

# Craccum

EST. 1927

*"I know that you cannot live on hope alone, but without it, life is not worth living.  
And you...And you...And you...Gotta give em hope."*

-Harvey Milk



## Pride Edition

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# ausa's PRIDE WEEK



MISA PRESENTS

## RAINBOW FLIX & CUPCAKES

ausa's PRIDE WEEK

**Monday, 13th May**

6:00PM

Grafton Campus (ROOM TBC)



ausa's PRIDE WEEK

## PRIDE WEEK HANGOUT

TUESDAY 14 MAY  
2PM - 6PM

@ QUEERSPACE  
STUDENT COMMONS FLOOR 3, 311-302

FREE DRINKS + SNACKS, CLOTHING SWAP, AND BOARDGAMES (+PRIZES)!



ausa's PRIDE WEEK

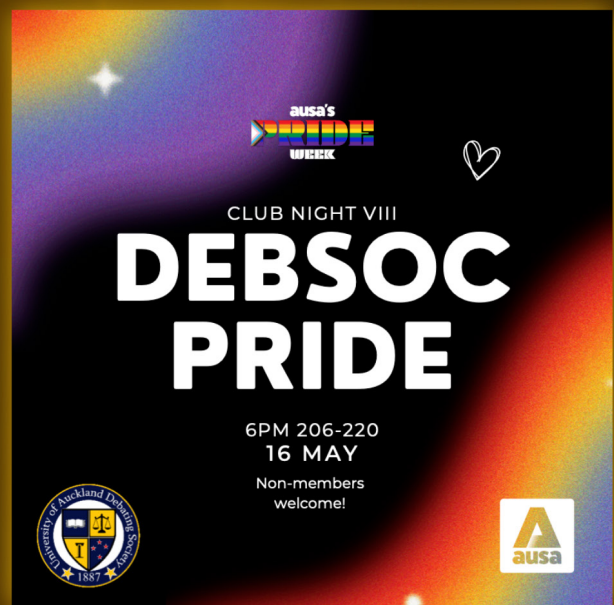
10AM-1PM • WEDNESDAY 15TH • QUAD

## Queer Maker Market

WITH

MAKE A TIE-DYE T-SHIRT FOR PINK SHIRT DAY

CLOTHES SWAP BRING 5 TAKE 5



ausa's PRIDE WEEK

CLUB NIGHT VIII

## DEBSOC PRIDE

6PM 206-220  
16 MAY

Non-members welcome!



WiHN

ausa's PRIDE WEEK

## PAINT FOR PRIDE!

FRI 17TH MAY, 6:30pm, 507-G007

Totes to paint, nibbles & juice provided!

LOVE WINS

HUMANS ALL THE SAME

GAY!



ausa's PRIDE WEEK

rainbow law

ausa

## MOVIE & CRAFTS NIGHT

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

Thursday 16 May  
5:30 PM LAW CAFE  
BYO Crafts



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## EDITORIAL OFFICE

TOP LEVEL

STUDENT UNION  
BUILDING

34 PRINCES STREET

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# Safeguarding Pride

Taking a moment to acknowledge and create room for our Rainbow Whānau



KIERAN PANUI & KALA TAKEBE BURGESS



While acknowledging that it's not quite pride month yet here in New Zealand, we're early -yet excited- in celebrating Craccum's annual pride edition. This is an opportunity for the University of Auckland's magazine to showcase the struggles, stories, and celebrations of our LGBTQIA+ whānau here on campus. This year's issue in particular touches on many subjects in many forms concerning identity, feeling of belonging in a community, navigating sexuality in the modern age, and the deleterious aspects of postmodern dialogue on these subjects.

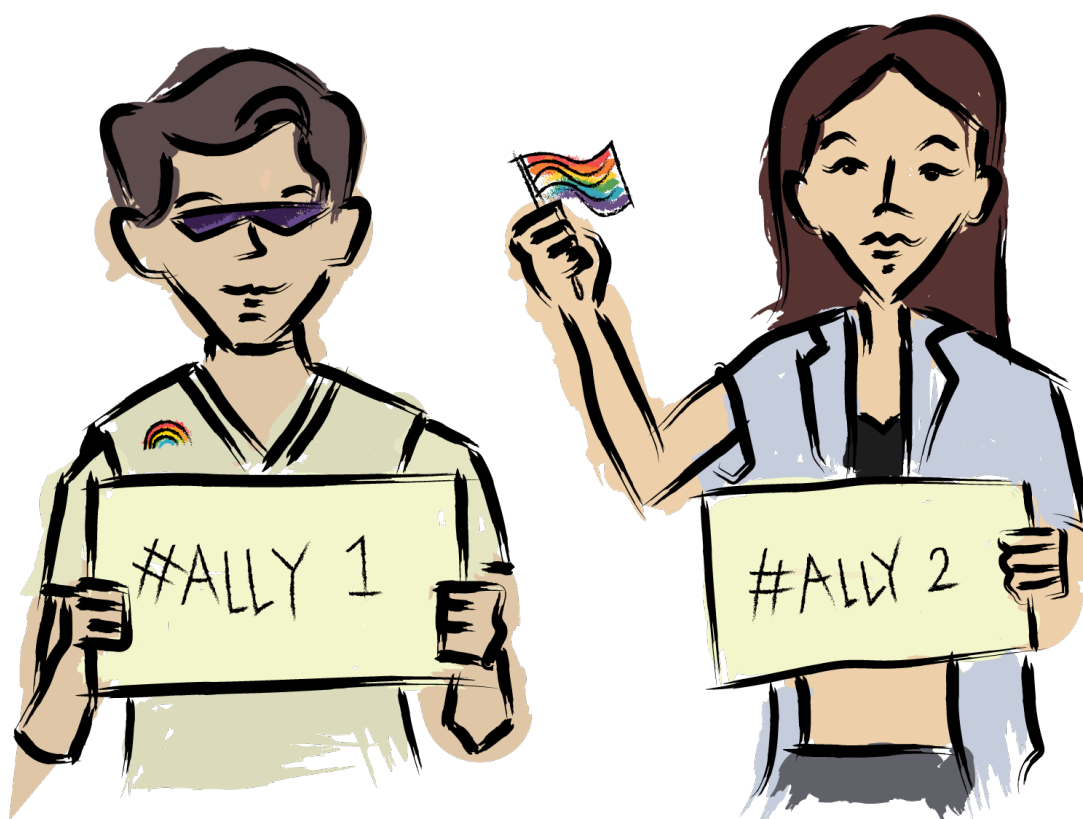
Craccum Magazine stands vocally and publicly as allies to the LGBTQ+ community, and it is important for us and many of our readers to recognise the importance of pride both for the celebration of identities and the ongoing struggle for equality and acceptance.

Despite living in an age of increasing acceptance, some have chosen alternative views that promote marginalisation and xenophobia based on others' identity and orientation. Craccum does not associate or promote these ideas; and so as we get to honour and acknowledge the diversity of human experience. Let us remember to create dialogues ranging from conversations on-campus, to national and international debates; and always valuing in that respect for others. Where everyone can live authentically to their true selves without fear of discrimination or prejudice is by virtue a society Aotearoa at least on paper aspires to be, and in spite of the deficits that exist presently in our nation, it should be a priority for Kiwi's to take stock of our history, and listen to the voices of communities fighting to have their perspective heard.

There are various Rainbow groups running at the University of Auckland, where one can meet like-minded peers and gain the support you might be seeking. If you are an ally, there is a page on the UOA website where you can find various links on how to be an ally. If you have no idea what pride is, it is always a good start to research and learn a bit about this celebration and community. The information to the aforementioned is provided further in the mag :).

This pride issue features all things queer and is a blast to read through. Here at Craccum, we stand in solidarity with our LGBTQ+ peers and advocate for meaningful change.

As we progress through the year, we hope that this momentum of support lasts throughout, not just in June, but in our lives enduring.







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# PUTTING ON A F\*CKING GOOD TIME

## OUR INVITATION TO HELP FUND YOUR EVENTS

Clubs/associations at the University of Auckland who put on an event during one of our Weeks are eligible for funding.

Find out more and apply at:  
<http://ausa.org.nz/weeks-tender/>





# LGBT+ Data of New Zealand



ALAN WU & TREVOR PRONOSO



Nearly one in twenty New Zealanders identified themselves as LGBT+ according to the 2020 Household Economic Survey (HES). This is the first national survey that Stats NZ had the ability to report on detailed statistics such as gender and sexual identity. Changes to a variety of national surveys over the last five years have brought about new data directly targeting the LGBT+ population.

Of the 18–24 years age group, 22.5% responded as LGBT+, with Māori making up one-fifth of the population. Being of a younger demographic, the incomes of LGBT+ respondents are on average lower than non-LGBT+ respondents, and they also typically incurred higher housing costs.

The HES found that LGBT+ people were also more than likely to report feelings of psychological distress and depression compared to the non-LGBT+ population.

The New Zealand Crimes and Victims Survey (NZCVS) followed suit with changes to their survey, to accommodate LGBT+ responses. A substantial reason for this report's reliability is that both unreported and reported crimes are considered in this report. This provides the most accurate representation of crime and victim data possible in the country.

In general, LGBT+ adults were more likely to experience crime than the New Zealand average based on this report. The prevalence of all offences in the bisexual demographic group were 55.6%. They were second only to individuals experiencing high psychological distress (61.8%). This trend is mirrored for personal offences, and in sexual assault incidences.<sup>1</sup>

- LGBT+ individuals responded as being significantly more likely to suffer from interpersonal violence (17.8%) compared to the New Zealand average (6.4%).<sup>2</sup>
- Bisexual victimised adults were by the second-most victimised demographic group in New Zealand (13.5%)

compared to the New Zealand average (3.5%).

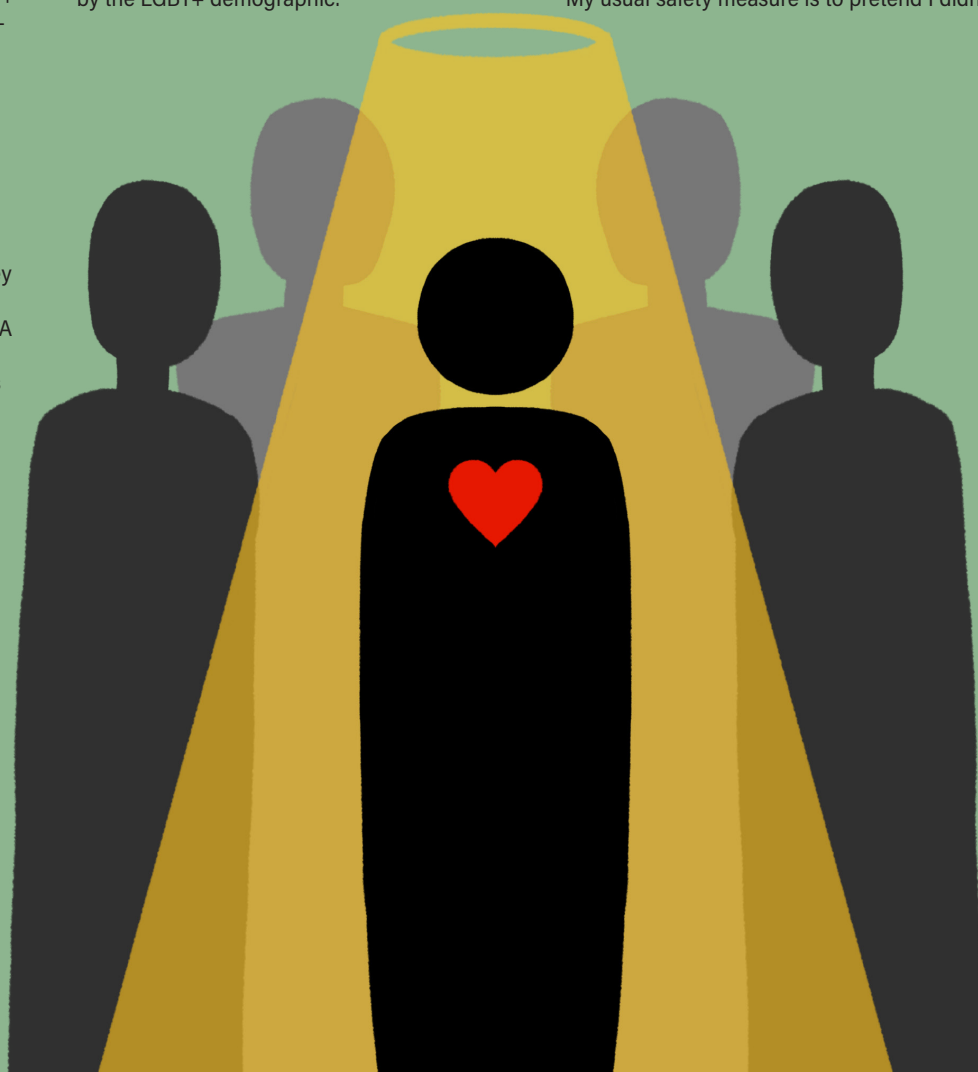
- In their lifetimes, it is found that 68% of bisexual adults will experience interpersonal sexual violence.

Based on recent data released by the Ministry of Justice, there is a trend related to sexual orientation, psychological distress, and young age being key factors relating to victimisation. These details dramatically increase risks of crime that bring about the disproportionate levels of crime experienced by the LGBT+ demographic.

*The News Team was also fortunate to receive input from LGBT+ students within our university community about their experiences of crime. Individuals have been anonymised to protect the identity and privacy of our respondents.*

*"Lots of street harassment, but never something majorly physical, thankfully. I've had countless instances where people, usually cis het men, will shout and make violent and/or sexual comments (slurs, hate speech, etc) towards me.*

*My usual safety measure is to pretend I didn't*





hear since I don't want to start things, but recently I just flip it back on them. These men shouldn't be at peace, making my community and me uncomfortable, so I yell back... I only do so when in public spaces where I know they're too afraid to escalate the situation more than me.

I've never reported these guys, I just don't see a point. I've only experienced physical violence by drunkards late at night when the clubs close and there's already plenty of cops swarming the streets to deal with it, so I don't end up needing to report it. When it comes to street harassment, the non-emergency line for reports is slow and ineffective." —K K S.

"I was once verbally harassed from a party venue in public almost back home while out with my girlfriend. A group of men kept following us, screaming slurs, sexual remarks and threats. No one tried to help us until we managed to find a security guard wandering outside. It never got physical, but we were terrified of letting them get close to us.

We tried to talk to some strangers for help but

all the ones we asked ignored us or just told us to call the cops. Usually we try to ignore it but after they followed us for so long we ran for the security guard when we saw him. Thankfully he helped get them to get away from us and leave, then stood with us to file a report. We did report on the non-emergency line, but the men were never found, and the case just closed." —S B.

"I came out to my year 9 class, and my classmates started to verbally and physically bully me. I would receive death threat notes on my desk (I sat in the same place every class) and online as well. There was also sexual harassment committed towards me.

A few times, I had people coming up to me, threatening to "make me straight" or "prove I'm not gay" by scaring me into being straight. I would get hit and punched sometimes; kicked every now and then, too. A lot of people I knew turned against me.

I never told anyone due to the harshness of the threats. If I told anyone, they wouldn't have done anything anyway. The teachers all said,

'I was going through a phase' and 'I'll grow out of it. I have not yet.'" —D G.

<sup>1</sup> Personal offences are defined as offences committed directly against the victim.

<sup>2</sup> Interpersonal violence includes sexual assault; other assault; harassment and threatening behaviour; robbery. It also includes damage of personal or household property if the victim knows the offender.



**HES shows 1 in 20 adults identify as LGBT+.**



**NZCVS Report, Cycle 5.**



**MoJ: High levels of victimisation in LGB+ community.**

# Upcoming AGM and Constitutional Change

The last time changes have been proposed within AUSA's constitution was in 2021. With great changes such as the AUSA/PGSA merger on the horizon, the student community is encouraged to take notice and hear of the additional developments yet to occur. Thanks to the notice provided by AUSA's email, we are fortunate to have our hands on the proposed amendments before Wednesday's meeting. The news team has noted some major changes that may pique our readers' interest.

**The AGM will be on Wednesday 15th May, 1 – 3 pm at Shadows Bar.**

Of course, other changes and amendments in the proposed constitution will not be included here. Whether you agree, disagree, or find none relevant to your student life, I implore you to attend the Annual General Meeting. You will never lose out on acquainting yourself with the services or organisations surrounding you. They will only help you to make more informed decisions in your own student life.

Below are the summarised changes:

**"Powers of the Association" has been removed**

In the current constitution, s 6 lays out the abilities and capacity which AUSA as an association has to advance its objectives (advancement of education, improving student experience and wellbeing etc... [see s 3 of the current constitution](#)).

Section 1 (b) then continues that the powers of AUSA would not "be limited or restricted by a principle of construction or rule of law or legislation power... except to the extent that it is obligatory." This section is proposed to be removed.

**Introduction of s 53 (6) – Changes to The Rules**

This and the following amendments would be of particular interest to the student body. The proposed addition of s 53 (6) is an amendment to section 54 of the standing constitution, "Changes to the Rules".

This amendment would allow the AUSA executive to adopt "minor or technical amendments to the constitution" by informing AUSA members of the proposed change. The amendment becomes adopted if there are no objections within 20 working days. Likewise, an objection means that the amendment will not become adopted under this same rule.

**Introduction of Part XII: Contact Person and Dispute Resolution**

Per AUSA's status as a non-profit organisation, AUSA's governance and activities are therefore subject to the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

The proposition of s 56 concerns introducing a "contact person" who will be appointed to liaise with the Registrar of the Incorporated Societies. The appointed contact persons noted s 56(1) are the association secretary, the president, and potentially one other association officer.

What will be of most interest to members will be s 57. Currently, disputes addressed in the constitution are limited to only election results. The introduction of this section provides a deliberative process for how complaints can be filed and addressed. This includes the creation of a Complaints Subcommittee consisting of the president, secretary, and one other member of the AUSA Executive.



**Current AUSA Constitution**



**Proposed AUSA Constitution**

# New on the Block

## Another Church Group Raises Questions



OLIVER COCKER

Having chased out Arise at the start of last year, I would consider myself an amateur adventurer in the realm of churches at our university. Elohim Academy occasionally enjoys attempting to proselytise unsuspecting students studying in the general library. Various older men are convinced that you will take their pamphlet or New Testament if they stand on the same corner of Princes Street. Or you can attempt to attend a Unichurch event and find a URL that just links to Pokémon plushies.

The University of Auckland has always been a hotspot for various groups attempting to share their good and broadly mutually exclusive word. Evangelicals, with their particular interpretation of Jesus' role in the Bible, are the most active in seeking out new members. Something about the other well-established groups having had thousands of years to convince families.

As I mentioned last week, a new group has been making moves on campus. Collectiveuni is what they call themselves in their branding, but just as Arise took on the moniker of Passion, so too is Collectiveuni a youthful face of the Equippers.

Equippers is a rebrand that the Apostolic Church of New Zealand went through about twenty-five years ago. Essentially, across the world, there are millions of church leaders who autonomously manage their own territory, and each of them, to some extent or another, believes that the way the church was originally, all the way back in the first century, is how it ought to be now. Baptism, confession, and penitence are all on the table under our national Apostle, Sam Monk.

But, before we go off further, it is 'Pride issue', and this is a pride issue. At the start of last year, over at AUT, a complaint was raised about a group that had openly lobbied against any gay rights reform operating a weekly sermon on the campus. The church that had one of its core values as 'Marriage should only be between one man and one woman?' Equippers.

Equippers says that while the Church holds a traditional view of marriage and sexuality, it especially does not seek to impose this view on those outside its community. The phrasing already makes me a little concerned. But thanks to the reporting of Debate Magazine, our AUT counterpart, we know that the individual who raised the complaint was then approached on multiple occasions by the group and felt very threatened. Fiercely protective or overzealous?

In any case, it reflected poorly on AUT, which to this day is one of only three Aotearoa universities with a Rainbow Tick. Our fine establishment, unsurprisingly perhaps, is not on that list. This is all compounding on the efforts of Dr Parmjeet Parmar of the ACT party, who wrote to the University in the wake of reasonably spurious claims of discrimination in spaces in an attempt to audit all the "safe spaces" that are operated on campus. Although their efforts were focused on Māori and Pasifika, it is no large leap of the imagination to assume where they will reach.

Faith groups are able to operate on campus without causing disturbances. I simply remain unconvinced that if so much has been raised in the last twelve months about this group, it will reflect well on all of us. Especially when Equippers held their last service at AUT in December and moved into Maclaurin Chapel after it all.

And, if you have the memory of it, this was all brought to my attention by some poor students who found themselves almost trapped in a congregation two Wednesdays ago. Having observed the group from afar, I found myself trawling my usual sources for information until I inadvertently came across a post on [r/universityofauckland](https://www.reddit.com/r/universityofauckland). And yes, even your dear Features editor turns to strange springs of knowledge when the times seem bleak.

It has since been deleted, but that is no obstacle. In essence, our intrepid fellow found themselves an interloper in the OGGB after hours, too curious for their own good, and ate a piece of pizza. Unbeknownst to them, this created an obligation to stay, which some bouncers on the door attempted to exercise by

blocking any escape.

Needless to say, do not be like our protagonist; do not eat random pizza. But, if you do happen to find yourself between The Rock and a hard place, remember that anyone who does not let you leave is liable to be sued for false imprisonment. Generally, the threat of legal action will scare most people off. Though I do understand if you have reservations about sounding like an octogenarian or feel too threatened to do so.

A story much the same would be repeated in the comments, which tends to fit the trend of rather aggressive preaching that underlies all the music and flashing lights. And conversely, does not fit in the kind of behaviour that we want to see on campus.

University is a period in many people's lives where we experience a level of freedom that might sometimes feel overwhelming. Often, though of course not always, there are practised forces at work who will claim to bring you stability, friends, and even study tips. But in the end, these events are not put on for free. Once you're in, once it is all you know, there is a ten per cent tithe that may not be mandatory but certainly is not optional.

There are weeks of organising camps for them, unpaid and unrespected. Former interns and goers of other similar organisations have spoken out about sexual harassment, exploitation, and nastiness in the undercurrent of culture. If you wish to join, by all means, but from me to you, make some other friends. Do some other things. No matter how hard it is. Conversations in tutorials. A different club. Anything to break from the monotony of the hymns.

And to everyone else. Do not let any group bully you. I've seen their Facebook Lives. And they may be organised, have slick production and rehearsed lines, but we are many. We have the power to call out injustice when we see it, regardless of the perpetrator. If you don't want to, have no fear. Send an anonymous email to your Features editor, and I can lend volume to your voice.





# LUNCH ON THE HOUSE

**WEDNESDAY | SHADOWS**  
**15TH MAY | BAR @ 1PM**

**FREE FOOD • LIVE MUSIC • PRIZES • AGM**

FIRST 80 TO RSVP GET A FREE PUB LUNCH! DETAILS AND LINK ON AUSA'S INSTAGRAM (@AUSA.UOA)  
OR EMAIL [EVENTCOORDINATOR@AUSA.ORG.NZ](mailto:EVENTCOORDINATOR@AUSA.ORG.NZ) TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT.  
WALKS IN WELCOME ON THE DAY



# "CHEMICALS IN THE WATER MAKING THE FRICKEN FROGS GAY?!?"

## A DIVE INTO ATRAZINE, ALEX JONES, AND AMPHIBIAN ADVOCACY



MIKE CROSS

Welcome, dear readers, to a journey into the murky waters of conspiracy theories, environmental science, and the fabulous world of frogs. In this special Pride month edition, we're diving headfirst into the quagmire of controversy surrounding the infamous quote, "Chemicals in the water making the fricken frogs gay?!?" attributed to none other than the grand shit lord of ridiculous conspiracies, Alex Jones. But fear not, for amidst the chaos, we'll uncover the truth about atrazine, its effects on our amphibian friends, and why froggy pride should be celebrated, not feared.

Let's start with the basics: atrazine. This widely used herbicide has been making waves in both agricultural fields and environmental circles for its alleged detrimental effects. Studies have suggested that atrazine might be more than just a weed killer—it could be wreaking havoc on frog populations. How, you ask? Well, atrazine has a knack for messing with the endocrine systems of frogs, leading to all sorts of froggy shenanigans like hermaphroditism and altered reproductive behavior. Imagine frogs with identity crises, thanks to a

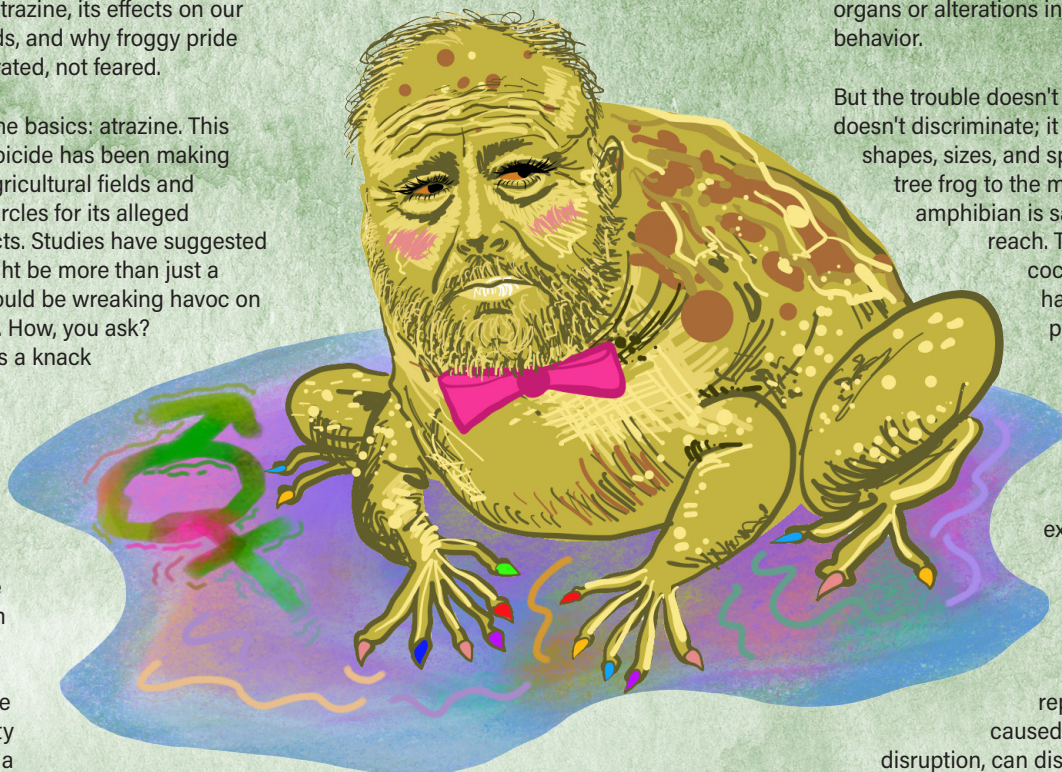
chemical cocktail in their water!

Atrazine, primarily used as an herbicide, finds its way into agricultural fields to control broadleaf and grassy weeds. Farmers worldwide rely on atrazine to maintain their crops and boost agricultural productivity. However, this widespread use has raised concerns about its effects on non-target organisms like frogs.

When atrazine seeps into water bodies, it doesn't just disappear; it lingers like the worst kind of Grindr hookups, creating a toxic brew for aquatic life. Frogs, with their permeable skin and delicate biology, are particularly vulnerable to atrazine's effects. This herbicide disrupts their endocrine systems, interfering with hormone production and reception. As a result, frogs may experience physiological changes, such as hermaphroditism where individuals possess both male and female reproductive organs or alterations in their reproductive behavior.

But the trouble doesn't stop there. Atrazine doesn't discriminate; it affects frogs of all shapes, sizes, and species. From the tiny tree frog to the majestic bullfrog, no amphibian is safe from atrazine's reach. This chemical

cocktail infiltrates their habitats, turning once pristine waters into toxic wastelands for these unsuspecting creatures. Moreover, atrazine's impact extends beyond the physical realm, affecting frogs' behavior and ecological roles. Altered reproductive behavior, caused by hormone disruption, can disrupt mating rituals





and breeding patterns, potentially leading to population declines. Imagine a chorus of confused frogs, unsure whether to croak like Casanovas or remain silent in the face of atrazine-induced uncertainty.

## ENTER ALEX JONES. . .

The king of conspiracy theories himself, With a flair for the dramatic and a penchant for wild claims, Jones famously proclaimed that "chemicals in the water" were turning the frogs gay. While the statement might sound like the punchline of a bad joke, it ignited a firestorm of debate and speculation. Suddenly, atrazine wasn't just a herbicide, it was the secret sauce in a grand scheme to undermine froggy heterosexuality, and evidence of some grand government conspiracy to undermine America's reproduction and population to fit some absurd fantasy of a "homosexual agenda". Oh, the drama!

But as they say, "even a broken clock is right twice a day". Jones's outlandish assertion, while wildly exaggerated, inadvertently highlighted a broader issue: the potential for misinterpretation and manipulation of scientific information. In a world where sensationalism often trumps substance, credible data can be twisted and contorted to fit preconceived narratives or fuel conspiracy theories. Case in point: atrazine.

While scientific research has indeed identified concerns about atrazine's effects on frogs and other wildlife, the nuances

of these findings can easily be lost in translation. Instead of sober discussions about endocrine disruption and ecological impacts, we're left with a madman proclaiming "Chemicals in the water making the fricken frogs gay?!" giving ammunition to bigots with hate fueled hearts. It's a classic case of the truth being stranger than fiction—but not in the way Jones might have intended.

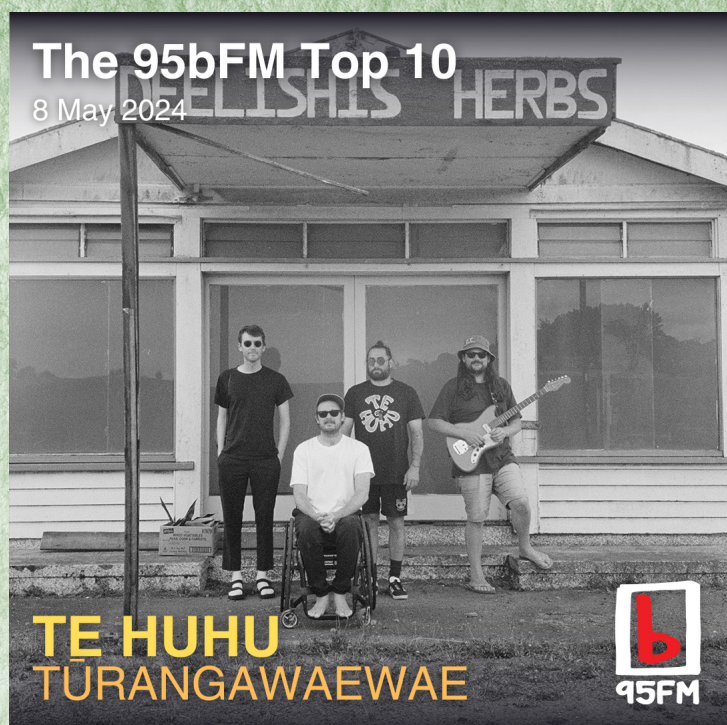
In this age of information overload, separating fact from fiction can feel like navigating a labyrinth of half-truths and conspiracy theories. Every sensational headline, every viral meme, becomes a battleground for the war of perception versus reality. And unfortunately, it's often reality that loses out in the end, when you come across a wild claim or an outrageous conspiracy theory, take a moment to consider the source, question the evidence, and seek out credible information. While it's easy to get swept up in the drama, the truth is often far more nuanced and far less sensational than we're led to believe.

## EMBRACING THE TRUTH BEYOND THE HEADLINES

As we wade through the sensational claims and conspiratorial waters, it's crucial to remember the importance of informed discussion and environmental consciousness. Frogs, those remarkable indicators of ecological health, continue to face threats that require our attention and action not just in the lab, but in legislative

chambers and in everyday conversations. By pushing past the flashy headlines and diving deep into the science, we empower ourselves to make more informed decisions.

**WE NEED TO COMMIT TO PROTECTING THESE VITAL MEMBERS OF OUR ECOSYSTEMS, ARMED WITH KNOWLEDGE, SKEPTICISM, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. WHILE THE CHEMICALS MAY HAVE MADE THE FRICKEN FROGS GAY, IT HASN'T AFFECTED OUR CRITICAL THINKING, SO PLEASE CONTINUE TO USE IT!**



1. Te Huhu - Tūrangawaewae [NZ]
2. Swallow the Rat - Mind [NZ]
3. Phoebe Rings - Mandarin Tree [NZ]
4. Louisa Nicklin - Thick [NZ]
5. Joe Ghatt - Pale Blue Dot [NZ]
6. Big Sur - Lands [NZ]
7. Jim Nothing - Easter at the RSC [NZ]
8. Fu Manchu - Hands of the Zodiac
9. REPAIRS - LYLAS [NZ]
10. Geneva AM - Pikipiki feat. Samara Alofa, Hawkins, Rewi McLay, Mara TK [NZ]

Text VOTE with your favourite song to 5395 or visit [95bfm.com/vote](https://95bfm.com/vote)  
The 95bFM Top Ten, every Wednesday from 7pm



introducing me.

i wish i knew you were beneath my skin.  
 i had always known my bones did not only  
 hold me. i told myself they were pillars.  
 but what did they hold? i told myself they  
 were trees. but what did they hold? i told  
 myself my spine was the root of me. that i  
 carried myself inside its cart. it was the  
 truth. but it did not have a name. i have  
 carried mine like my body, giving it away  
 so i can return to attention like my  
 mother's womb. no one held me inside her.  
 she carried me. but i do not remember her  
 hands. did she catch me? or was i always  
 destined to fall from her? cut me off  
 from herself? did she take the scissors  
 and tear us apart? we did not have a number.  
 because in unity we do not need identity.  
 but i have learned that in solitude  
 you are given one. one.  
 i wish i had known you earlier. i would  
 have given you my name. and i would be  
 yours. mine. ours. we would be  
 one.

- JEDIDIAH VINZON

*introducing me is a poem that reflects on the rediscovery and  
 reintroduction of the self. The disjoint between the sense of  
 identity and the body is reunited. The poem itself is the prelude  
 to fully accepting oneself, despite all prior definition and  
 experiences.*

All I Hold Dear

I was never one to be at peace  
 With the fabric of reality  
 I wear my heart on both my sleeves  
 And intersect with gravity  
 Though nothing else is sacred to me now,  
 But to be boldly timid  
 If I could be so gentle now,  
 And tender for your witness  
 I'll finally let down my hair  
 As beads of sweat and beads of tears  
 Are glistening like bleeding diamonds  
 Behind both of my ears  
 And boy, you know I love you deeply  
 Know I know that you're fine  
 But I must say, your beauty falters  
 In the presence of mine  
 Although before each major moment  
 I'm always scared to death I'll blow it  
 And for every perfect view  
 There's one or two still splintered with you  
 Just like a lonely widow  
 Peering through a frosted window  
 Waiting for an easy breeze to say  
 Hey girl, I'll take you away  
 Just waiting on an easy breeze  
 To come and take me away  
 Just waiting on an easy breeze  
 To come and take him away  
 Just waiting on an easy breeze  
 To come and take us away  
 To come and take us away  
 To come and take us away

- BAILEY ALICE GINSBERG



# Unnamed

## An Intersectional Pacific Queer Spoken Word



IATUA FELAGAI TAITO

Race, queer, minority, systemic pressure that sanctions someone's history and creativity.

Indoctrination on a canvas and not giving hope to the ones deemed as different.

Diversifying, decolonising and deconstructing certain notions that are not true but because it's silent does not mean it is ok?

Being ok.. Defining who you are in a world that is white male dominated? There is still privilege that each individual has but is not aware of it,

Everyone is a product of their environment... it is ok, there is a conversation that is needed to grow, bridge the gap, to find common ground and to acknowledge the difference but work with it to create peace in all things.

Choosing to be courageous and standing unapologetically in your truth but acknowledging every truth in the space, room and everywhere you go will be essential... to dismantle hierarchy and keep everyone at a equitable and equal space of growing.

Indigenous, Indigenous, Indigenous, Black, Black, Black, Queer, Queer, Queer, discomfort, scared, ostracised, racism, political divides... that dictate systems in place that forget the human experience and it then leads... to scars, scars, scars.

Protection is needed, protection is needed... Unlearning bad habits is needed. Love... love, love transcends race, sex, age and gender. Keep that in all things and we can grow, grow and grow.

One question to solely think about prior to what I preached and even for those that are a minority as well; what version of yourself do you want to survive?



# Growing Up as a Queer Māori

## The slang and actions that need to change



BLAZE WEBSTER

**G**rowing up as a queer Māori, I felt pushed out of many spaces due to the smallest feelings of being queer when I was younger. Then, throughout my school years, it got worse. I think it was the act of accepting myself that was incredibly difficult, due to my community shutting me out and isolating me. Whenever I tried to reach out and seek help, I was often told "I do not know what I want", "it is a phase" or I am "queer for attention". I had never felt accepted in any Māori community until this year, and this is only because I have taken a Māori paper, and hung out in the Uni-created Māori spaces. Myself and many others feel accepted in these places, and for what reason? Is something wrong with society or our language?

Homophobic and anti-queer slang/slurs has been integrated in everyday vocabulary of many Māori and Pacific people. There is an old advertisement that's called "If It's Not Gay, It's Not Gay" on YouTube. I find it interesting and entertaining, and I recommend checking it out. I mention this ad specifically because it highlights that a lot of people use the term 'gay' casually but inappropriately. A lot of people also use the 'F slur', 'gay', 'homo', 'T slur' and others either to describe a person negatively, towards something that angers the person, or simply randomly as if it is a joke. The only appropriate way to use the word 'gay' is when someone is gay (shocker!!!!). The actual problems with using these terms are the long-term negative effects that affect takatāpui. Let me tell you about an example...

I have recently refreshed my relationship with an old highschool friend (kept anonymous for their privacy) about their experiences with their whānau; this is their story:

*"When I was a kid, I had a family member who was an open lesbian. My family told me about her; however, they would say it in a negative tone, and [that] being a lesbian 'looked bad'. They would follow-up with that being a lesbian is **fine** but they rolled their*

*eyes and emphasised the 'fine', which still sounded 'bad'.*

*I often remember heavy sighs when it came to talking about her or her community. I saw this in other people in my classes at school too, and guys would always tell other guys they are 'gay' for the way they talk or write. 'Gay' was this word that meant you weren't cool. No one actually knew anyone that was gay. No one thought about how gay people would react to being bluntly called gay. My friends used homophobic slurs because they knew that it would affect the person that is being called gay or something. It was an easy way to insult someone. The way they felt about the words didn't matter."*

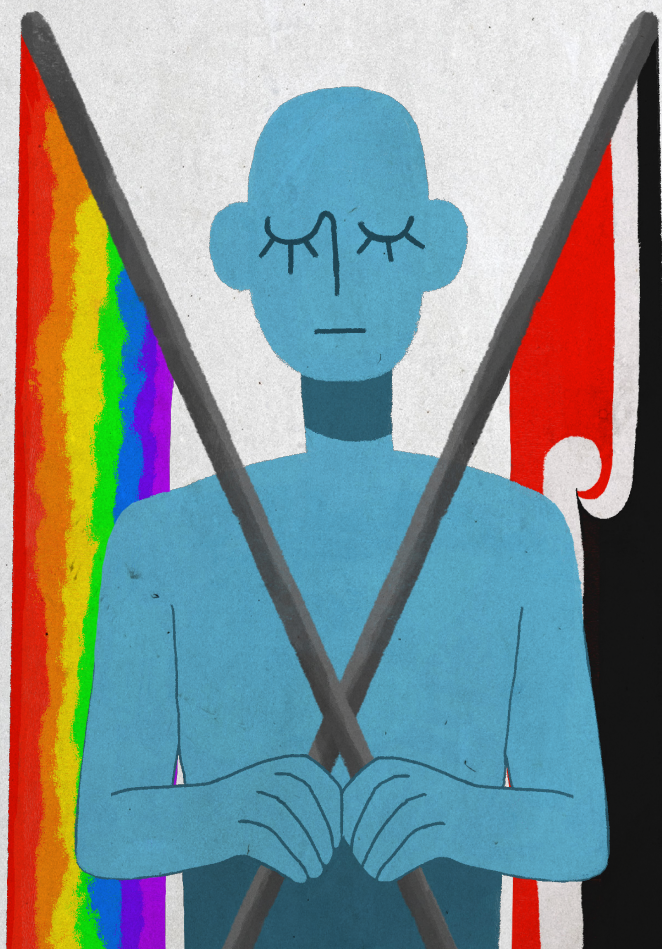
I really appreciate my friend. You can see the negative connotations and a lowered tone when talking about takatāpui. Maybe it's due to whānau ideology or a lack of education within takatāpui topics; who knows, maybe these things are also in the past. Regardless, we need to strive to improve our vocabulary and attitude towards takatāpui, because we are all people, we all have feelings and want to belong. Many takatāpui have been hurt and can't recover from the words and actions that they received when being vulnerable. Respect is a human right. Mana takatāpui.

### Glossary

Whanau = Family and Kin

Mana takatāpui = Being who you are

Takatāpui = LGBTQ+





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# LESLIA

## WHY

## SETTLE



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**FOR**

**LESS?**





# Playlisting a Partner

## The love story of a clumsy gay (not clickbait)



TIM EVANS (THEY/THEM)

Everybody knows that when it comes to a queer relationship those picture perfect, movie style moments are a little less common. Sometimes, we're a bit late to the game in getting our love life off of the ground. Who can blame us? Even if you were, like me, one of those kids screaming their queerness from the rooftops from day one—others are much more reserved. The dating pool has barely started filling while our straight counterparts are diving in headfirst. So really, a lot of us are just figuring dating out in our early 20s. Don't worry, you're not alone and in fact I have a story which might make you think you've got a bit more game than you think you do.

It's December of 2023—the beginning of extraordinarily hot girl summer. My plan: get 1 unbroken tan and 10 or more men on my line at all times. A simple, super achievable thing all things considered. My Grindr account was going crazy, my Snap Score following suit. I was on the prowl and this cougar was pouncing at any lead I could find. Spoiler alert: I had a great summer. I actually did keep my roster up for a bit and I was very proud of my tan. I also met one particular man who threw me for a bit of a loop.

He was exactly my type, amazing in bed, and had his own place near my work. Score, right? Well here's how I made him my man—I didn't. After meeting up with him twice to hookup and hangout as slaggy mates, he mentioned he was needing some new music recommendations and he knew I was a musician. So I made him a playlist... on day two. No biggie, just a huge emotional commitment and honestly the gayest thing I could've done. And babes, I laid it on thicker than the sunscreen I was burning through at the time.

Without even realising, I was throwing in songs about how much I wanted this man. Every second song told him that not only did I want to see him again, I wanted to move in with him and have his children (technically not possible but I'm dedicated to proving the scientists wrong). Let me put you on to **All This Space** by **Stephen Day**, **Shooting Glances** by **Edgehill**, and **Pretty Boy** by **The Neighbourhood**.

It wasn't just romance either, y'all. One of my personal favourites—**Eat My Ass** by **Bigg Wett** was in there way too quickly. **Sex in Public** by **Menna** and **I Wanna See Some Ass** by **Jack Harlow** also made their features. Dear readers, I was down for this man. And then—the ultimate fumble...

**I GOT BACK WITH MY EX????** You heard me. My one and only ex from 5 years ago reached out and wanted to hang out. He was moving to Australia and was also having a bit of a hot boy summer himself. He just wanted to catch up—it had admittedly been too long and it was a 'just friends' thing at first. Well, that lasted until the end of the summer and I had a great time. 'No regrets,' as that one weird ad with the back tattoo said.

Within 24 hours, I was back in bed with Mr Playlist (his formal title). He admitted he'd missed me (win!!!) and wanted to see me more often if I'd let him. Needless to say, I did, and I scored myself a lovely boyfriend to call my own from it. But that's history now folks. Go out and blossom as the lovey queers I know you to be. Proud of you darlings, good luck out there xoxo.

PS: Yes, the playlist is still in use and yes, I did add **Head Head Honcho** by **Kim Petras**. Yes his friends did call me out on it when I met them (they analysed it while I was with my ex), and yes I stood by my decision to add **Animal** by **Neon Trees** twice, even though it was an accident. Peeps, the D was fireeeeeee—thanks queen Gypsy Rose—it was worth it.





## The Highlight Reel



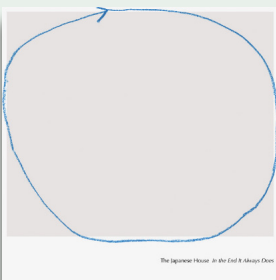
### Perfume by Del Water Gap

A strong contributor to this playlist and one of my personal favourites at the time I made the playlist. Actually, it's still up there. Baby, "I'm picturing you right now with nothing on, with nothing on but your perfume," is a power play and honestly, it's accurate. Rivalling Lorde's "wearing only my earrings," it is a strong message I very much wanted to send.



### As Long As I Can by Quotes From Movies

Coming out strong with the lyrics "I wanna love you for as long as I can," this song was not beating around the bush. While this song was not in there from day one, it wasn't exactly a late addition. This one is just such a feel good relationship song I couldn't help myself. It's proved great as car karaoke recently, so it was a good move.



### Touching Yourself by The Japanese House

This song is one of the many which are slightly too close to home. We are medium to long distance partners (it's awful, just follow them where they go, lowkey more worth it) and this song is just about imagining how bad you want to touch the other person all the time. Well, ain't that the truth y'all.



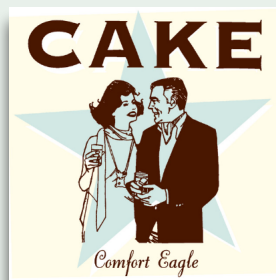
### Moonlight by Kali Uchis

Kali Uchis is one of my man's favourites that I put him on. Maybe he loves that latina mommy vibe (could you blame him, I mean if she asked I would open the whole relo up), or maybe he just likes that he can call me his "lover" with this song. Whatever it is, getting high in the moonlight sounds like a great date night to me.



### Worth It by RAYE

Truly, he could make it worth it. He's made a lot of things worth it, actually. Getting a train to Hamilton is something only love struck dummies would do. So if you catch me boarding on a Friday evening, mind your business babes. At least I have a banging playlist to vibe to the whole way. Thank you RAYE for being the realest bitch on the block right now with this song.



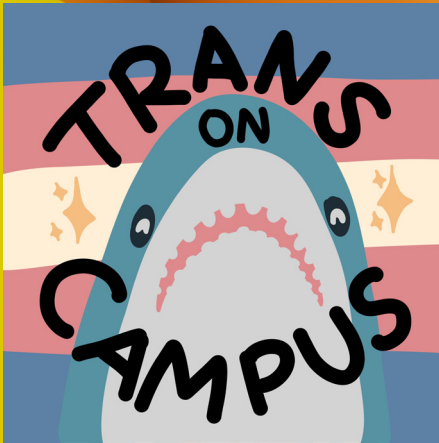
### Short Skirt / Long Jacket by CAKE

Well, it's in the title. I'd look REALLY good in the short skirt/long jacket combo. This song is to date the only song that he's added to the playlist (despite shared custody), but I'm not mad that he thinks of me as a hot girl that makes him go a little crazy. I can definitely work with that.



# RAINBOW CLUBS!

A SPECIAL CLUBS COLUMN CELEBRATING AUSA PRIDE WEEK ;)



## TRANS ON CAMPUS (TOC)

Trans on Campus (ToC) is a social, support, and advocacy club for all transgender, gender diverse and gender questioning people. We hold multiple events a month including board game nights, movie nights etc and have a very active discord, but you can keep up to date with our other socials too. No joining fee either, and it's ok if you're not a UoA student we'd still love to see you around :)



## RAINBOW BUSINESS UOA

Welcome to Rainbow Business, where diversity fuels success! As an academic club within the business school, we champion advocacy and offer professional development opportunities for everyone. Contrary to our name, you don't need to identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community or be a business student to join. Best of all, membership is completely free! Join us beyond Pride week for our exciting semester 2 events, featuring a Drag Queen Trivia night and a lively Pub Crawl. Embrace knowledge, creativity, and community with us. Don't miss out – join Rainbow Business today and slay together!



## RAINBOW LAW

Rainbow Law is a student-led group providing support and a community for LGBTQ+ students and allies. We have a number of exciting portfolios creating a range of opportunities in areas such as professional development and advocacy, and our community portfolio works on providing a variety of informal and formal events throughout the year dedicated to creating a welcoming and safe environment for all. We'd love to see as many of you as possible at our events, so please follow the QR code to sign up, follow our instagram (@rainbowlawuoa), and we hope to see you around!







## RAINBOW ENGINEERING

Rainbow Engineering is the Faculty of Engineering's LGBTQIA Takatāpui+ network, by and for students with a mission to create an inclusive and supportive environment where LGBTQIA Takatāpui+ students feel empowered, valued and have equal opportunities to excel academically, professionally, and personally within engineering. We hold panel events and morning teas with our Industry sponsors and run community events like movie nights, film nights, cookie decorating and more. We will also have some exciting events this year, including Industry Drag Bingo Night, Drag Trivia Night, and a Cocktail Night! You can stay posted by signing up or following us on our socials: <https://linktr.ee/rainbowengineering>.



## FMHS RAINBOW STUDENT NETWORK

The FMHS Rainbow Student Network provides a safe space for LGBTQIA Takatāpui+ students (and allies!) to connect. We aim to encourage inclusion and diversity within the Faculty by holding social, academic, and workforce-oriented gatherings and events; advocating for the welfare of rainbow students at a structural level; and providing individual guidance and support to any rainbow students in need. We're here to facilitate the growth of an integrated rainbow community within the Faculty and future health workforce, and in doing so better serve the health needs of rainbow people in the wider community. Sign up to be a member here: [linktr.ee/rainbowfmhs](https://linktr.ee/rainbowfmhs).



## RAINBOW SCIENCE

Rainbow Science is a point of connection for members of the Rainbow community in the Faculty of Science. We've just been revived as of 2023, so we're a bit newer to the scene, but we've been running collabs and solo events once every couple of weeks since. Our events tend to be chill "hang out" type events - see our recent Gay With Clay event with SciSA, Pizza Meet and Greet from the beginning of the year, and our upcoming Movie Night (free food included). Membership is open to all, so feel free to sign up!



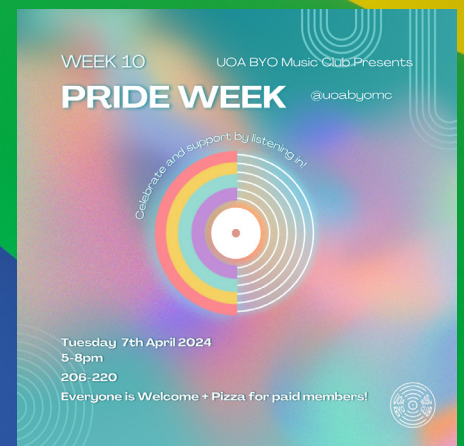
## RAINBOW ARTS

The purpose of our group is to provide not only a network for LGBTQIA+, Takatāpui and MVPFAFF+ students studying the Arts or who have an interest in the Arts to meet others, but also creating a safe space for them to be able to express themselves freely, find community and attend fun events. Sign up here: <https://linktr.ee/rainbowartsuoa>.



## RAINBOW EDUCATION & SOCIAL WORK

New things are on the horizon at the faculty of Education and Social Work! With a new campus we thought we deserve a new club too! While we may not have all our shit together yet, we have some big plans. Rainbow Education and Social Work has movie nights, crafts and collabs all in the works. We are open to everyone at the university (no matter your faculty), so whether you're a member of the rainbow community, or just looking for things to do, join R-EDSW now, for vibes and whimsical times!



## PRIDE WEEK X UOA BYO MUSIC CLUB

While our club may not be an official Rainbow club, we are certainly allied with the LGBTQIA Takatāpui+ community. To help add some noise to the Pride Week celebrations, we will be hosting a special music event on Tuesday evening (@ room 206-220) for showcasing the talented and diverse voices from the Rainbow community. Bring along some of your favourite Pride anthems on Vinyl, CD and Streaming Services to share with us! Free Pizza will be provided for paid members! Learn more here: <https://linktr.ee/uoaormc>.





# HEARTSTOPPER

REVOLUTIONIZING LGBTQIA+ REPRESENTATION IN POP CULTURE

BEN BONNÉ

Given the globalised nature of today's popular culture industry, the television series *Heartstopper* is raising awareness and normalising LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus) storylines and challenges to a global mainstream audience.

Since its release on Netflix in April 2022, *Heartstopper* has experienced overwhelming popularity from viewers and critics, receiving a 100 percent score on

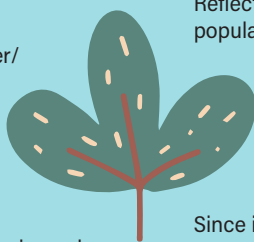
Rotten Tomatoes and featuring on Netflix's Top 10 television show list in over 50 countries.

Reflecting upon the impact of *Heartstopper's* popularity within the LGBTQIA+ community and beyond, this essay will argue that *Heartstopper* has inspired global change on an individual and societal level and thus is fundamentally transforming global consciousness.

Since its debut on Netflix in April 2022, the television series *Heartstopper* has become a cultural phenomenon, captivating audiences worldwide and reshaping the

landscape of LGBTQIA+ representation in mainstream media. With its authentic portrayal of young queer love and rejection of harmful stereotypes, *Heartstopper* has not only garnered immense popularity but also sparked conversations and activism both within and beyond the LGBTQIA+ community.

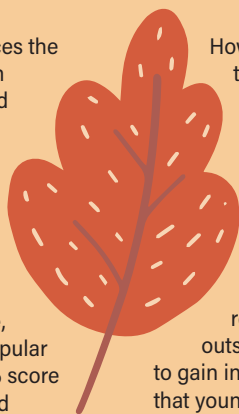
Adapted from Alice Oseman's webcomic series, *Heartstopper* follows the endearing love story of two British high school boys, Nick and Charlie, emphasizing the innocence and wholesomeness of queer romance. Unlike many portrayals in popular media, which often tokenize queer characters or focus solely





on their trauma, Heartstopper balances the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ youth with a refreshing focus on the joy and optimism of their love story.

Heartstopper has experienced overwhelming popularity from viewers and critics, with the series receiving over 53 million hours of watch-time in the first three weeks of its release on Netflix. Furthermore, within its first three weeks on this popular streaming service, it received a 100% score on Rotten Tomatoes and was featured on Netflix's Top 10 television show list in over 50 countries.<sup>1</sup> Heartstopper's extreme success was further evident in the show being renewed for two future seasons in May 2022, only a month after the show was initially released.<sup>2</sup>



However, Heartstopper's underlying themes of human connection, self-discovery, romance, friendships, and family, also enable the show to appeal to a wide variety of viewers beyond the LGBTQIA+ community. The show highlights how beyond one's sexual orientation or gender identity, we, as humans, all share essential desires and feelings. This relatability of the show allows viewers outside of the LGBTQIA+ community to gain insights into the diverse experiences that young LGBTQIA+ people face today, which inherently allows these viewers to acquire greater awareness, empathy, and altogether acceptance towards the LGBTQIA+ community.

This huge fan base, created by Heartstopper, has used the television shows' global popularity to enter social activist environments to further advance rights for LGBTQIA+ people and challenge discrimination and prejudice against them. Luke Pollard, a British politician, referenced Heartstopper in official governmental discussions on June 13 2022 to support his argument to include transgender individuals in the proposed conversion therapy-ban legislation. Pollard drew attention to the Heartstopper character of Elle, a young trans woman of colour, whose visibility and legitimacy he claimed 'has saved lives'.<sup>4</sup> Pollard acknowledged the inclusiveness and optimism of Heartstopper and argued that this should inspire politicians to create inclusive legislation that seeks to stimulate social change and counter structural inequalities.

Given similar debates around transgender rights and inclusion in conversion therapy-ban legislation currently occurring in other countries worldwide, it is not unreasonable to assume the effects of Pollard's utilisation of Heartstopper has global implications. As shown by the marriage equality law reforms, which began in the Netherlands in 2001, and subsequently influenced numerous countries worldwide to legalise same-sex marriages, political discussions and their impacts are rarely confined to a single country. Therefore, Heartstopper's reference by Pollard in a parliamentary debate reinforces how popular media has the power to influence and change legislation, which is even more impressive considering how Heartstopper's political influence in Britain occurred within two months of its release.

Heartstopper's political influence has spread beyond Britain through its worldwide exposure to vast international audiences - enabled by Netflix's global platform. Typically, Netflix caters movies and television shows to

align with each nation's social and cultural interests. Hence interestingly, Heartstopper is included on Netflix in countries such as Jamaica, Kenya, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which hold significant intolerance towards LGBTQIA+ people and tend to prohibit and censor LGBTQIA+ media representation. Perhaps even more surprising is that Heartstopper has experienced unexpected popularity, reaching Netflix's Top 10 Television List in all these countries.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Heartstopper's significant popularity with these unexpected audiences offers hope for potential changes in these countries' cultural attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people, which could inspire further political change.

As Heartstopper prepares for its highly anticipated third season (released October 2024), its impact on global consciousness continues to unfold.

**THE IMPACT OF HEARTSTOPPER EXTENDS FAR BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT. FOR MANY LGBTQIA+ VIEWERS, THE SHOW SERVES AS A MIRROR, AFFIRMING THEIR EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITIES IN A POSITIVE LIGHT.**

Fans have shared how the series gave them the courage to explore their sexuality, with some even using scenes from the show as inspiration for their own coming out experiences. Older members of the LGBTQIA+ community have also spoken about how they wish they had had shows like Heartstopper when growing up that portrayed queer relationships in a positive light - something that did not exist a generation ago. Elton John praised the series on his Instagram, calling it "a beautiful series and a powerful portrayal of young gay love"<sup>3</sup>

**WITH ITS UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION AND POSITIVE STORYTELLING, THE SERIES STANDS AS A TESTAMENT TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF POPULAR MEDIA IN CHALLENGING NORMS AND FOSTERING SOCIAL CHANGE.**



As we eagerly await the next chapter in Nick and Charlie's love story, we anticipate further strides towards a more inclusive and accepting world.

1 NBC News, "Heartstopper renewed for two more seasons at Netflix"; Rotten Tomatoes, "Heartstopper".

2 Netflix Tudum, "Heartstopper Season 2 Will Say 'Hi' to More Queer Joy"

3 Metro, "Sir Elton John has 'epic' night with bestie Dua Lipa, Jake Shears and Heartstopper cast and fans are insanely jealous"; Elton John, Instagram Post.

4 Attitude, "HEARTSTOPPER AND YASMIN FINNEY ARE 'SAVING LIVES' SAYS LABOUR MP LUKE POLLARD."

5 FlixPatrol, "Heartstopper TOP 10"





# Animating Identity

The trans-formative potency of Jonni Peppers' *Wasteland*

MADELINE SMITH

For this week's Pride issue, I wanted to highlight the work of a transgender filmmaker. One whose work has been particularly important to me is the animator Jonni Peppers.

Animation is perhaps my favourite medium, but it suffers greatly from its relationship to commercialism. Because of how difficult it is to maintain a living as an independent animator, it hasn't flourished as much as independent scenes in other mediums. Despite this, a lot of great work is still being made, much of which is ignored within online animation fandoms. Slogans such as "animation is cinema!" and "animation is for everyone!" get repeated, but this is almost

always in the context of the same Hollywood movies and shows. When it comes to trans cinema and genuinely exciting animation, I believe there's a responsibility of studios to greenlight more of those projects, but audiences are also responsible for actively seeking out what they want to see. When talking to other queer people about media, the discussion often begins on an assumption that the 'Great Queer Film' is a hypothetical, something that we must strive for but does not yet exist. And while the stakes are obviously lower with animation fandom, there's often a similar tendency to highlight the **IDEA** of a truly original and innovative animated project over the ones that animators are actually making. In both cases, the work isn't going to

come to us. We have to be the ones that find it.

Jonni Peppers' work **IS** the kind of formally exciting, deeply personal, and thematically mature work that these audiences clamour for, and it reflects the kind of qualities I find the most interesting in animation and contemporary trans cinema. The first of her two features is *Wasteland*, a compilation of her short films from 2017-2019. *Wasteland* does not coalesce into a singular narrative, but there's certainly a unified style across the shorts and a thematic trajectory that builds across them. While you can watch the shorts independently, watching the compilation film is the best intro to her work. The two centrepieces of the compilation are *Goodbye Forever*



*Party and The Final Exit Of The Disciples Of Ascensia*. *Goodbye* focuses on the struggles of children's show performers, while *Ascensia* tells the story of a UFO cult (very much inspired by the real-world Heaven's Gate cult).

Peppers' work prioritises animation's potential for expression over a sense of polish.

The character designs are simple, and in *Wasteland* most of the shorts utilise a paper cut-out style, a hand-made aesthetic. In execution, the character animation is so fluid that I initially had no idea how she pulled it off. The choices made are not 'amateurish', but deliberate. The voice actors are mostly not professionals, but their sense of spontaneity and uncertainty is key to the overall effect. The characters in Peppers' films rarely speak with certainty or confidence. They are deeply isolated, alienated, and always unsure of what the 'correct' thing to say is. They jump between a sense of detachment and a sense of panic. While the films have a tragic core, there's also plenty of absurdist humour throughout. As with most great absurdist work, the humour is not really a 'relief' from tragedy, but instead is effortlessly integrated into it.

*Wasteland*'s primary theme is the subjectivity of reality, and animation is mainly used in service of this. *Goodbye Forever Party* is primarily driven by the sense of detachment, of being an actor playing the role of someone else's life and failing at it. Peppers' animation takes advantage of the medium's capacity to represent the interior mind. This can be done in live action too, but animation presents a new set of visual possibilities. *Goodbye Forever Party*'s rough pencil outlines represent a whole world shaped by these feelings. From the perspective of its protagonist Lilith, the crude, unpolished stylistic disposition is pervasive enough to become normal. There's no sense of a life outside of feeling crude, unpolished, unfinished.

There's a similar case in *Ascensia*. Different animation styles used to convey the different characters' POVs, and a major theme is the way that faith impacts one's subjectivity. When we look at cults from the outside, their ridiculousness is obvious to us, but from the

point of view of someone who has a sense of faith in their teachings, their effect feels overwhelmingly real. As a result, the same events seem radically different between participant and spectator. By tapping into this faith, *Ascensia* is a film that empathises with cult members while remaining critical of faith.

For me, *Wasteland* has its strongest resonance as a trans film, though I don't want to completely pigeonhole the work into this category based on the identity of its director.

I watched the film at a time when I was really beginning to question my gender identity. The primary representations I had seen of gender dysphoria were ones where it was overwhelming and obvious, an intense internal and external suffering. While I was not the most confident in my male identity, I believed that I could not possibly have dysphoria—surely I would have realised it by now if that were the case? *Wasteland* was the first time I saw a representation of a kind of dysphoria that was very different - one that lurks and seeps its way into 'normal' life, to the point that I could not recognise it as unusual. It was not an immediate and overwhelming pain, but something that was slowly destroying me day by day. This is what is represented in *Goodbye Forever Party* especially, and connecting it to my experience was one of the stepping stones that allowed me to recognise myself as transgender a few years later.

*Wasteland* features scenarios based around alienation, isolation, detachment and uncertainty of self - all features of the dysphoric experience, but also things that can be integrated into scenarios about other subjects. This is why I want to stress that the film is not necessarily an allegory for dysphoria. At the very least, it is not one in the way where we usually think about allegories, where the story's surface is a front for a

'true' meaning. Peppers is very open on her website about how her upbringing and her experiences with mental illness influence her work, and so to reduce the film exclusively to transness/dysphoria is a misreading when there's overlap between the experiences. *Wasteland* IS about its surface-level focus, and while trans/queer experience is certainly embedded into it, it is not so much a 'true meaning' and more as something that echoes throughout the film. I think the big flaw in my initial reading of the film was to highlight its relation to MY experience, rather than seeing it as an emotional stew where the viewer has to confront both familiar and unfamiliar experiences and emotions. No matter your own background as a viewer, you will find things in the film that you might immediately connect to, and others that might confuse you.

To see the flaws in interpreting *Wasteland* as a trans allegory, one only needs to look at *Ascensia*. There's obviously some pretty iffy implications in suggesting a film about a cult is a one-to-one trans allegory, and the film's main focus on faith and the complications of social dynamics/community is certainly not a front. The film has a serious engagement with cult members and their experiences, and that is primarily what it is about. But we also see in *Ascensia* how the characters are struck by an inability to be the people society has demanded them to be, a longing to be someone else and somewhere else, latching onto any sense of belonging they can, the sense of community as a double edged sword, etc. The parallel isn't in the literal experience, but in the feelings the characters carry with them. This kind of emotional reading is something which I tend to do a lot, and is part of why I read works such as Stephen Sondheim's musical *Company* and Isao Takahata's film *Only Yesterday* in relation to trans experience, even though in those, there's no intentional connection. In this case, there is a more direct connection, but it is still only a 'trans film' on a more implicit level than a direct one.

This quality of a more implicit transness is also the case in the work of other contemporary trans filmmakers, such as Jane Schoenbrun's *We're All Going To The World's Fair*. There's often an expectation on trans artists that their work can only ever be about transness. The implicit transness in these films is a way to avoid this pigeonholing while still allowing resonance for the audiences that might need it. And for me, the indirectness of dysphoria here is something that rings the most true to how I feel.



Scan the QR code to view *Wasteland* for free on YouTube.





# Finding Love While Finding Yourself

Being a Trans Man in Auckland



KAAVYA GHOSHAL



**"When your mind is at war with your body, it's easy to lose track of who you are."**

**S**alem, a History and Criminology student at the University of Auckland, sits down to tell us about his journey of navigating the world of relationships and accepting himself as a trans man in Auckland.

### **When did you decide to transition?**

I got my period. I was 12. And I was like, what the fuck is happening—but it wasn't like the regular 'everyone's first-period' thing. It was more like, this isn't okay; my body shouldn't be doing this. Before you hit puberty, everyone is pretty much androgynous; and then I started growing boobs and was like, "are you fucking kidding me?" My friends were always jealous, and I was like, "these *don't* make you want to curl up and die?"

### **How did you navigate your identity when you were younger?**

I was in a queer friend group in catholic school, but they were all lesbian, so I thought I must be a lesbian. Plot twist: I'm not a lesbian. Fun fact. I came out as non-binary first, just to test the waters. I went by them/them for a year, but that still wasn't right. I moved to my second high school, which was a public school, and I was like... he/him. That fucking sticks. That's great. I like this. So I cut off my hair and cried of pure happiness. It took six months of arguing with my mother. [I] got a binder, started experimenting with more masculine clothes, and this is who I am. It's awesome.

### **A lot of people think that you're only trans when you've medically transitioned. Can you talk about that?**

I've got trans friends who don't want to transition medically. There's this huge thing—and it's created by society and their ideas of masculinity—a trans person 'can't' fully transition unless they look like Brad Pitt. It's really dangerous, and it does a lot of damage. I thought I wasn't trans enough. Transitioning isn't linear; no trans person will transition the same.

### **Who was your biggest support during this process?**

I came out to my dad with french fries. I said these fries and I had nothing in common, they were straight cut fries. He said, okay, cool. Look, no one's perfect. And when your family has known you as 'her' for 14 years, it's challenging to tell them that this person they've known for 14 years is changing, but I wouldn't be here without them. Good support is the line between life and death.

### **What are the biggest challenges you face when it comes to accepting yourself and other people accepting you?**

For me, it was understanding that I don't have to look like everyone else, and I don't have to do it how everyone else wants me to do it. For a while, I dressed in your stereotypical masculine clothes, and I was miserable. I know that now, but a couple of years ago, I religiously wore ripped jeans, t-shirts, and hoodies because that's the only way I'd feel accepted.

### **Do you feel a sense of responsibility to represent the entire community?**

I always say I can't become a serial killer. I wouldn't just be Salem, the serial killer; I would be Salem, the trans serial killer. There's this huge expectation placed on you when people find out you're trans, so when someone who is trans [does] a terrible thing, everyone loses their mind over it. People can be terrible, but their gender or sexuality does not play a part in that. Just because I changed my gender doesn't mean I can't fuck up.

### **Can you tell us about your journey to finding love?**

I thought everyone was bisexual when I was a kid. One of my friends asked me if I was gay and told me 'gay' meant happy. So I went around telling everyone I was gay. That aged well. When I started dating, it was for the sake of dating: He was trans, and he sucked; we were 14 and dated for a month. I found out that people feel entitled to ask you some very uncomfortable questions about sex just because you're trans.

I started dating again in 2020. I was dating a cis guy. He was a bit of a piece of shit. I was the 'transgender boyfriend', not just the 'boyfriend'. [Being the 'trans boyfriend'] is really frustrating when you're trying to just exist as a person. He told me, "I have the best of both worlds. You've got the mind of a guy but the body of a girl."

In a relationship, I'm constantly worrying if the other person is seeing me for my anatomy or for who I am. And when it comes to intimacy, you need to feel comfortable because you're not comfortable within your body.

### **How do you navigate disclosing your identity to potential partners?**

Here's a really big argument going on, actually: If you're fully transitioned—you have bottom surgery, top surgery, etc.—there is literally no way of ever tracing it back that

you were born female. People are like, "Oh, we'll always know"—you don't, a lot of times. In terms of relationships, I'd say it's all about finding the perfect moment.

### **What do you think are the biggest misconceptions people have about trans men?**

Oh, that you have to be masculine. Gender identity and the way you present yourself are so different. No one bats an eye when people like Harry Styles walk onto a stage in a dress. But if a trans guy was doing that, *he's* obviously not trans; he's just confused.

Navigating the medical system is so challenging because doctors don't have to learn about trans people in medical school. You go in, and you get asked all these uncomfortable questions like, "Are you sure you're not going to regret this decision? What if you have a partner in the future, and they don't want you to make these changes?" They'll deny you top surgery if you aren't trans enough. If you're not taking hormones and if you aren't masculine-presenting, they won't let you go on the public waitlist. When I go to doctor's appointments, I wear my most, I guess, 'masculine' clothes because that's when they'll take me seriously. Clothing shouldn't have gender. They're just pieces of fabric sewn together that prevent us from getting public indecency charges.

Also, [that] we all 'sleep with each other'. No, and it's because, in the media, trans people have become so sexualized.

Another huge misconception is that trans guys are cute and soft, [and] need to be protected at all costs. What the fuck *is* that? I am one of the bitchiest people you will ever meet. I will absolutely take you in a fight.

### **What advice would you give to a trans man navigating the world of relationships and love for the first time?**

Know your worth. If your partner is embarrassed or they don't want to introduce you as you want to be introduced, that is a red flag. Be comfortable with yourself. Finding that respect for yourself can be hard when your mind is at war with your body. You need to have friends who are going to call you on your bullshit. I'd also suggest therapy. Before you enter a relationship, go and talk to someone. You don't need to go to therapy just because you're struggling; sometimes, you just need a fresh perspective on something. Learn to accept yourself. Don't let them treat you however they want to, just because you want to be loved, because your own brain can't love your own body.



# Is Queer Baiting Bad?

## From representation, to manipulation



KAAVYA GHOSHAL

**W**e're growing up in a world where the approach to sexuality is extremely flexible. As we create more labels and boxes, the likelihood of us understanding where we fit in on the spectrum of sexuality becomes both more and less intimidating.

Queerbaiting is a complicated concept to discuss. To put it simply, if you have the right to be whoever you want to be, then accusing someone of lying about their sexuality to appease a certain crowd seems to be out of the realm of possibilities.

At a larger scale, queerbaiting is commonly used as a marketing tactic. "A marketing technique for fiction and entertainment in which creators hint at, but then do not actually depict, same-sex romance or other LGBT representation". Celebrities such as Harry Styles have been accused of queer-baiting on multiple counts. By posing in *Vogue* magazine in an effeminate outfit, people were quick to assume that this was him coming out to society, and if it wasn't—it must be a way to manipulate the internet and broaden his listening demographic. Personally, I think that's bullshit. We cannot propagate the idea of a label-free society whilst simultaneously accusing someone of disclosing their sexuality because they took a picture wearing nail polish. We could also stress the importance of cis men steering away from the masculine stereotypes placed upon them—being in touch with your femininity does not, and should not, make you any less of a man.

However, there *are* several influencers who intentionally use their platform and sexuality to their advantage. A group called Alpha House Boys (the name should have been a giveaway) was accused of having

two separate accounts, where they teased homosexuality on one and posted about their girlfriends on the other. The trend of male influencers posting TikTok's looking deep into their best friends' eyes and faking a (near) kiss produced thousands of comments in support of them "owning their sexuality" when, in reality, they were simply trying to gain a wider

range of followers.

What's really interesting about queer-baiting is that it's actually present all around you. In a lot of cases, girls will pretend to be bisexual or bi-curious to feed into the idea of girl-on-girl intimacy being deeply fetishized. Lesbian porn being a top-rated category on Pornhub, has absolutely nothing to do with people *accepting* lesbians as part of society, but rather, the sexualization of women being seen as objects of entertainment, particularly to straight men.

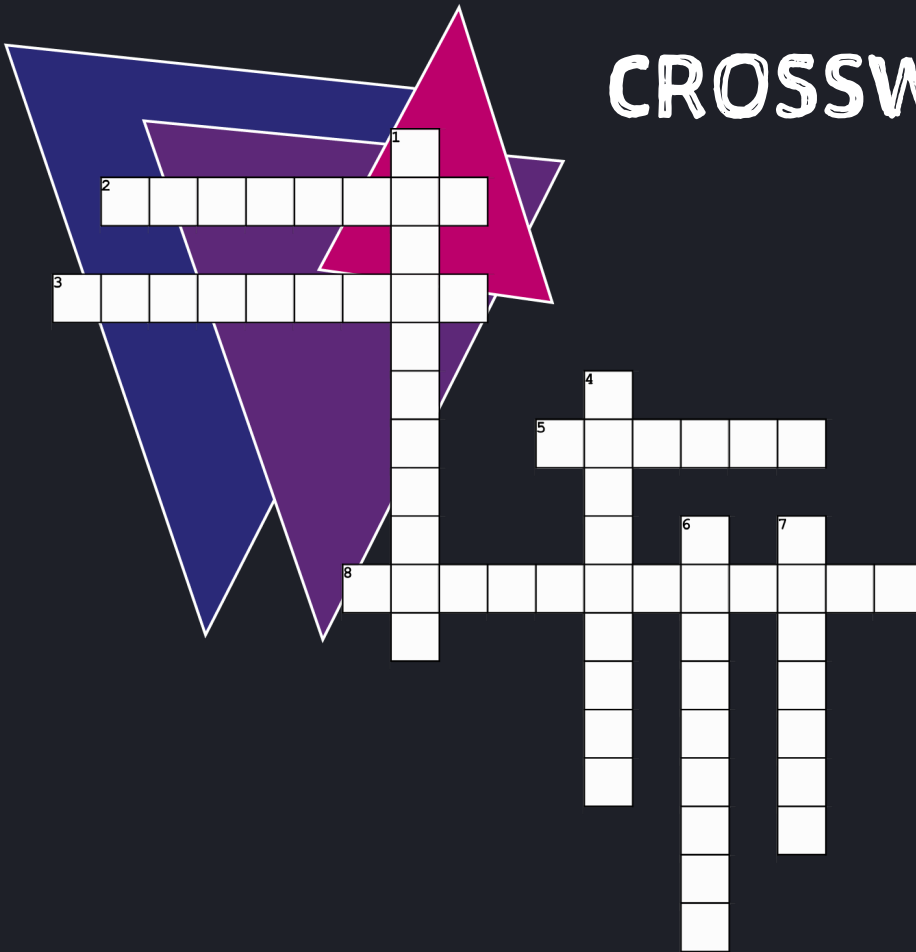
The saddest part about queerbaiting is how often it's done for the male gaze. While those two girls making out at a club to get a guy's attention probably doesn't mean harm, it does have implications for the LGBTQAI+ community. The idea of 'just a girly kiss' that started off as a cute photo op is now used by girls to bait their partners into finding them more attractive. It's invalidating for members of the community to hear that it's 'not cheating' when the person you hooked up with was of the same sex just because you're 'straight'. It most definitely is. And if you find yourself hooking up with your best friends instead of your boyfriend every time you're drunk, you probably have some introspection to do!

Sexuality is messy and confusing, and you'll probably never figure it out entirely. Society will constantly change their preferences for what is most desired—while being bisexual is 'hot' now, it might not be the case 10 years down the line. Let people have the time and space to figure out where they fit in. And most importantly, be who *you* are, not what everyone thinks you should be.





# CROSSWORD



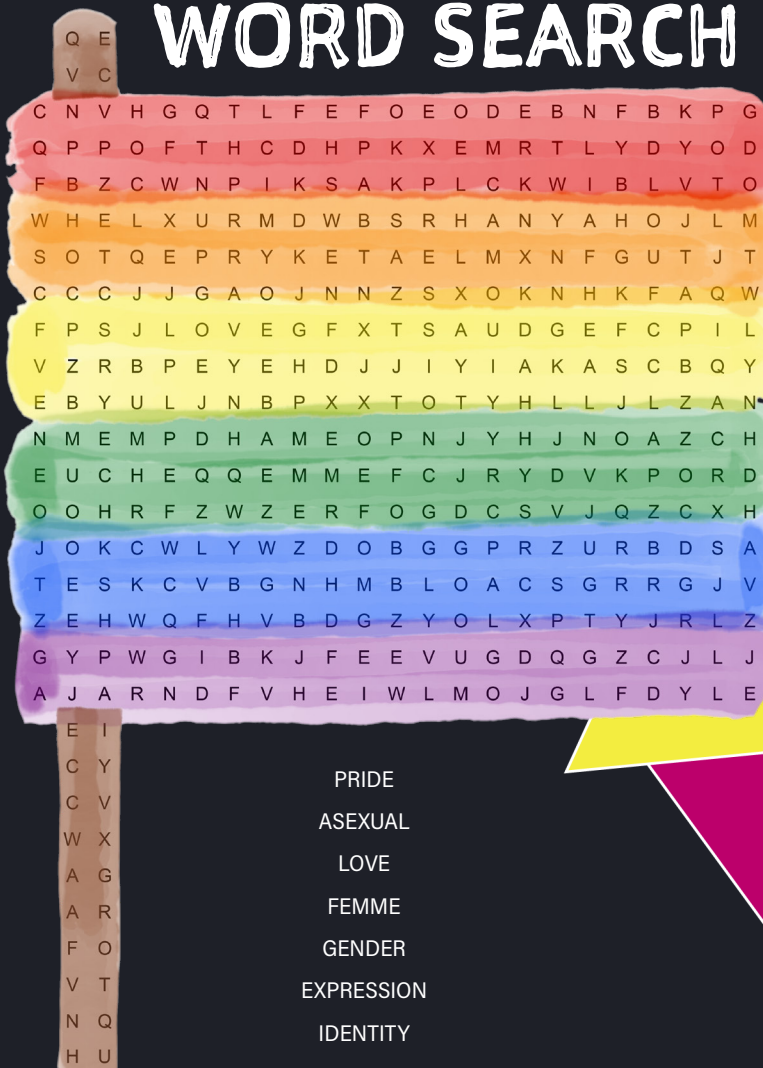
## Across

4. Sexual and gender identities other than straight and cisgender
5. Someone who isn't a part of LGBTQAI+ but supports it
7. significant distress caused when does not identify with their assigned birth gender
8. A person who does not experience romantic attraction.

## Down

1. Sexually or romantically attracted exclusively to people of the other sex
2. Consensually having multiple intimate relationships
3. Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation
6. Prejudice towards the trans community

# WORD SEARCH



# SUDOKU

		2	3	9	8			
4			1	5	2			
	3		4	7				
2		7		6			1	3
					3	5	6	2
6				2			4	
	6				9		2	
8			6		7	1		4
	9				5	6		

6		2			9		4	8
						9	2	
	3	4						1
2		7				4		
				2			1	
8			7	9		2	5	6
		3	9			7		
		9	1	7		3		5
	2	6		3	8		9	4



# HOROSCOPES



CLARICE DE TOLEDO



**LEARN  
MORE**

**T**his week's energy will be a continuation of what's been manifesting during the past two weeks. With Mercury entering Taurus on Wednesday and leaving its shadow period in Aries, there could be changes in how you approach a certain issue in your life. There could be this air of a new-found perspective and relief once you focus changes or you gain a new insight on a situation. This energy will bring a more grounded and creative approach to learning and communicating with others.

**Please read your rising sign as well!**

## ARIES

There could be a change of pace this week for you, where things go a little slower or you feel drawn to slow down and focus on the simplicity of things, like appreciating the beauty in things more and being more present. You could also be more focused on learning practical things like a new creative skill, cooking, managing money, or even tending a garden. In general, you could be feeling more creatively inspired and focusing on your inner calm.

## TAURUS

You could be prioritising self-focus and personal growth. There will be more emphasis on your heart, and your heart's desires. You could be reflecting more about your personal goals and new interests that could be popping up around this time, and you could feel more open to explore new possibilities. Your mindset could also shift for a more confident and self-determined version of yourself, where you feel you'll finally be exiting a period of stagnation.

## GEMINI

This week will be a continuation of a period where you'll feel more like slowing down and paying attention to your feelings. This is a more reflective time for you, where you could be releasing certain patterns and mindsets that could be holding you back in some way. It's a time to be patient with yourself, especially if you're going through heavy emotions. But this could also be a time where you're learning more spirituality, and are seeking to feel more connected to the universe and grounded in your emotions.

## CANCER

There could be a lot happening in your social life at the moment, and you could be very

focused on the friendships in your life right now. There could be a lot of different events popping up where you get to connect with your friends and do some networking as well. It's possible that you could be having mindset shifts when it comes to your friends and personal goals, you could be feeling more positive about it and wanting to commit more.

## LEO

You could be feeling more motivated and inspired to learn new things and bring in more creativity when it comes to your work. When it comes to your uni work or even a part time job, you could be more accepting of new responsibilities and wanting to implement more creativity into your workplace. Writing and ideas could come more easily, and you could be feeling more confident about your skills. You could also be reflecting more about your long term goals and strategizing about how to work towards them.

## VIRGO

There could be a big focus around education, writing and long distance travel this week. If you don't have any plans to travel overseas, you could be committing even further to studies. It could feel easier to absorb complex information, and you could be feeling very inspired by it. You could also be devoting your time to deeper discussions, like the political state of the world or your beliefs and new perspectives and sharing more of what you've been learning about.

## LIBRA

This is a time where you'll probably be focusing on self-improvement and reflecting on aspects of yourself that you don't usually show to other people. You could be letting go of certain mindsets regarding relationships and love or beliefs you have about yourself.

This is a time when you could feel more vulnerable but equally empowered by self-understanding. It could also be that you're reflecting more about your financial status and taking measures to improve it in the future.

## SCORPIO

There could be a lot of focus on your closest relationships at the moment. You could feel more drawn to spend more quality time with your significant other or a close friend, and the ingress of Mercury in Taurus can mean that you're learning how to voice your feelings

better to your partner or vice-versa and that there's a shift happening. If you're single, this could be an opportunity to meet someone new or go on a date. Pay close attention to potential great business partnerships as well!

## SAGITTARIUS

You could be feeling very focused on your routine and habits at the moment. You might be experimenting with different habits and indulging in self-care practices or you're looking to do more of that. There's an emphasis on your work-life balance, and during this week you could potentially feel a difference in mindset when it comes to that area of your life. If you've been feeling more overwhelmed, you might be drawn to taking gentle walks and doing a relaxing activity, or you could be very focused on your uni work and how to achieve a level of organisation that suits you.

## CAPRICORN

You could be focusing on activities that bring you joy, as well as your social life and maybe even dating. You could be reading or writing more for the pleasure of it, and you could be feeling more confident to voice your ideas and opinions. It's a time to fall in love with yourself and nurture your inner child wonder, and you could feel like expressing yourself more and nurturing the relationships close to you.

## AQUARIUS

There could be a focus on your family and home life this week. With Mercury moving into Taurus, it could be that you'll be having important conversations with family or flatmates, or it could be that you'll feel more sensitive and nostalgic around this time and you'll be speaking more about your past and childhood. You could be feeling like spending more time alone or with just really close people. It could also be that you are decorating in your space in a thoughtful and creative way.

## PISCES

You might feel more creative around this time and focused on your studies. You could feel more committed to activities that are related to writing or reading, and you could be reading all types of books and putting effort in your social life as well. It can feel that there's a lot going on, like errands to run and little details to focus on at work or studies. So if you feel like your mind is particularly active or overstimulated, try to do a gentle walk or a meditation.



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YOUR STUDENT BAR

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EVERYDAY 3PM - 5PM  
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EVERYDAY  
3PM - 5PM  
9PM - 11PM

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Odd Company • \$8  
Heineken • \$9  
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