

Lee Coleman

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by Katrina Griffiths & Joshua Fackrell

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COLEMAN: Lee Coleman

KG: Katrina Griffiths

JF: Joshua Fackrell

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This oral history interview was conducted as part of the Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2011, with Instructor Pat Young.

Introduction

Lee Coleman is a gay activist. At one time he was the only Republican on the Right to Privacy board, which was a gay-rights organization. Later, as a Democrat, he was a candidate for the Oregon State House of Representatives. In this interview he discusses the gay Republican group called Log Cabin Republicans, the anti-gay Ballot Measure 9, and other political issues.

Interview
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JF: Alright so my name is Joshua Fackrell I'm a student here at Portland State University with Kristina Griffiths...

KG: Katrina

JF: Katrina, sorry. We are here to interview Lee Coleman. It is the LGBT Gay History Capstone. Lee Coleman, we are just going to start off with some warm-up questions. Where are you from, where were you born?

COLEMAN: Los Angeles

JF: Los Angeles, and when and why did you come to Oregon?

COLEMAN: I retired after writing law books for about 30 years in San Francisco and I was tempted to come to Oregon by a friend who assured me that real estate was cheaper here. And so I sold a house in California. That automatically meant lots of money. And I moved up here and bought a house (an apartment building and a house) and then bought another three houses and fixed them up, and so here I am.

JF: Oh nice! In Portland or...?

COLEMAN: Mostly in Beaverton, Aloha, Hillsboro. So I've lived out in Aloha for the last twenty years. Well twenty one now, but uh ok?

JF: And one other quick question is, when were you born?

COLEMAN: January 1931

JF: Alright so...

COLEMAN: So I'm now 80

JF: So from just getting to know you through our professor and everything, you were apart of, you were one of the only republicans advocating for gay rights. I was wondering what got you into politics in Oregon?

COLEMAN: Well, I had been in politics or political in California and I joined Log Cabin Republicans [organization of gay Republicans] before it was Log Cabin Republicans, in San Francisco. When I got to Oregon I got a little more active and I began to see things like the Oregon Citizens Alliance. So I started a chapter Log Cabin Republicans here and very soon the OCA came to be a force in the state and that led me to, I decided finally that the gay republicans ought to be represented in the movement to stop the OCA. So I attended one of the first organization meetings of what became the No On 9 campaign, the no on ballot Measure 9. It sort of took off from there. I'll go into more detail but I want to answer your questions first.

JF: Those were our intro question everything else is just kind of, I don't want to double cover things so that really was just intro, do you have any quick questions?

KG: Not at the moment, would mind elaborating...?

COLEMAN: Oh sure, I think was '91 when the organization of the resistance to the OCA began and so I went to a meeting of state wide interested people in Eugene, in the basement of a tacky bar, in the middle of downtown Eugene. So I made it clear that I

wanted to align myself with the resistance to the OCA. And I began to think of a number of things that I could do. I didn't know anybody at all, but I had the first person to respond for my call for people to join the Log Cabin Republicans and I got an appointment with the chairman of the Oregon Republican Party, Craig Berkman. Craig was the last of the moderate republicans in this state. But I gave him a long printout of what I was going to tell him and what I wanted to do.

What I wanted him to do was ask the attorney general who was also a republican at the time, to keep the OCA's ballot measure off the ballot. So he did, he agreed, and he later, I think partly, if not all because of my visit with him made a statement during the run up to the election opposing the ballot measure. So I think I accomplished something, the attorney general and later on I talked to the Secretary of State. The status of the law in the state is that no public official is willing to fight any ballot measure. I kept saying, well let them sue ya, refuse to certify it to the ballot and let them sue you, you've got lots of money to spend, the state is a bottomless treasury, they'll defend you. In any case the attorney general couldn't do anything, [he] so that [was auditory] went nowhere.

JF: I have a couple of quick questions, the Log Cabin Republicans in Oregon, how many people did you end up pulling together for that?

COLEMAN: Well it was really almost an exercise in artifice -- I found that maybe ten people who would be willing to admit that they were republican and gay at the same time. In order to qualify as a member, as a legitimate chapter as part of the overall national movement, you had to have at least ten. I broke all the rules in the book to have ten paid members. But it was a tiny group, and was never anything but me and Eric Brown [was the name of] the first guy who responded, it's not the same Eric Brown who is running things at the Q Center. It was a two men operation when you get right down to it. But that's the way front groups operate, or should operate. Any front group worth it's

salt will make noise even though there are only one or two people involved that were really serious.

JF: We watched a documentary on Measure 9, a couple weeks ago actually. It was quite emotional during it, well extremely emotional during it actually I should say. I was wondering if ever felt unsafe during, because that was something that they brought up in there?

COLEMAN: I don't think I ever felt unsafe, and I don't think Eric felt unsafe. I did have friends, where we'd have meetings here at PSU. One of the leading figures had his brake lines cut while his car was parked in the parking structure across the street. But nothing like that ever happened to me. There was one big incident were a young lady was attacked and she sued the OCA and got a judgment and they've never, she's never been able to collect on it. But my impression is that by enlarge there was no physical threat. To answer your question. Go ahead...

JF: Let's see... was there much a difficulty transitioning from, you said you were a part of the San Francisco Log Cabin Republicans, to being in Oregon, did you ever feel like. Was it a very big difference politically?

COLEMAN: Well there's a big difference between San Francisco and Oregon and I was scared wittless that, people would know that I was gay. When I took my first materials to Xerox at Alpha Graphics, which I think is extinct now, but it was a regular Xerox copy shop. I was just fearful, I was fearful of being identified as gay, receiving mail from gay organizations at the post office. That wore off after years, but that's a good question.

I was very much in the closet and I came out of it rather quickly. In San Francisco I made a few stabs at activism, I was a member of Society for Individual Rights, which is how I met some of the lead ship there. I was total transplant to here and not really used

to a state that was as conservative as Oregon is. But I kept on going and I guess the fact that I participated in it earned me an invitation to join the board of directors of the group, Right to Privacy.

Right to Privacy was the precursor to Basic Rights Oregon, but all of the people that you saw on that video were a part of the No On 9 Campaign and a few of the were members of the Right to Privacy Board. That had been for several years, the leading gay organization in the state, they gave an annual fund raiser dinner and the first one that I attended the governor was there. Who would have ever thought that the governor would show up at a gay sponsored event. Which reminds me I, at one point I became friends with Senator Bob Packwood and we ended up having a fund raiser at the Multnomah Athletic Club, with him as the key speaker and it was the first gay anything that the Multnomah Athletic Club had ever had. The people that were running the building were astounded that a sitting US Senator and his girlfriend would show up. I was too but... that was one the early highlights.

JF: During the No On 9, what would say, I know you put together the Log Cabin Republicans in Oregon, what were some of the things you guys did as a group in Oregon?

COLEMAN: Me and Eric, primarily, what we did was PR with Republicans and support for the No On 9 Campaign and in PR with the Republicans, trying to make the points that I was making like visiting with the state party chair Craig Berkman, eventually Packwood although senators don't usually don't come out on local issues, both Packwood and Craig Berkman the Oregon GOP chair were willing to make an exception and speak out. And both of them did, Packwood waited until after the primary was over because he didn't want a challenge from the OCA. But he held a press conference in his office's downtown. Lon Mabon and Scott Lively were there, they were very unhappy, both of them Mabon was in charge of the OCA and Scott Lively was one of the worst human

beings on the face of the earth and is now very much involved in the Uganda effort to kill gay people. Fortunately he is in Massachusetts these days. But that's what we did, that's what we were involved in. So go ahead.

JF: In our emails together, you had spoken about the, I'm not sure if this later on I'm guessing, the Trumpeters?

COLEMAN: Yeah, I had very much wanted to get in touch with Republican elite. And what passes for the Republican elite in Portland is Trumpeters. It's an all men group really mostly lay leaders, I wouldn't call most of them movers or shakers, but I've met people like Bob Packwood, the current head of the state department of corrections, Max Williams was a friend. Scott Bruun who ran for Congress in the last go around was a member of that group,, and I did everything I could to keep him from winning the last election. Because I know him so well, I wouldn't want him anywhere, I mean it's bad enough we've got John Boehner in Congress let alone, people like Scott Bruun. But that was one of the key ways to get access to Republican leadership. It was a pretty influential group, Berkman the party chair was a part of the group. Several past chairs of the Republican Party were, so it was very useful. And the coffee is so great.

JF: You said there was a small group of gay Republicans apart of that group, like?

COLEMAN: Very few, Jerry Keene is one of the members of Trumpeters, Jerry's openly gay and everybody knew it. He was adored by the conservatives and the state legislature because he virtually rewrote the workers compensation laws to make it much more difficult for someone to get a workers comp claim. And the Republicans just ate that right up, they just loved it. He's still a member of Trumpeters as far as I know, even though he was accused of molesting a thirteen year old boy. He seems to have survived that, but anyhow.

JF: would you say that you were, you said everyone knew that he was gay and out, would you say were as out, were people knew?

COLEMAN: Certainly I was... I learned after the first No On 9 Campaign that either nobody really cared or I was dammed if I was going to keep my mouth shut, or both. It certainly made things easier to know all these good old boys, they virtually run the Dorchester Conference, which is a conference of Republican, I think probably the best word is layman, not all of them are politicians. But it's a group that meets in Seaside in the first week of March every year, and it's a good old boy perpetuation system. I will say a lot of politicians do show up. The first time that I attended the Dorchester Conference, Log Cabin had a table and right next to our table was Charley Starr's table, and his son was there on a day to day basis, his son is Bruce Starr.

Bruce is currently a member of the [US] state senate, and Charley was for many years. He was one of the most vicious antigay on religious grounds people that you can expect. I built a relationship with him, and that's I think what Obama does, or tried to when he was the editor of the Harvard Law Review. He would sit in a room like this and just b.s. with the Republican member of the Law Review staff. In order to build bridges and try to influence people so that was all part of that experience, the Trumpeters. At the same time I was a member of the Right to Privacy Board, and it accomplished some good, I wouldn't say it was earth shaking. The Republican Party went further and further to the right and that's partly because of the primary system that we have, in primaries radicals always win, because the radicals always come out and support them, both sides.

KG: What direction do you think the Republican Party is going now days?

COLEMAN: Way downhill it's now being controlled by the minority, the Tea Party people and in order to achieve the majority they have to give in the Tea Party. I think it's a trend that the leadership of the party is going to try to counter, it's going to be very interesting

to see what happens in the next election. I think that for example, Scott Brown the senator from Massachusetts is being bedeviled by Tea Party people, they think he's being top extreme, that he went too far to the left, voting for a couple of things that Obama wanted like, the health care bill. So there is a real fight though on, and I love it.

KG: Yeah it's kind of ironic because the Republican Party was known as the party that would stick together general. And then the Democrats were known divisive, but now it just seems that it is happening to them.

COLEMAN: I think that it is happening to them, and it couldn't have happened to a better bunch of people, to have it happen to. In any case I had my feet in both worlds I had my one foot in the Republican world of the Portland elite, and the other in the Right to Privacy anti-OCA gay political operation. And at one time in that film I think that Donna Red Wing is in that video, Donna Red Wing was voted Lesbian of the Year, in I don't know '93 somewhere along in there. A wonderful human being she's now in Colorado. Beating her head up against the wall just like she was doing here. But she ran the Lesbian Community Project and it was, she brought some real change to that organization. It became a real activist organization without being edgy or well hard edged. And she was I think a really brilliant leader, but she certainly wasn't the only great leader in the effort to modernize.

One of the things that I want to cover, I did everything I could including talking to Craig Berkman about getting the attorney general against those ballot measures, and Bob Packwood. But at one point as a member of the board of Right to Privacy I was on a yacht in the middle of the Columbia River with Chuck Carpenter, a gay Republican who was running for the state house. Ostensibly it was a fundraiser and that the Secretary of State, Phil Keisling was on the boat and on behalf of Right to Privacy with a bunch of board members standing with me I tried to persuade Phil Keisling to keep the ballot measure of the ballot, with the same argument -- let them sue you! Phil just absolutely

wouldn't do it, nice guy, I think he was one of the best secretaries this state's had, although Kate Brown is way out there. We can go into Kate Brown later, she chaired the Senate judiciary committee when the, what became domestic partnership law was being discussed and she did leadership toward getting those things passed.

Chuck Carpenter, I don't know if you've heard of this but the Republican controlled House of Representatives actually passed an employment nondiscrimination bill. Chuck Carpenter was leading it and it was amazing to see it actually happen, I tried to lobby the Starr family and I remember talking to Bruce who was a legislative assistant for his father who was a member of the state house at the time. His statement to me was, well how would I explain why at the dinner table why my father would even be will to consider voting yes on a gay rights bill. I said well because it's the right thing to do and a number of Republicans voted yes because they'd been convinced that it was the right thing to do. I didn't star in that one but Chuck Carpenter did and I was able to do a little something to help him get elected. So that was also a part of being a Republican in the media that was going on in this state at the time. Anything else?

JF: From what we have spoken about between each other, after Measure 9, you kept going, I was wondering what your fondest moment was in advocating for gay rights, what was great accomplishment.

COLEMAN: Well getting those people I mentioned on record as opposing the Oregon Citizens Alliance was probably right up there at the top but at one time I was a delegate of the state party central committee. This was the second time that the OCA was trying a ballot measure so I got up and argued for the concept that the Republican Party should be seen as joining in a discriminatory ballot measure. For what it was worth it was not successful and it got the response from the OCA people, well even God discriminates, so what's so terrible about discriminating? And that's a Republican view, so even God discriminates. So I think that that is one of the fondest moments.

The other one is when I finally became a Democrat, I was roped into running for the state legislature in a district that was totally hopeless. The first interview I gave, the first reporter was a reporter for the Wilsonville newspaper. The headline was "Gay Man Running Against Krummel", well you know you have to expect that sort of thing so I decided very early on that I was not going to play around, that I was not going to try to hide. I had counseled Chuck Carpenter when he ran that he wanted to just be right out front about it. The funny thing is that he won so I was, happy about that too. I was happy about that, that was one of the better moments.

JF: What made you decide to switch parties and run as a democrat?

COLEMAN: George W. Bush. He got up in front of the United States Congress and the entire bleeping world to ask for a constitutional amendment making darn sure that gay people couldn't get married and that blew all the synapses at the same time. I decided that I couldn't support Bush and it would have stayed at that except that because I kind of enjoyed working within the Republican Party. And I at the point of the '04 election I was still interested in doing networking within the Republican Party. I was the executive director of something I brought to this state called the Republican Mainstream of Oregon, or the Oregon Mainstream Republicans. So I organized the Oregon Republican Mainstream and our attempt was to moderate the party and fight the American Taliban. That's really an interesting thing that the allies I had as part of that included the Republican National Committee. A hardy old cattle raising lady from the Eastern half of the state, she hated the OCA, she hated the ultra-right wingers, they were ruining the Republican Party and she knew it. So that's one of the things that stands out in my mind anyhow.

But finally Ralph Nader came into the picture and the Republicans some of the people who think they are very clever tried to put Ralph Nader on the ballot, so as to draw

democrats away from Kerry. So I called Jeff Mapes, the political reporter for The Oregonian and I told him, here's what's going on, here's the names and phone numbers of the people who are leading this movement, check it out. He wrote a long article in June of '04 detailing what was going on with trying to get Ralph Nader on the ballot. In one paragraph in the middle of it all he said and Lee Coleman a member of Log Cabin Republicans is not going to support George W. Bush for reelection. At that point because of my friendship with Kevin Mannix, who was chairman of the party at the time. I had seven different positions in the Republican Party and I was the executive director of the mainstream Republicans, in 72 hours all that went, just like that. So I was a Republican for Kerry during the campaign and then in November after the election I reregistered, that's how I became a Democrat. I have to say at this point that I never voted for a Republican for president during all of the time or most other offices. Jack Roberts being an exception because I liked Jack and he's one of the few moderate Republicans left in this state. He at the time was Oregon's Commissioner of Labor and Industries and very much in charge of the antidiscrimination laws including I think, various cities had passed employment nondiscrimination ordinances and he was in charge of administrate those laws. He was very friendly and was one of the few Republicans I ever voted for. But it was George W. Bush that got me to be a democrat. So that's part of the experience that I have had here.

I'll just read these out: as a delegate to Oregon Republican Parties State Central Committee, I spoke out against party support for the OCA, I got the platform to get rid of the "Special Rights" plank and I replaced it with the consent of the OCA guy, replaced it with language from article 1 section 20 of the state constitution. Which has to do with all citizens are to be treated equally, and that's a short hand way to put it, so I got that into the platform. I was able to make friends and influence enemies, as I mentioned that Obama is known to be able to do and that's try to work with or at least understand where the opposite parties' coming from. And I mentioned that I started the Mainstream committee, mentioned Jack Roberts. One of the interesting things that I have found is

strange bed fellows. Russ Walker who is more recently known as the leader of Freedom Works, which is the Tea Party basically. He was the at one point also, the vice chair of the Republican Party of the state and one point when we were lobbying, when Basic Rights Oregon was holding a lobby day. I think it was on the Marriage Bill, marriage and employment nondiscrimination both finally came up in I think the session that began in '07 after the '06 election. So I'm in the cafeteria in the basement of the capital, and Russ Walker is sitting alone at a table and he knew it was lobby day for the gay contingent. He waved me over to sit down at his table which I thought was strange, turns out his brother is gay and he was willing to lobby Republican that he was able to lobby to get them vote yes on both bills. So [in a strange,] building relationships with strange bed fellows is I think the key to politics.

When Teddy Kennedy died you notice, I don't know if you watched any of those speeches at the wake that they held for him. You had all kinds of conservative Republicans professing their love and affection for Teddy Kennedy. That's a role that I think I like very much and that I admire Obama for, I think he's one of the smartest people we've ever had as president. [But that covers pretty much everything that I have to mention.] Right now I've had the honor of being a delegate to the state Democratic Party Central Committee and am currently a delegate to the First Congressional District Committee. I've been a member of the first Congressional district on both sides and none of them are effective and I'm ruining all of my relationships by trying to get the democratic parties Congressional district to actually do something. You'd be amazed at the inertia of the people who get elected to responsible position and that just sit there and pass dumb irrelevant resolutions, condemning this or that and it all amounts to less than one bean out of a hill. Well that's what I've got to cover, anything else?

JF: How would you relationships with people, do you still have relationships with the Republicans?

COLEMAN: Well, most Republicans won't have anything to do with me, which is understandable, to them I'm a traitor, I was rejected from the Trumpeters in the 04' election. Under their suspension that I would hear something that could help the Kerry Campaign.

JF: Like a spy (laughs)

KG: (laughs)

COLEMAN: I can't say that was unfounded fear, but there wasn't anything that was worth telling. So I thought it was uncalled for, but the end result of the whole article that Jeff made sure that the Republicans were not dealing with me anymore. I can still have a friendly conversation with people like Charlie Starr. Charlie is a religious nut but on a personal level they're willing to talk but it's there is no way to tell, but I remember when Don't Ask Don't Tell came up as an issue. Packwood would actually call me from his office, that the caucus were going to back Don't Ask Don't Tell. To tell me that he was sorry, but he had to follow the caucus and vote Don't Ask Don't Tell in. At some point after that Donna Red Wing and number of others, activists in the gay community, got a fifteen minute appointment with Senator Hatfield and we spent 45 minutes talking to Hatfield about Don't Ask Don't Tell and how it was costing and violation of Civil Rights. At the end of 35 minutes he suddenly it dawned on him; it's really about civil rights isn't it? It was really all we can do from saying duh.

JF and KG: (Laugh)

COLEMAN: People get elected to the Senate, excluding Wyden and Merkley, most of them are empty vessels, they don't have a thought in their heads. They rather lie, than tell the truth, especially the Republicans. I have to end with a reference with Jeff Merkley, he did everything he could to get me elected in a district that was hopeless. My first and

only fundraiser had a speaker that I thought would attract a lot of people, including people for Basic Rights Oregon. Ambassador Joe Wilson, the man who wrote the piece about Yellow Cake Uranium allegedly bought by Saddam Hussein. The fundraiser was not terribly well attended and nobody from Basic Rights Oregon showed up. I thought I had a national recognized well known speaker and I was able to get Joe Wilson to come because Valerie Plame is my cousin and Joe Wilson is married to her. It provided me a point with friends with the democratic activists, but not very much money.

JF: When George W. Bush spoke about gay marriage, you said it really fired you up. Gay marriage is quite the topic right now, when Oregon bill went through with gay marriage, were you a part of that?

COLEMAN: I did everything I could to lobby for it, every time I saw Kate Brown in the hall way, I would just say "thank you, thank you," I think were friends today, by some of that, but the bill itself had momentum and it was going strong, and also the democrats were in charge of the senate and the house. So it was pretty much forgone. The other thing about it was, all the people who knew me running for the house said they were voting for it said it was a matter of course, a matter in philosophy, so I knew we had it made. We did, I think I wrote one of emails, I was privileged to be on the floor by sitting with the state senator when the employment nondiscrimination act was passed in the state senate.

JF: Do you see much in the future for gay marriage? Where do you feel like it's going?

COLEMAN: I think it is going to win in this country, on a state by state basis. I have a solution for the small states. There is a tremendous lack of information, a tremendous lack of connection, factual connection among the population. So my solution is to build more universities [PLEASE delete: pollute the young mind, by god]. We want to liberalize those farm boys and girls, get them to understand the broader world of "live and let live."

When I ran for office I tried to talk about the preamble of the Constitution. Which is a radical liberal document, just the preamble. The crown heads of Europe must of been horrified. I would have of been horrified if I had been a prince of the realm back then. The princes in the realm today are scared by the same ideas that are preamble in the Constitution of the United States. According to the preamble, government is ordained to promote domestic tranquility provide a common well fare, and establish justice and provide a common defense. The first three or four of those are amazingly liberal and they are being dishonored all over the country. Right now by the tea party, know-nothings, and Republicans who are going along with it. That is core of my political philosophy is a 225 year document.

JF: When you moved to Oregon, you said it was really challenging and you came back in the closet, somewhat, but were there any standout challenging moments while you were in Oregon?

COLEMAN: Well, we covered a lot of it, I can't think of anything else at the moment.

JF: What would like to see happen it the future with gay rights?

COLEMAN: Well, getting back to the future, I go back to the Supreme Court about the sodomy case, the Supreme Court took note that all but 13 states abolished sodomy laws. Oregon was the first by the way. California actually followed Oregon, believe it or not. I always find that difficult but that's where we're at. Gradually state by state, we have domestic partnership laws, as far as I'm concern those are just labels. I know there are some activists the late Bonnie Tinker, I argued with Bonnie many of times, but as I see it the only way to claim victory is with the people. What I see happening is somewhere down the road, all the definitions of the marriage acts in the states that were put there by initiatives will be overturned. They'll be voted out by the legislature or by ballot measures all over the country. At some point we are going to get hard core 12 states and the

question is going to come up in the Supreme Court twenty years from now whether a definition of the marriage act that excludes gays from getting married is a violation of due process of law and equal protection under the 14th amendment. I think the Supreme Court will do the same thing as they did with Lawrence vs. Texas. The Texas sodomy case, I think the Supreme Court is going to say, "well, looks like the majority of the country has gone that way, and they'll write that it is a violation of due process of equal protection." I think that is going to happen sooner rather than later because, you have an incredible interest, a phenomenon, two actually, Facebook and twitter. What went on in Egypt for the last three weeks is a direct result in of something brand new in politics anywhere. So we are going to see a lot more of what's happening in Wisconsin.

KG: The riot, The Union worker protests?

COLEMAN: The protests that are going on because the governor a tea party Republican decided that he is not going to deal with unions. News for you it ain't going to work. Twitter and Facebook is going to organize people, they are going to come out, they are going to yell their heads off, and prevail. So I think it's going to be less than twenty years, considerably less, but it is going to be hard work. Here in Oregon, there might be a few things left on the agenda, chairmen mostly don't let anything get repealed. I think this state is beyond worries, California is another problem all together, but I think it is in the courts. The definition of the marriage act is in the courts, I think it going to go our way. Especially with Jerry Brown as governor. That's my predication, at one point the executive director of human rights campaign, Tim McFeely came to Oregon I was privileged to be the few in a room, when he was there. This was 15 years ago, he thought we were going to get there within twenty years. He was remarkably accurate, so we shall see. I think Facebook has done a marvelous thing for politics. I am still mystified why this country is pretty evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, except that I recognize the power of lying and it's amazingly powerful. The power of ignorance.

KG: And sensationalism as well?

COLEMAN: Yeah, one great example is Boehner came up with this amazing statement. Since Obama came into office, he says the federal government has added over 200,000 thousand workers, its 58,000, so he is a liar, and what's so terrible about working for government? The government ought to be an employer, of people doing important things for other people.

KG: Not only that but the government employees has been the lowest since the 1960's.

COLEMAN: Percentage wise, yeah.

KG: So the fact that that the government is theoretically expanding is false, in terms of employment.

COLEMAN: Chuck Riley, a former state Representative and recently defeated in a run for the State Senate, talks about the Republican "two Santa theory." He says the Republicans will complain about government being too big when they are out of power, but when they are in power they make damn sure that the government is big enough to pay off and benefit their finical supporters. There is a wonderful book that I going to push, I'm thinking seriously of starting a book club just to discuss *The Wrecking Crew*. It's about how Republicans and the American conservative movement make government work for them. When Reagan was a borrow and spend Republican and when George W. Bush was a borrow and spend Republican. They were raising money borrowed money not tax money to benefit their financial supporters. When they are out of power then they say the government is too big. Never minding that the part of the government that is too big, is giving subsidies to big oil companies and paying huge amounts on government contracts to their supporters, the people who spend millions dollars. The last election by the way cost 4 billion dollars. Now if George Soros would peel a billion out of several

billions, we would be in good shape. If every democrat in the country gave 5 dollars, to the democrat party, the democratic national committee would have several billion dollars. So you know the influence of money probably the worst things that has happening in this country. That goes to the Supreme Court and the citizens of united case that is the real challenges in the future, an amendment to the Constitution making damn sure corporations have the right to spend money in the elections.

KG: Some of this is disheartening to hear about American politics, but you have mentioned a progression going in terms in gay rights. How did you feel when don't ask don't tell was repealed?

COLEMAN: Oh, I'm very happy. I was a member of the U.S. Air Force, before any of that came along. Goodness gracious we had gay boys in open dorms, giving each other massages, talking about the nice man they met in a nearby town, the parties, and the rest of it. Nobody really cared about it, we had one extremely young, feminine, guy in who lived off base. He maintained his bed in the dorm, but everyone knew he was living with another Air Force member off base. Nobody cared, nobody cared, there was an occasionally court martial who fraternizing someone in a lower rank, but that was it. It never was a problem, there were times when people were getting carried away. Don't ask don't tell was nothing more than an appetite to keep gay people from being gay and losing their jobs in the military, the Air Force. I was really happy we going back to a point of which were sexual activity that isn't forced, a higher rank always has a moral point of persuasion that has to frowned upon but not allowing gay people to serve in the military is ridiculous. A little unhappy with the slow rate of progress, that is going on. I just saw something on the net, that the Marines had set a final date, and that's fine.

COLEMAN: But that is aside from this interview, snatch that.

JF: I have question, when you were younger, did you come out or did you know you were gay at a young age?

COLEMAN: I didn't do anything at all until I was 23. That is one of the major regrets of my life, but then I graduated high school in 1947. The only sex that was going on was the occasional "loose girl" and all of the jocks. That was the extent of it, sure I had crushes on guys, but I would of never thought of or I could do anything about it. So I think coming out in an early age, for me was not socially possible, that's the way it was in the 1940's, 1950's, and even in the 1960's. I am very happy the fact that they are gay straight alliances in high schools. I am encouraged by that, it's time that people let loose with their ambitions. That's why I'm all for gay marriage. Without going into a dissertation and I got one so I can go off at any time. In this country people despise gay people for hanging out in toilets and that's their concept of gay people. Also for popularizing sex, and overemphasize on sex, and at the same time they are bitterly opposed to allowing people to marry, carry on a domestic partnership, and they fail to realize that family is what this is all about. Bonnie Tinker said "love makes a family." Bonnie was a Quaker a true revolutionary but she founded love makes a family in Oregon. It's not a matter of marriage or domestic partnership; it is about family and the importance of building a family relationship. That is the major sailing point for gay marriage. George Lakoff the linguistic, have you ever heard of George Lakoff?

JF and KG: No.

COLEMAN: His leading philosophy is framing is everything. If you frame an issue like gay marriage in terms of gay marriage, straight people think of two people naked in bed, sleeping together all the time. That throws an awful lot of people in this country, if you are talking about gay people doing it. Lakoff says that calling gay marriage is bad framing. His idea of good framing is building family. That what I see about marriage in this country, if the gay community gets through its head we need to be talking about building

a family. Leave the imagery out there in the cold, we are going to gain success a lot more quickly. That was a good question.

JF and KG: Is there anything else you like to add?

COLEMAN: No, I've gone through my list and beyond. The future of filled with all kinds of promise. My main problem in this state is getting the eastern half of the state to start waking up and smelling the coffee. Greg Walden is the U.S. Representative for half of this state. I'm trying to figure out how to connect with the unconnected. Aside from building universities and community colleges, I'm toying with an advisement idea that I'm going to call Ambiguity Unlimited. Think in terms of little stickers posted anywhere with a drawing an important concept of a doctor tending a patient underneath that is the democratic logo. I think we can produce those for a penny and sale them for two. You can have millions of them all over the country, that's Ambiguity Unlimited. It's a scheme that I haven't told anybody about.

JF: We're the first.

COLEMAN: You're the first. One of my nephews' great, great, nephews was a formal partner with Lawrence O'Donnell. O'Donnell is news caster, on MSNBC. I have been trying to get my nephew to response an email. I'm going to try to organize an advisement agency at my advanced age and do something about Ambiguity Unlimited. We'll see how that works. I think the advising in this country isn't thinking in terms of creating cash flow, but selling a program that involves advising. The Republicans have been doing it for decades. So, I'm going to do something, and do read The Wrecking Crew it's a tremendous insight with what's going on in this country.

JF: Well, thank you for the interview and thank you for all you have done for Oregon and California.

COLEMAN: More to the point what are you guys doing? Are you a member of the county central committee? Are you both for Multnomah County?

KG: I am.

JF: I am now.

COLEMAN: Where are you from?

JF: I'm from Grants Pass.

COLEMAN: Well, what are you guys going to do? Why aren't you members of the Democratic Party? Why aren't you attending the monthly meetings of the Democratic Party Multnomah Central Committee?

JF: This class, when I was looking for a capstone, I had no clue this class existed. Honestly, I didn't know much about gay history, it's really opened me up to it, actually it is very interesting. I am very interested in getting involved.

KG: It defiantly gives insight on how powerful political actions really are.

COLEMAN: It's getting more so now with twitter, which I refuse to do.

JF and KG: (Laugh)

COLEMAN: I don't really understand Facebook and I really don't understand how to use it. But I'm learning, anyhow my question was directed to all the gay people in this state. I went to a meeting local human rights campaign activists. I went up there and asked the

same questions as I asked you, why aren't you people members of Democratic Party in this state? They all looked at me and had no idea. The Democratic Party is an open party and welcomes everybody no matter what, even the loony tunes that are far left and the loony tunes that are far from the center, the party is wide open to perception. It's the key to success in politics, local and otherwise. We had a disaster in the last election, the state house is split 30-30. We have 2 votes in the state senate, it's a disaster. The current state legislator is tied up in knots, can't do anything and is not likely to do anything. Because the voters couldn't drag themselves to mark up their ballots. The Republicans win when fewer people vote. That's my word for the day.

JF: Get out and vote.

COLEMAN: Get out and vote.

KG: Get out and vote.

COLEMAN: Spend some money and it's another thing. My finances have been a disaster in the last couple of years because of tenant problems. I own a small apartment building, I've gone into debt, I must of spent at least 2,000 dollars on Obama. I know I spent at least another 2,000 dollars on sending money to candidates to Congress. There are very few people like me who would do that. I'm not making demands on people who don't have money, but I don't think a gay person in this state who isn't able to peel off 100 dollars. I said this many of times. The political process is the cure. Everything depends on the political process. That is the end on my sermon.

JF and KG: Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]

Key words:

- Log Cabin Republicans
- Oregon Citizens Alliance
- No On 9
- Oregon Republican Party
- Oregon Democratic Party
- Craig Berkman
- Eric Brown
- Right to Privacy
- Basic Rights Oregon
- Bob Packwood
- Trumpeters
- Dorchester Conference
- Bruce Starr
- Charles Starr
- Tea Party
- Don't Ask Don't Tell
- Obama
- George W. Bush
- Oregon Marriage Bill

