

# Wake Forest University LGBTQ Center's Alumni and Friends Summer 2014 Newsletter

## Wake Forest holds inaugural Lavender Graduation

On April 30, 2014 the LGBTQ Center hosted Wake Forest University's inaugural Lavender Graduation. Lavender Graduation celebrates our LGBTQ and ally graduates for their contributions to a rich and diverse campus community. Our celebration honored nineteen graduates from both undergraduate and graduate programs. Vice President of Campus Life Dr. Penny Rue welcomed the graduates and the audience of over 100 people by recognizing the importance of such a celebration.



Dr. Angela Mazaris

April Johnson, graduate of the School of Divinity and former LGBTQ Center intern, offered a stirring invocation. Graduates Jessica D. Leuchter and Christopher Gonzalez La Corte shared words about their time at Wake Forest and the value of living out the wholeness of who they are. J. Robby Gregg, Jr. '83

served as the keynote speaker at the event. Mr. Gregg celebrated the students for their willingness to stand out and encouraged them to continue living with that boldness. Dr. Angela Mazaris, Director of the LGBTQ Center, presented each graduate with a lavender cord and a lavender journal. Please visit our facebook page to view pictures of the event and consider joining us for our 2015 Lavender Graduation on April 29, 2015.



The 2014 Wake Forest University Lavender Graduates with keynote speaker J. Robby Gregg, Jr. '83, Dr. Angela Mazaris, and Rob Powell.

## The LGBTQ Center welcomes a new Program Coordinator

Rob Powell joined the LGBTQ Center on November 4, 2013 as the new Program Coordinator. Rob came from the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault where he provided support and training to North Carolina's rape crisis centers. Prior to his time with the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Rob served as the Prevention Coordinator for the Family Violence and Rape Crisis services of Chatham County. Rob graduated from Berry College with a degree in



Communication and Women's Studies. At the core of Rob's work is a passion for creating spaces where people can live out the richness and fullness of who they are. In his free time, he eats good food, cooks decent food, goes exploring, reads, and can often be found devouring TV series. He's also the proud uncle of two very funny nieces. As Program Coordinator, Rob provides support to Dr. Mazaris, assists in the operations of the Center, manages and facilitates Safe Zone trainings, and supports student, faculty and staff as needed. Rob also serves as the Program Coordinator for the Women's Center. You can reach Rob at [powellrw@wfu.edu](mailto:powellrw@wfu.edu).

## Get Excited!

Here's a quick look at what's coming up at the LGBTQ Center!



Star of *Orange is the New Black* Laverne Cox will be visiting Wake Forest on March 3, 2015. Laverne Cox speaks passionately about the diversity, beauty, and challenges of trans\* experiences.

### Alumni Conference

The LGBTQ Center is thrilled to announce Wake Forest's first-ever LGBTQ Alumni Conference, to be held in 2015. This exciting initiative is supported by the President's Office. Stay tuned for dates and details!

### Oral Histories Project

Dr. Angela Mazaris is collecting the oral histories of LGBTQ members of the Wake Forest community. If you are interested in sharing your story, contact Dr. Mazaris at [mazarise@wfu.edu](mailto:mazarise@wfu.edu).

## Let's take a look at the numbers! In 2013-2014:

**3304**

people visited the LGBTQ Center.

**153**

people received Safe Zone training

**123**

people came out to hear Shane Bitney Crone

**1336**

people participated in LGBTQ Center events throughout the year

# After the Forest: Carlos Maza

Carlos Maza graduated from Wake Forest in 2010 with a degree in Political Science. We thought we would check in with him to hear about what he is up to now and a little about his time at Wake.

## ***What have you been doing since graduation?***

After graduation, I took an internship in the LGBT program at the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC. I produced a few reports on employment discrimination and LGBT healthcare and witnessed the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. At the start of 2011, I took a job as a researcher at Media Matters, a progressive media watchdog. I now head up the organization's LGBT program, coordinating our work monitoring anti-LGBT groups and correcting anti-LGBT misinformation in the media. I've gone undercover at a bizarre anti-gay student conference, interviewed one of the architects of the anti-gay marriage movement in America, and even appeared on MSNBC in February. It's been a wild few years.

## ***In what ways did you time at Wake prepare you for your current career?***

I was a Women's and Gender Studies minor, and those classes were the most important ones I took at Wake. I'd just graduated from a conservative all-boy high school, and it was really life-changing to learn from so many brilliant women who were just really, really good at making me reconsider the way I thought about sex, gender, and myself. I was also on the debate team for all four years at Wake, developing research and writing skills that I don't know how I would've survived without.

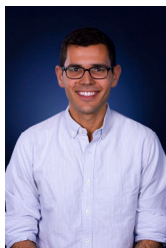
## ***From your time at Wake, what's one thing you'd hope to see Wake do in the coming years?***

It seems like Wake has already changed a lot since I left, but I remember feeling like the LGBT community at Wake was smaller and quieter than I hoped it would be. Going to GSA events felt like retreating into a safe space rather than planning to make that space more expansive. I'm always in awe of student LGBT groups that are fearless, politically organized, and willing to ruffle feathers in order to make themselves heard, and Wake could always use a little more feather-ruffling.

## ***Advice or words of affirmation for current LGBTQ students at Wake?***

Be courageous and always be taking ground. We're at an incredible time in the history of the LGBT movement in America, and the only limit to what we can accomplish is the limit we place on ourselves out of fear or shame. Dream big, make allies, and fight hard. (Also, be a great writer - it'll get you far in the real world.)

*If you'd like to share what you've been up to since graduating from Wake, send Rob Powell an email at [powellrw@wfu.edu](mailto:powellrw@wfu.edu). We'd love to hear from you!*



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