

# see me... **represented**

'see me...' zine | issue **#3** | winter 2020>21  
a **Queer** community collaborative zine  
exploring mental health and Queer identity



I do decree, **it's issue three!** (of our '**see me...**' zine)

We are **See Me Proud**, a team of LGBTQIA+ Community Champion volunteers based in Scotland seeking to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination within the LGBTQIA+ community.

If you're curious about what we do, find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) & [Twitter](#) @SeeMeProud.



We wanted to produce a collaborative, submissions based zine with original content from our Queer community. A creative outlet bringing together our experiences, a place to share our stories. An exploration of our Queer identities and mental health in our own voices.

We love that sharing part of our stories in a zine can be cathartic and healing for the creator, but also to the reader where they can feel understood or that they're not alone. Zines can smash self-stigma by allowing people to write, draw and read about themselves and other people like them. They can smash stigma in general by allowing readers into the world of others, building empathy & understanding.

This third issue is themed around representation. We know that positive and accurate representation can help to break down stigma. We asked you to reflect on representation of your Queerness and/or mental health within different types of media. Perhaps that first time you saw a part of yourself represented and felt seen. We also know that poor representation can be damaging, so we asked about that too, and how it could be better. A massive **THANK YOU** to all our contributors for sharing their stories and creations with us.

We love and embrace the zine ethos that we don't necessarily have to be artistic, a writer or a poet. Everyone can get involved. We're new to the zine game and learning as we go. Any tips most welcome! We really hope you enjoy our wee zine and maybe read (and send submissions to!) any future zines. Keep an eye on our social media pages for future zine themes. Much **love**, The SMP Team. **xxxxxxx**



**See Me**  
End mental health  
discrimination  
**Proud**

The **See Me Proud**  
project is powered by



**Representation** for me meant two things.  
Being seen and seeing people that looked and acted like me.  
Below are three examples of people who look and feel like me.

**Damian from Mean Girls**

- sassy, fat, cute, organised prom at school, that was me.

**Cameron from Modern Family**

- fat, dramatic, caring, funny.

**And Mr Ratburn from Arthur**

- when he came out it was EVERYTHING OMG.



I feel seen and normal when I see fat and  
overtly gay characters on TV and in films.  
Characters that are unashamedly themselves  
and are unashamedly me.

- **Iain**

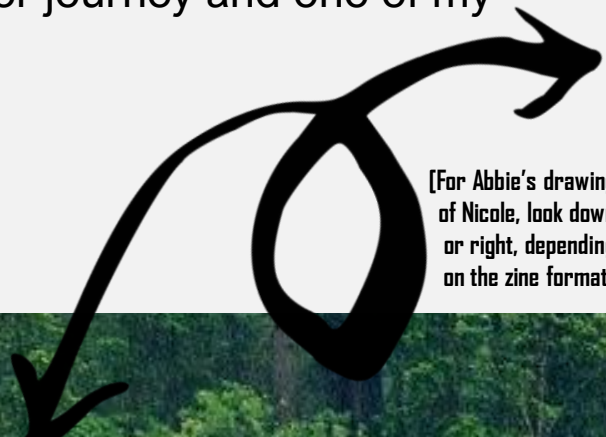
A character that really stood out to me is Nicole Haught (Kat Barrell) from *Wynonna Earp*, which is a “Weird West” (a subgenre combining western and supernatural elements) TV show set in a small fictional town called Purgatory in Canada.

Nicole is first introduced as a police officer and from her first appearance it was made clear she was confident in her sexuality as a lesbian, as she approaches a woman she likes and leaves her with her business card. There was a warmth and familiarity about her which really drew me to her.

As the series develops we also get to see a side of Nicole’s past which reveals her struggles with mental health, and her relationships develop with other characters too. This was incredible to see, especially for a lesbian character in a tv show.

I could see myself in Nicole due to her loyalty and vulnerability, and how she came across as caring, compassionate, and self-assured. Her queerness was natural on screen, which was refreshing to see and portrayed positively— even before I knew the actress was part of the LGBTQ+ community too. Nicole will always be a special part of my queer journey and one of my favourite fictional characters.

- Abbie G



[For Abbie’s drawing of Nicole, look down or right, depending on the zine format]



(c) Abbie Gladwin 2020

# ANGELS OF QUEERDOM



Angels of Queerdom is a new voicecast series that hit the internet in October 2020, challenging mental health stigma by opening up conversations that can often be shied away from.

“

*“Storyteller Claudia Collett invites you to listen to her guests from the Black and LGBTQ+ communities talking about their mental health. All shows are prefaced with content trigger warnings, information and signposting to resources and services that listeners may find useful for support.”*

”



As a big fan of the show, I was really excited to beam in and ask Claudia about this excellent project.

i. Hi Claudia! Thank you for creating Angels of Queerdom. What drove you to make the series?

*Hey See Me Proud, aha thanks for shining through. It's a pleasure to have Angels of Queerdom featured in this zine. Zines have always acted as catalysts for change within the voice of populist and saturated mass media. Like pods. I wanted to create this series to normalise talking about mental health. Having it broadcast to a wide audience on the radio meant releasing stigma outside the community. Even my family tuned in. People from older and younger gens. It was eye-opening for people who think we're mythical.*



- ii. Episodes navigate anxiety, dysphoria, self medication, self harm & suicide ideation. Can you give us some insight as to why you chose these topics, and the importance of us having open and frank conversations about them?

*I was reading the research that's out there on LGBTQ+ health. Especially around trans issues (Stonewall have some poignant reports up on their website). I wanted to know if I was the only one who felt like shit I guess, when it comes to their gender or sexuality. I grew up and did the whole coming out process with no queer friends. Or idols. I didn't even realise there were gay people coming out in pop culture 'til I went to college. It was Britney or punk at our house. 10 years of being out and still making friends on the scene is difficult. It feels so inauthentic. Like there's this veneer of goodness coddling some of the real-time horror of struggling with your mental health when you're LGBTQ+. I've exited queer events to reduce the risk of harm to myself. You can't hear anyone but everyone's shouting. I really like to listen and take my time communicating – but anyway, mental health stigma in and out of the community can't be freed with colouring corners and videos of puppies. These issues are really common. Yet if you're triggered into a meltdown, nobody bats an eyelid. When you say something, you get questioned as if it's abnormal. These conversations deserve to be on any table, in an open and frank manner. It's 2021. Showing up for us looks like accepting us through the storms, not just the rainbows.*



- iii. Voicecasts/podcasts (like zines) can be cathartic for the storyteller through healing, and also powerful for the listener who may recognise parts of themselves being represented, possibly for the first time. They can be a great way to open up wider conversations. Do you have any advice for someone out there who is ready to talk about a part of their Queerness or mental health, but doesn't know where to start?

*I think it's brave – telling your perspective. Having the courage to speak up is scary, but it's worth it! If you don't speak up, somebody else will for you... I'd suggest starting your communication with a loved one and then branching out. Prep your boundaries. Share them and stick to them. Pace yourself and test the waters as you widen your circle of support. Depending on the urgency, there are helplines who are genuinely really helpful. For long-term support – go to therapy.*

- iv. Will Angels of Queerdom be answering the telephone for more episodes in the future?

*Watch this space! Hopefully beaming in for some live shows at the studio, Covid-permitting of course. Angels are born telecommunicators. You'll hear from us.*

- v. Where can people dial in to listen to Angels of Queerdom?

*If anyone wants to have a listen, download the Diversity Radio app free and press play 7PM (GMT) on Wednesdays.*

Angels of Queerdom  
can be found on Instagram at  
[https://www.instagram.com/angels\\_ofqueerdom/](https://www.instagram.com/angels_ofqueerdom/)

*"Diversity Radio was built out of the need to create a space that can increase education and awareness of mental health in communities so they can better support people who are struggling."*

<https://diversityradio.org.uk/>





In 1999, when *Queer as Folk* first aired, I was a similar age to the character Nathan. We were both queer teenagers, figuring out relationships, sexuality and life. On the face of it, that was where the similarities ended. I was in a girl in a serious, monogamous relationship. I didn't really look old enough to go out on the scene, didn't like the music and wasn't particularly interested in shagging loads of people. My quiet little life made crazy nights out in Canal Street look very exotic. I was lacking Nathan's confidence and, I'd like to think, was perhaps a little less self-centred. And yet I followed Nathan's antics with delight.

There was something thrilling about seeing a young gay person living their life on a TV programme just like I had watched hundreds of heterosexual characters play out their dramas. A scene which I remember vividly features Nathan marching down his school corridor slamming doors open while Air's *Sexy Boy* plays (great tune by the way). I wasn't a boy and I certainly didn't feel sexy but whenever I walked down my school corridor, past people shouting 'lezzie' or maybe throwing things at me, I could still play that song in my head and feel a little less afraid. Nathan didn't really represent me but he represented what I would have liked to have been - bold, exciting, unashamedly myself.

*Queer as Folk* has been criticised for its limited portrayal of women. Certainly what I recall of the very grown up lesbian characters doesn't feel like anything I could have identified with at the time. Something about trying to have a baby, was it? I felt more sympathetic towards Nathan's straight friend, Donna, who in response to his 'woe is me' attitude tells him, 'Try being black and a girl.' In 1999, like most people, I hadn't heard of intersectionality and I probably needed to hear that line just as much as Nathan did.

Of course you can't really talk about *Queer as Folk* without considering the fact that Nathan is under the age of consent when he has sex with Stuart. As an adult who is now a few years older than Stuart was, I can see that this is deeply problematic, as is the casual way that this behaviour is treated by the other characters. At the time I only wondered why Nathan was interested in someone so ancient.

- Amanda

# SEE ME REPRESENTED

by Katya

Listening to podcasts can be somewhat akin to kissing frogs – you have to do an awful lot of it, if you want to have any chance at all of discovering that elusive prince, princess, or anywhere in between, that you happen to be spending your life searching for. This can apply not only from one podcast title to another, but also within any one series. Sadly, all too many podcasts falling under the broad umbrella of LGBT will take flight with an almighty flush of inspiration and interest, only to dwindle, or meander, as time goes by and the initial focus is lost. Perhaps it's something to do with a common theme of coming out, or transition, which, while often characterised by heart-stopping trepidation and a paradigm-busting bang at the outset, will almost inevitably tend towards the everyday and unremarkable, if not plain mundane, as life eventually begins to settle down into whatever it's "new normal" is destined to be.

Anyway, suffice it to say, that after so many months of my own exclusive coronavirus lockdown company, I've kissed more than my fair share of podcast frogs. So what WAS it about this particular podcast episode that so caught my ear and left me with the feeling that I had shared some uncommon common ground for 40 minutes or so?

<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/queer-smell>

Scottish author Val McDermid presented the 4th annual Oxford University lecture for LGBT History Month in 2013. Speaking of her own experiences, she captured my attention with her introduction:

*"I was born in 1955 ... when I grew up there were NO lesbians. None. Not one. Wasn't a single lesbian in Scotland, as far as I was aware. There were no lesbians visible certainly. ... I grew up really not understanding why I felt different. I thought I felt different because I wanted to be a writer ... I grew up feeling different but not understanding where that difference lay. There were no templates for any other kind of life. Why would I think differently?"*

Val and I were of a similar age – she was born just a year ahead of me. Each of us old enough for it to be a time when there WERE no role models. No one even to suggest that there might be a question, let alone to deliver a satisfactory answer. Val's account of student life brought back memories of my own – that small step/giant leap from the imposed certainties of the childhood home and school, to university and the world of work where there were personal opinions to be determined, and courses of travel to be decided. Almost between the lines, there was the recognition that the anticipation and dread of "coming out" could so often turn out to be far worse than the actual experience itself.

Perhaps you can't teach a love of words and the weaving of stories. But I certainly believe you can recognise a kindred spirit when you come across one. And take special pleasure too when this is outlined with a relaxed and self-deprecating humour that loses nothing in the seven years since the words were first spoken:

*"... All through my books, whatever the central character, whatever the subject I've written about, there have always been gay and lesbian characters as part of the landscape. And that, for me, has been one of the most important things about being a writer of my generation and in my position: the ability to portray gay and lesbian lives as being part of the landscape, part of the world, part of the community. We're not weirdos in a strange little corner all on our own, doing our laundry in a particularly lesbian way, or going around the supermarket in a particularly gay way. Most of the time our lives are just like everybody else's. We put the bins out. We bring the cat in. Or the dog. These are our lives and they are lives that fit in the rich tapestry of the society that we inhabit."*

So what of representative fictional characters then? If I'm honest, I've never found it to be a rich vein for me. Far easier to point out the apparently inexhaustible stream of characters who do NOT come even close to representing me or the world that I inhabit. Once upon a time, I would have had no hesitation in falling back on the work of J.K. Rowling. Now, I do hesitate, not absolutely certain any longer that she would wish to be in the same room as me. But then, I can still admire *The Ride of the Valkyries*, irrespective of my total rejection of the views of its composer, Richard Wagner. So let's say, that in terms of my younger self, I appreciated the drawing of Harry Potter as a youngster with poor eyesight (though always wondering why he was forced to go through seven whole books wearing glasses when the obvious solution in the magic world ought to have been a once and for all *Octularum Perfecto* spell). But without doubt, the character who came closest to the "difference" felt by the bookish teenage me, and perhaps the teenage Val McDermid too, was undoubtedly Hermonione Granger.

But of course, as we all know, adult life and happy ever after for the Potter characters, went on to be comfortably conventional, with no hint of any later struggle with the Voldmorts of sexual orientation, or gender identity.

So, not quite so representative in later life.

I was already familiar with dramas like *Tipping the Velvet*, *Fingersmith*, *A Village Affair*, *Aimée & Jaguar* and *Carol*. But now, in addition to the podcasts, these lockdown months have seen me delving a little more deeply into the world of lesbian film and TV, with the likes of *Lip Service*, *The L Word*, *The Secret Diary of Miss Anne Lister*, *Gentleman Jack*, *I Can't Think Straight*, and *The World Unseen*.

You have to wonder what the youthful Val McDermid in her splendid isolation as the only lesbian in Scotland might have made of such a surfeit of riches, not least Scotland's own Glasgow-centred *Lip Service*.

And yet. And yet ...

Strangely enough, the storyline that I've found to touch me most closely in all this wealth of LGBT viewing, turns out to be in what, on the surface at least, would seem to be a more conventional, heterosexual TV drama series.

**\*\*WARNING: SPOILER ALERT, if you've not seen the following series!!\*\***

Series 1 of the BBC TV show *Mistresses* includes the character of Jessica, beautifully played (in every sense of the word) by Shelley Conn. When we are first introduced to Jessica, it is as the youngest of the set of four female lead characters and the one apparently most likely to guarantee a regular feast of salacious, promiscuous and generally slutty reports to keep her friends enthralled and horrified in equal measure. In fact though, as the show develops over this and a further two series, Jessica emerges as the only one of the four women who, in my opinion, can be admired as someone who has a personal code to which she remains faithful and true. Furthermore, in a pre-Me-Too TV series, in which generally abusive, manipulative and disloyal relationships abound, Jessica also stands out as the one whose liaisons could be regarded as the closest to partnerships of equals, almost entirely free of the elements of deceit, power and control that otherwise so consistently characterise the shifting affairs of her supposedly more inhibited and superficially conventional friends.

A major part in the evolution of the character of Jessica over the course of series 1 is her relationship with Alex, whom she first encounters professionally in her role as an events planner assigned to organise the wedding of Alex with her lesbian fiancée. What starts out as friendship slowly inches towards something deeper. Jessica, the apparently serial heterosexual, finds herself examining the serious possibility that she might be attracted to a woman. As with everything else, she puts the thought to her friends, who each react in their own particular way. In the meantime, all the signs seem to be that Alex too is developing similar feelings towards Jessica, whose very hesitancy contrasts so clearly with the slightly controlling and domineering partner who Alex is on the way to marrying. Ever so gradually the inevitable occurs: tentatively, Jessica and Alex come together in a gentle and touching exploration of one another. There is no stereotypical clash of butch meets femme. By contrast with so many of the other power relationships portrayed in the series, the scenes between the two are gentle and increasingly loving. We don't need to be told that this is a well-matched, evenly-balanced pairing that probably would have a far better chance of a long term future than if Alex chooses to go through with the planned wedding. It even reaches the stage of Alex offering to break off her engagement.

But, in an almost 21st century re-enactment of *Brief Encounter*, observing the harm that results from the infidelity and betrayals of her three friends, Jessica refuses to be the cause of the breakup, despite her own personal heartbreak. The wedding goes ahead, end of series 1.

For all the lesbian romantics, the obvious hope might have been for a return of Alex in series 2, after a suitable period for the failure of her marriage to the bossy partner. No such luck – following this one risqué foray into the world of LGBT in the first series, *Mistresses* series 2 and 3 swing back to the “safety” of consistent heterosexuality thereafter, relying once more on the tried and tested liberal spicing of betrayal, deceit and generally unbalanced power dynamics. Yes, by a rather long stretch of credulity from where things start out in series 1, you could say that the show serves up a traditionally romantic happy ending for one at least of the four friends by the end of series 3. But really, there is never again anything to rival the innocent warmth of Jessica’s journey of self-discovery with Alex. Shame that.

In conclusion, I’m not Val McDermid, and I’m not Jessica from *Mistresses*, but each in their own way kept me entertained and feeling a little bit more comfortable in the world that I inhabit.



Mat + Socks from LGBT Youth Scotland (LGBTYS) got in touch and sent us seven **AWESOME** pieces of content from LGBTYS youth groups across Scotland.

Find out how you can support LGBTYS through fundraising and volunteering, or by supporting them through campaigns and events



<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/get-involved/>

**“Spending time with like-minded queer people, who lift each other up, have no fears to express who they really are and are able to share experiences and love, makes me feel represented.”**

**Ansley**

## Gender (trans narratives)

"he feels like a woman, inside"

Well no. Firstly, she feels like a woman  
And secondly what the fuck does it mean to  
feel like a woman

This was a "trans narrative", one of them  
Anyway.

designed to  
Squeeze

Us into nice little boxes  
the type with bows on  
for cis people to wrap their thick bigoted heads around

This did not help me  
this does not help  
us

I will not bend for you, your expectations or  
Your experience of my life  
I will live my life, despite you, as trans  
as feminine or masculine as I wish with my happiness trumping  
your fucking expectation  
Go fuck yourself

I am not listening anymore  
To Greer or Bindel or Bentham or mill  
Or to the guardian or the telegraph  
Nicola sturgeon when she says she "supports us"  
Or May when she says the same but with even less conviction  
They too can go fuck themselves  
I don't have to engage  
It should not fall on me to educate  
Cause I don't know shit  
Except how I feel  
And have you ever tried explaining a fucking feeling  
Cause I can't  
I don't have the words



But like I said  
I don't know shit  
So maybe this is all a lie  
Maybe my life is a lie  
Maybe I'm just a man in a dress  
parading around  
making a mockery of womanhood  
I'm just some freak  
A sick fetishist  
Buffalo bill, a pantomime dame, a pervert, a poof.

They're in my fucking head  
And they're fucking wrong  
It's fucking bullshit  
How many times have you heard it said?  
How many times are we played for a joke?  
Ace Ventura was a fucking great film  
Fucking Friends  
Fucking Zoolander 2  
Fucking peak humour  
Not at all bigoted bullshit that's fucking wrong and shit and makes  
me hate myself

And despite it  
I am none of what my insecurities might yell at me.  
I have made it this far  
I am here and queer and alive with no intention of going  
anywhere  
And there is no trans narrative, fuck the trans narrative  
Fuck you  
I will not eulogise civility  
Go fuck yourself  
Go fuck yourself  
Go fuck yourself

- Bea Anderson, revised 19/11/2020

As a child,

(Still an infant myself)

I would carry about a book of baby names

I would let it weigh me down in the bottom of my school bag,

Scour its pages for meaning,

Hold it up to the scrutiny of my peers,

(I'll have one, I promise)

Like a shield, like a ward,

(Why don't you like any boy?)

Now there is yellow neon tearing through,

Names highlighted again and again,

If I flip the pages fast enough I can see a shape come clear,

Amorphous,

Happy,

I'll stitch another onto my own,

Until it becomes My Own Double barrelled,

Conjoined,

Renewed, Reborn,

The infant,

The child

And I

**“This poem is about turning a book of names that was used as a symbol and representation of heteronormativity, life defined by marriage and babies, and moulding it to the queer experience, incorporating both sexuality and gender.”**

**Caitlin/17**

Niamh's favourite representation of LGBT+ characters is Himiko Toga, a bisexual character from the manga series 'League of Villains'.



She says:

"I think it's good for her to be queer so we have a bit of representation of LGBT, and not just straight people in anime and tv shows."



From  
the cradle  
to  
cremation,  
death  
just needs  
a little  
conversation

This is Lydia from the Beetlejuice musical along with a line from one of the songs that really struck me personally. I've chosen her as an example of representation because she's a sensible, intelligent person who just happens to be a goth - gothness isn't used as shorthand for her mental health issues or immorality, and that's extremely rare in media.

She's also grieving, and her experience of grief and how it affects her mentally really resonates with me. I haven't seen any other portrayals of grief in fiction that have done quite the same thing or that have connected with me in quite the same way.

The themes of the musical in general (it's important to talk about death/trauma and listen to people who are grieving/struggling with mental health issues and work through problems together rather than isolating them) are also subjects I hold close to my heart, but which I feel are rarely given centre stage in media.

*Quentin Wallace*

What is representation?

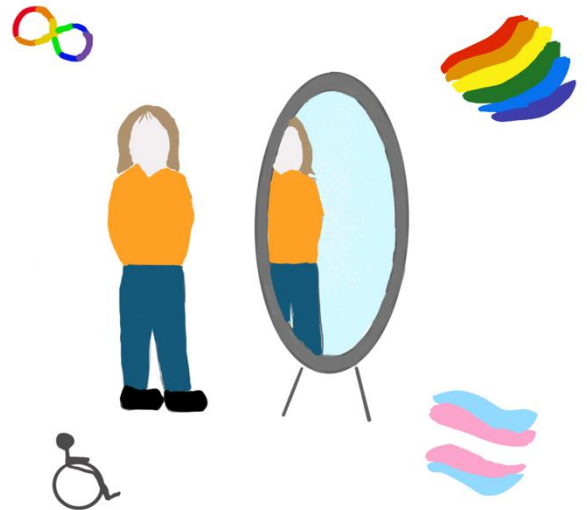
Representation is about being able to see who you are reflected within characters, within books, within actors.

In a world full of others you yearn for anybody that looks like you

Someone who's skin tone reflects on our own

Who's struggles and worries are so proudly shown

Seeing people like you in each and every way



Is a luxury not all have in this day

One part of us will be shown on the screen whilst another is hidden remaining unseen

As though existing as one is an entire new fight

An identity so narrow, so tug and so tight

We are expected to show pride in this identity of ours; Queer, Dyke, Trans and don't get me wrong we are

We are shown on the screen as the token queer friend, as a joke

But we are more complex than this

We are Children, Parents, Siblings, Sisters and Brothers

We are disabled, with different races and religions

We are told to fit, to choose and conform

When we are more complex than this

More complex than one



I feel represented by these characters.  
Jack (On the far left) was the first Doctor Who character part of the LGBTQ+ community.  
Cassandra (The near left) was the first trans character in the show's history.  
Bill (In the middle) was the first lesbian companion on the show.  
Ryan (On the right) was the first companion who had a disability.



I feel represented by these characters.

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**Ryan** (On the right) was the first companion who had a disability.

**Do you want to talk to someone  
about your LGBTI identity?  
To make more LGBTI friends?  
To take part in exciting and fun  
events?**



At LGBT Youth Scotland we work with people aged 13-25 who are LGBTI or thinking about their sexual orientation or gender.

Our goal is to make Scotland the best place to grow up for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex young people.

**We can support you though**

**Youth groups!**

**Digital  
support!**

**1:1 support!**

All of our groups currently run on our Discord Server

**PRIDE & PIXELS**

Please visit **[lgbtyouth.org.uk](https://lgbtyouth.org.uk)** or email **[info@lgbtyouth.org.uk](mailto:info@lgbtyouth.org.uk)** for more information



# U BELONG



FEATURING BPOC, LGBT+ AND DISABLED  
CREATIVES IN GLASGOW

U Belong describe themselves as “a multilingual community platform created in Glasgow to feature BPOC, LGBT+ and disabled creatives and to amplify their poetry, music, comedy and art.” For me personally, they have also been a source of welcoming, kinship, creative exploration and much-needed togetherness. I first became aware of U Belong in October 2020 just as they were taking their first steps, and I’ve been to two of their online events recently and loved them. While appreciating all the performers, standouts for me have been the awesome, inspiring artwork of Abz Mills, Ben Ellis’ energetic and hypnotic delivery of his poem ‘On Black Toxic Masculinity’ and Alice Godber’s poem ‘Unrequited Love’ which spoke to me in ways I **needed** to be spoken to. You can find videos of their performances (and so many others) on the U Belong Facebook page.

I got in touch with founder Esraa Husain to find out more about U Belong:

Hi Esraa! I really appreciate you taking time out to answer some questions for our zine. I’d also like to thank you for bringing us U Belong with the creative outlet and space that comes with it. This issue of our collab zine focuses on representation of our Queerness and/or our mental health. With that in mind, what does representation mean to you, and was this a driving force in founding U Belong?

Thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity. It’s a pleasure to connect with comrades from See Me Proud and witness this sense of solidarity. Yes indeed, representation matters. U Belong came about after noticing a lack of visibility and underrepresentation of Black and people of colour in the Spoken Word/Open Mic scene in Glasgow. Pre-Covid 19, I used to attend various Spoken Word/Open Mic events in Glasgow at Category Is Books, Femmes Uncut, University of Glasgow, Poetry Inn Deep, and Glasgow Women’s Library and they were lovely and inspiring. I thought to myself that it would be fantastic to have a similar platform that is consistent, and welcoming to all the different intersections of marginalised identities. U Belong is dedicated exclusively to Black and people of colour, and/or LGBT+ and/or disabled creatives.

cont...



...cont During the planning process, I contacted my friends and acquaintances in Aberdeen and London who I admire and they are actively working on similar platforms: Rebecca Dunn from Women's Open Mic, Stephen from Fruit Salad Aberdeen, Orla Kelly from Speakin' Weird, Mae and Hanna from Hysteria Aberdeen, and Andreena Leeanne from LGBT Poetry. All of them were very kind and supportive and offered tips and shared their experiences. I made a list of guidelines to follow for accessibility purposes: to keep the camera on for lip-reading, give short descriptions and introductions before performing, and later offer live captioning via Otter.ai. To document and promote the participants and their creative work, I upload the Zoom recordings of the performances on social media after every event and post their PayPal links, social media accounts and any websites to support them. There are so many talented artists, poets, photographers, comedians and musicians that deserve this kind of exposure. Everyone is encouraged to approach and express social, political, historical and mental health issues. The journey to healing can be reached collectively, when we all speak up against the stigmas. However, this does not replace therapy, rather it's a safe space to share and express what we go through.

Founder of U Belong Glasgow, Esraa Husain





How has the reception and feedback from people been so far?

So far, it's been glorious! I feel privileged and grateful for all our supporters and performers. People are embracing U Belong and building a wee community together. The soft launch of U Belong was in September 2020 held on Zoom and one of the main themes was Suicide Awareness Month. Thankfully Jules from LGBT Health and Wellbeing organisation in Edinburgh took part as a co-host and offered many useful resources and information for the audience. The PhD Society at the University of Glasgow was also featured. In October 2020, different organisations were featured including Kamus Bahasa Queer Indonesia, and Minorities and Philosophy network at the University of Glasgow. And one of the main themes was Black History Month. Then, the official collaboration with Glasgow Zine Library started in November 2020. Now they are in charge of ticketing, marketing and providing technical support. More collectives and organisations took part since November, including Sapphic Writers Online and Where I'm Coming From Cardiff Open Mic. I'm very much looking forward to seeing more platforms getting involved like See Me Proud!

With the emergence of online events this year, more and more people are getting the opportunity to find other people that represent parts of themselves without geographical, accessibility, or financial restrictions. Whilst respecting the need for, and benefits of, in-person events starting again when it is safe to do so, what are your thoughts on continuing to deliver events online in 2021 and beyond?

This is a very interesting point. Since everything is online due to lockdowns, I'm trying my best to make the most of the virtual world and have been reaching out to organisations, platforms and performers from all over the world. We feature different organisations, hosts and performers each month. Some of them are from Scotland, England, and Wales and we have international performers from Jamaica, Germany, Morocco, USA, Indonesia, India, and the UAE. It's been really great showcasing their talents and promoting their creative work. Regarding post-Covid era, my vision is to continue facilitating the monthly U Belong events physically in Glasgow and will start the U Belong podcast to nurture the international connections. I'm so thankful to Samar Ziadat from Dardishi for offering the Podcasting Workshop series that I've been attending with Halina Rifai. I'm getting the needed training from Rifai to start working on a podcast.

For someone out there who is nervous about performing for the first time, do you have any advice for them? How would they get in touch to apply to perform at a future U Belong event?

I said this before in one of the events, it doesn't matter whether you started your creativity 10 years ago or last night, it will always be good enough here, and we would love to have you with us! All kinds of creativity are valid to be featured. You belong here. This platform is for all BPOC and/or LGBT+ and/or disabled creatives regardless of their academic backgrounds, publishing history or qualifications. I personally offer short Zoom sessions prior to the events to any performer who is not familiar with Zoom and will show them how to use it, and do a wee practice Zoom performance with them. I also give the performers the chance to record their performance in their own free time then send them to me to show them during the event then post them later on social media. I do that to work around the difference in time zones and because some performers don't feel comfortable enough to share their creative work live. Posting the Zoom recordings on social media is not something mandatory, as I only do that if the performers are keen on sharing their creative work online. Sometimes I send the performers their own individual Zoom performance recording for them to watch it alone then decide whether or not they want me to share it online. U Belong Glasgow is relatively new and it's very much a learning process at this stage. So I encourage everyone to get in contact with me via @UBelongGlasgow on Instagram and Facebook to share any concerns, comments and ask questions.

What does the future hold for U Belong?

Next step is to create a Facebook group (beside the public Facebook page) to add all the hosts, performers and supporters and provide a chance to network and share their work, opportunities and events. In addition, to recruit volunteers and build up a team to help with running both the platform and the upcoming podcast. U Belong is unfunded yet, and I'm working on getting funds from the University of Glasgow. I hope to be able to pay all the participants, performers, hosts and Glasgow Zine Library for their time and efforts. And will hopefully get more funds to support the platform further. For example, to recruit a designer to create a new branding label and so on. I'm super proud to see U Belong thriving and I feel humbled by the amount of love and support that we get.

Thanks, Esraa! I'm really looking forward to Zooming into the next U Belong event.

U Belong can be found at >>>

<https://www.facebook.com/UBelongGlasgow/>

<https://www.instagram.com/ubelongglasgow>



## REWIND - FAST FORWARD

by Katya

### REWIND – THE 1990s: PSYCHOLOGIST

I had a strange experience this week.

- *Uh, huh.*

A bit like a football match, you could say – story of two halves.

- *How about we kick off with the first half then?*

Well ... last weekend, I rang up to complain about an item on the radio.

- *Oh, yes ...?*

A Sunday newspaper had reported that a “one-time close friend of a former Tory MP” had tested positive for HIV. You know, the ex-cabinet minister who’s hoping to be a candidate for the vacant seat coming up in London?

- *The one who’s admitted to having relationships with both men and women, back in his student days ...?*

That’s the one. He’d decided that it was better to be up front about it, rather than wait for them to use it against him in the selection process.

- *So what was your complaint then?*

Well, HIV is pretty bad news for anyone. But these two presenters seemed to think it was more fun to have a giggle at the politician; no thought for the man who’s probably going to die of AIDS.

- *And that bothered you, even though you’re not gay, or HIV positive yourself?*

Yes. It made me think of Tom Hanks in that film Philadelphia. When the lawyer was questioning why he’d kept his HIV status secret from his employers. He said that he had thought about telling them. But then he’d overheard the partners sharing a joke about faggots and after that he was just relieved that he hadn’t said anything.

- *Hmm, homophobia IS still very common.*

But NOT on the BBC.

- No-o-o. So, is that the end of part one then?

Well, yes, and no. I was telling the story to a fellow member of the Children's Panel; in her car on the way to a hearing this week.

*- And she agreed with you?*

Oh, yes. She commended me for my action.

*- But ...?*

Well, this is really where it comes to part two. You see, while we were waiting for the hearing to start, she got talking to the other member of our Panel about another Panel Member, from another area, who's under pressure to resign.

*- Some kind of scandal?*

I'll leave you to judge that. It seems this Mr X is about to have an operation and come back as Ms X.

*- Hmm. I can see that might not go down so well in some quarters.*

Quite. Apparently someone from the Kirk is questioning how such an individual could possibly be trusted to help children when HE-stroke-SHE was so obviously ... deviant?

*- And what did your Children's Panel colleagues make of that?*

Essentially, they agreed. Again, it was one big joke: she was a freak, and her participation in future hearings would CLEARLY need to be looked at.

*- How did that make YOU feel?*

At the time? Alone? Cold all over?

*- And afterwards?*

Very much like Tom Hanks, really – just SO glad that I hadn't confided in either one of them.

FAST FORWARD – 2020: GP

There's nothing like that first time when you blow the cover of a lifetime and step out the door as the real you.

*- I can imagine. Though I suppose it must be a little less scary these days than it might have been when we were talking about it 25 years ago?*

Well, yes. The kids are grown up and flown the nest. Both the parents are gone now too; they would have found it hard to understand ... But the general climate is certainly quite different these days, compared to back then. From the media, you could sometimes think it was almost fashionable to be transgender these days.

*- Do I hear a "but" in there ...?*

Hmm ... I still don't think it's quite so straightforward, even now. I mean, yes, you tell family and friends and the general response is pretty much the same all round – "okay, fair enough, it's up to you." Quite relaxed about the whole thing ... apparently.

*- But ...?*

I think it's a bit like this. Back then, if you did summon up the courage to confide in someone, the most likely response was a very large step BACK. I lost a couple of very close, long-standing friends that way. Nowadays, maybe they don't take the same step back, but, by and large, they don't really take a step FORWARD either.

*- That sounds quite ... lonely.*

Yes, ironic isn't it. The psychologists still love to probe how desperate and suicidal you might be. When what they really SHOULD be asking themselves, is whether you are a sufficiently stable and resilient individual to be able to cope with the whole thing pretty much all on your own. Oh, and of course, unless you are unusually rich, it certainly doesn't do any harm to have a good deal of patience.

*- No, the NHS can do a lot to help these days, but it's a slow process. And NOW ...It must be particularly hard: after yet another four years working through to a surgery date, before ...*

... quite. CORONAVIRUS. It's like endlessly trudging through a snowdrift, only to be overtaken by the avalanche rushing up on you from behind.

*- Hmm. That seems quite an apt analogy for most of us just now. But your day will still come. Postponed perhaps, but not CANCELLED.*

That's what I try to tell myself. After all, I can hardly complain at having to step aside and wait my turn at a time like this. If it was me being rushed into intensive care, I'd certainly be grateful that we live in a country where treatment is given out according to medical need, and not ability to pay. And even when it's all over, quite rightly there'll still be all those cancer treatments, hip replacements, and the rest ahead of ME in the queue.

*- Yes, it's going to take time. And some things may never go quite back to the way they were before. But you WILL get there in the end.*

A new me, for the new normal?

*- Without doubt.*



# LGBT Helpline Scotland

Information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, those questioning their sexuality or gender identity and their families, friends and supporters

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 12-9pm  
Thursdays and Sundays, 1-6pm



0300 123 2523

contact  
SCOTLAND  
BSL



helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk



www.lgbthealth.org.uk/livechat

www.lgbthealth.org.uk



## Rickie Vasquez from the 90s TV show *My So-Called Life* (and how they allowed my inner *Queer* youth to dance)

Rickie Vasquez was the first gay teenager I saw on TV that was a fully rounded character. They just happened to be gay. There was no coming out storyline. Their Queerness just existed. Sure, part of their storyline was navigating their Queerness in a straight 90s world, and that resonated with me, but they were shown to have other things going on in their life. They were strong, interesting, kind, and an integral part of show storylines. Rickie was... cool.

I grew up in a small town in the 80s and 90s where any potential Queer role models or peers in the area were too afraid to make themselves seen. I had to look to television, film and music in search of representation of myself. People like me that could help me understand the feelings I was having and help me feel less isolated.

My journey to the acceptance of my Queerness was a long one. Delayed by the bullying I experienced growing up, and the internal shame of constantly filtering myself in a small-minded town. Delayed by the homophobic microaggressions of family and friends.

My mental health took a beating, not **because** I was gay, but because of the way the outside world at the time showed me how they reacted to me being gay. I grew up an anxious, lost, lonely kid. I had friends, but was too scared to let anyone into my Queerness until years later. It's important to say that I am a lot stronger now, and things **do** get better. I promise. But back then, I yearned for signs of personal representation to assure me that I wasn't alone.

Watching Rickie unashamedly be themselves on *My So Called Life* was the outlet I desperately needed. Rickie was the teenager I felt inside, and it was freeing to watch them come to life on TV. There was one particular episode that has always stuck in my mind and I watched it last week (with a view to re-watching the whole season when I get time – my watch list is mammoth right now!)

Rickie meets Corey, the "new guy" at school, and instantly develops a crush on him, only to later find out that Corey has a crush on Rickie's best friend Rayanne. Oh, I'd been there. A lot. Developing crushes on "straight" guys at school and the seemingly endless despair of unrequited love. Thinking life would always be like this. Later, outside a school dance, Rickie has a conversation with Angela who jokingly offers to "kill" their best friend Rayanne for making circumstances a whole lot worse by being ignorant of the situation:



**ANGELA** [*jokingly*] “Would you like me to kill her?”

[*Both laugh*]

**RICKIE** “But the truth is that would only solve half the problem.”

**ANGELA** “What’s the other half?”

**RICKIE** “The other half is like, you know... the tough half.”

**ANGELA** “Which is?”

**RICKIE** “Which is like, just...you know... that I belong nowhere. With no one. That I don’t... fit.”

That was me! At that time in my life, Rickie had spoken my angst.

Rather than lay down to those feelings, Rickie walks back into the school dance. The song ‘What is Love’ by Haddaway is playing. Rickie tentatively walks fellow student Delia (*who has also had her share of heartbreak this episode*) onto the dancefloor, but in a two fingers up to the angst of Queer teenage life, Rickie soon starts voguing and dancing freely, full of energy, defiance, and authenticity. It’s a moment of pure joy. A moment of affirmation.

Back then, watching this scene gave me solace and chipped away at the anxiety I was living through. It was even more significant by the fact that the actor portraying Rickie - Wilson Cruz - was the first openly gay actor to play an openly gay character in a leading role in an American TV show. The promise that things could change?

The scene is currently on YouTube. Search for “My So Called Life - The magnificent revelation of Ricky Vasquez and Delia Fisher”. I challenge you to watch it and not be lifted.

I’ve still never paid tribute to Rickie and the ‘Haddaway’ scene, but the introspection that has come with the 2020 lockdown has made me promise myself that when things are safe, and we are able to be free on a dancefloor again, I’ll be talking nicely to the DJ.

I’ll be releasing that anxious inner teenager to fly free.

You’re all welcome to join me.





*'Rickie Vasquez' played by Wilson Cruz. My So-Called Life, 1994.  
Badly drawn by Drew.*

# GLASGOW ZINE FEST 2021

We have some pretty awesome news! We submitted an application for a digital table/page at Glasgow Zine Fest 2021 and we were successful! We'll be able to share the three zines we've brought together so far and will hopefully have another one or two by the time April comes around. From the Glasgow Zine Library Facebook page...

"Glasgow Zine Fest 2021 will take place online for the entire month of April.

Throughout the month, we will be hosting talks, workshops, and socials remotely. All the programming you have come to expect/love from GZF will be available remotely, which includes our zine fair!

We will be dedicating our website to the festival all month, centring our zine fair and its selected participants. We would like to make this as close to the real thing as possible, using video or written interviews to give our visitors the warm feeling of connecting with all of the amazing makers that make the fair so special every year.

Each "table" will have its own dedicated page on our website, showing their zines (and shop/distro links) and including a bit of info about themselves.

Find Glasgow Zine Library here >>>  
<https://glasgowzinelibrary.com/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/glasgowzinelib>  
<https://www.instagram.com/glasgowzinelib/>  
<https://twitter.com/GlasgowZineLib>



## A BIT ABOUT 'THE YIN THAT PITS IT AW THE GITHER'

Hey! I'm Drew (he/him), one of the volunteer Community Champions at See Me Proud. I take the lead on the zine. I'm a white, Scottish, cis male who identifies as Queer. I'm not a mental health expert. I do have lived experience of depression and anxiety. Kermit the Frog is my hero. I'm really passionate about zines as vessels for storytelling, healing, creativity, representation and unity (among the many other awesome things that zines can be for people). It's important that everyone has an outlet to express themselves in their own words or pictures. I've had the total pleasure of bringing together three of these zines so far. All of the people that submit to the zine do the creative work. I just pull them all together. Thanks to everyone who submits, reads, and shares. ❤️



Thank you for checking  
out our wee zine ♡



**See Me**  
End mental health  
discrimination  
**Proud**

Winter 20/21