

Collection: Thee Black Pride in JXN Oral History Project

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Narrator: Donovan Morton

Interviewer: Destiny Sears

Transcriptionist: Alissa Rae Funderburk

[00:00:00] Sears: Okay, so the day is November 15, 2021. The time is 12:46 PM. My name is Destiny Sears and I'm here working on Thee Black Pride in Jackson, and today we have—

Morton: Donovan Morton.

Sears: May you please spell your name for the record, please?

Morton: D-O-N-O-V-A-N. M-O-R-T-O-N.

Sears: We're going to start with some basic questions. What are your pronouns?

Morton: He.

Sears: Okay and then when and where were you born?

Morton: I was born in Jackson, Mississippi on November 16, 2001.

Sears Okay, we've got a birthday coming up.

Morton: Yes.

Sears: Okay, happy early birthday.

Morton: Thank you.

Sears: Okay, so growing up in Jackson, can you give me a description of like growing up, your childhood?

Morton: My childhood was really good. I think my mom particularly did a lot like for me not to see certain things so early on. So, I would say for the most part very—it was very good.

Sears: Okay, and it was just your mom in the household?

Morton: Yes, just my mom, single parent.

Sears: Okay, can you just give me your household dynamics.

Morton: Elaborate what you mean.

[00:01:07] Sears: Just like all the people that live in the house with you.

Morton: Just me and my mom. It was just me and my mom growing up.

Sears: Okay, you're an only child?

Morton: Yes.

Sears: Okay, so growing up were you all religious?

Morton: Yes, we would go to church and yeah.

Sears: Okay, [laughter] can you elaborate like what religion and everything?

Morton: At first like we would go to my grandmama church which is Baptist. But as I got like, me and my mom start getting older and stuff, we went to this non-denominal church and it was called Makarios and it was like a term for worship in another language and I liked that church. It was just a real homey, you know. Everybody knew each other. It wasn't like a mega church so, yeah.

Sears: Alright, so what schools did you go to here in Jackson?

Morton: I actually went to school in Ridgeland first which was Highland Elementary and then I went to Germantown, which is in Madison.

[00:02:07] Sears: Okay, and then how would you say your education career was at those two schools?

Morton: Honestly and truly, before I went to Highland, I went to a school in Jackson. It was a Black school and I was like Principals List, got all As and stuff, and all that. And then elementary, it was the same thing. But like switching from a Black school to predominantly white school, my grades weren't as like all As. I don't know if it was culture shock or what, and then as I got older, like going to Germantown and stuff, it was just like [pause]. It wasn't bad, but it was like not the grades I wanted. Like I started getting Cs then, but it was no lower than Cs. But I was like, yeah, it was a completely different.

Sears: 'Cause there was like a culture shock. So, can you tell me the difference between the predominantly Black school that you went to and the predominantly diverse school that you went to?

Morton: The Black school—it was just like, you know, when you're around your own people, like everybody know each other, like you get the inside jokes, you get the outside world. And then like when you go to a predominantly white school? I feel like me personally, you have to like try to fit in their box and their realm and it was just like not where I wanted to be. So, I didn't really enjoy it as much. That's why I was so ready to go to Jackson State. Because it was just like I'm

tired like trying to like dim down my Blackness just so I won't be like overly Black. You get what I'm saying? So yeah.

[00:03:32] Sears: Alright, so it's your—what year are you here in Jackson State?

Morton: I came in 2020.

Sears: 2020. Okay, so you are a sophomore?

Morton: Yes.

Sears: How has your experience been here at Jackson State?

Morton: I love Jackson State. All my life I knew I was coming to Jackson State. So, me being here is like sometimes I have to pinch myself, like wow I'm really here. Like I remember when I was so young, like going out to games and stuff 'cause my God dad like he really put me into this Jackson State world. He was really big at Jackson State here and he donates a lot. So, I've been going to games since I was like five so I just always knew. I enjoy it and stuff. Yeah.

Sears: Alright, and what all do you do here at Jackson State? Are you involved in any clubs or any teams or anything?

[00:04:20] Morton: I'm in the TRIO STEM Program, the Aristocrats Program, and I'm a cheerleader here.

Sears: Okay, and what is the Aristocrats Program?

Morton: It is a STEM program, a tutor and mentor program as well. And like with anything. Like you need help on chemistry, they have tutors that can help you and stuff. And like they actually funded my summer school this past summer.

Sears: Okay and then TRIO, can you elaborate on TRIO?

Morton: TRIO is like another STEM program where you just make connections with internships and tutoring and just getting to know other people in your field, like the older people like juniors and seniors that can help you, tutor, and that kind of stuff.

Sears: Okay and what's your major?

Morton: My major is bio, pre-med.

Sears: Okay. What do you plan to do with that?

[00:05:10] Morton: Honestly I'm still in the air about it right now. I'm really trying to like lock in, but I'm still trying to figure it out.

Sears: Okay. So we're gonna go ahead and get more into it. So how do you identify yourself?

Morton: Him/he.

Sears: And how do you describe your sexuality?

Morton: I'm gay and like I'm really firm on it like I stand on it and I'm not influenced by anything else. Like if you get what I'm saying, like I know me, you know?

Sears: Okay, and then when did you first acknowledge your sexuality, and then can you give me the timeline of you finding out till you coming out?

Morton: When did I just know? Honestly, as a child, I had already knew. I wanna say it really started in like elementary when I went to Highland. Like I knew I didn't wanna play football with the boys, like I wanted to be with the girls and cheer them on, make posters and, you know, stuff like that. That's not just kind of new. When I was younger I used to be so, like just trying to look for stuff—not even look, but like so, so curious. So like I would put markers and stuff on my face like it was makeup and stuff. So I just knew then like you know. And just my timeline?

Elaborate on that?

[00:06:41] Sears: So, you say you knew since you were younger. So when did you actually like start coming out and telling people?

Morton: And this is the thing. You might think it's weird, but me personally, I feel like even though I have and I did come out, I just feel like I don't owe that to anybody. Because you don't have people walking around telling me—like telling you, “Oh, I’m straight,” or “Oh, I'm trans,” or, “Oh, I’m pan,” or like you get what I’m saying? I don't like owe that to nobody 'cause it's like my life to live. But even with my mom, like we had the biggest struggle with it as well, like I just felt like I owed that to nobody. So she's just like, “You could tell me, I'm your mom. Like if anybody gonna understand.” But it was just still, like you don't tell me your business, why should I tell you my business? You know what I’m saying? So, yeah.

Sears: So, did you feel like you were secretive with that? Or do you just think—

Morton: I don't.

Sears: You just didn’t feel like you owe anybody an explanation.

[00:07:40] Morton: Like people knew. Like I was not hiding it, but like that’s not your business. I'm not gonna tell you. Like if you see me, you would know that I'm gay. But it's not like I’m finna come up to you like, “Hey, I'm Donovan, I'm gay.” You know what I’m saying. It was not hidden



at all. And that was my mom's biggest problem with me as well. It was like it's not hidden so why can't you tell me like out of your mouth like, "I'm gay." You get what I'm saying? But it was just like why do I owe you that?

[00:08:07] Sears: Okay, and did that cause strife in between you and your mom's relationship?

Morton: It did. It did a lot. A lot, a lot. It was a lot of fighting, a lot of arguing. I honestly feel like it was just like a [pause]. I don't know honestly, just trying to see from my point of view. Like growing up, we always stayed into it because she would feel a way that other people would know and not her. So it was like how do people—the outside people know that you're gay, but I didn't know. But it was like you knew, but I just never told you out my mouth. But I never told nobody out there out my mouth, so it was just like she felt we were close enough. But my thing was when I was younger like she used to always press the issue, no you can not be gay. That didn't create a comfortable environment for me to tell you so I feel like that's when I start to build this guard up with just telling people like, okay. At a young age, I was okay. I don't owe nobody that. Like I don't owe you to tell my life to you. Like you don't need to know my story. I don't know your story, so I don't need to tell anybody out there out my mouth. So it was just like at a young age I just built up a lot of confidence, a lot of courage, and just a lot of just standing my ground at a young age. Because it was like if it starts at home, if it's hard here at home, I know it's hard out there, so why not prepare myself here, right now, with you? It starts with you and it's gonna trickle down with everybody else. I demand respect in your house because I'm your son at the end of the day. You want respect, you have to give it as well. So I

demanded respect, not even saying I was disrespectful, none of that. But it's just like, as a child and a mother, that relationship, it has to have respect. If you just disrespect your child, you cannot expect respect in return. You get what I'm saying. So as young as a child knowing that I was gay, I started standing my ground very early on, and like I demanded respect. And it caused arguments, caused fights, caused me to spend the night with my other family members. But I came back and demanded respect and [claps hands] now our relationship be like so good, it's like amazing.

[00:10:11] Sears: That's good. So, do you feel like that characteristic of demanding respect and having like really high confidence, do you believe that that is something that a lot of gay males have to build before they actually like go out into the world?

Morton: I say yes and no. Honestly, I say yes because some people are not as strong as other people, and if you don't have that confidence, any little thing that somebody can say about you being gay, it will hurt your feelings. Like at a young age, my family would tell their kids all the time, "Don't act like him," and my feelings used to be hurt. But like me as a young child, I'd be like, "damn, like what? What did I do bad?" Like, you know, like, "What's wrong with me? I'm just chilling like for real," but it's because they don't want their kids to be gay. But like growing up now it's like, now your kids gay and it's not my fault that they gay. You didn't want them hanging around me so we didn't hang out. You get what I'm saying? So it's funny how God works. Because like just my family in general, I went through a lot of hell with just being gay but it's crazy how God works because the man you throwing salt on is the man that blow up in your

face. You know what I'm saying. Because all the men in my family, no degree, no college, no nothing, gave me the most hell and I'm the first male in my family on both sides to go to university. Still here, cheerleader on top of that, going into my second year here, finna go into my third. So it's just like I know I'm breaking boundaries and like kicking over barriers. So me to myself, my biggest self. Now I would tell my younger self like you did exactly what you needed to do. Like all the arguing and all the back and forth with people that you did. Look what you are and look where they still let you get on saying.

[00:12:07] Sears: Congratulations on your accomplishments.

Morton: Thank you.

Sears: So, like how was your college experience as a gay male?

Morton: Child [Laughter]. Oh Lord, have mercy. My freshman year here? Jesus, it was—Okay, leaving high school. I was like I'm not falling in love, I'm just gonna focus on me 'cause I know how to this get. Like when you get to college, people want one thing and wanna waste your time. They want to play with you and stuff. So I was just like, mmh mmh [low tone signifying disagreement]. Like and that's one thing about me, I'm so headstrong so like you cannot influence me in any way. Like if I don't want to do it, I'm not gonna do it. So I was like I'm not gonna do it. And so, I got here week one, like first week I was like good, I was cool, I was like having so much fun. And like this person, I met doing these groups. You know how you had a

group chat when you finna come to college and stuff. I had—it wasn't even like we was flirting or texting all the time, but like we was talking and stuff. One thing led to another, we was in a relationship for like from September to November.

[00:13:17] Sears: And this was your freshman year, right?

Morton: Freshman year.

Sears: Okay.

Morton: And it was just like a lot of new emotions I never felt. A lot of things that I've never done and it was just really new and just fast. For like, eventually I got disappointed. Finding out that he was talking to like so many other people, two of them being like the closest friends that I had. And like I was just like dang like I did so much for this person like you don't know, you don't understand half. I don't know, but I'm still trying to heal from that because it's still like I still had to see this person every day, not even every day but like we live in the same dormitories, live on the same hall. Game day I gotta see you, we ride the same bus to stadiums like. It is kind of hard to heal from that. Like just seeing the face every day, but I honestly, didn't even react when I found out, and that's the crazy part. Like I was just like, you know what? I'm trying to grow into the person I am. I just feel like it is a learning lesson for me, so it's not a need for me to fight you, argue with you. You don't owe me, you don't get a conversation out of me honestly. You're not going to get a conversation out of me. I don't wanna hear your side. You did

what you did and we're just gonna move on. And when I did that, it was a big—like it played on me so hard because I mean like one thing like me, everybody know about me, I'm very vocal on how I feel. You hurt my feelings, I'mma let you know. But this time it's like I don't owe you that. And I start praying really heavy, like I always pray. But like that time I was just like praying really heavy. I feel so defeated and I was so sad and stuff but it was just like I just kept hearing like “don't respond, I got it,” you know, “don't respond, I got it.” And like when you do that, and you just give it to God. And like the whole summer, I was so sad about it, trying to get my mind off of it, but when I came back to school it was like I would hear stuff about this person or I would see something about this person that I had no strings attached to no more. Like, “oh he did that bad,” or “he did this bad,” and it was just I see God working because you still not winning. After all that stuff that you did, you not winning. But look at me. I'm still winning because I did nothing to you, you got what I'm saying, but be there for you. So, looking for love in college, zero out of ten [laughter]. And I'm okay with that, honestly. I am. Like I'm accepting that. Like if it's not my time, it's just not my time and I'm not gonna rush it or I'm not gonna look for it. When you look for it, it's looking for disappointment, honestly. So yeah.

[00:15:47] Sears: Alright. Would you say that's your first heartbreak?

Morton: Yes, I would say it's my first heartbreak. I don't like to call it heartbreak, I just call it disappointment 'cause I don't wanna give nobody the power of saying oh you broke my heart.

Sears: Okay, and what else happened in college? Like what's your experience outside of the heartbreak? What else did you do?

Morton: I met some friends and like, I'm still friends to this day. I met them in a group chat and we like friends to this day. But you know you have a few falling out with people and you know some people want to try you. You know, you come from different areas. And that's the thing that I always forgot about, like we all coming from different states, cities, and stuff. Like me thinking, like I'm in Jackson, everybody not from Jackson so you might handle this situation differently than how she would handle it. And like that's what makes me use the clash with a lot of people. But like getting here, we had a friend group. It was like fifteen of us, now it's like six of us. And I don't know how we thought we was finna make that work, but it was not gonna work and it did not work. It was a lot of times, a lot of chaos. But honestly, I would say like even like besides the chaos and falling out and not having a friend group as big as it used to be like I feel like it all made me be the person I am today. Like honestly every lesson that I learned, every falling out, every heartbreak, every disappointment, like I still like it here. I still love it here. Like you not gonna take that away from me.

[00:17:21] Sears: And, how would your friends describe you?

Morton: Oh Lord [laughter]. They'd probably say I'm crazy. They'd probably say I'm vocal. They would definitely say I'm vocal. But one thing they will say like I do look out for them if anything like they never ever need money. If it's my last I'm gonna give it to them because I know they'll

do the same for me. Like if I need to vent I have all of them to do that with. And they know, one thing about it, like—he's so exclusive. Like outside people, you might think you know him, but you really don't know him. Not how we know him, you know. So yeah, I think they would definitely say like, yeah, all that.

[00:18:03] Sears: Okay, and, so you're originally from Jackson. So what are some places here in Jackson that you feel comfortable in?

Morton: See one thing about me. I really don't go out that much, but my freshman year my cheer captain did take me to the gay club, Metro. And it was actually like a very fun environment. Like you know how you just hear like a lot of bad things about gay people, like a lot of gay people in one setting? You know I was kind of like on edge because that was my first time ever like going to a gay club. Like ever going to anything just like for only gay people, you know what I'm saying. So, it was actually like really well. And like I dance like J-sette style and like they were doing that and I was having fun. Like it was so fun and like he made sure I was good the whole time. Like I really appreciate that. Like that was just a thing I never forget, so yeah, I would say one of those.

Sears: Okay, so they do like majorette dancing at the gay clubs, alright?

Morton: Mm-hmm.

Sears. That sounds fun.

Morton: Yeah.

[00:19:05] Sears: Okay. And then are there any other places you feel comfortable in?

Morton: Honestly, I'm just comfortable in my own skin, so anywhere I go, I'm comfortable honestly.

Sears: Alright, and what do you do for a living? Like do you work?

Morton: Oh yes, I have a work study job. I work at the Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium and—what else, I do, I forgot. I'm sorry, but there is one more thing I do. What is it? I don't know, it'll come later. But I know I work there.

Sears: Okay, and then how is it like in your work environment, as a black gay male?

Morton: Honestly it's the most comfortable environment. Like I love working there, like I love going, and I honestly hate sometimes when I miss going. Like it's really got like everybody there is so nice. They do not put labels on people there. Like it's so nice, like I love it, I really do.



Sears: Okay and then this question, what is it like being an identifier—well, what is it like being a gay black male here in the South?

Morton: You know, a lot of people, you know the South. You know how they say they still back in like they still. Back in 1000, like 1000 days, 1000 years old, they haven't progressed. You know. Everybody's not ready for change, everybody not ready for it, you get what I'm saying. But you know what? I had to learn that's not a problem that I need to have, that's a problem that they have. And you can say what you wanna say, but as long as we don't get physical, that's my only thing. But I had to learn that's not my problem to take on. Like, you do you, they do them, and if they have a problem with it then what? You don't have a problem with it. So that's your problem that you gotta sleep with. I'm okay, I don't have a problem with you because I really don't care what you got going on, honestly. So but we just being in the South growing up gay, I will not even sugarcoat it. Like it's really hard. Like you have to, like I said, like most of my answers are very like hard because at a young age, like I had no gay mentor. I had no gay person in my family. I had no gay anything. So like I had to learn the ropes for myself, I had to learn gay terms and gay thing things on my own, honestly. And just learning everything on my own and feeling like I was alone, even in my own household. Like I couldn't tell my mom things like, "oh if I had a crush on this boy like, what do I do?" I couldn't tell you that. So me bottling all this about myself, it's like, okay, if I'm learning the ropes by myself, might as well kind of grow up by myself, like just build that confidence like nobody can break me down. And sometimes I feel like—and it makes me, I'm not gonna say sad but like I hope it doesn't be perceived as if oh, he's cocky or oh he's better than. Because it's never that. It's just like I know my worth, I know what I'm gonna

put up with and I know what I'm not gonna put up with. And if you cannot respect or abide by it, you just gotta go. You get what I'm saying? Because I'm 19 years, gonna be 20 tomorrow, I built up myself just like really strong and like nobody's gonna break me down. That's why I don't like compromise for other people. Like no, because I know what I bring to the table, and I know what I'mma put up with, and I know I won't put up with nothing that I wouldn't like. I wouldn't do nothing to you that I couldn't put up with. You get what I'm saying? So I would want the same in return, so yeah.

[00:22:39] Sears: Alright, and then, uh, what is it like being a black gay male in Jackson, Mississippi?

Morton: Honestly like. Back to the love thing. You know how people want like a picture perfect like, oh I'm in love, like this love story? Like I honestly, maybe it's just like the hard reality but like I don't look for love. I just be like in Jackson, no I'm not going to find my soul mate here like. Honestly. I just honestly, I stay in my own lane. I stay in my own box because it just saves me from disappointment in life. You know, I hear a lot of stories by young gay boys like getting killed here. Like I know one boy. He followed me on Instagram. He was like super nice and like I found out my freshman year like he got shot and killed in Battlefield Park. And that just really broke my heart and it just made me look at life a little bit differently. Because you know, when you in your own lane you don't think about the outside world at all. And it is an outside world out there, like everybody don't like gay people and that really made me wake up. Like you in Jackson, this is like right across the street from your school and this boy was really sweet and

like he probably just was looking for love, you know, and he probably thought somebody really liked him and he got killed just for being himself. You get what I'm saying. So it really just woke me up and be like wow it's an outside world. Don't live in your own world sometimes and just like be careful. And it's hard to even say be careful because you really just don't know. Like that's the risk that you do take. You get what I'm saying? So, I would say it's really scary like. Because you might think people are—not even saying, think people are okay with you being gay—but it's like you might think you're in a comfortable setting and whole time, that's a dangerous setting. So I would say it's very scary here being gay but I try not to let it scare me.

[00:24:35] Sears: So, do you use any dating apps or anything of that such?

Morton: No. No, I'm just scared to honestly. I don't know why, I just am. Like it's not even to say I care about what people say, but it's a lot of people at this school, know me. It's lot of people in Jackson know me. So I just think about like if my profile was come up, like what would people say? Like, "Oh my God, I can't believe he on there," you know what I'm saying. Like I said, how my friends describe me like exclusive like. You barely see me. Like if you see me, you see me, if you don't, like, nine times out of ten you probably won't. But like you probably just gonna get like five percent. Like you don't. You know me because of Donovan and Don from Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, all that. But it's like, you really don't know Donovan. Like, you know Don. You don't know Donovan. If you get what I'm saying. And I actually like to keep it like that. Like really exclusive. Like if you like me, like you gonna have to show me like, that you like me. I'm not coming to you. You gonna have to come to me. You get what I'm saying? Right.

[00:25:40] Sears: Alright. And then you said, going back to another question, you said that you had to learn like gay lingo and all of that on your own. Do you mind explaining or giving examples of gay lingo?

Morton: Like shade. Just like if somebody's being like I'm not gonna say messy like, if somebody's just trying to like talk about you but trying to cover it up in a jokingly way. That's shade. I'm just trying to think like as a young boy like what did I learn on my own. It's a lot that I learned on my own and it was honestly coming from like reality TV, like *Love & Hip Hop*, all that stuff. That's what my momma did not want me to watch but I used to always sneak and watch it. And like one so I remember watching all the time was like—I don't know if you know Fuse, the TV [channel]. I don't think that they have a channel number or maybe they do. But Big Freedia used to have a show and I used to love watching that show. And I used to love *Bad Girls Club*. I used to learn a lot of stuff from TV, honestly.

Sears: Okay? You said *Bad Girls Club*, so that they use any of the LGBTQ lingo on that show?

Morton: I feel like they have but it's been so long ago. But I feel like it's so hard not to use gay lingo like even with, just like being a straight woman or straight male. Like it's just so catchy, you get what I'm saying. So when the whole world's saying it, like nine times out of ten, they probably saying it, like you know.

Sears: How do you feel about outsiders of the community using that lingo?

Morton: How do I feel? I feel like it's just lingo, but when it comes to other things I don't like it. Because if gay people cannot do your stuff without it being a problem, you shouldn't do that stuff without it being—like you should be sacred to their stuff, just like they're sacred to your stuff, like.

[00:27:31] Sears: Okay, can you give me an example of that?

Morton: Like okay, I always had an issue with how girls can put on boy clothes and get praise for but if boys put on girls clothes, he's like shunned. Like, you get what I'm saying, and like that has always—like the double standard, oh that makes me so mad. Because it's just like a girl can get praise for being like this Tomboy, like, “oh, she can dress,” like “she just so clean, so fly.” Whatever. But if a boy comes out here with girl clothes on it's like, “oh, what he doing? Uh uh, he a boy.” You get what I'm saying? So I always felt like it was always a double standard. It still is kind of, but I feel like it's growing. But yeah just like that.

Sears: So with that, are you talking specifically to masculine presenting women or just straight women that put on guy clothes?

Morton: Honestly both, but being in the community that women—hmm, how do I say it? Honestly, it irks me more with straight women more than it does with women in the community

only because I feel like straight women do bite off the community a lot as well. Because like with the lingo, how like we just said like they use gay lingo. And like sometimes straight women, I don't know if they understand they do it, but like when gay men come around it's like [snaps fingers] you have to turn into this gay supporter like 100% use all the lingo, use all the terms, you like, you know what I'm saying. And it's like sometimes it's kind of annoying because it's like we know that's not you for real. So, yeah, that's how I feel.

[00:29:11] Sears: Okay and do you feel that your experience would be different if you are of a different race?

Morton: Hm, that's a good question. I don't even know honestly. I really honestly and truly, I feel like it would honestly, because white privilege is real. I'm sorry to say that, but it is. And I feel like, I'm not gonna say it's accepted more because I'm pretty sure white gays go through that same thing black gays go through, but I don't think it's the same extent. You get what I'm saying? So yeah, I feel like my experience would be totally different.

Sears: Okay and then have you experienced homophobia?

Morton: Yes.

Sears: And then how did it make you feel?

Morton: Honestly. I experienced homophobia in my early life. Not so—it's crazy because not so much like now, like you would think it's opposite. But and like I said, it really started from my own family. Like I have so many stories that it was just like. Well, like I said, like it made me sad at the moment. But one thing about it, even if my Mama didn't agree with me at a young age being gay, one thing about it she was always there to like [claps hand] "this my child, who you talking to, you not talking to him." And like honestly, you know how they say, "Stay in a child's place?" One thing about me, like I said, I'm vocal. So, if I feel like you was coming for me in any way, I don't care how old you is. If I was eleven and you was 33, like I'm going to let you know like I'm not the one you need to be playing with. Like I'm a child but if you wanna go tit for tat, we can. Like going back and forth with derogatory language we can do that, but it made me sad at the time, but like I said me learning everything on my own, just building that confidence. I needed that for today. And like I said, look where I am now, look where their kids are now and look what they are now. So that was my—that's my motivation. Like look at them now. Look at where you are now.

[00:31:19] Sears: Okay, and at any point have you felt repressed?

Morton: Elaborate.

Sears: Like you couldn't fully express yourself.

Morton: No, I always make my business too.

Sears: Okay, and how do you—how would you describe—How would you rate Jackson State's campus as being a safe place for the LGBTQ community?

Morton: Honestly, like with me personally. I actually, before I got here, I actually thought that it was gonna be like so bad, like with gay people and like straight people being like, you know in one place, one setting. And I was like, “ohh, I bet it’s gonna be bad but like let me just prepare for the worst,” but I, honestly, I have not had a lot of bad experiences here. Like that one disappointment, that’s the only thing I had like even close to. So, I would say like safe place for me personally, speaking on my behalf, I would say it's probably like eight out of ten. I've said, like I'm comfortable because like I stay, I don't [pause]. I will stay with my friends and he real exclusive, I'm real ducked off until like I'm gonna have fun and stuff. But like I don't even, like when I go out and stuff, like it's cool. Like I'd be cool.

Sears: Okay and, have you been to any pride events?

Morton: Actually, I haven't because I always miss them. Either I'm working or cheer or something is always in the way. But I always wanted to go like just to hear different people story like how people grew up and stuff. That's the only thing, like I said, I hate missing stuff right? I don't have a chance to do nothing.

Sears: Alright, do you plan on going to the Pride events this weekend?



Morton: See I didn't know nothing about that.

[00:33:19] Sears: Okay, well, I think that's pretty much it. We're gonna go ahead and wrap up. Is there anything you would say to the younger you?

Morton: Oh. You did it! And don't regret it! Like I lived in, I don't know, like I was always scared like. Not even scared of being gay, just like scared of am I gonna make it. Like being gay, am I gonna—and not to even sound horrible, like, “am I gonna die early?” or “is somebody gonna kill me just because of who I am?” But like I would tell myself three words, you did it. And you're doing it. And that's what I would say. You did it and everything that you went through, everything that you're going through, everything that this person said about you, like it's all building you up just to be your person, right here sitting at this desk at Jackson State, your second year. Cheerleader, breaking barriers, the first male in your family on dad's side and mom's side to even go to a university. You did it and you're doing it and you're going to do it. So, that's what I would say to my younger self.

Sears: Alright, well I just wanna thank you for coming out today and I will make sure to send you a copy.

Morton: Thank you.