



Queer and Trans Research Lab



YEAR-IN-REVIEW 2024

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Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL)

The QTRL is a collaborative research project based at the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto, focusing on methods in queer and trans studies across the disciplines as well as across creative, activist, and scholarly research practices. Our aim is to bring innovative approaches and solutions to entrenched and emerging social and political problems affecting 2SLGBTQ+ and BIPOC lives and communities.

The Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL) is committed to:

1. Providing an interactive, creative space for scholars, students, artists, and community leaders to work collectively on their projects with the vital support needed to undertake them.
2. Welcoming scholars, artists, and 2SLGBTQ+ community leaders from across the country and around the world to conduct their work both at the university and in the community through talks, workshops, symposia, performances, and exhibitions.
3. Creating new research and study networks by providing its members with the opportunity to collaborate on complex issues in queer and trans studies and to imagine new approaches to research partnerships that will improve the lives of people in their and our communities.
4. Creating public-facing, accessible materials and knowledge delivery methods that stage and reflect the ongoing research collaborations as they take place at the lab.

Director's Message



Dana Seitler

2023-24 has been a historic year for us at the Bonham Centre. Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS) celebrated its 25th

anniversary as a program, and we just finished our third year of the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL). At the Bonham Centre, we strive to function as a collective and I feel grateful every single day that I have the privilege to do this work with all of you. If you are reading this, it means that you are part of this work and one of the folks that deserves the greatest of thanks for your support of what we do, for your commitment to community-based learning, and for the many activism of the classroom and the street that make SDS and the QTRL the queer and trans world-building experiments that they are.

I do not have to tell you that we are living in precarious times. The onslaught of anti-trans and anti-queer rhetoric, policy, and legislation continues to generate violence against our communities. These are times of heightened anti-Blackness, anti-Asian racism, and anti-Indigeneity. We have seen a tidal wave of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ legislature wash over the U.S. and Canada. We have seen entire Gender Studies departments in the U.S. eliminated. In Canada, we are experiencing much of the same, including the anti-trans legislation passed in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan. We also know that these are not isolated or unconnected phenomenon, but central to the structures of inequality that manage and regulate the everyday lives of queer, trans, and racialized communities. So, what do we do? At the Bonham Centre, we double down on our commitment to building a better world. We work harder to imagine and enact practices of change. We work to embrace actions of mutual consideration and intersectional care and awareness as the necessary conditions for any sexual politics.

We might also want to take a moment to think very specifically about the settler colonial project, and occupied territories and peoples, and hold a space for all the ongoing struggles against colonization, the usurpation of land, and the settler violences we stand witness to in Palestine and elsewhere, even as we move closer to and fight for their liberation. "Poetry" Audre Lorde argues, "is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action." For Lorde, poetry is not only a dream or a vision, but also the architecture of our everyday lives. Poetry extends beyond mere words on a page to an understanding that our worlds are made up of a poetics of the everyday, which, in turn, has the power to sustain, to elicit response, to disturb, to arouse, and to pleasure in ways that enlarge our capacity to imagine the world. Poetry, Lorde teaches us, has the power to remind us that we are still alive. And, these days, being alive is not a luxury.

Program Co-ordinator Review

Christopher Smith

As I enter into my third year as Program Coordinator for the Queer and Trans Research Lab, I am once again left in awe

at what has been accomplished in 2023-24. During this year I witnessed the growth in opportunities for undergraduate students to work with the Lab as research assistants, whom I mentored and advised. And they advised and schooled me too. Intergenerational learning and exchange is everything at the QTRL! It is a necessary component of our praxis.

I am in awe, because they told their friends, and a groundswell of eager queer and trans students culminated in the largest pool of applications for 2024-25. The word is out, and the number of students desiring to immerse themselves in the Queer and Trans Research Lab is reflecting our current need for societal change, in such innovative spaces.

The year has been a challenging one, and we all are still feeling it. The world is still not the one we need, nor the one we strive for. But I must embrace the joyful moments and milestones.

QTRL Artist-In-Residence – Rhoma Spencer (2022-23) writer/director/actor of “Queen of The Road: A Calypso Rose Musical” had its workshop performance at Hart House Theatre in 2023, during their residency. Imagine when you see a collaboration manifest itself abroad, and you find yourself in Tobago for the first of many performances of a groundbreaking work. I had the privilege of attending the Tobago premiere in October 2023. By popular demand, the premiere generated interest for multiple performances in various regions of Trinidad in the spring of 2024. This kind of collaborative accomplishment cannot go unremarked.

Witnessing the growth and success of End of the Line Press as they celebrated their first two publications at a book launch at Glad Day Bookshop with a full house. Further, the collaboration between fellows such as Hugh O’Neil (ELP) and Artist-In-Residence Brian Rigg as the latter began the process of building Black Fruit Press, an independent publishing company whose goal is to “champion a broad spectrum of 2SLGBTQ+ and BIPOC writers from many genres”. And I see great success for this endeavor.

Immersing myself in the politics of pleasure, as the Pleasure Project symposium opened with a masterclass for graduate students on “pleasure as method”. The keynote lectures offered by Angela Jones (Professor of Sociology and Department



Chair, Farmingdale State College) and Marlon M. Bailey (Professor and Associate Chair, Department of African and African American Studies, Washington University in St. Louis) were riveting and sure to generate future conversations about race, sex and pleasure.

As I write, Community Organizer-In-Residence Christopher Nkambwe – founder of the LGBTQ+ Peer Educators Academy, will be hosting the first graduation ceremony in July at the Paul Cadario Conference Centre. The LGBTQ+ Peer Educators Academy is an organization led by peers for peers to provide a safer, more inclusive, and engaging learning space for emerging LGBTQ+ newcomers and leaders to share their knowledge and expertise.

I decide to underscore these particular milestones, because they speak to the collaborative nature of the QTRL both locally and transnationally. I shine light on these milestones because they serve as a reminder of why we do this work. My peers and colleagues refuse to lose hope, despite the dark backdrop that provides the setting for their endeavors.

That is the spirit I carry with me as we enter 2024-25.

community organizer- in-residence

Christopher Nkambwe

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Nkambwe, herself a transwoman and refugee from Uganda, is this year's Community Organizer-in-Residence at the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL), part of the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies.

Four months after arriving in Canada in 2019,

Nkambwe founded the African Centre for Refugees (africancentre4refugees.org), an organization that supports vulnerable LGBTIQ refugees from the African continent. As part of the QTRL, she is establishing the LGBTIQ+ Peer Educators Academy.

"The peer educators are a group of 23 newcomers from different countries in Africa that we are training to reach members of the refugee community that we cannot otherwise reach," says Nkambwe. "We are training them in social work, in learning about HIV, employment, housing, healthcare.

"We sent out a call to our members at the African Centre for Refugees (ACR). We received 60 applications and we chose 23. At the end of six months, they will be graduating from the Academy."

The peer educators will then continue to work through the ACR.

"The Academy will train the peer educators to transfer the skills they have learned to the community at large," she says.

Nkambwe is also using her time at the QTRL to work on the QueerConnect app, a virtual resource hub that will be run through the ACR, allowing refugees to find services online. And she is working on a five-year plan to construct a brick-and-mortar shelter for queer and trans refugees.



“I’m representing the voices of the community, seeing that their voices are heard,” *Christopher Nkambwe*



“That is the long-term impact that the QTRL will be creating,” she says.

Nkambwe herself was forced to flee Uganda after she was arrested.

“I was working with so many different organizations,” she says. “I was working with a medical facility to provide outreach. Then the police stormed the venue, and I was arrested for committing homosexuality. By that time I had got a visa to attend a conference in Vancouver, and was able to leave. I was helped by so many organizations and individuals.”

Things have since become even worse for queer and trans people in Uganda with the passage of even stricter anti-homosexual legislation in March.

“Service provision and delivery in Uganda came to a standstill,” says Nkambwe. “People can’t get proper medical services, many have lost their jobs, most of them are being evicted.

The law says the landlord is liable if they rent to homosexuals.

It’s really difficult. The

African Centre

for Refugees was at the forefront of organizing a march in Toronto to protest the law. It brought together 200 refugees, and many organizations joined us.”

The idea for the ACR came to Nkambwe when, upon her arrival,

she realized that many refugees did not have access to help with even basic needs.

“When I got here, I started to wonder how many people go through similar challenges, even in things like housing,” she says.

“After four months in Canada, I realized it was very important to have a centre. It’s harder for LGBTIQ refugees to get to Canada, especially those from the African continent. It’s hard to know when someone is eligible to enter Canada. They make it very hard to enter Canada. Then it’s a challenge to fit into here, even basic things like using the TTC can be difficult. The AFC finds lawyers to help with immigration. It also does referrals for housing, employment, legal aid assistance; it supports people during hearings, and offers referrals to other organizations that have resources for essential services.


“We’re trying our level best to at least welcome everybody and make a positive space,” says Nkambwe. “The African Centre has established itself; we’ve created visibility for what we do. We have opportunities to speak to service providers working in different areas. Recently, we gave a presentation to the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture on how to orient themselves around LGBTIQ refugees and issues.”

Nkambwe also sits on the advisory committee of the Ontario Council for Agencies Serving Immigrants under the Positive Space Initiative that supports the settlement sector in serving LGBTIQ+ newcomers more effectively.

“I’m representing the voices of the community, seeing that their voices are heard,” she says.

Nkambwe also serves as the board chairperson of the Royal Rays Initiative, an organization in Uganda devoted to providing free services and resources that build self-sufficiency for LGBTIQ people.

“The work is still going on,” she says. “It’s an organization I was leading back home. When I fled to Canada, it did not mean I should stop working with them. It does not mean I have to be back home in Uganda. I connect them to organizations in Canada.



“I haven’t been in a formal academic space for a number of years. It’s interesting to be in a place where it’s very easy for language and radical movements to get co-opted into liberal frameworks. But the QTRL is very much grounded in realities and community work. It feels different from the rest of the university.”

Brian Rigg

Christopher Nkambwe

We recently got a grant from Pride Toronto to support the initiative.”

But Nkambwe still sees a need to expand the services offered by the ACR, which is why she seized the opportunity to apply to the QTRL.

“I saw the call for participants and I sent in my application,” she says. “I had a project in mind but didn’t have the funds, but when I wrote the application, they thought it was very important to have it.

“It is so very good because I have met so many people,” says Nkambwe. “I am making friends to support me in running the organization. We are making strong partnerships, and they will continue because our partners have different knowledges and are willing to be very supportive of the program.”

Nkambwe also has the chance to educate and learn from the other members of the QTRL cohort.

“You get to learn different ideas from different individuals,” she says. “I’ve met professors who are doing writing books, I’ve met students, I’ve met poets. It’s a really, really good experience of collaborating with people.

“During my “share and tell” session, I shared how I came to Canada, and how I have managed to live in Canada. They’re very eager to learn about my lived experience as a trans refugee in Canada.”

Nkambwe is hoping that the QTRL can help raise the funds to bring the app and the shelter to fruition. “The need is becoming more pressing,” she says. “In the last three months alone, the ACR has welcomed six trans refugees from Africa.”

“We need real connections,” says Nkambwe.

“We need spaces like the QTRL to connect us to people who can really support us. We need funds and we need moral support.”





artist-in-residence

The power of poetry is taking over the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL), using lyricism and verse to help build community and activist movements.

"You're not a lawyer arguing at the Supreme Court, but particularly for black folk and other minorities, poetry as protest and as activism has been a really amazing tool for providing a collective voice," says Brian Rigg. "Many great poets have come out of activist movements."

Rigg and fellow poet Jody Chan are this year's artists-in-residence at the QTRL, part of the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. Both are finding the mix offered by the QTRL a perfect fit.

"I always have and continue to identify as a community organizer first of all," says Chan. "There are community activists who are also poets, like Audre Lorde and June Jordan. That mixture of activism and creativity at the QTRL in a lot of ways feels very familiar, very aligned with my ethical approach to poetry."

"I haven't been in a formal academic space for a number of years. It's interesting to be in a place where it's very easy for language and radical movements to get co-opted into liberal frameworks. But the QTRL is very much grounded in realities and community work. It feels different from the rest of the university."

Brian Rigg

Rigg says the QTRL offered a rare opportunity.

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"It is very exciting for me as an artist and writer. Residencies are big, but they're few and far between in Canada. The mix of types at QTRL, different academics, students, activists and

artists, it sounded like a dream. And it has been.

"The biggest deal for me is being able to access the U of T library system, and acquire all that knowledge," he says. "The fact I have a Research Assistant is also amazing. I never had an assistant before, and it's very exciting to be able to work with someone who can help you."

Rigg is working on a collection of poems entitled *Warrior in the Garden*, which draws inspiration from Afro-Surrealism.

"In 2022, I took a trip to London with my mom," he says. "I visited a lot of museums, cultural institutions, and art galleries, and especially Black and queer artworks and installations and exhibits, including *Into the Black Fantastic*, which focused on Black continental and



“What feels most important to me is the mutuality and reciprocity. We have really different skillsets and different academic backgrounds, but we have lots of things to learn from each other. It’s really magical to discover what the areas of overlap are. Collaboration is a really big practice at the QTRL, and I’m approaching it with curiosity and openness.”

Jody Chan

diasporic surrealism and fantasy. By the end of the trip, I had a seed of an idea.

“The QTRL residency was the first place I pitched the writing project. It’s a great feeling to have my idea acknowledged, and now to have it supported by an institution like U of T.”

But while influenced by surrealism, Rigg says his new poems will also be more directly political than his previous work.

“I want to be a bit more obvious in my activism and politics, more head-on in dealing with Black issues around violence,” he says. “There’s obviously an all-out war on Black bodies that’s going on in America. The title of the project is from an old Chinese proverb, ‘It’s better to be a warrior in the garden than a gardener in a war.’ It reminds me that I’m a poet/warrior/activist.”

As part of the residency, Rigg is conducting a week-long writing workshop crafted for BIPOC, queer, and trans poets, that will culminate in a reading event.

“It gives me an opportunity to workshop my own manuscript, and to meet other writers and poets in the community,” he says. “It’s two birds with one stone.”

The workshop will also help fill a large hole in the Canadian literary landscape.

“I did some research around workshops in Canada, and there really isn’t anything. I’ve had this idea for a long time, but not had the resources to make it happen. It’ll be small, about 10 people, who will work intensely with each other’s manuscripts and get supported in their own work. I’m getting industry professionals to come in and talk about what it means to be a professional writer, how to write grant applications, and so on.

“This is pretty much a test run. I want to create a well-known brand that continues past the QTRL and into something more permanent and substantial,” he says. “My goal is to create a publishing house that provides various services, workshops, a journal, annual events, chapbook contests similar to the plethora of contests they have in the States.”

For Rigg, himself, his love of poetry grew out of his Jamaican heritage, growing up with reggae and the revolutionary lyrics of performers like Bob Marley.

“I was taught to appreciate language from an early age,” he says. “But I wasn’t satisfied with just reading, I was arrogant enough to think I could write something just as good or better.”

Rigg says his first collection, *A False Paradise*, which came out in 2001, allowed him to “synthesize and process my experiences as a young queer Black man living in Toronto.”

“Coming out, the joy of that, the strangeness of it, it was a collection of poems that touched all those different aspects of my life, my relationship with queer friends, a lot about drag queens, navigating my 20s really.

“My poetry is very personal. I never think a poem is going to change the world. It works as therapy and catharsis, allows me to process the politics and the terrible things going on in the world. It galvanizes me and makes me think I can keep going.”

Jody Chan

Chan had previously been a student at U of T, but their return has felt very different.

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“When I was a student, I was going through my own politicization and the queer and trans community was not at the forefront,” they say. “Being part of the QTRL has felt like a merging of many things. It has provided much-needed

material and financial support and flexibility. The support of a Research Assistant is really wild for me. Someone is there to support me!”

Chan is working on a manuscript exploring crip queer narratives and rituals around birth, death, and suicidality. They say the idea for the work grew out of their performances as part of the RAW Taiko drumming group. The work may also include a performance with other artists and movement workers exploring disability activism.

“I’ve been meditating on sound and movement,” they say. “Even the word ‘movement’ has many different implications. What type of movement, what allows movement, what systemic forces constrain someone’s movement? But also, collective movement, like for liberation, what it means to be part of that sort of movement. One of the dimensions of that is around madness and thinking of historically different forms of dissent and struggle.



artist-in-residence

"Black organizers have been criminalized and pathologized, queerness has been pathologized and criminalized. There's a form of madness in not conforming to the ways of being that are expected of you, in resisting capitalist and colonialist forms, in imagining forms of care that are needed. Suicidality and depression are actually reasonable forms of response to a world that doesn't value anyone who is rendered disposable or exploitable in capitalist or colonialist society."

For Chan, poetry is a way of thinking and a way of seeing the world.

"There is an affinity between my relationship with poetry and my relationship with madness," they say. "Poetry just doesn't have a loyalty to narrative truth as we understand it in the Western literary tradition. Poetry has more space to hold different relationships with time and space and meaning. It's very compatible with how my brain works,

"When I'm overwhelmed or triggered, I go non-verbal. Communication can still happen, but it requires

intimacy and understanding. Poetry invokes that intimacy and trust for me."

Chan's new book, impact statement, came out in March.

"It looks at the history of madness and institutionalization and incarceration in Toronto through the history of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the forms of control that have been present in that site," they say. "It goes a bit wider into my personal experiences with madness, intergenerational stories around trauma and madness, and historical and current relationships between policing and the queer and trans communities."

Chan themselves is a former psychotherapist, but is now training to be a death doula, who will help ease the end of people's lives. They say this new career is a better fit, especially as they are drawn to grief and death.

"There was a misalignment between me and psychotherapy," they say. "The relationship with the regulatory college and mandatory reporting, the relationship with policing and surveillance, the spectre of that power dynamic, seeing people virtually in private practice, not having a relationship with colleagues, it felt really isolating.

"With death work, there's more openness and space. People work in teams, and with friends and family and community. It's more caring."

The focus on support is part of what has drawn Chan to the QTRL.

"What feels most important to me is the mutuality and reciprocity. We have really different skillsets and different academic backgrounds, but we have lots of things to learn from each other. It's really magical to discover what the areas of overlap are. Collaboration is a really big practice at the QTRL, and I'm approaching it with curiosity and openness."

Chan says that idea of collaboration has become even more important to them, even in terms of writing their poetry. They are part of a group called the Daybreak Poets Collective.

"I don't want to do anything alone anymore," they say. "Writing can be very isolating. Last January, I facilitated a workshop all about collective writing for racialized, queer, trans and disabled folks. We ended up with a bunch of collaborative written pieces.

"The idea is not to erase any individual voice, but to have the experience of collectivity and solidarity. This is really cool for me."

The Martha LA McCain Faculty Research Fellows

From the murders of lesbians and gay men in India to the feminist struggle against patronymic nomenclature in the former Soviet Union, this year's faculty fellows at the Queer and Trans Research Lab are exploring ways in which queer identity is asserting itself around the world.

Cassandra Hartblay and Naisargi N. Davé are the Martha LA McCain Faculty Research Fellows at the QTRL, part of the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. Both are enjoying the freedom to work on their new projects the fellowship affords, while also welcoming the chance to be part of the lab's mix of academia, activism, and community.

"These spaces that are interdisciplinary also create spaces in which academics, artists, activists, and poets can think together," says Davé. "In a space like the QTRL, with so much diversity of perspective and life experience, it's incredibly generative."

Hartblay says the QTRL is also affording her an opportunity to catch up on what she has missed.

"I think the QTRL is a really special, unique community," she says. "Having faculty, graduate students, undergrads working together is really hard to accomplish and the QTRL does that so well. I hadn't done a lot reading in queer and trans theory since I did my dissertation. In 12 years, a lot has happened! It's valuable for me to have the chance to get to hear what other people are



working on. And it's just really nice to hear what the cutting-edge of research in the field is right now."

Cassandra Hartblay

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Hartblay is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health and Society and was the inaugural Director of the Centre for Global

Disability Studies at UTSC.

"I've always done a version of feminist and queer disability studies, and it became a natural fit to apply to the lab," she says. "What I've been working on at the QTRL is really amassing a set of readings and background information for my project, and continuing to build relationships with other academics in this area, as well as to research related to my project."

Hartblay's project investigates the social life of the Russian patronymic in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in collaboration with queer, feminist, and disabled community liaisons in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

"My previous research was in Russia, doing a project on adults with disabilities and ableism in

Russia," she says. "I was living in a small village while the [feminist activist group] Pussy Riot trial was going on, and I was struck by how little people seemed to care about this major event. One of the biggest cultural divides was about queer feminist advocacy. I started to track this, and to look at how people are looking at the patronymic."

In Russia, everyone is given a middle name taken from their father's first name. For example, Nadezhda Andreyevna Tolokonnikova, one of the founders of Pussy Riot, has a middle name taken from her father, Andrey Tolokonnikov. Vladimir Putin's name is Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, because his father's given name was Vladimir.

"It's highly gendered and it's given to children on their birth certificate," says Hartblay. "There are anecdotes of women making up the name of the father, while they decide whether the biological father is going to be part of the child's life. Tradition says a child needs a father and a mother, but the reality is that a majority of other combinations exists, like is a child living with her mother and the mother's mother. It's a striking example of people saying one thing and doing another."

"I had the idea to write about the social life of the Russian patronymic, which is founded on binary gender. What happens if people want to have a third gender, how are people dealing with it/them?"

Hartblay had intended to root this research in Russia, but fieldwork there became impossible after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. She saw this as an opportunity to follow up on a previous project in Kyrgyzstan, a central Asian country that was also part of the former Soviet Union.

"I heard about the case of a queer feminist activist in Kyrgyzstan bringing suit against

the government for not allowing a matronymic name,” says Hartblay. “That little kernel has become the centre of my project. This past summer, the constitutional court decided in her favour, but deferred on the parent being able to give the child the name. They said it’s so unusual it could give the child problems. They sent the matter to the legislature, which unexpectedly caused a political scandal.”

Hartblay, who grew up in western Massachusetts, was a kid when the Soviet Union collapsed.

“I was very interested in why communism didn’t work. I studied Russian in high school and university. It was an earlier era when cultural exchange was seen as important.”

Hartblay worked on bringing Russian artists and performers to the US. But while she was in graduate school, Russia began enacting bans on LGBTQ+ “propaganda,” and many of her queer Russian friends had to decide whether it was safe to stay.

Hartblay has also had a long-time interest in disability issues.

“I was just a strange kid,” she says. “Today, we’d probably call it neurodivergent. In the 90s, I felt an affinity to kids with disabilities. As I got older, and became more ‘normal,’ I personally felt the injustice of friends being sent to other classes.”

Hartblay’s dissertation, about disability advocacy and accessibility design in Russia, combined her fields of study. She also turned the work into a play, which was performed at universities around the US. She performed a reading in St. Petersburg but plans to bring the play to Russia were cancelled by Covid and then Russia’s war on Ukraine.

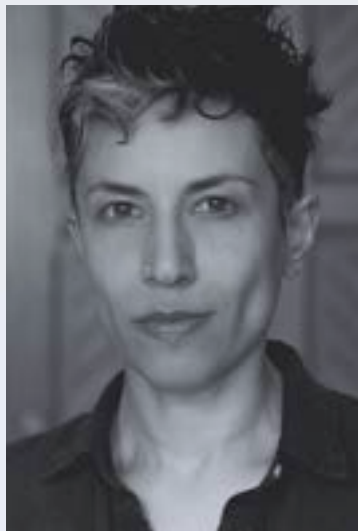
Her current work might also become a stage production, but first she expects to do several

years of reading and preparation, including long-term field work in Kyrgyzstan. More immediately, she is planning a virtual roundtable and an exhibition in Toronto around the politics of naming.

Hartblay was also the co-curator of Crip Ritual, an exhibition of artwork from the point of view of artists with disabilities.

“Projects that engage directly with the community are very important. Ethnography and theatre come into contact from time to time, and it’s been very exciting to be part of that conversation.

“For me, the QTRL is a really good example of how to start those conversations.”



Naisargi N. Davé

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As part of the SDS Steering Committee for the past few years, Davé calls the Bonham Centre an “auxiliary home.”

So when

the Associate Professor in Anthropology and South Asian Studies had the chance to apply for a faculty fellowship, she didn’t hesitate.

“I was just finishing my second book and was excited to start on my third book,” says Davé. “It was a chance to force myself to put something on paper and an opportunity to share my work at the monthly ‘show and tells.’ It’s such a wonderful, warm, rigorous community of scholars.”

Davé’s new project is entitled *Murder: The Social Life of Violent Death in Queer India*. It spans the trials of sodomites and bestialists in the nineteenth century, provocation and honour defences to justify the killing of gay men, the disappearances of hijras and sex workers, the slow death of people with HIV in Tihar Jail, and the lesbian double suicides across the subcontinent.

The book was inspired by the murder of two gay men in India in 2004 and will look at the ways sensationalist coverage of violent death has, in some unexpected ways, opened up space for queer lives.

“One man was wealthy, one was working class,” she says. “When the bodies were found, the location became an instant site of iconography. The media were covering gay life in a way they hadn’t before. It became part of the Indian understanding of what queer life was all about. It gave queer activists the opportunity to start engaging with the media and the police.

“The book also talks about journalists and Dalits who speak out, and lesbian women who are killed in honour killings, but also about what are known as “double suicides.” The murders serve as warnings, but also serve as a chance to celebrate these lives. The chosen cases serve as what I call ‘murder events,’ moments of rupture.”

Davé was able to spend February in India doing fieldwork, including looking at ways in which the true crime genre has become popular.

Naisargi N. Davé

"There is an undercurrent in the book of murder cinema, murder books, murder TV and, of course, murder podcasts, which are exploding in India. True crime is huge. I'm also interested in the cultural fascination with murder and true crime."

One result of that fascination, says Davé, may be that the justice system is cracking down. She points out that the two men charged with the 2004 murders were found guilty, even though they pleaded provocation.

"Even this desire to snuff out perversion, that was not a successful defence."

Davé is also interested in the ways in which the Hindu nationalist government of Narendra Modi is using "pinkwashing" to try to contrast itself to Muslim countries, painting India as more accepting, including of transgender and intersex individuals, known as hijras.

"The right is disgustingly savvy about co-opting this language of decolonization, of embracing anything that could be seen as traditional, such as yoga or hijras. It's anti-colonial but still fascist. And it doesn't change the on-the-ground violence against queer people."

Davé's new work follows closely on the heels of her last book, *Indifference: On the Praxis of Interspecies Being*, published late last year, following years of fieldwork in India.

"It essentially tries to answer big moral questions about what it means for humans and animals to live and die in a shared world," she says. "The tendency is to think that good comes from big feelings such as love, and social ills come from

hate. Love, curiosity, hate, disgust are all invested in the concept of otherness. I argue for indifference, a mutual regard for each other and for being let alone."

Davé was born and raised near Atlanta, part of one of the largest South Asian diasporic communities in North America.

"I was curious about the ways in which Indian identity was mobilized in patriarchal ways. I grew up in a strict household. I wasn't allowed to speak to boys, although I did. I was savvy and a good liar."

It took Davé attending the University of Georgia to find her identity.

"I cut my hair the first week," she says. "I came out almost immediately. It took getting away from my parents. When I was in Athens, it was a town where Michael Stipe was walking around with his twink boyfriend. It was an environment in which it was possible to be out."

"My mother reacted very negatively at first, same with my father. They're both very snoopy, and as rightfully happens to snoops, they found out things they weren't ready for. But they both came around, they adore my partner and they've embraced my partner's son."

Davé says she normally works slowly, but is looking forward to plunging into this book, including spending further time in India.

"I have a feeling this book is a little bit different," she says. "I have such a strong sense of what it looks like, even the table of contents. Of course, in my case, a faster book means five years instead of ten."





Martha LA McCain Postdoctoral Fellow

LJ
Slovin

S

LJ Slovin accepts that trans youth are at risk. But they don't want that to be the only identity those youth are allowed to have.

"My framework is thinking about the pedagogy of desire," they say. "My focus is on desiring trans youth

to exist, for young folks to grow up and to be trans. We need to expand our ideas of transness and the limited ways in which transness is understood. We need to find a way to shift these constraints and to embrace the fact that trans is a beautiful way to move through the world."

Slovin is this year's Martha LA McCain Postdoctoral Fellow at the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL), part of the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. They are delighted at the chance to work on a project exploring the ways in which "the category of 'at risk' has been tethered to queer and trans youth."

"The QTRL is a really unique academic space," says Slovin. "I'm an interdisciplinary scholar, a queer and trans person who works with queer and trans youth. I've done my degrees mostly in spaces that are not queer and trans-focused. This is a great opportunity to be in a space that is queer-focused and is run by queer folk. I'm fortunate to be funded by the QTRL and to be able to put the focus on research, and to be able to think, breathe, and talk to other scholars and other queer folks."

Slovin got their BA in Feminist and Gender studies from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and their MA in Sociology with a focus on sexual health education for young people at the University of British Columbia. Their PhD, from the faculty of education at UBC, focused on curriculum and pedagogy. Prior to arriving at the QTRL, they had been an instructor at the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at UBC and in the Women's Studies Program at Langara College.

But Slovin says they also took time off after each degree and worked with queer and trans youth in both Canada and the US, experiencing first-hand the ways in which young people are forced to fit a certain narrative.

LJ Slovin



"I'm a queer and trans person and a former youth worker," they say. "This is a topic that I care about a lot, not just intellectually, but personally, as an activist and as an advocate who cares about young folks."

"Something that has bothered me increasingly is looking around at the moral panic backlash, especially against trans youth. There is a lot of focus on risk and protection; it's very present in how advocates and supporters speak about trans youth. It affects how trans youth speak about themselves. At rallies, one of the most common signs is 'Protect Trans Youth.' It reinforces the idea that trans youth are at risk."

That constant refrain, even from their allies, takes a toll, says Slovin.

"I think it's incredibly harmful for young folk if what we're constantly hearing is that there's something inherently risky about being trans. Instead of hearing about heteronormativity and white supremacy and ableism being violent and targeting trans youth, it becomes that trans is risky."

"I want to be able to support queer and trans youth without labelling them as being at risk, without always being on the defensive, because transness is great," they say.

Slovin's research traces the creation of the "at risk" category for queer and trans youth back to the 1980s, when research first began being published on the rates of suicide among those youth. Today, they say, trans youth are required to fit a certain stereotype.

"There's a certain framework requiring young people to make themselves visible in order to receive support, they have to jump through certain hoops. We have this very white, colonialist, very ableist, very limited idea of what trans means, of what it looks like to be trans. In my time as a youth worker in Washington and BC, I learned that if you want to sustain programs, there are certain available discourses you are supposed to use to get funding."

"Members of the public who are supportive say that without these protections, trans youth will die," says Slovin. "It positions them as always on the precipice of death. It ends up giving trans youth this very limited idea of their future."

Slovin herself grew up in a small town south of Boston, a locale they say was not the easiest place for them to come of age.

"We didn't really learn about trans identity. When I was growing up, if you were queer, you were told you were going to have a tough life. In the larger society, conversations about trans people, any portrayal in film, none of it was positive. It didn't invite you in."

"There are so many folks involved at different points in their lives and study, and the lab is set up so that we are working and learning with and from each other. I think it's particularly unique for undergraduate students to have access to this type of mentorship. LJ

Slovin

They are particularly pleased that the QTRL offers a chance to work with and talk to undergraduate students, as well as with those from different communities, careers, and experiences.

"There are so many folks involved at different points in their lives and study, and the lab is set up so that we are working and learning with and from each other. I think it's particularly unique for undergraduate students to have access to this type of mentorship."

"I think it's incredibly generative, and it aligns so well with queer and trans studies," they say. "A lot of us remain connected to the community, so it doesn't make sense for our academic spaces to be disconnected from community spaces. Building that into the lab is a really important element of how the lab functions. It's important to how we move through the world, including as queer and trans academics, to not be in some academic silo."

Slovin hopes to publish their current research at some point and is preparing, once their time at the QTRL ends, to start their new tenure track job at the University of Victoria. For now, they are excited that their first book, *Fierce, Fabulous and Fluid: How Trans High School Students Work at Gender Non-Conformity*, is now published by NYU Press.

"It feels a bit surreal," they say. "It's very exciting. I've been working on it for a long time. It feels honestly wild that it's done."

Grad Students

Hannah Quinn is trying to change the stereotype that anthropologists do not work well with others. Being part of the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL) is helping her to do that.

"Anthropology is very much the lone researcher perspective," she says. "Writing is very isolating. I do a lot better when I can think as part of a community. I can think of things you might not otherwise. The QTRL is fundamentally a community of peers."

Quinn and Elliot Tilleczek are this year's Graduate Dissertation Completion Award Recipients at the QTRL, part of the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS). Jad Sinno is a Graduate Research Assistant. All three are enjoying the opportunity both to work on their own dissertations, as well as to interact and work with the QTRL's mix of faculty, students, artists and activists.

Tilleczek has been a part of the QTRL since its inception in 2021. They say the lab has taught them a lot over those years.

"I've built a lot of hard skills, in terms of interviews, scheduling, video editing, that I've put them to work in a lot of ways," they say. "I've gotten a lot of self-confidence from being in this space where there are so many inspiring activists, scholars, and artists. I remember how lonely I felt before I found SDS. I've learned that I do have a place in this academic mosaic."

Jad Sinno

S

Sinno is a PhD Candidate at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health in the Social and Behavioral Health Sciences Program

and Sexual Diversity Studies. Their dissertation, "A Reparative Analysis of Dating App Use and Wellbeing Among Queer Adults in Canada: A mixed methods



study," examines how online dating apps have changed the way that queer people interact with and relate to one another.

Sinno says being part of the QTRL has greatly enriched their work.

"The QTRL is a hub for anything related to queerness," they say. "It's a really interesting interdisciplinary, critically thoughtful space that has allowed me to push the boundaries of how I think. Listening to seminars provides me with the sort of tensions and invitations to start thinking about my work outside of the box. The opportunity to learn from brilliant scholars engaged with all these different ways of thinking has been fruitful."

Sinno's study takes an activist-oriented approach and seeks to understand the conditions that lead to both positive and negative outcomes with dating app use among queer people.

"Dating app use in queer men has been studied extensively, but it's been pejorative and has pathologized the users," they say. "I'm interested in understanding that queer persons aren't just passive victims. I'm looking at how they return to the apps and navigate potential negative outcomes, and under what circumstances there are positive outcomes."

"I'm very big on conducting research in the community while being part of the community. My

lived experience does play a large part as an entry for my inquiries. My interviews are describing things that are familiar to me. A lot of the work seeks to challenge disciplinary practices in psychiatry and to challenge the methodological approaches that currently exist."

Sinno says their study has shown the use of dating apps is much more nuanced than previous studies have indicated. Often users are on multiple apps, using each for a different purpose — whether for sex or socializing — and tailoring their persona to each one.

Sinno's work has also shown that many assumptions about dating apps — such as the idea that using apps for sex leads to increased negative mental health — have been exaggerated. While the experience of rejection and negativity certainly exists, many of those who filled out Sinno's survey spoke of how they have developed important relationships, friendships, and even travel partners through their app use.

"There is a lot of rejection, screaming into the void," says Sinno. "But we also got a lot of tension in the responses. Someone might start out by saying, 'I hate the space,' but would then talk about how they eventually met people."

"A lot of literature has also talked about how apps have accelerated the death of queer bars. It's actually a lot more nuanced than that. People are bringing dating apps with them into the bar. One person who works in a bathhouse says Grindr users communicate with each other through the app in the bathhouse!"

Grad Students

Sinno says their study included people from the ages of 18 well into their 70s, from different provinces, with a range of sexual and gender identities, including trans men and women, and various ethno-racial identities. They say 250 people completed a survey and 95% of those asked for a copy of the findings.

A sense of community as well as personal participation in research has always been important to Sinno, dating back to their undergraduate and Masters degrees at Dalhousie. Sinno arrived in Halifax at the age of nine, having emigrated from Kuwait. They co-founded Queer Arab Halifax, which they describe as “a safe space for folks who otherwise felt marginalized,” at the same time as they were conducting research on the ways in which stigma manifests neurologically and biologically in the brain.

Sinno says they plan to continue working on ways to educate health practitioners and the queer community about ways to address stigma and its impacts.

“We should be conducting research that communities want to know about. It’s important that research be led and organized by people in the actual communities where the research is being conducted.”

Hannah Quinn

Q

In the first year of her PhD in 2018, Quinn discovered that she could do a Specialist Collaboration between Anthropology and SDS.

When she found that some of her anthropologist colleagues were already part of what she calls “a great community of thinkers,” she registered immediately. And when the chance to be part of



the QTRL emerged, she jumped at the chance.

“I was grateful and pleased to receive the graduate writing award,” she says. “Neither of my parents has an undergrad degree, so when you’re coming from a blue-collar background, something like this dissertation award is significant. It’s a lot more comfortable to write when you have financial support.”

But Quinn also appreciated the QTRL’s activist approach to academic work and the opportunity to work with artists and activists.

“Applied anthropology is how I describe what I do,” she says. “It should be meaningful for the people I’m doing research with. Being involved in community activism is crucial, it’s sort of a given in the places I find myself. I’ve also been privileged to have done several arts-based installations. Art and community organizing are so integral to my work.”

Quinn is working on her dissertation entitled “Crippling Consent: Exploring Sexual Regulation, Sexual Access, and Ethics with Cognitively Disabled Adults in Québec.”

“I work with adults with cognitive and intellectual disabilities at a day centre,” she says. “What I’m looking at is what I call consent culture. The people in this

community experience a high degree of regulation. I’m working with these adults to understand what an anti-ableist culture looks like and how to ensure that they have fulfilling, intimate lives.

“Because of the presumed nature of disability, they’re presumed not to be able to make decisions about their lives. They’re treated like children. For example, intellectually disabled persons are not given access to sex education. We need to think about sexuality more expansively. The intellectually disabled do have needs, in queerness and in transness. They know when they’re queer, but they’re not given the opportunity to explore that. Autistic people are more likely to be trans than almost any other group of people.”

Quinn returned to Montreal, where she grew up and attended McGill, partially inspired to do this work by her brother, who has Down Syndrome.

“He lives in a group home. I grew up in a community with intellectually disabled folks,” says Quinn. “That infantilization is still a problem in his life, that lack of access to intimacy.

“I acutely remember my parents being talked to by the doctor, who told them they were lucky to have a boy with Down, because typically boys are sterile. They were talking about whether the group home would be safe. They talked about the possibility of harm with sex rather than as a source of pleasure and connection. It was always preventative, always about how harmful it can be, about violence and risk.”

Quinn completed her Masters at UBC on sexualized violence and consent with Indigenous women in Northern Canada, looking at how resource extraction projects led to sexual violence.

“Some of the women were saying, ‘Have you thought about doing research in your own community?’ These women are

like, 'We're happy to have you here, but maybe you can do work where you're from.' This advice helped shape her work when she turned her attention to her PhD.

Quinn also sees some similarity with her own experience realizing she was queer.

"I didn't come into my queerness until later in my life. I grew up in a very heteronormative community, and even I wasn't able to identify it as a source of struggle. But when I started working in the field of disability justice, and saw how central sexuality is to identity, I was surprised I didn't think of it."

Quinn does recognize a certain irony in her choice of subject.

"Intellectually disabled folks are simply not present in academia. Fundamentally, the university is not accessible to people with intellectual disabilities. Academic institutions, like most large institutions, are sexist, racist, classist and deeply ableist.

This perspective informs Quinn's outlook on Academia in general. "The question that guides my work is not just about how we make our research accessible, but about how we can build an academia that radically reimagines itself. I'm still working on that."

Elliot Tilleczek

T

Tilleczek has gained a fresh perspective on queer activism and community since leaving Toronto to return to their hometown

of Sudbury. After three years as the QTRL's go-to tech support, family events have forced them to do their lab work remotely. The result is a new-found appreciation for the town they left as a teenager.



Tilleczek is working to complete their PhD dissertation in Sociocultural Anthropology and Sexual Diversity Studies, entitled "Engaging Influential Politics: Queer Invention and Affective Activism on Social Media." Being back in a smaller city has made them realize anew exactly how important activism can be.

"Sudbury has changed a lot," they say. "Moving back, I had to re-learn how to connect with the community. I've met some really cool people here, and there's an immediacy here about sexual politics because it's so needed. In Toronto, it's easy to lose sight of how urgent and how pressing these issues are.

"It's kind of relit a fire in me. There's so much community action here. Multiple groups here communicate with each other. Black Lives Matter and Pride, for example. BLM called for no police involvement in Pride, and Pride listened. Don't believe the easy narrative that a small town is not going to have queer, and political, people in it."

Tilleczek says that, in Toronto, social media was contributing to them burning out.

"I was feeling oversaturated," they say. "Researching social media has definitely affected me emotionally. And socially, my attention span is shorter than

it's ever been. I'm feeling alone while being so connected. I'm probably going to take a very long cleanse from social media when I'm done."

But being involved in Sudbury's queer community and with groups opposing the genocide in Gaza has made Tilleczek appreciate activism and the power of social media again.

"I'm seeing the tools and tactics being shared in these groups, how to gain and maintain attention on social media, how to let protestors know what their roots are. Conversely, it's also reminding me of the importance of geographic and social location. It matters where we are because attentions are going to vary depending on where we are."

Tilleczek has also regained an appreciation for nature. "When thinking about collectivity, it's important to factor in rest and being in nature. Holding a tree, walking barefoot on grass, it's way to regulate our nervous system."

But they have not forgotten Toronto.

"It is strange to be away, especially from a place that values in-person connection so much," says Tilleczek. "I have to do more work to make sure I stay in touch, and I look forward to my in-person trips. I'm missing my queer and trans chosen family at the lab."

With the end in sight for their dissertation, Tilleczek is thinking about teaching and researching at Laurentian, the local university where his mother teaches. But they laugh as they admit they may not actually be done with SDS.

"Don't count me out of the QTRL just yet."

Undergrads

Community is very important to the 2023-24 undergraduate Research Assistants of the Queer and Trans Research Lab (QTRL). They are all majors, minors, or specialists in Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS) and come from different parts of Canada and the world. They find fulfillment in exploring and protecting their diverse communities and finding ways to unite them. They are all especially excited about the research opportunities the QTRL offers for the undergraduates in the SDS program.

The QTRL, part of the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies (SDS), has set out to break down barriers between academic disciplines, between institutions and queer and BIPOC communities, and between artists, activists and scholars.

That intersection is allowing Madeleine Vien, a specialist in Sexual Diversity Studies, to fully engage with her own art and experiences.

“My work in SDS really inspires me and my poetry,” she says. “It helps me make sense of the life I have lived. In other courses I have taken at the University, they weren’t queer enough for me. But SDS sinks deep into the complexities of sexuality, and how it’s interwoven with race and class. Nothing’s off limits here.”

And SDS and the QTRL are helping some of the students to find a home where they feel they

“It really makes me feel queer again, academically but also socially. I felt I had drifted apart from that these past years, but now I feel like I’m a valid part of this community.”

Sunnie Hu

For Sunnie Hu, the QTRL is helping them bring their interests together.

“I think the QTRL naming itself a lab is very empowering,” they say. “What’s more experimental than discovering and wanting to know more about something? Research, in itself, can be very artistic, but I don’t see a lot of spaces intersecting research and the artistic.”

truly belong. For Ollie Dimijian, a fifth-year student majoring in Human Biology and minoring in Immunology and SDS, the move to SDS has been freeing.

“Being from a small town, it’s cool as a queer person to study queer topics surrounded by queer people,”

Hu, Vien, and Dimijian are joined this year by Jae Kim, Laila Vahed, Mia Jakobsen, Xu Xu, Janice Hu, Olivia Rego, and Osarumen Ekhatator.



Sunnie Hu

H

For Sunnie Hu, SDS provided a breath of fresh air and a welcome change from studying math theory.

"It wasn't the cool sciences math

I had envisaged," they say. "I did relatively well, but I didn't like the hard sciences program atmosphere. There was a lot of attachment to people's grades and social standing. It was a monoculture.

"I took an intro course in SDS on queer pop culture. There were all these people of colour there, all this fashion, in contrast to these very dry math courses, where everyone's talking about how they hate U of T. It gets boring. I'm desperately trying to hold onto my STEM background, but I think the QTRL is really cool."

As a Research Assistant at the QTRL, Hu's job is literally to study pleasure. As part of Professor Jordache Ellapen's Pleasure Project—who argues that "pleasure, erotics, sex and joy must be central to any form of social justice work as we collectively imagine new social worlds as an urgent political project"—Hu is collecting art

and research on pleasure after colonialism.

"We're looking at pleasure both in sexuality and in every other way we feel pleasure. A lot of the Pleasure Project is focused on QTBIPOC perceptions of pleasure. A lot of the speakers have connections to Black history, to what's happening on Turtle Island, all contextualized by the fact we're on colonized land."

Hu says they're learning how to build a website, and, as part of the communications aspect, is spending a lot of time talking with artists. Those interactions are inspiring them to spend more time exploring their own art.

"I feel like a little baby looking at all these stars who, oh my gosh, make at least part of their living as artists," says Hu. "I'm also working on my own project about human connection, and carrying around journals that I ask people to write letters in.

"I got this notebook from my dad, and I'm a really big stationery nerd. I hated not using it. Some letters are really open-ended, some people have written pages and pages, and the power is transferred to the people who are writing. I started this in June, I've collected maybe 40 letters. I want to create a digital archive, and I want to do a similar project that's photography-based."

Now in their third year, Hu is majoring in Health Studies, finding in the program a way to address pressing social issues.

"I'm enjoying the intersection with public policy. We can't ignore the fact we struggle with public transit and public health."

Hu isn't yet sure what comes after their undergraduate degree and is considering doing a Masters in anything from architecture to social planning to nursing.

"I want to do something that feels fulfilling to me, and my art practice fits in there somewhere."

For now, being a part of the QTRL is helping Hu reconnect to their queer identity.

"It really makes me feel queer again, academically but also socially. I felt I had drifted apart from that these past years, but now I feel like I'm a valid part of this community."



Laila Vahed

V

Growing up in the GTA, Vahed was heavily involved in the local community.

"My grandparents, parents, and siblings grounded

their community work in the people around them," she says. "I grew up volunteering at various mosques and community centres, so it wasn't necessarily a conscious decision."

Now as a third-year student, majoring in History and minoring in SDS, Vahed is continuing her efforts to strengthen her local community.

"A lot of my community work revolves around supporting the Muslim community, with a focus on the arts," she says. "I'm involved in an organization that supports Muslims, where all Muslims are

welcome, and we try to address underrepresented folks within the community. We run social events, educational events, and annual Ramadan programming.”

Vahed is also part of the Muslim International Film Festival, which recently concluded its fourth annual event.

“We have animated, comedic, dramatic films, it’s quite the mix,” she says. “A lot of films address real-world issues that Muslims are experiencing in different countries. I’m very grateful to say we’ve had many submissions. This year, we had over 100.”

She is also finding ways to combine her work at the QTRL with her desire to make her community a better place. Laila is working as a Research Assistant to Joshun Dulai, who is running The SPAQSAM Study, “examining how intersecting forms of discrimination affects access to sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection prevention services for South Asian gay, bi, and other queer men living in Canada.”

“In my second year at SDS, I took a course which examined the HIV/AIDS crisis, as an example of how policy has worked and as a piece of history,” she says. “So I already had some interest in it, especially since as a South Asian person, it’s very tied to the community I operate in.”

Working for the project is also helping her further develop some practical skills, including elements of graphic and web design, computer coding, and the ins and outs of running a PhD project.

“I’m expanding my outreach and marketing experience as I’m running the recruitment for community involvement,” she says. “I’m learning how to communicate with candidates and organizations, the load of work that comes with community outreach and the sensitivities involved.”

And being part of the QTRL is proving to be far more than just an academic exercise.

“I honestly love it,” says Laila. “They’re doing an amazing job of helping us to balance our work lives, personal lives, and mental health. They’re very careful to build in social events and build in check-ins with the team.”

Laila says she will probably continue her studies after graduation, but she’s not yet sure in which field.

“I’m definitely exploring,” she says. “My parents are very happy to hear that I’m interested in pursuing academia. I’m interested in my history focus, and I would love to see how that could tie into my other interdisciplinary areas of interest. I would do best following the learning I’m most passionate about and developing my understanding of the intersecting communities I inhabit.”

This year, at least, Laila is confident she has all the support she needs from the QTRL.

“When you’re working with them, you can rest assured that you have someone in your corner to make sure that things are going ok.”



Madeleine Vien

V

Growing up in a small town north of Toronto, Madeleine Vien did not find a large queer community. “The queer people in my

hometown are still my chosen family, but there was definitely not a lot of representation, except for the few friends I had made,” she says. “I also grew up Catholic. My parents are very supportive of me now, but it took a while to get comfortable in my own skin. Our only exposure was through media, through all the queer music we could get our hands on.

“Toronto opened a lot of doors, things like going to the Village for the first time. It definitely sparked my passion for queer studies. I started as a minor in SDS, then went from a minor to major to specialist pretty quickly!”

Vien, now a fourth-year student, says she couldn’t get enough of learning about queer issues, and feels that it’s helped her learn about all aspects of her identity, including her Métis heritage.

“My dad’s family is from Manitoba, but I’m pretty disconnected from where we’re from originally. SDS helped me to embrace my identity in all ways. I took a great course about queer Indigenous politics and culture. I don’t think I could have learned it any other place.”

Working at the QTRL is also helping Vien to embrace her identity as a writer and poet. She is a Research Assistant to Brian Rigg, one of the lab’s artists-in-residence this year and a Jamaican/Canadian writer and poet based in Toronto. Vien is helping to organize a weeklong workshop crafted for BIPOC, Queer and Trans poets, culminating in a reading event.

“The main project is a poetry workshop for queer people of colour to work on manuscripts with a facilitator,” she says.

“Brian also has some research surrounding his own manuscript, on queer black poets and queer poets of colour. Especially in conversation with Brian, when you’re able to discuss poetry with a poet, it’s really inspiring to hear all his wisdom and experiences.

“A lot of my poetry focuses on young womanhood and coming

of age. It helps me to better understand myself.”

Vien herself is working on a year-long research paper about the formation of the Church-Wellesley queer village and says being able to talk to members of the QTRL who lived through those times has been extremely helpful. It’s also confirmed her interest in becoming an archivist, and she is currently in the midst of grad school applications.

She is also doing an internship at The ArQuives: Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Archives in Toronto.

“I never considered a Phd before this year; it depends on how much I enjoy doing my Masters. But I would like to work full-time at anything to do with preserving LGBTQ2+ history, especially Indigenous LGBTQ history. It’s very under-archived.

“It’s often misrepresented, depending on who the one gathering the information is. A lot of Indigenous Studies isn’t very queer, it isn’t talked about. There’s a lot of existing shame within Indigenous communities because of colonialism. I didn’t even know what 2-spirited meant until I came to university.”

Ollie Dimijian

D

For Ollie Dimijian, joining SDS was originally a fun respite from his arduous and pre-planned path to medical school.

“Having a designated career path was kind of

comforting, just because it seemed like there were concrete steps to it that fed into each other,” he says. “It seemed like a process.

“I started a minor in SDS just because I was personally interested, they were the fun classes I would take. Then I got more involved because I found the atmosphere of the program to be a lot more supportive. It really feels like they want you to



succeed. Science courses feel really competitive, like more of a weeding-out process.”

Having moved to Toronto from a small town in New York State, Dimijian says he initially found the city a bit hard to take.

“The first year, it was a lot,” he says. “I had been to Toronto growing up, but it was culture shocky, being surrounded by noise, not being around nature and the land. But I had to go home during the pandemic, and by the time I came back, I had started to miss Toronto.”

The city also offered other contrasts.

“We kind of made our own queer community in a small town,” he says. “Scale-wise, it was a big change. I live right in the village, it’s all around me which is nice. But with school, I’ve kind of been shut away. Hopefully, when I graduate, I can explore it more.”

For now, Dimijian is physically exploring the city with his husky, Osa, who joined him during the pandemic, and who requires constant walks through the city’s allies and green spaces.

He’s also finding that the QTRL is helping him explore new aspects of himself. Dimijian is a Research Assistant to Hugh O’Neill, who is establishing End of the Line Press, “an independent publisher of prose, poetry, and visual arts monographs with a focus on

support for emerging trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit creators.”

“Our first three books are coming out this year,” says Dimijian. “I’ve mostly been compiling info on grant agencies, opportunities for future revenue, and researching book prizes. It’s nice to just have one goal to research. It’s kind of therapeutic.”

The QTRL has also given Dimijian a new appreciation for school.

“I’ve really enjoyed going to talks by lab researchers, being part of meetings, just sitting around the table sharing ideas. It’s brought out the best parts of academia, and it’s certainly made me want to stick around.

“I’m going to take a year off, then I’m hoping to apply to the Dala Lana School of Public Health and focus on Indigenous health. Coming from a perspective outside of Canada, the disparities in the health field are more apparent. I went to an open house for the school, and the Indigenous health department has the same supportive atmosphere as the QTRL.”

Dimijian says he isn’t ruling out med school, but he’s no longer obsessing over it.

“It’s not the monumental be-all and end-all I had hyped it up to be as a little first year. I’ve been freaking out about what to do with my life since grade 8. Now I’m working on not having a concrete plan.

“I’ve been having fun with myself.”

Janice Hu

H

As a high school student in Winnipeg, Janice Hu knew she wanted to go to U of T.

“It was the only university I applied to, maybe a bit of overconfidence,” she says.

Hu, now a fourth-year student majoring in history with minors in SDS and East Asian Studies, also



knew she wanted to study the past.

"I developed an interest in high school because I had a very good history teacher. My interest in queer history developed at U of T. I might have been always vaguely interested in queerness, but it never really cemented in my mind that it could be something that had a bearing in academia."

But Hu says a summer course after first year helped her find a path.

"It was on early modern Korean history, focused on the Japanese colonial period in Korea. My final essay explored what kind of queer issues there were in the time period. There were two interesting avenues, one in which queerness was weaponized and used as a tool to create a Korean nation opposed to Japanese colonialism. The other was a contemporary writer who wrote a short story about a queer relationship that ends in heartbreak as a metaphor for Korea and Japan."

Hu appreciates the approach taken in SDS.

"SDS courses in general are very intersectional, which makes them very versatile," she says. "A lot of history courses tend to be very information-heavy and there's not a lot of critical discussion."

"The funny thing I always note about history courses: there's always one week that's about 'women and the gays.' One week

only. The ways you frame history are important. There is a history of everyone, and when you consider history only from the national perspective, it affects how we think about what's important."

Hu is working on two projects as a Research Assistant to Jody Chan, one of the QTRL's artists-in-residence this year.

"One is research for a book about queer Asian adopted immigrants in Canada," she says. "It's a lot of archival stuff about queer Asians in Toronto, as well as queer organizing, and trying to find where the two cross, because they rarely do in the historical record."

"The second is research on disability in the arts, sign language for performance, audio description in dance. The end goal for that is to host a performance where a lot of disability artists can perform. I have little to no experience with performing arts, it's a world I've never really considered as a fully-abled person. It's really eye-opening."

Hu plans to get her PhD in history and then would like to write.

"I want to live in the woods and do research for history books. I've also never tried historical fiction. One way or another, books call me."

Xu Xu



For Xu Xu, SDS has proven much friendlier than Computer Science.

"I wasn't getting enough support from Computer Science," she says. "I was kind of a STEMmy

person, but it's normal there to see each other as someone you have to be better than. It's hard to talk about mental health in that context."

"In SDS, the professors have been really accommodating. People are more willing to forge connections."

Now a third-year SDS specialist, Xu's interest was piqued when she took a first-year queer



popular culture course with Dr. Naveen Minai.

"I did really well," she says. "I really resonated with a lot of things. It became clearer to me I had the passion for it."

Splitting her time between Toronto and Vancouver, where she lives with her partner, Xu is also feeling more comfortable in big cities than the small Virginia town where she went to high school. She had grown up in small-town China, but her parents decided she would get a better education in North America.

"A distant relative's friend was living in Virginia," she says. "I was 15 years old. I wouldn't say I regret it; it felt like something that had to be done. But I felt really isolated, I didn't have a sense of community."

"Being in a small town in the US made me want to live in a big city, which is generally a more progressive environment. I knew U of T had a more diverse student population, and being an international student, tuition is comparatively cheap."

Xu says she is still figuring out how she identifies.

"I always kind of knew I was queer, from when I was very little," she says. "I came out at 17 to my host family, when I met my current partner. I didn't really come out come out, I just made a statement, 'Oh yeah, I'm dating a woman now.'"

But for her fourth-year SDS course in Advanced Research in Sexuality, Xu is putting together a research proposal that will allow her to explore herself further.

"It'll be on radical feminism in China, and it'll help connect me to my past self," she says. "In my early teen years on the internet, I was exposed to a lot of political issues, reproductive rights, sexual politics. But a lot of the radical feminists in China still really lack an intersectional queer lens. Now with the knowledge I've gained from SDS, I can be more critical about that strand of feminism. The aim of my project is to bring solidarity among radical feminists and queers."

As a QTRL Research Assistant, Xu is working with Dr. Tori Smith on an oral history project as part of the SDS's 25th anniversary.

"I've been doing a lot of archival work, looking through past U of T newspapers. Some of it is straight-up homophobia and queerphobia. It's interesting to learn about the backlash it received."

Xu is thinking about continuing in academia at UBC, and perhaps pursuing a graduate degree in equity studies.

"The most ideal would be to teach in the field," she says. "Either that or be a stay-at-home wife. Girl boss or stay-at-home wife."

Olivia Rego

R

when you work in a bakery, it's not very creative at all.

"I found out U of T has its own Women & Gender Studies and SDS programs, and I thought I would like to go to university after all. Plus, my twin sister is at U of T."

Olivia Rego originally planned to be a baker.

"During Covid, I was working in a bakery," she says. "I like baking because of the creativity, but



Now a third-year double major in SDS and Women & Gender Studies, Rego says the programs have provided experiences she didn't get growing up in Markham.

"My dad's side of the family is Indian, and very Catholic because of colonization. I went to Catholic high school, which was not very accepting of LGBTQ people. I had a girlfriend, but I wasn't necessarily out. I switched to public school, and that wasn't any better. As a lesbian, I didn't really receive a lot of education, historical or otherwise, about the queer community. I didn't really think it was an option to be queer."

But SDS has drastically changed things.

"This was the first time people were asking about my pronouns," she says. "I had sort of been questioning my gender identity prior to that, but in high school, I felt like I couldn't talk about being gay. In SDS, it felt very normalized talking about these issues."

As a Research Assistant, Rego is working with Christopher Nkambwe, the lab's Community Organizer-in-Residence this year. Nkambwe is establishing the LGBTIQ+ Peer Educators Academy, a peer-led resource hub and training centre for LGBTIQ+ newcomers to Canada.

"Working with someone who's in the field, actually practicing different theories, not just

talking about things abstractly, is really amazing," says Rego. "Right now, we're in the process of meeting peer educators, training them about sexual and reproductive health, human rights, things specific to refugees and newcomers, so they can support people through this academy."

Rego says she is able to draw on some of her own experiences.

"I wanted to do something to help our community, and with my own experiences of sexual assault, I knew it was really important to address issues around gender-based violence. And while my family came as immigrants, not refugees, there are similarities in experience, coming to a new place, the culture shock."

She says that her experience as a person with disabilities also allows her to offer a fresh point of view.

"I have multiple chronic illnesses, and my experience with the healthcare system allows me to offer a unique perspective. SDS is the first place I learned about ableism and disability studies. I've been able to articulate my experiences, and being disabled can help me understand and empathize with other people. It's influenced how I'm able to interact with people."

SDS has shown Rego that what she has gone through is important. She's considering pursuing a Masters, perhaps in social work, and wants to use what she's learning.

"SDS focuses on people's lived experience as a form of knowledge," she says. "SDS really prioritizes queer communities, they're not going to talk about them in the abstract."

Jae Kim

K

For Jae Kim, Media Studies is a continuation of the online communities that first introduced him to a queer world beyond Richmond Hill.



"People tend to underestimate the ability of online communities to help them out," he says. "It really helped to have that queer support system to help navigate my sexuality, my gender, all that stuff. It was my first exposure to queer safe practices and gender issues.

"There were not a lot of queer trans students in my high school. I definitely knew I wasn't cis het, but I didn't have the terminology for it. Online was the only place where I had some sort of connection, and by the time I entered U of T, I was comfortable enough to begin saying this is how I want to be called."

He is now a third-year major in Book and Media Studies, with minors in English and SDS.

"I always found it really interesting to put my personal interests in an academic context," he says. "When you get past the required courses is when it begins to get interesting: fan fiction, Asian media studies. Next year, anime and manga culture."

Kim also wanted to take more specifically queer courses and found SDS to be a perfect fit.

"I wanted to learn more about queer narratives and queer existences. It adds texture to knowledge you already had."

As a Research Assistant, Kim is working with LJ Slovin, the Martha LA McCain Postdoctoral

Fellow this year, on a project looking at how trans youth are portrayed as being "at risk."

"It started in the 1980s and the narrative has carried over," says Kim. "It raises questions of what's detrimental about being portrayed only in this light. It seems to overshadow all other lived experiences."

The job has allowed Kim to use his knowledge of archives, acquired through his work at the Bonham Centre's Sexual Representation Collection. He says he would love to pursue archival studies, with a focus on queers of colour.

"A lot of discourse is about white, queer culture. A lot of voices end up underrepresented. What does it mean when these voices don't get uplifted?"

Kim's lived experience has taught him about the realities of suppressing his own voice.

"Existing as a queer and trans person of colour has a lot of complications," he says. "I thought of these different parts of my identity as not being able to exist at the same time. When I was home, I wasn't queer and trans. A lot of queer and trans people of colour exist in a liminal space of not total acceptance but not total rejection. Everybody acknowledges it, but no-one wants to talk about it."

The QTRL is allowing Kim to use his own experience, not only as a queer trans person of colour, but as one who's also neurodivergent.

"I'm able to take the research and apply my own knowledge and experience to it. I can point out gaps, things that really stem from my own identity."

Mia Jakobsen

J

Mia Jakobsen used the Covid lockdown to teach herself about queer history.

"I never really learned queer history in school," she



says. "I thought it would be cool to catch up and learn more."

She was already planning to make SDS one of her majors, and her first classes confirmed her choice.

"The classes were a lot funnier than I anticipated. The profs were very engaging."

Jakobsen had originally also planned to major in Political Science but found herself sidetracked when she encountered Book and Media Studies—now her other major—online during Covid.

"I loved BMS, it was brand new. The prof did a lecture on Youtube, and it didn't seem like he was just talking, he really made it a production. The content, introducing us to media theory and theorists, was very understandable. I could see the profs in my own Instagram feed, and it was very clear how media was impacting them."

Now a third-year student, Jakobsen quickly became involved with U of T's queer communities.

"In my first year, I joined the LGBTQ student organization Vic Pride, doing marketing and outreach," she says. "I've been doing that for three years and being part of the queer Vic community has been lovely."

Jakobsen was also part of an outreach program at New College

focused on queer and trans activism among BIPOC students.

As a Research Assistant, Jakobsen is working with Christopher Smith on a project examining how transphobic parents' groups, even if they aren't white Christians themselves, get much of their information from white Christian groups in Alberta.

Jakobsen believes she brings a unique perspective to the project.

"I am a queer Christian," she says. "It's a specific view I bring to the topic that not a lot of other people bring."

"My entire family grew up Christian. We went to more conservative churches, but I don't remember specific churches teaching that homosexuality was wrong. Based on what I learned in church, I knew that God loved everyone. In my teens, I realized that some people didn't support gay people. I disagreed, and I thought that God would disagree. I was told that we had to pick and choose, are you going to be Christian or are you going to be queer? I accepted that I can be queer and still keep my faith."

She also brings experience researching archival material.

"I'm doing that for Christopher's latest project. It's on how queer and trans literature is being actively banned in the US, and how they're trying to do it in Canada, and looking at ways to fight back."

Jakobsen is interested in a career as an archivist or librarian, and is looking at completing a master's in library science. She plans to maintain a focus on queer issues and history.

"While learning about queer history, which is not even taught, I learned about historical silences. We're in a weird place, where progress is rolling back. Amplifying queer voices is very critical to fighting back. We're not going to go back; we've always been here and we're going to stay here."



Osarumen Ekhatior

E

For Osarumen Ekhatior, SDS is helping her work towards her goal of improving healthcare for people of colour.

"As someone

who has dealt with health discrepancies, I want to make it safer for people of colour," she says. "I want to create space where everyone has access to equal healthcare."

"I took an SDS intro course and I fell in love with the program. I decided I wanted to do most of my work with Black women on healthcare. I found out about eugenics, the history of Black women's reproductive health, and the intersection between sexuality and racial identity."

Now a third-year student majoring in Global Health, and minoring in SDS, Ekhatior has found that SDS has helped her make connections in her other programs.

"A lot of the time, we're talking about how everything is interconnected. The first course I took was History of Sexualities, where we talked about things like connections between butch femmes and Chinese immigrants. The more I took different courses, the more I learned about how gender identity connects to global determinants of health."

"My programs kind of intersect. SDS helps me on that front. Global

Health is more or less science-based. We need more work in these areas on how to talk about identity and how it makes you who you are."

Ekhatior is also working with the U of T medical school's equity office, helping people of colour gain admittance, and as the equity and accessibility coordinator for the PEARS Project, which provides peer support to survivors of sexual violence at U of T.

Originally from Nigeria herself, Ekhatior would also like to increase the space for Black queer students on campus.

"The Black population in general is really small, and trying to find a Black population of queer students is really hard. Being Nigerian is a huge part of my identity, and as a Nigerian you don't get exposed to having that kind of community. In Nigeria, homosexuality is still illegal and LGBTQ activism is just now rising. We don't talk about sexual identity."

"The QTRL is very different from the community I normally find myself in. Hearing from different researchers, hearing about different identities, having that kind of community, it's really nice."

As a Research Assistant at the lab, Ekhatior is working with Professor Qui Alexander on a study exploring how "pedagogies of abolition manifest in the everyday lives of Black trans folks in Canada," through the legacies of slavery, a carceral system, and dispossession.

"Trans people have a lot to teach," says Ekhatior. "As a Black trans person, you can learn about how slavery is taught, but Black trans experiences can also teach us a lot about how to teach slavery. "It's a very good introduction to how research is done. It's a very different look at black trans and feminist work. It's not looking through a microscope."

Ekhatior still wants to be a doctor but is currently considering doing a masters in either Public Health or Biomedical Engineering and being more hands-on in research.

QTRL FEST 2024

Each year the QTRL celebrates the achievements of the current cohort while welcoming the incoming fellows in the Paul Cadario Conference Centre. Sharing personal experiences, research interests, and milestones we sat with each other first and foremost to reflect.

This was a different scene of reflection, as one could not ignore the courageous student activists in the encampment holding steadfast for a just world merely footsteps away.

So it almost seemed vulgar to have a cocktail reception afterward. To my pleasant surprise, folks were already “plotting” joyfully. Maybe they were going to the rally afterwards, or merely exchanging contact info for future collaborations. I wish I took pictures of the undergrads huddled in a circle on the floor while sipping Pinot.

Rhoma Spencer Artist-In-Residence (2022-23) graced the stage with their stand-up comedy and it could not have been more timely. We needed to giggle, chuckle, or have full on belly-laughs. Nourishment for the soul.

Each year QTRL Fest embodies a space where we are learning from each other while carving new paths for liberation, in all the forms we demand. This year was no different.



- 1 Rhoma Spencer, performing at QTRL Fest
- 2 Dana Seitler (left) with Christopher Smith (right)
- 3 Incoming 2023-24 QTRL fellows
- 4 Dana Seitler (front row) Paolo Frasca (back row)



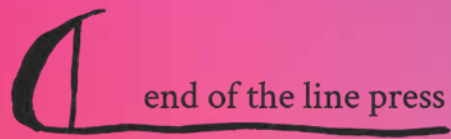
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emerging projects

Every year the Queer and Trans Research Lab sponsors an “Emerging Projects Fund” that provides grants to UofT affiliated scholars and external partners to engage in collaborative and community projects. We were able to support many exciting collaborations in 2023-24 are highlighted below. This work, like much of queer and trans research, is an ongoing project and we are excited to see the results!

End of the Line Press: a publisher of poetry, prose, and visual art monographs by trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit artists

Primary Investigator, Hugh O’Neil



The first of its kind, End of the Line Press is growing as an independent publisher of prose, poetry, and visual arts monographs with a focus on support for emerging trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit creators. As the organization grows in the coming years, the press will form a worker cooperative constituted by its authors, editors, designers, and artists. Trans literature, as a nascent tradition, is making space for itself in universities and on library shelves. End of the Line Press is achieving this goal with the successful publication of two books that were launched at Glad Day Bookshop in January 2023. Going into its third year, End of the Line Press has established a solid infrastructure and will prove to be a formidable force in the literary scene.

The Pleasure Project

Primary Investigator, Jordache Ellapen



The Pleasure Project is organized around a key set of questions: How do LGBTQ2S+ and QTBIPOC understand pleasure in the afterlives of settler colonialism, slavery, and apartheid? How is pleasure used to resist and critique but also to create social worlds that evade surveillance in the face of LGBTQ2S+ and QTBIPOC structural violence? What is at stake when an analytic of pleasure interrogates complexities of racialized sexual subjectivities? What significance does pleasure hold for expanded understandings of freedom and politics? The Pleasure Project explores the ways in which scholars, artists, and sex workers, for instance, utilize pleasure as method and praxis, re-directing us to the messiness of the body and the sensorial regimes. We are interested in examining how an analytic of pleasure can expand and disrupt the boundaries of queerness and queer theory by moving us beyond binary frameworks. In this project, we will not only examine pleasure as a politic, a method, a praxis, or a component of

'self-care,' we will explore the embodied, somatic, messy and fleshy sexual practices that people engage in to access pleasure. We are interested in the relationships between pleasure and the materiality of the body and our lived experiences. The Pleasure Project argues that pleasure, erotics, sex, and joy must be central to any form of social justice work as we collectively imagine new social worlds as an urgent political project.

Pedagogies of Abolition: Mobilizing Black Trans Ways of Knowing

Principal Investigator, Qui Alexander



Across Canada the project was initially conceptualized as a study exploring the phenomenon pedagogies of abolition, in the lived experiences of Black trans people in Canada. Pedagogies of abolition is defined as the process of teaching/learning an abolitionist praxis (Alexander, 2022). Using post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle, 2018) as a praxis centered methodology, this study builds upon previous research exploring manifestations of pedagogies of abolition in the everyday lives of Black trans folks in the US. Understanding the different cultural, socio-political, economical and historical contexts of Canada in relation to the carceral state, this study hoped to build a comparative analysis between US and Canadian radical movements, in an effort to build solidarity between Black trans communities in the Americas, and larger abolitionist projects worldwide.

"SPAQSAM STUDY: - STBBI (sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection) Prevention Access for Queer South Asian Men in Canada"

Primary Investigator, Joshun Dulai



This is an intersectional, community-engaged study that examines how intersecting oppressions are associated with and experienced when accessing sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection (STBBI) prevention services (such as testing) among South Asian gay, bisexual, and other queer men (GBQM) living in Canada. Working with community organizations serving South Asian GBQM, who will assist with data access, participant recruitment, and knowledge translation, the study aims to: 1) Quantitatively examine the association between discrimination and recent STI testing in a Canadian sample of South Asian GBQM; 2) Qualitatively explore how experiences of intersecting oppressions affect access to STBBI prevention services among South Asian GBQM in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA); and 3) Triangulate these findings to determine how access to STBBI prevention services can be improved for this diverse population. We hope to illuminate barriers that South Asian GBQM experience when accessing STBBI prevention services, providing opportunities for improvement by creating anti-oppressive services, programming, and policies, thereby improving the sexual well-being of this population over time.

events

The QTRL had a wide range of events throughout the 2023-24 academic year. Our monthly “Share and Tell” meetings brought together all members of the cohort – students, faculty fellows, artists, and community organizers to share and collaborate on their respective projects. The QTRL is collaborative in nature with the goal of imagining new ways to conduct research, make art, and build community beyond the usual silos in place at the university. This is evidenced in the robust calendar of events that follows.

September 8 2023 QTRL Orientation and Reception



October 20 2023 Queen of The Road – The Calypso Rose Musical - Tobago Premiere! Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



QTRL Artist-In-Residence Rhoma Spencer (2022-23) has the premiere of “Queen of The Road: A Calypso Rose Musical” in Scarborough, Tobago. The production was borne out of a partnership between the Bonham Centre, and the Tobago Performing Arts Company (TPAC) in early 2023.

November 24 2023 Artist-In-Residence Public Talk – Brian Rigg



Brian Rigg offered an Artist Talk at University College that was attended by students, faculty and members of the public. Rigg shared preliminary work from their upcoming collection of poetry tentatively titled “Warrior In The Garden”

December 15 2023 The Pleasure Project – Launch Party



A public event to launch The Pleasure Project at the Society Clubhouse featuring art installations, performance and drag artists, and a DJ Jade Elektra. The event invited guests to explore the multiple dimensions of pleasure in relation to social justice and change.

January 13 2024
End of The Line Press –
Book Launch



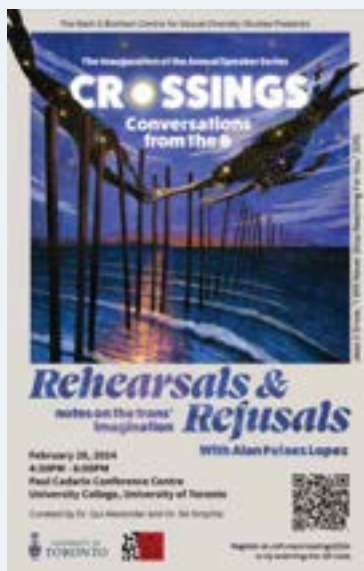
End of The Line Press celebrates its first two publications by authors Mandy Guttman-Gonzalez and Ariell Burgdorf with a public reading and book launch at Glad Day Bookshop.

January 26 2024
Artist-In-Residence Talk –
Jody Chan



Jody Chan offered an Artist Talk at University College that was attended by students, faculty and members of the public. Chan shared preliminary work from their upcoming collection of poetry titled “impact statement”

February 28 2024
Crossings: Conversations From
the & - Inaugural Lecture



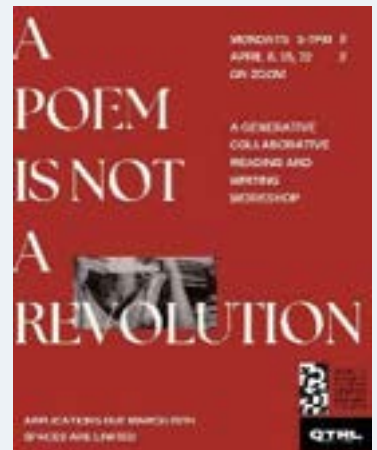
“Rehearsals & Refusals: notes on trans* imagination” Public Lecture by Dr. Alan Palaez Lopez

March 8 2024
The Pleasure Project –
Symposium



The event featured enriching keynote lectures by Marlon M. Bailey, Professor of African and African American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis and Angela Jones, Professor of Sociology at Farmingdale State College.

April 8-21 2024
A Poem Is Not a Revolution
Writing Workshop – Jody Chan



A generative, collaborative reading and writing workshop anchored in anti-colonial, anti-imperial texts and writers. The weekly workshop was facilitated by Mila Natasha Mendez.

April 17 2024
Survival is a Creative Act



a collaborative poetry performance featuring Kyla Jamieson, Steffi Tad-y, Jody Chan, and Rob Colgate. This project was in partnership with Tangled Art + Disability

April 23 2024
Book Launch – Jody Chan
“*impact statement*”



May 13-17 2024
Black Fruit Poetry Workshop –
Brian Rigg



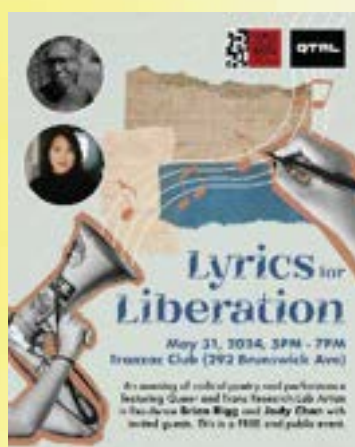
The Black Fruit Poetry Workshop provided a weeklong creative space where talented LGBTQ2S+ and BIPOC poets could explore and develop their craft with the help of supportive peers and experienced facilitators. Participants will give and receive editorial suggestions from the group in a spirit of solidarity. The workshop was facilitated by poet Kahsenniyo Kick, with guest facilitator Poet Laureate George Elliott Clarke.

May 22 2024
QTRL FEST



An annual celebration of the achievements of the Queer and Trans Research Lab that honored the current cohort of fellows, while welcoming the 2024-25 cohort into the QTRL community. (See more on page 28)

May 31 2024|
Lyrics For Liberation – Poetry
Showcase
Artist-In-Residence – Brian Rigg
and Jody Chan



An evening of radical poetry and performance featuring the Queer and Trans Research Lab – Artists-In-Residence Brian Rigg and Jody Chan with invited guests. The showcase honored the achievements of these brilliant writers. It was also an occasion to celebrate the work of future poets and creative thinkers that participated in intensive workshops to nurture their craft and its importance in these uncertain times.

July 20 2024
LGBTQ+ Peer Educators Academy
Graduation Ceremony
Community Leader-In-Residence
– Christopher Nkambwe



An afternoon celebrating graduates of the LGBTQ+ Peer Educators Academy. A resource hub and training Centre, predominantly led by peers for peers. It follows a peer-led model to provide a safer, more inclusive, and engaging learning space for emerging LGBTQ+ newcomer and leaders to share their knowledge and expertise, sharpen their skills, learn more about anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks as they relate to the LGBTIQ+ newcomer experience in Canada.

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