

BREAKING the SILENCE



HONORING the VOICES of LGBTQ youth & ALLIES
IN Supporting OUR TEACHERS



DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOUNDATION

Films for the Future

Raising the Curtain
on LGBTQ+
Student Experiences

November 17, 2021
Virtual // 6 p.m.

PRESENTED BY
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About the Film

Breaking the Silence: Honoring the Voices of LGBTQ Youth and Allies in Supporting Our Teachers

Breaking the Silence: Honoring the Voices of LGBTQ Youth and Allies in Supporting Our Teachers highlights youth perspectives, and casts a spotlight on the nature and impact of the problems with respect to gender and sexual diversity in schools. Students locate the problem in bullying, homophobic language and silence around LGBTQ people and topics that pervade school spaces, and also in teachers' inaction. All film participants weigh in to explore teachers' roles and responsibilities and to provide recommendations that teachers should consider as they move toward creating safer, more affirming schools and classrooms.

About A Queer Endeavor

A Queer Endeavor is an initiative launched in the fall of 2014, with the goal of breaking the silence in communities across the US and beyond, while building networks of strength and solidarity along the way. A Queer Endeavor is housed in the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. It is co-founded and directed by Bethy Leonardi, PhD and Sara Staley, PhD. They are educators who identify as queer and have been deeply affected by the well-documented traumas that too many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer (LGBTQ) and gender-fluid youth experience at school. As teacher researchers, Dr. Leonardi and Dr. Staley have been deeply troubled by the historical silence that has too long pervaded topics and issues of gender and sexual diversity (GSD) (Bryan, 2012; Meyer, 2010) in schools of education. Disquieted by the implications of that silence, namely that generations of teachers continue to move into classrooms and schools sorely underprepared and unsupported to organize learning environments that are safer and more affirming of queer identities and experiences, they were motivated toward action. Even with foregrounding GSD-inclusive education (Meyer, Taylor, & Peter, 2014) in their work with teacher candidates at CU Boulder, Dr. Leonardi and Dr. Staley realized something was eluding them and they were falling short. They discovered it was youth perspective that was missing! Dr. Leonardi and Dr. Staley organized a community event in which a large group of teacher candidates, members of the school of education community, and local educators bore witness to a conversation shared among a group of 14 middle- and high-school and college-aged youth, some of whom identified as LGBTQ and others, as allies. These students shared their experiences navigating the contexts of schooling, where they felt the most safe and unsafe, seen and invisible, and what recommendations they had for teachers charged with the task of creating safer and more affirming classrooms. It was a powerful evening for all involved, and from that conversation, *Breaking the Silence* was born.

Connect with A Queer Endeavor:

aqueerendeavor.org

aqueerendeavor@colorado.edu

Thank You, Moderators

MODERATORS

Levi Arithson (he/him)

Levi is the Program Manager of LGBTQ+ Equity in Denver Public Schools and is a proud member of the Culture, Equity, and Leadership Team (CELT). Levi has an eclectic background with over 14 years of experience in education, theater, and the nonprofit world. Regardless of role, his work has always been rooted in dismantling unjust systems and a strong drive towards equity and inclusion for all. A transgender, genderqueer leader and learner, Levi proudly serves the DPS community as an accomplice, hub, and expert in the LGBTQ+ field.

Bethy Leonardi, PhD (she/her/hers)

Dr. Leonardi is an assistant professor of Educational Foundations, Policy, & Practice at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education. In her research, she focuses on the complex relationship between policy and practice, and specifically, policies that rub up against the status quo.

Sara Staley, PhD (she/her/hers)

Dr. Staley is an assistant professor in Teacher Learning, Research, and Practice at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education. Her research and community-based work are animated by deep commitments to teacher learning and how prospective and practicing teachers develop queer-inclusive and anti-oppressive classroom practices.

Together, Bethy and Sara co-founded and co-direct [A Queer Endeavor](#), a nationally recognized center for gender and sexual diversity in education. As an organization that works in partnership with districts and school communities, A Queer Endeavor's goal is to improve the physical safety, social-emotional health, and life and learning opportunities of LGBTQ+ students, families, and employees. While A Queer Endeavor focuses on gender and sexual diversity, they believe that moving toward liberation requires that they work along all lines of oppression, and are committed to doing that work.

Thank You, Student Panelists

STUDENT PANELISTS

Jaron (he/they/she)

Jaron has been a DPS student almost as long as they have been queer. Starting their journey at MSLA and finishing it this year at West High School, Jaron is a strong LGBTQ advocate. They discovered they were queer in eighth grade during a Math class, and then discovered they were Non Binary during a AP geography class - two classes that are odd places to discover you are queer. Currently, they are on the board and a leader of their schools Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), their recent project being a Closet Rummage to provide gender affirming clothing to LGBTQ students.

Sam (they/Sam)

Sam is a non-binary, genderqueer person who is a sophomore theater major at Denver School of the Arts. Sam has been passionate about social change related to gender identity and LGBTQ+ issues ever since 5th grade when Sam researched gender stereotypes for the school science fair. This sparked Sam's interest in continuing this type of activism! Some of the recent projects that Sam has participated in were writing a social justice show "One Heart United" with Rainbow Alley that was performed at Pride in 2021 and helping run the school's GSA Instagram. Sam is going to use this voice to advocate for all LGBTQ+ youth in Colorado to have safe spaces in schools and to be able to live their truths openly and proudly! Sam is excited to be able to use this platform to be able to make a change in Colorado!

Skye (she/her)

Skye is a tenth grade creative writing major currently attending Denver School of the Arts. Born and raised in Denver, she's been in DPS schools since preschool, instilling in her a commitment to fight for students' rights and help to build a more inclusive and equitable school district. As a queer, transgender woman, she has faced numerous struggles in the school system, often rooted in transphobia and outdated concepts of gender and sexuality. However, these struggles have only empowered her to fight for the rights of queer students. At her middle school, Skye was able to end the sex-based segregation of lunches and re-establish the school's Gender-Sexuality Alliance. Currently she is working to make the administration at her high school more aware of the struggles of transgender students, especially around the lack of gender neutral restrooms. After graduation, Skye hopes to attend college before getting involved in community organizing, public advocacy, and policymaking.

Thank You, Educator Panelists

EDUCATOR PANELISTS

Jen Derosby (she/her) | 6th Grade Series Teacher at Girls Athletic Leadership School

Jen is a queer educator who has been teaching for 20 years, spending the last 10 of those years at the Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS). Jen teaches a unique class offered by GALS called the GALS Series which offers students an opportunity to dig into finding their voice, exploring their identities, and learning about their development through building relationships and navigating middle school.

Sam Long (he/him) | Science Teacher at South High School

Sam is a Chinese-American-Canadian transgender man and high school science teacher. He cofounded the Colorado Transgender and Nonbinary Educators Network and the GenderInclusiveBiology.com.

Alicia Sierra (she/her/hers) | Electrical Department Contract Specialist at Denver Public Schools

Alicia is not only a Denver Native, but also a DPS alumni. Alicia is a contract specialist within DPS's Electrical Department in Facilities Maintenance, and has been with DPS for 2 years. She is a member of DPS LGBTQIA+ BELONG Group which helps identify the needs of DPS LGBTQIA+ students and staff. Alicia is also a member of One Colorado, which is the state's leading advocacy group dedicated to advancing equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Coloradans and their families.

Taha Zaffar (he/him/his) | Therapeutic Service Provider at Abraham Lincoln High School

Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Taha is a first-generation American, first-generation college student who grew up outside of Chicago who knows what it's like to struggle to fit in. He earned his Master's Degree in Social Work from Loyola University Chicago and has been serving Denver Public Schools since. Taha served as a traditional school social worker for the last five years (and Gender & Sexuality Alliance sponsor for four!) and is now serving students and families as a Therapeutic Service Provider at Abraham Lincoln High School. His new role is part of a pilot program the district launched during this year to increase equitable access to culturally-responsive therapeutic interventions for DPS students.

Statistics on School Climate for LGBTQ+ Students

In the film we see statistics shared. We have provided updated numbers so we can best understand what today's students are experiencing and how they feel. The following statistics are from Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) National Climate Survey.

2013

At school, on a frequent or often basis, 71.4% of LGBTQ students heard 'gay' in a negative way (e.g. 'that's so gay') and 64.5% heard other homophobic remarks

55.5% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 37.8% because of their gender expression

2019

At school, on a frequent or often basis, 75.6% of LGBTQ students heard 'gay' in a negative way (e.g., 'that's so gay') and 54.4% heard other homophobic remarks

59.1% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 42.5% because of their gender expression

Learn more from the [2019 GLSEN National Climate Survey](#).

Keep an eye out for 2021 results from the [National Climate Survey](#), coming soon.

LGBTQ+ in Denver Public Schools

- Denver Public Schools recognizes gender (identity), sexual orientation, and sex-assigned-at-birth as complex, contextual, highly individual, and rooted in lived experiences.
- Statement from DPS:
 - Transgender is a gender identity. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and other types of attraction (Asexual, Pansexual, Demisexual, Heterosexual etc.) are sexual orientations. Transgender is a catch-all word for any gender that is not cisgender, though not all non-cis people are transgender. Cisgender and Transgender students can be Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or other sexual orientations.
- DPS's Culture, Equity, and Leadership team offers a SKILLS training about LGBTQ+ issues for DPS employees. You can also reach out to LGBTQ+ Equity Program Manager levi_arithson@dpsk12.net to support learning.

Glossary

Ally ²	A member of the majority or dominant group who works to end oppression by recognizing their own privilege and supporting or advocating for the oppressed population. For example, a straight cisgender person who supports and stands up for the equality of LGBTQ people.
Bisexual ¹	Describes a person who is attracted to people who identify as male/men and female/women, and sometimes other genders.
Cisgender ¹	Describes a person whose gender corresponds to their assigned sex at birth. The opposite of Transgender.
Gay ¹	A term generally used to describe a person who identifies as male/man who is attracted to other people who identify as male/man.
Gender expression ¹	Refers to the manner in which a person represents or expresses gender to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, activities, voice or mannerisms.
Gender identity ¹	<p>A person's deeply held, innate, and internal experience of their gender. Also referred to as gender. Everyone has a gender identity, for some folks their gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth and for others it does not. All genders are valid and deserve respect.</p> <p>Not the same as sex assigned at birth or sexual orientation.</p> <p>Gender is a socially constructed concept of what it means to be a particular gender in a particular time and place.</p>
Homophobia ¹	Fear, prejudice, discrimination, hatred, dismissal, and/or mistrust of people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other sexual orientations that are not heterosexual.
Lesbian ¹	A term that generally describes a person who identifies as female/woman who is attracted to others who identify as female/woman.

Glossary

LGBTQ+ ¹	Acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning. The plus sign acknowledges any other identity that is not cisgender and heterosexual. For example: intersex, asexual, pansexual, agender, etc.
Pronouns ²	The pronoun or set of pronouns that a person would like others to call them by, when their proper name is not being used. Traditional include “she/her/hers” or “he/him/his”. Some people prefer gender neutral pronouns, such as “ze/hir/hirs,” “zie/zir/zirs,” “ey/em/eirs,” “per/per/pers,” “hu/hum/hus,” or “they/them/theirs.” Some people prefer no pronouns at all.
Transgender (or Trans) ¹	Describes a person whose gender does not correspond to their assigned sex at birth. The opposite of Cisgender.
Transphobia ¹	Fear, hatred, dismissal, and/or mistrust of transgender people. Transgender people often face prejudice, discrimination, harassment, violence, and sometimes death due to transphobia.
Queer ¹	<p>Queer describes a person who does not identify as cisgender and/or heterosexual.</p> <p>Some LGBTQ+ people have reclaimed this word as a powerful identity, while others find it offensive or derogatory.</p> <p>Queer can also be considered a verb. Queering as an action means to question what counts as “normal” and according to whom; to investigate what is considered “normal” to talk about in schools, for example, and what is not and to trouble those assumptions.</p>

¹ [Denver Public Schools LGBTQ+ Toolkit](#)

² [GLSEN Key Concepts and Terms](#)

³ [PFLAG National Glossary of Terms](#)

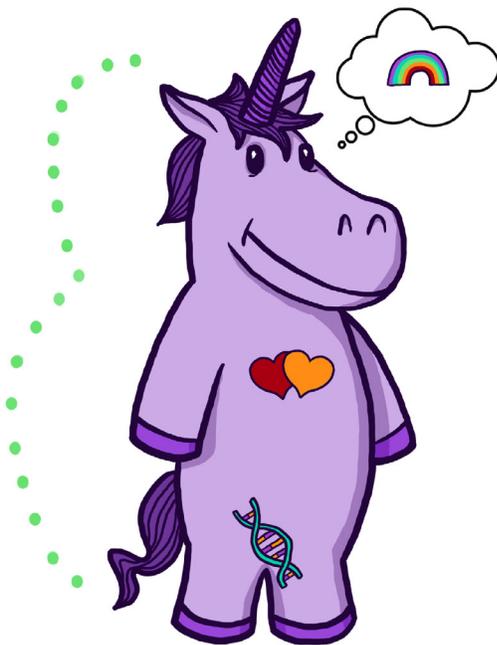
Click on the above links to find more helpful definitions.

More About Gender

Learn more about gender through Trans Student Educational Resources' (TSER) image below and [visit their website](http://www.transstudent.org/gender).

The Gender Unicorn

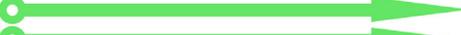
Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Gender Identity

-  Female/Woman/Girl
-  Male/Man/Boy
-  Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression

-  Feminine
-  Masculine
-  Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

-  Female
-  Male
-  Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to

-  Women
-  Men
-  Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

Additional Resources

Educators

- [Queering the Classroom](#)
 - A resource bank for educators seeking to disrupt heteronormativity, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, and endured harassment in educational spaces and beyond.
- [DPS supports of LGBTQ+ students](#)
 - Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) started with families. For more than 40 years, they have been providing peer-to-peer support, publications, toolkits, and other resources to make sure that the family members of people who are LGBTQ get the support they need in the way that best serves their needs. This allows families to then further support, affirm, and advocate on behalf of their LGBTQ loved ones.
- [WelcomingSchools.org](#)
 - A comprehensive bias-based bullying prevention program to provide LGBTQ+ and gender inclusive professional development training, lesson plans, booklists and resources specifically designed for educators and youth-serving professionals.

Families

- [PFLAG: Tips for Supporting LGBTQ Kids--and Yourself](#)
 - Some tips from PFLAG on how to support your child or loved one, while making sure that you also get the support you need.
- [PFLAG: Family](#)
 - PFLAG started with families. For more than 40 years, they have been providing peer-to-peer support, publications, toolkits, and other resources to make sure that the family members of people who are LGBTQ get the support they need in the way that best serves their needs. This allows families to then further support, affirm, and advocate on behalf of their LGBTQ loved ones.

Everyone

- [My Pronouns](#)
 - Visit here for resources on personal pronouns.
- [Gender Spectrum](#)
 - Gender Spectrum works to create gender sensitive and inclusive environments for all children and teens.
- [Trevor Project 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Mental Health](#)
 - The past year has been incredibly difficult for so many, but we also know that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youth have faced unique challenges. The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health sheds light on many of these challenges by capturing the experiences of nearly 35,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13-24 across the United States.
- [PFLAG Denver](#)
 - PFLAG Denver is one of nearly 500 chapters or contacts in the U.S. that belong to the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays national organization headquartered in Washington, DC.

As you watch the film...

1. What are the key messages?
2. Are there individuals, scenes, and images or lines that stand out for any particular reason?
3. What feelings does the film bring up? Was anything surprising to you?

Notes

Thank you, Sponsors

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Thank you for attending

Films for the Future, initially launched in 2018, is a DPS Foundation fundraising event that seeks to educate the community. It creates a space where we can shine light on relevant topics related to education while we strive to learn and grow together alongside topic experts so we can better understand and support today's issues. This event is a great example of highlighting two of our top core values, Equity and Students First.

If you want to continue supporting DPS Foundation's work around equity consider making a donation.

