had tried to join a movement, when I was at SPU, there would have been nowhere to go and I would have had to start one from scratch. Now, there's a dozen different organizations you can get involved with in this city. And there's, from what I hear, there are opportunities on campus to do a lot of that, right. So, I mean, I think the world is changing. And whether or not SPU specifically changes alongside of that the community, the Christian community, Christian College community, is in the midst of this change and is going to change as a result of that. And so find the places that you can make an impact and don't stress about the rest of it.

**Rebecca Cavanaugh** 57:51

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. Okay, I'm, unless there's anything else you want to share. I'm going to end the recording now, and then we'll discuss a few more things.