

PRIDE



MINUS18 CONVERSE

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LGBTIQ YOUNG REBELS

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   [MINUS18YOUTH](#)



**WHATEVER YOUR GENDER,
SEXUALITY, OR IDENTITY,
WE BELIEVE EVERYONE SHOULD
BE FREE TO BE WHO THEY ARE.**

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*Meet four LGBTIQ young rebels fearlessly
standing out for what they believe in.*



RORY BLUNDELL

Bathrooms

At 21 years old, transmasculine Rory, runs education workshops to start conversations about the LGBTIQ community.

I run LGBTIQ education workshops for students through Minus18. I love working with other young people and I really believe that that young people have a lot to contribute. I didn't have anything like Minus18 growing up - a place where LGBTIQ people can connect and belong. When I moved to Melbourne I was incredibly jealous that others had the opportunity to be part of a community, so when I had the chance to join and run workshops that others can relate to and that validate their identity - I jumped on it.

For me, advocacy is about dialogue and being someone that people could actually talk to, someone with a relatable experience. To help others through that is such an important thing. I would have loved to have access to that growing up.

So what are you working on at the moment?

I'm working towards getting into law and getting my black belt in martial arts. I guess I'm also working towards getting that acceptance of myself as well. I've socially transitioned (where I've come out as a transgender guy) but I want to find that balance in myself. I feel such a pressure to conform to that idea of what a guy is - so finding comfort within myself and navigating an identity that might not fit other people's expectations. Oh - and working on finding a toilet really.

Bathroom access for trans people is a really visible topic at the moment. Talk me through it.

For a lot of people there isn't a place where you can comfortably use the toilet - which sounds ridiculous - but it's true. For a lot of trans people it's quite intimidating to use bathrooms.

There's such an expectation of gender in these spaces, and there's a real fear of being physically or verbally harassed just for wanting to use the bathroom.

People feel like they have authority to question you in a bathroom. I find that when I go to women's bathrooms I get that look from people that's the "Are you supposed to be in here?" uncomfortable thing. And I don't really want to be in there, but in men's bathrooms I have this immense fear of my physical safety and I find that really uncomfortable. It's really tough, because I'm judged either way.

Any gendered space really has that. I've gone to the barber before and when they realise I'm a trans guy they literally just kicked me out saying they "don't cut women's hair".

Because I'm not on testosterone I'm often seen as a 15 year old boy. It might be easier to go on testosterone - but why should I have to just so I meet other people's assumptions of what a man looks like?

Like I just want my hair cut. I just want to pee. It seems so silly to be anxious about something so small but it's generally quite upsetting. It usually means I won't pee when I'm out or I have to hunt for a place that will give me a men's haircut.

So what are you doing about it?

I'm trying to create visibility by talking about it and trying to emphasise in any work space I'm in. Talking about this issue that can be very easily fixed. You can do things just as simple as relabelling toilets as Gender Neutral, especially when they are self contained.

It's such a small change that can make a huge difference to a lot of people.

ARETHA BROWN

Identity

16 year old indigenous activist Aretha Brown is already making big waves.

Why'd you bring us to this rooftop?

When I come here it's just everything in abundance and full of diversity and life. The people are weirder, and I kind of relate to that. I come up to the rooftop and I like to write. Usually it's just school work and I'll just read books. It's my favourite place to work.

What are you working on at the moment?

I'm going to Canberra 'cause there's an indigenous youth parliament and they want me to say a speech. I'm talking about drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres for indigenous youth and I'm doing that all next week.

I'm also involved in AIMS, an indigenous mentoring services which offers tutoring - I'm being tutored at the moment - and eventually I'll become the tutor, and it's a whole cycle which I think is really cool.

Is there something others struggle to understand about you?

People are often taken back by my confidence. I do have all the trappings of a marginalised person, y'know - gay, Aboriginal, woman - and people almost act surprised that I'm so confident. They expect me to be something else which I just want to blow away. I think it comes from a place of assumptions and there's a lot of bigotry in assumptions; I don't need to tell the LGBTIQ community that.

What can others do to break those down?

People are talking about us rather than to us. So in creating allies - and I say this in both indigenous politics and being part of the LGBTIQ community - you just literally have to sit down, shut the f- up, and listen. That's it. Once we start listening to people from within communities - things like compassion, respect, understanding - that stuff will follow.

On the flip side, what's pride mean to you?

The term within the Aboriginal community and the LGBTIQ community I feel are two different things but also two very similar things. Both communities have been ostracised and told you're not allowed to have pride in who you are. Being Aboriginal and also being gay, it's something for me that doubles up.

Sometimes pride can be twice as hard, but at the same time, it can be twice as empowering.

Where does that all fit in within your own identities?

Identity has always been a big topic for me, especially as an Aboriginal person, because it's something that I've always kind of learned to shun. I honestly think it's more important to be politically conscious than to have an identity at this point. My identity will catch up with me.

Like who am I? I don't want to get all philosophical but in the big run the only way that change has ever happened in the world ever is by a movement of people. You can argue that some individuals have sparked it, but at the end of the day it's by committed groups of people and so while I think identity is important, it's not defining for me.

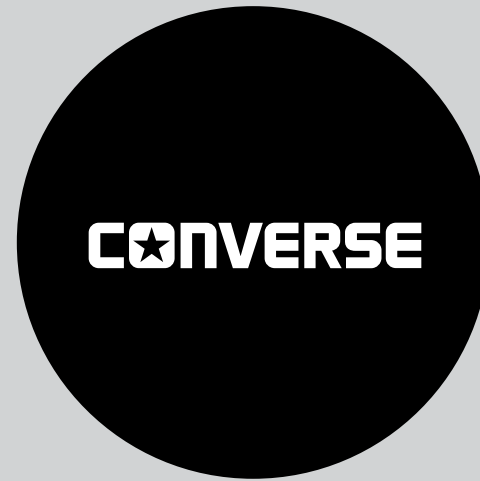
Cool outlook, what is it you want to change in the world then?

I need to pass Year 11 Maths first - ha! Okay. I know that I was put on this planet to help my Aboriginal brothers and sisters out and if I can factor in my sexuality and those who identify as being gay and bi and lesbian and trans as well - that would just be the coolest thing ever. I also feel like in these communities that are so used to being at the forefront of discrimination you are either forced to be one of two things. You are made to be a token or you can be an exception (meaning your lifetime trauma is disregarded - and that's horrible). I want to change that.

I'm not a prop. I'm not a box to be ticked. I'm just Aretha Brown in the moment.











GEORGIE STONE

Equality

Taylor Swift fan girl Georgie Stone, with her family, changed the law in Australia so that all transgender teenagers can access Stage 1 treatment.

Your room is full of Taylor Swift posters, what is it you love about her?

I find her witty and clever. So many people have things to say about her, and she'll take them on and roll with them and turn them into something beautiful. She'll be like "Yep, you think I'm a maniser - then sure watch me play that out in my video clip". It's something I've always strived for, to make something interesting out of being myself.

Tell me about yourself then

I was born male - George - and I've basically known all my life that I'm a girl. I was 2 and a half when I told my mum I wanted a vagina. It's been pretty consistent since then - the Disney princesses, dress ups, Hermione Granger - but once I started primary school that's when I really realised something was wrong. Everything was so gendered - male bathroom, male uniform, male team in sport, always in the male groups. That's when I really started to become distressed.

I transitioned to female when I was 9, and I came out to my friends when I was 14.

What was it like for you telling your family?

I didn't really have a problem. When I was 2 and a half it was just so innocent and it's what I said. I didn't think about what my family would think, no filters I just came out and said it. It was a different matter with my friends - I thought of exactly what I'd say in my head, and it was definitely stressful. But they were incredibly kind and understanding, and more importantly, eager to learn and get my name right. It was something really nice and I'm really grateful they were so understanding towards me.

You and your family had to go to court.

Yeah, in 2010 to access the first stage of treatment for transgender kids (the first stage is puberty blocker hormones) you had to apply to the Family Court of Australia to access it. So I started going

through puberty at 10, and the masculine changes in my body were making me quite stressed. In mid 2013 we had a partial victory - which meant that trans kids and their families no longer needed to apply to the court for Stage 1 treatment. There's still work to be done, and we need to now change the law for Stage 2 treatment.

Woah- it must feel great knowing you've helped other trans young person.

It's a good feeling, but the most rewarding thing for me is knowing that families don't have to go through that stress. I'm just really proud of my Mum who fought so hard to change the law.

Family is a pretty big part of your story.

Oh God, yeah. My mum is incredible and my brother is an incredible supporter as well. My twin brother too; Harry is so brave and supportive. A lot of people assume that all his troubles are based off what I've been going through - that my court process and everything is his world. But Harry goes through struggles as well like any other teenager guy.

Do you have any advice for family and friends of people who are transgender?

Try and understand them. Get their name and pronouns right and try to nail them down. That's a big one. Just be respectful and try to make sure you listen to them. Let them talk about it and give them space to do that - and if they don't want to, that's OK too.

Look - me being transgender doesn't take up a lot of time in my life. Equality means that me being transgender isn't a factor in what I can achieve in this world and for my rights. That shouldn't impact on the rights and opportunities that people have.

What do you want to change in this world?

Above everything - above law reform - I want trans people to know they're OK and that they will be OK. There is support out there, and if there's anything I can do with the position I'm in - it's to make our stories heard. I want to give other trans kids the platform to step up and tell their story.

I want people to know it's normal. You're normal.



BOBUQ SAYED

Gender

Writer, artist and founder of QTIPOC collective Colour Tongues, Bobuq rejects the strict gender binary of strictly masculine / feminine.

Let's start with gender - how do you actually describe it?

Gender is an identification that's culturally bound and differs across the world. It's the way we feel, the way we are comfortable presenting ourselves, the communities we're part of, and it's contextual in different spaces.

For me personally, I don't have a gender that is always the same among all people. When I'm with my family I have a role as the eldest son that is masculinised - where as when I'm with my chosen family I'm free to be much more feminine and to explore and experiment with a different angle on my gender.

I'm non-binary. I feel that my gender exists in different roles that I am constantly switching between based on who I'm talking to and where I'm at. When I am dressed masculine people struggle to understand that in fact my gender can also change alongside the clothes I wear. A lot of people assume that my gender is a rejection of just masculinity. Whereas for me and my gender, I feel like coming out as non-binary has meant that I have a better understanding and use of all genders.

Before we began you spoke about other identities - what are some that you identify with most strongly?

Politically and personally as Afghan, as Muslim, as queer, as nonbinary transgender, as a homosexual - I think those are a lot.

There have definitely been challenges in the past, yeah, but I've realised that with my multiple

identities that the only person I have to please and the only rules I have to satisfy are my own.

When it comes to being a supporter or 'ally' of the community, what's important?

What's important for me is not the language of people identifying as an ally. It shouldn't be something that's spoken of, but rather something that's demonstrated and exists in actions and concrete behaviours. Specifically, when I'm dressed femininely what concerns me with my allies is how safe they make me feel and how committed they are to ensuring that I'm getting home safe, or that I am not feeling threatened by the space I'm in. Safety is a strong and important concern considering how many strangers are insecure and threatened by the existence of a bearded lady.

You started an organisation called Colour Tongues, tell me about that.

Colour Tongues began as a performance and poetry night for queer and trans people of colour to gather in a community, meet each other and celebrate the art that we produce about our experience. It then developed into something more geared around creating communities for people who don't have access to the queer scene because of how long they've lived in Australia or their understanding of English.

So what are some of the things you provide?

We have monthly dinners at different restaurants around Australia that are paid for - so money isn't an issue. There are a few smaller social gatherings - movie nights, outings - events designed to celebrate their experience.

Colour Tongues is now a recognised charitable organisation so donations go directly to supporting queer and trans refugees and asylum seekers.

YOUR TURN

Tips to Stand Out

Get Up To Speed

The LGBTIQ community is huuuge and pride means something different to everyone. Language, experiences and identities are constantly changing, but staying in the know is easy to do. Reading stories like these, or with just a bit of Googling, this entire history is at your finger tips.

Be Someone Who Listens

An ally is someone who supports a movement and sticks up for others. That means listening and supporting those around us and giving people a chance to define themselves without doubt or judgement

Avoid Assumptions

There are a heap of identities within the LGBTIQ community and not everyone will express themselves the same or go through the same experience.

Some people might have a great time coming out - some people might not want to come out at all.

Stand Out

Stand out for your mates - or anyone really - when you see or hear people being jerks. It's so much easier to point out someone's crappy actions if it isn't directed towards you - and sticking up for someone can make a massive difference.

Use the Right Name and Pronouns

If someone's name changes, or they change their pronouns, the greatest thing you can do is champion them and celebrate your mate being their true self. This might mean getting used to saying 'she/her' instead of 'he/him', but this small change on your end can be life changing on theirs.

It's easy to make mistakes - we get it that! Generally if you slip up and use the wrong name or pronoun, then the best thing to do is to say "oops - sorry", correct yourself and move on.

If you aren't sure what pronouns someone uses, use 'they/them' or ask.

Make Change

If you're feeling super inspired then get active in the community. Roll up your sleeves and be the change you want to see. This can be as small as starting conversations with mates, family or at school, fundraising for LGBTIQ charities or level up and volunteer for community organisations.

Celebrate

Be visible in your support and celebrate sexuality and gender identity - we've got some stickers to get you started.

Celebrate the LGBTIQ community and all the rad people in it - fly the rainbow flag, wear your pride, and use visibility as a way to start showing your support.



MINUS18

Australia's youth driven organisation for LGBTIQ young people.

Young, fearless and smashing homophobia, biphobia and transphobia Australia wide. We run events, resources, workshops and campaigns and we won't rest until every LGBTIQ person belongs.

Imagine that - we think it all sounds pretty great. If you do too, you might like to support our work or get involved.



ONLINE SUPPORT • BOOK A WORKSHOP • DONATE

   MINUS18YOUTH [MINUS18.ORG.AU](https://www.minus18.org.au)

YES



TO ALL

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