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TRANSPHOBIA

ACKNOWLEDGING THE LIVES LOST FROM HATRED & VIOLENCE



TRANSGENDER
DAY OF
REMEMBERANCE
11/20

POST-CONVERSATION
TRANSCRIPT

COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS

AN OMA/CPGC COLLABORATION

Transphobia

Acknowledging the Lives Lost From Hatred & Violence

re.act: Community Conversation Series

Sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and Center for Peace and Global Citizenship (CPGC)

Friday, Nov. 18, 2016

CPGC Cafe, Stokes 104

SESSION OVERVIEW

What is the history of this day and why is it important? How does transphobia affect all of us? What more can we do to bolster the resilience of people within these identities? Join the Women*s Center as we discuss these questions.

[re]CC COMMITTEE

- Stephanie Zukerman, *CPGC Program Coordinator*
- Benjamin Hughes, *OMA Program Coordinator*
- Maia Williams, *Student Activities Office Graduate Assistant*
- Ananya Kumar BMC '18, *CPGC Intern*
- Riddhi Panchal '19, *OMA Intern*

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

- Qui Alexander, *Women*s Center* **FACILITATOR**
- Deirdre Quinn '17, *Women*s Center* **FACILITATOR**

GUIDING QUESTION(S)

- What is the history of this day and why is it important?
- How does transphobia affect all of us?
- What more can we do to bolster the resilience of people within these identities?

SESSION NOTES

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THIS DAY AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Remembering transgender individuals who have lost their lives to violence or suicide due to anti-trans sentiments.
 - Happens nationally in major cities that hold events around this day (November 20th)
- *Transmisogyny* is a term that describes the ways in which trans women specifically are discriminated against
 - This can show up as the narrative of “why would you reject masculinity when it is better than femininity..?”
 - The idea that “trans women aren’t real women” that harms the community greatly

HOW DOES TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT ALL OF US?

- OPEN QUESTION: *What are some ways that transphobia impacts us all? Why do you think transphobia does not impact your life?*
 - Hate and fear surrounding deviance from the gender norms
 - Stemming from a rigid understanding of how gender roles work
 - Transphobia is a tricky term when people want to consider it literally; yet at present, it’s our best way to discuss and describe the microaggressions that trans folk face.
 - Even within oppressed communities, some people advocate for the right to express themselves – until this right is expressed in the transgender communities...

- OPEN QUESTION: *What are the ways the we see transphobia manifested at Haverford?*
 - o The Clerk article about gender neutral housing
<http://haverfordclerk.com/queer-housing-and-efforts-to-establish-inclusive-safe-spaces-on-campus/>
 - o Romantic relationships on campus
 - o When people refuse to see you as the gender you work hard to present because they knew you first under a different gender
 - o Within the Customs Experience:
 - Being tokenized by other students who have not had conscious experiences with trans “you’re the first trans person I’ve met”
 - People who are unknowing, but also unwilling to learn or adjust
 - Misgendering, whether intentional or not
 - The confusion and anger that surrounds not understanding how someone presents
 - o Asking an individual their pronouns
 - Think about why you would be offended and confront those feelings
 - Understanding that there is an air of violence on thinking a person was “tricked”
 - o Power dynamic with faculty and staff which adds a layer of complexity

WHAT MORE CAN WE DO TO BOLSTER THE RESILIENCE OF PEOPLE WITHIN THESE IDENTITIES?

- For many within trans communities, the day is referred to as the “Transgender Day of Resilience” to mark the persistence of these communities in a society that works to erase them.
 - o Many times communities only comes together when somebody dies, and it is important to make sure we talk about more than tragedy.
- WATCH : *#transvoices: Spirited Tattooing Coalition* | Google Small Business
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkWLJE-BKok>
 - o Google’s campaign highlighting trans lives (#transvoices)
- Additional resources include the *National Institute for Transgender Equality* and the *Transgender American Veterans Association*

FURTHER RESOURCES

- *#transvoices: Spirited Tattooing Coalition* | Google Small Business (Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkWLJE-BKok>
- *Queer Housing and Efforts to Establish Inclusive Safe Spaces On-Campus* | Mary Kearney Brown (Article)
<http://haverfordclerk.com/queer-housing-and-efforts-to-establish-inclusive-safe-spaces-on-campus/>
- *National Institute for Transgender Equality* (Organization)
<http://www.transequality.org/>
- *Transgender American Veterans Association* (Organization)
<http://transveteran.org/>

Queer Housing and Efforts to Establish Inclusive Safe Spaces On-Campus

BY MARY KEARNEY-BROWN · NOVEMBER 15, 2016

Campus housing is one of the core components of the social experience at Haverford. It influences how students situate themselves in relation to the community and can impact their feelings of security and comfort within the school itself.

For members of the LGBTQ community at Haverford, feeling comfortable in housing spaces on campus is not a guarantee. According to Clara Abbott '18, who, with Chelsea Richardson '18, has helped spearhead an initiative to establish affinity housing for LGBTQ students on campus, housing presents many issues regarding feelings of safety and belonging for students who identify as queer.

“There needs to be a space where students who might or might not be closeted, or who do not feel comfortable expressing themselves a certain way in the outside world to feel safe and secure,” Abbott said. “It is difficult for cis or straight people to understand this lack of safety because they do not know what it’s like to actively hide their gender or sexual identity in order to feel safe and like they belong.”

Members of SAGA cited various types of microaggressions which they and other students who identified as queer had encountered, such as being misgendered, physically touched or harassed, or having people make demeaning comments about their sexuality.

Efforts to establish Queer Housing on campus in order to address these issues have been underway since 2015. According to Richardson, the idea for Queer Housing was often casually discussed among LGBTQ students in conversations about the lack of queer safe spaces on campus. The vision was first concretely discussed in a meeting on October 1st, 2015, during which representatives from the Women*s Center, the Office of Multicultural Awareness (OMA), Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA), and Queer Discussion Group (QDG) gathered to discuss ways to foster LGBTQ inclusivity and create safe spaces at Haverford. It was concluded that Queer Housing on campus would address many issues facing LGBTQ students, including creating a unified space on-campus for queer students and serving as a demonstration of institutional recognition for support of the queer community.

Abbott and Richardson organized conversations with staff members, such as Marianne Smith, Director of Housing, Theresa Tensuan, Dean of Multiculturalism, and Qui Alexander, Director of Women*s Center, in order to discuss the logistics of establishing Queer Housing on campus. Through these conversations, it was decided that 710 College Ave. would fulfill the core needs of Queer Housing, including distance from main campus, as well as physical and financial accessibility.

Tensuan and Abbott then met with Mitchell Wein, the CFO of the College, in December 2015 in order to discuss the possibility of keeping 710 as on-campus housing and designating it as affinity housing for

LGBTQ students. Although there were concerns about the financial feasibility of keeping 710 as campus housing, Wein said that the case for Queer Housing was compelling.

As of this year, the college has decided not to sell 710, meaning it is still a viable option for a Queer Housing program.

Wein and Dean Martha Denney presented the idea of Queer Housing to Senior Staff, who, according to Richardson, said that the official designation of 710 couldn't be changed without community-wide conversation and demonstrated support. They informed Abbott and Richardson that they could either apply for community housing or enter the room draw lottery for 710 as an independent group.

Students involved with the initiative expressed concerns with both of these options, in that they failed to serve as a demonstration of institutional support for queer students on campus and were not forms of officially designated protection for queer students.

Emily Dombrovskaya '19 vocalized the importance she places on the distinction between community housing and affinity housing,

“Queerness and gender aren't the same type of identity markers as being an environmentalist or nerd,” she said. They're inherent parts of your identity in a very specific way that warrants an affinity house.”

The comments made by Senior Staff about gaining community support prompted plans to create a resolution to present at the fall 2016 Plenary. Richardson and Abbott arranged meetings with SAGA members to draft a Plenary resolution and create educational materials to distribute discussing the initiative.

The group finished constructing the resolution and collected the necessary signatures to present at Plenary; however, after conversations with Tensuan, Alexander, and Smith, it was decided that Plenary was, to quote Richardson, “neither necessary nor worth it.” Richardson cited several reasons, including the possibility of rejection by the student body and that Senior Staff had potentially referred to other forms of community conversation.

Additionally, Richardson expressed frustration with the idea that the initiative needed community support to be materialized,

“I, and other people in our group, disagreed with the idea that the community needed to consent to [Queer Housing], because if the community realized this was necessary, it wouldn't be a problem in the first place,” she said. “It's the climate of the community that makes this necessary. The fact that there is harassment and that people feel the need to police themselves is because of the largely cis[gender] and straight community that doesn't understand these specific needs or have stake in these issues.”

The process of advocating for Queer Housing has also highlighted what some students perceived to be a lack of clarity in application process for affinity housing.

“There’s no institutional memory for how affinity houses, like La Casa and Ira Reid, were founded,” said Miranda Johnson ‘19, a member of SAGA who was involved in the initiative. “We don’t want a community house, we want an affinity house, but there’s no concrete system for application.”

Students involved in the initiative also expressed concerns that there remains an unfulfilled need for comfortable housing options for students who identify as queer on campus.

“Everyone at Haverford deserves to feel that they belong here,” Abbot said. “And in order for many queer folks on campus to feel that we belong, we need to know that Haverford prioritizes our physical and emotional safety. We need a space where we do not have to check parts of our identities at the door in the way that we might in the rest of our lives.”

As the initiative moves forward, the students involved hope to gather survey data and personal stories to demonstrate to Senior Staff the need for Queer Housing on-campus. In the future, they hope to arrange a community forum or petition to discuss the issue and raise awareness about the need of queer-specific housing at Haverford.