What is your role and area of focus here at Vanderbilt University?

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Ethics and Society at the Divinity School. As associate dean, I oversee the curriculum, programs, admissions and student services at the Divinity School. My research and teaching focus in the area of religion, ethics and social change—particularly for those who are most marginalized in the political economy.

Who were the key people that influenced you and helped you on your journey?

Numerous professors across my academic career, all of whom were passionate about social justice and prophetic leadership in their own ways. But also some key administrators who modeled what it meant to step up to shape and serve institutions seeking positive social change. I’ve never really bought into a “one primary mentor” model but rather had a web of people with different gifts that saw and nurtured things in me. I’ve also had several faith communities and leaders that nurtured and held my complexity along the way.

What do you love about sexual identity and/or gender identity/expression?

That these expressions are a conduit for sacred love and creativity.

What does your sexual identity, gender identity and/or gender expression add to your role here at Vanderbilt?

I am keenly aware of how everyday institutional practices can wound, heal and celebrate persons. I bring a body-level awareness of that to my administrative role and teaching.

What do you want others to know about LGBTQI communities at Vanderbilt and beyond?

Vanderbilt Divinity School is one of the most generative and amazing places in the nation—and perhaps the world—for nurturing queer religious leaders. We aren’t perfect by any measure but, from the administrative leadership to faculty and staff to students, we are seeking to live out our varied faiths in ways that celebrate and embrace our sexual and gender identities.

What are some key moments within LGBTQI history that are important to you?

I am deeply appreciative of leaders who live/d their lives at the intersection of emancipatory practice and saw economic, racial, gender and sexuality justice as intertwined. Here I think of folks like Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, Bev Harrison and Audre Lorde. But I will also never forget the feeling when I was actually able to marry my wife legally and later be able to put my name on my son’s birth certificate. I loathe being dependent on the state for security but I also recognize the tireless work of so many activists who laid the groundwork for that treasured, although privileged, recognition.

What message do you have for the Vanderbilt community about serving and supporting LGBTQI people and communities?

We are integrated, whole persons who require every system and area of the university to think about how we are being embraced.

What mark do you hope to leave on Vanderbilt, your community, the nation, the world?

To be a small part of Tikkun Olam (or the repair/healing of the world).

What is a fun or interesting fact about you?

I played college tennis but now prefer less competitive pursuits like kayaking or gardening.