

# THE TERLOPER

Virginia Tech's LGBTQ Magazine

Fall 2016, Issue #5



# Letter from the Editor

We were in Next Door Bake Shop by the windows—Matty, Katie, and I—on a rather chilly November day when Matty popped the question, “Would you like to be the next editor of *The Interloper*?” Of course I was ecstatic about this opportunity to carry on the metaphorical torch and keep the magazine growing—getting the opportunity to be the fresh face of *The Interloper* is quite the honor. I was excited (and still am) to not only keep Matty’s vision of the journal alive, but also update the magazine with my own ideas: more author-editor interaction, magazine sponsored events, new fundraising opportunities and more visibility on campus. Essentially, I envisioned *The Interloper* to be more of a community.

But, I also couldn’t help but feel overcome with apprehension and doubt. *Could I actually do this?*

I knew how much work running this magazine would be—gathering authors and editors, fundraising (my least favorite thing), and balancing the second year of my PhD program. There was no way that I could do this. Could I?

Despite my overwhelming anxiety, onward I went. I gathered a great team of editors that I knew would help guide each article in a great direction. I fundraised and made new connections between the magazine and offices across campus. I organized a Pride month event.

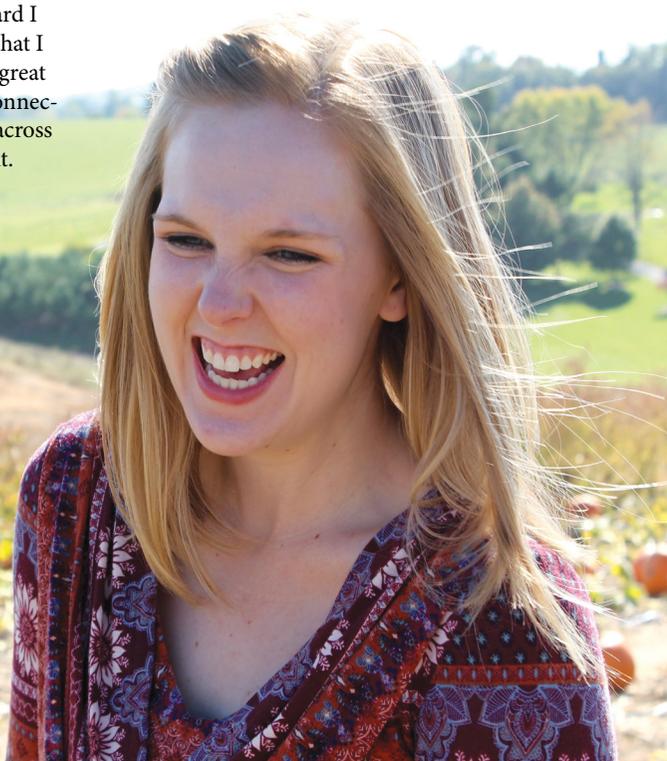
But this issue is not the product of solely my labor. *We* made this issue of *The Interloper* together, collaboratively. The consistent support, dedication, and collaboration of each editor, author, donor, artist, interviewee, and you—the reader—made this issue possible. And I think that is what I love about *The Interloper* so much.

To reflect my new goals for *The Interloper*, we decided to highlight the idea of community in each piece in this issue. For the first time, we are featuring multiple collaboratively written pieces each addressing the idea of what community means to each of us such as “A Virginia Tech Rugger” (p. 29), “Now and Then” (p. 18) and a tribute piece to the victims of Orlando (p. 6). Even our cover features our community on campus, one that claims that “We’re here and queer.” It is important to us to not only unapologetically highlight who the LGBTQ community is here at Tech, but also to emphasize the ways in which our community is diverse, welcoming, and home. Community is what drives us to do what we do. Community is who we are. Community is who we aspire to be.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Interloper*. Please share this copy with your communities and come join ours!

In solidarity,  
Maggie

Photo by Jessica Herling



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# CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: THE NEW LGBTQ+ RESOURCE CENTER

BY SAMANTHA SHIFFLETT

A new LGBTQ+ center has officially opened on Virginia Tech's campus. Clubs such as the student-led HokiePRIDE and the faculty-led LGBTQ Caucus, among other organizations like The Interloper, have been requesting this new center for a year now.

The official name for this new center is the LGBTQ+ Resources Center.

“So, it’s LGBTQ(+) plus all those other groups. The plus (+) is an acknowledgement of those that the LGBTQ name does not encompass,” said Luis Garay, the director of the new resource center. “It is encompassing of the center, who the center is meant for, but also the rest of the community.”

The center’s main purpose is to provide students who are LGBTQ+ with resources, support and a stable community. Garay states that their their first year goal for the center is to build a community. They eventually want to build an advisory board built from the community that would help make decisions regarding its future.

This new space found on the third floor of Squires – the bookshelves on LGBTQ+ diversity, the chalkboard wall and the furniture varying in every color of the rainbow – clearly expresses just how expansive Garay’s goals are for the LGBTQ+ center.



Photos by Vrajbala Tejaswi Mukkala

“I make it very important to note to the students that this space is entirely theirs: what goes in the space and what gets to stay there. Because it is important to me for the members to feel they have control over the center. It makes them feel as if they are a part of something.” 

The LGBTQ+ Resource Center is open anytime Squires is open. For more information, call Luis Garay at 540-231-8584.

# Winter is Coming

by Devin Koch

*“The day will come when your joy will become ashes in your mouth.” – Tyrion Lannister, A Clash of Kings.*

Two miles southwest of Eustis, Nathan and I journey along the railroad with flashlights and pocket knives on our backs. Through the barbed wire fence a tuft mound rises just past the sunken bed chiseled by a now dry river. A burnt circle holds a fiery tail that whips to the night. The arms of the willow tree fold downward like a shredded umbrella. We place the fallen branches side by side along the trunk, building a castle where he is Ser Loras and I King Renly.

The walls guard us from lions, dire wolves, dragons, wildlings, and yes even the white walkers. At night, we lie together in the same sleeping bag hoping a black stag whose antlers hold the moon will appear. His muzzle kissing a gold rose before the frost nips at its buds, like my lips to Nathan's. From the windows we watch the clouds clash against each other. Their armies in the dark battlefield creating wounds where flakes of ash fall seeping through the fortress and onto our mouths.

# The Notre Dame Hammer Thrower

by Matty Bennett

Hey Dominick, do you remember when we were on a big  
red bench and that bench was next to a shaved ice stand

and there were lots of happy little children squealing  
and parents corralling their kids and happy hetero couples

not too different from us and I read a poem I wrote just for you  
about fucking and dancing and cuddling and us and that poem

maybe had a few good lines: *in that first touch there was possibility /  
highway arteries being constructed / spreading out across the country*

and do you remember when that poem literally ruined everything-  
like your sweet cherry gelato and the warm summer night and

my sharp jawline and stubble for you and oh our future together  
because it was only the second time we'd met and I was acting

like we were birds rushing south for winter but thank God I can  
still see your gorgeous photos on my Facebook newsfeed



# ORLANDO: A REFLECTION

BY ANDREW PREGNALL



**O**n Saturday, June 11, I went to my first ever Pride parade in Washington, D.C. An afternoon of queering it up with my friends followed by dykes on bikes, drag queens, and a deluge of condoms was akin to a christening, and I thought no one could shake my queerness from me.

On Sunday, June 12, I sat down at the kitchen table and scrolled through my morning news sites only to find reports of the Pulse nightclub shooting.

Anger, sadness, disbelief. My queerness had been shaken from me.

The Pride festival was somber that day, only made marginally better by Naomi Smalls performing and then telling the crowd that being themselves would be the biggest middle finger to the haters.

On Monday, June 13, I went to my internship in the Rayburn

House office building and spent the day in an office where C-SPAN and CNN played non-stop. I was shaken, distracted, and finished no work that day; I did, however, write letters to all of my representatives. Writing is cathartic – it should make the reader and the writer *feel* – and it was the only way I knew how to deal with the emotions in and around me. Below is the section of my letter which addressed my emotions:

**I am tired** because, as a student at Virginia Tech, I bore the weight of attending the school known for being the site of the nation's largest mass shooting. When I first

tell people I go to school at Virginia Tech, their first reactions are not “Great school!”, “What are you studying?”, or “Go Hokies!” but rather “They’ve had a lot of shootings.”, “Do you feel safe?”, and “Don’t get shot.” Whenever something bad happens at Virginia Tech, there is inevitably a line in every news article that reads “Virginia Tech, the site of the April 16th massacre ...” because other writers are apparently incapable of contextualizing my university in any other way. Nevertheless, I am proud to be a Hokie. I am proud of how my university comes together in times of difficulty,

and I am proud that we do not let ourselves be defined by that singular day in 2007. Nobody at Virginia Tech enjoyed holding the ‘Site of Largest Mass Shooting’ label assigned to us by the massacre; in fact, I would say that we all hate it. I know, however, that the only thing we would hate more would be to give that label to another

place. Unfortunately, tragedy has struck, and Virginia Tech has lost its label.

**I am tired** because I have been robbed. People older than me often speak about events that they will never forget. Events for which they can remember exactly where they were at the time – 9/11, the assassination of President Kennedy, the Virginia Tech massacre, to name a few. Until this past Sunday, I never fully understood these memories because I did not have any. However, I will forever remember where I was – sitting at the kitchen table – when I learned that over one hundred of my fellow members in the queer >>

NEVER HAS THERE BEEN  
AN EVENT IN MY LIFETIME  
WHICH HAS SPOKEN  
VOLUMES ABOUT SO  
MANY OF THE ISSUES  
FACING OUR COUNTRY:  
TERRORISM, RACISM,  
GUN CONTROL, AND  
QUEER RIGHTS ALL  
ROLLED INTO ONE.

community were either killed or injured in an act of terror and hate. I understand why it may be hard for non-queer people to understand why this event has so shaken the queer community, but let me try to explain. Queer nightclubs are – and always have been – a place of retreat and sanctuary for the queer community. To have an act of terror aimed specifically at the one space that we have long held as safe is akin to being violated at a fundamental level of our being. This was an invasion and massacre of the Queer community. It was fueled by a hatred of our people found around the world. But, more importantly, it was fueled by a hatred of our people found in this very country. Public figures will be quick to blame ISIS and Islam for the radicalization of the shooter; however, they must take a long look within and realize that any homophobic and transphobic statements made by them, any refusal to extend workplace protections, marriage rights, or medical care, and any campaign to characterize trans people as mentally ill in order to prevent them from using the bathroom has contributed just as much to the culture of violence against queer people that has plagued our country since its inception.

**I am tired** because I look around our country and see hate for Muslims and immigrants and the disabled people and people of color and queers and for the people that hold many or all of these identities at once. I see leadership that either espouses this hate or I see leadership that is too cowardly to speak out against it because it may affect them or their party

come election time. Never has there been an event in my lifetime which has spoken volumes about so many of the issues facing our country: terrorism, racism, gun control, and queer rights all rolled into one.

Over the next week, no one around me understood what was wrong. Co-workers would offer pithy remarks of “It’s so sad,” or “I hope Congress does something this time.” C-SPAN still played in the office and I got to hear every word out of every representative’s mouth until the ‘issue’ fell by the wayside. In fact, so much wrong happened in the weeks after Pulse that four weeks later felt like a lifetime.

Our theme for this issue is community. In that vein, I feel it’s important to recognize that the thoughts and experiences above are my own, and to recognize that everyone had their own thoughts and experiences following Pulse. I also feel it’s important to recognize that the majority of people killed or injured that night were not just members of the Queer community but were also members of the Latinx community; our queer identities do not exist in vacuums and our differences are what should make us stronger.

Finally, we should listen to each other’s experiences and not let the memory of Pulse – what it stood for and what it stands for – fade. The names on the following page represent a small part of those lost in the fight for queer liberation. Honor them as best you know how. 



# THE POWER OF MUSIC

## The Importance of Music within the LGBTQ Community

by Rachel Hargrave

*Illustration by OpenClipart-Vectors via Pixabay edited by Sarah Gugercin*

*“All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music”*  
- Walter Pater

In many ways, music is the epitome of art, communication, and human connection. As a writer, I will freely admit that my preferred mode of creativity is lesser compared to what music is capable of achieving. There is not another art form that is as successful at connecting, communicating, and motivating people. There is a reason “Les Miserables” asks, “Do you hear the people sing?” Because of this power, music makes an ideal medium for social commentary and inspiring social change.

Blood Orange’s newest album, “Freetown Sound”, feels like “To Pimp a Butterfly”. It takes that powerful and assertive social commentary that is overtly present in Kendrick’s work and applies it to a broader range of issues: racism, sexism, and homophobia. Racism and what it is to be black in today’s culture certainly comprises the core of this album, but there are other

complex themes occurring around that central idea. These themes make this album accessible and successful in spreading its message. As Entertainment Weekly mentions in their recent interview with Dev Hynes, the man behind “Blood Orange”, he describes “Freetown Sound” as being “for everyone told they’re not black enough, too black, too queer, not queer the right way ...

it's a clapback." Additionally, Hynes tells EW, "being attacked for your gender, race, sexuality - I live with those things daily." One of the most popular songs off the album, "Augustine," discusses the concept of homophobia in religion. Hynes says that religion is "about this worshipping of trying to feel a warmth and flesh," and the irony that religion would "shut out this very large aspect of love." He says that throughout the album, he took "writing [he] viewed as pretty religious and making [the lyrics] more homoerotic." This unique and subversive angle is clever and fascinating, and it certainly puts Dev Hynes on the forefront of LGBTQ representation in music.

Additionally, Frank Ocean has long had ties to the LGBTQ community. Back in 2012, around the release of his album "Channel Orange", Ocean released a statement on his tumblr. He wrote of his first love when he was 19 years old, stating, "By the time I realized I was in love, it was malignant. It was hopeless. There was no escaping, no negotiating with the feeling ... I wrote to keep myself busy and sane ... I tried to channel overwhelming emotions." His use of he/him pronouns throughout the statement were the subtle signifier that the first love he was referring to had a lot of complications wrapped up in it. However, he finishes his letter on a positive note, saying "I feel like a free man. If I listen closely ... I can hear the sky falling too." As Pitchfork points out, "Hip-hop and R&B can be woefully conservative when it comes to sexuality." In fact, Ocean's statement caused immediate reactions, then re-reactions, and then deeper discussions about the real reasons behind those reactions. Pitchfork states that "'Channel Orange's' language is admirably and skillfully inclusive. Rather than getting listeners to comb through the lyrics for certain words or references, Ocean mixes things up so well and coats the entire affair with heavy doses of disorienting surreality that petty

pronoun policing is rendered completely useless as deeper meanings reveal themselves at the same time." That delicate and subtle interweaving gives the album depth and maturity, and seems to mirror Ocean's own path of naivety, growth, realization, and understanding through the complicated journey of discovering one's sexuality. His openness regarding his history and sexuality add another layer to his music, making him a voice for the community.

I'll admit I'm a Lin-Manuel fangirl of the most hardcore variety. I think The Atlantic was correct when they said the song he penned with Jennifer Lopez after Orlando, "Love Make the World Go Round," felt like a side project rather than a song that truly encapsulated the emotions and pain the community felt. Interscope Record's single "Hands" (featuring 24 artists) was worse, featuring everyone from Britney Spears to Halsey to Imagine Dragons. It felt like a long list of artists trying to slap their name on a philanthropic song to show their support so that they wouldn't have to do anything else. While songs mean well, they focus on the vague battle of love versus hate instead of directly intersecting with the LGBTQ community and the tragedy itself.

Sia takes a different route. While she has yet to openly explain the meaning of "The Greatest," the imagery in the music video makes the meaning perfectly clear. Her use of 49 dancers in a setting reminiscent of a nightclub are a clear message, especially when the dancers fall to the ground and reveal a wall riddled with bullet holes. The first frame reads "#weareyourchildren," a painful message when combined with the young dancers that ultimately die by the end of the video. As The Atlantic states, "What's so potent about the video—and so specifically awful about this massacre—is that its subjects do seem to have struggled and triumphed to find the freedom to flip out together, and they are >>



*Illustration by Mariana Sierra*

still cut down;” the tears running down Maddie Ziegler’s face through rainbow paint at the end of the video emphasize this pain. However, despite the hard hitting imagery, the words are hopeful:

**“ ... running out of breath but I / oh I I got stamina ... Don’t give up, I won’t give up / Don’t give up, no no no ... I’m free to be the greatest I’m alive / I’m free to be the greatest here tonight.”**

It both honors the tragedy and pain while also acting as a fight song for the community: no matter how many times you tear us down, we will always stand back up again, because we have stamina and we will never stop fighting.

While social commentary belongs in music because of the power music has, there are certainly songs that are more effective than others. I would place Sia’s “The Greatest” in that category, along with “Freetown Sound” and Ocean’s work. The difference I see is that those songs and albums were written by someone in the community, someone who understood the struggles and frustrations and pain and passion and beauty of the LGBTQ+ community. While allies can and should use their privilege to support the community, there is an authenticity of emotion that only members can truly communicate. Just like with anything else, direct experience brings knowledge and understanding. Allies should step back and lift up authentic voices, giving them space to speak. For too long, we have had others speak for us. It’s time that we are encouraged and allowed to speak for ourselves. 

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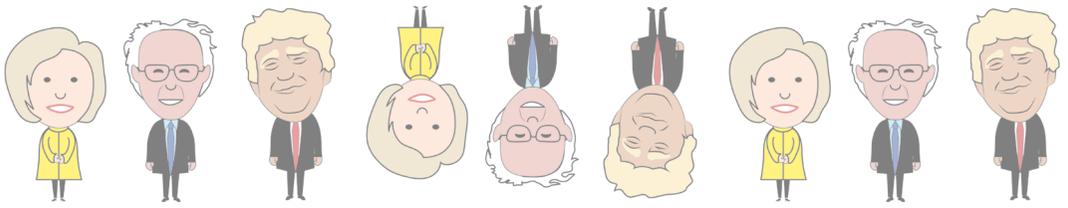
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# The Psychological Warfare of Election 2016

by Matthew Silvan

Illustrations by Brian Craig

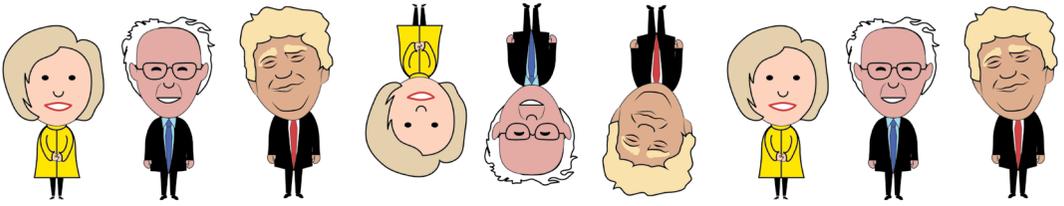
As a blogger for AmericanNewsX.com, I have followed the race for the presidency closely too close for comfort. It's been an anxiety-inducing year to see the rise of Donald Trump. By the time you read this, the election will be over; the lives of minorities all over America will either be on a better track or in states of uncertainty and peril.

In the 2008 and 2012 elections, the LGBTQ community became a focus of national attention like never before. The fight for marriage equality and for freedom from discrimination became a wedge issue used by politicians to divide Americans. Conservatives fearful of change were manipulated by their community, and political and religious leaders into believing that rights for LGBTQ people would bring on the apocalypse of America. While we enjoyed a champion with President Obama, we also witnessed the demonization of our community each and every day from conservative politicians.

June 26, 2015, the day same-sex marriage became legal in America, marked one of

the most cathartic days of a lifetime for many LGBTQ people. As an employee of Virginia Tech, I sat at my desk trembling and in tears when the news flashed across my screen that it was finally real. I had been optimistic, but there was still so much uncertainty. In an instant, I knew it was a game changer for the LGBTQ community. It was as if all the years of bigotry I had experienced were washed clean from my psyche for just a few rarified moments.

I was still uncomfortable in sharing my joy with my coworkers. I knew that my sudden bewildering gain of civil rights was actually not something many of them understood or appreciated, but I still cherish the moment of exhilaration of that day.



While same-sex marriage was a game changer, we still have far to go. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) is a reminder that the fight never stops. We share that fight with all other minority groups in America. That has never been so clear as of now, with the politics of Donald Trump blasted irritatingly throughout the media. Trump, like an orange pendulum of backlash, has crashed into American politics and managed to diminish the image of a progressive inclusive atmosphere that Obama worked so hard to make real.

Donald Trump, as no other candidate for president in my memory, has employed the politics of division to fracture the idea of a unified America. He has pandered to the basest of hateful human instincts, and alarmingly, he has had some level

of success in bringing voters to his campaign. When Hillary Clinton called half of Trump's supporters 'deplorable' for their bigotry, misogyny, and xenophobia, I was inclined to agree. There didn't appear to be any effort by Republicans to denounce the traits that were being called deplorable or to suggest that people in their party with these traits weren't welcome in their base. There was an effort to denounce Hillary for insulting Republican voters.

It has been disheartening to witness the polarization of the current political climate nationally and locally, and especially so since Blacksburg is a tiny blue dot in a sea of red all around us. It seems threatened to be engulfed by Tea Party mentality at any moment. I have counted the Tea Party license plates when running errands and have been amazed at >>

If Republicans aren't actually **deplorable**, they would denounce the bigotry, misogyny, and greed in their party – not disingenuously denounce people who **call them out** for it.

AMERICAN NEWSX

Meme by Matthew Silvan



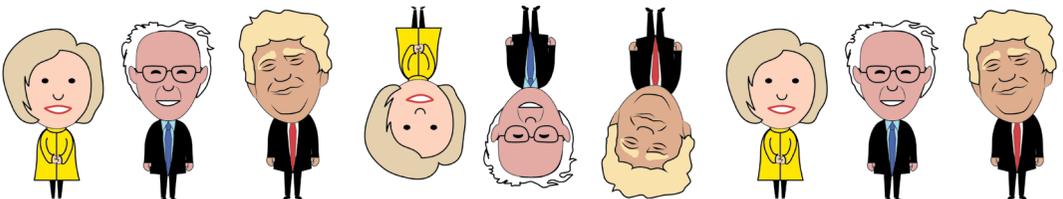
Meme by Matthew Silvan

how many extremists reside throughout this small blue oasis of education. It's that education that creates a safe zone.

Though the LGBTQ community is not the main focus of the Trump/Pence race so far, it gives no comfort whatsoever to witness the scapegoat target moved to Muslims, African Americans, and Mexicans. The misogynistic attacks on Clinton were expected considering the history of patriarchal politics from the GOP, but it was still disillusioning. That Trump hand-picked Mike Pence for his running mate indicates that the LGBTQ community could easily become a target again. It's been the strategy of divisive politicians for decades to rally their voter base by using fear tactics against minority groups. This

election cycle has brought out the worst examples of this. I am tempted to invoke Godwin's law and will refrain only because I have a feeling you were already there.

America simply hasn't evolved as quickly as we would like. African Americans are fearing for their lives at routine traffic stops. Muslims are living with the knowledge that many Americans support a man who would have them placed in a registry and/or exiled. Mexicans seeking a better life are witnessing Trump supporters applauding a wall of ignorance. Clinton is facing down a candidate who has asked a foreign government to commit espionage against her, and who has, through ill-conceived innuendos, threatened her life.



The transition to the next President will determine if President Obama's vision of a more perfect union will be wiped away, or if America will continue on the path of moving forward. It was familiar when Hillary Clinton adopted the campaign slogan of 'Stronger Together.' Virginia Tech had adopted the same slogan in my time there. "Stronger Together" was a slogan on campaigns by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion. I had a sticker on my desk with the slogan, and I believed in it. Seeing Clinton use the same campaign slogan reaffirms the validity of the sentiment.

Tech's Principles of Community state, "We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of

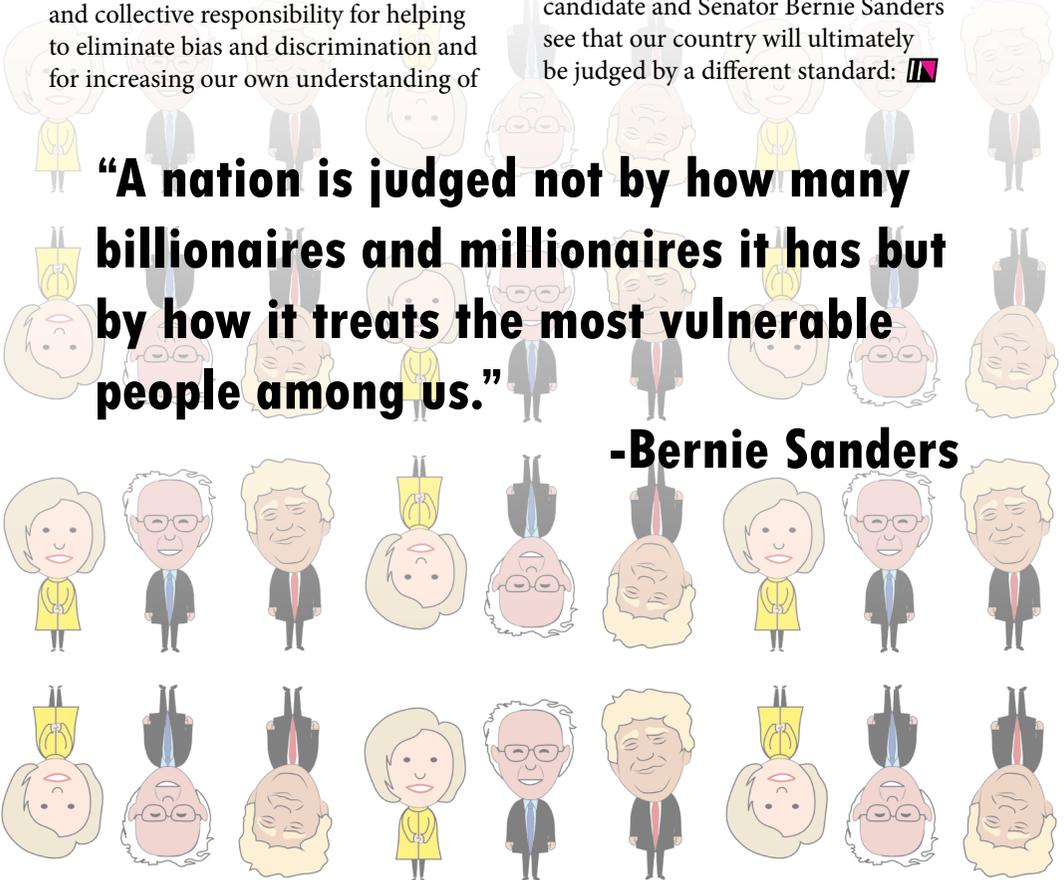
these issues through education, training, and interaction with others." This statement aligns with Hillary Clinton's campaign, but would be quite foreign to that of Trump's.

If you believe in this Principle of Community, then 'Stronger Together' will surely be the winning campaign strategy of election 2016. Trump's empty promise of 'making America great again' will be summarily rejected by the majority of us, because the majority knows that we can never be truly great if we do not love one another, including the minorities among us. We must elevate women, and what better way to do that than with electing Hillary Clinton?

While Trump seems to place value in 'making America great again' through monetary gains, Clinton and previous candidate and Senator Bernie Sanders see that our country will ultimately be judged by a different standard: 

**"A nation is judged not by how many billionaires and millionaires it has but by how it treats the most vulnerable people among us."**

**-Bernie Sanders**



# NOW and T.H.E.N.:

## *LGBTQ Depictions in Popular Media*

by Laura Fehr, Jacqui Helbert, and Kaitlin Seaton

The representation of gay individuals and gay culture in cinema and on television before 2013 is incredibly problematic. Shows like “Will and Grace” and “The L Word” offered portrayals of gay and lesbian characters that were often based on stereotypes. Additionally, films like “Brokeback Mountain” and “Boys Don’t Cry” gave tragic depictions of life as a gay and trans man respectively, but cinema rarely showed LGBTQ people living normal lives. The representation of lesbian and gay people in these roles are reductionist, and, as often as not, these characters are rarely more than shallow labels, walking punchlines, or heart-wrenching anecdotes about exclusion and oppression.

Though LGBTQ characters did often appear in television shows and movies in the early 90s and 2000s, they were uni-dimensional and static characters, and all relationship details and physical affection were censored. For example, on “Friends”, there is a plotline in which Ross’s ex-wife Carol divorces him (prior to the beginning of the show) and enters a lesbian relationship with Susan, which was portrayed as a jab to Ross’s failed masculinity. In fact, other male characters constantly made fun of Ross for his failed marriage, as if Carol’s sexual orientation was somehow based on his own failings, rather than her sexuality. Interestingly, however, Ross did have a co-parenting relationship with his ex-wife and her lover, which

seemed somewhat healthy, and rather than depicting his ex-wife’s sexuality as a phase, the writers made it evident that this was a real and valid lifestyle. Despite these few positive aspects, however, ultimately Susan and Carol were flat characters and were used merely to drive Ross’s plotline forward. Sadly, for the 1990’s, even this stereotype-riddled portrayal of Carol and Susan’s relationship was considered groundbreaking.

These shows and movies, though problematic in a lot of their content comprise the foundation upon which current LGBTQ representation is built. “Transparent”, “Orange is the New Black”, “The 100”, “Carol”, “Downton Abbey”, “Orphan Black”,

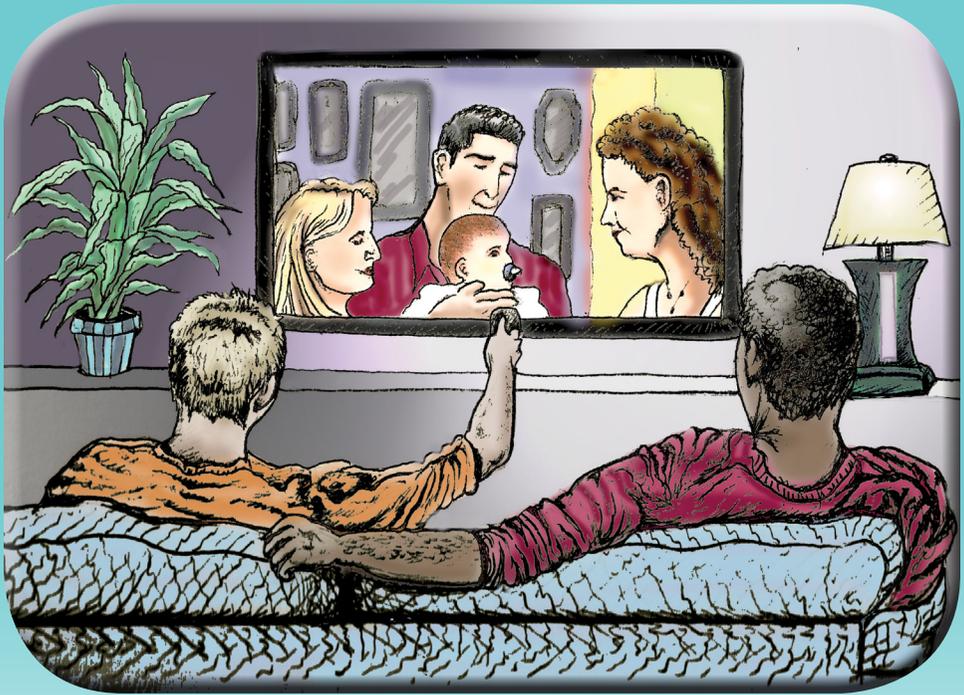


Illustration by Brian Craig

“Modern Family”, “Take My Wife”, and “Looking” are all shows that wouldn’t exist in their current state without earlier shows paving the way. Considerable room for improvement remains in media representation of LBGQT culture and lifestyle. And, we still have great strides to make in areas such as trans representation, bisexual erasure, and the #buryourgays and dead lesbian tropes.

But just over the last decade, representation has experienced an enormous shift, and we are just now beginning to see complex and realistic portrayals of LGBTQ characters. Crucially, having these kinds of characters be relatable and multi-dimensional is invaluable in changing public perspective. More importantly, it also gives LGBTQ youth role models whom they can identify with. If you don’t see yourself represented in the media, it is easy to feel as though your very identity is unwanted, devalued, and unimportant.

Now, if you are looking for more nuanced portrayals of LGBTQ characters and culture, here’s what you should be binge watching: “Orange is the New Black”, “Transparent”, and “Looking”. Netflix’s “Orange is the New Black” gives us dynamic lesbian and bisexual characters, who are deeply flawed and funny and human even under the worst imaginable circumstances, while Amazon’s “Transparent” allows us to enter into the complex world of the Pfefferman where we see all the beauty and tragedy of lived-experience and family relationships. Additionally, HBO’s unfortunately cancelled but phenomenal series, “Looking”, gives us a picture of what it means to be single and gay and searching for love in millennial culture. What is particularly ground-breaking about each of these shows is not just their depictions of seemingly real individuals but also of families, friendships, relationships, and even sex. 



# Trans Representation in the Media: What's Happening in 2016?

by Jessica Herling

*Photo by Tulane Publications via Flickr*

Trans representation in the media has not been positive. According to a GLAAD 2012 study, most trans characters were portrayed negatively. For example, many trans characters are either victims or villains and rarely ever play a heroic or even “normal” role. Not only are the storylines problematic, but cis people often play trans roles in films. Some notable examples include: Eddie Redmayne in “The Danish Girl” (2015), Jared Leto in “Dallas Buyers Club” (2013) (who won an Oscar for his performance), and Hilary Swank in “Boys Don’t Cry” (1999). You may hear people respond to complaints about cis people playing these trans characters. “Well, it’s called acting for a reason. That’s what actors are paid to do – to act,” they might say. However, this response is a cop out. It not only ignores the experiences of trans people, but it attempts to justify cis people playing trans roles, which in turn reinforces harmful gender ideologies.

Some contemporary examples of cis actors portraying trans characters include Matt Bomer and Michelle Rodriguez. For instance, Bomer plays the role of a trans woman sex worker in Mark Ruffalo’s 2016 film, “Anything”. Ruffalo’s casting received a great deal of criticism, namely from people on Twitter. While Ruffalo responded to the complaints with what seems like compassion and recognition of his mistake, the irreversible damage was done. Jen Richards, who is a trans actress, responded on Twitter and explained the threat movies like this pose to the trans community. She writes, “Dear @MarkRuffalo & @MattBomer: if you release this movie, it will directly lead to violence against already at risk trans women.”<sup>1</sup> She explains how cis men playing the roles of trans women perpetuate the myth that trans women are really just men. Crucially, this ideology

leads to violence against trans women by cis men who feel that their masculinity is threatened. And, in light of Richard’s response, we too should carefully consider the gravity and the stakes of cis men acting as trans women.

What is similarly, or perhaps even more, problematic is Michelle Rodriguez’s portrayal of a trans man in an action movie titled “(Re) Assignment”. Not only does the cis Rodriguez play a trans role, but, overall, the film is extremely transphobic. The plot of the movie centers on the notion of gender reassignment surgery as punishment. Rodriguez’s character wakes up from her “punishment surgery” as a trans woman. Significantly, the film forges a deeply problematic, transphobic connection between transsexuality and sex change and physical punishment. In response to criticism

from the LGBTQ community, Rodriguez demonstrated that she is in no way a true ally, and, in fact, she perpetuated cissexism and transphobia in the LGBTQ community. When asked about the valid criticisms of the film she stated, “I’m bisexual and I would never in my life do anything that would hurt the LGBTQ community,” as if being in the LGBTQ community somehow precludes you from being transphobic. Give me a break. Moments later, Rodriguez’s attempt at compassion suddenly changed to hostility, when

she argued, “They don’t own, they don’t own the patent on sex change, and the sex change in the movie is a, is a, is an act of vengeance. It has nothing to do with somebody’s emotional, you know, psychological, you know, uh, journey.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/SmartAssJen/status/769938435108843520>

<sup>2</sup> Footage from TMZ <http://www.t TMZ.com/2016/09/16/michelle-rodriguez-bisexual-transphobic-reassignment-movie/>

## Jeffrey Tambor’s Emmy Speech; Where do we go from here?

If you tuned into the 2016 Emmy’s, you were lucky enough to see cis actor Jeffery Tambor win his second Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Comedy Series for his role as Maura Pfefferman, a trans Jewish woman, on the show “Transparent”. In his acceptance speech, he stated, “**I would not be unhappy were I the last cisgender male to play a female transgender on television.**”<sup>3</sup> While Tambor used his platform for good, and also emphasized the need for trans people to play trans roles, it is hard to ignore his privilege in this situation. He is a wealthy cis man who just won an Emmy for acting in a trans role when trans people do not have access to this space to tell their own stories. While celebrity allies play an important role in getting trans voices heard and taken seriously, the overall focus needs to be on trans people themselves and how we can support them and their voices.

A more positive representation of trans representation is Laverne Cox, an out trans woman, who plays the role of Sophia, a trans woman, in the hit television show “Orange is the New Black”. Cox’s role required that she do flashback sequences to pre-transition Marcus, and the creator respected Cox, not wanting to put her in a situation that could hurt her by playing the role of a pre-transition man. In an interview from 2013, Cox stated, She [series creator Jenji Kohan] didn’t — this is [the] amazing support I got on set — she’s like, ‘I don’t want to traumatize you, by having you play a man again.’ You know, because I tried to play one for many years in my real life, and unsuccessfully.”<sup>4</sup>

We need more trans friendly spaces and more narratives where trans characters can thrive. Trans characters played by actual trans individuals have the potential not only to make considerable strides in the effort to have trans voices heard and valued, but to reinforce ideological shifts away from transphobia and cissexism. Members of the cisgender community need to be reminded that transexuality is not a costume. When cis men act as trans women, it clearly reinforces that myth. The trans narratives that play out on television shows and in movies serve as representations of lived realities, and it is imperative that we respect the trans community and ensure that their needs and expectations are met. 

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ew.com/article/2016/09/18/emmys-2016-jeffrey-tambor-comedy-actor>; Tambor’s language is also all sorts of problematic here. He used sexed language (male and female) instead of gender (man and woman) and used the term transgender as a noun instead of as an adjective.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.yahoo.com/tv/bp/-orange-is-the-new-black--star-laverne-cox-on-her-twin-brother-s-surprising-role-on-the-series-232519980.html>

# #HereAndQueer

A campus photoshoot from a Pride Month event on October 21st.

Photos are all by Jessica Herling







Photo by Leland Bobbé

# What a *Drag!* Points of Contention in the LGBTQ Community

by Maggie Nanney

When we think of the “LGBTQ community,” or at least what media leads us to believe, we typically think of one big, happy family of queer people. What a nice idea, right? Like any family, however, sometimes we disagree about what is okay. Who belongs in our community? What events are part of our culture? Recently, for instance, HokiePRIDE made the decision to discontinue its biannual Drag charity event due to complaints of transphobia. In what ways is drag an essential part of our community, and in what ways does it exclude (and potentially commit violence against) trans people?

## Defining our Terms

Drag is a form of performance or comportment in which a person of one gender wears the clothing and associated accessories of another (presumably opposite) gender based on stereotypical norms. These portrayals are often hyper exaggerated in what many drag performers consider a form a genderfucking. While typically we associate drag with men wearing women's clothing, called drag queens — think RuPaul, Bianca Del Rio, The Lady Chablis, Carmen Carrera, or Ilean Over — drag culture is actually more diverse including multiple types of drag with drag kings (women dressed as men) and androgynous, as well as multiple styles of drag including high drag, bear drag, impersonation, Broadway, camp, goth, and faux.

This is distinct from trans identity, however, which serves as an umbrella of other identities and experiences of people whose sex and gender assigned at birth does not match their current sex or gender identity. Sometimes, depending on who you ask, the trans umbrella can include drag performers, but not always.

This does not, however, mean that there aren't trans identified drag performers, that drag performers always dress stereotypically, that drag is always a performance, that being a drag king/queen isn't an identity, or that a person in drag only dresses as either a man or woman. See? Complicated.

## Drag as Part of Our Community

While the act of dressing in the clothing associated with another gender is not new nor unique to gay culture, the performance of drag is a keystone within LGBTQ culture. This is, in part, due to drag performer's intrinsically intertwined history with LGBTQ rights. Both at Stonewall, and the often overlooked

Compton Cafeteria Riot, drag queens were among other patrons that rioted against police violence. What has seemed to become a whitewashed, cisgendered history of the "gay riots" that sparked Pride and our LGBTQ movement today (cough cough "Stonewall" by Roland Emmerich) in fact was a revolution started, in part, by people in drag. Whether these people were performers or people who identified as trans before trans was an ideological concept is unimportant. The fact is that they were there, they started our movement, and they are a part of our community.

To me, drag is essential to our community because of the possibilities that it provides. In a society where our everyday actions are overly policed, such that if two women or two men are together, one of us still needs to be "the other gender," drag allows some of us to play with these gender norms as a way to say "fuck you." As Ru Paul states, **"It's a sort of piss-take on culture, because a drag queen is a clown - a parody of our society. It's a sarcastic spoof on culture, which allows us to laugh at ourselves - but in a way that is inclusive of everyone."** Drag is one way of visibly highlighting the overly contentious and highly rigid boundaries that we are forced into and offer a way, a persona, a possibility of what can be through an art form collectively created and enjoyed by an oppressed group of people. Art of the oppressed. In a very Judith Butlerian/gender and queer theory sense, drag is a way for us to cause gender trouble.

## Drag as Transphobic

On the other hand, I can also see how many people see drag as transphobic as well as sexist — akin to minstrel shows and blackface. From this viewpoint, by "playing with gender" but also identifying as cisgender, drag queens have the privilege to ultimately take off one's drag at the end of the day and walk away without any social >>



repercussions that trans people face (i.e. heightened violence and policing, barriers to healthcare, workplace and housing discrimination, etc.). Drag is a performance that parodies and makes fun of gender barriers, but also makes light of the trivialized experiences trans people face by identifying as trans.

Relatedly, another point of contention that I've seen is the equating of drag to trans, or rather, trans to drag. I think this is especially where we begin to see critiques of trans identities, however false, of "a man in a women's dress." No, these two aren't the same. Rather, this serves to delegitimize and erase the very existence of trans women as women.

But can they be? As a 2014 article entitled "The Quiet Clash Between Transgender Women and Drag Queens" on ThinkProgress highlights, "Sorting these identities out raises two questions: 'Are drag queens transgender?' and 'Are

transgender women drag queens?' The latter question is easier to answer; unless a trans woman actually does drag, she is in no way a drag queen. But the question of whether drag queens are transgender is a bit more complicated." This brings us back to the definition of what trans really means. Does trans mean solely the permanent transition from one assigned gender identity to another, or can it be more open and fluid as an umbrella category that includes a wide diversity of possibilities for playing with gender?

Regardless of HokiePRIDE's decision to end the drag show, I think it's important to think about the ways in which our communities may form, but also ways in which they may collide. The drag/trans debate is one point of contention out of many within our community, but we must not let it divide us. In a rather "Kumbayah" tone, we need to be able to discuss our differences, our points of view, and our disagreements in order to recognize how diverse we each are and to support one another. 



# What is your Sexual Patronus?

GOING TO BED? MIND IF I SLYTHERIN?

QUIZ BY MARIANA SIERRA

## 1. What's your pick-up line?

- A) Want to go for a ride on my broomstick?
- B) If I were the Sorting Hat, I'd put you in my house!
- C) In the Mirror of Erised, I'd see the two of us together.
- D) Is that a wand in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?

## 2. Where would you go on a date in Hogsmeade?

- A) Right to the Shrieking Shack!
- B) Butterbeers at The Three Broomsticks
- C) Honeydukes Sweetshop
- D) Zonko's Joke Shop

## 3. How would you profess your love?

- A) Say it in a Howler
- B) Send them a love poem by owl post
- C) Cast an *Orchideous* spell and present them with flowers
- D) Love potion-filled chocolates

## 4. What do they call you in bed?

- A) Whomping Willow
- B) Luna Lovegood
- C) Oliver Wood, because I'm a Keeper
- D) Moaning Myrtle

## 5. What is your go-to sexy spell?

- A) *Aguamenti*, to make you wet
- B) *Petrificus Totalus*, to get you stiff
- C) *Incendio*, to turn you on
- D) *Accio*, to make you come >>

# Answers



If you chose mostly A's, your patronus is a **lion!**

You're very sure of yourself. Your confidence is at the core of your sex appeal. People are drawn to your assertiveness and find it to be a huge turn-on. You take the lead in bed - you know what you like and aren't afraid to show it!

If you chose mostly B's, your patronus is a

**dolphin!**

You know that the most important sex organ is the brain. Nothing is more enticing or titillating than an intelligent, clever conversation - that'll persuade you right into bed. You are big into communicating what each of you wants and what feels good.



If you chose mostly C's, your patronus is a

**bonobo monkey!**

You are very much into sex for the sheer pleasure of it. You are a generous, affectionate and considerate lover - and you love reciprocation! You pay attention to the details and don't rush anything - sex is meant to be enjoyed!



If you chose mostly D's, your patronus is a

**topi antelope!**

Anything that comes easy isn't worth your time - you like earning your way into bed, but that doesn't mean you won't play hard to get, either. You like to jazz things up to keep it interesting!



# A VIRGINIA TECH RUGGER IS A HELL OF A WOMAN

by Taylor Busick, Sarah Woynicz, Kendall  
Maxey, Julia Mayer, and Megan Strayer

Layout by Amanda Phillips

The Virginia Tech Women's Rugby Football Club meets on Saturday mornings with dew still fresh on the grass, fog lingering around the trees, the cool morning air biting our lungs, and the sun peeking over the mountains. Although women's rugby games begin on these Saturdays, with these familiar sights and sensations, our games and practices are never as tranquil as our surroundings. >>



Rugby is the only sport where men and women have the same rules and regulations, but we are not women playing a man's sport. We are women playing a sport we love, and we put everything into it day in and day out. We play the same game at the same caliber. We break the same bones, tear the same ligaments, and get the same concussions as male athletes.

Furthermore, rugby is much more than the tackles made on the field. It is more than the muscle exhaustion on the pitch. It goes beyond the grueling early morning or late night practices. What makes rugby so much more than the sum of our matches, of our practices is our difference, community, and strength. We are a team of women from every corner of the map. We have different religious, social, and cultural backgrounds. We all have our own stories and our own unique paths that led us to this one common ground—Virginia Tech Women's Rugby.

Now, I bet you're thinking, *"It's fair to say that about every team, right? Aren't most men's teams diverse? Similarly, unique?"* Sure. But here is the difference: women in sports face many obstacles that men simply don't.

Women hear that they don't have the right body type. For

example, a woman with a strong, muscular frame is considered unfeminine. A woman with a smaller frame is too skinny, while a curvy woman isn't skinny enough. In

rugby, however, no rucker fits into a single mold, just as no woman fits into a single mold. There are fifteen positions to play; some positions require you to be small and fast and others require you to be bigger and stronger.

Therefore, rugby gives us a kind of freedom from the kind of body shaming we see too often in our culture.

Similarly, female athletes are constantly objectified. More often than not you'll find that the first thing someone says about a

**There are fifteen positions to play; some positions require you to be small and fast and others require you to be bigger and STRONGER. Therefore, rugby gives us a kind of freedom from the body shaming we see too often in our culture.**



female athlete isn't about her talent or hard work; it is about her looks. The value of our appearance is based on society's unrealistic and often flawed and stifling presuppositions of femininity and perfection.

Society tells us that we're not strong enough, or capable enough, or that girls shouldn't play such a physically demanding sport. We break these stereotypes daily by doing what we want to do - playing rugby. But female rugby players are not alone in dealing with societal control of women in sports. All women in the world of sports face these obstacles every day.

For example, this year in the Rio Olympics, soccer fans chanted homophobic slurs towards the US women's soccer team, with terms such as "zika" and "bicha" directed towards Megan Rapinoe, Hope Solo, and coach Jill Ellis. While news reports of this type of chanting is common in Rio at men's soccer games as well, this act was intended to control the actions and presentation of (lesbian) women who

are successful at their sport and break stereotypes of what women can do.

Yet, although the world might put these expectations on us, we do not put these kinds of demands on ourselves or on each other. In fact, having a women's rugby team at Virginia Tech is so vital because it proves to everyone that women can do absolutely anything they want. Who we are to ourselves and each other should not be determined by our appearance or any of the other stressors society puts on us. Rather, our identity comes, in part, from how we play rugby. In fact, when we first step on the field (most of us never having played rugby before), we can shed what so many women are valued for: our ability to follow certain, restrictive gender norms, who we date, the shape and size of our bodies, and all the pressures of life as women in a culture that often objectifies us.

When we are standing on the sidelines together, hunched over, hands on our hips, struggling to breathe after a countless

number of sprints or when we are muddy and bruised from tackling, we are aware that women's rugby does not recognize gender binaries. We don't have to "fit into" a box or a check off list of requirements that dictates what it means to be a woman in the world or a woman in sports. Instead, our entire experience revolves around the sport we play and, more importantly, the never ending support we give one another on and off the field. To us, rugby is our community, our family. 



# Taboo Tattoo

## The Intersection of LGBTQ Culture and Body Modification

by Emma Briscoe

It seems that the standard awkward questions and condescending statements parents, friends, even strangers, ask when you come out are in many cases identical to those directed at individuals who choose to modify their bodies with ink and metal.

Victoria Rose, a longtime piercing artist, and her elegantly tattooed girlfriend, Tara Peterson, weigh in with their experiences in the body modification industry and culture as it relates to sexuality and self-expression in general.

**E: Have you done any LGBTQ themed tattoos or piercings or gotten any done?**

*T: No, which is bizarre because almost everyone in the community that I know, [who] also has tattoos, has something of meaning to them and their sexuality. For me, it's a much more private thing. My sexuality, that is. I have no problem in being open but I've never wanted anything advertised on me. Tattoos are more of an aesthetic thing for me.*

*V: The only specifically gay themed piercing I have done was a set of rainbow anchors going down my client's spine. She was a regular, so I already knew she was bisexual and was very open to me. I feel that she got them to remind herself of her gay side because she does have a child and was seeing men at the time, but was trying to get over a relationship with a female.*

*The first tattoo I got was a rainbow star on my ankle. This was twelve years ago, but I knew I wanted a color tattoo and it flows through a*



Photos by Victoria Rose

*Celtic star and isn't a solid line rainbow so it's a little more subtle. I don't think I considered much of my sexuality when getting the tattoo; [I] just wanted something that was aesthetically pleasing.*

*After learning that lesbians at the beginning of the 1900's got blue stars tattooed on their wrists to have their sexuality be known at social functions when appropriate, I got one tattooed. There aren't many subtle lesbian tattoos and I thought it was a unique way of showing my sexuality to the very few who would know the meaning.*

*I have a red and black equal sign tattooed on my finger that I got during the time gay marriage was becoming legal. Me and another gentleman that worked at the shop wanted to do something together for ourselves to bond over*

the craziness our country was going through. He got NOH8 on his finger in black and red. It provided an outlet for me to release tension about how homophobic certain people in our country are and is a constant reminder for me of that time and not to take the current rights we have for granted.

I am also planning on getting a triangle tattooed on my hand next Wednesday actually, a tattoo I have wanted to be able to put personal closure to the Orlando shooting. My Facebook newsfeed was intense as a member of the LGBT community, especially because I have friends in Orlando. I feel getting it will allow me to move on and put the sad thoughts I again had about our country and personal fears for my safety aside. It will act as closure; [it will not be] a constant reminder of what happened, but instead [it will serve as a reminder] to appreciate how I am able to currently live my life.

I have seen tons of people get gay tattoos over the years, and I don't think anyone has ever described their reasons as spreading a message of any sorts. Even when clients get them in visible locations, I don't [think] they are getting tattoos to be asked about their sexuality or do any sort of teaching. They just genuinely like the image and want it on their body permanently.

**E: Are there members of the LGBTQ community who harbor any kind of stress, fear, or anxiety that their tattoos or piercings might also serve as targets for those who would attack them, physically or verbally, for who they are and/or how they identify?**

*T: Absolutely. I can't tell you how many times I've been traveling through Virginia from one side to the other and have stopped in towns*



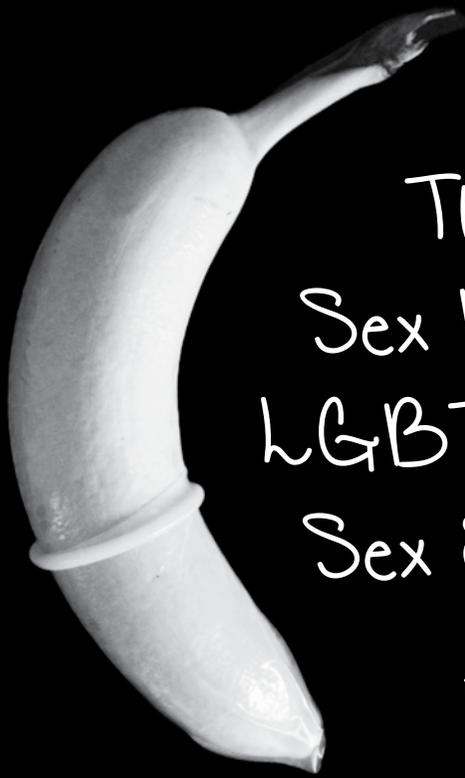
where they've felt uncomfortable enough that they've put jackets on in hundred degree weather. It's sad but sometimes can be necessary. It hurts to have to hide anything about who we are, it hurts more to be talked down to by someone who doesn't understand that sexuality isn't a choice.

**E: Do you think tattoos in general, sexuality and gender identity aside, can sometimes be a measure people take in an effort to feel whole?**

*T: I believe it makes us feel whole in a way that physically altering any part of your body does. Just like coloring your hair or putting on makeup. We constantly change things about ourselves over time to be more comfortable in our skin. And sometimes that means putting images permanently on ourselves.*

*V: I think tattoos can help people feel better about their appearance and in that aspect help them feel whole. I only have a few memorial tattoos, but I received them to help myself mentally move on and gain closure from what occurred.*

People get tattoos for a variety of reasons: to cope with reality, to grieve, to celebrate, to feel empowered, to demonstrate solidarity, to spread messages, and sometimes simply for aesthetic purposes. It hurts to get a tattoo (for most people, it is, at the very least, not exactly pleasant); it also hurts to be a member of a community that is still mocked, shamed, attacked, and murdered on a daily basis. Tattoos are aesthetic expressions of individual thought, desire, and experience, but they can also serve as catalysts for feeling whole. ■■



# The Need for Sex Positive and LGBTQ Friendly Sex Ed

by Grant Kawecky

*Photo by Jessica Herling*

When I was a child, my parents always controlled my TV habits and disapproved of my watching certain shows, like “Sixteen and Pregnant.” For those who don’t know, “Sixteen and Pregnant” was a reality TV series trailing the lives of teenage girls who had become pregnant in high school. To most, shows like “Sixteen and Pregnant” are nothing but dramatizations of an unrealistic future, but for many it is a reality. My mother, like so many others, thought that if I didn’t watch these shows or know about sex and pregnancy, I would never have to worry about it. Hiding me from those experiences, however, was certainly not the best way to go about it. Many parents believe that they can keep their children from experiencing the consequences of unsafe sex by intentionally keeping information from them. They believe that if their daughter doesn’t know about pregnancy, she won’t get pregnant. However, this results in exactly what the parents were trying to prevent; the daughter engages in unsafe sex unaware of the fact that she is risking pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Turning a blind eye from sexual health problems has become far too common. Often, schools and parents believe that they can keep their children from experiencing the consequences of unsafe sex by intentionally keeping information from them. They believe that if their child doesn't know about pregnancy or STIs, she won't get pregnant or get an STI. "You'll learn when you're older" and "You're too young for that" soon turn into "How could you be so careless?" as youths engage in potentially life altering practices for which they were never prepared for. Why were these youths never prepared, you ask? Great question.

Sex education in the United States is poor at best because it isn't federally mandated and it is not nearly diverse or inclusive enough. Since sex education is not federally mandated, it is very difficult to provide both comprehensive and consistent education. This makes it very easy for certain states or schools to leave out vital parts of sex education that legislators or administrators do not agree with or do not want to fund. Perhaps the most common example of this is the leaving out of pregnancy, LGBTQ inclusive, and sex-positive education. Consequently, many schools opt for the exclusive teaching of heterosexual sex education, and many others

only teach the risks of sex. According to the Center for American Progress, only twelve states require the mentioning of sexual orientation in the context of sex education; three of those twelve require instruction on inaccurate or LGBTQ negative sex education. Sex education is most effective when it is inclusive of all types of sex practices.

According to the  
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The United States also lacks sex-positive education resulting in an increase in adolescent pregnancies and STIs from unsafe sex. The majority of schools in the U.S. strictly avoid sex-positive education, opting instead for teaching students to practice abstinence and

to fear sexual contact from an early age. Don't get me wrong, chastity can be amazing, if it's meant for you. But to some, it isn't, and that is entirely acceptable. Many private or religious schools, however, fail to acknowledge this. We live in a society in which sex is common, both in adults and among youths. Statistically speaking, almost all teenagers will have the opportunity to engage in sexual contact, so it is unrealistic to expect growing children to never experience it until marriage. Therein lies the problem of the "no sex until marriage" argument; telling students not to have sex will do nothing to actually stop them from having >>



*Photo by Kerryank via Pixabay*

sex. All it does is increase their chances of either getting pregnant or getting an STI when they do have sex and these consequences can impact their lives.

The lack of comprehensive sex education makes it very difficult for most people to access the knowledge and resources they need to help prevent unwanted pregnancy and STIs. Studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have shown that pregnant teenage girls are less likely to finish high school and survive independently, more likely to be poor as adults, and more likely to have children with poor education and health. On the other end of the spectrum, gay and bisexual men account for almost seventy-five percent of syphilis cases among all men after 2013, while viral STI rates among bisexual and homosexual women were three times higher than their heterosexual

counterparts. The transgender demographic has HIV rates four times higher than the national average as well. The poor sex education of our current time could contribute to the increased rates of STIs among youths in the LGBTQ community, but the essential problem with sex education is the lack of access to proper information and resources.

The lack of comprehensive sex education does nothing but negatively impact both heterosexual youths and members of the LGBTQ community. The inattention to the varied and distinct needs of different people when it comes to sexual education promotes a world in which educators are comfortable with children being at high risk for life-altering sexual health problems like pregnancy and STIs. I can't speak for everyone, but that is not the kind of world in which I want to live. **LN**



# (BE) LONGING

BY SAMANTHA SHIFFLETT AND  
KATIE AYERS

Isolation. Healing. Community. These themes drive (Be)longing, an upcoming spring musical at the Moss Arts Center.

(Be)longing is a collaboration of a composer, Byron Au Yong, and a playwright, Aaron Jafferis. Both were initially drawn to Virginia Tech because of the April 16, 2007 shooting. Through artist residencies at Tech and elsewhere, Au Yong and Jafferis created (Be)longing to reflect on school shootings and other forms of community violence as well as ways in which communities can heal.

The core of the performance includes 32 songs written by Au Yong and Jafferis and performed by Virginia Tech and Blacksburg community members.

While school violence is a major theme, Moss Arts Center Executive Director Ruth Walkers said other themes also emerge.

“There are themes around gender, different cultures, minorities, and different sort of expressions on campus,” she said. “It raises the question of ‘Do we come together on campus as a community?’ ”

Walkers said the project allows people to express their points of view without fear of judgement.

“The title itself is a play on this idea, it is a way of suggesting that we all ‘long to belong in something,’ ” she said. “This project isn’t about bring[ing] up as many solutions one can think of, but about talking about those issues people crave to get out.” 

(BE) LONGING

7:30 P.M. MARCH 17 AND 18, 2017

MOSS ARTS CENTER

\$10 STUDENTS AND YOUTH 18 AND UNDER;

\$25 GENERAL ADMISSION

*Photo by Aaron Jafferis*

# Letter from the Founding Editor

When I started *The Interloper* 3 years ago, I knew it was an important project. What started out as my Diversity Scholar project morphed into something awesome—there's nothing like it at Virginia Tech. This is a collaborative, creative project that brings people together; it combines writing, art, and photography, cohesively designed into a physical magazine that infiltrates the heteronormative spaces of Virginia Tech. This magazine highlights the LGBTQ+ experience on campus and beyond. This magazine is radical.

I got the idea for the name from a bell hooks book called "Teaching to Transgress." She refers to marginalized students as interlopers, or outsiders, throughout the book, and this stuck with me. In light of our presidential election, I do feel like an interloper. I feel hurt, hopeless, scared, and angry. But I won't let that stop me from creating, from existing—and I hope you won't either.

Working on the first issue, I ran into issues with funding this project, and for awhile I didn't think *The Interloper* would exist. One woman told me her department couldn't fund a magazine that talked about dildos. She claimed that, because the money comes from the state, she couldn't fund a magazine "like this." Well, fuck her—I fucking love dildos, dildos are important to our community, and we found enough money from other places to go to print. And fuck yeah we ran the article about dildos in that first issue.

We're going to be fighting fights like that our entire lives. Some of those fights will be quick—you'll find a solution, you'll move on. Other times the fight may seem insurmountable. Lately, I've been feeling a constant mixture of anger, fear, and helplessness that does seem insurmountable. These are dark times; there's no other way to spin that.

But what I hope is that you can take heart in something like *The Interloper*. I hope you can take heart in its power. What you're holding is special. It's a gift. It's a place you can go to escape. It's community.

I'm so proud that this magazine is still living, still breathing, still thriving. This magazine is radical. And your existence is radical—so keep living, keep breathing, keep fighting.



*Photo by Alejandro Smith*

xoxo,  
Matty

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# ***Thank You!***

# Nest

by Tali Cohen

Jane brings her blue  
eyes over to my place  
and feeds me cotton balls.

*I'm building the bower,*  
she says. We sit cross legged  
over the blankets. *I think only*

*males do that,* I say. She takes a jar  
filled with cigarette butts and yellow  
plastic bottle caps from her bag.

*But you sing so well,* she says  
and places the objects in my mouth.  
*How big is your mouth in centimeters?*

I try to tell her it is three fingers wide  
but my mouth is not a mouth anymore.  
She cuts a long black strand from her hair

and stitches it through my bottom lip.  
*I'm tired,* she says so I crack my jaw  
open and let her climb in.

# OUT

## Josh Oliver

I was never able to be out in high school. Going to a Christian school keeps you in the closet for a while. Towards senior year I had started going on a few gay dates, but nothing serious. I still didn't really understand what I was feeling.

After high school, I had finally mostly come to terms with my sexuality. I began coming out to my friends and a few select family members. I told myself that when I came to Virginia Tech, I would come as an out gay man.

And I did. I haven't tried to hide it from any person I've met since—my painted nails and brightly colored hair gives me away pretty quickly. But, despite being out on campus, my parents still did not know. I was nearing a point where I was going to have to tell them, before they heard from someone else. In the end, the universe decided to come out for me.

As someone who hoped to be a writer, I kept a journal of personal writing, and struggling with my sexuality filled up quite a few pages. I came home one night during my first semester of college to find my parents sitting at the dining room table, my journal laid out between them.

Looking back, I think the universe was doing me a favor: if I told them myself, I would have experienced the brute force of their melt-downs. They had the opportunity to process what they learned and were able to approach me about it calmly. It could have been a disaster, but there was something, maybe a gay god, that knew what was best for me.

My parents didn't like it, and still don't. But that's ok. They've both made incredible attempts to understand as best as they can. They would never abandon me and would be the first to call out parents who do. They've done their best to embrace who I am and understand where I've come from. Since then, I have grown into the flamboyant man I am today.

**So be yourself, put on that crop top and wear that lipstick. Don't suppress how you walk, talk, and act. Throw all of your fucks out the window. Be 100% who you are. I have, because "Baby, I was born this way." (Cue rising from an egg, Gaga style.)** 

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*Photo by  
Jessica Herling*

