



***Pro Homo:**

**A Collection of Resources and Tools For Challenging
Homophobia and Transphobia in Community Organizing**

CREATED FOR ARTREACH TORONTO BY KIM CROSBY
AND NATALYN TREMBLAY OF THE PEOPLE PROJECT



GOAL Youth Workshop Series

The Grassroots Organizing and Leadership (GOAL) Youth Capacity Building Workshop Series was developed in 2007 by youth-led organizations, funders and other partners to provide access to learning opportunities that can enhance the work of young people, artists and youth-led groups. Through different strategies and in different spaces, young people are working to make change and to have an impact on communities across the city of Toronto. To take this passion and commitment and channel it into a project, individuals or organizations often require training, tools and supports that are not always available to emerging, youth-led groups.

This workshop series provides facilitators (many of whom are young people, or those that have been involved in grassroots organizing and project development) to share their insights and resources. Many groups have struggled to find financial templates that works for them, decode grant guidelines or define what structure works for them as an organization. Accordingly, past topics have included financial management for nonprofits, fundraising, grant-writing, and models of youth work. These free sessions provide an accessible and safe learning space for young people and groups to ask questions, receive support and demystify process.

The workshops are developed based on needs identified by young people in Toronto. Participants who attend 5 or more workshops in the series receive a certificate.

The GOAL Youth Workshop Series is implemented by ArtReach Toronto, in partnership with various organizations and youth groups including; Grassroots Youth Collaborative, Laidlaw Foundation, City of Toronto, Schools without Borders, For Youth Initiative and Toronto Community Foundation.

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Bios

Kim Crosby *Artist / Educator*

Kim Crosby hails from Trinidad & Tobago, but is made of the fabric and texture of the many places she has worked and created in, from San Francisco to Krakow to Caracas. Striking out on her own at a very young age, Kim began her dedication to community work at 13 years old volunteering in literacy programs for youth in her community at the Toronto Public Libraries. She continued her work with alternative and holistic education based organizations and initiatives well into her move to Montreal. With a joint honors in African, Caribbean and Latin American History and Cultural Anthropology with a minor in Philosophy from McGill University Kim has developed a strong voice as an artist, global citizen and advocate for social change. A published creative writer, spoken word artist invited to the stage as part of the acclaimed Les Blues Collective with the Black Theatre Company and as a solo performer at Toronto's Rhubarb Festival to name a few. An accomplished playwright who is currently developing her second solo work and directing her 3rd, she is also an emerging media and graphic design artist. Kim has graced stages, festivals, panel discussions and conferences all across North America. Over the last decade, Kim has built a proud reputation as a passionate youth leader and community organizer, committed to a patient and loving approach to community building. Kim is also an innovative arts program developer, mediator, consultant and popular educator inspiring and supporting critical dialogue while as an ICA trained facilitator she fosters inclusion, equity and anti-oppression into everything that she does. Kim is currently the co-director of The People Project, an organization producing innovative arts and leadership opportunities for queer and marginalized youth in Toronto as well as engaging in a partnership based approach to institutional change.

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Natalyn Tremblay *Artist and People Mover*

Natalyn Tremblay carries the conviction and strength of her Métis French farmer roots, and the experiences as queer and identical twin to imbue criticality and creativity into everything she engages in. Natalyn holds a BA in Integrated Media from the Ontario College of Art and Design with a special focus on the theory and practice of making art for social change. Natalyn has been creating socio-political video, music and performance art works as an independent artist for over 10 years and has shown across Canada and internationally. Natalyn has been working in arts based community development and community created documentary media for 5 years and has drawn much of her innovative skills as an educator and facilitator from these experiences. Natalyn has also collaborated with a dynamic and colorful diversity of artists, educators and communities across the continent. As an educator Natalyn encourages inclusion, diversity, exploration, creativity, criticality, sustainability and global citizenship. Natalyn is co-director of The People Project, an organization producing innovative arts and leadership opportunities for queer and marginalized youth in Toronto. The People Project also develops and facilitates creative community specific anti-homophobia workshops, trainings and resources, as well doing a variety of community based consultation and support work around evaluation, equity and accountability.

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Definitions

Terms Commonly Associated with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Communities.

Language is dynamic; it grows, changes, and develops. This is particularly true with the language of diversity and the terms that we use to describe, understand or express ourselves. The creation of new terms also means new levels of consciousness of the diversity in human sexuality and gender. There are more than two genders, more than two types of sexuality. There are truly as many as there are colours, and just as many combinations of both gender and sexuality.

As people who are engaged in the process of community building and bridging, we should strive to be sure that our language does not demean, exclude, or offend. Regardless of any of the terms, labels or context that is shared here, first and foremost, we must allow others to self identify. This guide is to give you a foundation for understanding, but definitions will vary for everyone.


➤ **Lesbian:** This is one of the oldest and most positive terms that describes romantic relationships, sexual preference or orientation of women identified people towards other women identified people. Some lesbians prefer to call themselves “lesbian” and use the term “gay” to refer to gay men; others use the term “gay” to refer to both gay males and lesbian females. Other terms that are often used to self identify are dyke, stud, femme, butch or AG. These refer to the different ways that these women express or perform gender.

➤ **Gay:** A male identified person who forms his primary loving and sexual relationships with other male identified people. A term adopted by the gay male community, though some lesbians use it also, as a sign of pride in their sexual orientation.

➤ **Bisexual:** A person who has an affectionate, emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to male identified people and female identified people.

Degree of preference and choice of primary relationship partner varies for each bisexual.

➤ **LGBTQ:** Often referred to the gay alphabet or the spectrum, this acronym takes the first letter of each gender identity a person may select such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and/or Questioning/Queer. These letters may be seen in different order (example: GLBTQ, BGLTQ, etc.). The full acronym is currently LGBTTTQQ2SIAA. The terms are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Questioning, 2 Spirited, Intersex, Asexual, Allies.

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- **Homosexual:** A clinical and technical term that is not generally used by lesbian and gay people to self-identify or identify their community.
 - **Coming Out:** A constantly changing process of self-acceptance and expression of one's sexual identity. It is an intra-personal as well as interpersonal process and may include public declaration of identity or political or social justice action in the larger society.
 - **Being Out or Out of the Closet:** A term that means being open and public about being part of the spectrum. People can choose to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of violence or rejection from community (including, work, school and church), family and friends. Some people are “out” in some settings (for example, with friends) and not “out” in other settings (for example, at work or with family). Many people reject the process of coming out because heterosexual people are not required to come out, meaning that true equality won't be achieved until no one has to come out.
 - **Out-ed:** Being “Out-ed” is a term used when a Spectrum individual's sexual or gender based identity is disclosed inappropriately and/or maliciously by another person.
 - **Heterosexism:** The social/cultural, institutional, and individual assumptions and actions that assert or take for granted that heterosexuality is the only natural, normal, acceptable sexual orientation.
 - **Gender Identity:** refers to how a person sees themselves socially: as a woman, as a man, as masculine, as feminine, as a combination, or as neither.
 - **Gender Expression:** is how an individual chooses to express their gender. For example, regardless of what their biological gender may be or what they claim as a gender identity, if a person dresses and acts in a manner that is consistent with society's definition of being female, that person is expressing a female gender.
 - **Sexism:** The belief in the inherent superiority of one sex or gender and thereby it's right to dominance.
 - **Heterosexist Privilege:** “The benefits and advantages heterosexuals receive in a heterosexual culture.

Also, the benefits lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity.”

➤ **Homophobia:** “The irrational fear, hatred, or intolerance of lesbians, gay men, or any behavior that is outside the boundaries of traditional gender roles. Homophobia can be manifested out of fear of association with lesbian or gay people or being perceived as lesbian or gay. Homophobic behavior can range from telling jokes about lesbian and gay people to physical violence against people thought to be lesbian or gay.”

➤ **Biphobia:** The discomfort and fear others feel around bisexual people and the myths that exist about bisexuality. Bisexuality is often misperceived as an invalid sexual orientation. Bisexual people are not only stigmatized by heterosexual people, but also by lesbian and gay people because it is perceived that they are accessing heterosexual privilege.


Transphobia refers to irrational fear-based discrimination against transsexuality and transsexual or transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity. Many transpeople also experience homophobia from people who incorrectly associate their gender identity with homosexuality.

➤ **Heterosexual Ally:** “Heterosexual person who confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexual privilege in themselves and others out of self-interest, a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and a belief that heterosexism is a social justice issue.”³

➤ **Lover, Partner, Domestic Partner, and Significant Other:** Gender neutral terms that Queer & Trans People use to identify those people with whom they have romantic or sexual relationships. In addition, heterosexual allies who want to challenge heterosexism often use this language. These terms can in general be used by adults who are not legally married, who share resources and responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitments to one another over a period of time.

➤ **Family, or Family of Origin, or Chosen Family:** “Two or more people who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitments to one another over a period of time. It is the a relationship of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, or adoption, or marriage.” In addition, “Family” or “Chosen Family” are often terms used by Spectrum individuals to describe their close circle of support since many have been abandoned or rejected by their natural/ biological family.

➤ **Queer:** Originally a derogatory label used to insult lesbians and gay people or to intimidate and offend heterosexuals. More recently this term has been reclaimed by some lesbians, gay men,



bisexual people, and transgender people as an inclusive and positive way to identify LGBTQ people. It is often also used a term to describe cultural expression created by members of the community. Caution: Some LGBTQ individuals dislike this word and view it as pejorative and Trans people don't feel included underneath this term as it has traditionally referred to sexual orientation and not gender identity.

- ✚ **Sexual Orientation:** Sexual Orientation refers to the gender of the person(s) that someone is attracted to, emotionally and physically, i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, and others in between, as well as asexual. Some people come to understand their who they are attracted to sexually or who they are inclined to be in a romantic relationship with earlier than others. For many this can change once or many times over the course of their life.
- ✚ **LGBTQ Activist:** An individual who engages in a variety of different actions and activities in advocating in the service of securing civil rights and social justice for people of all sexual orientations. This continuum of action can range from educating oneself on the issues to recognizing and interrupting homophobic and heterosexist behaviors on a personal level to participating in rallies, protests, and other efforts with the aim of achieving political and social change on a community level.
- ✚ **Rainbow Flag:** Artist Gilbert Baker first proposed the Rainbow Flag as the symbol for the 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. Volunteers hand-dyed and hand-stitched two huge flags out of organically grown cotton. The original design used eight colors, but hot pink and turquoise were eliminated because of cost. The six colors of the resulting flag displayed at the 1979 parade symbolized the following: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sun, green for harmony with nature, blue for art, and purple for spirit. Within the first two years of production, the flag became so popular that it used up the world's supply of purple flag cotton.
- ✚ **Transgender:** A broad term that covers many aspects in the gender experience. People who identify as transgender feel that their prescribed gender role does not fit with their internal experience of their gender.

Transgender people can be, but are not always, transsexuals. Some people decide to redefine themselves by changing their gender expression only and others feel that they also need to change their bodies. Sex hormones, electrolysis, plastic surgery, or sex reassignment surgery can help people make a physical change that feels more congruent with their self-image. The term transgender includes the following.

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- **FTM (female to male):** People who were born as biological female but understand themselves as male.
 - **MTF (male to female):** People who were born biological male but understand themselves as female.
 - **Bigenderist:** A person who develops and expresses a distinctly male persona and a distinctly female persona. A bigenderist might, for example, work as a woman or socialize as a man (or vice versa).
 - **Drag:** Dressing in the clothing of the opposite biological sex, or in a manner different than how one will usually dress (i.e. “corporate drag” or “military drag”). “Drag” is often theatrical, and often presents a stereotyped image. Individuals who dress in “Drag” may or may not consider themselves part of the transgender community. They also may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
 - **Female or Male Impersonator:** Person who cross-dresses as performance art and/or as stage personalities. They may also consider themselves as “drag performers”. They may or may not consider themselves to be bigenderists, and they may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
 - **Transsexual:** A person whose gender identity is other than their biological sex. This person may wish to change their anatomy to be more in line with their self-perception, but they may also choose not to. Most transsexuals would like to alter their bodies through hormonal therapy, sex reassignment surgeries or other means.
 - **Transition:** Transition is the time period when an individual changes from expressing one gender to another in their personal life and/or workplace. For most individuals the workplace transition is very carefully planned, often including appropriate levels of management in early discussions, and the transition process may be weeks to months in length.
 - **Intersexed:** Some babies are born with genitalia of both sexes (an outdated term would be: Hermaphrodite). In the past, most intersexed individuals have had surgery shortly after birth in an attempt to give them an “identifiable gender”. Some parents and doctors elect surgery for the infant and assign a gender. Because a person’s true gender cannot be known by their genitalia, an assignment at birth can be wrong. Parents often feel forced to make a quick decision with little information. Most intersexed persons are raised as girls/women. Intersexed people have been treated differently by different societies over history. In some other cultures they are given special places in the group and revered as special. Generally, the

more homophobic a society, the less understanding and acceptance there will be for trans- or inter-sexed people.

➤ **Two Spirited:** The term “*two-spirited*” comes to us with a rich background of history and importance. In contemporary times, with the advent of lesbian and gay liberation, “*two-spirited*” means Aboriginal people who identify themselves as gay or lesbian

The terms “*gay*” and “*lesbian*” are European in origin, so the term “*two-spirited*” is preferred because it is more culturally relevant to Aboriginal lesbians and gay men.

Some of our elders teach us that two-spirited people have a special place in our communities. We believe that two-spirited people have specific duties and responsibilities to perform. These include counseling, healing, being pipe carriers, visionaries (seers), and conducting oneself in accordance with our belief that respects all life

Based on historical evidence that comes from recorded material, out of ninety-nine tribes, there were references to Gay culture in eighty-eight of them, of which twenty made specific references to lesbianism. Among the Crow, for instance, two-spirited men were responsible for cutting down the tree, which is used for the Sun Dance Ceremony.

Taken from: “**Another Mother Tongue**” edited by: Judy Grahn, Beacon Press,

➤ **Asexual:** A person who does not experience sexual attraction.
<http://www.asexuality.org/home/>

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Voices of Spectrum Youth

With all of our workshops, we have a panel of brilliant and dynamic queer and trans youth who generously share their stories. They keep us as an organization accountable as well they allow participants the ability to ask questions and come to develop some people's very first connections to the queer and trans community. Here are some of their voices in response to some of the most frequently asked questions. It's important to hear a diversity of voices so we don't only hear the horrific coming out stories, so we also hear the positive, come to understand that things are changing and reflect the diversity of this community.

1. How do you identify? ■ What do you think about LGBTTTQQ2SIA classifications?

Fernandes: I identify as gender queer. I think that lgbttqq2sia classifications are useful for some people who choose to identify in some way and can find a community within that. However, sometimes I find them to be boxes that do not explain or encompass the fluidity of gender and sexuality.

Aemilius: I identify my gender performance as trans-masculine and my orientation as queer. To be honest, I really don't know how I feel about the LGBTTTQQ2SIA classifications. On the one hand I see how they are necessary, people feel the need to identify themselves. On the other hand, it forces folks into boxes and categories; people become too comfortable in their boxes.

Kiana: I identify as queer. I however for other people's understanding most often identify as a lesbian. I don't really like to identify myself as anything. Heterosexuals don't have to proclaim who they love and why, I don't think I need to either. It also says, it's okay to label me, which it's not. Throughout life we all have a fluidity that we can either enjoy or confine. The classifications go against my belief of being defined by labels. As well as it will always be a challenge to include everyone. If there must be this classification, due to respecting differences, I would prefer the spectrum term of queer. That way I don't feel like a sub species, but rather referring to my life, the struggles that come with living and the beauty in diversity

2. What was it like to come out?


Aemilius: Coming out was the scariest thing I have ever had to deal with and continue to deal with. Coming out to friends was an easier process as they were mostly from the ‘spectrum’ community so I didn’t need to explain too much. Coming out to my family is still an ongoing process. They are supportive and understanding but continue to refer to me by my birth name and use incorrect pronouns. They haven’t really taken the steps to learn more about what it means to be trans even after I’ve offered books, pamphlets, and contact information to counseling. It’s difficult because I feel stuck between a rock and a hard place, I understand they love me unconditionally and I feel like I am put in the position of not being able to ask for more. My extended family has not been told of my transition though I’m sure they’ve heard through the grapevine. I’ve also had to come out at work, which surprisingly has been amazing. My employer has been supportive of me from day one. She has gone out of her way to make sure I felt safe and comfortable and has even spoken to customers on ‘trans etiquette’.

Kiana: It was a horrific experience to come out in a catholic school where the culture wasn’t very accepting nor were my peer or teachers. My family definitely thought what was best for me was to force me to change my mind, assuming this would increase my safety and success in the world. I was more devastated by the reaction and shift in relations with my mother and sister than anyone else, as I didn’t understand why they were acting like the rest of the world. Now that I’m older I can understand that they did the best with what little information or understanding they had around homosexuality.

Fernandes: I came out to friends before family. My friends were incredible, supportive and encouraging. My family took a little bit of time to come around, but now they are just as amazing about it.

3. Were you ever scared? Were you afraid to come out? Were you afraid of the repercussions?

Aemilius: Yes, very scared. I am still scared of being outted. I always thought that once I 100% passed as male I would finally feel safe. I was wrong, I feel even more scared of people finding out now, to think I lied to them or that I’m disgusting/abnormal. I have yet to come out to those who’ve known me after I began the transitioning process. I’ve never had to experience severe repercussions but I’m definitely afraid of them. I am afraid of aggressive or violent reactions, but even awkward looks hurt at times.



Kiana: In high school all I would hear was, fag this, gay that. The rumours around someone's sexuality as if the idea of them being gay was enough to write them off as a human being. I was scared. I was too popular; I was an honour student, an athlete, respected by my peers and teachers. I had too much to lose. I worked hard to be where I was, at the top of the social hierarchy of my school. The truth would ruin all that. I knew, although, never told, I would lose everything. I was more scared of losing my family though. But even more scared of being alone. And I thought it was all going to happen... at least I believed it enough to make it true.

Fernandes: When I lived in the Middle East I was terrified of coming out to anyone. In Toronto I felt more comfortable coming out, and I was still nervous about being accepted but I found that if I was confident and open about myself, the people who were worth it stuck around.

4. Have you ever experienced internalized homophobia? How did you move past it?


Aemilius: Yes, and I still sometimes catch myself experiencing internalized homophobia. I would say internalized homophobia was predominant in my teenage life. I was vocally homophobic at school. Nowadays, I would say what I deal with is more heterosexism. I definitely feel at times as abnormal and look to heterosexuals and their relationships as the 'unreachable/impossible dream'.

How did you move past it?

I move past it by surrounding myself with allies and folks who remind that we are worthy people, deserving of love, rights, and everything that everyone wants. Not to sound cheesy, but some days I need to look in the mirror and tell myself that I am beautiful just the way I am and I did not choose my path/existence it's who I was from day one.

Kiana: My first crush was senior kindergarten, Ms. Small, I was in love. I decided I'd marry her at five years old. That was the only time I ever accepted that I loved women like that until I was 18 years old. I had my first girlfriend at 13 and went through a very destructive period for 5 years. Where I felt I didn't deserve anything good to happen for me because I was going against God. I grew up in a very religious home. Church minimum 2 times a week. I knew what the scriptures had said about homosexuality and I just wanted to get rid of the feeling from inside of me. I felt like I was broken and was destroying my family in the process of being true to my feelings. Looking back on it, a lot of the decisions I made were out of confusion around trying to reject my own ideas of self-identity.

Moving past something as deeply rooted as internalized homophobia is more about growth and



self-discovery than anything else. To say one can move past it, would suggest that it's a stage or part of a process and to not be able to do so means you're not as advance as someone else. I can only say that I no longer feel that way because of the support from allies and what's also becoming my family.

Fernandes: All the time when I was first realizing and understanding things about myself that I had never accepted or tried to understand in other people. Now it happens a lot less often and I'm aware enough, I think, to call myself out on it when it does. Learning; and communication with other queer people. Reading a lot of books about queer youth, written by queer youth. Going to community events that were directed towards education. Most of my homophobia came from ignorance and the more I learn about it, the less homophobic I am.

5. Can you have a family?

Aemilius: I hope so! I've always wanted children and I hope to have biological children, but I don't have the money to make that happen anytime soon. I will definitely have a family, no doubt in my mind.

Kiana: Men, especially, always ask me if I want to have a family. I answer yes. They look deep into my eyes, and say really slowly, "How are you going to have kids?" I change my answer depending on my mood. "I want to adopt. I've decided to have a close friend impregnate me. I don't want children. Sperm-bank. By the time I want kids, I'll be straight" No answer warrants further discussion, they just accept it, really concerned for any child raised by two women, or relieved that I'm not going to be queer forever. But I always ask myself, what giving birth has to do with having a family? And how many fathers are absent in children's lives. How many children need to be adopted and how many women don't want children. But mainly how NONE of this has to do with my orientation. Do I want to have a family? I don't know, depends on the definition of family.

Fernandes: Yes I can.

6. Do you want to get married?

Aemilius: Yes I do, I always have.

Kiana: The concept of marriage has never been interrupted by my orientation. But more so unattractive based on my inability to commit. My ideals aren't based on my orientation but rather my personality. Should I ever meet someone I would like to spend the rest of my life with, with or without ceremony, then maybe I'll consider marriage.

Fernandes: Yes I do.

7. What does equality look like?

Aemilius: Equality looks like respect, acceptance, and understanding.

Kiana: Equality to me, looks like, the day I don't have to answer questions about how I feel being a black, light-skinned, Jamaican descended, queer woman who performs gender in a more masculine way. Equality doesn't mean generic, but rather looking for similarities instead of differences. And those differences being respected as an experience that I'll never have but can appreciate. Equality to me is accepting none of us are perfect and are all on a journey towards knowing ourselves better.

Fernandes: It looks like sitting on the ttc, holding hands with my partner and not getting stared at.

8. What is the worst part about homophobia?

Aemilius: The anger it causes, the lack of understanding and education. The violence and aggression it causes, what it means to hate someone by just a look. The high level of fear on both ends of the issue, to queer folk and heterosexuals.

Kiana: The worse part of homophobia for me is the part where people who like me, idolize me, and sing my praises can't reconcile I'm the same person when they find out that I don't love who they expected me to. And to make it worse they don't even think about me loving the same sex, they only think about the sexual interaction between me and another woman. And how disturbing and disgusting it is. I'm all of a sudden sexually perverted, God hates me, and I want to have sex with every woman on the planet.

Fernandes: Everything- mostly being afraid I'm going to get beaten up at a straight club or on the street, or in a park, or a parking lot.

9. Are you out to your family and do they accept you?

Aemilius: I am out to my immediate family. They accept me and also my relationship with my girlfriend and are trying their best to understand though I don't think they completely do. They accept my 'differences' and speak of wanting others to do the same but I feel at times they view my life as a chosen lifestyle.

Kiana: I am 'out' to my family. My family would prefer I was in, so that's where they keep me. Inside the bubble of, everything except me being queer. I am a beautiful daughter, immensely talented, with a bright future. None of this though includes me being queer. So yes, I've expressed myself. And it will be a process of acknowledging before I can even work towards acceptance.

Fernandes: Yes I am and it took a while but they do now.

10. Who have been allies to you? How did they act?

Aemilius: My allies have been my girlfriend, my employer, and a few incredible friends. They've gone out of their way to educate others and have made my coming out process and my transition run smoothly. They have always been there when I needed to vent about fears and situations and have also been there to celebrate my accomplishments and goals.

Kiana: People who have been allies to me have been anyone who didn't make my queerness the focus of who I am, but rather respected it as a part of who I am. Whether it was in school or at work; teachers, friends or family. It was people who told me, and often had to remind me, that my sexuality didn't change anything, I am who I am, until I am who I'm not. Supported me in areas I needed more support in, which wasn't my sexuality, but how it changed my relationship with my family. This was also where I had an opportunity to learn about chosen family and building that support around me really kept me grounded as I was working on reconciling my orientation with my given family.

Fernandes: My friends and a couple queer Profs in college. Actions towards me ranged from surprise to resignation. For the most part people weren't very surprised at all when I came out. They "KNEW" before I did.

11. What are the things that you are you are most scared of?

Aemilius: I am most scared of violence by ignorant folk. I am most scared of not being able to have a biological family one day. I am most scared of health concerns because of the hormone therapy. I am most scared of the education system never changing, meaning youth and children grow up ignorant and hateful, homophobic and transphobic.

Kiana: In regards to homophobia. I'm scared that people will continue to live in fear. Continue to never see their potential as human beings because they're struggling with something as fundamental as trying to be themselves. Better yet, not even understanding who they are because it's so hard to understand how they fell, so they reject it, reject themselves. A piece of them that can never die, so they live dead. I'm scared of silent zombies.

Fernandes: I'm afraid of waking up 20 years from now and realizing that I am still hated by the general population because of ignorance and because I do not fit into a gender category. I'm afraid that I will become hard and snarky first as a defense mechanism and then not know how to turn it off.

12. How else do you define yourself other than as a queer person?

Aemilius: I define myself as a trans-masculine, Latino-Canadian, person of colour. I am a community gender performer on stage. I am a sibling, a child, a grandchild, and supportive family member. I am a boyfriend, a lover, and a best friend.

Kiana: Everyday, new opportunities allow me to define myself differently than the day prior. Life is about growth and in order to do so, I must stand for something but not stand still. Other than being queer, I'm sure I'm a lot of the same things as people who define themselves as other than heterosexual.

Fernandes: I sometimes use the word "boi" but I wonder how old I have to be when I can't use that term anymore. I am brown, a student, open to interpretation and forever learning how to be a better person.

13. What are some myths about the queer and trans community?

Aemilius: I believe some myths are that we are mentally unstable, that we are overly sexual, and specifically that being trans has everything to do with sexual orientation.

Kiana: Some of the myths... Well I can only go with the ones I've heard passed on behind my back about me. "The rookz is gay myth book" by ignorance. "rookz is gay and wants to have sex with every girl in the world. She also wears boy clothes because she wants to be a boy and has dick envy. I bet she was sexually assaulted as a child, no one is gay for no reason" The saddest part about these type of myth books... they're best sellers.

Fernandes: That we choose to be gay or trans. That we are trying to piss off the world and so have decided to make it known by marrying the same sex. That we are all one big happy family that gets along. That we are united under a rainbow somewhere and that QPOCs have exactly the same experience as white gay men.

14. What are some things that you wish people knew about the queer and trans community?


Aemilius: I wish people just realized that we live our lives just as everyone else does, with the same goals, ideals, values and needs. We are everywhere, in your classrooms, in your workplaces, and in your families. If we all showed compassion and understanding to each other, I feel we would all be able to live better lives and I feel a lot more people would be open about themselves, with themselves. To be queer or trans means nothing else than just that, it makes up only one part of us, and really why should it be anyone's business who we choose to date or sleep with or how we were born.

Kiana: I wish people knew that queer and trans communities are just like any other communities. Nothing better, nothing worse. Just people trying to stick together so they don't have to fight alone. Not because they want to have gayness everywhere all the time. They haven't chosen to isolate themselves but be in safe anti-oppressive spaces.

Fernandes: I wish people knew how easy it is not. I wish people would realize how hard it is to move in a world based on gender binary and not fit in. I hope that some day soon it'll get easier for kids to come out and know that they're not going to get disowned or bullied. I hope that pride becomes a year round celebration. I wish people knew that there is community in queer and that there's no shame in reaching out.

15. How and where have you found support and resources? What did you need?

Aemilius: I found support through the Sherbourne Health Centre, specifically SOY and also



CTYS. I received counseling at the Sherbourne Health Centre as well as CTYS. I needed a doctor who understood my needs as a trans person and to also begin the transitioning process and I found that through the LGBT doctors' office at the Sherbourne Health Centre. I also found support through various support groups I've attended over the last few years; Gender Journeys, QPOC Butch-Masculine group, Gender Play, Trans Fusion Crew, etc.

Kiana: I often found support on online gay communities like DowneLink from interacting with other queer youth without feeling unsafe. Resources, I never really looked for any to find, but had they been more available I probably would have used them. I think when I was younger I definitely needed a positive influence that was a queer woman of colour to help me understand this part of myself without letting it consume me.

Fernandes: I needed queer friends and I needed acceptance. I volunteered at Youthline and met some amazing people who have changed my life. I have also found resources at TWB , in books, for questions I was too embarrassed to ask

16. What did or does a good ally look like?

Kiana: A good ally always has a smile when you need one. Probably like Kim or Nat's from The People Project. An ally has to know where their limitations lie, and within that stays honest, supportive and open. Open to sharing experiences as well as listening in order to help heal negative experiences. I guess a good ally looks like someone who can put themselves in someone else's circumstance and give what they'd expect, but more so what they would need.

BIOS:

Aemilius 'Milo' Ramirez: I am 24 years old. I was born in Toronto, Canada but both my parents are from Lima, Peru. I identify my gender performance as trans-masculine. I have been physically transitioning with testosterone for two years. My sexual orientation is actually quite fluid, therefore identify more so with the term queer than anything else specific.

Kiana 'rookz' Eastmond: Twenty-1. I'm Jamaican raised, Canadian born. My family is very religious, but they love me more than anyone else breathing. My mother my sister and I are all I need to get by, the water and food part I'll figure out later. I can identify as a lesbian and I perform gender more masculinity. These five sentences don't do justice to the richness of who I am, and what I'm not. Nor do they to anyone ever. Take the time to get to know people, especially when you don't want to. You might be surprised to find out, they're not that much different.

Fernandes: My family is East Indian, and pretty liberal as I found out in my coming out years. I grew up in Dubai, where the amount of homophobia and racism is seemingly endless. Moving to Toronto at the age of 17 I found myself, as corny as that sounds, and had a relatively easy experience coming out of the closet. I find myself now surrounded by queer, encouraging and supportive friends and family and am eternally grateful for them. My gender performance is masculine for the most part, or at least what can be considered masculine in a North American framework. I am "female" biologically but do everything possible to break down the gender binary and hegemonic roles that have been set out for me. I am happy.

**“I am most scared
of health concerns
because of the
hormone therapy.
I am most scared
of the education
system never
changing...”**



Roots of Homophobia: Cultural Understanding

In working to understand and challenge homophobia, it is important to also explore the roots of homophobia within diverse cultural groups, norms, and traditions. It is so important to learn about and understand the context through which homophobic attitudes may have originated and/or why they continue to hold weight in given communities, rather than to make assumptions about the overall tolerance or prejudice of a people or culture. We must do this in order to give ourselves the necessary context to work with communities appropriately, to greet them with compassion and to provide meaningful learning opportunities around the effects of homophobia and providing support for Spectrum youth who are a part of every ethnic, racial, cultural and religious group across the globe.

For example, there can often appear to be particularly high rates of homophobia within communities of colour. This is such a damaging stereotype for the following 3 reasons:

- **1.** When any community of colour is decried as homophobic, this serves to make invisible the entire queer and trans community (and their allies) who are present within the broader ethno-cultural community.
- **2.** In a patriarchal society, men use tools to augment their masculinity - money, status, and influence in order to wield power. Men of colour don't often have the same access to these tools and so use other things to augment their masculinity. In these communities, power and therefore masculinity is at a premium. Anything that is perceived as a threat to that concept of masculinity, anything that is perceived as "feminine" or as "weak" can be denigrated. This perceived weakness even within the cultural group is viewed as a liability, intense feelings of anger around lack of access to resources, mobility and liberation can be directed at women, queer and trans people. Thus comes dialogues around "Queerness being un-African", "Homosexuality as a White Man's Disease." This is not to excuse homophobia, but rather give context and explain how oppression can foster further oppression.
- **3.** With colonization, religion was used as a tool of destroying existing belief systems, justifying the enslavement of African and Indigenous peoples and for the degradation of human beings. European powers also exported puritanical ideas including homophobia


into countries like Ghana, Jamaica, Nigeria and Uganda where much evidence exists about pre-colonial era indigenous homosexuality. For example a close analysis of early colonial trial transcripts shows that there was often shared property resulting from long-standing cohabitation by the same sex partnerships that were considered marriages prior to their dispute. The invisibility of Queer and Trans people of colour and the existence of Queerness historically and contemporarily is directly related to these systems of oppression and their continued effects.

These are some attempts at providing context for understanding factors that can contribute to homophobic attitudes. Homophobia and transphobia often have much more to do with power and privilege than a particular culture, group of people or religion. Along with patience and understanding, we need to all be inclined to ask more questions to have deeper levels of assumptions, as opposed to further stereotyping and oppressing human beings.

Understanding The Roots of Homophobia: Family

When seeking to understand the roots of homophobia in particular communities or individual youth it is important to understand the influence of family values, norms and practices.

In many cases, it is within the family domain that homophobic ideologies may be directly fostered and gender identity tightly policed. It is often thought to be the very role of family to teach proper gender performance and norms of heterosexuality. In many instances, the occurrence of 'homosexuality' is actually considered to be the fault of bad parenting. These ideologies may be the result of moral judgments or of cultural and religious teachings. Some parents have been given very little information about the Spectrum community, and often the information received is negative, stereotypical or inaccurate. In the case of religion, for example, it is often through the family unit that religious teachings are largely taught and upheld, with severe repercussions for individuals as well as the whole family if teachings are challenged or disobeyed.



As a result, youth may have particularly strong judgments and a persistence to be vocal about their homophobic views.

For spectrum youth, as well as straight youth who don't adhere to gender norms, living in these kinds of family environments can foster intense self-hatred and internalized homophobia with an array of negative side affects. This can manifest into extremely vocal homophobic language and behavior, as well as more isolating coping mechanisms such as failing grades, social introversion, drug addiction and alcoholism. In severe cases the threat of personal and familial shame is so great that suicide seems like the only option. Spectrum youth also experience immense pressure, guilt and deep fear of being rejected from one's family on the basis of their sexuality if they are found out. Youth run the risk of greatly jeopardizing their familial relationships; being thrown out of the home without any support, being ex-communicated and losing the "unconditional" love and respect attributed to familial bonds.

Fortunately, feelings of discomfort and disapproval can change when understanding and knowledge is increased.

Providing Support for Families and Friends of Spectrum Youth:

Alterheros:

➤ <http://www.altherheros.com>

Alterheros is a Montreal-based non-profit organization whose mission is to facilitate the social and community integration of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth. The site has resources for youth, parents and educators.

Family Services of Greater Toronto:

➤ <http://www.fsatoronto.com/programs/brochures/DKS%20Brochure.pdf>

Provide professional short-term individual, couple and family counselling to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer.



Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays:

➤ <http://www.pflagcanada.ca/en/index-e.asp>

This website provides resources and support for parents, friends, allies and educators trying to learn more about the experience and needs of Spectrum youth, community engagement and more. A great way for new allies to get involved. Also a great selection of responses to common questions by parents.

Providing Support for Children of Spectrum Parents:

The LGBTQ Parenting Connection:

➤ www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca

The LGBTQ Parenting Connection is a network of agencies, organizations, and programs whose primary focus is supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) parents, their children, and their communities. Members of the LGBTQ Parenting Connection work to create healthy and informed communities within which LGBTQ families thrive.

519:

➤ <http://www.the519.org/>

The 519 has a HYPERLINK "<http://www.the519.org/programsservices/familyandchildren/history>" history of providing family support programs and space for LGBTQ-led families since the 1980's. Queer Parenting Programs evolved from our inclusive HYPERLINK "<http://www.the519.org/programsservices/familyandchildren/childrensprogramms>" Children's Programs to further support the specific needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, and Queer (LGBTQQ) parents, their children and families, and those considering parenthood.

Our programs include:

HYPERLINK "<http://www.the519.org/programsservices/familyandchildren/familyplanningandpre-natalcourses>" Family Planning and Pre-Natal Courses for prospective parents, HYPERLINK "<http://www.the519.org/programsservices/familyandchildren/familyresourceprograms>" Family Resource Programs for families and their children 0-6 years of age, Special Events. We provide support to and advocacy for families and prospective parents from the Greater Toronto Area and outside the GTA. We also offer information, training and support for students, community members and professionals seeking to understand the needs of our families.

We are a founding member of the HYPERLINK "<http://www.lgbtqparentingconnection.ca/>" LGBTQ Parenting Connection, along with the LGBTQ Parenting Network at the Sherbourne Health Centre and Family Service Toronto. The Parenting Connection is a network of agencies and organizations that provide information, resources and support to LGBTQ-led families and work to create healthy and informed communities within which LGBTQ-led families can thrive. The network's aim is to ensure that LGBTQ-led families will be free from the impacts of ignorance, hostility, harassment, discrimination and oppression, intentional and/or unintentional, and can participate fully in all levels of community life.

The Roots of Homophobia: Understanding the influence of Religion

For many Spectrum youth and their families, religious views around homosexuality can be a source of great conflict. Religion is often used as an argument against homosexuality and explaining why it is sinful and immoral. However, it is entirely possible to reconcile one's queer or trans identity with religion; there are a diversity of centers and resources that can offer information about a specific religious group and provide information about tolerance, acceptance and the existence of homosexuality within many spiritual and religious denominations.

Christianity

1. Soulforce Q

■ <http://www.soulforce.org/>

Soulforce, guided by the spirit of truth and empowered by the principles of relentless nonviolent resistance, works to end the religious and political oppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people.

✚ Their focuses include:

✚ *International Partnerships*

✚ *Incubation & Training For Activists*

✚ *International Advocacy*

✚ *Challenging Homophobia Using The Bible*

2. Queer & Christian Without Contradiction

■ <http://queerandchristian.org/>

In 2006, the Student Christian Movement of Canada (SCM) launched a national campaign to support and empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) youth – in and out of the churches. We work with allies in campus LGBTQ service centres, churches, chaplains and non-government organizations to build a culture of respect for LGBTQ rights and safer spaces for queer people to engage.

The campaign features:

✚ **Stop Homophobia in the Churches:**

A pamphlet and web resource reclaiming the Bible to liberate and affirm LGBTQ Christians.

✚ **Queer & Christian Bible Studies:**

Created by students across Canada, this resource examines key Bible passages to support queer identities.

✚ **Que(e)rying Religion Activity Guide:**

A collection of student-tested events and activities to bring the campaign to your campus or community.

Places Of Worship

✚ **Metropolitan Church**

✚ **Trinity-St.Paul's United Church**, 427 Bloor St. W. 416/925-7924

✚ **Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church**, 214 Wright Avenue 416-536-1755

✚ **St. John's Anglican Church**, 288 Humberside Avenue, Toronto, Ontario.
Telephone: 416-763-2393

Judiasm

1 **Kulanu** ■ <http://kulanutoronto.blogspot.com/>

Kulanu Toronto ("All of us" in Hebrew) is a Jewish LGBTQ social and educational group affiliated with Hillel of Greater Toronto. Our programming is geared towards LGBT people between the ages of 19-65. However, most people attending our events are between 25-45.

Our community includes people of various Jewish affiliation (from secular to religious). All our catered events are kosher and have a Jewish flavour to them. Our events include Shabbat dinners, Purim parties, Pesach seders, pub nights, film and speaker nights, karaoke, plays, brunches, potlucks, and marching in Toronto's annual Gay Pride Parade. Friends and allies are always welcome at our events.

2. Doing Jewish In Toronto

<http://www.jewishtorontoonline.net/home.do>

Doing Jewish in Toronto is a community resource of UJA FEDERATION's Jewish Information Service. Doing Jewish highlights and celebrates Toronto's tremendous Jewish community. This web site offers access to a variety of information about what's happening in the Greater Toronto Area.

Including:

- Arts
- Community Events
- Newcomer Info.

Places Of Worship

Congregation Shir Libeynu @ the Michael Bernstein Chapel,

➤ on the 3rd floor of the Miles Nadal JCC (416) 465-5488 or shirlibeynu@yahoo.ca

First Narayever Congregation

➤ 187 Brunswick Ave (Harbord and Brunswick) Tel: 416.927.0546

Congregation Darchei Noam

➤ 864 Sheppard Avenue West (Bath/Sheppard) Tel: 416.638.4783
Website: <http://www.darcheinoam.on.ca/> Rabbi: Tina Grimberg

Islam

1. Salaam

<http://www.salaamcanada.com/>

Salaam: Queer Muslim Community is part of a network of Salaam Canada: Queer Muslim Communities. Salaam: Queer Muslim community is a Muslim Identified Organization dedicated to social justice, peace and human dignity through its work to bring all closer to a world that is free from injustice, including prejudice, discrimination, racism, misogyny, sexism and homophobia.

Including:

- **Support Groups**
- **Events**
- **Social Justice**
- **Diverse Expressions Of Islam**

1. Huriyah: A Queer Muslim Magazine ■ <http://www.huriyahmag.com/>

Bahai

1. Gay Baha'i ■ <http://www.gaybahai.net/>


Website dedicated to telling the stories of LGBT Baha'is and their supportive families and friends. To celebrate LGBT Baha'is, to educate the entire Baha'I community and create dialogue towards acceptance, love and reconciliation.

2. Religious Tolerance: Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_bah4.htm

Generally a good resource exploring religion and homosexuality. Provides good resources, articles and links around LGBT Baha'I issues.

Hinduism

1. The Alliance For South Asian AIDS Prevention ■ <http://www.asaap.ca/index.htm>



The Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention is a community-based, non-profit, charitable organization committed to providing health promotion, support, education and advocacy in a non-discriminatory manner for those who identify as South Asian living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

2. SAATHII –Campaign for Open Minds

<http://www.orinam.net/campaigns>

Launched October 11, 2009, the Campaign for Open Minds is one of the many efforts to end homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in India. This online campaign is a response to the alarming surge in attempts at conversion therapy and other negative reactions to increased visibility of LGBT people, following Delhi High Court’s historic July 2 2009 decision decriminalizing homosexuality.

3. The Safra Project

<http://www.safraproject.org>

The Safra Project is a resource project on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual and transgender women who identify as Muslim culturally and / or religiously.

4. The Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association, Inc.

<http://www.galva108.org>

GALVA is an international organization dedicated to the teachings of Lord Caitanya, the import of inclusiveness and the Vedic concept of a natural third gender. They do community work raising awareness and provide support and community for third gendered people (gays, lesbians, transgenders, intersexed etc.)

Buddhism

1. The Gay Buddhist

<http://gaybuddhist.org>

This organization produces a regular newsletter, provides online discussion groups, have a variety of groups and committees for Spectrum Buddhists and offer seasonal retreats in San Francisco.

Other Resources

📌 Queer & Trans Religion Panel

A panel of acclaimed, renowned and accomplished queer and trans people who explore, challenge and share stories about the experiences with their respective religions. The religions that represent include the Hindu, Baha’I, Jewish, Muslim & Christian faiths. Most recently they presented to a group of 65 high school students at the 5 th annual Unity Conference in November 2009. Please contact kimreal@mac.com to arrange for them to visit your space or if you have specific questions for any of the panelists.

📌 Who’s Your Daddy? And Other Writings On Queer Parenting

by Rachel Epstein

📌 One Love Project:


A Project in Partnership with CamH, The Verity Center, The People Project and The TDSB

A community touring sharing circle engaging in a process of educating and informing African and Caribbean family members the importance of accepting and supporting our LGBT youth and the difference it can make in their lives.

The Effects of Homophobia:

Youth Homophobia Climate

Language based oppression is often the most common and happens in malicious and obvious ways as well as systemic ignorant ways. This ranges from “murder music”, music with lyrics that overtly call for the violent killing of gay and lesbian people to the daily assumption that LGBT individuals are assumed to be heterosexual. This manifests as uncomfortable questions to girls like “Why don’t you have a boyfriend?” These kind of questions might seem harmless but their repetitive nature makes them a constant reminder to gay, lesbian, and bisexual students that they are not “normal”, because the assumption that is being asserted is that heterosexuality is normal. The use of words like “faggot”, “gay” and “batty man” also acts as warnings for people who might be questioning their sexual identity; it indicates that they need to hide their identity or risk scorn and ridicule. This issue is even more complex for a trans person who may be aware at an early age of their trans status but unable to discuss it at school or at home and is living in constant fear.



In Canada creating a safe and inclusive space for Spectrum people is both an ethical and legal responsibility that falls upon all individuals, however there have failed to be any governmental programs or support systems for the public to learn how to act in ways that are non-discriminatory towards the LGBTTTQQ2SIA community. This means that not only are community members and families oppressive due to embedded cultural homophobia but also institutions like workplaces, the police and the government due to a lack of concerted education initiatives and enforced policies also further oppress all queer and trans people. This leads to a climate that is oppressive to young people in the following ways:

- Systemic homophobia and heterosexism create complex barriers for queer and trans youth accessing social institutions, employment opportunities as well as in family often leading queer and trans youth to suffer from self-hatred and emotional isolation.
- According to Statistics Canada, close to 600 youth between age 10 and 24 die by suicide every year.
- Canadian queer and trans youth hear anti-gay slurs an average of 26 times a day, and are five times more likely than their heterosexual peers to be targets of violence and/or harassment. Between 20-40 percent of homeless youth in Canada are LGBT and queer youth account for one third of Canada's annual youth suicide rate, one of the highest in the world.
- Students harassed based on actual or perceived sexual orientation are more than three times as likely as students who are not harassed to make a suicide attempt.
- An estimated 28% of completed suicides are by lesbian, gay and bisexual people.
- One study found that one in four transgender people have been harassed or abused by a police officer.
- One study found that one in two transgender people have experienced employment-related discrimination.

(Adapted from Freedom to Be: A Teachers' Guide to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Human Rights by the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, 2007)

- Queer and trans youth of color experience even greater challenges. "African-Canadian LGBT youth often face additional pressure because of discrimination from the larger society, including white gay communities and homophobic black communities (Advocates for Youth 2002; Pittman, Witman and Adams-Taylor 1992). To maintain acceptance in their black communities many youth felt that they had to down play their sexual identity and to fit into the gay community many felt that they had to downplay their blackness" (Sears 1995).

- Like the larger community, queer and trans youth are often relegated to queer and trans only spaces, which consist primarily of night-life culture, encouraging heavy alcohol and drug consumption and often premature, un-protected sexual activity.
However in spaces, like school where there are policies and educations initiatives:

“LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much less likely than other LGBTQ students...

- **to have had lies and rumours spread about them at school or on the Internet,**
- **to have had property stolen or damaged,**
- **to feel unsafe at school,**
- **to have been verbally or physically harassed”**

To Based on these results, and other similar results from the Egale Safe Schools Survey, the following is recommended:

- That community organizations implement anti-homophobia policies and make these known to young people, board, staff, and all staff are engaged in the process of making communities safe.
- That larger membership based organizations, funders and levels of government develop anti-homophobia policies to provide institutional authority and leadership for grassroots organizations in order to provide further support to staffs and boards.
- That community organizations strongly support and encourage the creation of an Equity Council (including youth, staff and board members) that focuses of addressing all equity issues including gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability etc. and also identifies appropriate long term training sessions and resources.
- That independent diverse queer and trans youth led community organizations and voices are supported in creating of anti-homophobia curriculum, workshops, resources along with steps for the implementation of the policies, to provide support and motivation to divisional and school staff.
- That clear and deliberate outreach invite queer and trans young people into programming spaces as well as staff and leadership roles.

10 Ways Homophobia Affects Straight People

1. Homophobia makes men feel pressured to act “macho” or “passive” if we are a woman. This restricts our ability to be ourselves.
2. The expectation of homophobia forces heterosexual people to act aggressively or violently towards Spectrum people.
3. Homophobia establishes very clear rules of what it looks like to be friends with people of the same sex.
4. Homophobia can strain or break up families and communities despite otherwise positive relationships.
5. Homophobia can mean the young queer, trans or questioning people feel pressured to become sexually active in order to prove that they are “normal.” This can lead to traumatic experiences, unplanned pregnancy and STIs.
6. Homophobia means that important information on about safe queer and trans sex and sexuality isn’t taught in schools. Without this information, young people are put at a greater risk for HIV and other STDs.
7. 3 out of 10 people who are targeted in a verbally or physically abusive way because of homophobia identify as heterosexual because they are not conforming to a specific standard of what it means to be “straight”.
8. Homophobia makes it hard for straight people and LGBTQ people to be friends.
9. Homophobia along with racism, sexism, classism, etc. are all a part of the social factors that make it hard to put an end to AIDS.
10. Homophobia makes it impossible to appreciate the diversity of sexuality and gender and prevents all people from being able to explore the possibilities for love and expression.

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Anti-Homophobia 101:

How to Be an Ally to LGBTTQQ2SIA or “Spectrum” People

- 1.** Understand the difference between tolerance and acceptance. No one wants to be tolerated, so agree to work towards a place of acceptance for all Spectrum people.
- 2.** Attend training sessions on Spectrum issues, receive a resource manual and request additional resources and support.
- 3.** Identify yourself as an ally by displaying a rainbow flag as a button or sticker (or be even more creative) in your community space, your office or your home. It doesn't have to be everywhere, but try somewhere.
- 4.** Become aware of community programs and services for referrals through training.
- 5.** Help report harassment or discrimination while still maintaining confidentiality if necessary.
- 6.** Try not to make the assumption that everyone you meet is heterosexual. Try to be open to the fact that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (Spectrum) people are present in every walk of life, in every community.
- 7.** Allow people to self identify, ask people what personal pronoun they identify with, whether they like to be called “he”, “she”, “hir”, “z” or something else entirely. There can be a lot of risk associated with being open about your gender performance or sexual orientation, don't “out” people based on your own assumptions.
- 8.** Use non-gender specific language. Ask “Are you seeing someone?” or “Are you in a committed relationship?,” instead of “Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?” or “Are you married?” Use the word “partner” or “significant other” instead of “boyfriend/girlfriend” or “husband/wife.”

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- 9.** Do not assume the sexual orientation of another person even when that person is married or in a committed relationship. Many bisexuals, and even some gay men and lesbians, are in heterosexual relationships. And don't assume that someone who is transgender is gay or that the person will seek to transition to become heterosexual.
 - 10.** Do not assume that a Spectrum person is attracted to you just because they have disclosed their sexual identity. If any interest is shown, be flattered, not flustered. Treat any interest that someone might show just as you would if it came from someone who is heterosexual.
 - 11.** Interrupt offensive language, mimicking behavior, or insensitive jokes. Let people know that the language, behavior, and jokes are unacceptable -- even between Spectrum people.
 - 12.** Validate people's gender expression. For example, if a biologically male person identifies as female, refer to that person as "she" and use her chosen name.
 - 13.** Review your organization's policies, by-laws or mission statements. Suggest changes ensuring that documents are inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. If appropriate add or include publications or links specific to the needs of the Spectrum population (health services brochures, Spectrum support materials, etc.) Doing this will show the Spectrum and Allied members of the community that Spectrum individuals are not invisible, that they are valued.
 - 14.** Educate yourself about Spectrum history, culture, and concerns. Read Spectrum publications such as The Advocate, or Out Magazine. See movies that are by and about diverse SPECTRUM individuals like "The Agressives", "Venus Boyz" or "Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100". Understand that the same systemic racism and oppression that affect the heterosexual community and make people of colour invisible is also present within the Spectrum community, so work extra hard to unearth their stories.

- 15.** Incorporate Spectrum issues and individuals into programming or curriculum. Many historical and literary figures were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.
- 16.** Continue to educate yourself about issues facing Spectrum people. If you don't understand something, look to local or on-line resources, read an article or a book, participate in discussions related to Spectrum issues and individuals.
- 17.** Understand that the expression of homophobia is an attack upon the spirit, emotions, and sometimes the actual physical being of Spectrum people. It is also a violation of every person's freedom and human right to be who he or she wants to be. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Homophobia affects heterosexual people in profound ways, it means that girls who fix cars get called 'dykes' and boy who like to paint get called 'faggots'. Homophobia is just one of the symptoms of a larger system of gender based oppression and prevents all people from being who they really want to be.

How to be an amazing Trans-Ally:

Submitted by Trans Youth Aemilius Ramirez and partner Francis Hilary

I think the most important thing that we can do, is regard others with respect. However, respecting the pronouns a person prefers, or using his or her chosen name is not quite enough to consider yourself an ally (though it is a start). Webster defines an ally as "one that is associated with another as a helper". I don't consider my support of trans-gendered persons to be in aid of them; I rather consider myself to be helping non-trans public to become more educated about the world and people we share these spaces with. It is important to me that I dispute any negative language used towards a trans-gendered individual that I may encounter. It makes me uncomfortable that I even have to do this sometimes, but I do, just as sadly I still have to speak up if any derogatory comments are spoken of someone regarding their culture/sexual orientation/race. I can only thank people who have corrected me if I have ever offended another person. I was not born with the perfect awareness, but we can only work to better ourselves and allow others to aid in our own education. I can't tell people to live their life the way I do, all I can ask is that you try not to be offended if someone does remind you to be more respectful and don't be afraid speak out when needed.

Community Engagement Tools:

As a community leader and/or youth facilitator dedicated to discouraging homophobia, encouraging Spectrum acceptance and ultimately fostering safe and inclusive space for Spectrum youth it is important to engage your community and program participants in a variety of ways. Here are some tools to get you started.

Learn more about the LGBTTTQQ2SIA community:

In order to step into our roles as leaders and Global Citizens we have to come to learn about, and try our best to understand, the many different intersections of identity that shape the people around us. We can always find interesting things about a community on the internet and books, but it is also so important to spend time amongst a community and learn from the people.

1. On the web:

- www.glsen.org: Very thorough website with tons of resources. American source.
- www.egalecanada.org: Only national Canadian organization, surveys, statistics.

2. In Toronto:

- **Inside Out Gay and Lesbian Film Festival:**
www.insideout.ca (A week of films exploring queer and trans identity, also run the Queer Youth Digital Video Project)
- **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre:**
www.artsexy.ca (theatre, dance, performance art, youth programs)
- **The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives:**
www.clga.ca (historical information, statistics, newspaper articles, event listings, photos, films and more produced by, for and about the Canadian LGBTTTQQ2SIA community)

Promote Tolerance:

It is important to have messages in your community or program space that affirm queer and trans identities as well as the rights of LGBTTTQQ2SIA youth, and clearly indicate the beliefs and policies of your organization or project as openly anti-oppressive and anti-homophobic.

1. Posters and stickers:

- The Safe Schools Coalition: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-posters.html>
- Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network: www.glsen.org

2. Queer positive messaging apparel:

Queer Gifts: <http://www.queergifts.com/>

3. Signs, postcards, magnets etc.:

“Out on the street” Queer culture shop at 551 Church street, Toronto.

4. Make your own posters:

Create an “adburst” poster by selecting ads or images in magazines that can be altered; cut up, written on, collaged etc. to produce a new inclusive and anti-oppressive and anti-homophobic message. This is a great activity with older youth from (15-25) that also allows you to explore gender stereotypes, heterosexism, racism and representation in media.

Encourage Positive Learning around LGBT issues:

It is important to provide positive opportunities for youth to learn more about the queer and trans community, rather than only discussing anti-homophobia and its negative effects or by relying solely on policies or penalties. The queer and trans community is one of rich cultural, spiritual and artistic diversity that can be shared and discussed in a variety of respectful ways.

1. Hold a community screening and discussion with your colleagues or program participants:

Film suggestions:

- **Queer Youth Digital Video Project compilations,**
Just contact Inside Out to request a copy (15-29)
- **Beyond Beats and Rhymes:**
Exploring Hip Hop and Homophobia (15-29)
- **Paris is Burning:**
Exploring the Black Queer community of New York and Vogue dancing (18-29)
- **Venus Boys:**
Exploring the diversity of female masculinity (18-29)
- **Soulforce Q Equality Ride:**
Queer Christian youth doing anti-homophobia workshops in Christian schools across America. (15-29)

Other sources:

- **The Canadian Film Makers Distribution Centre:** www.cfmdc.org
- **V Tape artist run video distribution centre:** www.vtape.org

2. Host an anti-homophobia workshop or training course for your colleagues, in your community or for your program participants:

Toronto Anti-Homophobia Workshop/Training Providers:

- **T.E.A.C.H.:** Workshops and presentations for elementary and secondary schools
http://www.ppt.on.ca/Anti-Homophobia_teach.asp
- **The People Project:** Individually tailored workshops and facilitator trainings for organizations, youth servicing centers and for youth groups.
www.thepeopleproject.ca

3. Host a panel discussion or presentation with LGBTTTQQ2SIA community leaders and youth in your group or organization. Be sure to prepare your group to be respectful, pre-screen public questions and have a skilled moderator to support the flow of discussion in order to keep space safe for your guests.

Contact **Egale Canada** (www.egalecanada.org) or **T.E.A.C.H** of **Planned Parenthood** (www.plannedparenthood.ca) for advice on finding a suitable speaker for your community.

4. Start a Gay Straight Alliance:

A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a youth or student-run club, typically in a high school or community center, which provides a safe place for youth to meet, support each other, talk about issues related to sexual orientation, and work to end homophobia. Many GSAs function as a support group and provide safety and confidentiality to youth who are struggling with their identity as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. In addition to support, some GSAs work on educating themselves and the broader community about sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

Discourage negative language and behavior:

Although homophobic language or behavior may not always be overt or intended as an insult it can be very harmful and isolating for queer, trans, questioning or gender fluid youth. By not responding to any and all homophobic language and behavior you may be condoning homophobia and homophobic ideologies, which may later result in more severe discrimination or violence.

1. Always establish a “safety contract” with your group that speaks clearly to tolerance of different gender and sexual identities, as well as restricting homophobic language or behavior. Create firm responses and/or penalties collectively with the group so participants are aware and can also govern themselves.

2. Use creative spins to challenge improper language: This way you still maintain your cool factor, get your group thinking and keep the energy up and positive.

3. Establish anti-homophobia policies in your organization: It isn't enough to have posters up, and anti-homophobic points in your safety contract if your organization or colleagues don't support you. It is also important to have a support system in place in case a situation is larger than you can handle alone.


- Learn about what other organizations have done by studying their anti-oppression policies and talking with their equity staff.
- Bring “anti-homophobia” up as an agenda item in staff meetings, and especially when doing strategic planning.
- Refer to the Canadian Charter of rights Commission to help push your case:
[See articles 2 and 5](#)
- Hold evaluations and surveys with your participants and colleagues to better understand the existence and effects of homophobia in your community or organization.

Challenge assumptions:

Using a series of activities, games and questions, you may challenge the stereotypes and assumptions that are embedded on a social and cultural level, which are a necessary part of challenging homophobia. Through this work we may come to see the parallels between a whole host of varying forms of oppression and discrimination.

1. The Binaries Exercise: This exercise invites participants to explore assumptions, stereotypes and conventions around differing identities by positioning them as binaries (or opposites).

- Split your group into 3 or 4 small groups. Each group is given a large piece of paper with two columns, and two headings. These might be: Black and White, Homosexual and Heterosexual, Male and Female, Young and Old etc.
- Ask your participants to list below each heading words, terms and expressions that would define this heading as well as distinguish it from its “opposite”.

- 
- Invite each group to present their page and discuss why they have chosen their words and terms.
 - Open discussion up to the group and begin asking questions that challenge these stereotypes.

For example: Under “male” people often write “Strong”. Is this always true?

2. The Heterosexual Questionnaire: This tool reverses the questions that are very often asked of Spectrum people. By having to answer this type of question, participants will get some intellectual and emotional insight in to how oppressive and discriminatory a hetero-normative frame of reference can be to the Spectrum community.

**The Heterosexual Questionnaire can be found in this toolkit.*

Facilitating for an inclusive and/or gender neutral environment:

Another way to create safe space for queer and trans youth is to assume that they may be present in your group whether you know this or not. Consider how your language or the way you split participants into groups based on gender might alienate a queer or trans youth. This also fortifies the idea that there are only two genders or that there is a specific way that gender should be performed.

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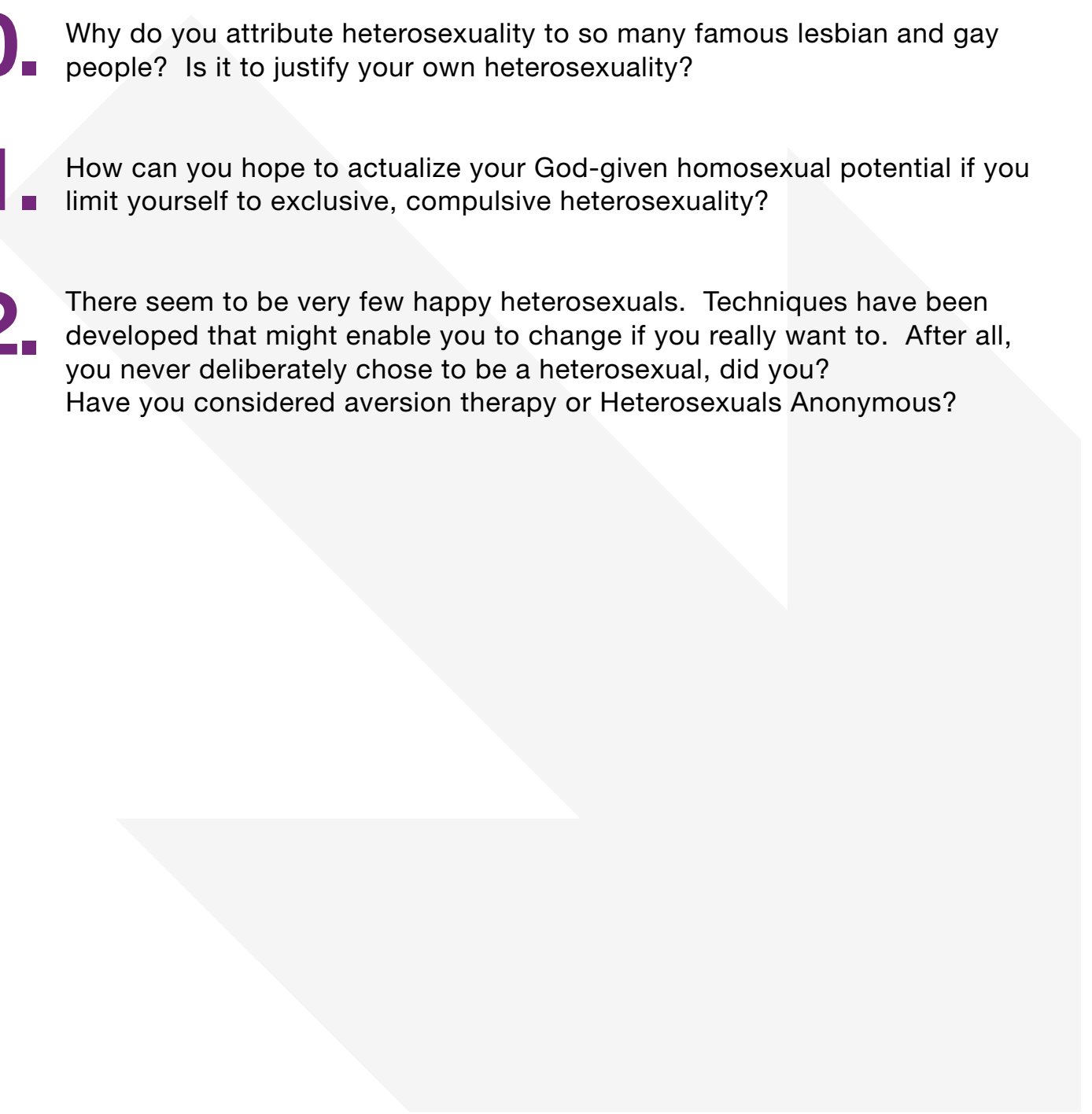
The Heterosexual Questionnaire

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This questionnaire is for self-avowed heterosexuals only. If you are not openly heterosexual, pass it on to a friend who is. Please try to answer the questions as candidly as possible. Your responses will be held in strict confidence and your anonymity fully protected.

- 1.** What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
- 2.** When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
- 3.** Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
- 4.** Could it be that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
- 5.** If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, how can you be sure you wouldn't prefer that?
- 6.** To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
- 7.** Why do heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into their lifestyle?
- 8.** Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?

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- 9.** Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?
 - 10.** A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual men. Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual male teachers, pediatricians, priests, or scoutmasters?
 - 11.** With all the societal support for marriage, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
 - 12.** Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
 - 13.** Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual?
 - 14.** Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear s/he might be inclined to influence you in the direction of her/his own leanings?
 - 15.** Heterosexuals are notorious for assigning themselves and one another rigid, stereotyped sex roles. Why must you cling to such unhealthy role-playing?
 - 16.** With the sexually segregated living conditions of military life, isn't heterosexuality incompatible with military service?
 - 17.** How can you enjoy an emotionally fulfilling experience with a person of the other sex when there are such vast differences between you? How can a man know what pleases a woman sexually or vice-versa?

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- 18.** Shouldn't you ask your far-out straight cohorts, like skinheads and born-agains, to keep quiet? Wouldn't that improve your image?
 - 19.** Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?
 - 20.** Why do you attribute heterosexuality to so many famous lesbian and gay people? Is it to justify your own heterosexuality?
 - 21.** How can you hope to actualize your God-given homosexual potential if you limit yourself to exclusive, compulsive heterosexuality?
 - 22.** There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to. After all, you never deliberately chose to be a heterosexual, did you? Have you considered aversion therapy or Heterosexuals Anonymous?
- 

For some youth, the experience of questioning their sexual or gender based identity can be very troubling and this may lead to their own self-isolation from participating in programming or fully engaging with other youth.



Supporting Spectrum Youth

As community leaders, organizers and facilitators we have a responsibility to be available and accountable in providing support, council and protection for Spectrum, questioning and straight youth alike.

For some youth, the experience of questioning their sexual or gender based identity can be very troubling and this may lead to their own self-isolation from participating in programming or fully engaging with other youth. Be vocal and clear about ways that youth can approach you if they have any concerns or needs but never approach a youth you think may be spectrum and simply hasn't disclosed. Each individual has to come to terms with their identity on their own and being called out can be very traumatizing and further isolating.

If a youth does disclose that they are questioning always be as discreet as possible. You never know what kind of community or familial climate they are living in and what levels of support they might have. After referring a youth to any of the below organizations or providing resources always be sure to follow up and continue trying to engage them in your community and programs.

Resources for Spectrum and questioning youth:

SOY (Supporting Our Youth)

- A part of the Sherburne Health Centre, SOY provides a diversity of groups for spectrum youth, counseling, mentorship and health care.
www.soytoronto.org / (416) 324-5077

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line:

- Youth driven service, provided for youth, and offering support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth in Ontario.
www.youthline.ca / 1(800) 268-YOUTH

The Griffin Center: ReachOut Program

- A creative, inclusive & accessible program that support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, intersex, queer and questioning (LGBT2IQQ) youth.

www.griffin-center.org / (416) 222-1153

The 519 Church Street Community Center

- Provides a wide range of programs for Spectrum youth, adults, immigrants and refugees, anti-violence programs, anti-poverty and homelessness, AIDS and sexual health counseling and much more.

www.the519.org / 416-392-6874

Family Services Toronto: David Kelley Counseling Services

- Spectrum Counselling Program provides professional, short-term, individual, couple and family counselling to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer.

www.fsatoronto.com / (416) 595-9618

If a youth approaches you about having experienced homophobic language, discrimination or violence, whether Spectrum or Straight, it is very important to treat the situation with utmost sensitivity, discretion and care. Be transparent about all of the steps and approaches you will take, particularly if the infraction involves other youth from your community or programs. When appropriate, it is recommended that homophobia be reported to upper levels of management in your organization as well in order to assure all necessary measures are taken to address the issue and prevent future instances. Above all be sure to provide whatever support for the youth experiencing homophobia that you can. Never suggest that they may have brought this upon themselves and reassure them that they have made the right choice in confiding in you. The resources below can give you more information about reporting and dealing with homophobia. Remember Homophobia is against federal law and the Canadian Charter of Human Rights.

Support for youth who have experienced homophobia:

The 519 Anti-Violence Program (AVP)

- Support and advocacy for spectrum people who have experienced hate crimes, records incidents, provides counseling, helps in safety planning, provides referrals, assist in police reporting and more.

www.the519.org/programsservices/the519anti-violenceprogram

519 Bashing Line (416) 392-6877

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line: Bullying and Harassment Program

- Phone support for victims of bullying and harassment, resources, support reporting to police, know your rights support and more.

www.youthline.ca/bullying_harrassment.php

1(800) 268-9688

Toronto Police Servie: Report Homophobic Violence, Period (RHVP)

- A campaign and coalition of community members to prevent homophobic and transphobic violence among youth and boost reporting of hate crimes.

www.torontopolice.on.ca/rhvp

Non-Emergency: 416-808-2222 / Emergency: 9-1-1

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