

HU Queer Press

2.0



**A Non-Harding Sanctioned
Collaboration of Queer Students**

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**“FOR GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US A SPIRIT OF FEAR,
BUT OF POWER AND OF LOVE AND OF A SOUND
MIND.”** -2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (NKJV)



what in lack of representation

Introduction

Welcome to the newest edition of the Harding University Queer Press (HUQP). It has been seven years since the first edition was released, and for some readers, maybe you would have preferred it stay in 2011. For others, maybe this is the first time you've heard of it. But for some of us, it has been long overdue.

For me, the first time I heard of the Queer Press was early in high school, before I was out to myself, much less anyone else. I thought the idea was so cool, that students rose through anonymity to tell their stories, boldly and bravely, when so much was at stake. But like most things I was interested in during high school, the Queer Press faded from my mind, and was replaced by some other hot topic.

I first came out my senior year to a few close friends, all of them very accepting and loving (some of them were even in the closet themselves). At this point, I had already decided on Harding, and I honestly did not think that my sexuality would really be a source of tension between myself and others. It was my own little secret, who could it hurt?

I soon learned that it *would* hurt someone. Myself. Not because it was a part of me, but because others were so vehemently opposed to that part of me. Professors I respected and friends I made would make harsh jokes, or express their disgust at the “homosexual lifestyle” or the “homosexual agenda”, not even considering that one of those “homosexuals” was in their presence. I would laugh along with them, or maybe nod solemnly in agreement, but what I really wanted to do was to be anywhere else but there.

As the semesters passed, I began to become aware of other queer students on campus. I found friendship and community. I also started realizing that the more I became at peace with who I was, the harder it was for me to hold my tongue at the ignorant

and harsh remarks that would often come out of our mentors' and classmates' mouths. Blanket statements about "the homosexuals" rang in my ears and echoed down to my heart, from teachers who couldn't imagine that they could be insulting the very students in front of them. I was becoming bitter; I felt helpless and trapped with this secret that only few around me knew.

Recently, I have become more flippant about who knows and who doesn't. Though I try not to care, it's nerve-racking not knowing how those people around you truly feel. I told a classmate recently about my secret, and after our encounter, I was worrying. I thought, "I just really wish people understood, and I wish this wasn't something I had to worry about." Like lightning, the memory of the HUQP struck me. That's when I decided I *could* do something.

This edition of the HUQP is centered on fostering understanding between the University's queer and straight members.

To our fellow queer students – you are not alone.

To our fellow students questioning themselves – it's okay to question.

To our fellow straight students – please listen. Listen to our stories and know that we are your friends, roommates, classmates, and family members. We just want to be accepted and to not have to remain in the shadows.

To the faculty/staff/administration – this is not a paper written out of spite, hate, or anger. We want the University to be a more loving and accepting place, and in the interest of attendance, so do you.

To anyone and everyone – thank you for picking this up (or looking this up) and reading it. Nothing will ever change if we can't have an honest conversation, and we hope that this sparks many of them.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." -
Martin Luther King, Jr

A CONVERSATION WITH THE ORIGINAL HUQP

1. What were some of your fears starting this project?

“I was afraid of being outed publicly, and that my parents would know I had written for it. Which, if they know that, they’ve never acknowledged it to me. Maybe there was a small fear of getting kicked out or something, but I don’t think I ever really thought that would happen.”

“I was most worried about the backlash we might receive. We took a lot of precautions to protect our identities, but I was still worried about the possibility of being discovered and kicked out, or my mom getting fired if it was found out her daughter had done something this rebellious.”

“My biggest fear was administrative retaliation. When we were putting together the zine, I had left Harding short a few hours of graduating. I knew I wanted to eventually finish my degree somehow, and my fear was that if the administration ever got our names, there’d be some sort of consequence.”

“On a personal level, I harbored some deep fears about being outed as a result of my participation in the project. I was also concerned about the possibility of visible backlash against LGBTQ students coming from the student body, leading to an even more hostile climate.”

2. How was campus when you were there in respect to the LGBTQ community?

“Do you guys have this thing called Integrity Ministries? It started when I was there, and it was basically a “either pray the gay away, or do therapy to resolve it, or just be celibate” kind of thing, and they advertised this in chapel several times. So that was some inspiration for us.”

“I remember sitting in classes with teachers saying really homophobic things -- comparing us to pedophiles, etc. -- and it made me just instantly not care about that class anymore. I was always really put off by lectures or chapel speeches that treated LGBT people as this huge looming threat, just waiting to take over America and destroy religion forever.”

“It was a nightmare. It was the fear of coming out in high school, but amplified by 1000 because telling the wrong person could end you up in therapy for something that wasn’t wrong with you. There were supportive people, people I knew I could introduce my boyfriend to, but it took me so long to find them.”

“There was no such thing as a visible LGBTQ community when I was a student. LGBTQ issues were very rarely talked about; there was no acknowledgement from anyone that LGTBQ individuals existed at Harding. Speaking only for myself, it was quite an isolating climate.”

3. What was the kickback like after it was released?

“It was really, REALLY bizarre? Everywhere online people were talking about it and discussing it, but when I went to classes that week, it was never brought up. It was like it was okay for people to talk about it on Facebook, but not mention it in person. Harding held a seminar afterwards about how to treat gay people, and it was pretty much the same thing as usual -- hate the sin, love the sinner type stuff. What I really wanted was for Harding to reach out to us and ask what we would have liked to see them do in a seminar like that, rather than just go with the same message they’d been giving for ages.”

“When we released the zine, I was living with my fiancé in Georgia, so I didn’t especially feel a lot of the weight some of the others in our group did. The story did eventually make it to my grandparents, who referenced it after I came out to them about a month later. I don’t think they knew that I was involved.”

“Thankfully the responses were overwhelmingly supportive.”

4. Dr. Burks addressed the HUQP in chapel, what were your responses to that?

“I went with a couple of friends to meet with him, and it was all just anger. There was no attempt to understand. It was like he couldn’t even see the humanity in us, which was sad. He

has no love for people. Maybe he has that love for his own people, but that's not the kind of love that Harding is allegedly teaching people."

"That was such a fascinating event. On the one hand it was an appalling, but unsurprising, reminder of Harding's extreme neoconservative orientation - from his refusal to even speak the HUQP name aloud because of the word "queer", to the absurd claim about Harding not trying to control students' thinking while actively blocking the website from campus. On the other hand, I was ecstatic that the president of the university was forced to speak the words" gay" and "lesbian" in front of the entire student body."

5. How did it feel to have major media outlets pick up the story?

"I liked it. It helped me feel more protected, validated for sure. I think they recognized this was enough that they'd be turning people off. I liked that, and some of the media contacted us. I think it was the New York Times that called us, which was weird."

"On one hand, I was glad, because I felt like it put more pressure on Harding to address it, and offered us protection from being punished. On the other hand, I felt like it pulled away from what we really wanted to do. Instead of it being about communicating with students and faculty about how we felt and changes we'd like to see, it became about the whole country scrutinizing Harding. I think that made it feel like it was more of an attack on Harding than we meant it to be. I think the hardest part was that juggling the national attention really pulled away from the time and energy we could have used to engage with people on campus more. I would have loved to have been more focused on finding a way to do more for other LGBT students at Harding, like creating a network of some kind."

"Honestly, it felt horrible. When I was contacted to be a part of this group, my understanding was that we were hoping to spark a conversation on campus, to hold up a mirror to the Harding community. Instead, it became a much bigger story than many of us had prepared for. One professor who was mentioned received angry emails and threats from people who had likely never heard about Harding before then. I think by the story gaining national attention, we ended up doing more hurt than healing. I don't feel great about that. That said, I know that a group of LGBT students at Freed-Hardeman started blogging about their own experiences directly because our story ended up gaining some attention. I am happy for that."

"The media coverage felt like a massive form of validation for my experiences at Harding and desires for change. I was also relieved, knowing that state and national level media coverage would force Harding to respond, even if the response wasn't ideal."

6. What would you like to see change on campus in respect to LGBTQ policies?

"Allowing an official LGBT group, even if it off-campus, allowing that to thrive, and to advertise on campus so everyone can know it exists. When you're applying for housing or applying to Harding, they could have something that says, "I'm cool with LGBT people," so that you know you're going to be in a safe environment. If people don't feel safe in their dorm situation, they should feel safe to say that."

"I would love for there to be some way for staff and faculty to communicate with students that they are affirming, because I know a lot of faculty are, but can't express that without risking their jobs."

"I think Harding does a disservice to its student body by perpetuating the "Harding bubble" with outdated policies. Harding students should learn to be Christians in a 21st century environment."

"I believe a policy should be implemented that requires course curriculum to be based in the most up-to-date accepted scientific and professional literatures; thus, any course content related to LGBTQ populations and issues should not reflect unscientific, outdated and discriminatory information. Second, the Harding administration should publicly acknowledge and affirm the existence of LGBTQ students on campus and their right to an education free from discrimination and harassment, which includes the right to LGBTQ-affirming mental health services."

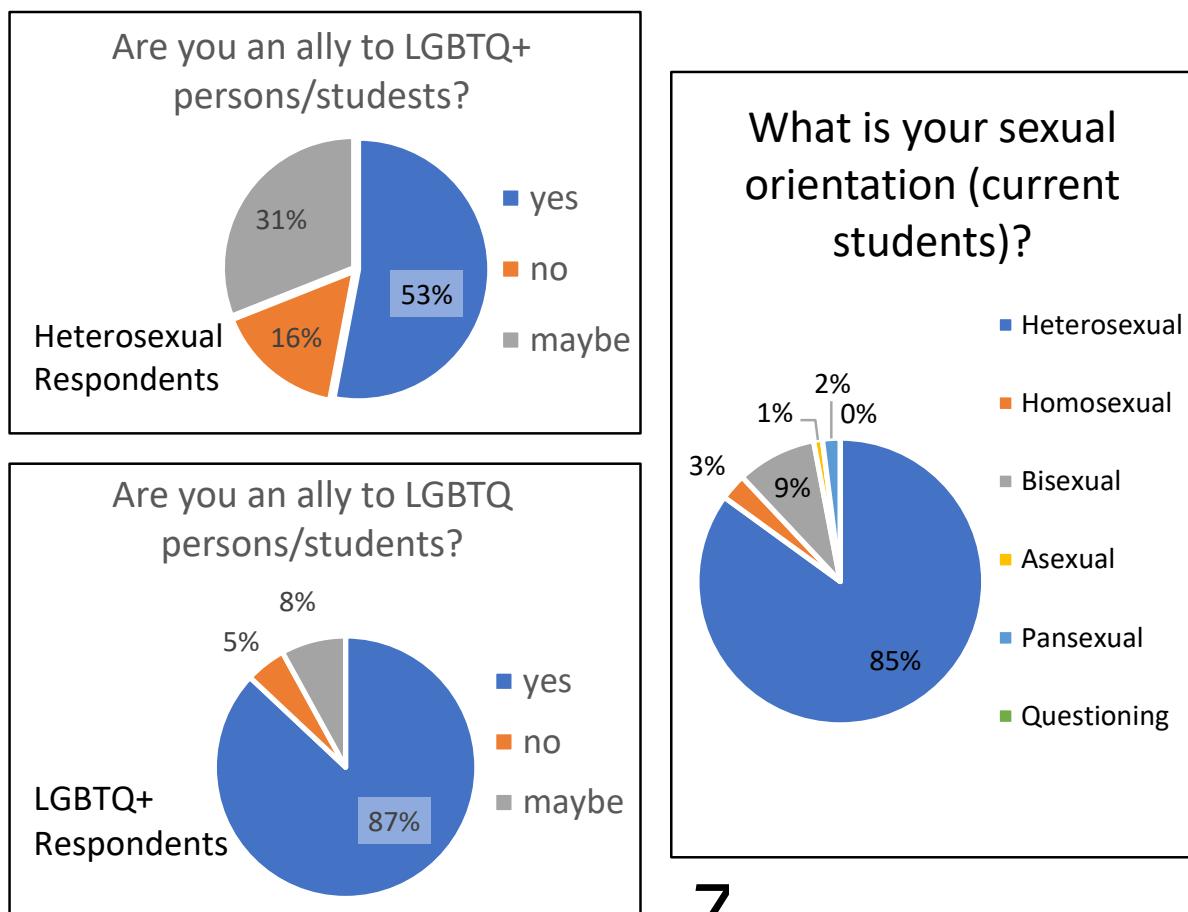
Survey Responses

These are the results of an unofficial, anonymous survey offered to Harding alumni, former students, faculty/staff, and current students. The data cannot be extrapolated to model the entirety of the target group. Joke responses were excluded from data presented. The purpose of the survey was not given to respondents or those that shared the survey, and if it was, it was presented as a personal project, to try to eliminate bias and protect those sharing it.

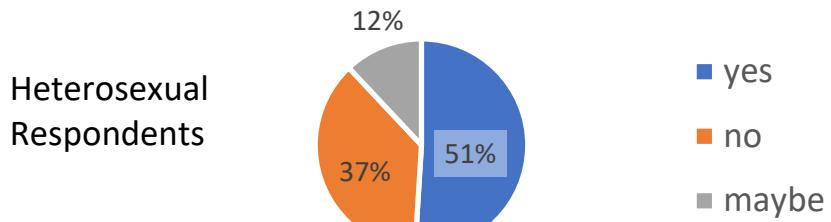
There were 355 respondents: 235 students, 61 former students, 52 alumni, and 7 faculty/staff.

Out of 235 current students, 38 were queer or questioning. Just ponder that a moment. Very few people saw this survey, yet we had 16.2% current students respond that were not straight or cisgendered. With almost 6,000 students, imagine what that number might actually be. Imagine what attendance could be if queer students felt welcomed on campus.

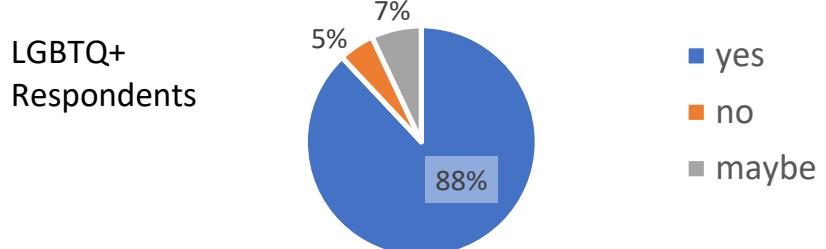
Following are pie charts from the survey. Again, this information cannot be extrapolated to fit the entire campus. Charts marked 0% are less than 1% but greater than 0% of respondents. More results from this unofficial survey will eventually be posted online.



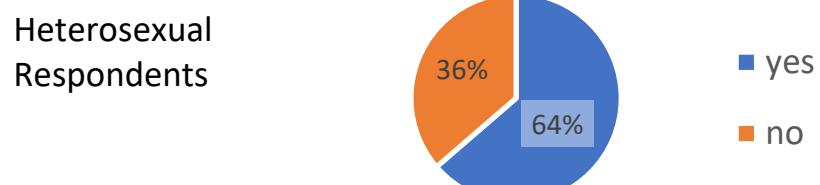
Have you ever experienced, seen or heard discrimination at Harding based on gender or sexual orientation?



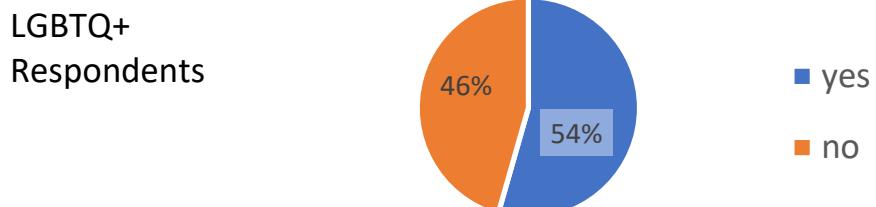
Have you ever experienced, seen or heard discrimination at Harding based on gender or sexual orientation?



Do you know of any faculty/staff on campus that are LGBTQ+ allies/advocates?



Do you know of any faculty/staff on campus that are LGBTQ+ allies/advocates?



It's your
friendly,
neighborhood

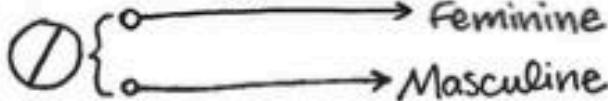
GENDER PER

1ST THINGS FIRST:

Gender is not binary. It isn't either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. And all of these components (expression, identity, sex, and attraction) are not interchangeable. Because each of them exist on a spectrum, there are an infinite number of combinations. And the best part of all this? Any combination is entirely valid, and totally okay. What's most important is that we treat everyone with love and respect.

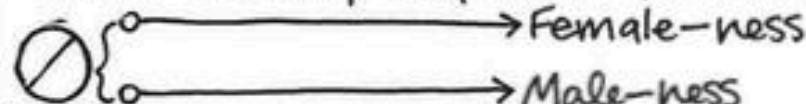
GENDER EXPRESSION

*The way you present yourself/gender, through your actions, dress, and demeanor, and how those presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.



BIOLOGICAL SEX

*The physical sex characteristics you're born with and develop: genitalia, body shape, voice pitch, body hair, hormones



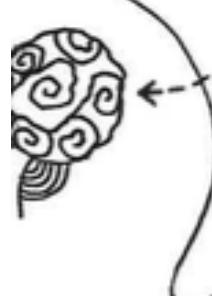
Non-binary = a lack of what's on the right of each spectrum

*Inspired by / borrowed from itspronouncedmetrosexual

above

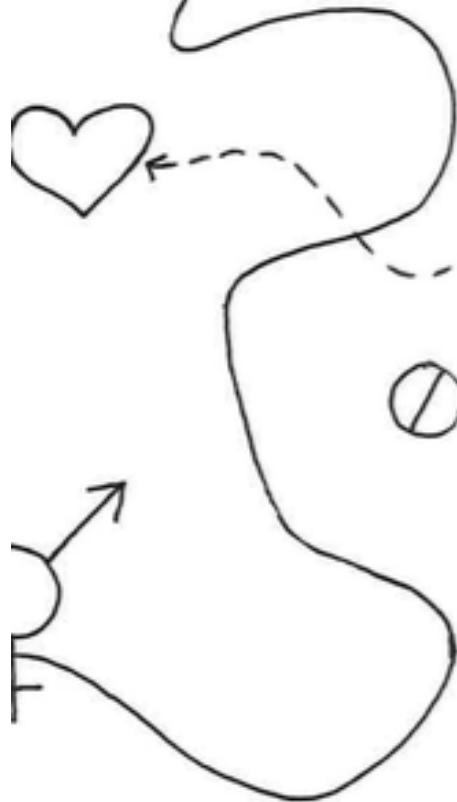
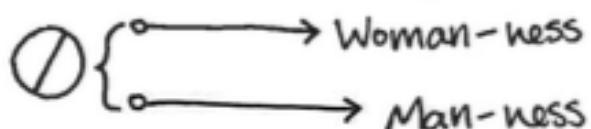
RBREAD

SON here to tell you
a thing or two



GENDER IDENTITY

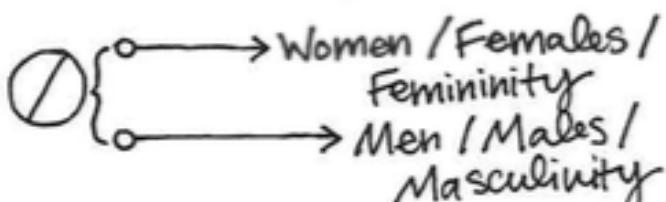
* How you, in your head, define your gender based on how much you do/don't align with what you understand to be the options for gender.



ATTRACTION

* Sexually attracted to:
Women / Females / Femininity
Men / Males / Masculinity

* Romantically attracted to:



*** REMEMBER:

This is just an introduction, there's a lot more to gender — and

We can all keep learning together! And if you get stressed out about these things, all this you are a person. And that's pretty great! 

sal.com — thanks, Sam Killermann!

You Belong Here... If You Want to

On August 24th, 2017, President Bruce McLarty gave a touching chapel talk. And I don't mean that ironically, or cruelly. It was one of lessons that you don't forget after its given (unlike many chapel talks I've heard throughout the years). Dr. McLarty was very sincere in telling the student body that they all belonged at Harding, despite their different backgrounds.

Dr. McLarty began listing different factors that have made students feel out of place at Harding through the years. Broken homes, trauma, academic ability, race/ethnicity/nationality, financial situations, and religious background were among the many that were specifically mentioned. As someone who has been through broken homes, trauma, and financial struggles, I was very attuned to what Dr. McLarty was saying. With each example, he would repeat, "You belong here... if you want to," As he continued talking, I waited for an example that I knew would never come. Sexual orientation and gender. Not that I expected him to condone or affirm the LGBTQ+ community (phew, imagine the backlash), but I at least thought that we would get an honorable mention.

Nothing.

I would like to think it was implied. Kinda like a J.K. Rowling and Dumbledore type situation. It isn't real representation, but hey, it's something!

I would REALLY like to think it was implied. But when you list different minorities of people that not only feel alienated by society, but by the church, that at least the queer student body would be addressed in some way.

But the truth is, the administration and board do not think we belong at Harding. We are not welcomed, and we never have been. At least that's what their policies and attitudes say. And it's not for lack of want on our part. We want to belong here. The wonderful things you love about Harding are the same wonderful things we love. But when you are *constantly* ignored and dismissed as even existing at the University, you start to doubt that message.

We want to belong.

But the university, unlike the example of Christ we are trying to follow, has certain guidelines to be included into the Christian community. You're gay? Go to conversion therapy or be alone. You believe that members of the LGBTQ+ community don't have to remain celibate to go to Heaven? You're wrong, and your voice doesn't matter. Be quiet, you're making people uncomfortable.

It feels as if there is no place for the queer student at Harding University, even one who loves God with all their heart. We either must shut up, be alone, convert, or go to Hell in the eyes of the University. We get told the same things over and over when we complain. "Well, you signed the contract!" That's true, we did, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't strive to make the university a more loving and accepting place for all its members.

In Bible classes, I have heard the other side of the argument presented for accepting and affirming queer Christians only once. The remainder of classes have condemned and confirmed that queer people do not have a place in the Christian community. If not blatant condemnation, then the heteronormative attitude that they aren't speaking about anyone in the class. Many people think the term "gay Christian" is an oxymoron, but we have the same right to have relationship with God as you do. After all, isn't relationship the most important thing to God? We as Christians have forgotten that.

And don't get me wrong, I really like Dr. McLarty. He is fun and kind, and I have no doubt that he truly cares about people. To an extent, his hands are tied on these policies. The administrators, board members, and donors are a perfect storm of silence and repression. Dr. McLarty is, however, the face of this University. Part of me feels remorseful that he will be having to deal with the kickback of this publication. However, part of me doesn't.

We sing "Just as I Am" in chapel, but we aren't accepted just as we are. We're accepted just as you want us to be.

We sing "The Greatest Commands" in chapel, and as the four parts join together in the end, we sing, "God is love." God is love, but all we hear are crickets from a University who claims to love God and others regardless of their beliefs.

We want to belong, Dr. McLarty. But does your University allow us to?

Intersectional Queerness

“Why does everything have to be about race?” Queer people of color (POC) have heard this more times we can count, even by “liberally minded” people who advocate for LGBT rights. We can be pulled into two different minority groups until it feels as though they are mutually exclusive. It seems that we have to choose which part of our identity to own and wear proudly: race or sexual identity. The fact is, we are often marginalized even within our own community. It is sometimes difficult for queer people of color to voice our experiences without being made to feel like we’re filling in more boxes in oppression bingo. But the experiences of different ethnicities and cultures do contribute to our identities, as do the experiences of different genders and sexualities. My journey as a black woman will not look the same as that of a white man or even a white woman’s.

It may be difficult to accept, or perhaps just easy to overlook, that even within minority communities, there can be levels of privilege. I know this is a word that has become so sensationalized by the media, it makes us uncomfortable to think we have it. But recognizing the ways in which we are privileged is important, if we want to live in a way that

empowers others, and to work toward a more just world. Being a minority in one area does not erase our privilege in other areas. For example, I am black, female, and gay, and while I may be disadvantaged in these ways, I must also acknowledge the privilege that goes along with being cisgendered, able bodied, and college educated. In the same way, queer white people still benefit from white privilege. And this should not be cause for guilt, but for awareness.

This means listening to the voices of people of color in the LGBT community, fighting for their rights, and supporting their art. It means questioning why the oscar-winning film *Moonlight* never received the same mainstream attention as did *Call Me by Your Name*, despite the latter movie's portrayal of a problematic relationship between a teenager and a grown man. It means continuing to say the names of Tonya Harvey, Celine Walker, and Phylicia Mitchell, who represent the growing number of black, trans women murdered this year alone. It means using white privilege as a platform for underserved members of our community, because that is what we are, and what we must continue to be: a community.

DEAR STRAIGHT PEOPLE,

I want you to know that I love you. I know my queerness makes many of you uncomfortable, and I'm sorry. I just hope you understand that my goal is not to rub it in your face, but to show the world that I love myself. It took me 20 years to do that.

I love you. You are my dearest friends, my sweet family, and my intelligent professors. Thank you to those of you who show me kindness and love even though you don't quite understand how my community works. I know we do not see eye to eye, but I am thankful for your criticism. It has made me a better person.

Be thankful that being straight comes to you naturally. I envied you, but I learned to love being me.

DEAR STRAIGHT MEN,

Sometimes I assume that all of you want to beat me up or call me names, because those things happened to me in high school. Some of you are my best friends here at HU, and you showed me what God's love really looks like. You are all so important to me and you have made an amazing impact on my life. To those of you who do not know me: please be kind. Just because I am attracted to men doesn't mean that I am incapable of friendship, just like you can be friends with girls. Guys, I need you. We need you. I'm tired of walking by a group of men and feeling like they are going to hit me. I fear you, and I need to know that I am safe with you. Let me know that I am safe here.

DEAR STRAIGHT PEOPLE OF HARDING,

Ask me about my story and my faith. My story may be a rainbow-rific glitter-fest, but I almost died getting here. Please listen.

Sometimes I don't feel welcome at Harding. In some of my classes you talk about my people like you are disgusted by us. I am disgusted by your disgust. To those of you who care: please speak up for me.

If Jesus were here at Harding, He would not be hanging out with you. He would be eating lunch with me because I need Him. Jesus is not scared of me. You shouldn't be scared either. Jesus loves everyone, Especially me.

Please understand how important it is that you read what we have to say. This is the only voice we have.

WE ARE HARDING!

(that felt good)

There are so many queer people on campus. Do not be surprised to hear it. We are here, and we are queer.

I know Harding has an anti-bullying policy, but for justice to be served, we must come out... Why don't we? Coming out makes us a target. We are NOT safe here.

DEAR DR. MCLARTY,

You say Harding students are "just different," but not all of them are. These are the same students who make me feel like an unwanted guest in my own home. These are the same students who make me question my faith by telling me I am going to Hell. They do NOT know my heart like God does. Please speak up for us Dr. McClarty. Please acknowledge us. We are tired of being silent, but we are not safe enough to speak up for ourselves. And your silence is deafening

DEAR STRAIGHT PEOPLE,

Welcome to Harding.

Are Gender Roles All That Bad?

Have you ever been told that you can't do something because it is only supposed to be appreciated by the other gender? Perhaps you're a woman, who has a strong ability to speak in the public arena, but you've been told that only men are supposed to be leaders? Or, conversely, maybe you're a man with a passion for caring for others in their times of need? Surely that isn't a role a man can succeed in, right?

These are assumptions that we make every day, because so many things in society are associated with being masculine or feminine. Nearly every aspect in our lives is gendered including: colors, games, activities, hobbies, and even sports. As a society, we love to group things into one of two categories, "for boys" or "for girls" but there is an inherent flaw with this system. This idea of only the masculine and feminine leaves no room for an individual to express themselves in a way that is unique and tailored for their own personal identity.

Following are a few examples of how detrimental it can be to force people to conform to our perceived gender roles. These are from my own personal experience as a man who presents as extremely feminine in nature. Both in mannerisms and in things I enjoy, I find myself aligning more with what is traditionally thought of as being "for women," and believe me, it gets brought up often. Whether it be the fact that I talk with my hands, or the idea that I love romantic comedies and sappy "chick flick" movies, or that I love shopping and spending time around my friends that are girls (more often than my friends that are guys). I am reminded daily, both by people's actions and their words, that I don't fit the bill as a quintessential man.

One of the examples that stands out the most of how hurtful assumptions can be comes from my time living in Searcy. Several years ago, I had a friend who asked if they could paint my fingernails (an entirely harmless activity) to which I said yes, because I absolutely didn't care. She chose a polish, and proceeded to paint away, leaving me with shiny orange nails when she was done.

Over the following days, I ended up being rather busy, so I didn't get around to taking it off. After my classes one evening, I had a short break before work, so I decided to run by a local fast food restaurant to pick up dinner. As I pulled up to pay, the cashier was friendly, warm even, until I handed over my debit card, and he saw my painted fingernails. He immediately stopped speaking, not even finishing his sentence, tossed my card into my car, followed by my food, thrown into my lap, then waved me along without so much as another word. In terms of damage, it was harmless, but mentally, to witness someone turn so cold for a simple coat of nail polish was extremely eye opening.

Another example that often comes to mind involves life within the church, where jobs and activities are often divided by gender. I have always loved working in the children's classes at church. Yet several times over, after getting to know the congregation, and really believing I had found a "church home," I would express an interest in helping with classes, only to be informed that I wasn't allowed to. Because that was a job that women were supposed to do, but if I was interested in speaking to the congregation for a devotional, that was always an open option.

These are a few simple instances that have occurred. There is a whole other world of minuscule actions and comments that happen every day, both to me and countless others because they don't fit the mold as a man. Another consideration is that for women, it is oftentimes even worse, because they are judged and attacked just for fitting the roles that they are prescribed, let alone for the women who speak out, or seek to occupy roles that are deemed as being masculinely aligned.

Here is the question that I leave you with, are gender roles that important? As a man, I am told that I am not allowed to be nurturing or that the color purple isn't a color that I am supposed to like. Many women are told not to be outspoken, or that they can't work in any form of science, or labor. Are these archetypes that we still need to stick to in modern society, or perhaps, these are holding people back from reaching out and becoming who they want to be, and in turn, holding back society as a whole, because the people who may be most passionate, or most driven are not supposed to be involved because they weren't born with the proper genitals.

Growing up and discovering I was gay was pretty unfortunate turn of events for me. I came from an area that was not exactly gay-friendly, nor did I have friends or family that were fond of gay people. Though most were not completely hostile towards the gay community, they did not make me believe it was a topic I could confront them about. Long story short, to retain the love of those I loved, I repressed my feelings. Slowly I lost the desire to empathize, love, and connect with others. I was angry at myself for being gay, then bitter, and then apathetic at my situation. I turned my emotions off. That was fine. I didn't want them. They made everything more difficult anyways. But the truth was that I was not apathetic – I only wished to be. I was actually desperate for love and acceptance, and not from the gay community but from those that I loved. However, I kept the insecurities on the inside to try to convince myself that I did not need anyone. On the occasions that some emotion did bubble up to the surface, it was hatred and anger towards everything and everyone who drove me into this situation. Why didn't they try harder to fix me? Why couldn't they tell I was hurting so bad? I was too afraid to be honest with them. While presenting a hardened exterior, I was self-destructing from the inside out.

It got to a point where all I wanted to do was inflict this pain I felt onto everyone around me. I wanted them to know how much I was hurting. I thought it would be *fun* to make them understand my pain. They deserved it for not trying hard enough earlier. I frequently brought my mother to tears from my indifferent attitude towards life. All she wanted to do was to make me happy, to let me know I was loved because *I was her son*. She was distraught and helpless. She thought I was suicidal. I wasn't. However, I wanted to keep her in that lie, because only whenever she was crying about losing me did I feel the deep love that I desired more than anything. I only felt important when people were pleading to know what was wrong with me. I would shrug them away indifferently or make up some fake issue in order to keep them captivated. *I needed attention. I needed to be in control.* I was heartless. I had no compassion, no love, no empathy, only a desire to feel loved and accepted. I did not consider the fact that maybe my family did actually love me, and that my behavior was taking an enormous psychological toll on people who really cared about me.

I am responsible for all of the poor decisions I have made. It would be immature for me to point a finger at everyone and everything else and say that you are responsible for my actions. They are not. I am not a victim of them. Mainstream culture encourages me to blame the church for all my shortcomings due to repression. The church encourages me to blame my homosexuality for all my character flaws. If I honestly believed I could blame the church or homosexuality for everything I have done, I would. But I won't. It's not right or true. I only have myself to blame. It was never homosexuality that made me so inhuman - it was just me desperate for love in the grip of fear.

But where did the fear originate? *The quiet.* Satan uses the quiet to his advantage. Most churches I have seen throw out the blanket statement that homosexuality is wrong. I am okay with the church disagreeing with homosexuality, but it is the lack of further discussion that scares me. Individuals are left to fill in a lot of mental gaps of how we approach the issue of homosexuality on their own. Do we let gay people into the church? Must they repent in order to join? Does the church believe that God hates gays? Will God forgive gay people? Unfortunately, it seems that only the harshest opinions get verbalized, whether they are held by the majority or not. People who would be willing to talk about the issue are no longer able to voice their opinion, because of the weight the blanket statements hold. Homosexuality is wrong, and any sympathy towards "the gays" is opposed to the church. People are either afraid or genuinely believe nothing more needs to be said about the issue, and so the church remains quiet.

People like me hear these statements, notice a lack of counterpoints, and naturally hide. Of course we do. I hear that I am an abomination and that I do not have a role in God's work. I hear that because I am gay I am going to hell. I do not want any of the above to be true – I doubt anybody does. Because of the fear of hell, I repressed my feelings. Because of the fear of rejection, kept my mouth shut. Because of fear, I could not tell my family that I needed help. I could not tell them I wanted help. I needed people to talk to, but everyone was too scared to bring up this issue. The only people brave enough to speak out loud were the ones that supported the extreme view that God despises gay people. I don't care if it makes you uncomfortable, I don't care what you

believe about homosexuality, simply saying that everyone of a different sexual orientation is evil will never meld the gap between the church and the queer community.

What would have helped me the most was honest dialogue about the subject. I wish I would have known that it is okay to be gay and to talk about it. Whilst silence gave those who were not gay room to fill in theoretical gaps about how to interact and react to the gay community, silence gave me room to unhealthily obsess over how to rid this darkness from my life. Because I saw homosexuality as the pinnacle of my sin, all other actions to me became more or less morally neutral. Compared to me being gay, nothing could be worse. I was unable to focus on fixing the parts of me I could control – my lust, my emotions, my compulsive lying – because I was too focused on what I couldn't control - my attraction to the same gender. I became so focused on myself I plummeted into that “apathetic” state where I was truly only desperate for love. Once there, the silence only left me room to perpetuate my bad habits. There was no one there to stop me.

After a long journey of trying to synthesize conflicting information about God, the church, and myself, I began to look at myself differently. I said screw it. I did not choose to be gay. More so, I do not believe I can ever rid myself of how I feel. I fought for years before I became tired of trying. Maybe I have given up too early or didn't try hard enough. Honestly, I don't think either of those are true. When I stopped focusing on destroying myself and began focusing on helping others, I felt a peace that I had never felt before. I suddenly found that life had so much more purpose and value. I was happy to be alive for a change. It was *good* to be alive. It was not as if I was filled with meaning and purpose because I was gay. I was not suddenly “endowed with the power and confidence of homosexuality” because I decided to accept myself. It was more as if my sexuality was simply irrelevant. It was a part of me, but it was not what defined me. Eventually, my parents became aware of my sexuality. I will never forget what my mom told me. I braced myself for the inevitable awkward silence followed by the classic barrage of familiar Bible verses.

Instead, she stepped forward and hugged me.

You must be so exhausted.

... I was. She held me a little bit tighter.

I know you have worked so hard. I am so proud of you. This does not define you.

Those were the words I needed to hear 6 years ago. That was the conversation I was too afraid to start.

You are so much more than this. I love you.

For some of you, this conversation may not seem like much. For others, it may be everything you ever wanted to hear from a loved one. For me, it certainly was. I think that was a discussion that would have saved me from myself, but I was too afraid to ever initiate it. This is the kind of talking that needs to happen. She never said she agreed with homosexuality. I don't know if she will come to that conclusion. You don't have to. But that is the point of honest discussion. It's not to convince, it is to create mutual understanding.

Whether intentional or not, there is a lot of pressure for queer folk to find their identity solely in their sexuality. This is unhealthy. This is what I hope a deeper discussion with the church will to put an end to, because ultimately, your sexuality is not a valid source of identity, no matter what it is. With a staunchly resistant or largely quiet church, finding my identity was difficult. In their own ways, both the church and culture guided me to my identity – I was gay. That was who I was. However, limiting myself to my sexuality was an insult to myself and my God. I am so much more than that. I was only ever told to accept or reject this part of me in order to move on with my life. I had to pick a side. I was never encouraged, until this moment, to think of myself as *more* than gay. I have been through gay therapy, read through the applicable Bible verses extensively, prayed, meditated, and begged God to give me a different hand in life, yet none of those made a difference. Those tactics were focused on me suddenly becoming very straight and living life as a happy, straight individual forever. The only thing that made a real impact in my life was when I heard somebody I love tell me *this does not define you*. I was able to step out of the lie I had put myself in. I am more than my sexuality. We are more than our sexualities. I do not believe I can ever be straight, but that is irrelevant to the issue. The body of Christ is not achieved by assimilating everybody into one Christian mold, but instead by matching our *identities* in Christ.

Therapy

I have always grown up Church of Christ. My family has been going to the same church for three generations, and I grew up reciting bible verses and Christian beliefs from birth. I knew exactly what was right and what was wrong. I was a stereotypical, conservative, Bible-Belt-reared girl and was proud of it. That is, until I was in the seventh grade and realized that I was attracted to my best friend. The problem? She was a girl. This went against everything that I believed to be morally right, or even possible. Only bad people were gay, right? As I struggled with these feelings, I began researching if it was even possible to be gay and a Christian at the same time, but was not connected to the right resources. I fell away from my faith for this, and other reasons.

Flash forward to my junior year of high school. I was 16, and had been suppressing these feelings for so long that being “gay” wasn’t even on my radar, until the first day of junior year. I made friends with a new girl in my class, and she spent the night at my house. As we were talking about ourselves, she came out to me as being a lesbian, and I did the same. Unbeknownst to me, my mother was listening at my door, and heard me say this. The next week, I came out to both my parents in a crying, sleep-deprived frenzy, which proved to be the worst decision possible. They were furious.

The next day, I was dragged after school to a “Christian” counselor, who turned out to not even have a real license to practice, just a certificate from the “Christian Counselors of America” organization. Over the next 8 months, I was told over and over that I was wrong, that how I felt was disgusting, that I was just looking for attention, that I was going to hell. Which, as you could imagine, did wonders for my self-esteem. When simple emotional-damage wasn’t doing enough, I was made to do aversion therapy in the form of small, physical, self-inflicted abuses whenever I had “those thoughts.” This led to me developing self-harm habits that I still struggle with today. I was encouraged to pinch, scratch, or hurt myself in some small way, as well as pop myself with a rubber band or rub an eraser on my arm until the thoughts went away. I was even assigned “homework” of watching softcore heterosexual pornography, in the hopes that it would entice me to change my “deviant ways.”

All these things, rather than turning me straight, drove an even deeper wedge between me and my parents, my faith, and even myself. I felt alone, not listened to, and cast away because I was not good enough.

Conversion therapy, or “reparative therapy”, as it is sometimes called, has never been approved or credited as legitimate therapy practice by mental health organizations, but only 10 states and the District of Columbia have laws to protect minors from these dangerous practices.

People who go through these practices are:

8x as likely to commit suicide

6x as likely to report high levels of depression

3x as likely to use illegal drugs

3x as likely to be high risk for HIV and AIDS

The American Psychological Association does not recognize homosexuality as a mental disorder. Since they do not see it as a disorder, they do not support any sort of therapy to “cure” homosexuality. Over 480,000 mental health professionals involved in numerous accredited psychology associations back this. However, a growing sect of “Christian” therapists are offering these practices, and this is a growing problem for young LGBT+ teens. There are therapy sessions, camps, even “after hour” meetings, which all result in the teens growing up with warped self-esteem and identity issues, and most result in the statistics above.

Today, I can proudly say that I am a lesbian, I am a Christian, and I am a survivor of conversion therapy. I say survivor because, though I was not subjected to electro-shock therapy or the more intense versions that some teens are, I was told in my formative years that I was an abomination, that I was disgusting; but I am still here. I am learning to love myself again, and I am learning to love God and others.

To students who are gay and went through any form of conversion therapy: I am so sorry. What you went through was not right, and I am here for you. You are not disgusting, you are not wrong, and you can love God and someone of your own gender.

To students who are gay and did not go through conversion therapy: count your blessings that you did not. However, just because you did not, does not mean that you do not deserve the same amount of support and love. I am here for you.

To students who are straight and may have gay children someday: please, please, PLEASE do not even consider conversion therapy for your children. Being gay is not wrong, and no matter your personal views on it, cannot be “fixed.” All that you would be doing is driving a wedge between you and your children, and I know that that is not what you want. Please instead love your children, hold them tightly, and teach them to love themselves, and one day they will thank you, instead of keeping you out of their life.

With Love,

Always

I Do Not Have the Resources to Be the Change I Wish to See

My first week of junior year I came back to school and met a gay freshman at church, coerced into being a bible major. When I came back to church the following Sunday I found out he had tried to take his own life the night I met him. He would be sent home for treatment.

Before he left campus, he would try one more time.

Professors here use hate speech and call it “religion”; we’re included in every stock list of sins; “academics” frequently call into question our right to simply live as we are.

We are vilified and portrayed as pedophiles, traumatized, broken, confused, you name it.

Classes hold discussions on how to love us (as if it were different from loving any other person in the world).

Boys use us as a punchline.

Do you know what this does to people? I do.

I’ve known queer women here struggling with self-harm, queer young men on Grindr flirting with danger down the road in Bald Knob.

The majority of us struggle with mental health.

Half of us transfer out after a semester or two.

This isn’t everyone--some queer people come here and do alright. But every single one of us is burdened with the hostility on campus.

My junior year I took charge of Outsiders, a formerly underground, informal support group. And I took on the responsibility of caring for people: hurting, desperate to leave, hurting themselves.

We propped each other up and for two years I was the 20-year old undergraduate social work student at the helm.

That same year I published an article in the newspaper, calling Harding out for its discrimination. It got a fair amount of attention.

Bruce wrote me a letter, also published in the newspaper.

Do you know what changed? Nothing.

I can't help but think of what this institution could do if they merely redirected their energy. When a student is found out to be queer they send them to a "non-mandatory bible study."

Because conversion therapy is no longer legal.

The only resource for queer folks in town is Outsiders and it seems like Harding is okay with that. They're okay with the blind--a student with no counseling experience, more interested in public policy than therapy--leading the blind.

Most days I feel like a child playing at counseling.

So where are the adults?

For the most part, they are silent.

But what if this institution chose to support the hurting, bleeding people--not for their sexuality but for their humanity, out of love?

One might call that Christianity.

About the Authors

We the authors of Harding University Queer Press 2.0 have one simple mission in mind: to let people know that we exist. We are your friends, your classmates, your chapel buddies, your club brothers and sisters.

We are the girl you say hi to in the hall, the guy doing laundry next to you, the girl who lives down your hall in your dorm. We are here, we are queer, and we love you. We are not here to cause tension, we don't want to fight, we just want recognition that we belong here at Harding University just as much as the rest of the student body.

The writers of HUQP 2.0 are just like you! We had celebrity crushes when we were young, from Emma Watson to Chris Pratt to even Shaggy from Scooby Doo. We love TV shows like One Day at a Time, movies like Perks of Being a Wallflower, and books like the Percy Jackson series. We have heroes just like you, from Cameron Esposito to Garrett Watts to Mary Oliver. We stay up late watching movies with friends, we hang out on the front lawn hammocking, and we love nugget day in the cafeteria.

We've all had crushes, from our best friend, to hot classmates, to fictional characters. The difference for us is that we had to hide our feelings in case they were negatively received and our worlds exposed to those around us. We love just the way that you do, just a little more quietly. Discovering that you are queer is something that changes the way that you interact with people who have caught your eye.

We all come from different backgrounds, but we have more in common with each other than you might think. We are all at Harding, we all belong here, and we all deserve the same rights as each other. Don't you agree?

Sincerely,
HUQP 2.0

Change on Campus

If you ask me, change is usually scary. The fear of the unknown, the uncertainty. But change can be a good thing, such as in the case of representation of the LGBTQ+ students here at Harding University. This definitely needs to change. We at HUQP 2.0 have a few suggestions for the Harding administration as to how policies could change to benefit all the students, not just the heterosexual ones.

The first change that we suggest is an easy one: let us exist. Pretty simple, right? We are simply asking for the right to be recognized as LGBTQ+ and still be allowed to attend school here. To be able to be out and proud, comfortable with our sexuality, and not to fear retaliation. We're not asking for the school to start hosting Pride parades or to start flying a rainbow flag on the front lawn (although that would be pretty awesome). We simply want the right to be here.

Secondly, we would like you to listen to us, not just hear us. Along with that, do not speak for the LGBTQ+ community. You do not know our struggles, or what we “need” from Christians. If you want to know how to help us, ask. When you ask, listen to us, and truly try to put yourself in our shoes. We have been walking in them for miles, and we have given a lot of thought to what we would like to see happen. That being said, we have some really awesome ideas on how to bridge the barrier, but we cannot do it alone. As Indira Gandhi once said: “You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.”

The third and final suggestion is a bit bigger: acknowledge us in a non-negative light. The only times I have ever heard the word “homosexual” in any of my classes is when professors talk negatively about it. We would love for professors to have some sort of training to know what to say and what not to say about the LGBTQ+ community in their classes, regardless of their personal beliefs. Because the truth is, they might have a member of the community in their class and not even know it. One of the most isolating feelings is the feeling when you find out that even your professors, the people who are supposed to educate you, wouldn’t be there for you if you needed them because of your sexuality. Be there for us, please.

Sincerely,
HUQP 2.0

RESOURCES

Mental Health:

National Alliance on Mental Health <https://www.nami.org/>

National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-8255

The Trevor Project (hotline) 866-488-7386 (confidential text messaging text "Trevor") 202-304-1200

Resources on the rights and experiences of LGBTQ people in mental health care: Center for American Progress

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/view/?tag=lgbt-health>

National Transgender Discrimination Survey

<http://transequality.org/Resources/TransAgingPolicyReportFull.pdf>

LGBT National Help Center <http://www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org/>

LGBTQ+ Support:

It Gets Better campaign <https://itgetsbetter.org/>

LGBT National Help Center <http://www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org/>

Medical Support:

Gay & Lesbian Medical Association's Provider Directory

https://glmaimpak.networkats.com/members_online_new/members/dir_provider.asp

Intimate Partner Violence & Sexual Assault

RAINN <https://www.rainn.org/> 1-800-656-4673 (HOPE)

National Dating Abuse Helpline www.loveisrespect.org 1-866-331-9474

The National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)

www.ndvh.org

Trans Lifeline 877-565-8860 www.translifeline.org

Homeless and Domestic Violence Shelter's serving LGBTQ populations

White River Women's Shelter Newport, AR 870-523-5000

Lucie's Place Little Rock, AR 501-508-5005

Our House Little Rock, AR 501-374-7383

Faith Resources:

Q Christian Fellowship <https://www.qchristian.org/about-us/>

Faith Resources from The Human Rights Campaign

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/faith-resources>

Outsiders Meets Wednesday Nights at 8pm at First Christian Church and is LGBTQ+ and Allies friendly, feminist empowering, and for those seeking like-minded liberal thinkers

The LGBTQ+ Ins and Outs (Terminology)

Asexual- a term used to describe someone who does not experience sexual attraction but who can still want to be in a loving, committed relationship.

Bisexual - a person who feels romantic, emotional, and physical attraction to both males and females. This term is confused with pansexual or pansexuality. Also, people who identify this way may also be heteromantic. (Refer to Genderbread Person.)

Demisexual- someone who is more likely to experience attraction only to people who they have formed close bonds with.

Gay* - a term that is used to describe a “homosexual” person and used to describe the characteristics of a homosexual. Also, this term is used to identify a “homosexual” male, but lesbians are also referred to as gay.

Gender- a social construct, meaning that society has created social norms for males, females, and anyone in between. For example, men cannot wear makeup or wear “feminine” clothing.

Heteronormativity- the belief that “heterosexuality” is the default sexual orientation, and it is also the belief that everyone is “heterosexual” or “straight.”

Intersex- someone who was born with both male and female genitalia or born with a chromosome that does not match said genitalia. People who are intersex are labeled as transgender, but it is not the case; these terms have different meanings.

Lesbian - a lesbian is a “homosexual” or gay woman that experiences love, either emotional, or physically with other women.

Nonbinary- someone who neither identifies as male or female even though their assigned sex suggests otherwise.

Pansexual- a term closely related to bisexual but are not limited to only males and females. People who identify as such can experience attraction for those who are transgender, intersex, nonbinary, and etc.

The Plus (+)- is used in the acronym of LGBTQ+ to show inclusiveness to all identities within the community. When the Plus is used it is abbreviating the full acronym.

Queer* - a word that is used amongst younger generations to describe their orientation that is not limited to either being “homosexual” or “heterosexual.” People who identify themselves as queer find the terms such as “gay” or “lesbian” limiting.

Questioning- the exploration of one’s own gender, orientation, emotional, physical, or emotional identity.

Sexuality- a word used to describe the identity that person finds themselves attracted to. Example: “heterosexual” person who is attracted to someone of the opposite sex.

Transgender - a term that describes a person whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth. This word is abbreviated to “trans” at times.

Transsexual- a experience some people feel when their sex assigned at birth does not match the sex they identify with.

Gay*- is a preferred name in which to call a “homosexual”; homosexual is an outdated term that is typically used in a derogatory sense.

Queer*- some people in the LGBTQ+ community have reinvented this term to describe themselves, but this is not a universally accepted practice.

THANK YOU FOR READING THIS ZINE!

Thank you, donors! We literally could not have made this zine without you. Thank you for giving us your time AND money. Thank you for your kindness and your words of affirmation. Your good deeds will not be forgotten.

Thank you, authors! Your stories and knowledge helped us show the world what we are about, and your hard work will surely show around campus. Do not be discouraged. There will be those who do not appreciate your work, but in the long run you have helped make Harding University a safer place.

Thank you, creators of the original HU Queer Press! Without you we would not have had the resources, the inspiration, or the courage to pursue this project. Again, THANK YOU!

Thank you, allies of the LGBTQ+ community! You have helped build us up and you have encouraged us to be ourselves regardless of what people on campus say or think of us. We are grateful!

Thank you, readers, for giving us your attention and taking time out of your day to read what we have to say. Thank you for your understanding and we are looking forward to seeing you holding this zine on campus.

Thank you, faculty, staff, administrators, and board members who have taken this zine seriously and are willing to strive for change alongside us.

We hope that this zine has stirred something in you that will allow us to have an honest and compassionate conversation. We look forward to hearing from Harding University, and we look forward to seeing the change on campus

CONTACT US!

If you would like to see a continuation of this zine, alongside bimonthly updates about LGBTQ+ life on campus, then follow us on Twitter and Instagram and Facebook!

WEBSITE: Find the link on social media

Twitter: HUQP2_0

Instagram: HUQP2.0

Facebook: Harding University Queer Press

Feel free to give us your feedback! Ask us questions, leave us your comments, and if you would like to share your queer experience feel free to contact us by email at HUQP2.0@gmail.com, or you can send us a private message on any form of media listed above.

We can't wait to hear from you!

DON'T YOU WANT TO BUY A STICKER???

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RECYCLE IT.**



**This zine is not copyrighted! Do
what you want with it. Burn it if
you want to, but**

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