

DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University agnes.queensu.ca

You Ain't "Scared of Me"... You Hate Me with Dr Tommy Mayberry

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SPEAKERS

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KEYWORDS

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TRANSCRIPT

Dale Lackeyram: Great. Good afternoon, everyone. I have to do the glasses on, glasses off thing here. See at a distance versus read. Thank you, and welcome to today's chat. Let's get started and acknowledge that the Agnes and Queens University resides in Ka'tarohkwi, a place where there is clay or a place where there is limestone. We are situated within the territories of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Huron-Wendat peoples. And this land is also home to many members of the Metis nation. We are located at the mouths of many rivers and lakes which makes these territories subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, a covenant between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, The Three Fires Confederacy (the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomie), and other Allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources in and around the Great Lakes. How we enact reconciliation and peace grows from these truths as we strive to establish, repair, and strengthen our relationships. My name is Dale Lackeyram. I am an uninvited guest on these lands afforded the opportunity to live and work here at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Queen's University. The collaboration with our dear co-conspirators at the Agnes is one that we cherish. And from my perspective our relationship is perhaps best encapsulated in bell hooks' quote from "Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope", "Dominating culture has tried to keep us afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences, this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community." The relationship with the Agnes and the CTL is committed to anti-racism and work and addressing systemic institutional biases. It is a relationship that dares to co-create spaces that intentionally include the wisdom and voices that are so... that we are so desperately in need of. We are fortunate today to bring together several members of our community, including you all, and a special guest, colleague, and friend, Dr Tommy Mayberry who is described in their bio as one of the biggest fears of our contemporary cis-het, Conservative, white, Western world. Tommy is the inaugural director at the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Innovation at Yorkville University, and the Toronto Film School. They are co-editor with Lindsay Bryde of the award winning "RuPedagogies of Realness: Essays on Teaching and Learning with RuPaul's Drag Race." They've published their work in numerous journals and edited volumes including Discourse and Writing, Journal of Microbiology and Biology Education, Visual Pedagogies, the International Journal of Žižek Studies, and Sexy Blake. They have performed and presented their

scholarship and research findings nationally and internationally in places such as Oxford, Washington DC, Tokyo, and Honolulu. Let's meet some of our guests today and I'm going to ask some of these fine folks seated upfront here first to introduce themselves. I'm going to start with Zak. And your mics are just behind you.

Even though these prints are different from what you might be used to seeing in a self-portrait, they're still considered self-portraits because they're a unique representation of the artist! *I as artifact* is a great example of how self-portraits can represent how you see yourself, and how you want to be seen by the world.

Zakary-Georges Gagné: [Foreign language spoken]. Hello, everyone. My name is Zak or ZakaryGeorges. I use she and they pronouns. I am an artist. I am a community builder, an advocate and I'm of mixed heritage. And so, my dad is Cree from the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi up in Eeyou Istchee, which is in the north of Quebec. And my mom is Francoquebecois, and so am I in many ways. And I have roots in [inaudible] Quebec City, Montreal City as well. And I've been in Cataraqi for about three and a half years at this point. And so, I hold relationships to these different lens' some being my community and my ancestors' lens, some being my community ancestors' lens, as well. And here at Kingston-Cataraqi has been a beautiful land to develop both relationships to the water, more specifically, the lake is pretty much 50% of why I moved here, having access to the beautiful water for both joy, playfulness, and ceremonies as well. And I'm very thankful to also be developing relationships with folks from the community. It's really kept me and I'm happy to see some familiar faces amongst all of you today. I'm honoured to be amongst these amazing panelists today. So, chi-miigwech.

Dale Lackeyram: Thank you. Jermaine?

Jermaine Marshall: Good morning, or afternoon by this point actually. Time... social construct. Good afternoon, everyone. My name's Jermaine Marshall. He/they pronouns. My official title here at Queens is the Inclusion and Anti-Racism Advisor. But I think of myself more so as a storyteller, as a Black and Queer Jamaican immigrant to Canada. A lot of what I've done all my life is share insights, reflections and the experiences that I've had growing up. As Trevor Noah says in his autobiography, "Born a Crime", so to speak 'in a place where your identity is criminality before you've even formed your first thought.' I am really excited to be here with panelists and folks who have shared experiences of navigating a world that wasn't designed for us, but in ways that reimagines, recreates, and redesigns. I can't wait for today's conversation, discussions to learn from, and to learn with everyone. When I'm not doing my formal work, I do perform. I'm a freeform vocalist. Minor bit of a dancer. I can move a little bit, you know, do the shuffle. Then I like to throw words together into what sometimes people call poetry. Thank you.

Dale Lackeyram: Thanks, Jermaine. Marwa?

Marwa: Hello everyone. My name is Marwa. Pronouns, they/them. I'm a lover of lists, so I'm going to go through my identity through a list. I am a newcomer settler who was created through colonial and exploitative violence in the SWANA region. I'm a Queer Muslim representing person. I'm a student here at Queen's who has both the privilege of learning from amazing teachers and mentors and scholars, but also the responsibility of being with an institution that has caused harm and damage in the community. My interest in -- I've been a community organizer for two years and my interest is in creating third spaces where people can exist and be and share with each other their

resources and also learn that they're not alone, because as amazing spaces these are and amazing conversations we're having, unfortunately, not many people know they exist. And, yeah, that's moi.

Dale Lackeyram: Thank you. Hill?

Hill Werth: I never know how to hold these things [chuckle].

Unidentified Audience Member: Close.

[Laughter]

Hill Werth: Hi. My name is Hill Werth. My pronouns are they/them. I'm an artist and activist. Some of you might have seen my artwork, 'Hate Has No Home,' in public spaces. I am also a Queen's student here, former pro athlete, and educator.

Dale Lackeyram: Thanks Hill. Kel?

Kel Martin: Hello. My name is Kel. I use they/he pronouns. I am an uninvited settler on these lands. I currently am the Sexual and Gender Diversity Advisor at Queens Yellow House which is a student centre for equity and inclusion at Queen's, where I work closely with students to design and deliver programming for 2SLGBTQ+ students, as well as offer non-clinical advising to help navigate the institution. Outside of my Queen's roles, I am the chair of Trans Family Kingston which is a local grassroots support group. Mainly we're operating with a mutual aid framework in Kingston, and we've been operating for over a decade now. Thank you.

Dale Lackeyram: Lee?

Dr Lee Airton: Hi, folks. My name is Lee. I'm an assistant professor in the Faculty of Education here at Queens. And most of my – oh, my pronouns are they/them. And most of my work is about trying to help institutions understand that they're not ready for us. They're not ready for trans people. For most Queer people. And my biggest, greatest joy is supporting young Queer and trans people who want to be teachers. Our profession thinks it's ready, wants to be, isn't yet [chuckle]. So, I am very honoured to be here and to learn from each of you. Thank you so much for having me.

Dr Tommy Mayberry: Alright, so yes. My name is Dr Tommy Mayberry, and my pronouns are he/she/and they. So, any of those pronouns series with respect are how you can refer to me. And I'm the founding Director of the inaugural Centre for Teaching Excellence and Innovation at Yorkville University and Toronto Film School. I am going to speak for about 20 minutes and then I'm going to pass things over to my peers and colleagues here for some of their reactions, responses, ideas, and words before we move together into our Q&A and discussion with you all. Thank you for inviting me and for having me here in Kingston with you all. As Dale mentioned, there are printout copies, as well as if you need one, there is a link to a Google Doc with my speaking notes for accessibility, so that you can follow along... save them for later. Resist scribbling down everything I'm saying if that's your style, and just listen in and engage as best fits with your style.

I'm humbled and honoured to be here with you all today. I would also like to begin – I would also to begin to invite us all to consider our racialized bodies in and across places and spaces we occupy and move through in the world. I'm a raced, white, Queer and trans-feminine settler scholar, and my raced white body affords me incredible privilege to be able to walk – I am able-bodied –

across university and college campuses in full drag as the true authentic whole person self as the academic drag queen whom I am. I owe this power and privilege to innumerable ancestors and tranecestors before me. And as part of my raced white body acknowledgement today, I want to name and honour three of these non-white tranecestors who ignited a riot on June 28th and 29th in Greenwich Village in New York in 1969 that paved the way for moving the needle on intersectional equity. And I say moving the needle here and not liberation, because we are so not there yet as a society. And we are literally moving backward violently in, and across North America, in this regard too. Marsha P. Johnson was a Black trans woman, drag queen, homeless person, and Queer and trans activist and heroine who is popularly remembered for throwing a brick at the raiding police officers that helped ignite the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969. Stormé DeLavarie was a bi-racial transmasculine drag king performer, and Queer, and trans activist who is popularly remembered for throwing a punch at the raiding cops and igniting this riot. And Sylvia Rivera was a Latinx trans woman, drag queen, homeless person, and Queer and trans activist who is remembered for throwing a wine bottle at the raiding police and adding to this riotous ignition. Who are your ancestors that have paved the way for you to not just be where you are today, but who you are today? As the whole person, the passively or actively raced person you are today?

In my raced white body acknowledgement just now, I noted that we are literally moving backward violently in, and across North America, in regards to Queer and trans liberation. And in my abstract for this talk with the Agnes and Queen's UCTL I noted that fears and phobias might not be so much what is happening across these lands now known as North America. Did you know that the words homosexuality and transsexuality -- transsexuality being the former word in use for the word transgender today-- first entered the English language as medical terminology for distinct pathologies, actual mental illnesses that folks who today would be Queer and trans were literally diagnosed with -- diagnosed with this affliction, this disease and then set on a treatment path to be cured? Yeah, that happened in the 1890s and then the 1940s. And through moments like Stonewall in the 1960s, neither the first nor the last, but a key iconic one, Queer and trans rights have been fought for and died for. And across the decades, these rights -- essentially just the right to live, to exist -- have not stopped being fought back against by those in positions of power, privilege and majority dominance.

As a raced white scholar, I take a critical lens to my work and specifically a race-critical one, guided by critical race theory. And critical race theory or CRT, diametrically contrary to public perception, does not teach hate. The critical race theory, CRT movement, is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power. It is an academic discipline --yes -- and unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. As Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic write, quote, "CRT tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it. Setting out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better." End quote. And even though it is called critical race theory, it has continued to grow out of and together with other equity denied academic and activist relationships including as Delgado and Stefancic fabulously note quote unquote, "Feisty LGBT interest groups." So, my talk today as is all my teaching, research, and leadership work is, CRT informed. And one of my key teachers in CRT is Dr Aja Y. Martinez who teaches and researches with the method and genre of critical race counterstory. So that as she writes, quote, "The personal can represent the collective." End quote. And even more powerfully, that quote, "This collective voice can speak for a group but can also represent varying diverse, divergent viewpoints within groups." End quote.

My talk this afternoon started with me reflecting on Stonewall, the historical event for why the month of June each year is celebrated as Pride month. This June, 2024, will be the 55th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, and my talk will continue with following Dr Aja and her work,

personal voices that can represent the collective in helping us all to better understand, and I hope combat, today's rising drag-phobia and transphobia; today's rising hate – through an intersectional lens that centers experiential knowledges and unique voices of colour, as well as advances social justice and is accessible. Stonewall was 1969. Less than a decade later, 1978, California State Senator John Brigg's referendum in opposition to gay rights hits. As I explore in my chapter in *Visual Pedagogies*, Brian Goldfarb talking specifically about this 1978 referendum, explains that to be openly gay and a teacher was to be selling one's sexual identity to students via a pedagogical performance insofar as it teaches sexual behaviour. Goldfarb goes on to tell us what the Brigg's Initiative implied was that any public signifying of, or participation in gay culture, within or outside the classroom, explicitly sexual or not, constituted pedagogical advocacy, solicitation, or even imposition of gay culture in the classroom and beyond. This era of the late 1970s, Goldfarb recounts, subscribe to, quote, "fantasies that a gay educator might be so powerfully seductive, that students would be recruited into gay culture through his or her presence alone," end quote. This is fear mongering. Let's be sure. Hate-filled and heterosexist. Yet this dreaded magnetism of the premillennium zeitgeist, the parents of today's neofascist feud, is today a badge of honour – a badge of honour that is increasingly becoming a target.

Flash forward another decade, and across the pond to the UK, back to the colonial homeland of both Canada and of the United States, and this fear mongering continues with more dire consequences. As non-binary British drag queen, singer, actor, and first runner-up on the premier season of RuPaul's *Drag Race UK*, Divina de Campo shared while on the show, "Growing up was really hard. Like growing up for everyone is hard, but then you add on being gay, and it's just a whole other level, particularly for the time that I grew up in." Divina was born in 1984, and she says that Section 28, which Maggie, Margaret Thatcher, put in, quote "Did a lot of damage to people like me, because it meant that, you know, a lot of teachers felt like they couldn't step in when bullying occurred," end quote. Section 28, Divina explains in a talking head interview on the show, enacted 1988 up to about 2000, it stops the promotion of homosexuality. Now for most teachers, Divina continues, that meant that it could not even be spoken about, so, it just erases gay people completely. There was no discussion around it, so you have no understanding that as a gay person there can be a different way of living, because you never get told that – that never happens. "Whereas for a straight person," Divina says, "you are constantly fed 'you are correct. You are right. You are valid.'" You don't get that as a gay person. Divina then very powerfully states "whether you believe something or not does not stop the fact that I am here. I live."

Today –like literally today – like right now – today – we are seeing an eerily similar political project back in the United States with Florida's Don't Say Gay bill, and now law, that forbids curricular instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity. And this is bleeding profusely into this nation now-called Canada, too. So, what happens when these beliefs, as Divina points out, become policies, laws and legislation? What happens when the curricular instruction, i.e., the forbidding of the inclusion of anything but binary, straight sexuality and of binary, cisgender gender identity and expression in the K to 12, not just Floridian, but also American, and then our Canadian schooling systems? What happens when that bleeds out co and extra-curricularly to make drag performers and trans people reading children's books to kids in public libraries – makes that illegal.

When asked on the *Daily Show* by guest host Dulce Sloan about all these anti-drag bills that they're starting to pass, and to what extent this is affecting where you can work, native Hawaiian trans woman, drag queen, and beauty pageant competitor Sasha Colby replied just a few months ago, quote, "I'm a little nervous to go to Tennessee, and I do have a booking there in like a month or so. I mean, technically walking, like standing foot down there, I'm breaking the law for some reason," end quote. Sasha continues, "This is what these anti-drag bills are made for. I can't get out of drag. I'm a trans woman. I'm going to be breaking the law just being me. And that's what they want

because they're trying to get trans people controlled." Making it very, very clear, Sasha then explicitly states, quote, "The wording is, if you're in an article of clothing that's not your assigned birth article of clothing. That's how they can roundabout say that drag is illegal. And then the real thing is being trans is illegal," end quote. When public pedagogies are infiltrated and affected by Christo-fascist beliefs, Divina de Campo might not be wrong, but might become wrong. There is a very real, very present risk, that terrifyingly, something someone believes can, does, and will stop the fact that we are here. And, yes, even, or especially, stop the fact that we live. That we live! That we are able to live, and that we continue to live, and be able to live.

Before I close and pass my provocations over to my esteemed colleagues, and now friends, for bringing their words and voices powerfully together with mine, I want to share a personal story that happened to me recently, and I've got the receipts to prove it. You know, picture or it didn't happen. Right? So, scrolling through my Facebook feed a while ago, I came across a video shared by one of the best friends of my sister-in-law, whom I first met during the wedding planning phases, and then the in-person events at my brother's wedding just a couple years ago. Now I'm very open about who and how I am, and not going to lie, I literally thought all of my brother's then-fiancé's girlfriends absolutely loved me and found me fabulous. I mean, they legit told me so.

[Chuckles]

So anyway, I'm distracting myself and perhaps all of us. The video that this best friend of my now sister-in-law shared was one of those ranting, whiny, cis head alt-right, uber-misogynistic, white bros screaming hateful, harmful vitriol to anyone who would listen. And I was shocked to see this video popping up so casually in my scrolling, like legit wrecking my quiet morning scrolling. Hurt, yes, but also angry and then confused – and then more angry, seeing the comments on the shared video with whitely 'amens,' and 'yes, a hundred percent.' And I know -- I know never to feed the trolls on social media, so I didn't, but I also felt that something was off here. The best friend of my sister-in-law did not appear to me to have even the slightest homophobic, drag-phobic, or transphobic bone in her body. And yet, and yet, here was this video gaining likes and praise for its hate. If I commented on it something like, "what a hateful, harmful video," – I didn't want to embarrass her in case she didn't realize what this video was actually promoting. But I also didn't want more and more folks seeing this, uncritically, and adopting this hate.

So, I opened Facebook Messenger, started a new message to the best friend of my sister-in-law. And here's how that went... "Hi, best friend of my now sister-in-law. I was just scrolling through Facebook and the video you shared of Andrew Tate's hateful, harmful, homophobic, and transphobic rant came up... I didn't want to post anything in the comments there that might upset you or your friends who are agreeing with that, and I also didn't want to just report it and remove you from my friends because, from now sister-in-law's wedding planning, wedding itself and afterwards, I got no sense at all that this would be something or is something you support and want to amplify. So, I thought that DMing you to see and chat more privately might be okay. Please let me know what you think on this, and on that video, and I hope you're doing well."

So that was at 10:06 AM. 10:31 AM; "No, no, no, no... The only thing I don't want is it to be shown to my small children when they're too young to understand it. I'm all for what makes people happy. Please don't take any offence to it. I'm not that kind of person." I immediately replied because I'm amped and pissed, but I'm trying to keep my cool. So, I say, "And by it, you mean that queer and trans people – like me – exist. Like you don't want your kids to know that I exist, that I am who and how I am, and that I am happy and can have love in my life too?" A few seconds of those three dots that indicate she's composing a message, and then, "I'm not here to fight. It's my kids and I can raise them as I please. I feel like we are being targeted just like you. We can all just live our lives

the way we want to. I do not want transgender introduced to my five-year-old child in school. I don't want them asking me questions, 'why is he dressed as a girl?' No, I don't. So, I don't know why we can't just keep to ourselves – leave the children alone! They don't need to be confused on sexuality at an elementary school age. I am not here to fight about it. Drag is totally fine. I'm not against it."

My turn for three dots to show up on her screen before I hit enter on the following. "That's fine." – actually, I think, yeah... here – "That's fine, best friend of my now sister-in-law. If you as a parent do not have the capacity or the loving heart to be able to answer your own children's questions about queer people and trans people, and even more so if you think that there is something wrong or age inappropriate about queer and trans people existing and going on with their lives trying to be okay and happy being who they are, then you are, I'm so sorry to say, exactly that kind of person who you are claiming not to be, because it is very easy to explain and to teach love and acceptance to 5-year-old children. They actually are born loving and have this capacity to accept difference right from the start. And I am totally here to fight, because queer and trans people are literally killing ourselves, and being killed every single day because of these hateful and misguided beliefs including the ones you have about not wanting your children to know queer and trans people exist, and to think they will be confused and harmed by us."

Here, I didn't even see the three dots warning of her next response, because I was still typing mine, but she snuck in – classically – "I'm at a birthday party, I'm not replying anymore," just moments before I hit enter on, "And no, you most certainly are not being targeted just like I am, just like my partner is, and just queer and trans people are. You are not being arrested for who you are. You are not contemplating suicide because of who you are. You are enjoying your life at a birthday party, and not living in fear of being beaten or killed." And that was the end of that.

In her black Queer town hall with Bob the Drag Queen from July 2022, a year and a half ago, American trans woman, drag queen, actress, and activist Peppermint said something about the impact of a similar video to the one of my Facebook exchange with similarly dangerous, innocent, uncritical viewings and takings-in of it. "I think there's a lot of well-meaning people who would watch this type of video," Peppermint says, "who can hear this argument, or an argument like leave the children alone, and say well that sounds reasonable, and then leave it at that. And then suddenly you're Bette Midler saying dat-da-dat-dada... Or Macy Grey, same thing. And I think that's the type of thinking that leads someone to make a post like that." The type of thinking that leads someone to make a post like that. It's a rhetorical strategy on the part of the oppressors to strike fear across our publics, to instigate, to incept phobias into public culture. This fear is real. Leave the children alone. Perhaps hate is too strong, unfair, or misapplied to folks like the best friend of my sister-in-law, though it certainly isn't for the ones in power and abusing that power. But uncritical fear turns into and becomes hate, and those of us who call hate out – we become the problem.

I'll close, close, now with the words of one of my favourite drag artists whom I recently met in person at the conference on College Composition and Communications in Chicago last year, The Vixen – #TheVixenWasRight. "Everybody's telling me how I should react," The Vixen famously once said, "but nobody's telling the oppressors how to act. Be nice, calm down, don't yell. Be more professional. You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar... blah, blah, blah." But as Dr Aja always says, "We must fight story with story. More to the point," she continues, "we must fight tall tales, myths, and presuppositions with the truth only stories can reveal." After all, I follow not just in Dr Aja's CRT footsteps, but in The Vixen's too, from how she entered the workroom on season 10 of RuPaul's Drag Race once upon a time with saying quote unquote, "I'm just here to fight." I too am just here to fight. And to keep fighting. So, in languages we speak across this nation now-called Canada. I'd like to say Miigwech, merci, Nya:weh, thank you, and merci. And I'm looking forward to our conversations together.

[Applause]

Dale Lackeyram: So, I want to turn it over to maybe our panelists first, or the folks that are joining us on stage to get some of your reactions. There have been some provocations, casted. Let me give you the first roundup. How are you feeling about this and what are your responses?

Jermaine Marshall: Excellent, excellent, you know, talk. Excellent speech. I really enjoyed it. I think one of the things that's really fascinating that you highlighted is how common those kinds of backand-forth social media interactions and surprises are. You think you know somebody, and then you find out oh, they've posted something, or they've commented something, and you engage them. And in my experience, the conversation almost never goes well, but it's always very enlightening.

So, it was really interesting that component of your presentation, and then those words on 'everyone's always telling me how to react, but not others how to act.' I found that really quite poignant.

Dale Lackeyram: Thanks, Jermaine. Anyone else want to weigh in?

Jermaine Marshall: Can I ask a question?

Dr Tommy Mayberry: I would say yes, absolutely.

[Laughter]

Jermaine Marshall: While folks are percolating, I do have a question, I suppose. How does that ripple out for you? You know, that conversation with the best friend of the – you know, clearly a knit social community. How does that moment, that interaction ripple out for you, if you don't mind sort of sharing, and how do you navigate those ripples?

Dr Tommy Mayberry: Yep. Thank you. That's a great question. So, slides or screenshots I didn't show were when I actually Facebook messaged my now sister-in-law, and was like – I'm about to cause a scene. Just so you know, in case your friend messages you with this as well.

And so, there was a conversation I had in Facebook Messenger with my sister-in-law, who absolutely was criticizing her best friend -- she's from New Brunswick originally -- so criticizing New Brunswick and New Brunswick politics and pieces, mentioning that she has those frustration pieces. She then also went and yelled at the friend and then the friend took the video down, and so the ripples out, I always say to folks that like those moments or those conversations – well for me the calling-outs. I understand there are moments to call people in. But for me, it's more that I'm here to fight. So, it's more of the calling-out, but it's also finding my allies and accomplices like my sister-in-law, to be like I'm about to cause a scene, this shit isn't okay.

And then she also was able to help move things and the video came down, right. I mean – so sorry – it's not like we got Andrew Tate's video scrubbed from the internet, that didn't happen. But it came down off of, you know, the best friend of my sister-in-law who then had those other folks watching it and saying, 'a hundred percent we need to get this out of the school.' So tiny little kind of ripples of that, for me, I need the community to help me with some of those pieces, and find those ones who can, perhaps, differently, say 'get that off,' or 'delete that' kind of pieces for it. So, I hope that kind of speaks to your question.

Zakary-Georges Gagné: Miigwech, Tommy, for your presentation. I really enjoyed it. And when I read the title of your presentation for the first time, You Ain't Scared of Me, You Hate Me, that really spoke to me. Specifically, the shift between fear and hate.

Fear is a feeling that we've probably all felt even towards our own Queerness at one point, and maybe we've even experienced some level of hate towards ourselves. And so, I think those two words are words that we know. They're emotions that we know very well, and sometimes a little too intimately. And I remember one time that highlighted the importance of word choices, specifically around talking about the current climate, the current political climate towards Queer, Trans people, drag queens, drag artists, in general, was at a conference last September that I helped organize. And the title was combating and tied to 2SLGBTQI+Hate. And it was gathering 200 leaders from across Turtle Island.

And in that conference, a Two-Spirit and community leader from Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance which is on the east coast, in Mi'kmaq territory, went on a panel and talked about his perspective on the choice 'Combating' in the title. That for us we understand what we mean when we mean 'combat' because we are fighting. You said you're here to fight, you're still here to fight. I wish we didn't have to fight. We're here to fight, unfortunately. And we understand what that means, but the choices of words are very important when doing solidarity building work. When we're doing awareness building work, combating is putting one person against another. It is creating this dichotomy, in this contrast that we cannot work together, and one has to conquer. Which, that idea, that mindset is still quite embedded in the theory of discovery, the doctrine of discovery, and making sure that one person has the win, one person has the power. And that John, what's his name — John R. Sylliboy, and he was saying, I think we have to talk about how to bring those people in, more than making them feel like we're against them.

Combating is a powerful word. It mobilizes people because we understand the urgency of what needs to be done, what needs to happen, and how we are part of it. We're not just sitting and watching. We're all impacted by how the things will go down. But, making it seem as if we are fighting against them. I understand why we're using that language, because I feel anger, and anger and shame really destroys all compassion, empathy, and sense of humanity often. But the choice of words, of combating versus building awareness, building solidarity, creating radically safer spaces for us -- all those language versus hate and fear are very important. And I have not used homophobia or transphobia in probably a year, because that is not what we're dealing with, I feel. So, chi-miigwech for your presentation and the title, the beautiful title, that you wrote.

Jermaine Marshall: Sorry. But do jump in. Don't let me — [inaudible]. Okay, thank you. My mother says I talk too much. No -- her ghost, well, she's still alive, but her presence is in the back of my head right now — oh, you're talking too much.

But I don't remember who I heard say this where, you know, language is one of the worst tools for communication but it's the best that we have. And we live in this, and this is something that I'm constantly just thinking about too much. We're in this age of global connection where you know, where long gone are the days where — I'm in Jamaica and I could only speak with people around me. Now I can be using Jamaican lingo and ways of speaking with the assumption that everyone's understanding what I'm meaning with people, internationally. You know, a video that takes place in let's say, the context of this room could go into the context of an entirely different space, and the meaning that people attach to words becomes radically different. And I oftentimes think that a lot of times when I go to conferences, or even when I have conversations increasingly, the first question that I ask is oftentimes what do you mean when you say that? Or what do you mean by that? What

do you mean when you're — [chuckle] my friends are so frustrated with me because we'll spend a good hour before we get into the actual conversation just defining how we're using terms.

But I think in a big way that's what your kind of speaking to, is the double-edged sword of our understanding of terms and how we use them in, let's say, spaces that are designed for that versus how people will look in and they'll take it and run with it. Because a lot of times, people are more invested in running with their understanding, than developing understanding. And I think our education system, for one, is one that builds upon this idea of they're having to be one uniform understanding, even though we live in an English language of synonyms, and close approximations, and metaphors. And I, oftentimes, wonder, there's this great piece that — is it Susan Sontag does around how metaphor affects your understanding of reality? And I think one of the biggest changes that I'm really hoping to see, and I'm trying to contribute to myself, is helping people become more comfortable with the nebulous nature of meaning and becoming more context-specific when they're talking about something, how they're talking about something, and kind of being in the moment of that conversation. Because I think that fear and hate oftentimes manifests when they're projecting outward of the conversation. So, it's not about you, me, and what we're talking about now. It's this idea of if you quote unquote "win" in this conversation, it means all these terrible things for the entire world. And I'm like when did we start catastrophizing so goddamn much? Yeah, just something that you stoked in my brain. I don't know if this resonates with anyone else on the panel in their own experiences or conversations.

[Inaudible]

Kel Martin: So, I do a lot of work in the community with gender diverse folks both at Queens and outside of Queens in the wider community. And this past year, was involved with offering community care at two protests. And one of the things that really surprised me was the difference between what we were seeing advertised in media and the expectation of what that space would be, versus the reality and the complexity of what actually unfolded. And for me that was protest number two. You know, we expected it to be combative. We expected it to be violent. There were community members who showed up with milk expecting to be maced. And what we actually got was a music dance party. [Laughter from the audience]. We had community members who showed up who made soup and served soup to the community. We had a tent with people who were making crafts, and being creative, and expressing themselves making signs, and talking to each other and offering community care. There was a lot of love. There was a lot of joy.

It was also a very difficult space, and there was a lot of anger, and there was a lot of frustration, and a lot of complex emotions. But for me, it was very interesting how the reality on the ground of what we actually encountered was so different than what we were seeing in media and what we were expecting, which was like a face-off of angry people. When really it was, I think the second protest was like a four to one ratio. There was a group of maybe 10, yeah, 10 to one – 10 to one of maybe 10 angry protesters with a very large sign versus the Queer and Trans positive folks who, there were probably like what a hundred —?

Dr Lee Airton: A hundred fifty.

Kel Martin: A hundred fifty of us. And none of that was captured in the media and neither was the building up to and the aftercare that happened in these communities with people showing up, events that came out afterwards that built community. Groups that popped up, meetings, informal meetups, and just the complexity and depth of what was happening in the community. That just wasn't captured. So, like I think that when we're talking about like language, and like that failure

there, like I do think a bit about how what we're being inundated with through media is sometimes not really the truth of what we're actually experiencing.

Dr Lee Airton: I was there. I counted the numbers [laughing]. No problem. I made the playlist. It was a pretty great dance party. I actually, at our very celebratory counter protest, I actually felt like a bit of a bad activist because our protest was too celebratory. Like our protest was like a celebration of our community, that Kel and everyone up here and people contribute to. And I actually had this feeling of we're not, we're not, we're like, I don't think it's real, but I did have a self-consciousness of are we being activisty enough? Which is very interesting because I think that's how you can feel when what you're doing is more care of each other and less messaging and speaking back.

And I actually wanted to share a little bit of my ambivalence around the word hate as a strategy, because I do a lot of chatting with people who don't know a whole lot about Queerness and Transness. I do a lot of stuff like that, and I often feel like what I'm trying to do and I'm going with the message of hate, is I'm almost trying to force them to identify the way, what they're bringing, with the concept of hatred and the feeling of hate. And they will never do that. Like they will never come to associate the deeply held feelings they have with hatred. And one of the exercises that I've tried to do as a person who does engage with folks who don't know much about this stuff, is to try to feel my way into what it must be like to be told that you are hating, when you fundamentally do not identify that you are hating. That is not what the experience is for you, of having thoughts and feelings about me, and about Trans people, about whatever, about kids, yada, whatever it is that you kind of hitched your little wagon to. It isn't hate. I've come to believe that isn't where a lot of folks are coming from.

And so, a wonderful movement and a wonderful discourse has come up that I think is wonderful, and I support it. But I also think that the hate messaging feels like it's for me. Like the hate messaging is telling me that people who have these stunning posters that Hill has made that I love seeing. I know what that's sending to me. And I know that that's conveying a certain view or a certain welcome to me, but the irony of that messaging is that it's not for me. So, in my work I think a lot about what is our language trying to do, and who is the audience for our message.

And I want us, I think I guess, I want my fellow people to think about how the hate messaging is something we do for us. But I do not believe it is pedagogical or it is conversational. And I don't think it has to be. Absolutely, it does not have to be. I think it's enough that if people need to feel that, they feel it. But I don't — I am unconvinced that, that it is a political tool. If politics is making, is encouraging, and scaffolding change, I'm not sure it is. I don't know. But I guess that's my provocation. I'm very provocative in here today. I guess that's my provocation. I'm tremendously grateful for what — everything that I'm learning from each of you. So, thank you.

Jermaine Marshall: I'm wondering if I can open another context to the question of hate and fear. I don't know if I mentioned it at some point. I grew up in a very sort of religious Jamaican Pentecostal which I always say I'm glad I grew up Pentecostal not Catholic. Because at least I could run up and down and scream, and sing and jump [chuckles] whereas otherwise I would've had to be very stationary. And I, you know, I hold a lot of just love for folks who went through that and are able to reconcile the pain of silence, because at least — but I digress.

And one of the things that I've been navigating a lot, I've done a few conversations with the United Church of Canada around things like anti-racism and faith, sexual identity and faith. And it's something that my colleagues and my friends that we talk a lot about how, one — and it jumped into my mind because of that piece around too young to understand it, and I'm like well, you think kids can understand the complex nature of a metaphysical being called quote unquote "God" from their three years old, but you think that — and that's something that you can't see, that's the intangible —

you think they can understand that. But people who are there in front of them, that you think is too complex. Okay, that's an interesting contradiction.

A lot of my pedagogical approach is trying to help people to approach contradictions in the spirit of openness, as opposed to fear and anxiety which is what they're taught to do. So that's the first piece. And then secondly, I think religions, oftentimes, instill and create an anxious relationship to the idea of you as a good person because it becomes attached to the very salvation of your soul. And so, as you were saying in the minds of people who they're like oh no, but I don't hate anyone because I'm supposed to love my neighbour. But then, again, how have they been taught that? Have they been taught a true nature of what love looks like? That love sometimes requires unlearning what you've learnt, and what you understand, et cetera. Are they clinging to this idea that at no point in time can I ever be in sin?

And so have we created this just really pervasive system of belief that is, I think it has some good parts to some ways that it can help with activism and all that stuff, you know, Black civil rights movement, and how it was organized through a lot of Christian organizations. But at the same time how does it act as a kind of a cognitive block for folks because they're so fixated on being saved, and sanctified and not sinful that it prevents them from actually being those things. Sorry, not really a question at the end of that, but I'm curious if folks have had interactions with faith or religious, in their own lives, in their own work, that has maybe highlighted some of the ways in which it acts as either a barrier to, or maybe even a way forward because I know Marwa, as you mentioned before Queer Muslims, so I was really interested in that.

Marwa: By the way thank you for the opening [laughter].

Honestly, my brain since seeing the text messages from Tommy, my brain has been going through this, what does would this text message look like with one of my relatives, which I've had. And how would it look like in Arabic? And I want to emphasize that in because I love in a lot of these spaces, we emphasize these of language and how language is different for each other. Try having the same language as someone from a completely different culture, from a completely different country, who had their life experiences that we'll never experience. So, like things that they have conclusions, and things they come up with that we will just, unfortunately, never relate to, bar similar limitations of the human condition.

So, coming, when it comes to faith, that is the tricky part because whenever I've had them, had conversations as a Queer Muslim, with folks, it's always this defensiveness because, at least from upon an immigrant perspective, Queerness kind of has been beautifully accepted in society but, unfortunately, has been placed right next to whiteness. So, a lot of perspectives, our Queer Liberation is being seen to a certain extent as another attempt by Western society to erase Muslim culture, Muslim culture... the umbrella term of that; values, family, love, care... because they've been taught by how society has treated them, that their values, what they believe in is kind of like oppositional so, therefore, it should take the side to white Queer love.

So, honestly, the process of figuring out language that works for us, figuring out how to even start the conversation with the other side, and I love – even though I loved what happened during the protest and seeing the support and community, it was heartbreaking because I can look at the other side and I understand why they brought their children, I understand why they're there, and I understand the thought process behind doing these signs. And I was kind of mildly proud because they're finally standing up for themselves, even though on the whole, completely, horrible, wrong side. So, from then and even now, and even through my circles we're figuring out how to start the conversation, what language to use.

So, one friend suggested it – relating Queerness to values of Islamic; that mutual aid, the importance of us as a collective, our duty towards each other – especially stepping away from our

capitalistic values and materialistic values and more like, what I own is not really mine but is for the community, for the survival of community. It's a gift and a blessing that I should share with my community. We're still working on the language part, but I am finding using these values and approaching people using these values is really helping a lot, kinda bridge these gaps, and just create some sort of peace, or some form of I am with you. I care about you, I cherish you. Um...yeah... thoughts.

Jermaine Marshall: Thanks so much for that.

Dr Lee Airton: May I follow up on that? Is that okay? Um, Marwa, I'm so grateful to you because I'm a school person, so I talk to people who are in schools and whatnot about things. I'm being so vague and weird, but I do a lot of gender-related work in schools, and in school boards. And the – a story is emerging to Queer and Trans movements of a lot of brown kids, Muslim kids, Sikh kids across Canada who share something of themselves, their family, their faith, their cultures, what they have to say about these things, about gender and sexuality in class, and then they are descended upon with racism. And completely the sort of discourse of acceptance of gender and sexual diversity becomes a way to enact racism and xenophobia.

And I am quite, I'm quite profoundly seized by that problem, because I don't, I find it to be quite, I find it to be the emergency that has, as I understand it, speaking of folks who are in community and coalition with especially Muslim communities in Montreal, that families do feel extremely alienated from what's happening at school. And their children are experiencing racism and Islamophobia for literally saying anything in conversations about gender and sexuality. And children will seize on whatever is power to enact on each other. So, this, so even our liberation can be used to enact different kinds of oppression on other people and that happens among children in school.

So, something that I think is really promising is the relationships that have already existed. For example, Montreal is a really beautiful place to deal with the fact that, especially the September protests were white, like 90% white people and 90% people of colour facing off against each other. So, in Montreal, they had a movement where a lot of Queer and Trans people came out and did a lot of organizing against the Religious Symbols Bill. So, against the quote unquote “niqab ban,” which is also a hijab ban. So, a hijab ban and a kippah ban, and all these things. So public servants not being able to have religious symbols. And so, a lot of Queer and Trans groups and individuals came out and did a lot of work to show solidarity against the Islamophobia, and racism, and xenophobia of that bill in Quebec.

And so, in Montreal, these protests, a lot of Queer and Trans people, and allies, were facing off against people they already knew, against communities where they'd already formed solidarity. And so, some beautiful things are happening there where the relationships are already there. So now they're having conversations about why are you over there? Why are we over here? What has gone wrong and what is happening? So, I'm really looking forward to– and I don't see because of the context of Quebec and that bill, I don't– we aren't as well set up to have those conversations in other places in Canada. But for me, the next thing is anyone who already has those pre-existing relationships to begin doing that kind of work, because that is where we are going to see what is unique about Canada in this neofascistic era, is how well we do that coalition building work. Because it is that– that is the moment. I think that's the current issue, the current challenge we have. For what it's worth.

Jermaine Marshall: I have a thought, and then a question actually because you had mentioned 45 minutes ago that you were a former athlete. So, I was like oh, I'm going to bookmark that because I

have questions about, I'm curious about your own experience in that world. About how are people understanding the language, how are they using the language, all that good stuff. So, I'm prefacing it now so you can percolate maybe a thought or two, and then I'm going to say something just on the thread that's just really being unraveled here.

So, there are two memories I want to share. Content warning for one. When I was quite young at a family prayer meeting, I remember very vividly my mother, you know, out of nowhere, started to pray for God to kill her kids before they became gay. And so that became one of the fundamental formings of my 'oh, wait a minute, what? I thought we were loving people. Hold on, let me open the Bible again because something here isn't making sense to me.' So, from a really young age again, just my introduction to the cognitive dissonance of faith and what it claims to be love and hate, and how it really warps, I think, oftentimes, believers, because it creates this anxiety in them where she was more afraid of this specter of my kids becoming gay than she was about me dying. And so, again, just really interesting.

But then when we start to talk about racism and colonialism, and how, you know, for a lot of Caribbean nations, is the reasons why we are so religious is because of a colonial process, is because it was literally beaten into the culture. There's a lot of, again, like I said, generational trauma around fear and anxious attachment to this idea of salvation. And in one of the— my favourite actual interview of 2023, I highly recommend this, if you ever have a minute, the conversation between Trevor Noah and Jay Shetty. Beautiful. And there was a point in it where Trevor Noah who he grew up in South Africa, 'Born A Crime', really enjoyed his autobiography. But he says that he learnt that when people aren't safe, when people are stuck in survival mode, it is almost impossible for them to recognize love. And when he said it, I had to pause and I had to think, hmm, because a lot of times. The conversations with my own community, racialized community, it so quickly gets sidetracked — oh, but poverty, and there are other more important issues. And it's almost like they don't have the space sometimes to hold those things that they've decided oh, well, it's just a white thing. You're just bringing in your white thing. Because again they're so alienated, and they're trying to prioritize, and they're being told what they should prioritize, and they're in survival mode.

And so, in the coalition-building piece, I remember a few years ago, a colleague of mine who was on a— I'm going to try to make this as anonymous as humanly possible — they were on a committee for a international coalition that would've involved some Jamaican educational institutions. Yeah, there we go, that's anonymous [laughter]. And one of the persons on the committee who was Canadian, a Canadian Queer person, they said that oh, they're having a lot of reservations about this coalition because of Queerphobia in Jamaica. And I was like hmm... interesting. Because here is this coalition that could have helped to — you know, that is helping it, it went through, helping to increase education, access to education, resources and supports. But somebody is resistant to it because of this idea of oh, but Jamaica's so homophobic. What will it mean if we coalition with them? And so, they said, you know, Jermaine, I know your work. I know the things you do. Could you go do the things you do and have a conversation with this person? I said I'd be happy to. And we have this conversation where you know how the language that I use and the ways that I framed it to say, well, why is Jamaica the way it is? And what do you view as the methodology to getting it from where it is now to where it is, where you hope it will be. Are you still thinking about it in a kind of, well, why don't they do what America did? Or why don't they do what Canada did when they're not those countries, or they haven't been impacted by those things? Or is there a way that by providing support, by providing resources, by coalition building, they can start to recognize that you are here to help, you are here to support, and maybe this whole gender diversity thing isn't an attack on their culture, but rather trying to highlight the voices of people in that culture who are trying to have this conversation and lack those resources.

But, again, interesting to me that conversation needed to be had with someone in a position of power to determine these things. And I think one of the things that I've really learnt from even just the first couple waves of feminism, the first couple waves of Queer theory, et cetera, is even the people who mean well have a lot of those fear, anxious attack—again, this idea of oh, but they don't look exactly like us or they're not—this idea of coming out being you have to come out in a parade, and there aren't subtle ways you can come out when you're in a racialized community. So, again, coalition building, needing to tackle those difficult conversations with people who don't think they're part of the problem, but in some ways, they are part of the problem. And that being said, I'm so curious to hear more about the realm, of what level did you play at? Tell me more. Say stuff.

[Chuckle]

Dr Lee Airton: [Inaudible]

Hill Werth: Wait, Lee, did you say something?

Dr Lee Airton: I said, say stuff, Hill.

Hill Werth: [Chuckle] So well, give me a guiding question here.

Jermaine Marshall: Start off, what did you play? You know —?

Hill Werth: So, I ran track at UCLA, and then I was on the US National Bobsled team. So, I grew up, born and raised in the States. And moved here in 2021 to marry my wife. So, I'm not Canadian [chuckle].

Jermaine Marshall: It's alright.

Hill Werth: I know, you'll forgive me.

Jermaine Marshall: And do you find, how do you find, I guess, if those are conversations that you found cropping up around sexuality and gender identity, what did those conversations look like?

Hill Werth: Well, growing up, I mean I grew up in the Midwest, so I grew up in a very conservative family. If you were to walk in my parents' house right now there's Trump flags in the garage and guns on the counter. So, I'm not really a product of my environment. And I grew up in a household of professional athletes.

So, my first experience exploring myself, being around anyone that was Queer, was when I moved to LA. I was like oh, there's a whole world outside of cornfields. So, I think it took me a lot longer to get— you know, I was just having a conversation with my wife the other night. I was like I'm 36. I started transitioning when I was 35. I was like what took me so long?

And I think that kind of goes back to what you were talking about with that text thread. Like that's— I wish that somebody would've had conversations with me when I was younger. Because I don't, it was so hard getting to this point in my life. I never learnt anything in school about myself. I just think that if there was that type of representation and visibility growing up, it wouldn't have been this hard to get where I was at.

And on top of that, if you want to bring in the whole sports mentality and growing up in a family of professional athletes, the problematic things that are said and that toxic masculinity— there

was just, it just took a lot of unconditioning to get me out of— not that I ever thought like that but it was just when you grow up hearing those things, and you know it's wrong, but you can't say anything —

Jermaine Marshall: Articulate it.

Hill Werth: — because you're in an environment that isn't safe to stick up for yourself. It just, I think it just took me a long time to get where I was at.

Dale Lackeyram: So, thanks for that. So much help. I wanted to try and get our audience a little more into the conversation here. Because I know these folks up here have a lot to say to each other. Questions from the audience for any of these folks up front, or thoughts, or comments? Yes.

Audience Member: I think I could probably project I'm just so thankful for the conversation you shared with us about the people that you've engaged with about the issue of transphobia. I feel like it comes up so often with so many different issues about what you choose to walk away from, and what you choose to engage in. I feel like there's both the sides of it that, as an ally, I really do need to show up as an ally and not always leave it up to trans and Queer folks, or like I'm a Queer folk, but anyway — leave it up to trans folks to do all the heavy lifting. It's still personal for me, but not quite so personal. So, there's part of it.

And it's nice to hear that even just those conversations that you found allyship in that also, like people backing you up to have those conversations. And do always hold the hope in my heart. One time I was an anti-vaxxer, and then somebody had a conversation with me nicely on the internet and completely changed my life. Just from that one conversation even though it was like years and years of my own beliefs and research on it that had got me to that point, that one person just brought a couple points to me that were like huh— so I like to think that there's something about all the issues that you choose to engage in that maybe for that one person, you'll be the one that was like, actually, this is wrong because of this reason, and then you'll change their life forever. So, anyway, thank you for sharing that with us. It's really nice reminder to keep showing up and thanks for showing up too.

Unidentified Audience Member: Thanks so much.

Dale Lackeyram: Thanks so much. Additional questions? — Yes.

Audience Member: Thanks. Thank you for your talk and for all of your perspectives. It's been really lovely. I have a 6-year-old gender-fluid child. And I'm going to get emotional because it's hard to navigate this. I'm super proud of them, but I don't want to mess up and I want to make the world as accepting and loving and wonderful for them as possible. So, no, it's all good. I just— so, okay.

So, my question actually is about, you've talked about like how there's these reasons for hope like you show up at a protest, and you're overwhelmingly in the majority. And we see so much progress in all these ways and understanding and awareness of all these different identities and acceptance of that. But also, we see policies and hate, or phobias, or whatever that are so scary. So, I guess my question is, or not a question, but I'd love to hear you talk about where you see this going. What we can do — like the main points.

And also, I'm interested so in my trying to advocate for my kid, one of the things I get from a lot of people who would consider themselves allies, sorry this is not as emotional as I'm making out to be by my tone of voice, is people saying like 'oh no, I'm all for it. But like there are too many kids these days who are all of a sudden trans.' Like this idea that this is new and just popular, and not real

for people. And you're talking about like they don't want their kids to be exposed to it. Well, these are their kids. These are just people in society who need to be represented, right. And hear about themselves, as they're growing up and recognize that they're just a person who is just as deserving of being seen as anybody else.

So, I guess I'd love to hear what you would say to those people if you were in my position on how to get them on board if they're trying to be an ally but have these views that aren't super helpful. And, particularly, in a case where often it's with a 6-year-old in the other room, so I'm trying to create more allies within their community. Thanks

Dale Lackeyram: Folks up front.

Dr Lee Airton: First of all, I just want to tell you something that isn't my own thought. It's just research. The number one protective factor for your child is you. So pretty much, your child will face adversity. They will have challenges with advocating for their pronouns, and people having thoughts about them that they don't like. But the number one thing that will support them is you. So, when I have a parent of a trans or gender-fluid or non-binary kid who's wondering what you can do, you can do you, and you can take care of yourself, because for whomever that applies, you having affirming home environment and an affirming parent is THE protective factor. There is nothing better than that. So, you get to relax because your kid's going to be okay.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Dr Lee Airton: You're welcome. And this is not like me being at church. This is literally the research. [Laughing] So like it's a weird moment because it's just literally true. So, the other things that a trans kid will go through will be challenging because of society and because of all these things that many of us we have survived. Glory, hallelujah. Hello.

[Laughter]

So, you got this in me. I don't know what's going on, Jermaine, yeah.

Audience Member: [Inaudible]

Dr Lee Airton: You're welcome. [Inaudible]. So, if you are affirming offering that environment for your child, and they get to rest when they come home, the rest is gravy. And very few of us ever had anything like that. So, there you go.

Audience Member: [Inaudible]

Dr Lee Airton: Yeah. And I like to say to everyone as a parent like you are your kids' wellbeing, your mental health is their mental health. And I'm not just like pointing you for this. Like, of course. I like to offer that back especially to parents with trans kids and, if you want to have a conversation with someone who has that like 'oh, there are just so many of those and ra-ra-ra-ra,' like having that kind of thing, like that is not coming from hatred. It's legitimately coming from wondering and from having so little media literacy, and so little access to information that is accessible because our movements don't tend to speak to those people. Weirdly, that's my job. I tend to speak to those people. So, I do a lot of that stuff. We can talk about resources, but what I want to offer is one widget which is just simply, well, did you know that about 50 years ago, there were so few people who were left-handed?

[Chuckles from the audience]

It's incredible. The number of left-handed people has just increased exponentially and why? And I often find it may seem silly, but I often find instead telling them they have to be nice. And that's transphobic, and that's something hateful. And when people say that they're actually dehumanizing me, like that's – all can be true. But in those conversations, that person who generally typically isn't understanding themselves to be hateful, does actually need something as simple and as anodyne as that. So, I would say try that. And model for them, the wonderment. Yeah, I mean people do have that question. There are a lot more out trans people now. It's probably because it's possible, just like being left-handed. And that is something, indeed, we can say around somewhat of any age. So, for what it's worth, I hope that's useful. You're welcome.

Dale Lackeyram: Thanks, Lee.

Hill Werth: I don't have any research to back up like Lee. [Laughter] But [chuckle] -- soon.

Dr Lee Airton: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

Hill Werth: But I just wanted to say I think just by you being here, like you're batting a hundred, sorry sports analogies.

Dr Lee Airton: Oh my gosh.

Hill Werth: But I think like, like little me would've died to have a parent like that that is going to lectures and educating themselves so they can be the best parent for their kid. So don't discredit yourself at all.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Unidentified Speaker: That's just great.

Dale Lackeyram: Marwa?

Marwa: I was actually having a conversation about this with a friend about her parents. We're both youngish. We both are figuring out what our relationship with our parents going to be look like in the future. Spoiler alert, our parents are not exactly trans-friendly. But she, they were saying I'm surprised that my parents always told me I can be whatever I want to be, but they never told me that was conditional. So, I guess in the conversation if someone ever asks you just say I'm committing to that. I'm letting them be whatever they want to be, and I'm going to be there for them and support them. And, honestly, I would love if my parents even did like a [inaudible] of that.

The other element is part of my story of how I started living myself as trans and non-binary is that we right now live in our age where there is media and the word trans is coming more, more the word non-binary and other many words beautiful words to describe how people be, are coming out more popular. It's allowing people to feel comfortable expressing that part of their imagination of who they want to look like. I was reading this word article where they referenced that in the early days of grading many terms to describe trans people, one doctor said that there is probably going to be 43 million genders. And that kind of blew my mind, but at the same time, that seems ridiculous for a second, because how people vary, how cultures vary, how experiences shape us vary. Trans is just an umbrella word that makes us feel more accepted and more into the world. But we just

allowing our imagination to spur, we're allowing ourselves to be whoever we want to be of.
[Inaudible].

Dale Lackeyram: Zak? Oh, Tommy?

Dr Tommy Mayberry: Zak, I talked tons, you go.

Zakary-Georges Gagné: I wanted to highlight an organization that's based in Quebec. But they do bilingual work, and all of their reports and resources are available online. It's the LGBTQ Family Coalition of Quebec. And they're one of a kind. There's a couple organizations outside of Quebec doing work in English to gather parents, but they are the only organization that's kind of focusing on the family, both for conceiving Queer children and Queer fam – not Queer children but families in Queer context. And also, specifically how to support Queer trans youth amongst families. And I would really highlight that.

And I would love to speak at the hope piece that you mentioned as well. I think we– Tommy you spoke earlier about our trancesors. And I know that for me, I look upon lineage and generations of peoples behind me that stood as gender diverse even when those words did not exist in any way. And we had different languages and different words to call people like that. And we knew for a fact that those people were sacred. They were holding roles, they were leaders in their communities, they were healers in their communities. And your child will hold those roles. And I think you have it responsibly as a parent to let them know that they have a role. They have a belonging, they have a purpose on, in this community, in your family, in their community, whatever they go through.

And I would go back to one of our sacred teachings which is the seven grandparents teaching, the seven grandfathers, and the seven generations, as the work we're doing today– the panel, we're all talking, and blabbing our mouths off. It's not really for today, unfortunately, because today in five minutes, or I don't know how much time there's left, and we're going to stop talking, not much is going to change, unfortunately, from what we are. We're during these conversations where we're sharing our knowledge, we're sharing our experiences to make sure that seven generations down change can actually happen. And– it– sometimes talking about the seven generations teachings bring a nihilistic feelings, because we're saying we might not see the change today. And that's just a fact. And I think today we talked about two very big aspects of Queer activism which is the political, international, advocacy piece, and there's a community piece where we all have power to create the spaces we want to be in, and we want to be to invite people in. We all have the power to talk to someone. We all have the power to also set boundaries over what we engage with, and we don't engage with. And sometimes that big, advocacy, international piece is scary because we don't know how to approach it. We don't have the language to even enter those spaces. The doors are often closed as well because Queers are power hoarders as well, unfortunately. But we all have the power, the connections, to create a space that being your living room, that being the schools that we're in, or that being the rooms like the Agnes we're engaging in today.

Dr Tommy Mayberry: That was the perfect segue way actually with the local and the community because something I was thinking about as we were talking about parents and Queer children and representation, as Hill was talking about, you know, having grown up and not having seen anything. I really do think that is one of the guiding fears around drag story hours– is that it's this space that is uncontrollable to any of the powers that be, where we can bring diverse children's books, we can bring diverse bodies into the spaces, we can bring community together in a place like the Agnes, in a place like a library, in a place like Queen's University– where it's not the curriculum that can be

immediately controlled, or kiboshed, or protested against. It's not the house where you may not have those Queer children's books or those diverse children's books. I think up, you might know the study I'm citing actually. So now I'm panicking like I'm doing my comprehensive exam. [Audience laughter]. But I think up until 2018, children's books, like Children's Literature as a field, you were more likely to see non-human animals as the main characters than you were to see any racialized or any Queer or any other than like the nuclear family in that.

Dr Lee Airton: [Inaudible]

Dr Tommy Mayberry: Yes. Yes [chuckle]. And that is changing as more folks are writing these books. And as drag story hours bring them into public libraries, public spaces for that. And so, I think, if you are looking for your own, even if you are as like Hill said, someone who was fully grown, and you're still figuring things that we all are, we're all growing. So, go to them as an adult, and see drag performers, and listen to these stories that we didn't get read to when we were kids.

And then I'm working on an article on this right now, actually, about how those children's books are also adult pedagogy books, because so many of us hear these, and are like oh you're explaining it in a way like left-handedness, and it's not this cerebral activity where you're panicking and trying to convince somebody. You're actually just like look what happens when Julian puts on a mermaid tail and they're more happy. You know, like those kinds of pieces are so powerful and the community is there. And I think that is so much different necessarily than the grade three classroom, or home – and kind of those pieces for it. That's really where this kind of talk, and the Agnes's stuff, that's really where that kind of came from. But how do we do these in different spaces with community?

Dale Lackeyram: I'm — oh, go for it Jermaine.

Jermaine Marshall: I'll make this quick. I'm going to do a very mini, mini rant to parents and the culture of parenting. One of the more frustrating conversations I tend to have with my own parent is— and I love how you said it, as we navigate what being their children and them being our parents means, because it is a changing relationship from, just throughout life, even after life, for those who may have parents who are no longer with us. One of the most frustrating conversations I'll have with my mother is when she's like, 'I know you, this isn't you.' This fixed, convincing that before you went to Canada, you were fine. And all of a sudden, you know what happened, that this isn't you.

And one of the things that I've been really trying to find different ways to convey to her is, the me you know is the me I had to be to survive you. And I think that is something that, again, religious teachings, societal teachings, don't prepare a lot of us for as parents, as people in these family dynamics. For the reality that a family can be just as, if not more toxic and controlling than an abusive boss. Then, you know, a workplace environment where you have to lie about who you are, what you feel, et cetera, to survive. Because as a kid, they are your food, they are your shelter, they are your clothing. I was often threatened with homelessness if I wouldn't go to church. But there was -- you know, connecting in their mind that oh, if I do these things, can my child be authentic with me never occurs to them.

Which is why as they've been saying being a parent who listens, who allows your child to explore what they're exploring, to navigate themselves as they're becoming, is one of the biggest preventative measures in terms of mental ill health. Because Dr Gabor Mate has some really great writings on trauma, and when he looks at childhood trauma and how attachment and authenticity are two vital things for children to develop healthily – but when you have a really oppressive cis culture, heteronormative culture, they don't get too attached. They don't get authenticity because

attachment is conditional. It's all these things. So, giving children the space to become, recognizing their resilience, they're figuring things out, you know, a lot around gender affirming care is really vital. And not getting caught in the trap of thinking you are the only person who knows them and you have this kind of divine knowledge of your child because they are a whole person outside of you. So, when you're like 'oh, I don't want my children to be exposed to this,' your children may be this. Again, how are you thinking of them? Sorry I just wanted to get that out of the way.

Dale Lackeyram: Well, I'm going to change the dynamic in the remaining time that we have. Firstly, I want to say thank you very much to our folks up front for sharing and learning with. I've learnt so much, and I'm truly humbled, and thankful for your participation here today. And to you, the audience for participating in this dialogue. We're going to change the dialogue up.

I also want to say thank you very much to Ashley who has been here with us. [Applause] Thank you so much. And there's food. There's some beverages at the back. Let's get these folks off the stage, and you're interacting however you choose to interact, depending on the time that you have left. Thank you so much. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon.

[Applause]