

# MSU Stories of the Pride

LGBTQ+ People of MSU

September 14, 2020



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## PREFACE

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I was inspired when we went on a fieldtrip for the Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) to the library archives. We got to look at QSA's history, one of the oldest clubs on campus [[**TODO:** Clarify is it the oldest or just one of the oldest?]]. I wanted to help document this history as it happens. The purpose of this document is to capture stories of queer individuals at Montana State University (MSU). It is meant to serve as a time capsule of sorts for LGBTQ+ students. The stories are not required to meet any standards; there are no assigned topics nor length limit. Participants can write about what is meaningful to them and their personal experiences. If things change and people have more to say, they can add multiple stories over their time at MSU. I hope this document can become a collaboration between many groups on campus and lives on long past me.

The information for each story (only what the writer is comfortable sharing) is a combination of:

- Name
- Pronouns
- Year in school
- Major
- How the writer identifies
- Story
- Title of story

Some potential topic ideas could be:

- What are your experiences as a member of the MSU LGBTQ+ community?
- When did you discover your identity and how did you feel about it?
- What is your coming out story?
- What advice do you have to younger or less experienced LGBTQ+ individuals?
- What's a funny/sad/happy/random story that involves your LGBTQ+ identity?

- What are some LGBTQ+ issues in the world today and how do they affect you?
- (Current Event!) If you were forced to go back home due to coronavirus, how did that situation play out?

The current event topic was suggested by Anne. I really like it and think it would offer an interesting take on the current times we live in from a queer point of view. It would make unique stories for future generations to look at. My heart goes out to those who had to return home and be once again closeted or be unaccepted.

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## LGBTQ+ IDENTITIES

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[[**TODO:** Have members of the MSU LGBTQ+ community (QSA, oSTEM, etc.) write about the identities making it more primary source material!]]

### ASEXUAL

The dictionary defines asexuality as not having sexual feelings toward others, not experiencing sexual desire or attraction [1]. [[**TODO:** Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define asexual.]]

### BISEXUAL

According to the dictionary, bisexuality is defined as of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to people of one's same sex and of the opposite sex [2]. [[**TODO:** Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define bisexual.]]

### DEMISEXUAL

[[**TODO:** Include definition of demisexual]]

### GAY

The term gay has a little more complex meaning. For example, the dictionary defines it as of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to people of one's same sex, usually referring to males [3]. It also says of, relating to, or intended for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, etc [3]. Therefore gay doesn't just refer to one group. [[**TODO:** Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define gay.]]

## GENDER FLUID

Gender fluid is defined as of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity is not fixed [4]. [\[\[TODO: Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define gender fluid.\]\]](#)

## LESBIAN

The dictionary defines lesbian as of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to other women or between women [5]. It also shares an interesting fact about the origin of the term. Sappho of Lesbos (c. 610-c. 580 b.c. lead a female religion and educational community where she would write poetry for and about other women [5]. [\[\[TODO: Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define lesbian.\]\]](#)

## NONBINARY

Nonbinary is defined by the dictionary as relating to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female [6]. [\[\[TODO: Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define nonbinary.\]\]](#)

## PANSEXUAL

Pansexual is defined as of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction that is not limited to people of a particular gender identity or sexual orientation [7]. [\[\[TODO: Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define pansexual.\]\]](#)

## TRANSGENDER

The dictionary defines transgender as a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth [8].

Transgender is a broad term. There are many identities under it. Some examples are binary trans-man, binary trans-woman, trans-feminine nonbinary, and trans-masculine nonbinary. [\[\[TODO: Work with MSU's LGBTQ+ community to further define transgender.\]\]](#)



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ACADEMIC YEAR: 2019-2020

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**ANONYMOUS: PICK AND CHOOSE**

I had a conservative upbringing wherein the idea of being binary was inherent and somewhat drilled into us, children. Those were the underpinnings of a culture I had to take a hiatus from, when I came to America at 17 and my entire foundation of navigating identities was dismantled by my engagement at MSU. I starting questioning but that only made me increasingly frustrated, as I had a conflict brewing inside me. At this time, a close friend of mine and a member of the MSU LGBTQ+ community told me something, that changed my entire perspective on having an intersectional identity. He said," You need to pick and choose a person to love, not a gender" and that defined the rest of my experience at MSU.

-She/Her/Hers

-Cell Biology & Neuroscience , Junior

**BRITNEY: FINALLY, A REALIZATION**



I never realized my sexual identity and now that I have, I'm much happier. The signs were all there, I even joked about being a lesbian or told it to guys when I didn't want to go on dates. Turns out it was true! Basically, long story short, my best friend in Bozeman moved and I was lonely. I was 22 and for the first time started to consider that maybe I wanted a relationship. Shortly after a guy asked me out. Now I've never been attracted to a guy in my life, but I said yes. I assumed that's how it was for all people. The funny thing is I had been attracted to girls in the past, I just never realized what that was either. This guy and I had been dating for a while when I began to realize I was in love with a friend from high school. Shortly before things ended with him, I reached out to her. I told myself we were just friends. She ended up being my first kiss. Another long story short, she ended up breaking my heart. However, I realized something valuable. Turns out, I was not straight; I am a lesbian! I started looking into dating girls and getting involved in the MSU LGBTQ+ community.

There I found a wonderful group of friends and encouraging community. All in all, I am so thankful I was able to meet these people and explore my identity with them. It's been an interesting, amazing ride!

-She/Her/Hers

-Computer Science , Masters

## SHAMARRA HARDEMAN:

After discovering my Not So Straight™ identity in my second year I started frequenting the Queer Straight Alliance every week. The president at the time, Jamie, introduced the game Warewolf to the group. I thought it was a great bonding experience for the local queers, and it was easy to build a lot of strong connections and friendships through this game for me. So the following year once they had left I decided I wanted to start running these games more often in qsa just after the meeting. It's a lot of crazy stories of betrayal, trust, and friendship and I think it's absolutely amazing! At this point that was two years ago now and we have a tradition of doing it at the end of almost every meeting and then we go to IHOP and talk to the amazing waitress and hang out there for an hour or two. I guess it's not just one story, but I've seen this continuing event bring people out of their bubbles and create strong friendships that have lasted and I really enjoy it!

-She/Her/Hers

-Political Science

## MURDOCK ORRORIN ZEPHAKAR CRISWELL: BELIEVE US

When I was a wee 14 year old experiencing my sexuality crisis, identifying as x y and z were just never enough, I always felt kind of alien to myself.

I started using a name online that I liked (it was Elliot, which I've grown out of) and using he/him pronouns thinking it would just be kinda fun to pretend to be a boy, and to my surprise, I was actually much more happy with that.

I told my mom in the car on the way home from the library one day, "Hey, I think I've experienced gender euphoria."

She promptly told me she doesn't think being transgender existed, "that's not real," she said. It was 2013. And so I didn't mention it again. I started using my deadname again online and I went back into whatever type of closet I had built for myself. And it was still not enough, it never felt right.

My mom had historically been really abusive, physically and emotionally, my whole life. She 'accepted' my sexuality, at the time I identified as bisexual. She wouldn't let

it go, she would always invade my privacy over it, every girl I had hung out with she pried for information from me, saying she couldn't understand it; why would I like girls? Like. I don't know? I just do? It was a pressing issue I had with her over my time in high school.

When I turned 18 I met a guy and admitted I was questioning my gender, and he accepted that which is great! He's still a friend of mine to this day. We dated seriously for about 2 years, but our relationship took a left turn suddenly when I had chosen a name and decided on my pronouns finally. He was still supportive but, in a more sexual way than I had expected, and didn't really use the name and pronouns I had asked him to use. He said he hated the name I chose, that if I was transitioning that I should've told him before, he would've adjusted back then instead of struggling now.

I told him that wasn't REALLY and excuse to deadname me to his friends who were using the name I wanted. Really the most support I got from him was when he was interested in having sex, and it really had an affect on my mental health and how I view my body in relation to my transition, which I'm still working through as I progress.

My mom, as I mentioned before, didn't support me and my name change and new pronouns. She would make fun of me to her friends, deadname me in public after I had already introduced myself under my new name, and would yell at me at home if I said anything about it to her. I posted on facebook, just a little vent, and my uncle (who is also genderqueer) saw it. He hadn't talked to her in years, but he called her on the phone one day and lectured her about how she was damaging me. That she was being a bully, the exact opposite of what should be expected of a mother with a child who is lgbt. He told her it wasn't about her or how she felt during my transition, that I had already considered her feelings and that I was just trying to live my best life and in the truest way I could. She stopped deadnaming me after that, mostly because she just stopped referring to me altogether. She got worse in other ways though.

I was about 20 when I decided to transition, I had just turned 20 that April, started HRT on July 11th 2018 at a dose of 100mg/1ml every 2 weeks. I cried when I got my first shot on the way home. My mom drove me. It was several months after my uncle had scolded her for her actions. She still didn't get it She told me I was ruining my body. But man. I didn't care. I was so excited.

In early December 2018, early in the month my mom got into an argument with me over my therapy diagnosis of PTSD, which she wielded against me about my transition, saying that my hormones were out of balance and that I was faking it, that I was lying to my therapist about her and making her seem like an abuser. She kicked me out after I refused to let her see my laptop, presumably to snoop on me. And so I left. I moved to Montana. I finished my semester dropped out, 5 classes before I got my degree, and just left. I stayed with my uncle for a bit, until December 30th, and then I got as far away as I

could from her. I changed everything, blocked her everywhere, and my uncle actually filed for adult adoption paperwork so that I would legally be removed from her.

On June 12th 2019 I got my hysterectomy, performed by Dr. Samuel Sillitti at Bozeman Deaconess hospital. He never misgendered me, he accepted me wholeheartedly as a transgender man just trying to live my life. One of the easiest decisions I've ever made. I will forever be grateful to him.

I celebrated my 1 year anniversary by hosting a small gender reveal party (its a boy!)

On February 4th 2020 I had my top surgery performed by Dr. Emilia Ploplys in Great Falls. She's been very helpful, has done these surgeries often, and has always made me feel at home in my own body. Second easiest decision in my life.

A lot of the time, trans people feel like they should've been born cis, or should've been happy with their life before they transition. I've never felt like my body was wrong in that way. Being trans was a part of me this whole time, and finally being who I was going to be in some way or another is good. I never felt like I was sacrificing myself for this transition. I knew I would lose friends, family would disown me, et cetera. But that didn't matter to me. I needed to matter more to myself than they mattered to me.

Being trans for me is self love, a conscious choice, because I saw how To anyone questioning, you'll know the right decision when it gets to you. You will find support everywhere, and you can always change your mind. Your identity is allowed to be fluid.

To anyone suffering, remember that your life and body are more important than hateful words and self doubt. You will be who you were meant to be. You will get there, you will (and must!) learn to love yourself every step of the way.

-He/Him/His

-Biological Anthropology , Junior Transfer

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ACADEMIC YEAR: 2020-2021

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**ANONYMOUS:**



I started to figure out my sexuality around the age of 12. I was very worried because I was raised very Christian and I knew my mom wouldn't approve. After about a year and a half of working on accepting myself, I decided to come out to my mom. As expected, she didn't take it very well. After a couple months of new strict rules, being banned from seeing my best friend, and ultimately being punished for being queer, she elected to pretend it wasn't true. She never acknowledged it again. Fast forward about 4 years, my mom is now engaged to a woman. Don't get me wrong I love my mom and my step mom, but she put me through so much pain and now she's denying it ever happened.

**MARCH RENFRO: REALIZATIONS AND AFTERMATHS**



I'm not sure where to really start with this so... let's go to the very start of The Realization. Looking back, I'd say that was early elementary school—before I knew what love fully was. I had a friend who always had cold hands and during break time we would hold hands.

"Yours are always so warm!" she'd tell me, and we'd go about our time drawing in the dirt with sticks. It just so worked out that she was left-handed and I'm right-handed, so we could hold hands while we drew.

At the time I wouldn't know it, but I had a huge crush on her. This would become a running theme where I'd fall a little in love with all my friends as the years went on—boys, girls, non-binary, didn't matter.

I was twelve when I learned not everyone felt that way. It was actually at a sleepover and I made up a fake crush on a guy to avoid telling my friend I liked her. All the girls

were fawning over guys and it dawned on me that I was different in that regard. I took this knowledge and repressed myself, throwing myself so far into the closet because it was a religious school and well... 2012.

Around this time, I also had another Realization about myself—this one harder to accept and harder still to talk about with my family. (To date, only one knows this part; if any of my other family members stumbles on this... uh... surprise?)

I started to fully accept that maybe, just maybe... I wasn't cis. It hit off and on for years—a cycle of self-denial and quiet pondering. There was a point where I finally accepted I was trans and just decided that I would never come out. (Spoiler: I lied to myself, thankfully.)

Okay, so at this point I know I'm not straight or even cis for that matter and I live in the smallest religious area. I'm terrified and now seventeen; a senior in high school.

I decided to come out at least to my closest circle of friends—four people... Oh boy, did that end poorly.

One of the people in that group ended up telling our ENTIRE high school, so that was great... People didn't take it well; they told my friends to stop hanging out with me, told me I was going to hell, quite a lot of nasty stuff.

It was rough and I repressed the trans part even further into myself; accepting that I would just live a lie forever.

Then I got into Aaniiih Nakoda College. (I would get my associate degree in Computer Information Sciences from here!)

During my time at ANC, I had a queer instructor/boss for a while (mentor might be the better term; it was a work-study). His husband was also trans and I adored them so much. They became my inspiration and are the only reason I decided to slowly tell my family I'm trans. (If they find this: Hello! I hope things are going great for you; you're amazing!!)

It is now 2020 and I'm in my third year of Electrical Engineering. I'm out, for the most part, and feel great. Currently I'm actively transiting, and it's been fantastic. Of course, there are other stories and anecdotes that I could share; but I feel like this is a good start.

*-He/Him/His, They/Them/Theirs*

*-Electrical engineering , Junior*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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[[**TODO:** Include acknowledgments of those that helped and want credit]]

### LGBTQ+ IDENTITIES

*Asexual:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write asexual section]]

*Bisexual:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write bisexual section]]

*Gay:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write gay section]]

*Gender Fluid:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write gender fluid section]]

*Lesbian:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write lesbian section]]

*Nonbinary:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write nonbinary section]]

*Pansexual:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write pansexual section]]

*Transgender:* [[**TODO:** Names of people who helped write transgender section]]





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