

# Humanizing LGBTQ+ Experiences

## FLEX Day – Fall 2024

### Description of session

The session explores the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in the California Community College system. Participants will discuss first-hand LGBTQIA+ student experiences, and the ways we can actively create a better higher education experience for students with diverse gender and sexuality identities at Golden West College.

The first-hand experiences that this session will discuss are available on the CIL website before FLEX Day. Those interested in attending are encouraged to review them before attending, however, previews are not required.

### Groups and Stories

Click on the title of each student story below to view the YouTube video. Transcripts of the video may be found in the Appendix section of this document.

After viewing/reading the student experiences, use the guided questions below to discuss how Golden West College can create a more equitable and inclusive campus for students of diverse gender and sexuality identities.

#### **Guided Discussion Questions:**

1. What experiences do the interviews discuss?
2. How are the experiences similar or different to GWC?
3. Do you feel that you have the ability and/or knowledge to implement solutions for these experiences at GWC?
  - a. If yes, how can you help create more equitable spaces at the college?
  - b. If no, what additional training or resources do you think you might need to help create equitable spaces at the college?

*Group 1: Students on Inclusion in the Curriculum*

[Allan on the curriculum](#)

[Caitlin on queer-inclusive classes](#)

## *Group 2: Transgender and Non-Binary Student Voices*

[Cass on misgendering](#)

[Ciel on pronouns in the classroom](#)

## *Group 3: Students on Race, Culture, and Queerness*

[Trajan on being out as gay](#)

[Zoë on Asian American queer history](#)

## *Group 4: Neurodiverse and Disabled Student Voices*

[Allan on queerness and autism](#)

[Dale on disability and queerness](#)

## *Group 5: Students on Diverse Gender Identities and Community*

[Thao on coming out](#)

[Maria on representation](#)

[Gaby on queer community](#)

Each group should plan on taking 5 minutes to review the videos/transcripts, and then 10 minutes to review the guided discussion questions. Each group should be prepared to share their conversation with the entire group as we share out and collectively discuss strategies for making GWC a more inclusive space for gender and sexuality diverse individuals.

## **Coming This Fall**

Level I Safe Zone Training! We are excited to announce Safe Zone: Level I for GWC employees and students. Level I will cover the basics. We will discuss topics including:

“What is a pronoun and why is it important? Is it a political statement?”

“Why is it important for me to respect the affirmed names of students and employees at GWC?”

“What *is* a Safe Zone and how can I help create it at GWC?”

There will be two separate trainings: a Level I for employees and a Level I for students so that all participants have a safe and comfortable environment to engage with the content and ask any questions (and yes, we mean *any* questions!)



## Transcripts for Videos:

### [Allan on the curriculum:](#)

I have taken some courses that were very difficult to endure because they were very poorly informed in my human sexuality class. So I had the experience where I had missed the class prior and I showed up and the gal next to me was like, "Oh, man, the last class was like, perfect. You'd be really good at like talking about it. I'd like to have heard what you'd said." I responded to this peer with, "Well, what was it about?" And she said, "Wow, I mean, I don't know, you just, you'd be really good at explaining it. And it was just, it was perfect. Man, you'd be able to talk about it really well." And I said, "Well, what is it? I mean, I'm so curious now." And she said, "I don't know. You weren't there to explain it." And then there were other students who agreed with that sentiment. It's just incredibly stressful having to be a guide for the professor and having to be respectful in correcting their misinformation.

### [Caitlin on queer-inclusive classes:](#)

Really the only class that I have taken that has had any significant focus on queerness is the queer studies class. I just, I don't really recall queerness being a part of any of my other classes. Potentially it was mentioned, you know, maybe in like a more US history focus and then it was, you know, Stonewall or something. It certainly was an afterthought, much like the mention of anything Hawaiian. I thought it would be a really great opportunity to learn more about things that I felt I had already kind of like tapped into. But in an academic sense, the knowledge not just being on like the internet or social media, but in a sort of classroom setting might have some resources that would not have been readily available to me in an Instagram story. In terms of importance, I think that really, it's kind of the same, the same kind of argument. I think that's where of an intersection there, right? Of in particular being Kanaka Maoli and, you know, and queer, what that does as a student, right? And the way in which I feel underrepresented as a native Hawaiian, and the excitement that I would receive from that representation, intentional, authentic representation. You know, I think it would be applicable to the queerness as well, you know, of, you know, just feeling seen. And I think that is so important. I think that's really what people need and want the most, is to feel seen and heard and known. I think that's a deep, a deep want.

### [Cass on misgendering](#)

It is frustrating. I put in a lot of work both in my presentation and how I carry myself and how I interact with people to make it clear that I am not a man and a lot of people just don't understand or they're not willing to. A lot of people just sort of let their brains roll and go on autopilot and will say whatever pronoun they think is easiest. Coworkers who will just misgender me because it's easier or because they have known me prior to my transition and they're still adjusting. And classmates and professors who have misgendered me 'cause maybe there's one or two days where I go to class and I don't spend a bunch of time putting on a full face of makeup and wearing a dress and wearing heels and carrying myself with an heir of more femininity. And it can be frustrating to feel like I don't do those things. I can't be treated the way that I want to be treated. It's a like a little ping of discomfort in your spine, in your gut. It's this feeling that whoever you're talking to doesn't care enough about the conversation that you're having or about the interaction or about you to make a small conscious effort to just use a word that fits what you want them to use. And that's something that I have come to live with. It's not something I'm happy about or something that I think is reasonable, but it is something that happens. But it's not the occasional misgenderings that are frustrating, it's the consistency of it. It's having coworkers who have known I've been out for a year and a half and still make mistakes. It's having teachers who have actively apologized for mis-gendering me and then have done it again two weeks later. It's speaking up in the middle of conversation to correct somebody when they say the wrong thing and then have them say the wrong thing in the next sentence. It's the compiling of all of those things over a period of time that becomes dysphoric and hurtful and anxiety inducing.

### [Ciel on pronouns in the classroom](#)

I think probably I would like that, because then it would tell me that this is like a safe place for queer people and like, visibly my classmates, like a handful them do like visibly queer. So like it'll make me feel like, assured that I'm in a place where I'm not gonna be discriminated against in some way, or fashion form. It's like, I don't know, like I guess a sense of solidarity and security.

### [Trajan on being out as gay](#)

Yes, I believe that people like to see men act as men, or if you see women, women act as women. So being a gay male, they don't wanna see the feminine sides of myself, they wanna see me present as masculine and as a straight male, straight as a male would.

So when I present in that way, people, I feel as though I'm taken more seriously and I'm trusted faster as well, even if they know I'm gay, if I present that way, people are more comfortable with it and I feel that expectation. Yeah, I think about optics is a lot being gay and being Black as well. I know I'm biracial, but I'm six-four, I'm obviously African American, and there'll be expectations about who I, or let's say preconceived notions, about both of those identities. So I think about optics actually a little bit too much, yeah, a little bit too much. Kind of stops you from living in the moment, I'm thinking about how I will be perceived, think about my message a lot, and then sometimes when you overthink things, things go awry. So I wish I could be more in the moment, but sometimes when you're doing certain work you feel like you don't have that privilege. Sometimes you don't have that privilege, but sometimes you do, so I'm really working with, like, just understanding that better, and I'm sure I'll be working with that for a little bit longer, not a lot longer.

#### [Zoë on Asian American queer history](#)

I'm thinking about like Filipino history, specifically, when it comes to gender. There is in the Filipino, at least in Tagalog, the language that I speak, the word for gay is bakla, and it comes as a contraction of the word for boy and girl, babae and lalaki. And prior to colonization, like, it was a gender category, and it was something that was celebrated. And I know that that's not an entirely limited to the Philippines, that like other cultures around the world had different ideas of gender, which I think is also like, I mean, it could be so important to somebody who's trying to figure out their gender, I think, too. I think that could be another marriage of having that in their curriculum just so that somebody knows that who they are, what they identify as, what they want to be, has existed before, long before in history.

#### [Allan on queerness and autism](#)

A couple years ago when I was 18 and I was just about to move out, I had just recently reconnected with the same therapist that I had been seeing from 14 to about 15. And she said, well, Allan, I didn't wanna bring this up because you were going through a lot and you were trying to transition. And something like an autism diagnosis can be very difficult when you're trying to transition, but you are autistic. And it's not a bad thing. Don't worry. And I was very relieved to hear that because I had spent a lot of time talking to my parents about how I think I'm different or autistic, specifically, and just being shut down consistently every single time. When you're talking about things defined by social

experiences, and then you have a neuro-, like a cognitive disorder that informs how you experience social experiences, they tend to be intertwined. My gender identity is impacted by how I do and don't relate to how others experience gender. And I think sexuality plays a part in that as well. I don't have sexual attraction, so I never really got the indicator of, hey, you find that person hot. There's your sexuality. There's your romantic orientation. So I kind of had to figure out who I experienced romantic feelings for and how that's informed. Is it informed by their presentation? Is it informed by, um, that I've gotten to know them for a long time? That I haven't? I do know that there is a large percentage of autistic people who are aromantic and asexual. I don't know how tied those are, but I'll get back to you in six years when I have a degree.

### [Dale on disability and queerness](#)

So I'm currently diagnosed with C-PTSD. I used to have really, really bad episodes, which would look like me dissociating to the point where I wasn't present. I was in my past, and I couldn't really differentiate between what reality was and what my hallucinations were. I used to have really severe episodes, and it used to be really bad. Like I couldn't hold a job or remember to do self-care. The physical symptoms I'm going through took up all of my energy and all of my time, like it was the only priority, like I couldn't prioritize anything else because it was the only thing I was doing. I was just trying to survive. This professor went out of their way to give me extra space, extra time, not just extensions on assignments, but actually sitting down with me, going through my assignments that I hadn't turned in and letting me know if they were meeting the requirements to be turned in late. Because they were being turned in late, she wanted me to, the professor wanted me to get the best score I could get on those assignments. So instead of grading them after submission, the professor would review them before I submitted them, and I ended up passing with a C in that course, even though it was like certain failure, because they didn't give up on me. I am unfortunately of the thorough belief that if I'd have known and come out sooner, that I might not have my current diagnosis, 'cause a lot of the trauma I experienced wasn't from direct abuse. It was from indirect neglect and a lack of acceptance in my family life. A lot of the abuse I experienced was psychological, me being forced to present as a gender I'm not for many, many years, the physical symptoms of dysphoria that I experienced, that for most of my experience, my family and people around me would tell me that it's not that big of a deal, to just live through it.

### [Thao on coming out](#)

I told some of my friends who I already knew was out just to like really close friends. If anyone asked, I would respond, but overall I wouldn't like publicly disclose it in a way. And I don't think I'll ever get the chance to tell my family. I'm an only child in my family and I am also the only person who knows a lot of English or is going to college, and they have a lot of hopes for my future. There's a lot of expectations that are placed by me as I'm an only child to an immigrant family, and it's a lot of things like good grades or expected to do very well to act a certain way. I kind of have like a little responsibility to my family, and if they want me to live in a way that they don't feel uncomfortable with, then I might have to. But I'm hoping in the future I can also go a little more in my own way away. I think because I, when you grow up in like an Asian family, especially when it's like first generation, a lot of us know that there is no way that you can do a lot of things or express yourself fully around your parents because they tend to be very strict, very cultural, very traditional, and they want you, like for women, they want you to grow up, they want you to get married to a man and then have kids, have grandchildren for them. They want you to have a really good job, high paying job, security. You just learn that you can't ever fully be yourself around your family and you just come to terms with it and it becomes part of yourself and you end up having two identities, one outside of your family and one with your family.

### [Maria on representation](#)

I think I would have benefited from the like a young age you know like or even in high school even in like early on in college just knowing like and seeing queer transfer my teenage people, people of color are just you know all of the above like thriving and like in a university setting and like teaching like a class I think that representation maybe this early on would have given me like a lot of Hope and like courage to just like be out and like accepting of myself and also like I feel like other students too they'd would have respected it a little bit more too because they have like this like person of authority who identifies in those ways and and they respect that person why wouldn't they respect like other students who also identify that way because it's like setting an example you know so yeah I would say it's very important.



### Gaby on queer community

I would say the queer community is definitely like my second family um in the sense of the the community that I've made in Sacramento it's the people that I feel like know me most authentically and that accepts me for for how I am and see me for how I am and don't try to put me in a box who I am and who I'm going to be is kind of left up to me and that's like how it should be and it's definitely like saved me um in the sense that I've had a very religious um environment growing up and very conflict conservative and growing up learning that like everything that I am is not not okay the queer Community has just kind of been my my other home of like a understanding other people's similar experiences and not only experiencing like frustration and loss and like discrimination and all of these things and understanding that that also like celebrating where we all are like be able to just experience like queer Joy together.