

LGBT & Internationalisation



By Ali McDonald

In January along with two colleagues, I attended the Stonewall Scotland LGBT and Internationalisation Seminar, hosted by the University of Dundee. Having worked in International Student Support for over 8 years and more recently becoming a Staff Dignity and Respect Advisor, this sounded right up my street. Part of our remit in the International Student Advisory Service is to provide help and guidance to students transitioning into their lives in Edinburgh – though we currently offer a lot of cultural advice and highlight the diverseness of our ever-expanding international campus, do we explicitly offer sufficient support and advice to LGBT+ students at the pre-arrival and induction stage? This was one of numerous questions I had in my mind whilst travelling through to Dundee.

The seminar itself was really thought-provoking and had great representation from Universities throughout Scotland and Northern England. Early in the seminar, we were split into teams for a quiz. Our team sadly didn't win however we did learn some stark facts, such as: Same sex relationships or sexual acts is illegal in 76 countries and homosexuality is punishable by death in 13 countries – scarily, this number is actually on the increase.

Through a variety of discussions and knowledge sharing between the Universities, I felt proud of the University of Edinburgh and the work we have already done in this area. BLOGS – the LGBT+ Student Society are very active and it's fantastic to see the LGBT+ staff network has been newly revived. The International Student Advisory Service also provides a lot of pre-arrival advice and cultural support to students, particularly highlight the diverseness of our campuses and how we promote inclusivity. There is definitely more we can do in this area and I am keen to develop this further.

We are quick to celebrate – and rightly so – how wonderfully diverse our University is, with staff and students coming here from over 135 countries. Each individual will arrive with their own set of values, beliefs and ideology. It's important to acknowledge and appreciate an individual's journey is not linear and with such a diverse staff and student body, it is inevitable that beliefs and values will unfortunately clash. I believe our job as representatives of the University is to encourage open, honest but most importantly accepting and understanding conversation with no judgements made. I think our biggest challenge here is with such a diverse population, how do we promote inclusivity whilst not excluding any particular group at the same time?

In London at an LGBT conference

It seems strange to be writing this on the morning after a terrorist attack in London. I was there in the city at the beginning of the week, attending a conference on LGBT networks

in Higher Education, and now this.

London struck me as a beautiful place when I was there. I grew up in the 1980s and 90s and imagined the English capital as a place of pollution and litter. Perhaps it was, back then; I remember the 'Keep Britain Tidy' campaigns of my childhood in cinemas and on the back of crisp packets, as they tried to do away with the culture of casual littering. But walking through London this past week, I understood why people flock to it. That windswept, asphalt smell that hits you on the Underground of a million stations, then in daylight, the sense of something prestigious, at least in the Temple district, of people who inhabit another world, a private school world, glamorous and utterly beyond me, a Wimbledon world of privilege. Then through the high streets, striding behind the guy I was with from Edinburgh, a small suitcase in tow, feeling vaguely important in my business suit and heels as a six-foot transwoman PA, passing men and women in their business suits.

The photo shows me in profile and in discussion after the conference had finished, and some of us had gathered in a London pub to network. You can see me talking with Isabella, while staring morosely into the lens is Andy. Isabella said some really nice things to me about how I looked. When I got back to Edinburgh with the guy I was with, Jonathan, he asked me for my reflections on the conference. 'The woman, Isabella, said nice things to me, and London was nice,' was my reply. He must have been wondering why our LGBT network had bothered to pay for me to come along, but actually there was something I remember from one of the speakers, and it's this:

People perform better when they can be themselves.

Yes, I think so too. I was a terrible student in my younger days, and it's costing me now. Now, I am the kind of student who can get distinctions, but 'way back when', before I was out as transgender, I applied myself to all things like a

zombie. I simply switched off and escaped, into Ealing comedies on a bedroom TV or in unreal fantasies of myself in an imagined America.

So now, when I apply for funding, I can't get it, because people see my record from the past and immediately dismiss my application, regardless of the impact I talk about making, or the performance I'm *now* capable of scoring. I wish there was a greater understanding with funding bodies and with the HR departments of Edinburgh University, who think it's a level playing field, but I'm not sure it is, not if you were once someone who couldn't engage with the world, and was accordingly a mediocrity.

I wonder how I can contribute in changing that for future generations, but in the meantime, the London conference was useful to me in consolidating this sense of unevenness I have, concerning the opportunities out there, for trans people but also for anyone else weighted down by a past that once zombified them from any discernible achievement.

To conclude: I went down to London and enjoyed its magic, and picked up breadcrumbs of useful ideas, which may not be breadcrumbs but seeds. And London was a shining, happy place to be, and I wonder why those terrorists did what they did, what was this cause they decided to kill for, and die for, with their foot-long knives and fake suicide belts.

Article by Gina Maya

Taken from her blog:
<https://www.ginamaya.co.uk/transgender-life/in-london-at-an-lgbt-conference.html>

June Newsletter

June Newsletter

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**Staff Pride
Network**
for LGBT+
colleagues
& allies

Welcome to the new Staff Pride Network Newsletter

Over the past year the Staff Pride Network has been growing and evolving, and as such we felt it was time for a makeover to match! As well as a new image, we'll be sending out a regular newsletter to keep you up to date with all the Network news and upcoming events, and to help you stay connected with your LGBT+ Colleagues and Allies.

We also want to celebrate the achievements of the diverse LGBT+ community across the university. So if you have any news, research or events that you would like to share with us then please do get in touch - StaffPrideNetwork@ed.ac.uk.

A Message From Our Co-Chairs



Sharon Cowan

Jonathan MacBride

The newly named Staff Pride Network (previously the LGBT Staff Network) was relaunched in September 2016, for LGBT+ colleagues and allies, and we are delighted to complete the relaunch today with a new logo designed by ECA student Kael Oakley. Having discovered that the previous network had gone into abeyance, Jonathan MacBride explored the possibility of reinvigorating the static network with his now co-chair, Sharon Cowan. With the support of the UoE Human Resources team, VP for People & Culture Jane Norman, and committed volunteers, the new network has gone from strength to strength in its first year. We have developed links with external organisations such as Stonewall Scotland and university LGBT+ staff networks such as Napier and LSE, as well as internally with the Disability Network. LGBT+ History Month in February saw a packed programme of academic, arts, social and other events, some of which were organised with the student LGBT+/queer groups BLOGS and Liberation+. Future planned events include a UoE SPM Pride March contingent wearing our newly designed t-shirts with logo, while the rainbow flag flies over Old College, and trans awareness training for network members. We are proud to provide a safe space for all LGBT+ identified staff and allies, and happily welcome anyone who wants to join the network to contact the committee at StaffPrideNetwork@ed.ac.uk.

News

Logo Competition Winner Announced



Congratulations to **Kael Oakley**, winner of our Logo and Branding Competition.

The Staff Pride Network was re-established in July 2016 but needed an updated logo and brand. Fashion Lecturer and Edinburgh College of Art (ECA) Staff Pride Network Rep, Emily Ford-Halliday, set an ECA-wide competition for Art and Design students to come up with a branding makeover that would encapsulate the network's values and purpose. Read More
And here is Kael's winning design which is now the new logo for the University of Edinburgh's Staff Pride Network!



'Tis the Season to be Proud



Join SPM at Pride Edinburgh

Get your rainbow hats out of the closet and get ready for Pride Edinburgh 2017 which is now just a few days away. The 22nd annual pride scotland march starts at 12pm on Saturday 17th June. Meeting point for Staff Pride Network members (and friends of course!) is at 11am at the **Scottish Parliament, beside the water feature**. Look out for our new logo branded t-shirts.



Order Your SPM Pride T-Shirt

We hope you can join us this Saturday for Pride Edinburgh. We'll be marching together so remember to order your Staff Pride Network T-Shirt. E-mail us at StaffPrideNetwork@ed.ac.uk with your size (M-L-XL) and we will save you one. Limited stock though, so hurry!

Edinburgh Frontrunners Pride Run

Early bird? Join/come and support other SPM members at the **Meadows (eastern end) at 9am** for the Edinburgh Frontrunners Pride Run before the march, including a cake sale in aid of LGBT Youth Scotland. Visit the web page for more details, here.

Pride Edinburgh 2017 Sat 17th June



For a full running order of the day's events - visit the Pride Edinburgh website.

Events

Pre-Pride Edinburgh Coffee Afternoon

TODAY - 1-3pm, Teviot Library Bar (Side Room)

Join us at our regular monthly coffee afternoon and the first of our Pride Edinburgh events. Please drop in any time for a coffee and cake, catch up with your LGBT+ colleagues and ask a committee member those questions you've been dying to have answered!

Pride Edinburgh

Saturday 17th June - 11am, Scottish Parliament

Meeting point for Staff Pride Network members (and friends of course!) is at 11am at the Scottish Parliament, beside the water feature. Look out for our new logo branded t-shirts.

SPN Social

Friday 30th June - 5:30pm, The Potting Shed

Continuing our monthly evening socials, join us after work to unwind and meet other network members. Conveniently held on the first Friday after payday.

Full Events Calendar
Useful Information
Contacts & Committee
Help, Support & Advice
staffpridenetwork@ed.ac.uk



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

The Dilemma of Having Your Face Tortured

By Gina Maya

Introduction

I came out as a male-to-female transsexual this year, meaning I identify less with the gender I was born and raised with, and more with its opposite. It's a transition of many processes—administrative, cosmetic, hormonal, and social, to name a few—and it will take years; in some respects, a lifetime. Although I keep a weekly diary on my website (www.ginamaya.co.uk) on the ups and downs, I'll try to use these newsletters to shed light on the more general processes involving my transition. I'll start with the thing I want to get out of the way—the thing I've hated most: facial-hair removal.

It takes fifteen minutes and sometimes less. You rest in a dentist's chair, wearing dark goggles while a smiling young woman lasers your facial hair. For the first few months, there's only a 12-hour rash. Your jaw and mouth are blotchy, initially. With balm smothered over it, it looks like you're melting.

You walk back from the clinic along busy Princess Street, looking down. Avoiding eye-contact because more than ever you look terrible, a swollen, red, rash-covered face that's melting. You're walking so fast your calves are hurting.

You continue to go to the clinic every six weeks. The pain gets worse with each visit; your feet press against each other

and you hug yourself during the cosmetician's polite conversation as she lasers your face. You've started taking taxis home, wrapping your face in a scarf like the Invisible Man. Soon enough you come out as a transgender woman.

Soon enough, you're noticed in the street, you clearly don't pass as well you thought. Your five o'clock shadow becomes your obsession, not the breasts or the groin, those things you can cover. It's your five o'clock shadow, that's what will decide the social reaction. You shave at least once a day. You touch up your layers of foundation constantly, in disabled toilets that become a second home to you.

October 2016. Ten months have gone by, the dark bristle almost gone. The NHS calls you, they'll do it for free. But they need to know what they're dealing with, so there's one condition: come in with four days of facial hair growth on a bare, unmade face. We're sorry, was that a 'yes'?

Meet the Volunteers: Carol Dow; Community Ally

In August I attended the Stonewall Scotland training day for allies which was fantastic (and funded by the University). I wasn't really sure what to expect but it was very empowering and uplifting; the trainers were lovely people with enthusiasm and commitment to their jobs. The day focused on how we, as allies, can support and encourage others to help promote an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone in the workplace. We did a little bit of roleplay which (after I overcame my initial shyness) was a lot of fun. One of the

tasks we were set was to give a short presentation to the group of how our weekend went without referencing place, who we were with, or their gender; this was an example of how difficult it can be for LGBT persons being quizzed about their social life while unable to speak openly. The difficulty was eye-opening!

At the end of the day we all had to stand and make one commitment. I committed to wearing Stonewall's Rainbow Laces for my Great Scottish Run 10K, for which I was raising money for PoTS UK – a charity that supports people with the condition Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome. Rainbow Laces are part of Stonewall's campaign to stamp out homophobia in sport; wearing them on my run combined and advertised two very different, but equally important, challenges.

On October 2nd I ran in the Great Scottish Run 10K in Glasgow, finishing in 1 hour 12 minutes. I've been training for this run for 5 months after a 28 year gap from running. It was an amazing experience and I raised over £1000 for PoTS UK. My youngest son has this condition. It has been life changing for him during what should be his introduction to independent adult life and it's very hard to watch him have to come to terms with it.

Running 10K is nothing compared to the days he sometimes has.

We were 7 women (!) at the Allies training and we decided to stay in touch, and perhaps have some joint events across our respective places of work. I look forward to helping organise these. As someone with a sister who is a lesbian and a transitioning niece, I am well aware of the enormous difficulties my family have encountered and I'm enthusiastic to help support inclusion and acceptance at work. I am very proud to be part of this Staff Pride Network and to have run in my laces. They will be staying in my trainers.

SPN will be launching an allies' membership to include all

colleagues who agree with the network's aims. More information is available at <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/rainbow-laces>.

Meet the Committee: Sarah Moffat; Bi Rep

As Bi Rep on the Staff Pride Network Committee I was very pleased to be asked to contribute a piece to this newsletter to mark Bi Visibility Day, which took place in September.

Growing up, I was grateful for bisexual erasure – for the way it protected me from the most vicious and violent forms of queerphobia, for the way it saved me from having to have painfully awkward conversations with my family about subjects which are deeply personal – but, as I've grown older, my desire for visibility and acknowledgement have become almost overwhelming. Particularly following my engagement to my partner Callum two years ago, I've found the repeated erasure of what is a significant part of my identity immensely frustrating and in response have begun to advocate increasingly loudly for the bisexual+ community.

Ultimately—while visibility isn't for everyone and some would rather their private lives be just that—when Anna Paquin is still being asked on national television if she is now a “non-practising bisexual” after marrying her partner Stephen Moyer, and when members of the media are suggesting (not so subtly) that Amber Heard's bisexuality might be to blame for Johnny Depp abusing her, I'm going to keep claiming my place in LGBTQ+ spaces. I will keep reminding people I'm not in a “straight relationship” and I will keep looking out for all

members of my queer family.

Remembering Trans Remembrance

By Gina Maya

At a certain point, the playwright and actress had everybody in the palm of her hand. Jo Clifford, the evening's guest speaker, also a sort of benign cobra before us, mesmerizing, with her tales of directing theatre in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, of a life story of love, loss and artistic resurrection. She spoke of religion and the two versions of the myth of Adam and Eve, a familiar one of polarity, then another of androgyny. Somehow it was possible to be anything in that relaxed, reflective audience, atheist or religious, middle-class culture vulture or revolutionary. The event was trans remembrance, but it could have been simply about humanity.

We celebrated, then, and remembered. Avery Laquerriere read their brilliant poem about pride and alienation and shit-strewn hypocrisy. Jo Clifford spoke of her life and her career; she could have continued all night, one suspects, on any topic. We watched a movie, *Tangerine*, that became increasingly about fragile individuals falling between the cracks of social labels, trans women, married husbands, their families, prostitutes left outside bolted brothel doors. It was Christmas in the sun-swept urban sprawl of Los Angeles, with a big final scene of conflict in the plastic hollowness of a Donut Time restaurant.

Outside the room we broke for tea and pastries, while by candlelight stood a board with some eighty names of trans people, murdered in hate crimes this year, from all over the

world. We celebrated trans identity, and remembered.

And bless us

For all the times we have been frozen in terror

Let's remember we are not alone

Don't let us,

Don't let us ever forget,

For he is she

And she is he

And we are they

And they are we

And ever shall be

For ever

And for ever

And for ever

Jo Clifford

The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven

Why I do Queer Tango

by Maria Boutchkova

If you don't need convincing to try Queer tango, please come along on Wednesdays either for a lunch or an evening class (12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm) at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus), otherwise, read on for why I do it.

Over the last three years, I have been dancing on and off at the Blues and Balboa events organized by <http://www.edinbop.co.uk/>. I like the crowd there, along with the spirit of the dancing because being able to lead or follow regardless of one's presented gender is common and accepted. Before moving to Edinburgh, I had chosen to practice flamenco in Montreal for two important reasons: first, because this dance has very little partner dynamic and second, for its emotional intensity. This intensity, in my mind, can be found in tango as well, and it has been an unfulfilled dream of mine to be able to learn it one day. But the very rigid traditional roles of leading and following, not to mention the strict ritual of eye contact and nods across the dance floor before inviting someone to dance, have placed it in the "I don't do this" category for me.

Until I saw an ad for Queer tango this summer, and attended several classes in July with the amazing, inspiring, igniting Louise.

One of the rules I live by as a parent and as a human being, is to act in a way and use a type of language that challenges oppressive stereotypes. For example, I

avoid saying to little girls how cute or pretty they are, and instead I ask them what their favourite story is, or ask to see something they recently drew or made. Imagine how I felt,

when Louise told us in the very first Queer tango class that we would invent our own language and instead of saying lead and follow, that we would use the words suggest and interpret.

To me Louise's will to start this class and use a new language is not only an act of activism that is in line with my beliefs but also has been a precious gift – to be able to enter the world of this magical dance that used to be inaccessible to me. I can't wait to share this gift with as many people as possible, and I know Louise feels the same.

Here is my favourite description on how Louise teaches tango:

“Louise's philosophy of tango is that it is about awareness and connection. To tango well, you have to be able to pay attention. Some people have called tango 'walking with attitude', but she thinks it's 'walking with awareness' – of yourself, of the other person, of everybody else in the room, of the music. In the world and in life in general, people are often looking for different ways to connect really well with other people. As human beings, we thrive with connection, and tango is a fabulous way of being connected.”

Please join us on Wednesdays at lunchtime or in the evening for one or two hours. The lunchtime classes are 12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; the evening classes are 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm. They are at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus). Find out more at <http://www.qte.dance/> and/or join the Queer tango Edinburgh Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/285415031797624/>.