

Interview transcript: Robert Martins

[00:00:00]

PARTICIPANT: My name is Robert, I'm from from Uganda, I'm a volunteer for LGBT Foundation. I've been volunteering for four years in different capacities. I live in Manchester.

[00:00:27]

INTERVIEWER: Ok, could you tell me about your volunteering roles, the different capacities, what do you do?

PARTICIPANT: I've been volunteering in different capacities, such as I'm a member of Archives Team that do— we do history courses— LGBT material— we catalogue LGBT material that was deposited in Manchester Central Library by LGBT Foundation. This is meaning to preserve the history of LGBT community in Manchester and UK at large, so it has to be preserved for the next generation to know what was going on. So, that is one of the main role that I do as a volunteer at LGBT Foundation.

So, I do, during Pride, we do different roles, which I really can't mention – there are so many: welcoming people, helping people, front desk. So many activities which are coming up as is seasonal[?] [00:01:59], even as we do— I usually do. So, volunteer during World AIDS Day. World AIDS Day. Usually.

[00:02:14]

INTERVIEWER: Did you volunteer this year, World AIDS Day?

PARTICIPANT: World AIDS Day?

[00:02:17]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: This year I didn't volunteer but the other year I volunteered World AIDS Day, yeah. So.

[00:02:26]

INTERVIEWER: That's great, maybe we can come back to that.

PARTICIPANT: Ok, alright.

[00:02:29]

INTERVIEWER: So, I was gonna ask you, when do you remember first— your first memory of hearing about HIV?

PARTICIPANT: The first time when I heard about HIV was when I was... I was in college? I think I was in college, first year, in my country. That's when I first heard it. Just to get understanding how it is, how it is as— and how dangerous it is to the human life, so that's how I remember, if I try to recall.

[00:03:15]

INTERVIEWER: How did people react in your class? Was it a teacher telling you, or you watched a film, or do you remember something of the conversation?

PARTICIPANT: It was mainly about a conversation among my classmates, who have already— who have known it before me, and if you even, during class, when do you do— there are some subjects which you do like biology they talk about how diseases are being transmitted human beings, so they had talked about HIV. So that's how I started to know about it, that's how I came to know about it.

[00:04:06]

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Great. And I think you had, you know, some of this project is about the way in which, in response to HIV, people have developed the idea of safer sex, and I think you wanted to say something about this idea of safer sex, is that right?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, yeah.

[00:04:37]

INTERVIEWER: So go ahead.

PARTICIPANT: I have some points which I can try to lay down of how to have safer sex in your life, among the gay men. As a gay man I really feel it's really important to have safer sex for better life. One of the points I can say is, avoid contacting of HIV and other transmitted diseases. I mean, that is how I can— if I say that, then the points can lay down— anyway. I can say one of the points is, gay men have to try to use condoms as much as they— they have to try. Not try, in fact they must. It's really important for their life, they must use condoms to protect their lives from HIV and transmitted diseases, especially those who are active, sexually active, it's really important to use condoms. If you use condoms you protect your life from diseases such as been talking about, and you can have better life.

Second point, second point I can say is to be monogamous, to be monogamous in relationships. This is, this is about relationship, to have a stable— to have a partner, you know? To have a partner who really you can share, or have sex with whenever you need, rather than having different partners, this is monogamous. So I really encourage gay men to be monogamous in their life. It's really important for their life. Because if you have mutual relationship it's really— you really have healthy sex, you really have healthy minds, and really have better life because everything goes on well without any fear and worry if when it comes to life and sex, because sex is also life as well. At times people refer sex as life because, some people, they can't live without sex, so it's really important to be monogamous. Yes.

[00:07:26]

INTERVIEWER: Controversial.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

[00:07:26]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. [laughs]

PARTICIPANT: So, that is it. So I have another point, it's really about, try to limit— to those who drink alcohol, they should try to limit their alcohol. If they could not stop, they should try to limit the content they do, because it really helps to have better minds, because alcohol can have slight change over their minds whenever it comes to have sex. Though people, some people they take it as light, but it's really important to have your minds to be sober whenever you have sex because you know what you are doing, and you know what you are going for, and you know sex is life. So it's real[?] [00:08:22] to have— to limit your alcohol whenever— throughout your life, because when it comes to sex, you know what you are doing.

And also in addition to that, use of drugs. People should try to avoid use of drugs because it also— use of drugs have an impact to one's brain, in terms of life or activities or whatever, or mainly about brain. So people should also try to avoid such things in their life to have safer sex.

Another point which I will try to emphasise is get tested. Get tested regularly, as much as you can, because even here at LGBT Foundation we usually have sessions where people come to be tested, so the service is available, people should be use it. It's really important for one's life. Get tested as individual or as a partner for better life. So it's really important to have it.

I have another point as well to talk about, is in case of divorce, because such things are— can't be avoided in life, at times it happens to people's lives as gay men, in case of divorce or separation, people should try to avoid to getting to another relationship soon or immediately because you have to heal your emotions of the previous relationship, then you go for another step. It also helps to have safer sex because if you do it immediately, to me, act of revenge of the other, then you don't know whom you are going to have sex with, and it may bring life, it may— you may contract diseases such as HIV or other transmitted diseases. So people should try to avoid such scenario in their lives.

Um, another point, crucially should try to talk about, is those who have HIV as well, they shouldn't be worried that this is the end of the world or their life has ended. They have to go for treatment, medication is available for life and life, and they have to use it correctly as being advised by medical doctors, or their doctors. So, they shouldn't be worried that this is the end of the world. So, anyone with HIV should go for treatment. And it doesn't mean that anyone who has HIV shouldn't have sex, but they should try to have sex in... advised way. As they go for counselling, those counsellors, they are being trained of how to advise on how to have sex when you

have HIV. So doesn't mean that when you have sex— when you have HIV, it's the end of the world. You can have sex, but follow the counsellor's advice for better life as well. So, that's what I can have about how to have safer sex among gay men.

[00:12:35]

INTERVIEWER: Ok.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

[00:12:36]

INTERVIEWER: Do you mind if I ask you about your feelings about World AIDS Day when you have volunteered there before? Can you describe it? Can you describe what happens? Because not everyone will know, will have heard about it. What is it, yeah.

PARTICIPANT: You mean, what it means to me, or—

[00:13:06]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, maybe what it is generally, and then what it means to you.

PARTICIPANT: World AIDS Day, it's so me those who have died of AIDS and those who are having the virus, and to... Those who have died of AIDS and those who are having it, who are having HIV. And to those who have HIV, we have to be with them, encourage them, love them, move with them in life. Doesn't mean that they are not part of us, so we should be with them, move with them, they are part of us. So, it's to bring people together as the World AIDS Day, that's how I kind of understand it. To come together in life. Yeah.

[00:13:59]

INTERVIEWER: And how does it feel, to you, to be a part of that when you volunteer there?

PARTICIPANT: Um, I feel happy because, doesn't mean that— it means that I'm part of those who are having the virus, I'm part of them, and I move with them, so doesn't mean that I'm the other part of the world. So I'm with them, that's what I feel— that's what I feel.

[00:14:34]

INTERVIEWER: Ok. That's nice. When you were talking, you mentioned using condoms for safer sex. Do you know much about PrEP? What do you think about PrEP, will it change things, or?

PARTICIPANT: PrEP will change, also life— But having gone into little, trying to understand PrEP it is, but the little knowledge I have it, I know it is an improvement of— it is a step forward to... to have life, longer life to those who need it, to those

who are value their lives. That's what I believe, it's a step forward in terms of medication to those people who care about their lives. Some people, they don't care about their lives, but those who care, it's a step forward in terms of medication. I really, I really— I'm really, so pleased about that. I don't know which proper word I can use, but I'm happy for that. Yeah.

[00:15:58]

INTERVIEWER: Ok. So, you talked about, you do a lot of volunteering which is really great. How— do you feel that that has helped you as a person as well? Volunteering at the LGBT Foundation?

PARTICIPANT: Volunteering at LGBT Foundation I have got— I have been able to have friends and they are part of my life, they are family— I feel LGBT Foundation is a family to me. It is a family to me. So I feel so happy, and I've been able to have friends. I have acquired the skills, I've acquired skills which I'm using to my new job which I'm having now, because skills are very important to when you have to— when you have a responsibility in terms of employment. So I'm using the skills which I got from the LGBT Foundation. I really appreciate for that. If it wasn't that, I would be having nothing. I'm so happy for that. I've been able to have friends of different backgrounds because within the organisation, people are from different backgrounds, and you know how they behave, you know how to treat them, and they know how to treat you because I'm also from different background, so I'm so pleased to be part of LGBT Foundation.

[00:17:45]

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Great. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to talk about? Maybe something we haven't mentioned or covered that you'd like to talk about? I know you said you only wanted to talk for ten minutes—

PARTICIPANT: [laughs]

[00:18:08]

INTERVIEWER: —and now we're on twenty minutes, so. But I'm happy to keep going, and if there's something that you want to say?

PARTICIPANT: I'm, um, though I have talked about it already, but I want to emphasise it again, that people with HIV should— we have— should be part of our lives. If you get to know someone tells you that he's HIV, you should know it's part of you— he's part of you. So, we have to love them, care about them, think about them, because they are also people like us, they are people like everybody. Like everybody. There's no difference, they can do everything that we can do as well. So, we have to be together. We have to be together with people with HIV.

In my country when I go, in my country, the first time I heard about HIV I just get to know because I was not born— I was known, by that time I wasn't aware about what is HIV, I don't remember exactly. But the time when HIV came up in my country,

people used to be treated like they are not part of the society. That what I was being, I was being told by older people. But now at least the world has changed, we have to keep it moving, moving ahead. So. That's what I have. Yeah. Thank you.

[00:19:54]

INTERVIEWER: Ok. Thank you so much.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

[00:19:56] End of transcript.