

S3 — Episode 3 — LGBTQ Issues in the Jamaican Media

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Tara talks to Professor Andrew Campbell from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and Queen's University about his ongoing research on LGBTQ issues in the Jamaican media.

Tara: Hello, and welcome to season three of Gender Sexuality School. I'm Tara Goldstein, and we're podcasting from Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Today, Professor Andrew Campbell, who works at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, joins us to talk about an exciting new research project he is working on that examines the ways LGBTQ issues are being reported within the Jamaican media. Andrew, welcome to Gender Sexuality School. We're so happy to have you here.

Andrew: Thank you so much, Tara. And it's a pleasure to be here to share the research work and just to share this conversation on gender, sexuality, and schools. So, thank you so much for having me. It's an honour, privilege.

Tara: Thank you. Thank you, Andrew. So, to begin our podcast interview, let's talk a little bit about this research project. Can you tell us a little bit about the history of the project, how it got started, and what are its goals?

Andrew: So, um, I was, I was always interested in LGBT research, or, or let me centre by saying, understanding homosexuality, because you have to remember I'm coming to you from a Jamaican context, right? So, a lot of the language that we're using today, or we, or I'm using today, these are what I picked up when I came to North America, when I came to Canada, because growing up in Jamaica, you just, you hear about homosexuals. And so— know you are, you know, you are gay, but you didn't even think gay, you know, you are "homosexual". And so, you want to figure out, because that's such a bad word. It's such a word. And so, you want to figure out, so I grew up, you know, to my, my initial teacher education program. And I've always been a self-advocate and wanting to find out more. And so, when I started to attend AERA, and other conferences, I seized the opportunity to talk about— because I realized, hey, I can do advocacy work through research. And this is how this started, advocacy work through research. And so, in 2017, the conference, we had a conference in Jamaica called Beyond Homophobia, oh, yes. And we have, and North American scholars and academics also participated. And that was the first time, in Jamaica, think about that, in Jamaica, in the, at the University of the West End is more than campus, there was a group of LGBTQ people that all gathered to discuss issues around them. I think, once it's a privilege for me to be in this space. And I started talking, about my research I started on was to look at how the stories are being told about, not in my choice of word, about us, in the Jamaican newspaper, two of them, the main people, which is the Jamaican Gleaner, and the Observer. And I started curating and getting stories. So, so I'm focusing on document analysis, as a methodology. And I collected between 2000. And the year, I focus on the year 2002, 2018, at that time, so now of course, I'm going to expand it to 2020, 21 of course, and right now, I have over 130 articles, and these are in categories of heavy— what I call, what I call a news item, editorials, commentaries, letters to the editor, right? And these are all, majority are written by people who do not identify as LGBTQ, writing

about us. And the messages, of course, they are violent, they're negative. They are they're— they're stereotyped, they're aggressive, and they are, and they're just condescending about LGBTQ. So, the work in stark contrast of the work is for me to— to bring in the LGBTQ voices as a means of a counter narrative to what is out there.

Tara: So interesting. You know, Andrew, as you know, I'm a playwright, and I've begun doing some historical research on moments of queer activism, and I'm starting a series of plays about that. And there are two white lesbians, American, who in the 70s took on the American Psychological Association, and Barbara Gittings and Kay Lahusen. And they did that with a gay activist named Frank Kameny. And these three folks interrupted some of the sessions on homosexuality, which then was understood to be a sickness. They interrupted conversations around the, the treatments that psychiatry had developed for "curing" homosexuality. And they were very successful. They was— the result was, they managed to create a moment where they took homosexuality off the diagnostic manual of disorders in the world of psychiatry. So, this whole idea of activism, and their big, their big push was, "do not speak on our behalf. We are the experts on our own lives". Because most of these psychiatrists did not identify as LGBTQ. And those who did, the gay psychiatrists were very much an underground set of, had an underground set of understandings, they weren't dominant. So, this idea of making sure that people are not speaking for you, but we are speaking for ourselves, is very important historically. And, and here you are, in this moment doing that research at this time, which is, which is so, so excellent. Why do you think it's so important to do research about the way the media reports LGBTQ issues? Why have you chosen to focus on the media and the different ways homophobia gets expressed? From letters to the editor, to news items?

Tara: Yeah, yeah. You know why, and it's come back to exactly what you just said. And thank you so much also for, for sharing that story. And centring that, you know, that reminder in this, in this, in this conversation, because I literally, it is to tell us, to tell our stories, right? I remember, every time you open a newspaper, it is a story about us. And it is written, I can tell you one of the things I'm doing in one of the, one of the papers is looking at the language, just the language. And I'm writing one of the papers with a person who teach linguistics, right, looking at just the language, just the vocabulary that is used to describe us as dangerous. I mean, in many of the articles, pedophile is linked anonymously, with, with somebody, with a with a gay person who's gay. And this is the kind of narrative. So, we are taking that back to tell our stories. And I'm doing that when we want to do that. The reason why I'm pushing the research is for the media, because I want the media to understand that they have to, number one, make space for us to tell our own stories, and it's happening. And I'm so happy to share with you that over the last, maybe three years, I've, I have now start collecting pieces that are been written and published by LGBTQ activists in Jamaica. And I can tell you, one thing that I must, I must highlight is getting up one day in order for one hour. Very, very popular magazine. It's a magazine within the newspaper called the Flare. And I see a, a trans woman's story there. And a trans woman who live in Jamaica's story, there. I cannot tell you, even saying it to you now. And now I'm seeing more and more of the trans community being extremely active and, and visible. And so, this— their stories are being captured, their stories are being told, their stories and pictures are being shared in the newspaper in ways that are not deficit. And so, this is important, and that is important. So, another layer is to tell our

stories within the Jamaican— so I want the stories, two levels. The first level, of course, is within the Jamaican and Caribbean, Latin— Latin America space, because this is a space where people are feeding on these negative images. So, we have to do the stories to educate, to learn, to unlearn. So, we give them space so they could tell their stories. So, they could educate, unlearn, learn and to also, as a mean of resistance, and also just a means of LGBTQ visibility. That's why when I'm asked, do you, you know, if somebody asked to interview me in a Caribbean paper or Caribbean magazine, or Caribbean space. I say yes. Because it's not, actually it's not even what I want, it's what I'm going to say. But I know for a fact that there'll be a picture of me, and it won't be the picture that we see all the time, it won't be a negative cartoon, it won't be some caricature of me, it won't be, you know, me looking ridiculous and stereotyping, marginalized. It will be me in all myself that is placed there, and a little boy or little girl who is, who is, who's reading this magazine, or reads the newspaper, or seeing this article and say, "Hey, he looks like me, he's like me, is a teacher. I want to be a teacher, but I couldn't be a teacher, don't have to be, I'm afraid to be a teacher". So, it is very powerful. And the next level is also that, is also sharing what is happening in the Caribbean, in a more international academic spaces. And I'm very much looking for that, because I can tell you Tara, on my shelf, I have tons of books, I, you know, I'm getting your book, congratulations. I'm coming, I'm definitely coming to the book launch. Congratulations on that. But I have other books I have other books written by people that you and I know, Lee and other people, and, and I have those books, I have those books, and on the shelf, within those books, I don't have my Jamaican books, stories. And so I want to make sure I'm a part of chapters in a book, I'm looking out to get my work in, in North American, Canadian book chapters, in articles and journals, because we want our story to be told, I don't want it to be taught in a distilled North American way, I want to be told in my in the Jamaican way, because they're— North American readers need that. They need to hear it in our way, in our form, in our identity. So that's why, you know, it's important for me to do this work. And I'm very, very, very excited about the possibilities.

Tara: Fantastic. As you were speaking Andrew, I'm thinking I can imagine an anthology of narratives from, from folks who identify as LGBTQ from Jamaica and other places in the Caribbean. Have you ever thought of editing and anthologizing that?

Andrew: Yes, yes. You're in my heart, Tara, you're coming to my head. I tell you something, I'm going to say this for the record right here on your, on your, on your thing, on your, on your podcast. I started some very, very, very personal narratives, about 2017. Like when I said, I write them, I write them with tears running down. And I call it Pride Pain. Because it's— it's pride. Pride isn't pride. I wrote them in June, and pride as in a person feeling that I'm seen and I'm okay, and I'm not, I'm not dead, I'm not infected. I'm not, you know, because remember, you have to remember when I use the word infected, I want the listeners to understand, when you think of Jamaica, or you think of LGBTQ or think of gay, the first you think of, oh, these are, these men are going to die of HIV. That's it. That's just what's going to come off our end. There's nothing quote, unquote, good coming about us. Right? So, so, when I started seeing pride and experiencing pride, I kept on writing and I have a couple, couple in it. There's a lot going on, I haven't reached further with it. But I am, I am, I'm betwixt making it be my own anthology. Or I am betwixt inviting people, I think I really want to invite people in, like you said, and just go ahead with it. So, I'm actually one, and it's, I would say, I am 50% in that work, I'm looking, I'm going to get, I'm

going to start to look for somebody who wants to publish that kind of work. Because I can tell you this, there are people out there who, I was gonna say a market. But I take that word market back, I want to say there are people out there who want to hear the story. And how do I know? Because I posted a couple of them on my Facebook years ago, like last year and the year before and Twitter. And every time the response is amazing. The inbox messages, people are scared of responding online. They respond to me, my inbox, and they said, thank you for sharing that story. And I share the beautiful stories. I share the positive, that's why I call it pride. No, it's more, it's a pride, we feel it. And I'm using my pen to capture that pride. So yes, you just, you just spoke into my life Tara.

Tara: Oh, great. Well, I even have a suggestion of a publisher. As you mentioned, we are going to be launching our, my team is going to be launching our new book about LGBTQ families. And we're doing it as part of a series that Dennis Sumara from the University of Calgary, a white gay scholar from UCalgary, has begun. The series is called Queer Singularities. And Dennis will be at the book launch to talk a little bit about the series. And so, I think after you hear what Dennis has to say, you might want to connect with him. And, and, and, and write a proposal up and pitch him the idea because I think that series will be a perfect place for your book. And I'll make sure that you have a chance to connect with Dennis.

Andrew: Thank you so much. Because you know what, and the last thing I'll say on this is, the stories must be told. And they have to be told by people who have lived the stories, right? Many times, we are writing about others. And so, for me, you know, those are very personal stories. And another thing I have to say why this story is so important is because in our space here, you know I live in North America as well. But when we read about Caribbean stories, they're such, they're written in such deficit and such, such, in pathological ways. Right. And we want to make sure these stories are written with, with where they are, I can tell you, I look, I'm talking to you right now. And I have three Jamaican trans women that are my friends. And I could tell you their stories are beautiful, right? Like, one is an emergency nurse who lives in UK, like these stories are amazing and powerful. One is an activist in Toronto. Another one is an activist in Jamaica, and they are doing amazing work. But their stories are not in book, I guarantee you, their stories are not in any book. I have two of them stories in my book, my first book, my book, *The Invisible Students in the Jamaican Classroom*. But I want their stories more. I want these stories.

Tara: Yes, of course. Now that you mentioned your first book, would you tell us a little bit about that? Because I know that there will be readers who will want to hear you speak a little bit about that.

Andrew: Yes! So, my book is called *The Invisible Student in the Jamaican Classroom*, and you can get it on Amazon. Okay? Yes, it's called *The Invisible Student in the Jamaican Classroom*, and why I love this book: Um, I got an amazing privilege as a researcher to do something that I know many researchers want to do, is to have people who identify trust you enough to share their stories. And when I told people that I had an online survey, I'm looking for Jamaican men, who are— who grew up in Jamaica, and went to a school in Jamaica, whether you live in Jamaica, or the Caribbean, or anywhere. To answer my questionnaire. I honestly thought I was going to get about 50, about 50 persons, I would I, you know, I know enough to get about 50 people to ask their friends, snowball and get it. I had over 121 persons. And this is a powerful part of this. And I did interviews at about, I think interviews, maybe about 18, or

20 interviews, took me a while to do it. And then I did focus groups. And I can tell you when the book was published, and done, that book was published, and we had the launch, Tara, I had people, LGBTQ Jamaican men and women writing me to say, I need my story to be told. If your book, I want my story, and I didn't put any lesbians in the book, and I have my lesbian friends and trans friends who are saying, no, I need my story. So, I'm gonna I'm definitely going to be working on part two of this book. But I— because people want to be told, and it was weird, because I felt so honoured because I didn't have to be, go, you know, begging people to tell their story. They trusted me. I'm thankful that I didn't disappoint. Because I asked them after I read the book. I said, let me know if I did anything wrong, if I misrepresented your voice in any way, because I wanted to be authentic to their voice. And they said no, sorry, we are ready to go from the book to when you're ready. So, I know, the people there to share. I just need the time and the hands and the support to share the stories because it needs to be shared.

Tara: Wonderful. Andrew, let me ask: I know that you're very involved in a number of teacher ed programs, both at OISE in Toronto, and at Queen's; have you had a chance to use any of the stories you've been talking about today within your teaching? And what has that been like?

Andrew: Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely. So in my, in most of my courses, because I teach antidiscrim— I teach equity courses, I teach diversity inclusion. And in most, in all of these courses, they are, there, we deal with, you know, equity in school, we deal with teacher, we deal with cultural relevant pedagogy, but we also deal with LGBTQ issues, 2SLGBTQ+ issues. And what I've had the opportunity to do is, I've used someone who was featured in the book, also, as a guest speaker, for my, for my master's students, for my MT students here at OISE, and they loved it. They, they gave me some of the best review on, on that person as a guest speaker to the class. And also, I've used the book on a list of possible books to use for your executive book, sorry, an assignment, but also use a chapters from the book for, as part of the reading. So, it has been, it has been a good experience. And I'm— the students I've really, really appreciated. And I've had students who have sent it to me, students in our OISE program who identify as LGBTQ that says, "Well, Dr. Campbell, thank you for, for the Jamaican side, or a different view of it". You know, when we talk about church and school, people don't get it that, you know, that when we said hiding, when we talk about hiding in school and being scared, you know, being scared to tell your friend who you are, and feeling like, you know, you're, you're possessed by a demon, because that's what you were taught at a church. And the schools are connected to church. On the guest speaker, that schools are people from the churches, you have to understand the layers to that, and then the levels to that. It's quite— it's quite— it's quite hostile, for growing up in an environment like that. And so, they get to see that, and they get to hear that from not just my voice, but from keynote guest speaker and also from just the, the participants in the book. And I have had the pleasure of doing, as a matter of fact, I have had the pleasure of being asked to do workshops and talks on my book. And I have used data from the book and, in which, in our Canadian context, and always have an amazing reception. So, I know for a fact there is a space, I can tell any publisher, right now, there is a space and a place for this voice, because, because our, our, our North American students are getting even more skillful, they are, they are realizing that what they are getting, voices are missing. And they are asking for the missing voices. I am telling you right now, you, I'm sure you experienced that, Tara. Our students are asking for the missing voice, which is, which is a beautiful thing. They're saying, Dr. Campbell, I've just read five articles. But

where are the other voices? Right? Where are the other voices? And so, it's they're holding the university accountable for the other voices, they are opening up the system of power and privilege that does that, you know, that is responsible for academia and publishing and writing and sourcing for the missing voices.

Tara: Such a powerful way to begin to wrap up our interview on missing voices and missing narratives and how your work is making sure that they come into our talks about schooling and come into our talks about teaching. Just as we wrap up, is there anything else that you think you'd like to say about the research you talked about today? You actually talked about a couple of book projects. Is there anything else that you're working on that maybe you'd like to come back and talk to us in more detail another time?

Andrew: Yes. So, I will definitely have to come back and talk to you about how I'm doing the work in the same counter narratives. And I'll give you a little teaser of what's going on. I'm looking at, I said to you, I have over 130 articles. And I presented the work at CSSE 2019, presented some of the work. I was also presented before at AERA, and I also was up to present at the Caribbean Studies Association. Right. And what I've always been asked by people is, Dr. Campbell, I know you have editorials, news, you have letters to the editor, you have hard things. But have you seen the horrible cartoons in the Jamaica newspapers? And I said, yes. And I can tell you right now I have curated about 46 cartoons. And they're horrible. And these are in our Jamaican newspaper. And they all have to do with LGBTQ people. And so, I am definitely going to be find— I just need I just need more hands, more time, more hours in my day, I want to find artists and I'm not looking for the— I'm not looking for, I'm looking for high school students and college students and activists and whatever you identify— identify as Black but are racialized. But I'm looking for persons who want to lend their allyship in taking that cartoon and drawing it different for me, give me, give me that cartoon, get to that same message and put it in a light where it should have been properly and correct that. So, it's almost going to be correcting the cartoon, or something like that. But we're getting to the end. It's— it's just— it's just again, showing the positives, because we have been marginalized and pushed aside and excluded and stomped on for so long and even murdered. And when I say that, you know, I know people may go, wow, but, but that's up in Jamaica. Right? We have had that in Jamaica. And so, and we want to make sure that, you know, we see, we see us, all our students. We see, we talk about LGBTQ, we talk about sexuality and school. We want to see our students. They have been made invisible in Jamaica; we want them to be seen. And so, I look forward to another opportunity to come back and speak with you. Because it went so fast. Are we, are we, are we there yet? It went so fast, because so amazing conversing. Thank you so much, Tara.

Tara: Oh, it's such a pleasure. And thank you for joining us today. I loved hearing you speak about your research on creating narratives and counter narratives about the lives of LGBTQ people in Jamaica. Andrew Campbell is presently a faculty member within the Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning. He teaches in the Master of Teaching program there and he is teaching courses in anti-discriminatory education, law, professional ethics, educational research, and urban education. Andrew is also an adjunct assistant professor at Queen's University in the professional Master of Education Program, where he teaches courses on curriculum in the global context and issues of equity and

diversity. Alright, that's our podcast for today. You can find this podcast at www.LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca. This episode was produced with the support of the New College Initiative Fund, and from Doug Freisen, who is a PhD student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Thanks to the LGBTQ families speak out team member Kate Reid, sound engineer Lisa Patterson, and musician Doug Freisen for creating the music that opens and closes the show. I'm Tara Goldstein. All the best.