he had the families and the dogs and the

00:03

kids and everybody in balloons and

00:04

everybody gets off the airplane and and

00:06

greets their loved ones

00:08

and uh i just got off the airplane right

00:11

walked through and i had to go outside

00:13

and

00:14

bring my bags and again pretend like i

00:17

just had somebody i knew picked me up

00:19

when in fact it was you know

00:20

my significant other

00:26

first man simply must arm our airmen to

00:30

outrank outperform outpartner out

00:32

innovate

00:33

any potential adversary

00:36

the first command the air force starts

00:39

here

00:39

[Music]

00:40

hello and thank you for tuning in to the

00:42

air force starts here podcast

00:44

my name is miriam thurber and i'm

00:46

honored to welcome you to this special

00:47

episode celebrating pride month

00:49

recently lieutenant general brad webb

00:51

the commander of air education and

00:52

training command

00:53

sat down with brigadier general brenda

00:55

cartier who's the incoming aatc director

00:57

operations

00:58

and they talked about our lgbtqi plus

01:00

community here

01:01

within the air force they did this live

01:03

on facebook but we wanted to bring this

01:05

important conversation here to the air

01:06

force starts here podcast as well

01:08

because our people are our most valuable

01:10

resource you're the foundation of

01:12

everything that we do

01:13

which means having conversations that

01:14

empower all of our big a

01:16

airmen is so important obviously this is

01:19

just the audio track but if you want to

01:20

watch the video of this real talk check

01:22

out our facebook page at air education

01:24

and training command well without

01:26

further ado it is my honor to introduce

01:28

lieutenant general brad webb

01:29

and brigadier general brenda cartier

01:31

let's remember the charge that the chief

01:33

gave us a year ago

01:34

which is we need to own this dni

01:36

situation

01:37

we need to engage in small groups

01:39

creates a

01:40

safe space and listen or seek to

01:43

understand

01:44

the other thing that i think is worthy

01:46

of a few minutes of discussion

01:48

are these things that we call bog or

01:50

barrier analysis

01:51

working groups we've had several uh in

01:54

the past but they've

01:55

actually been evolving over time and

01:57

really quickly what i'd like to do

01:59

is kind of articulate the bogs that i

02:02

have been established

02:04

inside our air force there's best which

02:07

is the black

02:08

employment strategy team dat which is

02:11

which is the disability action team

02:14

heat which is the hispanic empowerment

02:17

action team

02:18

inet which is indigenous nations

02:20

equality team

02:22

pact which is the pacific islander asian

02:25

american

02:26

community team wit women's initiatives

02:30

team

02:31

and lastly and really we're doing this

02:33

in honor of a pride month here in june

02:36

lit which is the lgbtq plus

02:40

initiative team so today that's going to

02:43

be the topic of this real talk

02:44

and uh and brenda you and i had an

02:47

excellent

02:48

uh back and forth with respect to the

02:51

acronym

02:53

lgbtq plus and

02:55

you know of course my uh really

02:58

uninformed uh

02:58

perspective was in fact i think i said

03:01

hey brenda there's enough letters there

03:02

now that you know we should probably

03:03

need to

03:04

spell out something so it's a little bit

03:05

easier to remember but your response was

03:07

actually very insightful would you mind

03:09

sharing that with us

03:10

thanks uh yes sir i would love to share

03:12

this with you

03:13

uh and a lot i get that question a lot

03:14

what are all what are all the letters

03:16

and why so many

03:17

i can boil it down to one thing really

03:21

it's the straight and non-straight

03:24

or heterosexual and non-heterosexual

03:27

communities

03:28

and how not just airmen but how society

03:31

and people within society

03:32

define sex and gender and what we've

03:36

what we are seeing as our society

03:38

evolves and

03:39

people are able to talk more about

03:41

themselves and their families and how

03:43

they

03:44

live their lives and um create family

03:46

and community

03:47

is that there's a whole spectrum of how

03:50

people define themselves and others in

03:52

terms of sex and gender

03:54

so the the letters actually

03:57

are a celebration in a way of all of the

04:00

diverse communities within the

04:03

non-straight communities and so

04:07

lesbian gay bisexual transgender and

04:10

queer and plus is there's intersex

04:14

there's asexual

04:15

there's pansexual i mean there are just

04:18

any number of

04:19

ways that folks define themselves and

04:22

and

04:23

live their lives to the fullest i like

04:26

the plus

04:26

because it says that it's not limiting

04:29

there

04:30

there can be more as we all decide how

04:33

we want to define ourselves

04:35

um the interesting letter is also the

04:38

cue

04:39

right queer and in the past as we all

04:42

know

04:43

queer was a derogatory term and

04:46

the lgbtq community over the past

04:49

few years has decided to take that term

04:52

back and own it

04:53

and turn it into something that

04:54

celebrated and something that's

04:56

used as a term to open up an

04:59

entire culture you do have quite a bit

05:03

of

05:05

an agenda or initiatives within the lit

05:08

portfolio could you describe some of

05:10

those forces but if i can kind i'll just

05:12

go backwards a little bit and talk about

05:14

some of the initiatives or examples of

05:16

okay why did lit

05:18

choose these as as some of their

05:21

things that they're working on the

05:23

medical one

05:25

the that also ties in with the

05:27

transgender airmen

05:28

and what our transgender airmen are

05:30

going through in terms of

05:31

care to medical resources

05:35

and in some cases transgender airmen can

05:38

still be turned down

05:39

by medical providers so imagine just

05:42

trying to get the care that you would

05:43

normally

05:44

get and being told no we won't see you

05:47

so we're looking at that as one of the

05:49

transgender medical initiatives the

05:50

other thing that's

05:51

a big deal is access to reproductive

05:55

support so if you want to have a family

05:58

and you're going to use reproductive

06:00

support because if you're in a same-sex

06:02

marriage then

06:03

you do in vitro fertilization or you do

06:05

surrogacy or

06:06

something along those lines and it's

06:10

it's interesting because say you have a

06:12

same-sex female couple

06:14

and they want to have children well lots

06:17

of couples do

06:18

um you know in vitro fertilization or or

06:21

methods that can get get you on your

06:25

road to having a family

06:27

and in the case of a same-sex female

06:30

couple

06:31

if they were to access care to go into

06:33

the

06:34

military system and say okay we want to

06:36

have a baby

06:37

okay well which one of you is going to

06:39

carry the baby okay so

06:40

this this gal is going to be the one who

06:43

will have the pregnancy

06:45

and carry the baby fine the military

06:47

system knows how to recognize her and

06:50

put her through the care that she needs

06:53

but the other partner the other female

06:55

the military

06:56

um working on this didn't have language

06:59

for that or a way to identify

07:02

what that other spouse is

07:05

and um so there have been examples in

07:08

the past

07:08

where the military said well we don't

07:11

have a way to categorize you

07:13

so we're going to just consider you the

07:16

sterile male

07:17

and so it's like

07:20

and she's all well um okay i mean how

07:23

does that work right

07:25

and it gets it gets even more complex

07:27

when you go through these processes

07:30

as the female sterile male you still get

07:34

asked questions on a lot of forms

07:36

about um you know did you have these

07:38

tests and how did they come back and

07:40

it's like no i didn't

07:41

you know didn't have the test because

07:43

there's no reason to have a test right

07:44

so it just gets really kind of

07:46

convoluted um

07:47

the other thing that's interesting on

07:49

the medical side too is

07:51

when you ask a same-sex couple and you

07:52

go in for your pha or something and they

07:54

ask you

07:55

what are your forms of birth control and

07:57

there there isn't one on the form

07:59

so uh that says ah same-sex marriage so

08:03

there's a lot of um heteronormative

08:06

language

08:07

that's used or forms or just updating

08:09

for options

08:10

on the medical side as one example

08:14

in the education side this is talking

08:17

about

08:17

giving resources and language to our

08:20

airmen especially to our leaders about

08:22

how to talk about it what is what does

08:24

the acronym mean and

08:26

how do the individual parts of that

08:28

acronym

08:29

where do they come together where do

08:31

they diverge

08:32

and how can leaders have be equipped

08:35

with a language that helps them talk to

08:37

their airmen

08:38

and some examples of that

08:42

are for instance when

08:45

the airmen and family readiness holds a

08:48

class they may say you know daddy and

08:50

daughter

08:51

class and if you're in a same-sex female

08:53

couple

08:54

well there there's no you in that phrase

08:57

or

08:58

you know mommy and preschoolers and it's

09:01

okay it's not to say to get rid of

09:03

that language it's to look at ways to

09:05

have inclusive language

09:07

that doesn't make folks who don't fit

09:10

that particular

09:12

category feel okay i remember my spouse

09:16

ann and i we were wing command couple

09:19

at kirtland and there was a marriage

09:23

retreat

09:24

that's great let you know let's go do a

09:26

marriage retreat well we picked up the

09:27

pamphlet when we looked at it

09:29

it was straight couples but we also

09:32

noticed

09:32

it was straight white couples there

09:34

there were no

09:36

biracial multiracial couples there were

09:38

you know no same-sex couples and

09:40

it's not that they were trying to um

09:43

sometimes

09:44

and sometimes these are called kind of

09:46

microaggressions in a way or

09:48

um where you're trying to do something

09:50

meaningful but the language or the way

09:52

you present it just falls flat

09:54

and so we're trying to identify those

09:56

and bring those forward

09:58

um you have an agenda i mean it's a

09:59

healthy initiative it is a

10:01

batch of industries it is it's to make

10:03

sure that our airmen are are doing well

10:05

so

10:05

um the last thing i want to talk about

10:07

real quick on this is

10:08

also talking with the office of general

10:10

counsel on senior leader security

10:12

because the lgbtq plus community as

10:15

everybody's aware of

10:18

off is often the target of harassment

10:21

hate and threats so we're working to

10:25

try to identify ways that we can

10:28

look at who is who is threatening what's

10:31

going on with that

10:32

and then mitigate it and address it so

10:35

brenda if we could shift gears just a

10:37

little bit

10:38

you and i have known each other

10:39

literally decades

10:41

but suffice to say our experiences in

10:45

the military

10:46

probably even though we're both special

10:48

operators by

10:50

uh trade probably couldn't be more

10:53

disparate uh i was wondering if you

10:55

would share

10:56

with us kind of your journey if you

10:59

would yes sir i will

11:00

um and most of my journey

11:04

was under don't ask don't tell and it's

11:07

been

11:07

an interesting journey because i came in

11:09

at the time when

11:10

women in combat that was being

11:13

overturned and women were allowed to

11:15

come in combat

11:16

um and also don't don't ask don't tell

11:18

was it in place

11:20

or put in place and then was in place

11:22

for years and so

11:24

um i when i first you know came into the

11:27

air force

11:28

kind of being here as a special operator

11:30

and talking about my

11:32

spouse my wife ann harrington would have

11:34

been impossible

11:35

so being here is

11:39

it's really special so thank you for

11:41

this opportunity to talk about this

11:44

in my early years under don't ask don't

11:46

tell and i know i speak for a lot of my

11:47

friends when i talk about this

11:49

um by the way we're celebrating the 10th

11:51

anniversary of the repeal

11:52

in 2011. we live really compartmented

11:56

lives because don't ask don't tell was

11:57

an interesting

11:59

policy in that it allowed you to be

12:03

in but you just couldn't say anything

12:06

and

12:07

people think well you just couldn't say

12:08

you were gay or lesbian or

12:11

bi i i get that but

12:14

that comes with a whole lot of um

12:17

difficulties and challenges uh that

12:20

people don't even realize

12:23

and don't you know so don't ask don't

12:25

tell so our friends

12:26

couldn't ask and we couldn't tell the

12:28

pro

12:29

well there's multiple problems with it

12:30

but it just required you to live this

12:33

super compartmented life where

12:35

i and my friends had to come to work

12:37

every day and do the mission

12:39

and support the mission that we love

12:42

without

12:42

ever saying anything about our family

12:45

our partner

12:46

or significant others and i tell my

12:49

friends who

12:50

did not live under don't ask don't tell

12:53

try

12:53

going through 20 hours without

12:56

mentioning anything that indicates

12:58

that you have a family or that you

13:02

are married or any of that try for 20

13:04

hours

13:05

or try it for 20 days so we did it for

13:07

20 almost 20 years

13:09

we had to live in a way that

13:12

we were allowed to show up every day and

13:14

be a part of the air force family

13:16

but not really have a family and those

13:19

compartments were really difficult

13:21

and things as simple as deployments

13:24

which as you know we deployed a lot and

13:27

when you deploy

13:28

usually your family drives you up to the

13:29

squadron drops you off you grab your

13:31

a-bags and everything and you go into

13:32

the squadron in the family

13:34

families come in and you kind of spend

13:36

those last moments together before you

13:37

jump on the rotator and go down range

13:40

um well i could never do that and so

13:43

my partner would drive me you know or

13:45

it's always zero darker

13:46

or zero dark 30 in the morning

13:50

so drive up to squadron and i would just

13:52

get out of the car and grab my bags

13:53

you know no hugs no nothing just okay

13:56

see ya kind of waving as if i'd taken an

13:58

uber

13:59

which didn't exist at the time but um it

14:02

was like that

14:03

and then i'd go into the squadron and

14:05

i'd be around everybody else and

14:07

try to you know kind of act like i'm

14:09

cool you know everything's good to go

14:11

and then you get on the rotator and you

14:12

go and then when you're downrange

14:14

everybody else if something were to have

14:16

happened to you they would have called

14:18

miss donna and

14:19

if um you know the worst happened to you

14:20

then somebody would have shown up

14:22

a team in in service dress and they

14:24

would have provided all the support

14:26

well that wasn't the case for us uh in

14:28

our community

14:30

we just had to hope that nothing

14:32

happened

14:33

and if something did that somehow our

14:36

friends

14:37

who knew in the squadron would be able

14:39

to go

14:40

handle things the best they could but

14:43

that was really

14:44

scary living like that and then on the

14:46

return side of deployments

14:48

the rotator pulls up and as you know we

14:50

had operation home coming every month

14:52

the rotator would come in and he had the

14:53

families and the dogs and the kids and

14:55

everybody in balloons and

14:57

everybody gets off the airplane and

14:59

greets their loved ones and

15:01

i just got off the airplane right walked

15:03

through and i mean i was happy to see

15:06

people but

15:07

i had to go outside and bring my bags

15:09

and kind of load them in a car and again

15:12

pretend like i just had somebody i knew

15:14

pick me up

15:15

when in fact it was you know my

15:17

significant other

15:18

so but as a squadron commander i really

15:21

loved that the air force

15:23

did all that so i supported it i went to

15:25

them and i wanted to support our

15:26

families like that so

15:28

i kind of lived this this dual life um

15:31

the other thing that was interesting

15:32

about living under don't ask don't tell

15:35

is it created this artificial

15:36

vulnerability in terms of security

15:39

clearances

15:40

because if we have this artificial

15:43

requirement or

15:44

or restriction on being

15:49

gay in the military because we decide

15:53

that then there was always the issue of

15:55

well you could be blackmailed if

15:56

if anybody finds out you're gay well

15:58

it's like why are we imposing that on

16:00

ourselves

16:01

um and so we once don't ask don't tell

16:05

was lifted it was like

16:06

okay yay that was easy we got rid of

16:08

that

16:09

security vulnerability literally for no

16:11

reason

16:12

that was in place the other thing too is

16:16

i love the air force i love abstract i

16:19

love the mission

16:20

but i could not be fully present i

16:22

wanted to i gave everything i could

16:24

but it was you know half of myself

16:27

because i always had

16:28

half of myself tied behind my back

16:30

because it was that compartment of who

16:31

my family was and what was important to

16:33

me outside of that

16:35

and so there was just and i know our

16:37

other airmen were very restricted by

16:39

that as well our other

16:41

lgbtq plus airmen so uh

16:44

let's if you don't want to i want to

16:46

talk a little bit about the air force

16:47

corps values

16:48

and air force core values were something

16:51

that i thought about a lot

16:53

and i was in the air force when when

16:55

they were created

16:57

and yeah you look at service before self

17:00

excellence and all we do

17:01

and integrity and service before self

17:04

that is something that i will tell you

17:06

that your lgbtq

17:08

members who were serving under don't ask

17:10

don't tell and today but really under

17:12

don't ask don't tell

17:14

they were all about service before self

17:16

i think

17:17

the secretary of defense couple weeks

17:19

ago said it really well in his dod pride

17:21

speech

17:22

he said they fought for our country even

17:24

when our country wouldn't fight for them

17:26

and we put everything we love and know

17:29

aside

17:30

to continue fighting uh to for our

17:32

country

17:33

so service before self is something i

17:35

really

17:37

relate to um excellence in all we do and

17:39

this is kind of a

17:40

one that my friends and i in the lgbtq

17:42

plus community

17:43

kind of joke about because we wanted we

17:45

wanted to be in so bad that we gave

17:47

everything we had to it and

17:48

we would joke that you could almost tell

17:51

who was uh in the lgbtq plus community

17:53

because they'd have all these awards

17:56

uh when you talk about excellence and

17:57

all you do including one of my friends

17:59

who's a retired

18:00

chief and for the 30 years that she was

18:02

in she had a quarterly or yearly award

18:04

every year that she served and part of

18:06

that was

18:08

wanting to be excellent and wanting to

18:10

serve but part of it was also

18:12

wanting to be above reproach so that if

18:14

somebody

18:16

that thought well i don't really like

18:18

you so i'm going to report you

18:20

to osi that you could find yourself in a

18:23

situation

18:24

that could ruin your career and so you

18:27

wanted to be that airman

18:28

that your commanders and your leadership

18:30

said you know what

18:32

she's so awesome he's so awesome like

18:35

we're just gonna keep going from here

18:37

and uh

18:38

and so that was you know that was

18:40

something that was always

18:42

present for us and then you know

18:43

integrity i i always had to live under

18:46

don't ask don't tell

18:47

with the nobody could ask me but people

18:49

in the

18:50

course of a normal conversation talk

18:52

about family we're talking about in the

18:52

air force all the time

18:54

which is great you know you're married

18:56

you have kids and so sometimes people

18:58

would just say

18:59

oh you're oh you're not married yet um

19:01

are you going to be or something very

19:03

innocent like that and i would say to

19:07

them

19:08

if i meet the man who was my match i

19:10

will marry him

19:11

and i'm knowing that was an

19:13

infinitesimally small chance probably

19:15

um but you know i suppose it would have

19:17

been true too

19:18

so that's that's kind of how i i handled

19:20

that but living under don't ask until

19:22

was very confusing the other thing i was

19:24

confusing for was not just the

19:26

lesbian gay bi members it was also

19:29

everybody like you and our other airmen

19:32

who

19:33

knew us so we had to be really careful

19:35

because we never wanted to put our

19:37

friends

19:37

and our co-workers in a bind so

19:40

those of us who knew about us also had

19:42

to kind of keep it hidden

19:44

so they had and if um

19:47

you if we wanted to share ourselves

19:50

authentically with our co-workers now

19:53

we're putting them in a position of

19:55

having to

19:55

hold that in case something were to come

19:57

up in an investigation or whatever

19:59

it really just put everybody in this

20:00

strange bind yeah so

20:02

when it was repealed that was that was a

20:04

fantastic

20:06

yeah before before we shift to that i

20:08

just want to comment on the core values

20:09

because i

20:10

i love the way you laid that out maybe

20:12

one more acronym

20:13

uh that we should uh go through doma

20:15

doma can you explain that

20:17

uh to us in our audience yes sir so

20:20

domo was passed in the 1990s defense of

20:22

marriage act and it

20:24

stated that marriage would be recognized

20:26

only between one man and one woman

20:28

in 2013 the supreme court took

20:32

a case called windsor versus u.s and

20:35

this was actually a case about taxes

20:40

but it ended up implementing

20:44

the policies that we have today in the

20:45

federal government with regard to

20:47

recognizing marriage

20:48

and so by overturning the defense of

20:51

marriage act

20:52

they recognized that the federal

20:56

government

20:57

would recognize same-sex marriages i've

20:59

heard you state earlier

21:00

hey okay there's been some repeals of

21:02

these acts and uh

21:04

so forth but that didn't just say hey

21:07

gay and lesbian transgender said

21:09

you're free to join the military

21:12

they've always been in the military

21:14

absolutely sir

21:15

right i mean don't let me uh steal your

21:17

words on that but

21:18

you know i think from that standpoint

21:20

it's uh

21:22

100 yeah always been we've always been

21:25

in the military and

21:27

that is so it's not that suddenly the

21:29

doors were open

21:30

and all the lgbtq plus people rushed in

21:33

and deluded the military

21:34

we just like i said we just showed up to

21:37

work

21:38

again on september 20th 2011 and kept

21:40

doing our thing

21:42

but we could do it even better and just

21:43

feel better well

21:45

brenda thanks uh that uh i know that

21:48

that

21:49

uh there's a lot uh to digest

21:52

historical wise but the fact the point

21:54

is you've been an airman

21:56

a serving airmen through all of this

21:59

uh historical time frame yes sir uh and

22:02

when we you know we kind of stated up

22:03

front the initiatives that

22:05

lit has is underway which is pretty

22:06

healthy uh just from the small list of

22:09

that you articulate there's there's been

22:11

a lot so i guess really

22:12

the point is there's been a lot of

22:13

ground covered and a lot of positive

22:15

ground

22:16

uh but but this is maybe only the and

22:18

it's not the end

22:19

it maybe is the end of the beginning

22:22

listener thank you again for joining us

22:24

today we hope that you were encouraged

22:26

and that you were challenged to use more

22:27

inclusive language and to look out for

22:28

your fellow airmen

22:30

don't forget to subscribe to our podcast

22:32

and catch up on the latest news from

22:33

around the command at [aetc.af](http://aetc.af)

22:36

dot mil hire aatc public affairs team

22:38

thank you for joining us and again

22:40

i'm miriam thurber and i'll see you next

22:42

time on the air force starts here

22:44

podcast