

Episode 47: Identity, Culture, and Machismo with Christian Balmaseda  
Released on June 18, 2021

[00:00:00.33] ANTHONY SIS: The opinions expressed by the guests and contributors of this podcast are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Cornell University or its employees.

[00:00:09.65] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:14.38] ANTHONY SIS: Welcome to the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month, a month that recognizes the 1969 Stonewall uprising that took place at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. To honor this month, we have collaborated with the LGBTQ+ colleague network group at Cornell to create a special series called Beyond Binaries. Through this series, we will interview Cornell staff who identify as LGBTQ to share what Pride means to them, and celebrate the diverse lived experiences among members of the LGBTQ community at Cornell. My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:00:57.42] TORAL PATEL: My name is Toral Patel.

[00:00:58.80] ANTHONY SIS: And you are listening to Beyond Binaries.

[00:01:09.08] ANTHONY SIS: Christian, thank you so much for joining us on our series Beyond Binaries. And so just to get us started for our listeners, if you can just share your name, where you work at Cornell, your pronouns, as well as other salient identity.

[00:01:22.15] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: So my name is Christian Balmaseda, I'm the assistant director of enrollment and admissions at Cornell Tech. My pronouns are he, him, his. And some of my salient identities, I am Latino, I am a gay man, and I'm from New York City.

[00:01:40.29] ANTHONY SIS: Thank you for sharing that. So to get us started, I wanted to start us with a trivia question. So the question I have for you, let's see if you know this, is which country holds the record for holding the largest Pride Parade in the world?

[00:01:54.72] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Which country-- oh my goodness. I'm going to take a stab, is it Israel?

[00:02:00.72] ANTHONY SIS: Different continent.

[00:02:01.65] [LAUGHTER]

[00:02:03.14] ANTHONY SIS: Different continent. Do you want to take one more guess?

[00:02:06.84] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: If it's not Tel Aviv Pride, then it must be New York Pride.

[00:02:10.42] ANTHONY SIS: Closer.

[00:02:10.92] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: No?

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[00:02:11.67] ANTHONY SIS: Closer, it's actually Brazil. So Brazil holds the largest Pride Parade, has the record of holding the largest Pride Parade. And so it says right here, Argentina may be the first South American country to legalize same sex marriage, but Brazil takes the cake when it comes to hosting Pride Parades.

[00:02:29.46] According to the Guinness World Records, Sao Paulo's Pride Parade is the largest in the world. Every year the parade welcomes millions of people around the world to celebrate the LGBTQ community. And in 2009, approximately four million people attended the Sao Paulo Pride Parade, breaking a record of 2.5 million attendees that was set in 2006, also in Sao Paulo. So they broke their own record, essentially.

[00:02:54.33] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: That's-- I don't know why that is so surprising to me. I was going to say New York first but I felt like that was too easy, so that's why I immediately went to Tel Aviv. I guess it's just because in my own circle, those are the Pride marches and celebrations that people talk about.

[00:03:09.78] ANTHONY SIS: Another one that I typically hear often too, is Madrid. I hear a lot of people go to Madrid Pride, and that seems to be a pretty big one too. But so I initially thought Madrid at first, so Spain, but nope it's Brazil. So a little fact there.

[00:03:23.60] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: The more you know.

[00:03:24.79] ANTHONY SIS: The more you know. So to get us started with this conversation, so we're here talking about Pride, Pride Month, what it means for members of the LGBTQ community, particularly staff here at Cornell. And so just to kick us off, when you hear the word Pride, what words, feelings, experiences do you immediately think of?

[00:03:42.99] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: If I could define it in a word for me personally, it's confidence, the confidence to be able to be my true self. For so many years I didn't have that confidence. I didn't come out to myself until after I had graduated from undergrad, and I'm fairly young. I mean, I'll be 30 later this year.

[00:04:01.48] So a lot of people my age came out in high school, came out during college, but for me it took a little bit longer. I was a bit of a late bloomer. And so I always equate Pride with just having the confidence to be your true self.

[00:04:16.14] And of course joy, I mean, if anyone who's listening to this if you've ever been to a Pride march or Pride celebration, everyone is just so, so happy. My first time walking in a Pride march was New York City, with the Queer Urban Orchestra, which I'm a part of, I play the violin. And that orchestra and everyone was just so happy, like everyone who was marching. We were in between two different groups, and we eventually just became one big group with three different organizations. And we were all talking to each other while we were walking down the street and it was just, it was so, so cool to see and something that I hadn't experienced myself as a kid.

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[00:04:54.54] ANTHONY SIS: What year was that, if you don't mind me asking you?

[00:04:56.76] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: The Pride march, my first Pride march?

[00:04:58.37] ANTHONY SIS: Your first one, yeah.

[00:04:59.34] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Was in 2017.

[00:05:03.96] ANTHONY SIS: Wow so not that long ago, yeah.

[00:05:05.90] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Yeah 2017, and then we marched again, I marched again with Cornell Tech. Actually Cornell Tech marched with students and faculty and staff one year. It was actually my first year working at Cornell Tech, so about four years ago, so might have been 2018, 2019.

[00:05:22.00] ANTHONY SIS: That makes me think of my first time ever attending a march, and I came out my freshman year in college. And long story short, it wasn't the best experience in that, I was essentially outed out by somebody who I was talking to when I was an undergrad. And so that kind of forced me to come out to my peers, and other folks, my family as well. And so that summer that was my first Pride march.

[00:05:44.25] And this was at a time when Queers for Economic Justice, the nonprofit organization that did a lot of work, no longer exists, but I remember meeting a lot of people there. And I had a friend who was interning at the time at the organization, and so she was like, hey do you want to come march with us at the parade? And I was like, for my first time ever I was like, OK wait, what?

[00:06:02.52] Like first time going to Pride and in addition to that, marching. And so your story really very much reminded me of that experience and just how liberating it was to start off all the way in uptown and then go down to the Village. And just seeing all these folks loud and proud and just so joyful, just so much joy, so much happiness. And for many years I also felt very isolated in my identity, in my experience, and so just knowing that there are so many people I didn't know who I could connect with just because we were at the celebration, was so crucial to me really coming into my own and me accepting myself for who I am.

[00:06:38.90] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: 100%, yeah for me-- so I mentioned one of my salient identities is that I'm Latino. My mother's family is Puerto Rican, my dad's family is Irish, so both very, very Catholic families. I went to a Catholic undergraduate institution, I went to Manhattan College, which was a wonderful experience. It's a great school but there weren't a lot of openly gay people in my class.

[00:07:02.28] I wasn't surrounded by a lot of openly gay people, and I did have, I do have, openly gay family members, cousins, aunts, uncles, distant relatives. But it was always something that was just never discussed. Like they would have their partner come to the house but that wasn't their partner, that was their friend. And so that was

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kind of my growing up experience. And it wasn't until my first Pride that I started to feel comfortable and confident enough in myself to be able to say openly, I am a gay man, to be able to say, I have a boyfriend, to be able to confidently talk about that stuff with my family.

[00:07:37.61] ANTHONY SIS: Another part of my identity too, I'm half Puerto Rican, half Guatemalan. And so you know, I do remember family members, or even friends, just bringing other people. We're just kind of like, who is this person? And they're like, they're just their friend. Clearly they were not just their friend, right? So--

[00:07:51.15] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Right, right.

[00:07:52.67] ANTHONY SIS: Hence why we're doing this series, so we can break those binaries down and those kind of rigid identities. Like, they're just a friend. No we can talk about it now, it's OK.

[00:08:01.10] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: 100% and I could talk for days, literally for days, about the role that machismo plays in all of this, because that Latin machismo is a very, very real thing.

[00:08:12.02] ANTHONY SIS: Well hey, let's do it. Let's get to it. I mean, one of the questions that I did want to ask you, which is kind of later in the interview that I wanted to share and ask, is what are some of the relevant issues that are affecting members of the LGBTQ community? And I think machismo, especially from a Latino, Latinx perspective, I think is definitely one of them. So why don't we dive into it, let's go.

[00:08:32.45] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Yeah absolutely. I mean, machismo, it played a huge role in the delay in me coming out. I felt like by me saying that I was a gay man, that I was less than, that I was going to be viewed as not a man.

[00:08:48.92] And that was part of the culture growing up, not explicit, but there were a lot of insinuations, a lot of things that my grandparents would say to me. And they love me for who I am, they are open and accepting of who I am, but just unintentional things that they would say to me growing up. You know, my mannerisms being too girly, or just having the assumption that I am interested in girls, always talking, any time that I was talking to one of my girl friends my grandparents would be like, oh is that your girlfriend? Like, are you interested in her romantically? Little did they know, that couldn't be farther from the truth.

[00:09:29.18] And they would have conversations with me about our relatives who are gay, who are openly gay, and not talk about them in the greatest light, kind of make jokes about them. And so it made it difficult for me to be able to accept that part of myself for a very long time.

[00:09:47.22] ANTHONY SIS: So just to kind of expand upon that, so I very much resonate with that as well, and so I'm just wondering as somebody who is out now, has

that changed? Has that shifted? Could you say, particularly within your family, or are there still some barriers there?

[00:10:03.91] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: There are definitely still some barriers. It's certainly shifted, the relationship has shifted, my grandparents and I have a very, very close relationship. I have a close relationship with a lot of my family on both sides, on both my mom and my dad's side, I'm very fortunate.

[00:10:17.38] One of the things that was kind of a striking difference between my relationship with my grandparents in Ireland and my relationship with my grandparents here in the States, who are Puerto Rican, when I was younger, I was maybe 23 years old, I went to go visit my grandparents in Ireland. I had a partner at the time, I had a boyfriend, and I surprised them. I didn't tell them that I was coming, and part of that is just my Nana is a crazy person. And she would literally redecorate the entire house any time a visitor was coming, always new wallpaper, always new paint on the walls.

[00:10:48.47] And when I showed up at the house, the first thing that they asked me was, where is your boyfriend? They were surprised that I didn't bring him with me. And that to me, like I'm almost getting a little emotional right now because that to me was like, wow you're validating the fact that my relationship is just as normal as any other relationship, without making it a big deal.

[00:11:11.86] Conversely, my grandparents here in the States, when we would talk about my relationship it was always framed as, how is your friend? And it's still like that, I mean, I'm in a relationship now with a different person than it was back when I was 23. And I love him very, very much, and we're very-- I mean, we spend pretty much every single day together. He's such an integral part of my life.

[00:11:33.19] And when I go and see my grandparents, they do ask about him, but it's always, how is your friend? And I constantly have to remind them, one, he has a name. And two, he's not my friend.

[00:11:46.40] ANTHONY SIS: Yeah, no, thank you so much for sharing that. And I was just curious, personally for me, because like I said I resonated a lot with your story, so thank you for your vulnerability, and for sharing that with us and with our listeners. So I want to also, as we're thinking about Pride, right? So it's celebratory, and when I think about Pride for me, it's about those moments, right? There certain kind of crucial moments.

[00:12:08.69] A lot of what you shared personally, that kind of helps shape and frame who you are, how you express yourself as an LGBTQ person. And so can you talk about maybe that first moment where you felt truly represented and included, whether it was at work, or in a different setting?

[00:12:26.11] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Yes absolutely, I'm going to answer that question. But before I get to that question, I want to circle back to something that you

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asked me that I didn't fully answer, which is what are some of the most pressing things that are affecting the LGBTQ+ community right now. And I want to be very explicit in saying that violence against trans people is one of the biggest issues right now.

[00:12:46.63] And for people who aren't aware of it, or perhaps just had never heard that that was a thing, or have turned a blind eye to it, I urge you to do some research because it's pretty scary. I mean, the likelihood of a violent attack on, particularly a trans person of color, is astronomically higher than cis white men. And it's pretty scary.

[00:13:11.95] Now to kind of shift towards a lighter topic, in talking about when I felt truly represented for the first time, I think it was actually when I was working my first full time job out of undergrad. I worked for a charter school in the Bronx, part of a nonprofit CMO called New Visions for Public Schools. They are very, very active, not just in creating charter schools, which is a highly politicized topic, but also opening up public schools in New York City. And so I was based at the John F. Kennedy Campus in the Bronx, which is known as an Impact School. So what an Impact School in New York means is that it has a very high rate of criminal activity, that fights things like that, attrition is also quite high in Impact Schools.

[00:14:03.91] And I worked within the guidance counselor's office, I was the enrollment coordinator for the school. And I felt represented there, one, because I was amongst my peers. Everyone in the school was either Black or Latino. The students, but also the staff, as well our leadership was very, very diverse.

[00:14:25.39] I mean, we had-- an Asian woman was our principal. We had a Dominican gay man, who was leading, he was the chief of staff. One of our assistant principals, who I at the time really, really looked up to, was a Black woman. And she was able to not just connect with the students in the school but also connect with the staff as well, in so many different ways.

[00:14:47.77] And why that mattered to me was, so I'm originally from the Bronx. I did elementary school in the Bronx but my family moved us up to Connecticut, to Westport, Connecticut, when I was in middle school. Because well, New York City public schools aren't the greatest, and they couldn't afford private school for three kids plus a mortgage.

[00:15:06.87] So I went from being one of dozens of Puerto Rican kids in my school, to being one of like, two or three when I was in Connecticut. And there was a huge culture shock for me, the culture shock that took a long time for me to get over. I mean, there were a lot of microaggressions that happened. Students assumed that I didn't live in Westport, but I lived in another city and was being bused in as part of their youth development program. It didn't resonate with them, or it didn't occur to them, that someone who looked like me could actually live in Westport.

[00:15:40.25] My mother is a Black woman, she's Afro-Latina, and more than once me and my brother and sister, being biracial children, more than once the assumption was

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made that she was the nanny picking us up from school. And so I'm the oldest, my brother and my sister are younger than me. They were very, very little when all of that stuff was happening but as someone who was cognitively aware of what was going on, and the things that were happening, and why they were not OK, it was tough. It was tough.

[00:16:08.06] So then to be able to go back into an educational setting where that didn't exist, I felt so comfortable. And I saw gay men in positions of power, which was amazing.

[00:16:20.39] ANTHONY SIS: Yeah definitely. Want to rewind a little bit to what you mentioned about another relevant issue, with the violence or trans people, especially trans women of color, particularly black trans women. I think that's such a key issue that still remains to be brought to the forefront within the community. I feel strongly about, especially given that when we think about Pride Month and the gay rights movement, and where that launch started, it was from trans women of color. So we were--

[00:16:49.55] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: 100%.

[00:16:50.15] ANTHONY SIS: Marsha P. Johnson, Miss Major, right? Like these are folks who were the pioneers of the movement, and yet a lot of people forget that sometimes, and so--

[00:16:59.44] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Right.

[00:17:00.02] ANTHONY SIS: Definitely want to encourage our listeners to rewind everything you said, and to just do some research on these folks, and really about the movement and where it really started. Because yes, we need to be advocating and speaking up more about this particular violence affecting trans women and trans people in general. So thank you for sharing that.

[00:17:18.23] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Absolutely.

[00:17:19.78] ANTHONY SIS: So in your opinion, why should people care about Pride Month. Yes there's the parades, yes there's the celebrations, now we have a lot of corporate companies sponsoring these events. But in your opinion, why should people care about Pride Month, and what is its importance and significance to you?

[00:17:35.47] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: So I'll tell you, I actually hate how corporate Pride has become. It feels so weird to me, to see every single company is going to change their logo to have some sort of rainbow color palette incorporated into it. And Pride goes beyond so much more than that. I actually really, really like the sense of community around Pride, people who know each other just coming together celebrating life, celebrating being their authentic selves, and just having a good time.

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[00:18:07.24] Pride for me, especially New York Pride, has become so corporate. And they get such a priority in a lot of, particularly the march, that a lot of the community-based organizations kind of get filtered out of all of that activity, which is unfortunate, because those are the organizations that really prop Pride up every other month of the year.

[00:18:31.39] But why people should care about Pride, it validates the lives of so many people when you're able to show up, show out, and be supportive of an individual like myself, who has a boyfriend. And to be able to celebrate that that validates that, it is OK for that person to live their life the way that they choose. And it truly does save lives, it really does. I think people underestimate just how valuable it is to show up. And just showing up for someone, and just showing an interest in why this matters to that person, validates them as a human being.

[00:19:12.13] ANTHONY SIS: I 100% agree. It's funny because I often tell people the most homophobic experiences I've ever had in my life have actually happened in New York City, surprisingly enough. And at the same time, the most liberating experiences have been during Pride at New York City.

[00:19:29.23] And so when I think about a lot of the additional events that other organizations like you mentioned, other nonprofit organizations or different communities host, and those to me in addition to the march are just so crucial to my identity, to building that community. I've met so many people through these events, people I didn't know outside of this event, this celebration of Pride. And I think New York in particular, because I've been to a couple other ones. And I'm originally from Chicago, so I've been to the Chicago one but the New York one for me always has a special place in my heart. Might be because it was my first one.

[00:20:02.66] But I think that sense of community feels so real, being in the city where the movement originated, right? Stonewall being in New York City, so I don't know if that's part of it but it definitely feels a lot more special and unique in New York City.

[00:20:16.42] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: There are good things about it and there are bad things about it. You know I harped on the fact that it's become corporate, at least the march has, but there are so many things that people probably aren't aware of that happen. You know Pride isn't just one weekend, it's the entire month, and there's an entire month of activities that take place. There are movie nights, family movie nights, and it's not just about adults going out and drinking and getting drunk and acting a fool on the streets, there are so many things around showing kids that it's OK. These family oriented movie nights, there are social meet-ups across the city, there are concerts.

[00:20:51.88] I know the orchestra that I play in, we do our Pride Concert the weekend before the Pride march every year, or maybe two weekends before. Actually I think it's two weekends before. Unfortunately we're not doing it this year because of COVID but that's something I look forward to once things eventually go back to whatever the new



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normal will be. But there are just so many different things. And so if the march isn't for you, there's something out there for you to be able to engage with that community.

[00:21:18.64] ANTHONY SIS: Something I just thought about too, I just remembered this, is that New York City, because you have the boroughs, each borough has its own Pride with the exception of the Bronx.

[00:21:27.40] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: They do, they do.

[00:21:28.57] ANTHONY SIS: They do have a Pride?

[00:21:29.26] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: They do.

[00:21:29.83] ANTHONY SIS: Wow.

[00:21:30.11] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: It's fairly new. And I'll be honest with you, as someone from the Bronx, I can understand why people don't go there. But let me tell you something, three years ago, four years ago, when I was at the Pride march, I wasn't marching. And I was a spectator, which I find to be more fun, I just like to see all of the floats going by.

[00:21:49.51] ANTHONY SIS: So just to clarify to our listeners, we're talking about the Manhattan--

[00:21:52.51] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Right, yes exactly, the New York.

[00:21:54.58] ANTHONY SIS: OK.

[00:21:55.07] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Exactly yeah, so when I was in Manhattan they still had representation from all of the other boroughs. I mean, there was at one point the Puerto Rican flag with the rainbow colors, instead of the red and the white, and I mean-- listen for someone like me, I got emotional seeing it. It's not something that I would have associated-- those are two salient identities of mine, I am a Puerto Rican man, I am a gay man. But they don't always go well together just because of a lot of the cultural baggage, I think, that I have myself. But to see people representing that, and represent the Bronx like that, it's just, for me it's amazing.

[00:22:33.70] ANTHONY SIS: I actually have that flag, to shout out to my friend Elena, who bought me that flag in undergrad. She bought me the Puerto Rican flag, she's also Puerto Rican too. And I remember when I got it, I hung it up proudly in my dorm room.

[00:22:44.70] And it's a huge flag, it literally covered one of my entire windows. But I said, *con orgullo*, with pride, I'm going to hang that *bandera* up, singing "*que bonita bandera*." It's a traditional Puerto Rican song, for folks who don't know, about how beautiful the Puerto Rican flag is. And just to see the rainbow colors, for me, it was also

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just like a nice blend of the two. I'm like, yes, something that actually I could be super proud of, in terms of my racial ethnic identity but also my LGBTQ identity.

[00:23:15.30] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Right, absolutely.

[00:23:16.68] ANTHONY SIS: Yeah so I'm curious, we talked about the corporations sponsoring Pride, it's got to go beyond that, right? So for our listeners who are listening, who maybe don't identify as part of the community, what does advocacy look like for non LGBTQ folks, either within Pride Month, or even outside of Pride Month, right? What are some of the kind of things that come up for you as being the most important for advocacy purposes?

[00:23:41.19] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: One, which is something that I myself am trying to work on as well, is having an understanding of non-binary gender identities. And when you pigeonholed someone into one of those categories and they don't identify, what that could do to that person. It's something that I, admittedly, over the years have not been very educated about and I'm trying to be a little bit more intentional about, especially as we are bringing in a new class at Cornell Tech. I am one of three people who bring our master students into the programs.

[00:24:15.90] But creating a space in a culture where that is normalized, that not everyone falls into those two categories, more broadly I think creating space and opportunities for people who identify as part of the LGBTQ community. Have a conversation with them, ask them questions, talk to them about their life experiences, get to know them as a person, not just as an employee. Because so many of those life experiences, you bring that stuff with you to work.

[00:24:45.55] And if you as an employer have an understanding of what they're bringing with them to work, you can increase productivity. You can improve on the culture of the entire office. You can create a community that's really something that's special.

[00:25:02.16] People want to enjoy going to work. We spend so much of our time at work. We spend more time at work and more time with our coworkers during the work week than we do with our loved ones. And so we want to be in an environment where we feel comfortable, where we feel accepted, and where we feel like we have a voice.

[00:25:19.57] ANTHONY SIS: Those are all really great things. I always encourage people to, particularly Cornell folks who are listening, take a look at our LGBTQ CNG website, who we collaborated with on this series. And so shout out to them, shout out to all of the other colleague network groups here at Cornell. Because it is important to develop community and just develop relationships with people who have similar identities, similar lived experiences, as you do. And so shout out to them for collaborating with me and with our department to put this series together, because these are the stories, and exactly what you shared so far is what other folks need to hear.

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[00:25:55.38] So as we wrap up our conversation, as we wrap up our time together, I'm just wondering in terms of-- because you shared a lot. You shared a lot of really great content with everyone here, so I hope our listeners are taking notes and bringing this back to their offices, their departments, their workplaces. When you think about the legacy, or the impact, of Pride for future generations, where you want it to grow and evolve in the future, what immediately comes to mind for you?

[00:26:22.57] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: I want to see more young people getting involved. And I don't mean people-- there might be people listening to this who are saying, well duh, you're young. And I totally recognize that I'm fairly early in my career but when I say young people, I mean teenagers.

[00:26:37.35] You know, again Pride is not about going out, getting drunk, and acting a fool in the streets. Don't get me wrong, been there, done that, worn that t-shirt. It can be fun, as long as you're being safe. But I'm talking more about the overall, the educational pieces, the community building pieces around Pride, those types of activities I'd love to see more teenagers getting involved.

[00:27:04.66] I mean, there are so many, even still in 2021, the homelessness rate is so much higher amongst LGBTQ members of the community. It's sad, it's scary. And I want those individuals to know that they belong, they matter, and they're loved.

[00:27:27.69] ANTHONY SIS: I think everyone needs to hear that, especially even members of the community too, sometimes. Where sometimes with everything that's going on, and it's, we're thinking about just the intersection of identities, not everyone is going into Pride Month, I feel, with the same kind of celebratory notion. Because there is so much that's going on when it comes to social justice, racial justice, in this country, internationally speaking.

[00:27:51.45] And so I think there's just a lot that we're as a community, as a collective, coming into and just keeping that in mind for future Pride celebrations, to be able to acknowledge and recognize that. And at the same time be proud of who we are as members of the community. So Christian, I want to thank you so much for your vulnerability, for taking time--

[00:28:10.53] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Thank you.

[00:28:11.16] ANTHONY SIS: --to chat with us, and to be a part of this show and this series. And just to kind of end off on a positive lighter note, I just want to ask how are you planning on celebrating Pride this year?

[00:28:21.21] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: I have a couple of things in mind. So I'm actually going away this week, at the end of this week, for a week with my boyfriend and a bunch of our friends. They do this every year, and this is kind of how they kick off Pride Month. So we're going to be going to Rehoboth Beach, and I am very, very excited.

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[00:28:38.97] For those who don't know, Rehoboth Beach is one of the gay destinations on the East Coast. There's a really, really nice community out on Rehoboth Beach, so many fun bars and cute shops. And I'm getting my nails done on Friday, I'm going to have Pride colored nails for the week. And I'm just looking forward to spending time with my friends, that's kind of our Intro to it. I have some friends who are part of the organization that manages Pride in New York City, and I'm looking forward to participating in some of those events as well, albeit virtually.

[00:29:14.37] ANTHONY SIS: Is Cornell Tech doing anything?

[00:29:16.07] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Not this year. The year that we did march, was student run, or rather student initiated. And my former boss, Ray Lutzky, who's no longer with us, he's out on the west coast now, he was kind of the staff point person that led the charge.

[00:29:32.58] But there are pictures. If anyone is curious, there are pictures. We marched alongside, or we tried to march alongside, I believe the organization is called CUGALA.

[00:29:41.43] ANTHONY SIS: Yes.

[00:29:41.70] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: It's the organization for members of the LGBTQ community who are Cornell alum, so it was really fun. It was really special.

[00:29:49.41] ANTHONY SIS: Well thank you once again, and hope you have a wonderful day, and Happy Pride.

[00:29:53.85] CHRISTIAN BALMASEDA: Thank you, Happy Pride.

[00:29:57.05] ANTHONY SIS: For the latest updates on diversity, equity, and inclusion at Cornell, as well as resources to honor and celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride Month, be sure to visit [diversity.cornell.edu](https://diversity.cornell.edu). My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:30:12.56] TORAL PATEL: My name is Toral Patel.

[00:30:14.06] ANTHONY SIS: Thank you for listening to the third episode of our special series, Beyond Binaries.