

Tamar Carroll: And, um, this is Tamar Carroll and it is October 25th, 2021. And I'm here with Eric. Is it Rodli? Am I pronouncing that right? Who is, uh, formerly with the motion picture division of, of Eastman Kodak. And we're going to be discussing the Kodak Lambda network today. Um, Eric, can you tell me a little bit about your work at Kodak?

Eric Rodli: Yeah, I was brought in, in 2000 as Kodak was very aggressively embarking on a digitization of all their businesses. Obviously every part of Kodak business was facing digital substitution, obviously. And the motion picture business was one of the last to be facing substitution of electronic cameras and other things, visual cameras for film. It was about a billion dollar business. And, uh, actually I was the first outsider, uh, non-Kodak bred and groomed executive to ever, uh, run that business. And again, I was brought in, um, in 2000 to, to play one year as the number two person chief officer. And then later in 2001, uh, I made, was president of the entertainment imaging. Uh, it was the technical name for really the motion picture business for Kodak.

C: And how, um, how did you come to learn about the Lambda network?

R: Um, I was reflecting on that, actually. I, I think I was aware of the networks. The networks are important. Employee networks were already a fairly important part of Kodak, uh, as part of the cultural and managerial change. I think the leadership of Kodak recognized you, you needed to sort of invigorate and change a lot of things. So the, there were very vibrant networks, right. When I got there, um, there was the variety of Asian, I think it was Asian Islanders. It was African American. It was a women's forum. There was, it was, you know, and, um, so I was aware of Lambda, but, but I was minding my own business. I was brand new, right outside and living in California and kind of an outsider. I was just trying to figure out my job. Um, I was approached by an African American woman who worked for me and I've got to, if there's a way to come back, I can't believe I forgot her name. And that's the embarrassing part. I was thinking back how I first really was made aware of Lambda. She was very active in the women's forum. She was just a very vibrant, very, uh, fascinating woman who was, uh, kind of fearless. I mean, she actually organized an event with, uh, George Fisher's wife, just to sort of out about women and work. And she, she was, and so she approached me and said, on behalf of Lambda network would kind of explore whether you would be their corporate champion. It was sort of an intermediary because they're in Rochester. I'm this new guy out in California. And, um, I was kind of touched like, well, of course, I mean, I, I'd be pleased to be a corporate champion for the Lambda network. But it was funny that she, they, she either, they asked her because she was in my business unit, you know, the networks across all of Kodak. So that's, that's where I first really became aware. And I said, fine, I actually kind of think back, but, you know, I'm a Californian. Maybe they thought I would be kind of a, you know, classic liberal open mind. You know, I don't know exactly what, or where they somehow picked up some good vibes. And I mean, I have no idea exactly what led to the actual request, but I know at some point you need to get a corporate officer. So the structure of the network is you need a sponsor who is a corporate officer, which is a senior VP level above or something. And I, I qualified for that. So they, they needed someone. And, and I think maybe the guy that was ahead of me had, had transferred out or whatever. But

so that was, that was how I said, sure.

C: And so what did you do in your role as a corporate champion for the network?

R: Well, that's the fun part. And I think some of the, Emily and some people may remember this, but so I'm a new guy. I don't know what I'm supposed to do or not do. There was no, there was no, no one told me what it meant to be a corporate champion, but I am very goal oriented. And if I'm going to be a champion, we're going to be a great network I mean, I, I mean, I'm all in and, and I realized I was a little different than some because they'd have meetings back in Rochester, you know, of the leadership of the network and talk about issues and, and what lobbying things and, and, and where to put our time and effort. And I'd go to those meetings. I mean, I could try to arrange my schedule so that, and they think, I think they kind of arranged their schedule, had these executive leadership meetings, the land and network when I was back in Rochester. I'd be there once a month for a week. So I wasn't there all the time. But I, and maybe after hours meetings out at the Kodak park, like, and I'd go to these meetings. And at first they were like, here's this big exact, I mean, Kodak historic, incredibly hierarchical, very time in grade. It was, it was just an old school sort of thing. And someone like me, the prior corporate champions, not just in that network now, often didn't come to the day to day. They came for the big high pressure stuff, the big annual meet. I went to the, I went, I was going to be a work, a member of the team. I mean, I figured that was my, and I realized that was, I realized culturally it's still Rochester Kodak and I'm this California digital executive. And it was like, it was, it was sort of interesting. I realized later that why are you here? Well, we got stuff to get done.

C: So you showed up for their regular meetings and can you tell me what they were like?

R: It was, it was, it was fascinating because it was a very motivated group of people. I of course thought, again, first of all, as I've said to Emily and others, Kodak was a challenging time for me. The company was going through a tough time. I was brought in to take the motion picture business digital and I could never get Kodak to support my investments. They had too many battles going on. So they decided about halfway through my tenure that they were just going to sort of, the technical term is harvest. Just take the cash out of the motion picture film business and reinvest elsewhere. I guess that's their right as a corporation. I think I know they think that maybe it was a mistake. So it was a pressing later in my time at Kodak because I was unable to really transform this business unit. And, but when I look back, the land, the network was one of the highlights, literally working with that group of people. And of course I thought I'm a modern California and, you know, I, my, my mom was a working high school counselor. Or, you know, I was, I mean, I thought I was as liberal and as actualized and up to speed and all these things. And then I, but through the Lambda network, I really realized, wow, there's a lot I didn't understand. I mean, it was very, I got much deeper concerned about the issues of the GLBT community as I really got these personal stories working with these people. And you hear their personal stories and you go, it just broke my heart. I mean, I, I can't tell you how I thought, you know, okay, we're winning. We're moving ahead. And again, this is back in the early 2000s and

it was still, you know, domestic rights benefits. You couldn't, you know, that you couldn't, your partner would be in a ward at a hospital and you had no, I mean, all these stories and you just wanted to be, to get married. I mean, and all these things, and it was just, and I, and I kind of like, oh yeah, we're winning this. It's, and I, and so it was, it was just very poignant. There was one thing they did. I think this, Can We Talk? That is a very powerful. I did that for my whole leadership team. It's one of the first things he says as a Lambda champion, we're going to take my whole leadership team. And they did that inside, inside, outside circle. And I know it touched a lot of my leaders. I mean, I have a bunch of, you know, Kodak, you know, hard work and good, you know, they're all good people, but I don't think they really understood the reality of these issues. You know, everyone thought, of course we're all forget, right. We're fine. We're tolerant. But to really understand that, that Can We Talk thing to me was one of the most powerful things. And so we, we did that and that, you know, it was just, there's lots of other stories. I'll take a breath, but it was very powerful getting involved personally and learning a lot.

C: So it sounds like part of the power was people telling their own personal stories, both in Can We Talk and then maybe in the monthly or weekly meetings as well.

R: Yes.

C: Yeah.

R: Yeah. The story is just, I mean, it just things that you take for granted that, you know, wow. I mean, the people that were people in the, in the network of religious, you know, and felt they lost their religion. Their religion wasn't accepting. I actually happened to be really, I'm an Episcopalian, which of course we have gay bishops and, you know, we're women priests. So, but, but I, but, but there's the fact that people just had lost that. It was just, I mean, and, and so it was very, it was kind of powerful to realize. And so I felt, I mean, so it was easy to put time into that. I mean, it was for a cause that I felt was good, not just for Kodak, but for broader things. I remember getting, talking to the, one of the top executives, IBM, who was my, who's chair of their Lambda network and talking about ways to do things and how to lobby. So it was, again, I'm very goal oriented and I took this as a goal. What can we do as Lambda? And what can you just support basically? I mean, I was just supporting the team to get, continue to get Kodak on the, on the right side of certain issues. Kodak to their credit was very early as a company that was facing a lot of issues. Fisher, Karp, they took this seriously. They did seem to take this, it wasn't just lip service to these employee networks and these issues of diversity and inclusion, but they, so it was, it was, it was kind of fulfilling, you know, re, re-supporting mutually positive thing. I put energy into the network with the Lambda, did a lot of good work and it was very powerful. I'm, I'm, I'm taking, I'll take one breath at a second. The one thing I wish I could find is you'd have these annual meetings where you do some sort of educational things for the whole of Kodak and they were, you know, and we did this amazing thing called Hollywood Squares. I've got to find a video. I had it, I, so VCR, we basically, this was one of the, we've spent a lot of time working on, basically we did a whole Hollywood Squares thing where we had, we basically punctured beliefs and educated people by having, I was the MC and we had two people there

and you'd pick a square and you, you know, true or false, do this thing. And it was, and there's a video of it someplace and I got to find, I can't, I don't know, maybe Emily or someone, because it was very powerful. So that was the whole, you know, the once a year when you're the big educational forum and it was, it was hilarious. It was funny and it was incredibly educational and it was a lot of work and people worked hard on that.

C: So I've seen a still photo of that event and Emily did give me a bunch of VHS tapes so I can look and I can let you know if that's one of them. So that, that's really neat though, that you were involved in planning that and, and then actually performing it. And what were some of the, you know, you said you, you punctured beliefs, what were, what were some of the mistaken assumptions people had about, you know, what it's like to be gay and lesbian or?

R: I guess is, as I tried to touch on it earlier, just the, again, the things that if you're not gay and lesbian and you have all the, you just wouldn't think about, again, the simple issue of your partner is in a long-term relationship partner is in the hospital and their parents have rights and you don't. I mean, that's just, I mean, that was still true and, and, and it's just fundamental. There's a series of things and I spent the whole issue of, of, you know, I, I was sort of like, you know, civil, you know, civil ceremony, what, what marriage? And there was a lot of education that Lambda and through their relationships with other, other groups in the LGBT community, which, you know, a marriage has a whole bunch of common law. There's a whole bunch of stuff. You just, if you're married, you're married. A civil union, you have to kind of recreate and parse together agreements. So that was sort of such an, and I used to think, well, marriage, that's a, that's a religious that has its own connotation. No, it's, it's a fundamental thing with both cultural and legal rules and benefits. So it was like, okay, yeah, got to do this. You know, and, and again, it was more just getting a deeper than just the superficial. Yeah, I'm, I'm for gay rights. I'm for, you know, African-American, you know, the sort of, you dig into it. And the other thing, discrimination against, you know, GLBTQ community, it crosses every socioeconomic rate. I mean, it is, I mean, again, there's issues of women's rights and African-American rights and diversity inclusion, but I mean, gay life, it cuts across every, it's a slice through the entire population. So, and it, not that that you need a note, but it's like, it's so fundamental, you know, fixing that just seems like an obvious thing for society. It's because it cuts across every, every part of society.

C: When you, you said that Kodak to its credit, you know, was, was a strong supporter. I had a couple of follow-up questions, which was, first of all, like what kind of policies was Kodak changing to be more LGBTQ friendly?

R: Well, they were obviously, they started the medical benefits, all the domestic partner benefits. They were already, I think, moving towards some of that. I wish I could remember exactly. I know during my tenure, we got Kodak to move on some other ones. I don't have a complete recollection. I'm sure there's some documentation of the timing and Emily and other may know exactly because I don't have that handy, but I know we influenced Kodak and Kodak was very open. The head of HR, I mean, we were walking the talk as a company and then helped us also

when we talked to other companies. I remember going to some conferences. I got glad with the media. There's, I think it's the media, of course. So I got to that. I went to, I went with Emily to the human rights conference and the dinner in Washington, DC was fascinating. I mean, so again, I can say Kodak was pretty, pretty good on most of these, you know, early, I think, and expanding the rights and things at least that they could control within their, you know, employee culture.

C: So for you, then, it didn't feel, you didn't feel stigmatized to be championing LGBTQ rights or that it would reflect on you in any negative way.

R: Yeah, if knowing me, it wouldn't have, I mean, if it did, I wouldn't care. That attitude that if for some reason, if anyone ever, if I ever, if anyone, I mean, there may be some people like, who's this crazy California new guy? Now he's suddenly a gay rights champion. I guess if someone felt that, I wouldn't, to be blunt, wouldn't care. It wouldn't bother me. I mean, to me, that's like, but I don't sense any, I surely didn't sense anything serious about that. I think there was, I looking back, I think there was probably people deep in the Rochester, maybe R&D area operation, not good people that probably didn't quite understand maybe why it was so out there. I mean, I'm sure there was some people said, who is this guy in California? I've never really thought about it until you asked that question. I'm sure there was probably some people that wondered why I was so passionate about it, but I, you know, I never, clearly it made it easy because the top leadership was very supportive. So, I mean, I never felt it was like, you know, even though, you know, so it's a good question, but I haven't really thought much about it till now.

C: Well, because sometimes as an out, you know, it seems like your role was an ally, right? You didn't identify as LGBTQ. So, you know, it, it takes courage sometimes to be an ally in the workplace, especially.

R: You know, and I guess my view is to me, it takes 10 times more courage to be out and try to fight those battles in Kodak and for all the top-down leadership, you had a very entrenched middle management. So that they, oh God, who is the gal? I get it. There's a name who ran the network. I want to say Amy. Have you run into Amy? She was one of the network heads. I got, I got Amy. So, you know, this woman worked in R&D or she was an operator. I mean, that takes courage. It doesn't take courage to be an ally. I mean, personally, relative to being out and challenged. I do, I do remember I got the out and equal award at one of the ceremony, you know, that was very, you know, I, you know, I got this plaque that I still have, you know, there ahead of my office, you know, you know, that was great. I mean, it was so fun to get that recognition, but no, I never felt that was just, you know, that's what you did.

C: When you talked about how this kind of discrimination or homophobia can cross every demographic race and class, did you feel that, that Kodak Lambda was able to change the culture like equally across those different demographics?

R: That's a great question. I'm not sure I, I, it was, you know, I look back, there weren't a lot of,

you know, African-American, it was, it was a fairly Caucasian group as I think back. So, I'm not sure it really cut across as broadly as, as maybe it could or should have. I, I, yeah, it's a good question. So, I don't want to presuppose I something, but I, it was, it was pretty much, you know, pretty, pretty white and actually female. I will make this, and if this could be, this is a delicate quote that I've used with my friends and, you know, gay and not that the thing I got to kick about the network is literally there was times there was meaning it was all the women and me. I mean, I mean, there's a terribly stereotypical comment, but, but the, the, the people that did most of the heavy lifting for the most part were the women. I mean, literally there would be like a couple of guys, sometimes only, sometimes only me and the women. So, that's a delicate quote. That may not be what I had in the historic archive, but I just, it's sort of a cultural observation still out who gets things done. And I, I noticed that it was, it was, it was the females. And for the most part, yeah, there, there was, it was Caucasian, you know, middle managers and they were all really good. I guess I was going to say that this woman, Amy, I kind of became a mentor to, and she was just really bright and sharp and, and tough as nails. I mean, she, I mean, these women, I mean, they're really good. I mean, these were amazing professionals. So, I also learned stuff from them. And, you know, I think I mentored a few because wow, I, you know, I think was trying to, I think the number of them were not in my business unit, but I was had my eyes out on. So again, to be blunt, there's another benefit is I think back, I got to see people in action and, and, and this isn't just original. I think that was also part of the employee network, the philosophy from HR and the ideas leadership positions in one of these networks was a way to develop your skills. So that was, that was sort of implicit in, in, in networks. And I thought, again, was very far reaching for Kodak and trying to develop management talent, because again, running one of these networks was a job. It was a volunteer job you did after hours and you were supported for it. But so I think that was a benefit and I could also then see talent.

C: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And Emily and others have told me that it wasn't the case like at Galaxy, the Xerox network or IBM, that there were more men than women. So that Kodak was unusual in having so many women in leadership within the network.

R: Yeah.

C: And it doesn't seem like that was the case within Kodak more broadly.

R: No, no, I would say Kodak. I mean, again, we could, you could spend too much time on some of the issues that Kodak faced, but no, they, they had a, yeah, very top-down, very, you know, historically male driven culture and, and years of engineering. And that's why Emily. So I think Emily was the first full vice president in research in Kodak. I mean, I think she was the first female, first female. I mean, so yes, it was the other part of Kodak and it was much, much more traditional, you know, white male type culture.

C: Yeah. Maybe that explains why the, why you saw so much talent is just to make it at Kodak. They had to be super good.

R: I, that's so true to be, to be a woman and particularly in the operational technical front and all those areas. I mean, because that's, as I think like a lot of it, there was a lot of people in the labs and there was a woman in the trenches that had risen up. Yes. You had to be obviously better than the, you know, particularly because you were rising up in the nineties and eighties. So you had to be, you had to be better.

C: Yeah.

R: No question.

C: Wow. Um, well, um, in your time there, did, were you able to see changes happening as a result? I mean, you touched on it a little bit that you felt like your leadership team was really moved by participating in the, Can We Talk?

R: Yes. Yes.

C: Um, and was that just reflected in conversations they had with you or?

R: Yeah. I mean, after that, that, that, that session, I think we did more than once, but I know we did it. I did it early on because I went through one as, as I first came on board. Um, I participated in one, I don't think it was an EI, it was a different somewhere. They did one of these, Can We Talk things? And I said, immediately we got to do it for EI, uh, my leadership team entertainment. And, and, you know, I, you know, I, I just, I sensed that there was, and again, we, there were, um, you know, there were some, there were out what people we knew and, and, or even when I guess, so I don't think I'd like to think that it just sort of accelerated an acceptance and understanding. And then the educational thing that there's still work to be done. I mean, the idea that this is, you know, it's not easy, it's still not easy to initially come out or, and then, and there's still the issue. So I think this, that, that I'd like to think EI was pretty tolerant already and pretty consider we're the motion picture people. So we're these creative types, but, but in Rochester, you're making film and you're doing R and D. So I, I'd like to think that at least in my business unit, my involvement, you know, helped. And I think hopefully helped in the rest of Kodak, but again, the credit was to the network that the, the, the, the, the people that were active, they were driven I mean, it was a very, it was a very well run. I mean, they, they worked, I mean, they, they lobbied and did things and pushed and, and, you know, as much as I jumped in, tried to help a lot of times, I think I was just, you know, hanging on as, as this group, you know, tackled the problems. It was fearless.

C: Yeah. And how, how did, or did Lambda work with the other employee networks? Were there like jointly sponsored events or what was that like?

R: You know, I can't, I know there was a lot of coordination. The networks all work together. They each had their own major events and they would always have participation across. So I, I, since I was out in LA, you know, I would, some of that, that interaction, I'm sure happened and

others probably could speak to that. I'm sure there was good course coordination and communication. I'd go to the other network event, you know, when they have their annual stuff, but I'm just too far. I was, again, in LA most of the time, so I can't speak to that, but I know that the whole employee, I think we're very much supported top down and they work together. There was, there was a lot of good sense, you know, we're all trying to change a culture. I mean, you go back and it's easy to sort of say, oh, Kodak screwed up. Kodak did this. That's a whole, someday I want to write my own book about the motion picture business because yes, they did walk away from it, but they knew it was coming. And Kodak was just trying to, every part of their business was under attack. So, they're both facing strategic issues that are fundamental and they're also realizing they need to change their management culture. So, the employee network reviews as a way to kind of do that, attract talent. I mean, it was very business oriented. The whole issue of inclusion diversity, there is a business justification of trying to create a workplace where you're going to attract talent and you need to, I mean, so, and so Kodak to its credit was very early on that sort of, you know, the business rationale. So, I think there was, there was a lot of support. There's a lot of communication in that front.

C: Yeah. And you mentioned that you attended some of the conferences and met people who were in similar LGBT employee networks.

R: Yes.

C: Could you say anything more about that? Like, what did you get out of it or?

R: I, well, I mean, I remember specifically thinking, wow, the IBM guy, this guy was head of all global services. And so, I'm making a relationship there and I'm thinking from my business side, we now have a common interest. And so, that was, again, a little calculated on my part. There's a win. I mean, I was, IBM was a big player and had a big network. And so, talking to their corporate champion, I partly did to learn what he did. I mean, I'm a person who tries to figure out, okay, how am I going to do my job? Who's doing my job elsewhere? So, I mean, it was partly to learn, but also we agreed to, we got, we stayed in touch. I could never find a business thing, but I was thinking IBM, Kodak, maybe there's some other things. And IBM had gone through a tremendous transition itself. Remember, IBM also went out of business with a PC. So, that was one specific situation where I felt my Lambda role was helping me on a crass commercial business thing, which is good. I mean, they linked. Otherwise, it was mainly just learning and trying to figure out, picking up what were the issues of the day. Again, the GLAD thing, given that's media, that was those, I went to all those dinners out here and, again, just broadened your awareness of inclusion and role. So, again, it all, you know, now in Hollywood, you know, again, this is, there's a very large percentage of, you know, of gay, lesbian people at all levels. So, again, it was, that was the easy business thing, but I didn't play it. I didn't say I'm the corporate champion. I never led in, I never used that as sort of a calling card to look at me. I never, I never used my ally or my support as a, I would find that crass, except the IBM thing was different. He was a, he was a champion of that network. So, that I found as a business win-win. But otherwise, it wasn't something I led with in my business career.



C: But it sounds like it was a place to exchange ideas too.

R: Oh, absolutely.

C: What are other people doing within their organizations and?

R: Yes, yes. The Human Rights Conference was great and, again, some other conferences and just, and Lambda would bring, we'd bring people to Rochester, you know, to educate. The network was very good at outreaching. I mean, I remember one of the, the most interesting one was really the first kind of transgender. They had some sort of famous person or someone who was very, or I think maybe it was non-binary. I mean, I don't know what the term was, but this would be probably sort of a he, she. I mean, this person can say she felt, sometimes she felt like a guy, sometimes like a gal. And she, and it was very, I mean, this was how, that was on the edge. This was, I get to admit, there's even some of the network. This was like, okay, this is an interesting, this is the next level. This person came and spoke at an event and it was, I was pretty proud of Lambda that we found this, this individual who was credibly balanced and thoughtful, was not a rabble. I was just explained, this is who, who she, he was. And it was like, okay, you know, we, I think we had one transgender person on our leadership committee too. So there was at least some context there. And so that was a whole, that education goes to another level when you get beyond, that was sort of a, as I think back, there I was challenged. Because that gets to be more complex. What does that mean? And what that, so, and there was even a more emerging area. So, but again, so this is back in 2003. I mean, so again, shows the Lambda, the innovation and the forward thinking of the Lambda network and just always pushing the envelope, but in a very, a good way. It was never, it wasn't flamethrowing. It was, it was like, hey, here's this new set of issues and here's a, what's it like to be transgender? You know, or not, or unsure of what, you know, and how do you go through? I'm like, wow. That was a, that was, that was a little challenging, but yet very provocative.

C: I mean, we, in the public history events we do for the Rainbow Dialogues, we have people tell their own personal stories and it's still eyeopening for people to hear from transgender individuals, you know, what their life story has been like.

R: Yeah. It's a whole nother level of complexity and prejudice and confusion. You know, I, and so I, yeah, so it's a journey still going, but I do, I do really feel good about a global, at least in US space, how far we've come. I mean, I really, I mean, you can't ever, you know, he's got it, but it's just, it's pretty impressive when I look back just in 20 years.

C: Yeah.

R: It's, it's, it's, and by the way, and in my career, I always, when I later, I was in charge of part of a theme park, the Universal theme park. I worked at it after, after Kodak. And the first thing I did was I said, where do you have a gay lesbian network? So the first thing I did, I joined it and became active, you know, did the whole thing. And actually, I don't want to go names. I ran into

surprisingly a little more backlash there than at Kodak because I was so jumping into it. And there was, this is Universal. This is a, you know, and I'm not going to name any names, but there were, that actually was the first time I ran into like, why are you spending all your time with a gay and lesbian? It's like, well, yeah, it's an important cause. And so that I actually did find some funny comments. Again, I was a new guy coming in and I jumped in and, you know, I, I found the network and came to meetings. And again, even then I realized there's a little bit like, even if you were, you know, I was a senior vice president there, I was running part of theme park and guys like that leveled in often, you know, they, they, they put the title, they, they, they took like they, they were, they knew they, that was one of their things they had to do for their careers to champion a network. So I jumped in there too. And I remember there's photos of me. I never marched in the Hollywood parade, you know, and I said, and they said, you gotta march. I don't, I don't dance. I don't. And so literally the most fun I've ever did, I'm sitting there with my rainbow balloons and I'm dancing in the streets of Hollywood. And, and, and it was just amazing moment. I just, I, you know, my kids are so proud of me. I'm going, but it was like, sort of like, okay, well, that's, that's what we're doing. We're going to, we're going to have a Universal, you know, trolley and we're going to run down, you know? And so again, to me it was, and there's still, you know, still issues there, you know? So it's, it's a, but I, I would have never done that if I hadn't got such a benefit out of the Kodak lamp, the participation with Lambda. It was, it was clear. I want to do the same thing at Universal.

C: That's great.

R: I'll send you the photo. Maybe, I mean, I'll try to send a photo of me at the, at the hall.

C: That'd be fantastic, I'd love to see it!

R: It is truly a follow on from my, my Lambda experience. Literally. I, you know, I just say some of this leadership at that company is like, well, you don't have time for it. I mean, it's like, I think I get, why are you jumping in to this? You're just trying to figure out your job. I said, well, but I think this is part of my job. This is important. These networks are my gosh, we, we need, that's how you get talent. That's how you create a culture that you want people to thrive. And so, you know, we're not done yet. This is what several years ago. And, you know, anyway, and I, I think I made the point, like we all may think we're fully enlightened to understand that I, I feel like you guys not all not, you really may not really fully understand.

C: So, yeah, absolutely. Um, well, and it sounds like, so leaders, you know, that is part of your understanding of leadership. It seems like is speaking out on behalf of LGBTQ rights.

R: Clearly. I mean, it's, it's kind of a no brainer, but, uh, and I'll tell you, and I know I'm going, I know growing with your time here, but, but, but before the Lambda thing was where I got very serious, but, um, somebody asked me, you know, why did you get so involved? So one of the Lambda, uh, people, and one of the things I'll never forget in my life. So I was, um, came, worked in, I've been in the entertainment technology business my whole life. I'm not an engineer

and I'm not creative. I'm just a MBA business guy that, um, you know, likes to entertainment technology. So I was at a small startup that did some really cool giant screen. We were competing with IMAX big screen. We were a hot little startup in the nineties. And we had as a, um, we actually got a company called Creative Artists, CAA, which is a big, powerful, you know, at the time it ran Hollywood talent agency. And we somehow convinced this talent agency to help us with our new technology for entertainment to represent us. Michael Lovitz was trying to broaden out of just representing talent. So we were one of the first companies that he represented, and there was a team of people on, and there was this woman, uh, she wouldn't bother me mind. He's her name, Marcia Spano. She was, she was the one that did all the work on our team. And I, and I was the president of this business unit, you know, a business, it was actually an IPO public company. And, and I dealt with her all the time. She did all the work. There was that again, there was a guy, some agent superstar, but never did any work. Marcia was sort of the MBA business. So we got to make sure we were still very good friends. And I'll never forget, we're walking outside creative artists offices in Beverly Hills. This must've been the late nineties. Um, and she sort of said, you know, Eric, I just, I don't want to tell you something. I haven't told really anyone else at work, but I'm, I'm, I'm a lesbian and I went, oh, okay. And, and, and, and I, okay. And, and I, but it was, I realized this was a really hard conversation to have with me and she had yet to have it at work. And I went, but Marcia, what I, and I realized, I'm like, here's Marcia Spano, brilliant MBA, incredibly successful. And she was nervous about telling me, and I'm going, what's it? I sent signal. I look, I am all American. I look like a all man. I actually have liberal Republican to get that on the paper. I mean, so I don't have a party anymore, but I mean, I'm, I'm a, what's it called? The Rockefeller liberal Republic. No, it's just very sad. But, but, but the thing, so that was what sort of, I went, oh my, I figured this is like the nineties. I mean, you, you want to be come out at work, but she was starting with me. And then I'd been barely at work because for just even, this is creative artists agencies at Hollywood. So it hit me like, oh my gosh, this is still a, this is a big issue. So she's, when I told her that story, that that was inspiring to me and got me involved in Landa and, you know, but it, but it was, yeah, I'll never forget that walking on the sidewalk and, and how nervous she was and how uncertain she was. It's just, it's like, you could drive a stake. Like, did she think I would somehow think differently? But that's what, that's what, so anyway, that's not to get all that, that really. So when, when, when Landa approached me, I went, it was, it was like, it was perfect because I felt like I could do something for future Marsha Spanos, because it's like, it just, it just ripped me apart.

C: That's really, really poignant and beautiful. Yeah. So you were at Kodak till it sounds like about 2007 then, right? And did you, were you able to see changes in the culture during those, that seven-year time period?

R: I saw, so the, the, the part of this that gets challenging for, so I, yes, on the Lambda thing, I thought acceptance and I saw Kodak do some stuff there that, I mean, I thought, but, but the, the issue that is, is probably you might, this is not part of the interview that is more challenging. I wouldn't necessarily, it's, what I did see though, was Kodak struggling with the other side of inclusion diversity. So here's, and this is part that I, I wrote, we may, you may want to cut off from this piece, but, or it could be, so what, so the beauty of the networks, the powerful, the

inclusion, and that's, but, but partly what was happening in Kodak is you then had, to their credit, we had, Kodak was not diverse, right? You were in Rochester, New York, you had a very, and, and so the belief, which is correct, was you've got to diversify. You've got to make this place more open to, to all, you know, to African-Americans, to, to women. And so, so Kodak was incredibly aggressive on actual metrics. So this is, you know, interesting, not, I don't think Lambda, not GLBT, but on, which is what, which kind of bugged me. At least I'd love to run this down, but it was on the, you know, women percent, women in mid management and top management, African-Americans, Asians. So there was, it was actually, I was compensated as an executive based on, on, on tangible, like had you promoted women and people of color into mid management? So there was very, and that made you, if you're a company and you're serious about it, you put metrics and, and, and, but, but in a, in a weird sense, some of those metrics created, as Kodak was struggling, it did create some culture. So I, my, the challenging part of my job was something mid forties, late forties, mid managers, you know, white guys that spent their whole career at Kodak, suddenly realizing given that Kodak was slowing in growth, their, their project. So that was the tough part of being very aggressive for diversity and inclusion, try to change a culture on the theory that we needed new blood just to survive. But in that, but having one of those being a, you know, gender and race, it did that, that was the only part of Kodak, again, that was challenging because there were some, you know, very efficient, solid, great hardworking, you know, Caucasian guy, white guys that suddenly realized their career prospects were, were hampered, you know, that's, and again, if Kodak had turned, had been able to transition and grow, it would have been a win-win, but you have this massive external collapse of your core business. It's really hard to build new ones. So that was the only, but that wasn't really a Lambda issue. I mean, it was, it was more of that broader issue of, you know, so I don't think that had a blowback on Lambda, but because, you know, you, you know, I said, well, how did, how should we have diversity things for, should we have inclusion for explicit for, for GLBT? And that's kind of a trickier one to sort of obviously deal with. So it wasn't, wasn't, so that's, that's a secondary, that it's a more complex issue. I wasn't necessarily getting into today, but that's the, the complexity of when you try to, you know, what gets measured gets managed. And by putting those metrics in, by me being able to bonus, it gets everyone's attention, get the pipeline, all that good stuff. Make sure you have women in the pipeline, make sure. So all that is good, but combined with a Kodak decline, it created some, some tension.

C: So sort of like a backlash to a certain.

R: Yeah. There's a little backlash. I don't think it's a GLBT, but some of the, some of the networks that, you know, it is, but that's, you know, again, it's, it's Kodak itself was just facing and obviously did face and not survive existential issues that, you know, every part of their business was based on analog film and try to do you, you're fighting battles on seven front. You can't fight seven wars and seven, you know, healthcare, motion picture, professional, you know, government. I mean, you know, you, you're, you're, you, so you, you, it's too easy to kind of say what Kodak could have done. It's not easy.

C: Yeah. I know you said that after, when you went to Universal, you joined the employee

network there. And I wonder if you think if, if I you could speak a little bit about, you know, what do you see as the value of employee networks in general?

R: You know, it's an interesting issue. And again, to be clear, there was when I also realized how poorly it was not at all level of Lambda. I mean, universal, it was not even, it was just kind of a, they get together. It was just not, it wasn't very good. I don't mean to say it just wasn't had the structure and the leadership. And, and I was, I was a universal for a year and a half because it was, it was a job that was a kind of a, I was brought into a certain thing. So I wasn't there long enough to really infect it. But I remember thinking myself that the difference between Lambda and the employee, the one at universal was night and day. I mean, it was just, it was just so, it just wasn't as well led and it wasn't really wasn't supported to the same level. It would, I think it was maybe taken for granted by the, the, the corporate leadership, which again would a universal person would see this. Oh my God, how dare you say that? But I, I was in the trenches. It was not, it was fun. I mean, I love marching in the parade, but it wasn't, didn't seem to have as specific policy goals as, as the Lambda network did. And you asked a question. I didn't answer your question. What was your question?

C: No, I, well, you sort of did in a way, I was just wondering if you see employee networks, you know, as, as valuable for achieving change in corporations or for other reasons.

R: Again, you know, I've now been out of large corporate life for a while. I've done more independent, small consulting. So, so I've not been back in large corporate life. So I'm, I'm really don't, I can only pine based on a little bit universal. When I saw Kodak, I think those networks made a lot of sense because you had a, you had a forum, you had a group of people, you had visibility. And I think, I think it, it, it, you create an organization that can lobby the company for change. It can also be a place that the company has issues, you know, you can go to the Lambda network or the African-American network and say, okay, this is an issue we're struggling with. And, and you have your own employees who are, have a, have a mission at charge. So I, I, the concept makes a lot of sense to me. I just, it seems like it's a logical way for a company that's trying to maximize their profits. You need your people and you need people to make money and you need all sorts of people to make money. And you have to have ways to sort of communicate with people that you, you may not be perfectly, you know, you're not going to know all the subtleties. So having a network like that, to me, just seems kind of logical. I mean, I, I have no perspective of how that works in other companies, but it, it, it just seems logical.

C: Yeah. Sounds like it, you see it as a win-win for the employees and for the company.

R: I mean, and, and I, and I, I want to go back to something that was very clear. It was, it was definitely a place in Kodak for, for leadership training. It was recognized by the HR department that, that if you ran, if you ended up running the employee network, that was a real job. I mean, you had to manage people and you influence people as volunteers. And I've, I've often joked, you know, running a volunteer organization where, you know, my wife has been very active in

volunteer things, getting volunteers to work. That's a whole, it's easier than just saying jump. And so I think, you know, it is a very good training ground for, for recognized future talent.

C: Yeah. Um, no, that's a great observation about managing volunteers. Um, well, um, thank you. This has been incredibly helpful. Are there other things that you would like people to know about the Lambda network or your time there?

R: I think I, I think I covered the, like I said, I, I, I've said that again, again, when I talk about my time at Kodak, I genuinely say that that Lambda network and, and that, and that, that was very, you know, coming to Rochester, you know, I don't live there. Nothing personal. I don't like the weather there. And so the interacting with the Lambda folk was sort of, it was a great, it was separate from my day-to-day grind of fighting the battles, you know, again, a little bit, I was going to Rochester, say, please invest in my business. And, you know, it had had some tough times with the Kodak leadership who just really, to be honest, missed an opportunity in motion picture. We, we, I know if we could have saved Kodak, but we had all the technology Kodak owned that could have, could have had a huge business in digital Hollywood. And they just didn't, and maybe I've often tells that my failure to convince them, I tried every which way to get them to sort of invest. So it wasn't Kodak, Rochester was never fun for me, but, but being, having that time with the Lambda, these passionate Lambda network folks was, was, you know, I felt I was accomplishing something. It was also just, you know, it was just, it was, it was enjoyable.

C: Yeah. That's wonderful. It, I have to say, as a historian, it's so fun to talk with people about Lambda because many people have shared a similar sentiment that it was a highlight of their lives, really. So it's wonderful. And thank you very much for sharing your thoughts on this, Eric. I really appreciate it.

R: I will, yeah. And again, if follow up questions or something triggered or something more, I'm, I do, I'm going to try to figure, I feel bad that the woman who introduced me, I can't remember and that's age. And she was a piece of work and in a good way. She was a very interesting woman. That was very ambitious. She was almost corporately cool. I mean, she would, she'd call anyone. I mean, she called George Fisher's wife to get this whole woman's thing going. And then we supported that. I think she, because she knew I supported her because I found her kind of interesting maverick somehow. I still never asked how that, how she, because someone in Lambda said, well, maybe why don't you ask, well, Eric, would Eric be our corporate champion? And so I treasure the fact she asked that question. I'm going to get her name. Someone will remember her name. I'll get that to you. Maybe an email in case it comes up, but she was, she was fascinating. And then I will send you the picture of me. I think Matt marching in the Hollywood parade. And that's definitely, I would never done as much as I'm a supporter. I would have never done marched in the Hollywood parade without having the Lambda experiences. Okay. I'm doing it. Yeah, that would be great.

C: I would love to see the picture. And yes, please do. If you remember her name, that would be

perfect.

R: I'll work on both of that.

C: Yeah.

R: And the other one is Amy. It's Amy. And I get, I look at Amy who is, I kind of, one of my favorite people there because she was very young and, and, and, and she's a quality control person. And she was, I tried to mentor her because, you know, she was really good, but to step up, I mean, she was, you know, she was, you know, running the network and, and it was great. So I'll try to get those names too, just for, just for background. And, and I wish you could find the video. I'll try it again. That video that snippets, that video should be preserved because it was pretty, it was very educational. It was a nice way to sort of, you know, ask and learn things that, oh, really, you know, like true or false, you know, and it was, it was pretty well done. So that Hollywood squares, I looked through my, I know I had a copy. I can't find it, but hopefully maybe someone's got that. Someone back, Emily might know, or you may, she may have given it to you.

C: I will, I'll let you know if I find it. She did give us a bunch and I have a student working on digitizing them. So hopefully we'll be able to send you a copy.

R: I would love that for my records.

C: Yeah.

R: All right. Thank you. Thank you.

C: Thank you, Eric.

R: Is it Tamar? How do you pronounce it?

C: My family pronounces it Tamar, almost like there's a Y in it.

R: Tamar. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Great.

C: I'll look forward to being in touch and thanks so much. Nice meeting you. Thank you. Okay. Bye.

R: Bye.