I run a continuous miner form. I was harassed as a red hat which is your first six months, as a coal miner, to become a coal miner. Later on did it escalate to a lot more violence, destruction of my personal property, my vehicle, my locker my clothing, I’ve had my lockers broken into I’ve had a screwdriver taken to a brand new explorer which I just bought I’ve had my wheel weights taken off and pounded on my tires to make my car steer one way coming off of a one lane mountain that had a complete drop off. I’ve had a lot of instances where I’ve had supposedly friends call me out in front of you know, 16 employees for the coal company. Call me names, make fun of it, say they wish all faggots would die. And then look at me, the managers would look at me when others employees would say that, to get a response out of me, to get a you know. Later did I found out that when I filed papers to my superintendent those papers that I filled out went straight into the trash, was never put into my file. It was like I was their amusement, I was their toy to discriminate against

It would come to the point I would actually cut and load my own coal out and bolt a place by myself so I knew it was bolted right and I wouldn’t get hurt.

I actually went to a mining inspector, a federal mining inspector and asked them what’s my rights, why can’t I be protected. They actually looked at me, right to my face and told me, you don’t have no rights. And as a federal inspector and state inspectors, you have no protection. And they just didn’t care.

I went back and carried these people out of the mines when they got hurt. I took pride in making sure the next man come on didn’t get hurt. They didn’t give a damn about me, they didn’t care if I died. It was like, accidents happen. I’ve heard this before underground, accidents happen every day. I wasn’t going to be an accident. That was not going to happen, not to me.

When I come out the mines for the last time, without being, where they tried to hit me behind the miner. That was the final straw, because, even try to keep working there and become a victim or shake my tail on me, it was as simple as that.

I come out and I had a security come up to the top of the hill and escort me off the property. I went home and I told Burly, and he supported me a hundred percent. We went from there, we found as soon as we filed for a lawsuit, it kind of blowed up majorly. I started getting help from everybody in the near West Virginia, even out of West Virginia, I was getting support, and that made me feel good. That gave me more inspiration to keep fighting for those who can’t fight, or are scared to fight, or don’t want to be put in that predicament.

I’m actually now a store manager. In four months I become a store manager. I bust my tail to make sure that nobody can use anything against me. They can’t say, well he’s doing that because he’s a gay. No, I make a point to outdo people at my job just to show that because I’m gay, it ain’t a handicap.

But I just don’t want people going through what I had to go through. Because I know how painful it is. I know what it is to sit in your truck and cry, going to work, coming home. How miserable it is. You just want to lay down and say heck with it, I don’t want no more of it. You just got to dig down deep and find it. And just keep going.