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## **Performance, Dialogue, and Debriefing: Examining Frank Ocean's Coming Out**

### **Rationale**

Our teaching activity positions Frank Ocean coming out as a case study to engage students in discussion of heteronormative behavior. Using performance, interactive dialogue, and follow up debriefing, we hope to engage students in active learning by asking them to become the voices of both oppression and empowerment. We have compiled a variety of literature, including responses from the general public and hip-hop community. Materials include: Ocean's coming out letter via Tumblr, response letters from fellow artists, comments to his twitter account, [Hatetweetstofrankocean.com](https://twitter.com/Hatetweetstofrankocean), various news coverage, and parodies from the Onion and Youtube. "Narrative performance gives shape to social relations. . . a story of the body told through the body makes cultural conflict concrete" (Langellier, 1999). Using this material, we compiled a reader's theater script for students to perform and a series of discussion questions to be used afterwards to talk about reactions of Ocean's coming out. By creating spaces in which students can engage in civil rights discourse, instructors can facilitate meaningful dialogues (Orbe, 2004). In this instance dialogue that addresses LGBT rights and homophobia. We believe that this performative approach is innovative because it taps into the emotional and personal nature of the coming out experience by creating a contact space, engaging students to take part in performance and drama therapy debriefing. As Hip Hop is a performance based art form, we believe that the best way to connect to Hip Hop is through performance rooted interpretation and dialogue.

## **Complete List of Literature**

### **Frank Ocean's Coming out letter**

Whoever you are. Wherever you are... I'm starting to think we're a lot alike. Human beings spinning on blackness. All wanting to be seen, touched, heard, paid attention to. My loved ones are everything to me here. In the last year or 3 I've screamed at my creator, screamed at clouds in the sky, for some explanation. Mercy maybe. For peace of mind to rain like manna somehow. 4 summers ago, I met somebody. I was 19 years old. He was too. We spent that summer, and the summer after, together. Everyday almost. And on the days we were together, time would glide. Most of the day I'd see him, and his smile. I'd hear his conversation and his silence...until it was time to sleep. Sleep I would often share with him. By the time I realized I was in love, it was malignant. It was hopeless. There was no escaping, no negotiating with the feeling. No choice. It was my first love, it changed my life. Back then, my mind would wander to the women I had been with, the ones I cared for and thought I was in love with. I reminisced about the sentimental songs I enjoyed when I was a teenager.. The ones I played when I experienced a girlfriend for the first time. I realised they were written in a language I did not yet speak. I realised too much, too quickly. Imagine being thrown from a plane. I wasn't in a plane though. I was in a Nissan Maxima, the same car I packed up with bags and drove to Los Angeles in. I sat there and told my friend how I felt. I wept as the words left my mouth. I grieved for them, knowing I could never take them back for myself. He patted my back. He said kind things. He did his best, but he wouldn't admit the same. He had to go back inside soon, it was late and his girlfriend was waiting for him upstairs. He wouldn't tell the truth about his feelings for me for another 3 years. I felt like I'd only imagined reciprocity for years. Now imagine being thrown from a cliff. No, I wasn't on a cliff. I was still in my car telling myself it was gonna be fine and to take deep

breaths. I took the breaths and carried on. I kept up a peculiar friendship with him because I couldn't imagine keeping up my life without him. I struggled to master myself and my emotions. I wasn't always successful

The dance went on.. I kept the rhythm for several summers after. It's winter now. I'm typing this on a plane back to Los Angeles from New Orleans. I flew home for another marred Christmas. I have a windowseat. It's December 27, 2011. By now I've written two albums. This being the second. I wrote to keep myself busy and sane. I wanted to create worlds that were rosier than mine. I tried to channel overwhelming emotions. I'm surprised at how far all of it has taken me. Before writing this I'd told some people my story. I'm sure these people kept me alive, kept me safe. Sincerely, these are the folks I wanna thank from the floor of my heart. Everyone of you knows who you are.. Great humans, probably angels. I don't know what happens now, and that's alright. I don't have any secrets I need kept anymore. There's probably some small shit still, but you know what I mean. I was never alone, as much as it felt like it. As much as I still do sometimes. I never was. I don't think I ever could be. Thanks. To my first love, I'm grateful for you. Grateful that even though it wasn't what I hoped for and even though it was never enough, it was. Some things never are.. and we were. I won't forget you. I won't forget the summer. I'll remember who I was when I met you. I'll remember who you were and how we've both changed and stayed the same. I've never had more respect for life and living than I have right now. Maybe it takes a near death experience to feel alive. Thanks. To my mother. You raised me strong. I know I'm only brave because you were first. So thank you. All of you. For everything good. I feel like a free man. If I listen closely.. I can hear the sky falling too

-Frank

**Tweets from HATETWEETSTOFRANKOCEAN.COM**

lilduval tweets this:

sooooo @frank\_ocean are u gon be serenading men on stage? I just wanna know so I know when to go to the bathroom at yo show

itsbizkit tweets this:

U a faggot if u followed Frank ocean

EggandPancakes tweets this:

You made it our business with that gay ass letter... homo RT @Frank\_Ocean\_ My life. My choices. My mistakes. My lessons. Not your business.

BrooklynBiscuit tweets this:

I dont even wanna kno RT @OmgThatsWellie: Now Ive seen a lot of shit I got questions

@frank\_ocean are u the female or the dude w/ your boo?

Bigmoneyfeese tweets this:

@frank\_ocean is a faggot and @TylerCreator thinks it is cool to be gay this is a very sick world smfh

**The Onion: Jack Nicholson, Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, And**

**Daniel Day-Lewis Come Out As GayAlso Bruce Springsteen, Beyoncé, Brian Williams,**

**Meryl Streep, And LeBron James• ISSUE 48•30 • Jul 25, 2012**

LOS ANGELES, NEW YORK, LONDON, PARIS, CHICAGO, BOSTON, MIAMI, ELSEWHERE—Responding to Anderson Cooper, Frank Ocean, Emma Stone, Kelsey Grammer, Zooey Deschanel, and Jimmy Kimmel's recent unexpected self-outings, a galaxy of Hollywood stars, including Jack Nicholson, Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, and Daniel Day-Lewis, announced Tuesday that they, too, have been homosexuals their entire lives. "For years we have lived a closeted lifestyle, afraid of the consequences, afraid of what the social stigma could do to our public images," said Nicholson, speaking at a press conference alongside newly outed homosexuals Khloé Kardashian, Sylvester Stallone, Usher, Scarlett Johansson, and Ben Kingsley. "But today we proudly join those who have had the courage to come forward about their sexual orientation, among them Ron Howard, Nicki Minaj, Jessica Biel, Tim McGraw, Connie Chung, Sir Ian Holm, Busta Rhymes, and Peyton Manning."

Monday's announcements reportedly came as a surprise to the many fans of the homosexual celebrities, especially those of Nicholson and DiCaprio, who have famously cultivated "ladies' man" images. In addition, fans of LeBron James, Harrison Ford, Paris Hilton, Howard Stern, Ben Affleck, and David Lee Roth expressed shock.

At press time, representatives for many of the stars, including Ben Stein, have requested various combinations of privacy, support, tolerance, and pro-LGBT activism.

Another small sampling of famous American public figures who came out of the closet this week.

"After years of secrecy, we started thinking it was foolish to stay closeted, especially after Tyra Banks, Vince Vaughn, Elisabeth Hasselbeck, Jon Hamm, Carrie Underwood, Channing Tatum, Tom Brady, Gwen Stefani, and Leighton Meester had spoken up," read a joint statement from Robert Redford, Kenny Rogers, and Amanda Byne, which also cited the bravery of Renée Zellweger, Jake Gyllenhaal, Ashlee Simpson, and Clive Owen as an inspiration for going public. "That, along with the announcement by the Ernest Borgnine estate, helped us see that we were not alone—that in fact it would be damned hard to be alone if we ever wanted to be."

In the wake of the ongoing media frenzy surrounding the widespread outings, a large number of C-list and minor celebrities have also confirmed their homosexuality. By 8 a.m. Wednesday, *Facts Of Life* co-star Nancy McKeon, Journey bassist Ross Valory, *Hardcore Pawn* star Les Gold, first-ever *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* winner John Carpenter, "Balloon Boy" hoaxer Richard Heene, former Buffalo Sabres forward Yuri Khmylev, and cartoon voice-over artist Rob Paulsen had all come out, and statements were believed to be forthcoming from former *Saturday Night Live* featured player Beth Cahill, Motel 6 spokesman Tom Bodett, *Angry Video Game Nerd* star James Rolfe, Chicago Cubs playoff-game spoiler Steve Bartman, *Aliens* co-star Carrie "Newt" Henn, and Greg "Shock G" Jacobs of Digital Underground.

"These confessions come at the perfect time," said *People* magazine managing editor Larry Hackett, responding to the initial disclosures as well as to the second and third wave of announcements from Paul Simon, David Blaine, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Prince Harry of Wales, Danny

Bonaduce, David Brenner, Mickey Rooney, George Clinton, and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. "With American citizens, governments, and companies increasingly overcoming their prejudices and becoming gay-friendly, there is no better time for these stars—or for Val Kilmer, Michelle Kwan, Aaron Sorkin, and Billy Crystal—to come right out and say they're gay."

"Between you and me, I had a feeling about Michael Phelps, Jonathan Franzen, Norah Jones, The Rock, Dick Cavett, Billy Zane, Chick Corea, and Jackie Chan," Hackett added. "But Fiona Apple, Steve Lawrence, and Buck Henry? Wow."

With Western culture shaken to its foundations, President Obama attempted to restore calm, responding with approval to the mass exodus from closets across the nation.

"America is a place that guarantees the pursuit of happiness, whether it's for an anonymous factory worker or openly gay men and women like Rob Reiner, Carl Reiner, Mary-Kate Olsen, Samuel L. Jackson, Moby, Vivica A. Fox, Gov. Gary Herbert of the great state of Utah, or Matt Lauer," Obama said in a speech yesterday afternoon. "We are long past the days of being shocked at homosexuals in our neighborhoods, our places of work, or even in the White House. Yes, I am gay. And so is my wife, Michelle. And my daughters are lesbians. And we proudly stand alongside David Ortiz, Wes Anderson, Hal Linden, Dr. Joyce Brothers, John Rhys-Davies, Forest Whitaker, Matisyahu, James Garner, Jeff Goldblum, and Lisa Marie Presley."

"And Dionne Warwick," the president added.

"And Freddie Prinze Jr., Nikki Sixx, Drew Barrymore, 50 Cent, Hulk Hogan, Art Bell, Philip Roth, and Penn Jillette," he continued. "And Josh Groban."

Not all reactions have been positive, however. A statement from the Rev. Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church warned that "every last member of Satan's legion of miserable homo sinners, including eight of my 13 children and myself, will not escape God's judgment."

Still, the vast majority of people have been supportive, perhaps none more so than actor Hugh Jackman, who last night tweeted, "2 this week's many out celebs: though I have always been straight, u have my support and admiration."

## Hip-Hop's Anti-Gay Tone Shifting After Frank Ocean's Coming Out

By MESFIN FEKADU 08/23/12 02:27 PM ET **AP**

NEW YORK — Snoop Dogg has rapped in songs where gay slurs have been tossed about. He's even said them, part of a long list of rappers who have freely used the f-word – the other f-word – in rhyme.

For years, anti-gay epithets and sentiments in rap have largely been accepted, along with its frequent misogyny and violence, as part of the hip-hop culture – a culture that has been slow to change, even as gays enjoy more mainstream acceptance, particularly in entertainment.

But while perhaps glacial, a shift appears to be on the horizon.

"People are learning how to live and get along more, and accept people for who they are and not bash them or hurt them because they're different," Snoop Dogg said in a recent interview.

Frank Ocean may be largely responsible for that. The rising star, who revealed on his blog last month that his first love was a man, is technically an R&B singer. But he has produced and collaborated with some of music's top hip-hop acts, from Jay-Z to Andre 3000 to Kanye West to Nas. He's also co-written songs for Beyonce, Justin Bieber and John Legend, and is a member of the alternative rap group Odd Future.

"When I was growing up, you could never do that and announce that," Snoop said of Ocean's revelation. "There would be so much scrutiny and hate and negativity, and no one would step (forward) to support you because that's what we were brainwashed and trained to know."

When 24-year-old Ocean made his announcement, he received a ton of support from the music world, mainly through Twitter and blogs, including encouraging words from 50 Cent, Nas, Jamie Foxx, Def Jam Records founder Russell Simmons, Beyonce and Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Even Ocean's Odd Future band mate, Tyler, the Creator, showed some love, though he's used homophobic slurs in his songs.

"(The support for Frank is) an extension of the overall kind of support we're seeing across the country for LGBT people, and not just in a broad sense, but specifically from iconic members of the black community," said Daryl Hannah, GLAAD's director of media and community partnerships, who namedropped President Barack Obama and Jay-Z as those leading the change. While the support for Ocean is strong, and some rappers – including Nicki Minaj – have said a gay rapper will soon hit the music scene, it's still hard to imagine that the male-dominated, macho rap world could include a gay performer.

Anti-gay sentiments have been entrenched in hip-hop for decades. Darryl "D.M.C." McDaniels of the iconic rap group Run D.M.C., says it was the norm for years.

"You would have had 50 rappers jump on a song, diss the gay people because it's cool," said D.M.C.

That attitude has abated little, even as other parts of the entertainment industry have curtailed what many consider to be anti-gay material. (Last year, Universal Pictures altered a trailer for the movie "Dilemma" because a character called a car "gay.")



Eminem was targeted by groups like GLAAD for his incessant slurs against gays, a role that now seems to be embodied by Tyler, the Creator, in his raps. Lil Wayne recently used the f-word on Chris Brown's "Look at Me Now," a Grammy-nominated Top 10 pop hit and No. 1 rap and R&B song. There are also terms like "no homo" and "pause" used in the hip-hop community after an utterance to acknowledge that what was said does not have any homosexual intent.

Wu-Tang Clan has had a number of songs that contain the f-word. In an interview, Wu-Tang's Ghostface Killah recently explained the genre's stance toward gays like this: "For the most part I think that hip-hop is, you know, we always have been open-minded to a lot of things. It's just certain things we just – we don't deal with."

When asked if a gay rapper could make it in hip-hop, Raekwon, another Wu-Tang member, said: "I mean, I don't know. I guess that's a question we all want to know."

When asked the same question, Snoop said with a laugh: "There might be some openly gay rappers in hip-hop that's having success – for real. You never know. There might be some(one) right now that hasn't pulled a Frank Ocean yet, that hasn't jumped out of the closet to the living room to make that announcement."

Ice-T said he could see a gay rapper on the scene – depending on what kind of rap he or she performed. "I've done hardcore hip-hop in my life where masculinity is at a premium. At this moment right now, we're in the world of pop-rap and it doesn't really matter right now. These guys are singing, it's pop music and being in pop and gay is OK," he said. "It would be difficult to listen to a gay gangster rapper ... If you're a gangster rapper like myself and Ice Cube ... if one of us came out and said something, that would be a big thing. That would be like, 'Whoa! What?'"

But some of hip-hop's key figures have given some kind of support to the gay community. Pharrell recently collaborated with the openly gay pop singer Mika on the song "Celebrate." Jay-Z, like Eminem, has said people of the same sex should be able to love one another. Eminem performed with Elton John at the 2001 Grammy Awards at the height of GLAAD's criticism. D.M.C. is skeptical about some of hip-hop's recent support of Ocean, since he believes homophobia is still rampant in the culture. Still, he is sure a homosexual hip-hop act will emerge: "Of course there's going to be a gay rapper." He said that a rapper's success would be determined not by his sexuality, but by the quality of his raps.

Shaheem Reid, a veteran hip-hop journalist, said the inroads that gays have made in mainstream culture have made a dent in the rap world: "Hip-hop is just a reflection of what's going on." He added that gay rappers can gain mainstream exposure, but that will come with challenges. "I think that if the music is great enough and the topics are great enough, there's a slight chance," said Reid, who is editor-at-large for hip-hop's XXL magazine. "If there was a homosexual emcee, male or female, I don't think that talking about them being gay or lesbian could be the only substance in their music."

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AP Writers Cristina Jaleru and Zara Younis in London contributed to this report.

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## Gay Chicago TV Tackles LGBTQ Visibility and the Many Faces of Coming Out

Posted: 07/16/2012 9:10 pm

In recent days we've seen some very high-profile people come out in many different fields -- like CNN's Anderson Cooper, R&B singer Frank Ocean, Jamaican singer Diana King, and Olympic soccer player Megan Rapinoe. While Cooper may have received the most attention, I think all these stories have a greater impact than many in the media are giving them credit for.

That was the discussion that took place on Gay Chicago TV's [Critical Thinking](#), in this week's media roundtable with journalists Kate Sosin of *Windy City Times* and Joe Erbentraut of HuffPost Chicago. While one might think that three journalists discussing the politics of coming out and LGBT visibility would naturally gravitate toward Anderson Cooper, the in-depth conversation actually pivoted quickly to delve deeper into issues of diversity, media stereotypes, and the importance of looking at the greater story behind the headlines of such a diverse group coming out.

While Ocean, King, and Rapinoe didn't get the same attention as Anderson Cooper, it quickly became apparent that their coming-out stories might actually be of more importance. Beyond just the news of someone like Cooper, who comes into people's living rooms every day on television, people like Ocean, King, and Rapinoe coming out in traditionally closeted professions and fields like sports and hip-hop can reach a swath of Americans that may not be tuned-in to or even familiar with LGBT issues. It also helps combat opponents of queer visibility who seek to demonize our community, like One Million Moms, which the show also takes on, criticizing the group's background and efforts.

Too often we see the queer community literally white-washed; faces of middle- or upper-class white men are what are predominately used in pop culture or in the media. This furthers an untrue stereotype of queer people as rich, white, gay elites, when our community is actually incredibly diverse, crossing racial, socioeconomic, and gender-expression lines. Telling the stories and honoring the coming-out struggles of people of color like Frank Ocean and Diana King, or of people who challenge gender roles like Megan Rapinoe, is extremely important. While many in the LGBT community may question the need to come out in this time of great change and social progress, such questions really speak to a feeling of comfort and privilege that far too many in the queer community simply do not share. To say that there is little or no value to coming out, or that such declarations are "passé," is to deny the need to see the many faces of our community -- and not just ones that look like Anderson Cooper. Yes, [his story and his visibility are important](#), but his coming out shouldn't be given precedent over the brave declarations of people who represent parts of our community that too often get shoved to the side. It's an important conversation that we need to have in the LGBT community and in the media world, and a lot was added to it by simply sitting down and discussing the issues together at a political roundtable.

Now it's time for all of us to join the conversation.

*You can watch full episode of Critical Thinking, hosted by Waymon Hudson, [online](#), with new episodes added every second and fourth Thursday of the month.*

## **Jay-Z, Tyler The Creator, and more speak out about Frank Ocean's sexuality The**

**July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Examiner.com**

**By Natalie Kuckik**

On July 4 Odd Future member and singer-songwriter Frank Ocean posted on his Tumblr page that his first love was a man. Since the post, Ocean has received an abundance of support from public figures such as [Jay-Z](#), Tyler, The Creator, and Russell Simmons.

On his [Tumblr page Ocean wrote](#), "Four summers ago, I met somebody. I was 19 years old. He was too. We spent that summer, and the summer after, together. Every day almost, and on the day we were together, time would glide. Most of the day I'd see him, and his smile. By the time I realized I was in love, it was malignant. It was hopeless."

Despite having written the open letter in December of 2011 it was posted in July of 2012, just weeks before his debut studio album, "Channel Orange" is set to be released. The letter could be due to the lyrical content in his album and that reviews are coming out expressing how the singer used pronouns like "him" instead of "her."

Russell Simmons wrote an open statement on [Global Grind](#) about Ocean's post. [Simmons wrote](#), "I am profoundly moved by the courage and honesty of [Frank Ocean](#). Your decision to go public about your sexual orientation gives hope and light to so many young people still living in fear. These types of secrets should not matter anymore, but we know they do, and because of that I decided to write this short statement of support for one of the greatest new artists we have."

The hip-hop collective [Odd Future](#) is led by Tyler, The Creator and he too wrote a response to Ocean's blog. [Tyler, The Creator tweeted](#), "My Big Brother Finally F\*\*king Did That. Proud Of That Ni\*\*a Cause I Know That S\*\*t Is Difficult Or Whatever."

Hip-hop artist Jay-Z took to his official website [Life + Times](#) to write about Frank Ocean's decision to reveal his sexuality. [Jay-Z wrote](#), "We admire the great courage and beauty and fearlessness in your coming out, not only as a bisexual Black man, but as a broken hearted one. The tender irony that your letter is to a boy who was unable to return your love until years later because he was living a lie is the only truly tragic detail about your letter."

## **An Open Letter To Frank Ocean From Author Terrance Dean**

[Jul 5, 2012](#) By [Terrance Dean](#)

An open letter to [Frank Ocean](#):

Over the course of the past few days I read on the blogs, and saw a few tweets chattering about an R&B artist coming out. Your name surfaced, along with an interview you did overseas, and then you wrote on [Tumblr](#) about a relationship you had four years ago with a young man. You shared how it changed your life, and how that young man was your first love.

Initially, when I first heard the news about an R&B artist coming out I wasn't moved. I actually thought it was a hoax created by someone. As we all know how well internet gossip fuels outings, pre-mature deaths, and other lies about celebrities. So, I dismissed it. I was waiting for you, or your publicist, to issue their pre-made ready-to-go written statement *For Artists Who Are Considered Gay When The Rainbow Is Not Enough*: "I am not gay. I am a heterosexual man, and I love women." However, that didn't happen. You actually responded to your legion of fans, and the world, by announcing your love and declaration affirming yourself in a new era Hip Hop world that is drifting toward a new normal that is no longer filled with the hetero masculine machismo that despises homosexuality.

You see, in 2008, my book was released, [Hiding In Hip Hop: On The Down Low in the Entertainment Industry From Music to Hollywood](#). It's my memoir detailing my life of working in the entertainment industry, and being privy to many friendships with a number of closeted celebrities, as well as a few relationships I shared with most of them. So, the news of an R&B artist coming out and admitting his true sexuality was not a shock to me. I actually have been awaiting the day, counting down the hours and minutes as to when one of my friends, or past lovers, would be brave enough to come forward and make a public announcement (My inhale continues to expand). But, it wasn't one of them. No. It was someone younger. Much braver. An artist who isn't hindered by the old relics of Hip Hop, or the entertainment school of, "Don't you come out or it will ruin your career," and the record label politics. It was YOU. Someone who recognizes their own uniqueness and the power they have to change a world with their honesty and truth. It was you Frank Ocean. A trailblazer. A journeyman. A true lyricist. An artist. A pioneer. A hero.

So, I want to thank you, Mr. Frank Ocean, for your courageousness. It takes a brave soul to come forth in truth, and in love, despite what the rest of the world is doing or feeling as "flavor of the week," as legendary soul singer, Maze, recently said in a speech at the 2012 BET Awards. The mirror image you're reflecting to the world gives us a new vision to aspire to. Your grace and ability to stand in your truth, and BE who you are called to BE, give others the courage and strength to be unafraid and be FREE. Thank you for not playing small, or even allowing yourself to be small. You're too BIG, and nothing can contain your SPIRIT for it is your CALLing to give us this moment. Right here. Right now. There are many young people, even mature people, who are struggling with their sexual identity, and are afraid to step out of the shadows for fear of being judged, criticized, or ridiculed. Every day the fear grips and chokes them, just as it once

did to you. So, please know that they are watching, reading, and listening to you, and the declaration you're making. A black man in Hip Hop, who looks like them, speaks like them, and realized his dreams despite of the backlash or BS others tend to hold on to because of their own prejudices against same gender loving people. You boldly refuse to be bound by others, and in that declaration you are giving others hope and courage to be their authentic selves. Being black and gay so many times we hear, "No," and "You can't," or, "It's impossible." Yet, your music and voice is heard around the world on radio channels, you've performed in stadiums before hundreds and thousands of people, and club DJs bang your songs while men and women, straight, gay, and bi, bop their heads and two-step to YOUR GROOVE. Yes, that is POWER-FULL!

What many people don't understand is that coming out is a process. Though it is a process that is formed in our BEings, and shaped into our purpose, however, it takes KNOWing SELF, and BEcoming TRUTH-FULL within one's self in order to be able to share it with others. No one can make you do it before your time. It is not up to them. It's up to the CREATOR, and HIS will, and the moment HE knows YOU are ready to be responsible of the task and gift to give to the world. This is YOUR time.

Your gift has, and, is being revealed right before our eyes, and we are bearing witness to it. Every time you've opened your mouth we've heard it in your songs. Your melodic, smooth, and hypnotic voice lingering gingerly with the beats blending perfectly to tell us about love, happiness, hopefulness, and starting again. Thank you for the gift of your voice, and for understanding how to use it.

I also want to thank you for being open, vulnerable, and FRANK regarding your first love with another man. What a powerful testament in bearing your soul, and being emotional, open, and so revealing for the entire world to see, especially your emotions, and feelings for another man. Your letter was truly heartfelt. Thank you for your honesty.

Yes, we all know about first loves. The ones we'd walk to the earth's end for. The ones whose voice, smell, and touch gives us a reason to live and look forward to until the next moment we see them again. It's hard loving someone so much and they don't even know the depth of your love, and how you'll give your heart to them, and even lay down and die for them. It's hard because as you've stated so eloquently in your letter that when you were finally able to say the words letting that young man know how you felt about him, and his response was a pat on the back and him saying how he could not return the love, I knew that moment. I knew that experience. I could relate, as well as many of your fans who have experienced love and love lost. We've all been there sharing our hearts, words, thoughts, yet, the other person responds with a non-empathetic response. They don't get it. They don't understand that it took so much courage, and us fighting through our fears to be vulnerable and in a space where we once were afraid to go. However, for some ODD reason you felt the strength and courage to reveal all because you wanted to be free, floating, and living in that forever euphoric space that they made you feel whenever they were around. But, they tell you that they cannot love you the way you love them. They can't be or give you what you want them to be. Your world stops. The sky falls. The earth sinks. The air goes stale, and you can't breathe. The life has been sucked out of you and you know there will be no more tomorrows because there will be no more anything.

Yet, you've found the strength from a loving and nurturing support system of friends, loved ones, and family who healed you through. They lifted you, inspired you, and encouraged you. And, in the power of your BEing you were able to rise, lift the earth, and connect us to you with your symphonic music and tantalizing lyrics. Simply because you acknowledged your greater SELF which you stated at the end of your letter, "I don't have any secrets I need kept anymore...I feel like a free man." POWER-FULL!

Just as singer, Adele, wailed with an open wounded heart on her **21** album, singing about a rejected love, and Mary J. Blige, cried out with a soulful blues of an unrequited love on her, **My Life** album, their vulnerability connected them with their fans. Just as you have done with your letter. And, yes, there are many artists who have made songs about former lovers, ill-fated relationships, and love lost, but Mary J. Blige and Adele touched the souls of folks like an old Negro spiritual. And, in that connectedness their truths catapulted them to superstardom. My hope and prayer for you is that your new album, **Channel Orange**, in which reviewers say that many of the songs are an ode to a love lost with another man, will have the same effect as **21** and **My Life** did on the lives of music fans around the world, and it catapult you into the superstar stratosphere where you belong.

Thank you, Frank Ocean, for inviting us into your space, and giving us the opportunity to know you emotionally, spiritually, and humanly.

Warmly,

Terrance Dean

## **Protest Today: A Field Guide By Jeffery Gitlan**

I am tired of hearing people call our movement today's civil rights movement. The LGBT movement is a different protest shrouded in silence and crucified publicly by holy verses giving voice vendetta.

I am not trying to say the MLK had it easy, but he knew who his enemies were, they wore hoods cloaked in hate and warned that the civil rights movement should be cautious of Caucasians.

MLK assumed those of light skin could be categorized as either the bigots that met his protest on Bloody Sunday or the cowards that sat on the white picket fence saying they supported the movement when asked privately, but would vote against equal rights in their living rooms and ballot booths.

MLK knew the limitations of his protest and had a face for who was against him and who was on his side. My brother, we do not have the same luxury, no we cannot tell by looking at someone if they are part of our family, our battle.

Instead we have people denying themselves rights as they live within their closets. They think the victories of Ellen or Anderson Cooper are enough, that someone else will fight their fight as long as they promise they won't eat at Chik-Fil-A or shop at Target. They ignore the fact that we need to mobilize, come together and identify ourselves for the battle. But we are afraid, a generation that remembers what happens to Matthews that are out or Teena Brandons that are open. We are a generation that hears of youth choosing suicide instead of being called fag because they do not have an army, no movement to protect them. We are afraid because our enemy also does not wear a name tag, but stays hidden in a cloak of anonymity that goes viral through social media. We are unsure which side is causing more damage: The side that will not speak or the side that only speaks with hate.

We see movements to wipe out homophobia on Facebook, but that's so gay, no homo, and fag decorate millions of Facebook walls. Supreme Courts decide Fred Phelps's is protected under the first amendment. Phelps's will use his voice with no qualms, but will you claim your membership into a group not identified by race, sex, religion, or creed. Instead only bound by humans should have the right to love. Choosing to be united only by the most important quality that matters...Voice.



## **Flobots – There is a War going on for your mind**

Media mavens mount surgical strikes from trapper keeper collages and online magazine racks  
Cover girl cutouts throw up pop-up ads  
Infecting victims with silicone shrapnel  
Worldwide passenger pigeons deploy paratroopers  
Now it's raining pornography  
Lovers take shelter  
Post-production debutantes pursue you in Nascar chariots

They construct ransom letters from biblical passages and bleed mascara into the holy water supplies

There's a war going on for your mind

Industry insiders slang test tube babies to corporate crack heads  
They flash logos and blast ghettos  
Their embroidered neckties say "Stop Stitching"  
Conscious rappers and whistle blowers get stitches made of acupuncture needles and marionette strings

There is a war going on for your mind

Professional wrestlers and vice presidents want you to believe them  
The desert sky is their blue screen  
They superimpose explosions  
They shout at you  
"Pay no attention to the men behind the barbed curtain  
Nor the craters beneath the draped flags  
Those hoods are there for your protection  
And meteors these days are the size of corpses"

There's a war going on for your mind  
We are the insurgents

### **Heather Zydek: Revolutionary Field Manual**

I am not a social worker, professional activist, or sociopolitical scholar. I'm just a journalist with a specialty in community and social justice reporting who happens to find myself asking the same questions over and over again about service, voluntarism and charity. In all the ruminating I've done, I've come to some basic conclusions about myself and, perhaps to a certain extent, my generation when it comes to charity. Our generation is moved by intense, dramatic displays of horror and injustice – and we may be willing to open up a vein and start giving until we're drained of all of our blood...for a few days anyway. Then the memory fades as quickly as our favorite cable news network jumps to another set of news alerts, and for us, life soon moves on to more exciting things. The key for any protest movement is to inspire and motivate individuals to go from the comfort of their homes to the chaos of the streets and face off against the government. Social media allow organizers to involve like-minded people in a movement at a very low cost, but they do not necessarily make these people move.

### **Readers Theatre Performance of Frank Ocean Case Study**

#### **Heather Zydek**

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**Frank Ocean Coming Out**

Whoever you are, where ever you are, I'm starting to think we're a lot alike. Human beings spinning on blackness. All wanting to be seen, touched, heard, paid attention to. My loved ones are everything to me here. In the last year or three, I've screamed at my creator, screamed at clouds in the sky for some explanation. Mercy maybe. For peace of mind to rain like Manna somehow.

Four summers ago, I met somebody. I was 19 years old; he was too.

**Terrance Dean**

Initially, when I first heard the news about an R&B artist coming out I wasn't moved. I actually thought it was a hoax created by someone. As we all know how well internet gossip fuels outings, pre-mature deaths, and other lies about celebrities. So, I dismissed it. I was waiting for you, or your publicist, to issue their pre-made ready-to-go written statement For Artists Who Are Considered Gay When The Rainbow Is Not Enough: "I am not gay. I am a heterosexual man, and I love women." However, that didn't happen. You actually responded to your legion of fans, and the world, by announcing your love and declaration affirming yourself!

## **Huffington Post: Mesfin Fekadu: Journalist 2**

Snoop Dogg has rapped in songs where gay slurs have been tossed about. He's even said them, part of a long list of rappers who have freely used the f-word – the other f-word – in rhyme. For years, anti-gay epithets and sentiments in rap have largely been accepted, along with its frequent misogyny and violence, as part of the hip-hop culture – a culture that has been slow to change, even as gays enjoy more mainstream acceptance, particularly in entertainment. But while perhaps glacial, a shift appears to be on the horizon.

"People are learning how to live and get along more, and accept people for who they are and not bash them or hurt them because they're different. When I was growing up, you could never do that and announce that," Snoop said of Ocean's revelation. "There would be so much scrutiny and hate and negativity, and no one would step (forward) to support you because that's what we were brainwashed and trained to know."

## **Heather Zydek**

Our generation is moved by intense, dramatic displays of horror and injustice – and we may be willing to open up a vein and start giving until we're drained of all of our blood...for a few days anyway. Then the memory fades as quickly as our favorite cable news network jumps to another set of news alerts, and for us, life soon moves on to more exciting things.



## **The Onion: Journalist**

LOS ANGELES, NEW YORK, LONDON, PARIS, CHICAGO, BOSTON, MIAMI, ELSEWHERE—Responding to Anderson Cooper, Frank Ocean, Emma Stone, Kelsey Grammer, Zooey Deschanel, and Jimmy Kimmel's recent unexpected self-outings, a galaxy of Hollywood stars, including Jack Nicholson, Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, and Daniel Day-Lewis, announced Tuesday that they, too, have been homosexuals their entire lives. "For years we have lived a closeted lifestyle, afraid of the consequences, afraid of what the social stigma could do to our public images, But today we proudly join those who have had the courage to come forward about their sexual orientation."

Monday's announcements reportedly came as a surprise to the many fans of the homosexual celebrities, especially those of Nicholson and DiCaprio, who have famously cultivated "ladies' man" images. At press time, representatives for many of the stars, have requested various combinations of privacy, support, tolerance, and pro-LGBT activism.

In the wake of the ongoing media frenzy surrounding the widespread outings, a large number of C-list and minor celebrities have also confirmed their homosexuality. By 8 a.m. Wednesday, *Facts Of Life* co-star Nancy McKeon, Journey bassist Ross Valory, *Hardcore Pawn* star Les Gold, first-ever *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* winner John Carpenter, "

## **Single Man**

Let's leave the Jews out of this for a moment and think of another minority. One that can go unnoticed if it needs to. There are all sorts of minorities, blondes for example, but a minority is only thought of as one when it constitutes some kind of threat to the majority. A real threat or an imagined one. And therein lies the FEAR. And, if the minority is somehow invisible... ..the fear is even greater. And this FEAR is the reason the minority is persecuted. So, there always is a cause. And the cause is FEAR. Minorities are just people. People... like us. I can see that I've lost you a bit.

You know what? Let's just talk about fear. Fear, after all, is our real enemy. Fear is taking over our world. Fear is being used as a tool of manipulation in our society. It's how politicians peddle policy and how Madison Avenue sells us things that we don't need. Think about it. Fear that we're going to be attacked, fear that there are communists lurking around every corner, fear that some don't believe in our way of life poses a threat to us. Fear that black culture may take over the world. Well, maybe that one is a real fear. Fear that our bad breath might ruin our friendships... Fear of growing old and being alone. Fear that we're useless and that no one cares what we have to say.

**Heather Zydek**

The key for any protest movement is to inspire and motivate individuals to go from the comfort of their homes to the chaos of the streets and face off against the government. Social media allow organizers to involve like-minded people in a movement at a very low cost, but they do not necessarily make these people move.

**HATE TWEETS****lilduval tweets this:**

sooooo @frank\_ocean are u gon be serenading men on stage? I just wanna know so I know when to go to the bathroom at yo show

**itsbizkit tweets this:**

U a faggot if u followed Frank ocean



### **Jay-Z Response**

You were born in the '80s, when gay rights activist were seizing the streets of New York and other major world cities, fighting for visibility and against a disease that threatened to disappear them. The cultural shifts created from those struggles in some ways make your revelation about your fluid sexuality less shocking than it would have been decades before. Still, there are real risk with coming out as a man loving a man. I hope you hear and are reading the hundreds of thousands of people who have your back

### **HATE TWEETS**

#### **EggandPancakes tweets this:**

You made it our business with that gay ass letter... homo RT @Frank\_Ocean\_ My life. My choices. My mistakes. My lessons. Not your business.

#### **BrooklynBiscuit tweets this:**

I dont even wanna kno RT @OmgThatsWellie: Now Ive seen a lot of shit I got questions @frank\_ocean are u the female or the dude w/ your boo?

### **Russell Simmons Response**

"I am profoundly moved by the courage and honesty of Frank Ocean. Your decision to go public about your sexual orientation gives hope and light to so many young people still living in fear. These types of secrets should not matter anymore, but we know they do, and because of that I decided to write this short statement of support for one of the greatest new artists we have."

### **HATE TWEETS**

**Bigmoneyfeese tweets this:**

@frank\_ocean is a faggot and @TylerCreator thinks it is cool to be gay this is a very sick world smfh

## **Protest Today: A Field Guide By Jeffery Gitlan**

I am tired of hearing people call our movement today's civil rights movement.

The LGBT movement is a different protest shrouded in silence and crucified publicly by holy verses giving voice vendetta. Instead we have people denying themselves rights as they live within their closets. They think the victories of Ellen or Anderson Cooper are enough, that someone else will fight their fight as long as they promise they won't eat at Chik-Fil-A or shop at Target. They ignore the fact that we need to mobilize, come together and identify ourselves for the battle. But we are afraid, a generation that remembers what happens to Matthews that are out or Teena Brandons that are open. We are a generation that hears of youth choosing suicide instead of being called fag because they do not have an army, no movement to protect them. We are afraid because our enemy also does not wear a name tag, but stays hidden in a cloak of anonymity that goes viral through social media. We are unsure which side is causing more damage: The side that will not speak or the side that only speaks with hate.

## **The Onion: Journalist**

"These confessions come at the perfect time," said *People* magazine managing editor Larry Hackett, responding to the initial disclosures as well as to the second and third wave of announcements with American citizens, governments, and companies increasingly overcoming their prejudices and becoming gay-friendly, there is no better time for these stars to come right out and say they're gay."

With Western culture shaken to its foundations, President Obama attempted to restore calm, responding with approval to the mass exodus from closets across the nation.

"America is a place that guarantees the pursuit of happiness, whether it's for an anonymous factory worker or openly gay men and women. We are long past the days of being shocked at homosexuals in our neighborhoods, our places of work, or even in the White House."

## **Frank Ocean's letter**

By now I've written two albums. This being the second. I wrote to keep myself busy and sane. I wanted to create worlds that were rosier than mine. I tried to channel overwhelming emotions. I'm surprised at how far all of it has taken me. Before writing this I'd told some people my story. I'm sure these people kept me alive, kept me safe. Sincerely, these are the folks I wanna thank from the floor of my heart. Everyone of you knows who you are.. Great humans, probably angels. I don't know what happens now, and that's alright. I don't have any secrets I need kept anymore. There's probably some small shit still, but you know what I mean. I was never alone, as much as it felt like it. As much as I still do sometimes. I never was. I don't think I ever could be. Thanks. To my first love, I'm grateful for you. Grateful that even though it wasn't what I hoped for and even though it was never enough, it was. Some things never are.. and we were. I won't forget you. I won't forget the summer. I'll remember who I was when I met you. I'll remember who you were and how we've both changed and stayed the same. I've never had more respect for life and living than I have right now. Maybe it takes a near death experience to feel

alive. Thanks. To my mother. You raised me strong. I know I'm only brave because you were first. So thank you. All of you. For everything good.

### **Terrance Dean**

An artist who isn't hindered by the old relics of Hip Hop, or the entertainment school of, "Don't you come out or it will ruin your career," and the record label politics. It was YOU. Someone who recognizes their own uniqueness and the power they have to change a world with their honesty and truth. It was you Frank Ocean. A trailblazer. A journeyman. A true lyricist. An artist. A pioneer. A hero.

The mirror image you're reflecting to the world gives us a new vision to aspire to. Your grace and ability to stand in your truth, and BE who you are called to BE, give others the courage and strength to be unafraid and be FREE. Thank you for not playing small, or even allowing yourself to be small. There are many young people, even mature people, who are struggling with their sexual identity, and are afraid to step out of the shadows for fear of being judged, criticized, or ridiculed. Every day the fear grips and chokes them, just as it once did to you. So, please know that they are watching, reading, and listening to you, and the declaration you're making. A black man in Hip Hop, who looks like them, speaks like them, and realized his dreams. You boldly refuse to be bound by others, and in that declaration you are giving others hope and courage to be their authentic selves.

So, I want to thank you, Mr. Frank Ocean, for your courageousness. It takes a brave soul to come forth in truth, and in love, despite what the rest of the world is doing or feeling as "flavor of the week,".

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What surprised you in the Frank Ocean case study?
2. How did you react to the news of Frank Ocean's coming out when you heard it?
3. How is sexuality talked about within the Reader's Theatre? How is this like the other conversation you've heard about sexuality? How is it different?
4. How does the hip-hop culture typically speak about sexuality? How does this compare to the Frank Ocean case study?
5. How does the Frank Ocean case study relate to the LGBT social movement?

6. The Reader's Theatre discusses the 'coming out' process: what does this mean to you?
7. Were you surprised by the reaction to Ocean's coming out by members of the public and hip-hop community? What, if anything surprised you? Whose opinions did you find yourself agreeing with the most?
8. What things do you believe Frank Ocean considered prior to coming out? What were the risks? What were the benefits? Was twitter an appropriate medium for him to make this declaration?
9. What "fear" do you believe prevents individuals from coming out? What other motivations may prevent people from coming out?
10. What does the Frank Ocean case study teach you about hip-hop, homophobia, and the LGBT movement? What can be done to change the homophobic culture of hip-hop?
11. How do these lessons relate to your life?

### Another Perspective

Frank Ocean's coming out acted as a case study on how sexuality is talked about and handled in the hip-hop community. Does the way we talk about LGBT rights change if a white, heterosexual man is talking about the issue?

### VIDEO OF MACKLEMORE – SAME LOVE

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlVBg7\\_08n0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlVBg7_08n0)

1. How does the message change when the race and sexuality of the speaking is altered?
2. Which was more effective at conveying their emotions and meanings?
3. Which one is more identifiable to you? To whom do you relate and why?
4. Do these messages help or hurt efforts to create dialogue about LGBT rights? Why or why not?
5. Where else is this issue talked about in hip-hop?
6. What are the benefits of an LGBT ally speaking up about rights? What are the risks?

### Expert Work: Out of Class Discovery

After experiencing the reader's theater and dissecting the Frank Ocean case study, what have other's said about sexuality depictions in hip hop? Specifically what is the public saying? To find this out, using popular social media networks (Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, TUMBLR) examine the comments/response the public has had regarding hip hop and sexuality.

1. How are these reactions and messages this different from the case study?
2. How are they alike?
3. What or whom besides Frank Ocean's has queer hip hop and challenge the dominant heterosexual masculine voice to prevalent in the community?
4. How has the general public responded to these attempt to queer hip-hop?
5. What did you expect to find and were your expectations confirmed?
6. What were you surprised to find?
7. What seems to be the most common theme within the comments?
8. Which comments do you find the most troubling? Why?



### **Reactions of teachers and students to the assignment**

When trying new methods of teaching, there is always uncertainty in how to best employ the new method. We have had some questions in how to conduct a reader's theater in the classroom. With the reader's theater, there may be some apprehension both for the teachers and students, to reduce this apprehension we suggest assigning students the parts beforehand so that they may familiarize themselves with the script. The performance can be done either with the students creating characterizations and performing the script, or in a traditional table read fashion. We have found the use of a variety of pieces of literature allows multiple perspectives to be shared concerning the discussion of the queering of hip-hop. In particular, teachers have reacted positively to the controversial reactions to Frank Ocean's coming out. In one instance, we were told that the controversial reactions helped the class address the difficult subject of homophobia. Through the use of literature, the homophobic viewpoint can be examined without any student risking losing face by voicing their own opinions. Furthermore, we have found that the use of role-playing allows the students to take an active role in the process and has resulted in excellent discussions post-performance. Role-playing challenges students' viewpoints, and forces students to think critically about the topic. Additionally, we have found that this activity has helped spur classroom debate concerning the role of coming, and whether or not it is a responsibility of LGBT members. One teacher told us that the assignment generated discussion concerning barriers facing the LGBT movement and forced students to confront questions about what is more harmful to the movement: direct homophobia, or anonymity.

Overall, we have found students to be responsive to this activity. That feedback we have received from students has been powerful. Student did indicate initial uncertainty about the performance aspect of the assignment, but also indicated that they enjoyed engaging the

materials and found it to be more challenging than a traditional lecture or seminar style class discussion. Perhaps the most promising feedback came from a heterosexual male in a class who came up to Amy and said, “I realize why this [LGBT movement] matters to me now.” The assignment helped the student to understand that LKBT movement as a social issue as opposed and not an “us versus them” issue. Many students expressed how they appreciated the fact that “real life” issues being addressed in the classroom and that we were using texts from the “real world” and not a textbook. We believe this assignment will help teachers create a new contact space in which to engage in human right conversations.

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