

COMING OUT:

Stories from LGBT Young People



Engage Me!
15/16

Educate Me
Represent Me
Motivate Me
Develop Me
Healthy Me
Respect Me
Sustain Me
Entertain Me



endorsements

“The Rainbow Flag flies high over Dundee and Angus College.

Over the past year Dundee and Angus College have embarked on a journey embracing LGBT equality across the many campuses. Some amazing things have taken place on this journey; the college have helped set up LGBT Societies and an LGBT group with Angus Council and staff at LGBT Youth Scotland at an Angus College campus. This means that young people can access a safe space to meet their peers, learn and develop the group through youth led participation. As part of the History Month event in February this year the college hosted a human library event. This book has come out of the event and helps capture the importance of hearing, supporting and raising awareness of LGBT students across Dundee and Angus.”

Angela Houghton, Partnership Manager Central & North LGBT Youth Scotland

“It has been brilliant to see the LGBTI+ story book idea develop and see the end product. It has been great that Dundee and Angus students have take the time to document and share their personal coming out stories and these stories will undoubtedly help many other young people. We are proud to have this book available in our libraries for staff, students and community members to read. “

Sarah Mackay, Student Services D&A College

‘We strongly believe that equality & diversity underpins the supportive work we deliver, when engaging with young people. As community partners, we provide a welcoming health drop-in facility at the Arbroath Campus each Thursday lunchtime, which is open to all students irrespective of their sexuality or gender identity. Any questions can be asked and confidentiality is ensured. We are also involved with a new LGBT young people’s group on a Monday evening, to provide non-judgemental advice and/or educational support, depending on the needs of the group. Being a student can be a chaotic and stressful experience so we hope to encourage independence and resilience by encouraging positive health choices.’

Anne R.McLachlan, Community Health Nurse, NHS Tayside

“Community Learning and Development is about helping people to realise their potential. We recognise that many people face barriers in their life. We work with people to help empower them to get the most out of life and be confident, successful, healthy and happy. We work very closely with young people and a range of partners to ensure all of our provision is needs led and young people are able to take ownership of their learning. The work we have begun recently in partnership with Dundee and Angus College has allowed young people to come together as a group to look at issues that affect the LGBT+ Community. I am very proud that one young person who was instrumental in setting up the group has chosen to share his story with the public. I hope the sharing of the stories within the book will encourage conversations to take place, the perfect starting point for change and positive action. “

Pauline Rettie, Communities Service, Angus Council

thank you

Dundee & Angus College promotes respect in all aspects of the learning experience, encouraging both students and staff to promote and celebrate equality and diversity.

The Learner Engagement Team works hard to enrich your college experience, by providing opportunities for personal, educational and professional growth and development. One such opportunity is developing student groups and societies, where our students can socialise and continue their learning outside the classroom.

When we started the LGBT Society, we had no idea that it would become such an important part of student life, for so many of our students. As you will see from the timeline, we have travelled quite a distance!

It was important to us to develop a society that provided a safe space, encouraged new friendships, inspired new opportunities and opened doors to the wider LGBT+ community. Through working in partnership with our students and community partners, we have managed to achieve this and more!

This book shares stories from LGBT young people who have contributed greatly to the success of our College LGBT Society this year. This book has been created as an offshoot of a successful Human Library Event for LGBT History Month, where students openly, and bravely shared stories about themselves.

We hope you will enjoy our first publication.

Engage Me!



DUNDEE & ANGLS TIME

START...



NOVEMBER 2014

CHAMPION GROUP

Champion identified for O&A
Colleges.

Champion Group now established
to continue Charter Journey

SEPTEMBER 2014
FRESHERS FAYRE

Find out about opportunities,
Engage Met programmes & Sign
up!

OCTOBER

Charter Mark journey
Dundee & Angus
Colleges
Students attend the
at Roberts youth prize
Scotland

DECEMBER 2014

Awareness Stalls on each campus led
by students

Students & staff host a Christmas
Party for all students who are part
of the LGBT+ Societies

NOVEMBER 2014
PROMOTION

Students meeting on a regular basis &
created posters.

O&A LGBT+ logo created by marketing
team



APRIL 2015

NEW GROUP BEGINS

In partnership with Angus Community
Learning & Development team a new
group in Angus formed that meet at the
college - The Revs of Angus.

JUNE 2015
AWARDS!

LGBT+ Students receive group
award at Dundee & Angus College
prize giving.

SUMMER 2015
**CONTINUED
DEVELOPMENT...**

LGBT+ A&A developments
&
Revs of Angus group Summer
Programme

IS COLLEGE LGBT



ELINE!

SEPTEMBER 2014 FIRST MEETING!

First meeting with LGBT
Students & Learner
Engagement Team & LGBT
Youth Scotland

OCTOBER 2014 STUDENT CONFERENCE

A conference held to engage
students and create more
awareness & knowledge about
their role & Engage Me
Programme



R 2014

Journey begins for
Dundee College!

Students party
to celebrate LGBT Youth
Scotland

OCTOBER 2014

- LGBT Student group started
up

- LGBT Student Facebook Page set
up for Dundee & Angus College
with over 50 members

JANUARY 2015 TRAINING!

LGBT Scotland awareness training
session for Champion group

Meetings with different staff teams to
share LGBT+ & Charter Mark Journey



FEBRUARY 2015 HISTORY MONTH!

Students worked together to carry out
a Human Library Event during History
Month
Raised awareness & told their stories to
other students and staff!

FEBRUARY 2015 PARTNERSHIPS!

Meeting with other colleges and
developing partnerships in the local
community to share good practice and
developments for Charter Mark
Journey



AND OUR
STORY
CONTINUES...



did you know...

Young people say that education is the environment where they face the most discrimination.

Education Report, LGBT Youth Scotland, 2012

In 2004 the Civil Partnership Act was passed, giving same sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as married heterosexual couples

Scottish Government, 2004

One in six lesbian, gay and bisexual people have experienced a homophobic hate crime or incident over the last three years.

Stonewall, Hate Crime Survey, 2013

In 2013 The Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act is passed in England and Wales.

Government Equalities Office, 2013

In 2014 the Scottish Government passed legislation allowing same sex couples to marry in Scotland.

Scottish Government, 2014

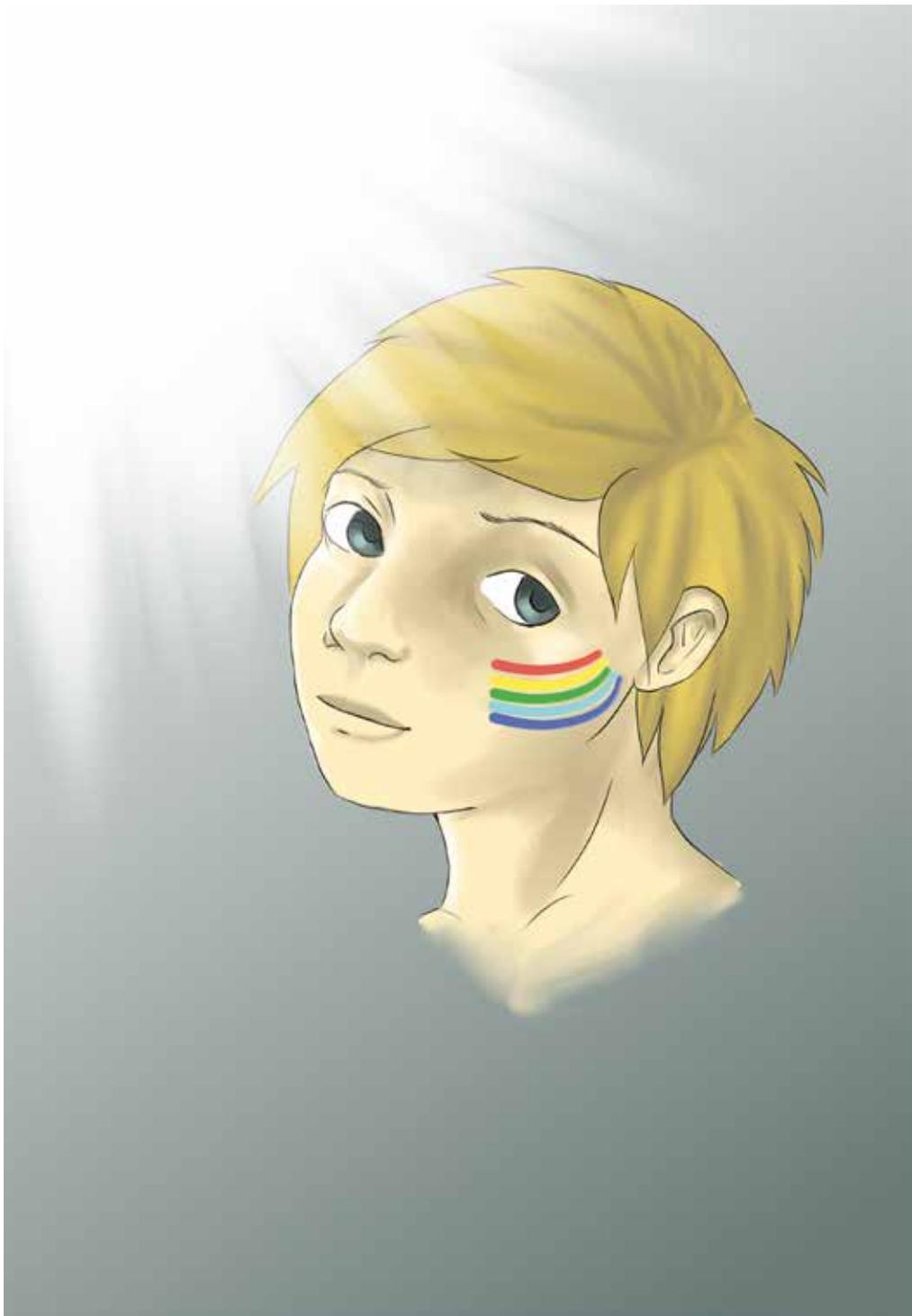
Homosexuality was illegal in Ireland until as recently as 1993. However, in 2015 62% of people voted in a referendum to legalise gay marriage.

Government of Ireland, 2015 BBC News, 2015

contents

LGBT YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES

- 07 Jordan's Story
- 09 Libby's Story
- 11 Age Poem - Beth
- 13 Time to be Ernest - Ryan
- 23 LGBT Me - Adam
- 25 The War With Myself - Jack
- 29 Quinn's Story
- 31 Alex's Story
- 33 The Closet - Kain



Jordan's Story

So what's my story? I ask myself that often enough. Would my story be a rom-com? An action? A sit-com? I guess I will figure that out when I write my memoirs! I will have to remember to write about the time I went to a national training event dressed in a 7 foot penis costume, or the time I danced with Tom Daley at the Closing Ceremony for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, or even the time I came out! While the first two sound like better stories (and I swear they were so much fun to go through), coming out was the hardest, but most worthwhile thing I have ever done.

It was only possible for me to do such weird and wonderful things because I came out and I accepted who I am. Everyone needs to do this at some point -- sit back, realise who they are and learn to not only accept it, but to embrace every part of themselves! For some people it's realising they are LGBT+, for some people it is realising they are vegetarian, or realising that they don't want to do accountancy but instead want to do stand-up comedy! (Why is 6 afraid of 7? Because 7 ate 9!!!)

But bad jokes aside, I guess the moral of my story so far is live life, but live it to the fullest! Do things that make you happy, never accept regret as an inevitable. Just look for the next opportunity to have fun, and make some memories worth writing about!



Jordan



Libby's Story

While my mum was dishing out dinner, I decided to tell her that I have a girlfriend.

Me: Mum I have a girlfriend

Mum: That's cool! Are you having pasta Bolognese or not?

That was all... there is no big story...

Then it was my dad...

I decided to have a joke with my dad, and said:

"Dad, I am pregnant"

Dad responded, "I thought you were gay..."

So, both my parents knew, and I didn't have to explain myself...



Libby



Beth's Story

I am 16 years old
Walking around pride
Feeling at home
Yet seeing the
furrowed brows
Of passer-by's
Wondering why I'm here

I am 8 years old
Curled up in a ball
Under my Hello Kitty bed sheets
Wondering why I burst into tears
Everytime someone asks me
If I have a boyfriend yet

I am 15 years old
When I'm told
I need to butch up
For anyone to take me seriously
As a queer girl

I am 5 years old
Quickly learning it's not okay
To announce your crushes on female characters
The scornful glare of my carers
Follows me around

I am 13 years old
The world follows me around
Like a clingy shadow
Freakfreakfreakfreak

I am 10 years old
And in love with David
Tennant
And Billie Piper
I didn't realise one had to be
More important than the other
For people to understand

I am 17 years old
Explaining once again
That yes my boyfriend knows
No he doesn't mind
No I'm not a cheat
Yes I've had girlfriends
No, yes, no, yes, yes

I am 12 years old
Looking for a name I'm not
sure exists
Please say it's a thing
Please say it's not just me
I don't want to be alone

I am 14 years old
I discover that I am the undateable
Too gay for guys
Too straight for girls
I don't want to be alone

I am 14 years old
My life hanging
On the edge of a blade
On one last pill
Maybe now
People will accept me

I am 17 years old
With a boyfriend who loves me
And community who will carry me
If I fall
And I have fallen many times
With no one to catch me
Broken bones littering my body
But I know now
There will be someone
To call for help
Instead of letting me shatter

by Beth



time to be earnest

I have often found that writing about one's self is a difficult form of writing – in some cases I have found it positively egotistical. But, for this purpose, in giving the LGBT community a human voice, a task and idea which I think is the most noble and wonderful to ever come to the minds of Carlene from Dundee & Angus College, and the inspiring local novelist Zoe Venditozzi. For this collection, I shall endeavour to write about who I truly am: what I do, how I do it, and what my thoughts are on the world of today. Though I have always shared with the late P. D. James the idea that autobiography, which can be written, revised, edited and punctuated, is largely fiction in some places, then all form of fiction is autobiography. But onwards I shall write; a final defence against personal accidie, to which I shall take my little tin of hoarded matches out to light my personal bonfire of vanities.

As a novelist, I have many views on the world of today – not all of them are good, I shall admit, some of the people of the world have a mind, perhaps unintentionally, to bring the world to wreck and ruin. Politics was – and quite frankly never will be – a subject which I am at home with, nor will I ever come to terms with it. Many has been the time that I have ranted and raved about something that has come to my attention which has come forth through politics. However, as a member of the LGBT community, I am not an activist, nor am I what is termed an “extremist”; like the Suffragists of the ending of the 19th Century, I prefer the peace of talk and sensibility than the use of brute force.

As a human being, as well as a member of the LGBT community, the politics of this day and age frighten me. Not just to LGBT, but to other human beings. Political correctness and labels govern our lives so much that we, as a species, have become obsessed with that, and so we place labels onto everything. I do believe that political correctness is a form of linguistic fascism, and that worries me, and it sends a shiver down not just my spine, but also the spine of a generation that went to war against fascism. You and I, as people, have been labelled in some way or another. Now we see labels everywhere.

I am a liberal person in my views, since a writer has to be able to see from the point of views of all his/her characters. By doing this, you acquire a sense of humanity as an author, and no-one wants to come away from the end of a book and say, "This book has no humanity in it!"

As a child, LGBT – at the time, the T for Transgender had not been added to the group – was never really talked about, and if it was, it was often done so with ridicule and scorn. Terrible words used to be said about it, and as I grew older, the words were more like a slap in the face, or a square punch in the chest, for at that time, I knew then who and what I was. The mention of the words: "Hitler had the right idea" were a source of constant discomfiture and horror. I never, myself, talked about how I felt until I was 17, a week before Christmas. A letter to my mother was my coming-out. And when my wings finally spread and I became more competent as a writer, experienced, my style finally flowering, and my words becoming more expressive, the truth of who I am crept into my writing. So much so that I wrote my very first LGBT aimed story: a novelette of 10,080 words called The Love of Friends. It was a small success when it was published on Amazon, reviewed by an American author and actually liked. I then put my pen to another work, a seven chapter novella, a crime story with a gay detective – who shall, in future, feature in more novels, I hope – called Blood and Breath. The title

comes from an unnamed poem by the American A. E. Housman, which runs:

**Some can gaze and not be sick,
But I could never learn the trick.
There's this to say for blood and breath,
They give a man a taste for death.**

The words of this poem sadly ring true with a lot of what happens today. In a world where the young despair and the old are cruel, the statement put forth can be reversed, where the young are cruel and the old despair, one gets the trick that Mr. Housman was talking about. Today, we live in an age where the younger generation is more sexual, more cruel, and often more suicidal than any other era of this planet's history.

Suicide of the young is far too common nowadays for it to be remarked on, but I find that a sobering thought. How could someone with their whole lives ahead of them, finally think that there is absolutely no way out? What could possibly make them feel so trapped in their own skin that they wish to cease their existence? Self-worth and self-image play their parts, as they always will; but we live, supposedly, in an age where we are more "liberal and open-minded", so how are the figures of suicide amongst the young so high? The young people of today are more secretive/open than ever before, and this leads them to be open targets of ridicule and to bullying, and bullying leads, more often than not, to most disastrous consequences.

One case has been brought to mind that happened in America, of a transgender young person who was not accepted and ridiculed, had walked onto a busy motorway, into the path of a moving lorry and was knocked down and killed. A horrific way to die, but nowadays, I often think on how many lives could have gotten somewhere and

made the difference by living, and not dying. By dying, their flames have been snuffed out, their aspirations destroyed in one fell swoop by their own hand, and talents wasted. Had this girl not done what she had done, she could have made the difference to someone who was going through the same thing. I felt myself rather angry when I read the suicide note which was posted onto the Internet – which I find rather insulting to the memory of this girl, since the note is a private document, but its contents, however, need to be read – that she had done what she had done to prevent any more transgender suicides.

Today, that does not work. Becoming a martyr for the cause is no longer perceived as romantic or idealistic. That idea had been lost when the First World War had come to its climax and end. Nothing about death is glorious, there is nothing romantic in it; committing suicide to prevent more suicides will not work; nay it might only encourage it further. Granted, they felt that they had no way out, and that there was nothing else to live for. But that thinking will get us nowhere. I myself have many transgender friends and I am horrified at the idea that any one of them will try to do the same thing. I have often thought about young people who have committed suicide: another case would be the young man – only 17, I recall – reading in the newspaper, who had jumped to his death from the Forth Road Bridge. I do not know his reasons for doing it, but I have often thought what I would have done

if I had seen him climb onto the railing and be ready to jump, naturally I would pull him back, and try to talk him out of it. My reasons for writing are not just for myself, but to help other people who are going through the Dark Places of Life; I want to have my work be their Light. Creativity is, I think, our most beloved star. It is, as the Lady Galadriel says, the light for you in Dark Places when all other lights go out. By being a light in life can you make a difference.

Our world is fragile: by working together and not against one another can we coexist? By understanding each other can we truly be at peace? We have all, together, endured the most terrible of times, and we live, even now, in their shadows. The entirety of Europe, if not the world, still lives in the shadow of the last world war. I have often felt that, as a species, mankind has never learned from the mistakes that we have made.

Power is given to the wrong people, who have brought at first great change, but soon it breeds greed and hunger, and that, like a dark serpent, raises its head every now and again to whisper in our ear. I do believe that the writer and Oxford professor, J. R. R. Tolkien had written something in his epic *The Lord of the Rings*: in which someone is given power, in this case, the Rings of Power – all nineteen of them – and they put the power that they were given to good intentions, but slowly those good intentions will turn to bad intentions. Corruption creeps in and they are overtaken by the power that was gifted to them and are betrayed, and it is here that the concept of the terrible Ringwraiths comes into play.

Look at the word “wraith” and see what words are closest to it: wrath, wreath, writhe (1. anger, 2. a twisted thing, 3. to twist and turn), and those who contain no will of their own, are composed of nothing but this insatiable anger, this rage, who are twisted and who twist and turn, are wraiths. They have gone through the wraithing process. They are the not the fictional concept of a spectre, malevolent or no, which floats away, wailing into the night as a banshee would. The look and concept of the wraiths is enough to dog the thoughts and nightmares of all who know and understand.

Nowadays, there have been many films and books brought out which depict an uprising against political tyrannies. *The Hunger Games* would be a good example of an uprising against tyranny. An uprising against capitalist socialism; but I shall not delve too deep into the ideas. But with this concept I can be entirely wrong, and would

love to be proven so. I do enjoy healthy debates, as long as they keep away from hair pulling and below the belt stuff.

I cannot and do not personally believe that we are a doomed species, though there have been times when I have been all the more doubtful that we ought to continue, since there have been actions done by this species that exasperates me to the point of saying “Dear God, why on earth would you do that? Have you lost all form of common sense?” I keep a small portion of hope alive, and if someone does something really stupid, no doubt that hope in humanity will be snuffed out forever and I shall look like one of those old cartoon faces when they are faced with overwhelming stupidity it actually hurts.

I do not see us as a failed experiment in adapting to new environments, though we have ruined a great deal of the planet for profit, and I find that an unforgivable action. Mankind is, after all, a child still growing, and learning as only a child could. Even with a history of only 100,000 years, we are still in our infancy. The questions are: do we live or die by the creations that we create? Have we brought about our own salvation or destruction? Is there a future for us? All these questions have been proved by the minds of the great writers of science-fiction, like the late Ray Bradbury. But to these questions, I myself have no answer. Perhaps when the time comes, the answers to all our actions shall be known to us, and whether they are fruitful or not, we shall not know until then.

As a writer of crime fiction, I have found that this – the most structured and most conventional of all mediums of popular fiction – can be a format in which I can write about the subjects that I want to address. I believe that the novelist Ruth Rendell does the same in her novels, with her Chief Inspector Wexford. The novel *Simisola* is a good example when she touched on the idea of a crime due to racism. I write about the investigation of violent death as to be able to, with my detective, Commander Alex Henderson, bring out of the chaos that is murder a sense of order and calm. I do believe that it is

the duty of civilised human beings to bring order out of disorder, and to help aid the police in a time that has brought pain, grief, misery and suspicion onto many innocent people, save the guilty party. I like there to be morally ambiguous characters in my murder mysteries, I enjoy writing about people who are usually law-abiding, peaceful, and caring and loving, but then having them step over that invisible line between respectability to planned brutality. But I do believe that crime fiction is the most effective for this purpose – which has brought comfort and relaxation to millions of readers – because you can write about characters that have done terrible things that they may or may not regret because they have done it to either advantage someone that they love, or to protect someone else, or because they have done it entirely by accident when the red mist descended.

Here I shall bring this to an end. I am indebted to the LGBT community, since if I was not part of it, I would not have met the wonderful people that are a part of it. Of course, we all have our ups and downs, that is natural; but it is well worth knowing the people in LGBT. We feel and we love; we aspire for many ambitions; like any other human being; and acknowledging that is a step in the right direction. I do not believe that after reading this you shall come away immediately with a view that has been changed, that will only take time. It is not stupidity or weakness, it is only human nature. I still myself tumble in the community, though I am more than willing to learn new areas. We are all different, though we all have the same fleshy envelope, we are still diverse, different, and that is a good thing.

Being different makes us individual and not sheep, it is what makes us human, and it is what makes us unique. The more we acknowledge our differences the more tolerant and supportive of one another we will be, and by learning about one another can we truly understand one another. I don't believe that we all have to be in earnest when at the age of seventy-seven, as Samuel Johnson has written; any age of life is a time to be in earnest. I shall round this off

with the words of the late P. D. James in her 2008 novel, *The Private Patient* which ends with a same sex couple holding hands:

“And she had Clara. She slipped her hand into Clara’s and felt the comfort of her responsive squeeze. She thought, the world is a beautiful.and terrible place.

Deeds of horror are committed every minute and in the end those we love die. If the screams of all earth’s living creatures were one scream of pain, surely it would shake the stars. But we have love. It may seem a frail defence against the horrors of the world but we must hold firm and believe in it, for it is all we have.”



Ryan





LGBT me

Coming out, anti-climax,
She already knew.

Residential days,
Campaigning and fun with pals;

The NYC life.
Building confidence,

Pride March and educating;
Life's never been so good.

LGBT me

When I was coming out to my mum, I had been nervous about it for weeks and weeks; finally I decided to just get it over with, so when my mum was driving me to Asda I just blurted out,

“Oh, did you know that I’m bisexual?”

And her only response was “I know, one of your friends told me a while ago.” I was a bit disappointed that I didn’t get a big coming out conversation, and it was rather anti-climatic.

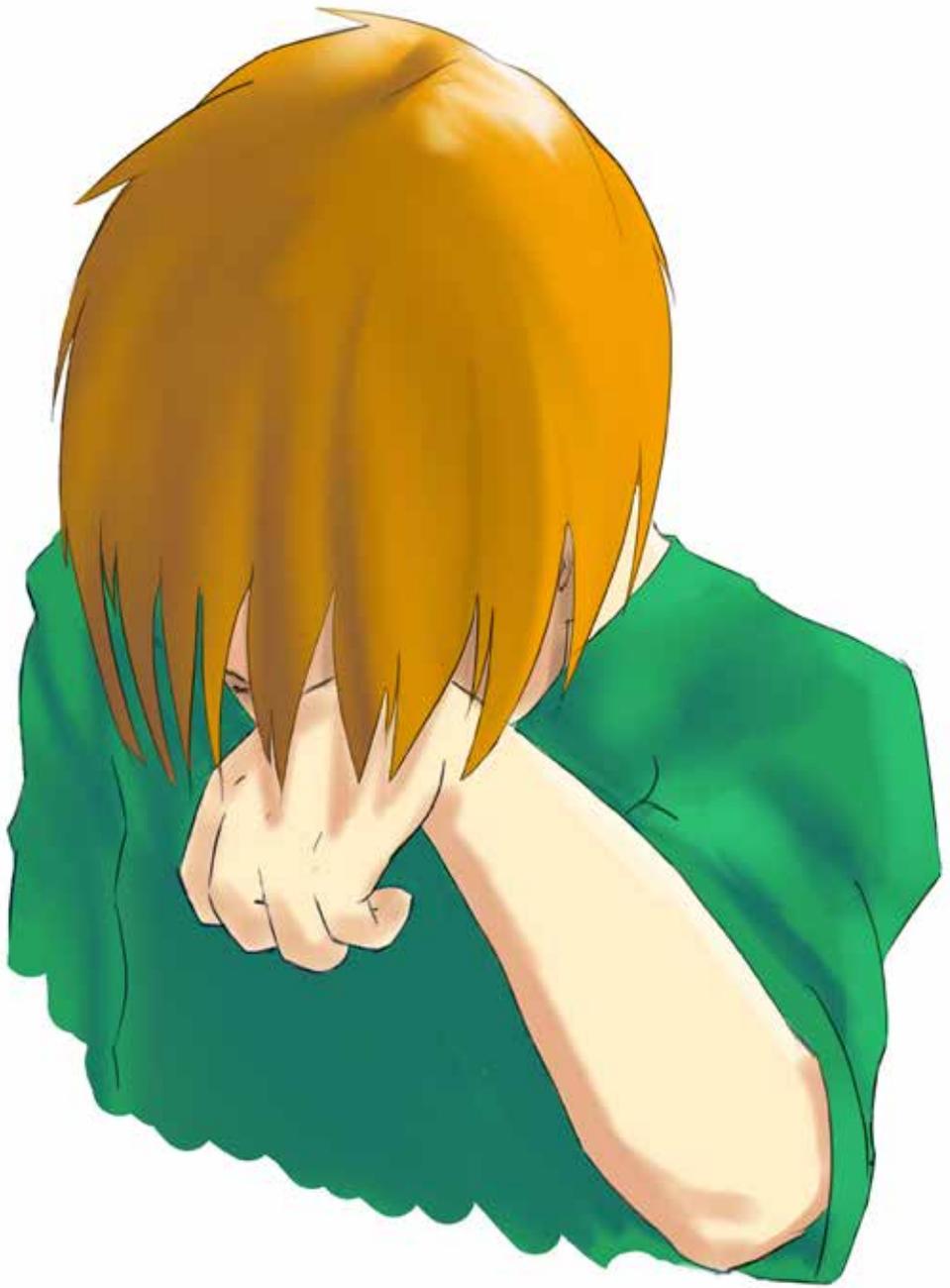
Residential days

I am a member of the National Youth Council (NYC) for LGBT Youth Scotland. It is an elected position and on the NYC, the main thing we do is go on residential for a weekend and develop campaigns, which is usually centred on educating and raising awareness about LGBT issues. It is so much fun and I have made so many friends from being on the NYC, and I wouldn’t change a second of it.

Building confidence

Being part of the LGBT community has really improved my life and social skills; from enjoying the atmosphere and the people at Pride to developing and running campaigns for the NYC, it has given me so much courage and more knowledge on LGBT life, and it has just become my home and my family.

Adam



The War with Myself

Coming out

From about age three I always knew I was different; I didn't know how or why but I knew I was different. By age 9 I began to realise I didn't fit in with the boys. I never liked sports or girls, I would much rather spend my time gossiping with the girls, shopping or criticising fashion.

By first year I began to grow curious about boys after having my first kiss with a boy. This boy was fantastic and I wanted to be with him with all my heart but I wouldn't admit that I was gay for fear of bullying. My second year of high school was the worst as I realised what I was scared of. I was gay. I hid this revelation from everyone and pretended to be straight. Hating myself every day for being this way, I would join in with the boys' discussions of cars, football and women in an effort to make myself normal. I did this because I was convinced people would hate me if I told them who I was and I would be bullied and friendless. I was scared my family would disown me and I would be all on my own.

Age 15 I came out to my best friends and began to feel much happier as I was accepted by them. It was at this age I told my mum, my two sisters and my brother. My sisters and my mum didn't care but my brother refused to believe it and began to harass me about it. By age 17 I was out to everyone in school, all my family and the world. The reactions were mostly positive but I did have the occasional bad experience. Now I am proud to be who I am and am open about it, however I wish my coming out had been easier.

The mood swings didn't start until my third year of high school, put down to simple hormone changes. As I went through high school - each year getting more difficult - the swings became more rapid and intense. By sixth year the littlest thing could set me off into a downwards spiral for days.

By college it had gotten so bad I had to go to my GP. She instantly suggested medication but the idea of being reliant on it was not a pleasant thought. So I turned to my local LGBT Youth Scotland group where, with the worker, I set out a plan to get hold of my life. I started using a planner to help me plan my week; I began attending the group regularly and ran for the group's NYC position - which I succeeded in attaining. This helped me slowly gain control of my life and I couldn't be happier now.

Relationships

Relationships have always been a mystery to me. All the relationships around me had failed or were failing. How could I have successful relationships when I didn't have an example to follow? In other words, I was screwed. I knew I wanted a boyfriend but I didn't know how to find one or even what to do with one. I knew about dating sites like e-harmony but they were for creepy old people, not seventeen year old boys. I finally met a great boy named Michael and I was smitten with him, he seemed to be everything I wanted - at the start anyway. As our relationship progressed we began to argue more and I ended things after he began accusing me of cheating.

I then spent the next few months sleeping around to deal with my emotions. I eventually slept with someone who had an STD. I spent the next three months going through tests and worrying about the results. I was finally given the all clear and I couldn't have been more

relieved. It was then that I realised I did not need sex any more; it was more damaging than beneficial to me.

So it was with great reluctance that I joined a dating site and before I knew it I was meeting lots of new people. This was a massive boost to my confidence and eventually I met Matty on the 22nd January 2015 and I instantly knew I wanted to be with him. One month later and we are officially going out.



Jack



Quinn's Story

I didn't "come out". It just kind of happened.
I had a girlfriend in Primary 2
and have continued to have
girlfriends all of my life...
no questions asked.

I'm now getting married.

I even told my grandmother who is in
the church and she handed us
a card and money, to help us start
our new life together.



Quinn



Alex's Story

So my mum was like,
“who are you taking to the prom?”

And I was like, “Mum, I’m gay. I’m taking my girlfriend”.

And she was like, “Oh, ok...do you want this dress?”

And I was like, “No, I’m wearing a suit. No dresses!”

And she was like, “Ok” and shrugged her shoulders.

*Coming out doesn't have to be as difficult
as you think.*



Alex



The Closet

In a wee closet I sat, clutching my gay grenade. I was terrified of the consequences, when (and if) I threw this rainbow weapon of mass destruction.

Whilst growing up, I was a very theatrical child. I loved my sister's Barbie more than my Action Man. I loved dressing up in my sister's gowns, especially the 'so-damm-good-looking-better-on-me-dress' that my sister adored, a white fairy dress which suited my skinnier frame better than hers. Then, there was the boy in my sister's primary - just so gorgeous. Whilst we were at the same childminders, I would purposely wait to make my mind up for a sandwich, so I could make the same choice as him. He reserved that right as, secretly, without him knowing, I had made him my boyfriend.

One year later, he moved to Blackpool and I had been consigned to the life of a singleton. I remember crying for a day. I was hurt at him for leaving. I however, did grow out of him by the next day: I could still have fun myself, especially playing Crash Bandicoot. Sadly, there was no one to get caught in my rubber bands, you know: Crash 'Band'- icoot.

Adolescence began, and I could tell that I was considered the 'odd one' in class. I lacked similarities to the other boys i.e. football and the interest in girls. This caused me to feel lonesome - I had no desire to talk about either! It was then that I realised I was different from my other peers. As a result, I began to shy away from people and went willingly into my closet.

The closet is where I spent my young teenage years. It was the only place where I could be tortured and nobody knew. No one had to know the screaming at the back of my head, the continual lying and self-pity that I had allowed to manifest. It was horrible, and I needed help.

At that time in my life I knew very little about the LGBT (Z, Q, I and whatever other letters you wish to add) community, so I decided to educate myself through the use of the web.

I was utterly astounded at the number of people who had gone through What I was experiencing is that I was not alone, Gandalf the Grey and even Dumbledore were gay! I could put my mind to rest about almost everything. Although, there was still the problem of coming out, but the reassurance that I was not alone allowed me to become more secure in my identity and knowing that one day that, 'it would get better'.

Being in the closet for such a prolonged period of time had a knock-on effect. I lacked someone to trust. During the beginning of the second term in 4th year, I was asked to assist in stage managing the school's Pantomime. Whilst coming early one day I noticed that one of the actresses/performers was sitting there: It was Laura, a girl in the year above.

She sat there, looking at me. Then she dropped her bomb.

'Hey, Kain, are you gay?'

I stared at her and my heart beat faster.

'No', I replied. 'Why do you ask?'

She gave a puzzled look. She (damn-right) knew but held back.

'Oh right, I just thought you were...I would have no problem if you were.'

My heart rate returned to the normal human level.

Over time, Laura became a very good friend of mine. I saw it as though she broke the lock on the door of my closet. After the Christmas holidays were over, I instantly messaged her about my life inside the closet.

She said, 'Kain, I honestly knew you were... like how could you hide it? I have gay friends that aren't as camp as you.'

I laughed and cried (there were always a lot of tears on my part) and we just talked. The next day we exchanged a hug. She also planted a kiss on my acne-filled face. The chains that kept me in the dark for so long were starting to lose their tight grip. Because of Laura I was finally beginning to come to terms with being gay.

For the next six months, Laura was the only one that knew anything. She kept my secrets: boys that I thought looked interesting, the troubles at home, and my mother continually asking if I was gay.

Although I had home troubles, I was having trouble with my own body: I was sixteen and a half stone! To me, this was the breaking point. I could not live a life where I was constantly unhappy and living in fear of what was beyond my closet door.

So over the next year, I made myself a goal – to lose that ridiculous weight, and to come out.

It was not until mid-October (2013) that I met my first LGBT person that was a family member: a third cousin in Canada. It did not matter what relation she was, she was family. I began to message and question – about herself and why she went to Canada. The fact that she was a lesbian obviously came up. Finally, after several messages to her I told her my secret. She replied the next day with

such love – she really understood what I had been going through. After, she sent me a link to a YouTube video. This video was the most inspiring piece from a lady named Ash Beckham. She talked about how the closet was in fact nothing but a ‘hard conversation’, and that everyone has a closet in some sense: telling your love to someone for the first time, telling someone that you have cancer, or just telling someone that you are not at one with the ‘social norm’, for example being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

I watched that video four times, and boy there were many tears. This video allowed me to realise that you have to be brave and to ‘rip the band-aid’ off, to be authentic and to expect real change when you open yourself up. So I told my cousin how wonderful and supportive she had been, as well as how helpful the video was. It was then that I decided to finally act in the name of courage. I walked downstairs and told my sister. Telling her was one of the most challenging things to do; it even tops ‘The Conversation’ with mother. I stared at her with tear filled eyes and then told her that I was gay. She looked at me with such love and came over to hug me. Her hug was comfort, telling me that everything was going to be okay.

Now a year on, my life has never been so great. I am truly happy. Coming out of the closet was an experience that has shaped me for life.

I can proudly say that during the process of coming out I have lost four stone in weight and never felt or looked so good, even though there were minor bumps along my journey - there always are. I have never felt so confident and happy about myself. Coming out of my closet was a trek that only I could do. I was the one who had to take my armour off and be real. Living in a closet is no way to live life. The instant flutter whenever the word ‘gay’ is uttered is never how a person should live.

Take off your armour and be true to yourself.

Life can only ever get better. Unless, of course, you are the man wearing 24 carat gold heels...then life is already fabulous!



Kain

Students Voices

Why is LGBT representation important?

“It is really important because it makes up about 10 percent of the population - and if that’s a whole 10 percent that isn’t represented - then that is a whole lot of people.”

“If LGBT didn’t have any representation there would be less voice, less noise in the world; and everyone deserves the chance to have their heart sing when their voice fails them.”

“Because it gives people an awareness and a sense of identity, and it helps people show who they are in a safer environment.”

What made you join the LGBT Group?

“I joined the group because it was meeting people who were like me, who had gone through the same, who felt the same and I didn’t feel like an outsider.”

I’ve never really got involved in anything LGBT related before. I left high school a year or two ago and there was nothing like that at high school and it made me feel quite isolated. I figured, now I’m quite comfortable at college, I should reach out and try and get involved in more things and meet people like me.”

“I joined the LGBT group because I didn’t know anyone who was LGBT at school, it was a thing to be ashamed of and I wanted to know I wasn’t weird. So, I went along to try and find people going through the same things as me.”

What impact has being part of the group had on you?

“It has had a huge impact on me, I have made a lot of friends and I have gained quite a bit of confidence. It has been a good focus in my life.”

“I’ve made a lot of new friends, everyone here is really cool.

It’s really nice being part of something bigger than myself.”

“Being part of the groups has given me a lot more confidence, it’s given me a wider range of friends I can talk to about anything. I’ve even met my current partner.”

“I feel a lot more at home with the LGBT community [...] and in the college because they treat you like family and they feel like my family. The people are absolutely lovely and I wouldn’t change them if I had the chance”

“It’s made a massive impact on my confidence in telling people about my sexuality and being quite proud of who I am. It’s really boosted my confidence”

“I’ve got so much from it. I didn’t realise just how inexperienced I was until I started organising my own group. I feel that I have gained some amazing friends as well as really valuable experience.”

“It’s changed my life quite a lot. There’s so many people I wouldn’t know and so many people I don’t think I would have actually spoken to outside of it. Not only that, it’s brought me and my own family a wee bit closer”

Students Voices

What would you say to someone who is thinking of joining an LGBT group?

“Definitely go ahead with it because it’s been such a positive part of my life and there is no reason to hesitate in joining, I’d just go for it”

“Definitely join the group, it’s just more fun to do things with other people than to do them alone and it’s usually really great people”

“If you’re thinking about joining, definitely do it! Even if you’re not LGBT and your plus, it gives you a lot of information about that and information about the issues involved in it. You can learn a lot and then you can pass that learning onto others as well”

“I would say it’s okay to be scared, it’s okay to be nervous, you’re basically joining something where everyone is comfortable and they will help you find yourself. They will help you along the road you’re going down”

“Make sure it is something that you want to stick to that you’re not going to go just once and then that’s it. At least, give it a few weeks, and if you don’t like it after that then basically just try, because there is going to be a group of people you fit in with. If it’s not the hyper lot, then it will be the quieter ones, there is always someone you can connect with. Just don’t go once and that’s it- just try it more than once because the first impression is not always the best one”

“I think it would be a great idea even if you are quite nervous about coming to something like this for the first time.

Everyone here, is here to support you. We will keep things confidential. We won't pressure you into anything you don't want to do. Where here to help each other”

“Go for it! Join it, have fun, meet new people and most of all just show up to the groups. It's an amazing environment and the people are so relaxed and chilled out, its one of the best places to be in the college, definitely”

get in touch

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/DAengageme

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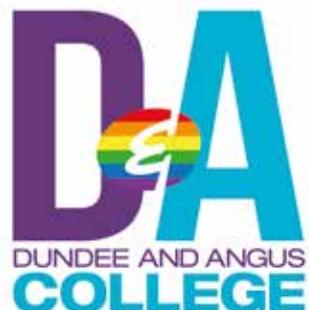
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thank you

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LIFE GOES BY TOO QUICKLY

COMING OUT:

Stories from LGBT Young People

A collection of stories from LGBT young people.