

# LGBTQ+ military film breaks silence on campus

## “DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” DOCUMENTARY TELLS HISTORY OF LGBTQ+ SERVICE MEMBERS

PHOTO AND STORY BY SHAWN TAPLEY  
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On Tuesday, Oct. 9, “Breaking the Silence: An Oral History of Oregon’s LGBTQ Veterans and Service Members,” a documentary that tells of how the military has changed since the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” laws were repealed in 2010, was shown in the McLoughlin Theatre on Clackamas Community College’s Oregon City campus.

Until 1993, the military did not allow gay people to openly serve. During President Bill Clinton’s administration, the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy was enacted. The policy allowed gay veterans to serve so long as they didn’t

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*—Nathaniel Boehme*

disclose their sexual orientation.

“Breaking the Silence” is a 54-minute long documentary about the brave men and women who fought for our country while harboring a secret that could have gotten

them kicked out of military.

Five current or former LGBTQ+ service members were interviewed in the film about their experiences of being in the military during — and in one case after — “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” They spoke about how their lives have changed since coming out to family, friends and fellow vets.

Casey Curry, an LGBTQ+ member, veteran of the U.S. Army, and CCC’s Vet Outreach and Retention Specialist. She believes that with the repeal the military changed for the better.

“As a gay veteran who served prior to and during ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’ when I heard that there was a group out there fighting to get it repealed, I was all for it, but I had a lot of concerns.”

“Since it’s been repealed, other than the back and forth with the current administration,” she said, “it’s been really good. It’s been really positive.”

Nathaniel Boehme, LGBTQ+ Veterans Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs, was in attendance for the screening and expressed great joy towards the film and its powerful message.

“This piece is a labor of love” said Boehme. “It is, to our knowledge, the very first full-length documentary that gives voice to LGBTQ+ veterans and service members to allow them the space to tell their stories in this way.”

Sergeant Landon Shimek, who was one of the soldiers interviewed in the documentary, mentioned that being gay and in the military was so difficult that LGBTQ+ soldiers

had to speak in code, using “pineapple” for lesbian, “strawberry” for gay, “boysenberry” as transgender and “marionberry” for questioning.

Curry said that she wanted to bring the documentary to campus because she felt that CCC had the welcoming and inclusive energy that this film needed in order to reach a wide audience.

“This is a magnificent campus,” Curry said. “It’s very inclusive. I thought this would be a great place to show this.”

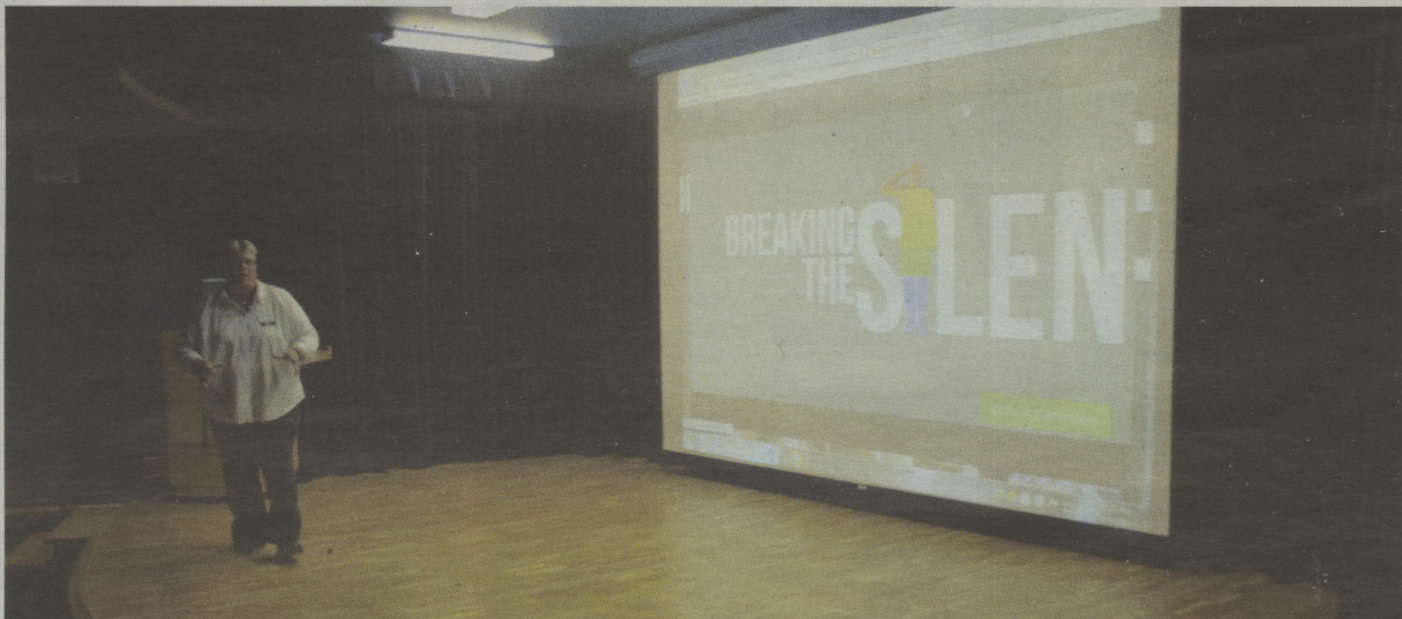
Curry also recognizes the impact this film will have on those enduring sexual discrimination.

“This is the story and the struggle they went through to just to serve in the military,” Curry said. “I think it’s a really excellent education piece for other people who maybe might not understand what the struggles were like trying to serve and trying to keep who you are very closeted.”

Curry said there is work to be done.

“There are still issues with LGBTQ+ veterans,” she said. “There are still issues with women who are being sexually assaulted. There are still issues of veterans of other cultures who are being treated unfairly – Muslims, Hispanics. But the more that we practice inclusion then less of that (there will be.)”

Visit [bts.oregondva.com](http://bts.oregondva.com) to watch the full documentary.



Casey Curry, a U.S. Army veteran and Vet Outreach and Retention Specialist at Clackamas Community College introduces the documentary “Breaking the Silence” to the audience at the McLoughlin Auditorium on Tuesday, Oct. 9. “Breaking the Silence” focuses on the experience of LGBTQ+ veterans and service members.