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Thank you, Caroline. I am here today because of Caroline for several reasons, but I would like to thank her particularly for her early, enthusiastic and unhesitating support for the OUTList, without which it is unlikely that I would have been here today.

I'd like to start with two terms so familiar that they seem to need no definition. I have thought about these two words quite a bit over the last several months. One is **community**, and the other is **diversity**. It's pretty easy for all of us to think that diversity means special people, different people—people who are unusual in their own right, or because they are in the minority—people who are extra-ordinary in the true sense of the word. Similarly, it's easy to assume that community means inclusivity—everybody, all of us, no one left out.

But what I have found, instead, is that these commonplace, everyday definitions could not capture what has been happening here at Hopkins.

To explain what I mean by that, allow me first to explain what the OUTList is and how I came to be invited to speak here today. Briefly: the OUTList is an online list of Hopkins faculty, staff and students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, which is intended to serve as a source of informal mentorship and community-building. For me, by far the most meaningful aspect of bringing the list into being has been the truly extraordinary support that the idea has received from people who could help make it happen. The list really does say "Welcome! We want you here!" to the LGBT community. It's been a wonderful project, one that many people are proud of, and with good reason.

In the weeks since our launch on October 11, I've had a chance to think about what this project means to me—as a physician, as a dean of students, as a member of the Hopkins community, and even as the mother of two very young people for whom I want a better world. I don't think about the project in isolation. It wasn't, nor is it now, an administrative task with its own solitary checkbox. Rather, this project reflects the remarkable intersection of things I care deeply about, both as a professional and as someone living here, with all of you, day to day.

For me, the OUTList was the outgrowth of two seemingly disparate activities. The first was my academic interest in patient-physician relationships and what physicians need to do to create a space to allow open and honest communication. That communication can be complex, especially in times of great stress, even crisis. My work in this area is focused on medical education; we need to teach doctors to understand the connection between communication with their patients and clinical reasoning. Without the cultural competence and, frankly, the *skill* to establish rapport with patients, doctors may not find out all that we need to know in order to offer the best diagnosis or treatment. That is, the psychosocial needs and biomedical needs of the patient are interrelated and important. In addition, just understanding or even glimpsing the patient's illness context and illness experience, and taking that into account in interactions and treatment plans, can achieve a great deal of healing.

The second activity was a conversation with a then second-year medical student that began right around the corner, at a School of Medicine program at the Baltimore Museum of Art. Allow me to explain. A few times every year I lead, with a BMA docent, tours of the museum for medical students. We ask the students to consider the art carefully, with an eye toward improving their skills of observation. It's a terrific way for them to learn to look closely, to interpret data, to sketch a narrative from evidence that is neither linear nor explicit. But it's also the case that these BMA tours are an important way that students can get off campus—away from the books and the wards—and look at art, just to experience the art. It also allows them to find a safe place,

beyond right or wrong answers, where simply seeing something means it's true. I value this program not only for what it offers the students in their medical training but also for what it offers them as human beings: a larger world. An extension, if you will, of the boundaries they think they've set for themselves.

Though disparate, as I think back, I see that these are both tied to ideas of how to build bonds between us that forge closer connections among us and strengthen community. For me, they were two paths that would soon cross, with the help of my colleagues.

True, at a recent American Association of Medical Colleges conference I had eagerly attended a session on building support for LGBT students; I was actively looking for ways to support and sustain the LGBT community at the School of Medicine. But, as feminist political theorist Elizabeth Frazer puts it, building community "is less about building ... institutions and structures, than creating the conditions for its emergence."

It seems to me now not entirely a coincidence that this project, which I feel has so profoundly helped solidify the sense of community at Hopkins, began outside the boundaries of Hopkins, at the BMA. Here, though I didn't think of it this way at the time, medical faculty and students were "creating the conditions for the emergence" of a stronger community. Off campus, talking about art, expanding the boundaries for future physicians—this is where, last winter, I once again ran into Carl Streed, a second-year medical student and a regular on the tours. We already had a connection of thinking "outside the box," and when we realized that we were both interested in LGBT issues on campus, a meeting was the obvious next step.

It was from this that the OUTList project was born, and it moved quickly from being a School of Medicine idea to, thanks to the Gertrude Stein Society, an East Baltimore idea. And then spread to the rest of Johns Hopkins.

At that mention of the Gertrude Stein Society—the LGBT organization for the East Baltimore campuses—I must pause for a sidebar without which this story would be less interesting, if not incomplete. It is a lovely coincidence, you have to admit, that Carl—president of the Gertrude Stein Society—and I met at the BMA, surrounded by the magnificent art collection that once belonged to the Cone sisters, Claribel and Etta. As you may know, Gertrude Stein was a prominent modernist writer and art collector who attended Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. At the time (1897), Claribel Cone was teaching pathology there, and they used to ride the trolley together, talking medicine. Gertrude Stein admired Claribel Cone tremendously, but it was with Etta, the younger sister, that she found intimate friendship. (Later, once Gertrude met Alice B. Toklas and her fondness for Etta cooled, she would go on to write *Two Women* about the Cone sisters.) I would love to tell you that Carl and I had our "light-bulb OUTList moment" as we stood next to the Cones' lovely Matisse or Picasso; perhaps that's how we'll shoot it in the movie version of this story. Nonetheless, our affiliation assuredly began in the shadow of an iconic lesbian and her dear friend Etta. Theirs was a relationship that certainly pressed at the edges of conventional friendship, and one that Stein made as a result of her medical studies at Hopkins.

The process of taking our idea to fruition has been fascinating and has taught me a lot about how the university works. What's been truly amazing and profoundly meaningful to me is the almost universal welcome that the OUTList has received. This is in part a testament to an idea whose time has come, and to a community that is ready to make a home for LGBT individuals. But it is also in large part a testament to the courage and sacrifice of important people in this process. During one of the few tense moments in the development of the OUTList, several people raised concerns that the list would expose the people on it to some sort of danger. Dr. Beyrer, a distinguished professor in the School of Public Health, responded this way. In his work, Dr. Beyrer frequently travels to parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan that are ruled by Sharia law. In Sharia law, homosexuality is punishable by death. Dr. Beyrer joked in the meeting that he assumes that his hosts extend some sort of dispensation to him, but his point was clear: the members of the list know that they are taking a risk, and they do so to benefit a larger community.

The welcome that OUTList has received, thanks to the words of Dr. Beyrer and others, has been an astonishing pleasure of this whole process.

But the bigger surprise, perhaps, is what I have learned about—to return to the terms with which we began—**community** and **diversity**.

First: Community

As I said in the beginning, it's easy to think about community as a collection of individuals with similarities, commonalities, a certain sameness.

It seemed paradoxical to me, though, that in drawing a distinction—who is LGBT and who is not—we were actually strengthening the Hopkins community. How does that work? Why does drawing a boundary around a subset of a group make the larger group stronger? And why does strengthening our own community—we are Johns Hopkins, as opposed to all the other folks in the world who are *not* Johns Hopkins—feel like a good, civic-minded, for-the-common-good, intellectually sound kind of move, rather than yet another attempt to draw a line between us and them?

These are the questions I found myself pondering. And while it's one thing to do what I did—have some meetings to get the OUTList going, get a website together, convince Hopkins Legal Counsel that the OUTList is not just litigation waiting to happen—it's quite another thing to do what I'm doing now—to try to answer questions like this about the nature of community and diversity.

Theorists of the idea of community figured out, long before I did, that community depends not on sameness but on two related conditions: “members of a group have something in common with each other; and the thing held in common distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other possible groups. Community, thus, implies both similarity and difference.”

And through this process, I realized how powerful it is for me to be part of an institution that shares my values. I have found that the stronger the LGBT community at Hopkins, the stronger the larger community. Not because of homogeneity, of course, but rather because of a powerful trio: recognition, value, and invitation.

That is to say,

- 1) We recognize difference.
- 2) We value that difference & its implications.
- 3) We invite others to be part of a Hopkins that has these values; we invite others to participate in “a community of meaning,” where we are organized around a shared purpose of building a better society.

My understanding of, and appreciation for, the notion of community here at Hopkins is enlarged and enriched by the courage I see in Dr. Beyrer, Carl Streed, and others as well as the openness and willingness of people who are not LGBT.

Alexis de Tocqueville says it best: “Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed, only by the reciprocal action of men [and women] one upon another.” A project like OUTList gives us, as a community, new ideas and new understanding. It offers us an opportunity for empathy—for our colleagues as well as for prospective colleagues who are sizing Hopkins up. Thinking about risk and generosity, our hearts are enlarged. And finally we are all given the opportunity for reciprocity. Those who have joined the OUTList have given a gift, one that any of us can reciprocate in a variety of ways.

To consider this, let's turn to diversity.

Second: Diversity benefits everybody.

The gift that members of the OUTList have given is the invitation to conversation.

Of course, this might take many practical forms: the prospective freshman emails an upperclassman on the list with questions; a staff member contacts a senior faculty member for advice handling a new and unfamiliar situation.

But the invitation to conversation I want to focus on here is the larger, community-wide conversation that the OUTList helps generate. To reciprocate such a gift, we need not be of any particular sexual minority; we don't need to belong to any special category. Put another way: If the OUTList represents to us the kind of "community of meaning" that we value, and I believe that it does, then the term **diversity** simply refers to the terrific range of people who comprise that community. That is, diversity is everybody.

To say that diversity is everybody is *not* to say, though, that since the infinite variety of human existence is unknowable, then, diversity is unknowable and I can get back to my desk and my work. Our definition of diversity depends on the tenets of community I listed above—that we recognize difference and that we value that difference and its implications. So how do we go about this?

To answer this I find it helpful to turn to the work of Martin Buber, a philosopher who focused expressly on the qualities of communication between two people—whether spoken or silent. Buber wrote that we cannot grow until we understand how to live "in relation to others," until we have learned "to recognize the possibilities of the space between us." That "space between us" seems to me to be what is so electric about having diversity within community: the contrast of heterogeneity vs. homogeneity. In particular, in the university, we inhabit a world of ideas. It is through the respective interplay of diverse ideas and perspectives that we learn more about ourselves and strengthen the community in which we live. We can only grow and develop, according to Buber, once we have learned to live in relation to others. The fundamental means of this is dialogue.

My identity—gay, straight, black, middle child, whatever it may be—does not determine the possibilities for my contribution to the strength of this community or to its daily practices in regards to diversity. Rather, my *conversations* do—my ability to meet the person in front of me and recognize the possibilities of our interaction, of the "space between us."

I think many of us in this room, as evidenced by our registration for this conference, have an interest in nourishing the diversity of our community. I bring up this idea of the "space between us" to remind us of the ways in which this work is available to each of us—incumbent on each of us, even. The people who join the OUTList make themselves available for any number of kinds of conversations that will, ultimately, strengthen our community. But those who are not members of the OUTList can also strengthen a diverse community by making thoughtful, deliberate decisions about *who* to talk to, and about *what*. [???

Coda

I began by telling you that two disparate paths led to my work on the OUTList: my research on patient-physician communication, and my volunteer work with BMA tours for medical students. In closing this talk, I'd like to return to first of those paths now.

I got interested in patient-physician communication because I was so profoundly moved by how vulnerable people are when they present for medical care. So much is at stake—patients' bodily integrity, their sense of self, their *life*—and the power differential between physician and patient is so complex and imposing. As

doctors we need to be as thoughtful, aware, and sensitive about these interactions as we can lest we inadvertently deny the patient what he or she needs most.

To do this is not only to provide good health care but also to create the conditions in which community can emerge. By attending to the “space between” in patient-physician interactions, we contribute to an ethic of community-building that recognizes and values diversity and its implications.

And this is what the OUTList does as well, in a very different way.

Something I’ve been thinking about—for years—is that a society is its strongest when its members are able to grow to and sustain the fullest promise within them. As a physician, I want to support my patients’ ability to do this by supporting their health as fully as possible. As a Hopkins community member, I want to support my colleagues’ and students’ ability to grow to, and sustain, the fullest promise within them. My LGBT colleagues and students deserve to be able to do this. So, too, does every member of this community.

My hope is that the OUTList—by recognizing and valuing difference, and inviting others to participate in a community with these values—facilitates the kinds of conversations that help us all meet our fullest promise. These are the conversations—public and private—that honor the diversity within us and build community among us.

I’ll close by returning to Martin Buber. Imagining the possibilities of the space between, Buber famously declared that “all real living is meeting.”

It’s nice to meet you.