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LGBTQ+ representation, queer journalist, National Post, conservative media, polarization, gay liberation, radical politics, assimilation, Canadian media, trans issues, independent journalism, marginalized community, media landscape, journalistic process, Behind the Review.

**SPEAKERS**

Evan Zeller, Matthew Hanick

**Evan Zeller**

Hey everyone, thanks for tuning in to Behind the Review, a behind the scenes look at the journalistic work of our amazing team here at the Review of Journalism. So at the Review, we aim to tell stories that mirror the widespread and rapid changes happening within the Canadian journalism industry, and so this podcast series will serve as a deep dive into the reporting process of our hard working contributors, shedding light on why it's important to tell these stories. Now today, I'm joined by Matthew Hannick, who is going to be talking about his piece on the polarization of LGBTQ plus representation in the media landscape, and how after working in a predominantly conservative space as a queer journalist, he began that process of finding, Rediscovering his voice. And so I Yeah, hi Matthew, how are you doing today?

**Matthew Hanick**

Good. How are you?

**Evan Zeller**

Very well. Thank you.

**Matthew Hanick**

Thank you for having me.

**Evan Zeller**

Oh, of course. I'm glad. I'm glad that I got the chance to speak with you. So I just want to start by saying that your piece was an incredibly good read, and I particularly love your ability to paint a scene so vividly, much like you would read in a novel. So you, you are definitely at that level. Just let me say that, and not just your own experiences, but also the experiences of other important figures in your story, like, um, that little kind of segment of about Tim McCaskill for for instance, I Well done, really.

**Matthew Hanick**

Thank you for thinking that.

**Evan Zeller**

So as a queer person in journalism, what was your understanding of LGBTQ plus representation before writing this feature, and what did you learn coming away from this experience?

**Matthew Hanick**

Um, I guess my understanding of queer representation in media was that it's steadily improved. Over the last couple of years, I think we've seen, like social movements, like Black Lives Matter, you know, sort of fight for representation in media. And, you know, there's been sort of a shift in seeking and asking for diversity in media. And so I think we definitely see that nowadays, and it's there's been some, you know, small improvements here and there. Absolutely, hopefully that answers the question.

**Evan Zeller**

Absolutely it does. No, I think that, like, anyone, kind of, like, with like, kind of just entering that situation, would have more or less that idea. Because, you know, in the grand scheme of things, you you know, we look at it from that standpoint of, like, how it must have changed on a wider scale. But like, I guess if you're, you know, if you, if you're not from, like, a marginalized group within, you know, the queer community, you can't really, like, speak to that. But so this was probably an education in itself. So yeah, your idea for the story came from your experience in turning up the National Post as a queer journalist. And can you speak a little bit on what the work atmosphere was like there.

**Matthew Hanick**

It was pleasant. I worked there as an editorial intern. I reported to the web team. I was interested in the National Post because they offered specifically an editorial internship, and I I wanted to write news, and so that's what I did, and and I enjoyed doing it, and so I wrote a lot of stories for them. And yeah, it was, it was going well, and, you know, they valued my ideas.

**Evan Zeller**

No, I absolutely. And that's that's kind of heartening to hear that like, you know, yes, in a in an atmosphere where you might like, anticipate that, you know, people have like, Opposing Viewpoints, that they still like, maintain that level of like professionalism, and it's still welcoming. But also you in your piece, you talk about how working at the post, despite, like, you know, them making you feel like valued, and all that, as a journalist working their placed you in a bit of a moral quandary. And can you explain what that was and like, how that made you feel?

**Matthew Hanick**

Yeah, absolutely. So when I accepted this position, I had certain, you know, reservations about the publication. You know, given its conservative outlook and its audience, not to mention some frequent contributors who I disagree with, conservative media is often critical of the LGBTQ plus community, and in recent years, extremely so I'm thinking specifically of like, accusations of grooming pedophilia, and, you know, with polarization and distrust in media, you you see on social media, these things go to sort of wild extremes. Nonetheless, I considered working at the National Post a good opportunity, career wise, and if anything, I thought about the opportunity as one where I could potentially write about sensitive topics in a responsible way, being a queer person in a conservative environment. In practice, I don't know if that's what actually happened, and that's sort of where, you know, the moral conundrum comes in, because it's I sort of got lost in the weeds a little bit, and I didn't have so much control. I didn't have as much control as I thought. And so, yeah, I started to lose my voice a little bit.

**Evan Zeller**

Yeah. So on that note, can you talk us through your story a bit, and what did you set to find out from that experience?

**Matthew Hanick**

Right? So I guess with this essay, I wanted to sort of talk about so specifically, you know, Canada's LGBTQ rights, invisibility are sort of on the downswing, I guess, is the end result of all this polarization. And conservatives sort of view that as the result of, you know, radical political thinking. And so there's this sort of two ends of the spectrum where everyone is, in and of themselves, acting too radical. But when it comes to the queer community, I wanted to look back at, you know, Canada's early gay liberation movement, and sort of ask what the history was there, and, you know, what its achievements, how those achievements were achieved, basically, and was what style of politics was it accomplished through? Was it radical, or was it assimilationist? For the most part, it was, I guess it was a mixture of both,

**Evan Zeller**

yeah, but there's definitely you can, like, see that divide, that generational divide between, like, how the older generations, they're like, as you're saying, just kind of like they're they're more so, but like, celebrating their hard earned, like, achievements, and, you know, assimilating, so to speak, well, with the newer generation, there's still like, this, um, I think this fervent need to, like, how should I say Like, like, a resort to, like, more radical demonstrations, because, like, you know, like, without trying to, like, sound Shakespeare here, like, oh, like, the battle is not yet won, you know, until we have until every kind of like sect of like within the LGBTQ community is seen and recognized.

**Matthew Hanick**

Well, I can say that. I can say this, the essay, you know, sort of came from attending my first Pride Parade, and it being interrupted by the coalition against pinkwashing. Who were, I guess, protesting prides sponsors, relationships to Israeli arms manufacturers and conservatives called this protest radical. I guess, being a queer person working in a conservative space, I sort of wanted to interrogate both left and right wing perspectives to understand why the LGBTQ plus community is sort of so fractured right now. Is radical politics a bad thing

**Evan Zeller**

so in the process of, like, gathering voices or gathering sources for this, for this piece, there were evidently some conflicting perspectives, because, you know you're, you're kind of, like trying to balance it out from, like, the the right and the left side. Um, so yeah, there were some conflicting perspectives that you included in your piece here. And how did you go about balancing these voices?

**Matthew Hanick**

Well, I suppose the essay started out as trying to unravel the conundrum that is being a queer conservative. I'm not a queer conservative, but I just was interested in this sort of perspective people who sort of are assimilationists, but don't recognize or are against, you know, the sort of radicalism that we see today with the queer social movement or factions of it, I was just interested in getting their perspective and sort of balancing it out, you know, with more left wings and sort of, you know, looking at, you know, just trying to find a middle ground. Basically, it was also easier, just because I had worked at the National Post, and I could find conservative, queer and lesbian journalists to talk to. So it was just doable. And then I did want to go back through, I guess, Canada's Gay Liberation history, and that's where I sort of reached out to the body politic, Tim McCaskill, Ed Jackson, I spoke with, and then trying to find people to talk to on the left. It wasn't in today's media landscape. It wasn't easy. I tried to reach out to a few unions, blmto journalists at extra it's hard. I in their defense, I did just work at the National Post, and so I didn't really get much in response, but I did my best. So,

**Evan Zeller**

and does that, like fear kind of still loom over your head, like being associated with, like, the kind of core values of the National Post,

**Matthew Hanick**

very much. Yeah.

**Evan Zeller**

Well, I think anyone who, uh, who reads this piece will see that that's just simply not the case. So, just, just so for your own assurance, but yeah, on that, on that on that note, being a more left leaning queer person, when speaking to some of your more conservative sources, were there any stories or perspective of theirs that maybe, like, kind of made you, kind of like, stop and think, or even resonated with you?

**Matthew Hanick**

I guess, speaking with all, like the sources, but I think conservative journalists is the idea that assimilation is sort of the way to go, and that, you know, Rather than wait for a sort of radical overhaul of society, we should trust basically all of our institutions, even if inclusion for some marginalized groups comes at an incremental pace. I think it's easier said for some than others, but throughout I guess ka liberation history, they did at some point realize that there would be no revolution, as sad as it is to say, and that work through unions and work through the courts. I think Tim McFall calls it like a vertical approach, like working with government and working through laws is how societal acceptance happens. I think that is sort of how it has become. But part of the essay also acknowledges that since not everyone can assimilate, or assimilation isn't offered to certain members, and specifically like racialized and trans queer people, then why should they have to wait around? Why isn't radical politics a suitable option?

**Evan Zeller**

So I realized that for this piece, you you likely had to do extensive research into the history of the movement's visibility in Canadian media spaces. What were some of the things that shocked you to learn and do you see any parallels into how the queer community are represented in the media? Now,

**Matthew Hanick**

I guess, to answer the first half of that question, I guess I was more or less surprised. I don't know why it was surprised, but like to see like the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail like so anti gay was surprising, just because you know of how the tides have changed, I'll say, and then I guess to answer the second half. I guess conservative stances are the same as always. I guess I don't think the National Post was around till the 80s, but, like, the sun was pretty much the same as it is today. So, um,

**Evan Zeller**

something certainly haven't changed. Yes,

**Matthew Hanick**

yeah.

**Evan Zeller**

Okay, you know what this kind of like a, just an Off, off shoot of that. But, um, what can you speak a little bit on what it was like getting to, kind of like talk to Tim McCaskill in learning about the history of representation in Canadian media,

**Matthew Hanick**

sure, it was really cool to talk to Tim McCaskill because I learned about him, I guess, during my undergrad as an English major, also at Tmu, my professor recommended his book, queer Progress. I can't remember for what assignment, but I read it quite some time ago, and I realized, like as a journalist, or at least at the time that I could, I would end up being able to speak with him. I think that's maybe the coolest part about this experience was, you know, getting to speak with an activist who really, you know, shaped Toronto's queer history, and also Ed Jackson, also of the body politic and seeing and just, I guess, reading about the uphill battle they faced, because there really was no queer media in the 70s before them, and they did a lot of work, you know, not only to Make queerness acceptable, but broadcast to all so really cool.

**Evan Zeller**

I'm glad, I'm glad that you got to have that experience, that that must be some part of you, like, must have, like, had to, kind of, like, remember, like, to to kind of keep up your not journalistic persona, but like, remembering that you're like, you're here for, like, an interview. Well, like, at the same time not being, like, not totally succumbing to being like, star struck or awestruck, like, what, like, anyway, so on that note, with the rise of, you know, the the media landscape has changed. I mean, maybe not entirely for the better, but there has been some progress and and with mainstream media becoming more inclusive, do you think queer communities still have a need for, like, independent radical media spaces?

**Matthew Hanick**

Absolutely look. If you look at how trans issues are covered, you know, the lack of trans journalists in major newsrooms has essentially botched the coverage of that issue, and that's why I think independent journalism and independent queer journalism from trans and non binary folks in Canada is so essential to, I guess, actively counteract like misinformation, but also just poor information coming from news outlets. And that's just one example.

**Evan Zeller**

So just kind of taking it back to like, you know what this piece meant for you. What has reporting and writing this feature meant for you personally? How has it changed, or has it changed you how you feel about your path in journalism since you finished interning at the National Post?

**Matthew Hanick**

definitely, I sort of feel like I needed to do this after working there again. It was a pleasant experience, but I feel like I feel like I sort of misrepresented myself, and I kind of lost my voice a little bit. And so this was my path to finding it again. Throughout this year, I've had people think that I'm conservative or and so just this, I've sort of felt this stigma followed me. So I don't know that really bothered me, and I think I didn't want that to be a representation of, you know, my journalistic standards and ethics. So this is me, I guess, trying to break free of that.

**Evan Zeller**

Well, I think just being one of the people who've read your, your amazing piece, I think it's safe to say you've done just that, and I can't, I can't wait for others to read it as well. Really is a great piece, and it seems that you had a good time, not, not without its struggles reporting on this surely, because you, you have, we, I'm sure you experienced some roadblocks, and, like, you know, gathering sources. But, um, it was, I take it was really like fulfilling experience nonetheless, and like a passion project.

**Matthew Hanick**

Yeah, definitely, it's, it's been a weird year, but it's, I'm happy with this essay.

**Evan Zeller**

So Matthew, just to end things off, having been through it all, would you say it's possible to be queer and work in a conservative media space?

**Matthew Hanick**

I think what I learned through writing this essay is that anyone can be conservative. This sort of started out as an essay on white privilege, examining like how the queer liberation movement in Canada primarily validates a sort of white, cisgender middle class. And that is sort of the argument I bring to the table for the most part, because it does. But what I did learn is that, you know, anyone can be conservative at the end of the day. So it's not entirely about that.

**Evan Zeller**

The two are not necessarily like,

**Matthew Hanick**

yeah,

**Evan Zeller**

like, if you if, I mean, like, I think there's definitely like, from the sources you spoke to, like, like, who work, like, on the National Post team, or just like, you know, in kind of, like, more conservative media spaces, I think they definitely like, as you say, like, there's a shift required mentally, like, in terms of like, what you view like, what is the movement trying to accomplish? Because, you know, for them, it's more so, but like assimilating. So I guess if you can kind of like, like, shift your mindset in that sense, and like, be like, but it also it can, I think it kind of goes deeper than that. It's like, if you don't directly come from like, a marginalized community within the LGBT community, you know, it's not, it's harder for you to like, understand the need for like, perhaps like radicalism. Well, on that note, Matthew, I just want to say thank you for being here today and speaking with me on your piece. It's

**Matthew Hanick**

Thank you for having me.

**Evan Zeller**

Thank you. I mean, I don't know if we have any listeners here, who are you know, not directly, like you know, from within the Tmu community or Tmu students, but if you are outside of the university's confines, please give Matthews piece a read. You will not regret it. And, yeah, it's a passion project for how long in the making? It's, How long was it that you spent working on this, Matthew?

**Matthew Hanick**

You know, a year

**Evan Zeller**

A year. So there you go. So you know it's going to be good and very well, like, yeah, please give it a read anyway, so yeah, thanks. Thanks guys for tuning in today, and have a great Have a great rest of your week. I'm your host. Evan Zeller, this episode was produced by me and Chloe Kim. If you enjoyed this episode, explore all of our podcasts in the podcast tab at reviewofjournalism.ca. Thanks for listening.