

THE GOOD FIVE CENT CIGAR



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Pride month a time of reflection for LGBTQIA+ staff, students

Christian Silvia | Contributing Reporter

The University of Rhode Island's Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) offers year-round resources for LGBTQIA+ students, faculty and community members in an effort to "spread positivity and enact change" in the community.

Omar Laguerre-Lewis, a rising senior who works at the GSC as a receptionist, said that the Center works to help LGBTQIA+ students by providing resources and space for them to feel included in the community.

"I do think that the Center has done a great job trying to spread positivity and enact change," he said. "I'm personally of the belief that when there's a lot of negativity in the public space, it is always right to respond with positivity."

The GSC offers community members events and support groups to help them feel more comfortable at URI. These support groups include online Zoom calls for Trans and Non-Binary students that meet weekly on Mondays.

Additionally, the Center runs "Safe Zone Project" which have been utilized throughout the Kingston campus since 2012, according to Director of the GSC Annie Russell.

"Safe Zone is our baseline education program," said Russell. "The purpose of it is to build a connecting, supportive community at URI for the LGBTQIA+ community"

The Safe Zone Project is a two-hour-long workshop that teaches attendees about the LGBTQIA+ community and issues such as transphobia. After the workshop, the participants are asked to sign a pledge to declare themselves an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Holly Nichols, a clinical counselor at URI, also runs a support group for LGBTQIA+ women students through the Counseling Center.

Another project at URI, "Out and Proud," hopes to facilitate conversation and promote the visibility of LGBTQIA+ faculty members and faculty members that are allies. In the group, they discuss why it is important to be a visible member or ally of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Laguerre-Lewis, who is part of the LGBTQIA+ community, noted that recent events have been detrimental to LGBTQIA+ community members and have made them feel unsafe on campus. He said that the University needs to take a stand when community members share homophobic or transphobic views and feelings.

"Recent events with the administration have made me feel less welcome and secure with regards to my identity and being a student here at URI," Laguerre-Lewis said. "The administration has made it clear that some statements in the past have been kind of empty and it's shocking."

Russell has also said that students in the LGBTQIA+ community have felt disheartened by the events, and said that the recent events have been traumatic for students.

"I have to be honest in saying I am noticing, and the staff is noticing, that there is a deep fallout from the trauma students are feeling," Russell said.

Laguerre-Lewis hopes that incoming University President Marc Parlange will take steps to make changes that will help LGBTQIA+ community members feel more safe.

Students have been largely supportive of LGBTQIA+ community members in spite of a lack of action from administrators, according to Laguerre-Lewis.

"Looking at students primarily, I personally feel welcomed on campus with my peers," he said. "That is something that

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Celebrating Pride in style



The Gender and Sexuality Center hosted an on-campus Fashion Show during the 2021 LGBTQIA+ Symposium last spring. PHOTO CREDIT: James McIntosh

Writer's rankings: LGBTQIA+ tropes

Kayla Laguerre-Lewis | Entertainment Editor

Pride month is a time to celebrate LGBTQIA+ people; real and fictional. While there has been an increasing amount of representation both on-screen and off-screen in recent years, many LGBTQIA+ characters and storylines have fallen into tropes ranging from "please get this off of my screen, this is setting gay rights back another 50 years" to "stereotypical, but here for it!"

So, here's my definitive and totally-not-objective ranking of the worst and best LGBTQIA+ tropes.

5. *Bury Your Gays*

I know I just said that this wasn't objective, but if you don't find this to be the worst trope, something's wrong. This trope and its now-infamous name reached unfortunate popularity in 2016 when a queer character named Lexa was killed off in "The 100" right when it seemed like fans were getting their "Clexa" (Clarke and Lexa) endgame. In the following months, Denise on "The Walking Dead" and Root on "Person of Interest" were also killed off in their respective shows. These deaths sparked such controversy that an annual women-loving-women fan convention was made in Lexa's honor titled "Clexacon." However, this trope didn't begin in 2016. Another famous example comes from "Buffy The Vampire Slayer." Tara and Willow were one of the first same-sex female couples on mainstream television, but Tara was killed off similarly to Lexa during the show's sixth season in 2002. All this trope does is dangle happiness in front of characters and fans from discriminated against communities just to subsequently snatch it away from them when they breathe a sigh of relief at achieved representation. I think I can speak for everyone when I say it's time to bury the "Bury Your Gays" trope.

4. *Momentarily Bi/Bi For Fun*

Bisexuality erasure is a huge issue on-and-off-screen, whether it's painting bisexuality as an experiment before re-establishing heterosexuality, or just a quick stop on the way to coming out as gay or lesbian, and this trope certainly doesn't help. In "The O.C.," a 92-episode-long teen drama, the relationship between Marissa and Alex gets a whopping 53 minutes (give or take) in five episodes devoted to them. Main girl Marissa falls for recurring character bad girl Alex quickly, even moving in with her (U-Haul much?). However,

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The Gender and Sexuality Center, located on Upper College Road, has hosted many events this Pride Month. PHOTO CREDIT: Grace DeSanti

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Why The Cigar?

The University of Rhode Island's student news organization takes its tongue-in-cheek name from a comment made by Woodrow Wilson's Vice President, Thomas Marshall, while addressing the US Senate. Though the exact context of Marshall's comment "what this country needs is a good five-cent cigar," has been lost over the years, we, as URI's news organization, strive to emulate our quirky name and give just what this campus needs.



Modern LGBTQIA+ artists to celebrate during Pride month

Juliana Lepore | Staff Reporter

Some of the greatest and most influential artists today identify as LGBTQIA+, and in honor of June being Pride month, we're going to break down some of the best in no particular order.

The artist that has arguably had the most modern impact on the LGBTQIA+ community is Lady Gaga. Since first talking publicly about her bisexuality, Gaga has been strong in her position as a beloved member of the community. In 2011, she released her song "Born this Way," a power anthem about feeling comfortable in your own skin and being proud of who you are.

Many members of the LGBTQIA+ community have coined "Born this Way" as the "gay anthem" for its lyrics that specifically mention accepting your sexuality and the powerful message that comes along with that. Gaga has continuously shown her pride and support through her clothing, lyrics and advocacy on social media.

Sam Smith is a non-binary British singer who rose to fame around 2012 with their song "Latch." Since then, they have been a role model for the LGBTQIA+ community, using male pronouns in reference to love interests in their songs and being open and proud of their sexuality on social media.

Smith came out as gay in 2014 following the release of their debut album "In the Lonely Hour." They later came out as non-binary in 2019, announcing that they "feel like a woman sometimes" and have considered transitioning.

"American Idol" 2009 runner-up Adam Lambert came out as gay after photos of him kissing another man surfaced during the run on the show. Lambert admitted he had "nothing to hide" about his sexuality and was always open about his life.

Lambert is flamboyant and bold in his appearance, typically seen wearing dark eyeliner and other makeup. Although he didn't win "American Idol," he still made it big with hit songs like "Whataya Want From Me" and "Ghost Town." In 2020, Lambert teamed up with Queen to record a cover of their song "Somebody to Love."

Frank Ocean released a statement about his sexuality on Tumblr in 2012, not long after the debut of his first solo album "Channel Orange." Since then, Ocean has mentioned his gay relationships in many of his songs.

Some have called Ocean an "LGBTQIA+ icon" for his openness about his sexuality in his lyrics, something that isn't seen much in mainstream music. This openness has gained him a large group

of LGBTQIA+ fans who find Ocean relatable and inspiring.

YouTube star and musician Troye Sivan has been a general gay icon since he came out as gay in 2013. Sivan is an Australian singer-songwriter who is best known for his 2015 album "Blue Neighbourhood."

Sivan came out publicly on YouTube after being out to his close friends and family for about three years. His music videos, most famously "Blue Neighborhood Trilogy," a short film comprised of the videos for the songs, "WILD," "FOOLS" and "TALK ME DOWN," feature different images and tell stories of young gay couples. These videos are meant to embrace the LGBTQIA+ community, who doesn't often see much representation in mainstream media.

Last, but certainly not least, is the queen herself: Jojo Siwa. Siwa got her start on the show "Dance Moms" and later became an icon for young kids online. She came out in a TikTok video of her lip-syncing to Gaga's "Born this Way" earlier this year.

Siwa coming out quite literally shocked the internet, her videos overflowing with positive messages and love. While her target audience is a bit younger than college students, I'm including her on this list because she herself is a member of Gen Z, and who doesn't love Jojo.

These talented individuals remind us every day to be ourselves, embrace who we are and spread love to all people, so let's all do that this pride month.



Lady Gaga celebrating Pride Week in New York in 2019. PHOTO CREDIT: **Vulture**

Writer's rankings: LGBTQIA+ tropes - Continued from Page 1

Marissa is still not over her ex-boyfriend, so they break up. We never see Alex again and Marissa's sexuality is never explored or discussed again. Then there's the idea that it's "fun" or "cool" to be Sapphic/bisexual. The 2014 MTV show "Faking It" was literally based around the premise of two girls who pretended to date to gain popularity (one of them turned out to be a lesbian and the other was "bicurious" at best, leading to seasons of will-they-won't-they before settling on won't). As recently as 2017, in the "Riverdale" pilot, Betty and Veronica shared a kiss during cheer tryouts to try and make the team. As Cheryl Blossom said (who is now a canon lesbian character), "Check your sell-by date, ladies. Faux-lesbian kissing hasn't been taboo since 1994," so let's please make it taboo again.

3. Gay Best Friend/GBF

This one's a classic and will probably never go away, no matter how much I wish it would in most scenarios. It even birthed the 2013 comedy "G.B.F." which I'm going to assume was awful, even to its surprisingly high 80 percent Rotten Tomatoes rating. The Gay Best Friend is typically a side character, usually used as comedic relief, like Damian in "Mean Girls" (who I do love), who is "too gay to function." However, they can be main characters as well, like Will, perhaps the embodiment of the trope itself, from "Will and Grace." These characters tend to

outshine the trope itself, which is part of why I don't see it disappearing any time soon. The trope works, but the implication of it is why I start to push back against it. It almost exclusively applies to gay men and doesn't end on-screen. Real gay men have plenty of stories to share about cishet girls wanting a Gay Best Friend to talk about guy and go shopping with (they can also be referred to as "arm gays"). This reduces them to no more than their sexuality and places them in a stereotypical box of flamboyant, funny and fully serving to their best friends. I would instead like to pitch the "Token Straight Friend," that one friend who finds themselves adopted into a group of queer friends because show writers still haven't seemed to figure out that members of the LGBTQIA+ community tend to move about like wolf packs.

2. Queerbaiting

Raise your hand if you've ever been queerbaited. If you're a part of the LGBTQIA+ community, chances are your hand's been raised. From "Xena: Warrior Princess" to "Supergirl" to "Rizzoli & Isles" to "Glee," the list of queerbait ships runs long and cuts deep. Urban Dictionary defines it as "when an author/director/etc. gives hints, and clever twists to paint a character as possibly being queer, to satisfy queer audiences, but never outright says they are so they can keep their heterosexual audience." As

frustrating as it is to watch seasons of a show where the writers dangle the potential of more canon queer characters in front of its large LGBTQIA+ fanbases, it breeds some of the best fandoms. Apparently, nothing brings the community together online quite like some good old-fashioned queerbait, as they rally to harass the writers, make fan edits, share fan art, create headcanons and read fanfiction. Queerbait ships tend to have the strongest fan bases, as they build their potential off-screen, but it doesn't absolve writers of the fact that they're using LGBTQIA+ audiences to boost their viewership while ignoring their requests for representation. If you're being queerbaited, it still may be worth it to hang on for the ride; if "Supernatural" was able to make their formerly-queerbait ship canon after 15 years (no matter how poorly it may have been done), then anything's possible.

1. ???????

Want to know the top LGBTQIA+ trope of all time? Click on the link above to finish the article on our website!

Pride month reflections - Continued from Page 1

makes me feel happy."

He said that community members who want to support the LGBTQIA+ community should listen to students and try to educate themselves about sexuality and gender identity.

During Pride Month, the GSC is hosting numerous events, such as a Drag Show fundraiser and attending the Newport Pride Parade. All of

these events and information on how to participate can be found on the GSC's social media accounts.

During the school year, the GSC is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. During the summer, it is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Opinion: Pride is not a commodity

Mary Lind | Production Manager

The queer community exists in our purest, most joyful form during Pride Month. If you've ever been to a pride celebration, or interacted with any queer person ever, then you know what I mean.

But, as always, we also exist as consumers. Corporate 'pride' has become an overwhelming presence in the last decade. Pride -- and, dare I say, queer existence in and of itself -- has become an opportunity for brands to market themselves to the queer community and [mostly well-meaning] allies.

You've certainly seen it, because practically every brand has put out at least one rainbow in the last few weeks. On Twitter this month, I've seen an insane amount of brands revamped for Pride.

Take, for example, over-the-counter cough medicine: Robitussin supports the queer community? Yup, according to their profile picture. So does Listerine, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, PayPal, Cisco, Mercedes-Benz and more.

Your favorite brand has a rainbow-striped version of their logo as their Twitter profile picture, or they pinned a "happy pride" post on their Facebook page. Maybe they even aired a commercial, developed a new gimmick like personalized pride soda bottles, or are selling ridiculously flamboyant pride clothes.

Great — but do they actually support the movement? Does their interest in pride go beyond profit margins? There are a few ways to tell.

Coca-Cola is an excellent example of a brand that, despite what their PR teams would have you believe, does not actually support queer liberation. They offer customizable glass bottles of their products with a pride-themed label to put on it. However, when it was first launched, [the tool would not let users put words like "lesbian," "transgender" or "bisexual"](#) — but slurs, "blue lives matter" and other *actually* offensive material were permitted.

Also, like other companies mentioned previously, Coca-Cola makes their "pride" loud and clear in regions where queerness is more openly accepted, and where liberation is making headway. [But in regions where queer people live in the closet out of fear for their safety, or where homosexuality is illegal, the corporation's 'pride' is nowhere to be seen.](#)

Pride-branded products simply would not sell in areas like Russia or Saudi Arabia. The profit trumps the activism. Companies like this are profiting off of the products that people buy thinking that they are supporting the queer community. If my Coke has a rainbow on it, that means I'm supporting a company that has good values, a company that cares about my well-being and identity as a queer individual, that sees my people as more than a bottom line, right? No.

Corporations and brands are not your friend. No matter how quirky their social media presence is or how many rainbows are on their products, they care about the bottom line and if your movement will negatively impact that, then they no longer care about your movement. If your movement is not profitable, then they do not care about your movement.

Performative corporate activism had left me confused — if a company doesn't come out in support of a movement, are they a bad company? If they do, are they good? The real answer is that no matter what they do, they are not good. Whatever they do publicly is not necessarily what is happening behind the scenes.

There are some companies that do pride better than others. Skittles, for example, has gone black-and-white for Pride Month, to highlight the "one rainbow that matters." [They partnered with queer artists](#) from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and are using their brand's platform to highlight the work of those artists. They also partnered with GLAAD to share resources for the community and allies and are donating to them a portion of profits from special "Pride Packs," or Skittles in a gray bag (see the "one rainbow that matters"), up to \$100,000. If pride has to go corporate, then this is a solid way to do it.

Is this representation a bad thing? No, not necessarily. But queer representation shouldn't only matter one month of the year.

As podcaster Fran Tirado pointed out in this great [Twitter](#) thread, ["queer inclusion is no longer the exception. It's the standard."](#) More than that, representation is not the biggest problem here. Are the companies with rainbow logos protecting their queer employees from harassment and discrimination? If they offer health insurance, does it cover gender-affirming surgeries and other treatments? If they are involved in politics, are they supporting politicians and organizations that support queer movements and queer people? Are the profits from pride-branded merchandise going to LGBTQIA+ organizations or into the pockets of the executives?

Putting "love is love" on a t-shirt or in a commercial or having gender-neutral bathrooms in some retail locations is not equivalent to actively supporting the movement for queer liberation. These gestures, while nice, are ultimately meaningless without the work to back it up.

When I'm at Pride, I don't want to see big corporations trying to sell us products with rainbows slapped on them. I don't want to march in a parade alongside a float for a company that makes billions every year and doesn't pay their workers. I'd rather see queer-owned businesses or advocacy groups or local artists or literally anything else. Pride should feel like a celebration — not an advertisement.

Our pride does not exist for profit. Pride is a celebration of identities that have long been stifled or hidden away or persecuted. Pride is a memorial for those who died in the fight for queer liberation, who have been attacked or killed for who they are, who have taken their own lives. Pride is a movement, a continued fight for queer liberation, the act of living radically as yourself. [The first Pride was a riot started by Black trans women against police trying to shut down a gay bar.](#) It was never meant to be commodified. But in capitalism, anything that moves can become a product. During the summer of 2020, many brands came out in support of Black Lives Matter and the movement against policing, including Amazon, IBM and Microsoft, to name a few. They pledged to stop or hinder the sales of racist surveillance equipment to law enforcement, [but continued to do so anyway.](#)

As this Pride month comes to an end, I ask you to reflect on the commodification of the movement and think deeper about what it means for a brand to be "woke." Don't trust the rainbow logo, and don't get used to it because it will be gone on July 1, with queer liberation off the table as a marketing strategy until next year.

Disney underperforms in queer representation

Leah Popovic | Web Editor

With minimal LGBTQIA+ representation in their films, Disney continues to face backlash this Pride month for only using token queer characters rather than spotlighting the community.

Over the past five years, Disney has incorporated very few queer moments and characters into their feature length films despite a growing global concern for proper representation. Glimpses of a lesbian couple in "Toy Story 4" (2019) and LeFou's implicit romantic interest toward Gaston in "Beauty and the Beast" (2017) are two examples of Disney's modest attempts at portraying LGBTQIA+ relationships.

Their farthest progress can be seen in the 2020 Pixar production "Onward," which includes Disney's first openly gay movie character. Aside from this, their queer characters are few and far between.

While some new Disney television series have made further steps towards representation, the majority of their movies and shows imply heteronormativity, the belief that heterosexuality is the default, preferred or normal mode of sexual orientation. Fans have accused Disney of "queerbaiting" and only acknowledging LGBTQIA+ characters in an attempt to seem inclusive.

Disney is also notorious for poorly implying characters as gay or queer, yet never introducing them as such. Ryan from the "High School Musical" (2006) franchise was intentionally written as exuberant and feminine, placing him under a gay man's stereotype and undermining the true diversity of the community, all while never canonically confirming his sexuality.

The lack of proper inclusivity by Disney and Pixar is unwarranted considering the strides being made towards equality worldwide. It sends a message to queer people, especially queer youth, that their identities will always be overshadowed by straight and cisgendered stories instead.

Disney's missteps have been noticed by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), who analyzed the quantity and quality of LGBTQIA+ representation throughout seven different motion picture studios. They ranked Disney as failing in these categories.

Rising sophomore Micky Vancoughan said that Disney should consider more progressive options when writing and animating their films.

"It's not enough to have [queer people] in the background for attention," she said. "We need to see more gay and trans characters at the center of the story."

Vancoughan hopes that in the future, members of the LGBTQIA+ community will be advocated for by filmmakers, and that queer characters can be played or voiced by actors who identify as members of the community as well.

Although the instances are scarce, the progress made by Disney should also be underlined so that the studio can continue in an inclusive direction.

The Disney Channel Series "The Owl House" confirms one leading character, Luz, as bisexual, and shows another character having two fathers. Additionally, Disney+ released a short film entitled "Out" which tells the story of a gay man coming out to his parents and even features an on-screen kiss.

These steps are crucial, but Disney must do more for the queer community. Rising senior Lizzie Vanasse is optimistic.

"I expect [Disney] to keep moving in the right direction," she said. "Our world keeps moving forward, and so should they."

Fans are eagerly awaiting the premiere of "The Proud Family" reboot, which is said to have a same-sex couple at the center of the plot. As for other future projects, Disney has yet to announce if queer individuals will be significant in their plans for 2021 releases.



Scene from "Out," a short on Disney+ following one man's coming out story. PHOTO CREDIT: **indiewire.com**