

# OUSAA

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

# PRIDE, POLICIES, AND POST-SECONDARY SPACES

LGBTQ+ VOICES ON ONTARIO CAMPUSES

**CONTENT WARNING:** Transphobia, Threats to Trans People

# foreword by Linda, the intern

Everything in my life is categorized as **BKS** or **AFS**, also known as **Before Kristen Stewart** and **After Kristen Stewart**, respectively. Honestly, I've always known I liked girls, so it was game over from there; it just happened that Robert Pattinson also existed, so I sort of realized that perhaps there was some substance to this queer thing #thankstwilight. Aside from general internalized homophobia during high school, I've come out pretty unscathed, in part because I don't think my immigrant father paid attention when I explained the words "bisexual" and "queer", and because my mother truly only cares that she can flex about my degree (and they both just want me to be happy, but that's not as funny). But I really came into my identity because of the LGBTQ+ students on my campus – a campus that was filled with hilarious and loyal people who taught me to be aggressively me. I was given a safe space, within my campus services and groups and in classrooms. However, I'm aware that my situation is unique and many LGBTQ+ students in Ontario do not feel comfortable or safe on their campuses due to their identity.

Two Spirited and LGBTQ+ students deserve to have their voices heard and represented at their post-secondary institutions, both on campus and in academia as a whole. This publication is an attempt to address that gap, while understanding that LGBTQ+ students continue to do the frontline advocacy work for their own needs and protections.

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) is proud to release "Pride, Policies, and Post-secondary Spaces," a series of blogs about pride and the LGBTQ+ experience written by students across Ontario.

We encourage and support you to be unapologetically proud of your identity.

## about ousa

OUSA represents the interests of approximately 150,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at eight institutions across Ontario. Our vision is for an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario. To achieve this vision we've come together to develop solutions to challenges facing higher education, build broad consensus for our policy options, and lobby government to implement them.

**edited and designed by**

Linda Cabral (the aforementioned intern)

# Multiple Closets, a Few Planes, and Finding a Place to be Safe

*Kelvin Sun, University of Waterloo*

I am GAY, ASIAN, and HEARING IMPAIRED.

So to me, Pride Month is not only a time to raise awareness and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, but also a time to represent visible minorities and people with disabilities.

Growing up in Hong Kong, within a Chinese environment, I was very self-conscious about my hearing disability as well as my sexual orientation. My parents are typical Chinese parents who want their son to marry a woman one day and continue the bloodline of the family. My parents are neutral about the LGBTQ+ community, because it doesn't affect them directly. But I believe when it comes to the idea of their son being gay, they will go from neutral to against - strongly against. That's why **I never came out to them**. I know my parents love me, but not the real me. I always feel bad about not telling them about my sexuality, **I feel like I am deceiving them**. I constantly avoid conversations with them, because I am afraid that my secret will slip out unintentionally during a casual conversation, and then they will disown me.

Going to university has definitely been a whole new chapter in my life. **Since I am studying in Canada and my parents are back in Hong Kong, I feel like I am able to be my true self**. In first year, I was still shy and afraid to socialize with people, but I managed to overcome this.

"This is a chance to be free", I thought to myself. So in second year, I started volunteering at Glow Centre with a friend. My first term volunteering at Glow Centre was amazing.

It was the first time I met people in the LGBTQ+ community. I no longer feel alone, I feel included. This volunteer experience also opened me up and I became less afraid to talk to people. In the next two terms, I am taking on an executive role with Glow Centre to advocate for safe and inclusive space on campus as well as planning fun events with the executive team to make LGBTQ+ students feel included and that they belong. **This past June,**

**I had the chance to go to my first pride parade** with Glow Centre! It was an amazing and eye-opening experience, that I will never forget.



# Gender, Sexuality, Race, and I Don't Mean Drag Race

*Student at University of Waterloo*

A STUDENT WAS PROMPTED TO REFLECT ON THEIR CONCEPTIONS OF PRIDE, AND WHAT PRIDE MEANS TO THEM - AND HOW THEIR EXPERIENCE HAS CHANGED OVER TIME.

**In a word, wow.** That's how I felt when I learned to be proud of who I am. Twenty years is a long time to go without saying something, and I only realized after my twentieth year on earth that I opened up to a truth I didn't realize I was holding; I am a trans man. There was a period in my life – high school specifically – where I kind of already knew this.

I vividly remember a time when I was fifteen when I was finally coming into my own. Little me was just coming to grips with the fact that I was not only a person of colour, but a QUEER person of colour – and not just that, I was a queer and TRANS person of colour.

**And in a word, terrible.** That's how I felt when I realized how hard my life would be sometimes simply because of who I was. Though it hurt way back when my mom said she was okay with my bi-ness because it “seemed to be a trend”. It's funny to think of a time when I only thought I was bisexual, because being transgender is a whole other level of oppression that I haven't scratched the surface of yet. But, seeing as I was an openly bisexual person of colour living in a town where white and Catholic was the norm, **there wasn't much room for me to explore both my gender and my sexuality.** High school was a terrifying and anxiety-inducing experience to have to pretend to be one way for so long.

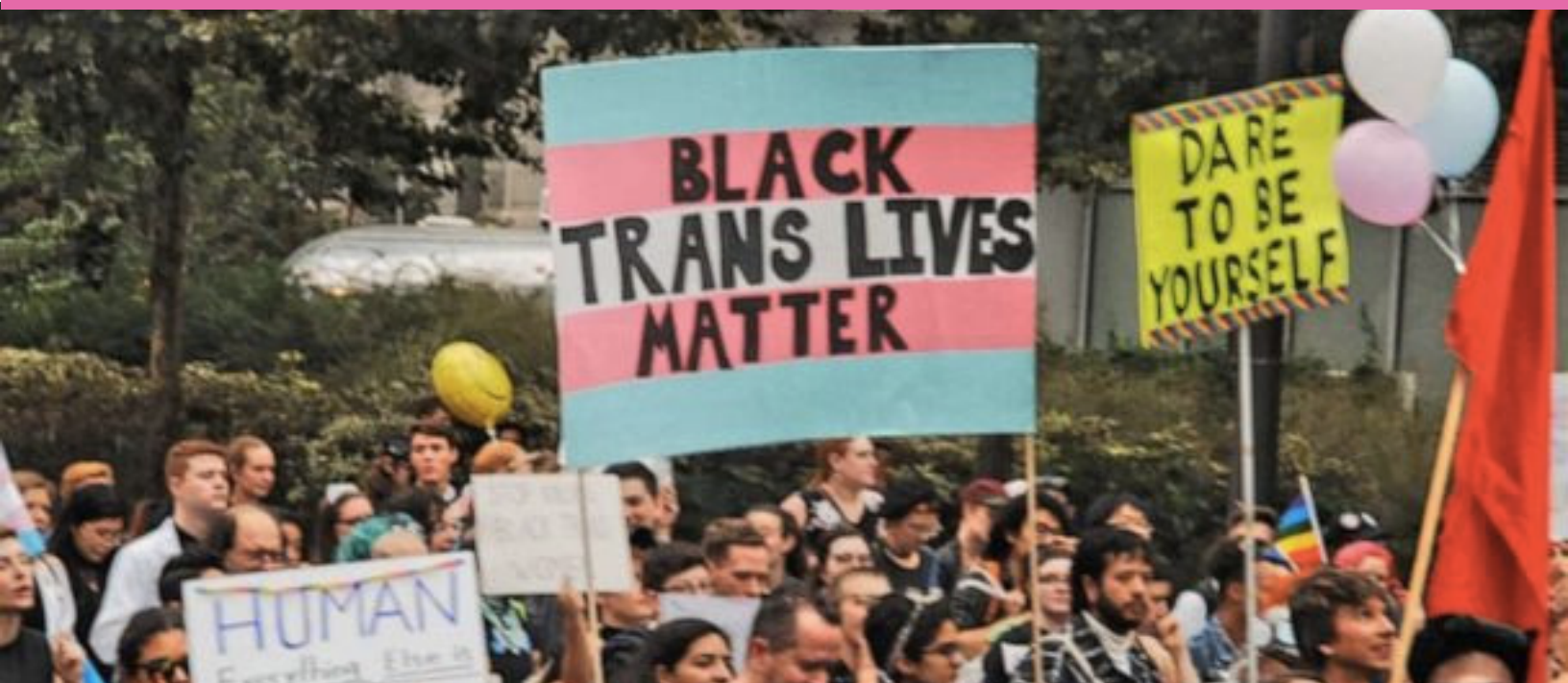
Coming into university and joining the ranks of University of Waterloo's Drag Club helped me realize that I could be both trans and bi without having to be scared of my truth. Don't get me wrong, it's not easy all the time. Sometimes it is easier than others to be proud of who you are when not everyone sees you as a good thing. So, does it sting when I get misgendered and referred to as she/her? Absolutely. Does it make me mad that I can't always stand up for myself? Yes. But does it deter me from being a proud person? No, absolutely not.



I recognize my privilege where I do have it; I was born and raised Catholic, I come from an upper-middle class family, I do not have to pay for OSAP. I know that being queer, trans, and a person of colour does not exempt me from being an ally to my community and other communities I am a part of. But it is important to remember that queer and trans people of colour, especially Black trans people, are systemically disadvantaged. It is a truth we must all come to terms with first before any progress can be done. It is a truth I grapple with every day. And in a way, it is the truth that has followed me along all these years.

If you are a Queer, Trans, person of colour, and you're reading this, I want you to know that you are beautiful and valid just the way you are. Dare to be proud, because hell, I know how hard it can be sometimes. Dare to apply to that job you want even if you're the only person of colour there. Dare to resist, however loudly or quietly you can.

Being a Queer, Trans, person of colour is hard, but it is something to be proud of.



Are you a LGBTQ+ student at the University of Waterloo? **The Glow Centre** is the oldest continually-running university-based LGBTQ group in Canada. Run entirely by dedicated student volunteers, they offer a wide variety of discussion groups, social events, advocacy opportunities, awareness campaigns, resources, and information. Glow promotes a healthy attitude towards all sexual orientations and gender identities. They also have peer support hours for confidential peer support from trained volunteers.

# Projects, Professors, and Privilege

## *Student at Laurentian University*

During my second year of university, I took a course where the entire class was based around a project - the midterm, the final, all of it.

The project needed to be done in a group and the professor let us choose who we wanted to work with. Since I had a friend in the class we decided to work together, and we added two other people to the group. I knew these guys from other classes that I had taken, and was confident that they were suited for the project based on their skills, but beyond that I had never really talked to them.



We got together one weekend to work on the project, just a few weeks before the midterm. It was fun at first - four guys hanging out and working on what had quickly turned into a passion project - then things got political. We started talking about trans people.

I was stealthy; only one of these three guys knew that I was transgender. I really wanted to like all of them, I wanted to be friends with them, and this conversation was sort of a make or break moment for that. One of the guys said something that was a small red flag, but I honestly thought that things were fine - one misplaced comment isn't enough for me to try and cut ties.

We were just passed the midterm when things shifted dramatically.

The guy that put up the red flag was in another class with me, and we were sitting together talking about the project. Another guy came in, sat beside him, and they started chatting. Throughout the three hour class their chatting turned into a whispered debate, then a whispered argument, which escalated into one of them storming off halfway through the class.

The entire time, the guy I was doing the project with, the guy that was hanging out with me every other week, was saying that he did not think trans people should be allowed to live.

### **And I was trans.**

I freaked out. I didn't know what to do, but my flight or fight response was going off like crazy. I thought about ignoring it. I tried to pretend that it wasn't a big deal but apparently

when you text your friends “lol my group mate wants trans people dead,” as a trans person, your friends (rightfully) freak out too. I was convinced to email the professor, and to tell someone in authority what I heard. So I did.

People say I’m lucky. I live in Canada. I’m in university. I have transitioned, I pass as male all the time, and I have a loving girlfriend. These people are right. I have privilege. I am lucky.

But not lucky enough, because as the professor pointed out to me I was in a situation where I was spending large amounts of time with a man that wanted me dead.

The professor asked me to leave the project and do something else to make up for the final. So I did, because honestly, that conversation with the amazing and accepting professor made me realize that my life could be in danger, and that the project was not worth my life.

Nothing else happened with that guy. He just ignored me for the rest of the semester and I haven’t seen him since.

But I applied for a job this summer, and they wanted to know if I had any experience. When I asked them to specify, they practically described the project I had to stop working on because my group mate didn’t think I should be allowed to live. I had to say no, that I didn’t have that experience because I hadn’t finished the project. “A shame,” they said. I never even got a rejection letter.

But I’m lucky.

Because I’m still alive. Others aren’t.

lol my group mate wants trans people dead

?????

what???

you have to talk to the prof

or the dean

that's not okay

yeah im going to email the prof tonight about it

kinda worried about what he'll do

***If you’re trans and in crisis, or if you just need to talk, please give Trans Lifeline a call. It is a Trans-led organization, open 24/7.***

***Call Toll-Free: 1-877-330-6366***



# Institutionalized Transphobia in Post-secondary

*Nathan Barnett, Trent University Durham GTA*



“So, do you plan on getting any surgeries?” are words I heard from practically a stranger at 8 AM one Tuesday morning before class. Ironically enough, it was a class on Queer Feminism and the topic of the day had been Trans Feminism. Institutionalized transphobia loves to rear its head in interpersonal conversations just like that.

I’ve never understood the fetishization, honestly. Medical stuff grosses me out - why would I want to ask a stranger if they have plans to go through invasive and energy draining procedures? Then again, transphobia has so othered trans people that asking these questions becomes akin to watching a train wreck – they just can’t help themselves. In that instance, I shot my classmate down. I told her that her questions were invasive and rude. But that’s not every situation on campus.

Sometimes it doesn’t come from classmates, but instead from professors. “Sorry, I don’t teach that. Maybe you could educate me,” is something I’ve heard after correcting transphobia from a professor of a sociology class called “Social Inequality.” How can we respond to that? I didn’t. Maybe it was cowardly, maybe it was self preservation. This was the first day of class, and I didn’t want to anger or alienate someone who was going to mark me for the next four months. So instead, I held my tongue and went back to my seat.

**I’ve dealt with transphobia long before I came to university.** Throughout high school, on the streets, in the workplace. Coming into university I had two opposing ideas of what I was going to face. There was the optimist in me who believed, because I was taking Gender Studies and Sociology, that transphobia wouldn’t be an issue. And then there was the angry, righteous man in me who dared anyone to say something transphobic



and thrived on conflict, putting them in their place. In actuality, neither thing happened. As much as I daydream, oddly enough, about angrily shoving transphobia back in people's faces, I am not good with conflict. But I can't say that there wasn't any.

In my first year, I took a writing class on how to write at an academic level. Nothing really political or debatable there – it was about how to properly use MLA or APA in papers. Or, at least, nothing political should have been there. We were taught how to write an opinion piece in response to one of two articles – both of which had to do with pronouns and were filled with transphobia. Thinking about it now still angers and frustrates me.

## How is it appropriate to ask a trans student to analyze transphobia in an academic setting when that's my every waking moment?

I realise now, maybe I shouldn't have been so angry – after all, that class was just another waking moment. I ended up emailing that professor, informing them of the trauma that resulted for me, the anger I felt at being graded on how well I defended myself – when me and people like me are murdered for speaking our truth.

Being asked to write about LGBTQ\* voices on campus, I find myself thinking of times like these. Of how institutionalized transphobia has manifested itself in microaggressions and assignments that cis professors think are fun and topical. How do I, a trans man who very loudly says screw traditional masculinity, use my voice to fight against it? The truth is, we can't always. Sometimes it's safer for us not to use our voices. But the fact that it isn't safe for us to use our voices means we have to. The world, academia included, won't change unless we force it to.

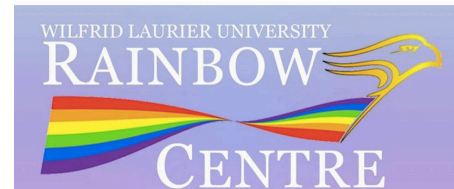


# LGBTQ2SI+ RESOURCES ON CAMPUSES

TALK TO SOMEONE, GET INFORMATION, AND LEARN



Queens University  
**Alma Mater Society**



Wilfrid Laurier University  
(Waterloo Campus)  
**Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union**



Brock University  
**Brock University Student**



Wilfrid Laurier University  
(Brantford Campus)  
**Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union**



McMaster University  
**McMaster Student Union**  
*Check out their Navigating Pride series on their socials!*



For Sexual and Gender Diversity  
University of Waterloo  
**The Federation of Students**



Trent University Durham GTA  
**Trent Durham Student Association**



fierté@l'ul  
Laurentian University/ Université Laurentienne  
**Students' General Association**  
**Association Générale des Étudiants**

# MORE RESOURCES

TALK TO SOMEONE, GET INFORMATION, AND LEARN



LGBT YOUTHLINE

## PEER SUPPORT HOTLINE

Service is open from 4:00-9:30 PM Sunday-Friday.

Call Toll-Free: **1.800.268.9688**

In the Toronto Area: **416.962.9688**

Text Them: **647.694.4275**

E-mail: [askus@youthline.ca](mailto:askus@youthline.ca)

Chat Online on their [site](#).



TRANS LIFELINE

## PEER SUPPORT AND CRISIS HOTLINE

Trans-led organization open 24/7.

Call Toll-Free: **1-877-330-6366**



## PEER SUPPORT AND CRISIS HOTLINE

Provides professional counselling, information, and referrals for post-secondary students in Ontario.

Call Toll-Free: **1-866-925-5454**



HOPE FOR WELLNESS HELP LINE

Offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada.

Telephone and online counselling are available in English, French, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.

Call Toll-Free: **1-855-242-3310**

Chat Online on their [site](#).



Rainbow Health Ontario

Santé arc-en-ciel Ontario

RAINBOW HEALTH ONTARIO

Promotes the health of Ontario's Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ communities and improve their access to services

Find their resources through their [site](#).