

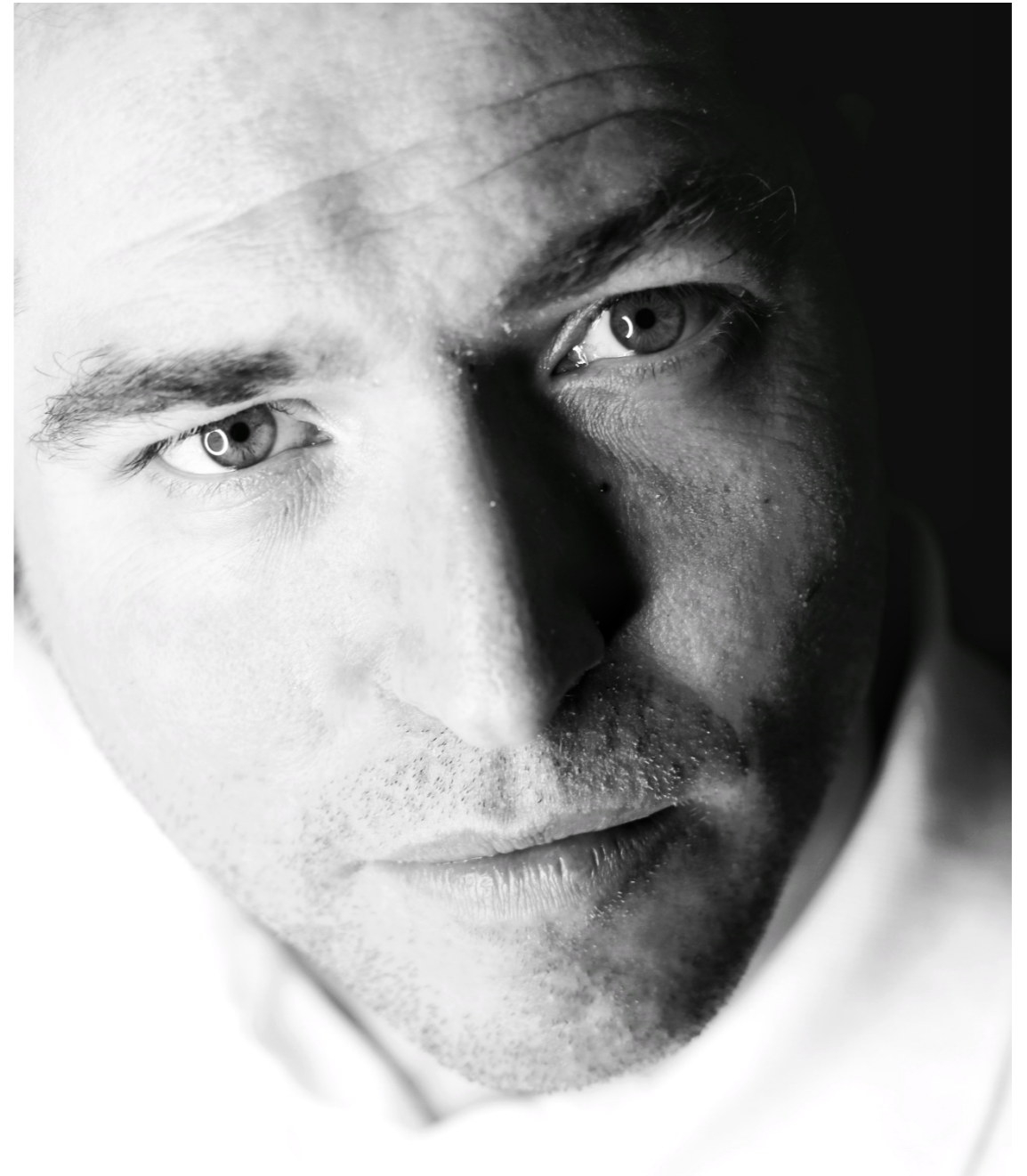
# How do we Make Pride \*Actually\* Accessible for 2SLGBTQ+ Disabled Folks

Presented by Andrew Gurza  
Disability Awareness  
Consultant



# Who Am I?

- I am an award winning Disability Awareness Consultant
- I am a Queer Cripple
- I am disabled
- I am a freelance creative
- I am they/he
- I am an author
- I am a podcast host (download *Disability After Dark*)
- I am the sexiest disabled person you will ever meet in your whole life



# Disclaimer!!!

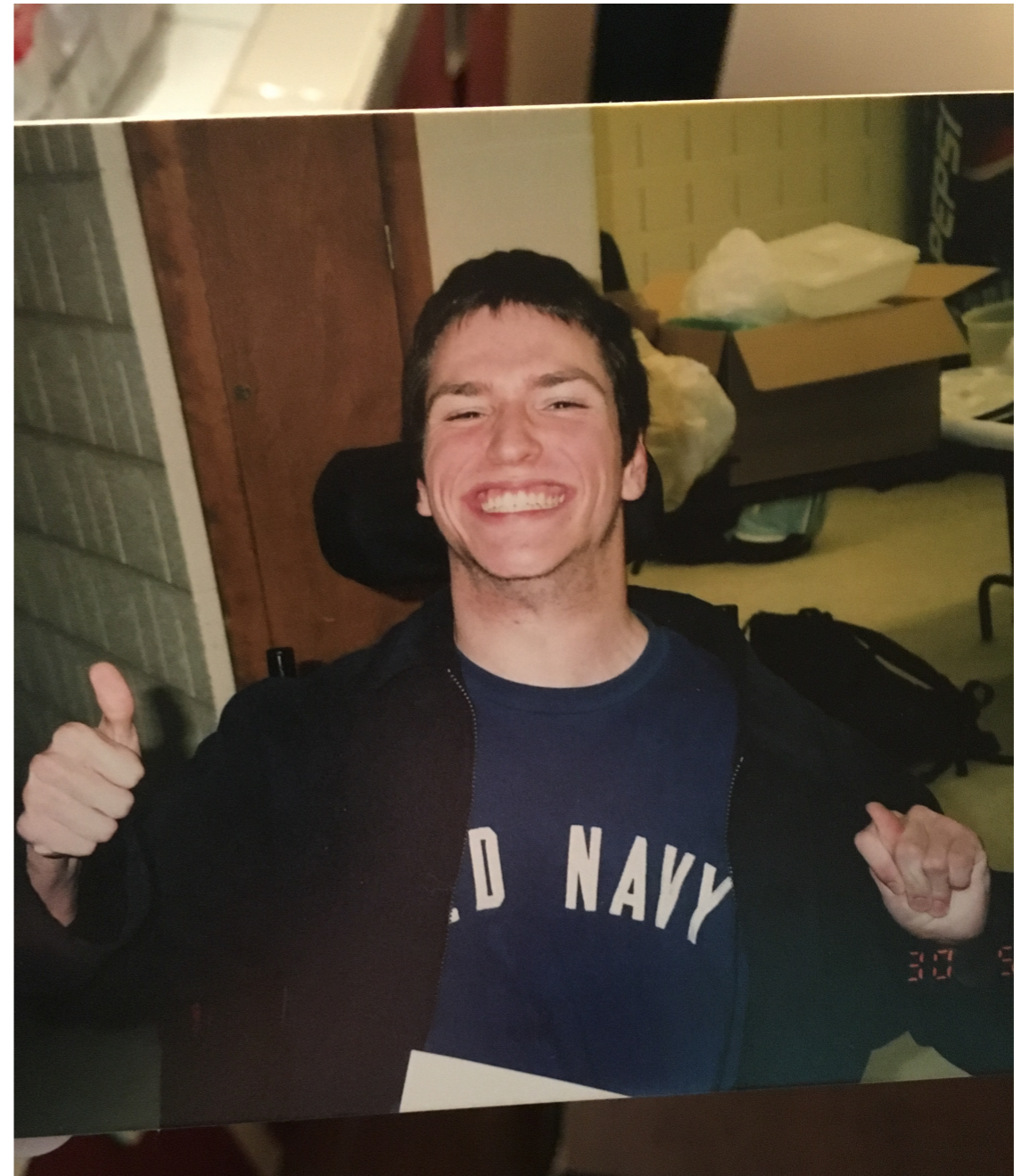
- This presentation is a conversation starter about queerness, disability, sexuality and ableism... it can only be that and nothing more.
- In this presentation, I will use language like queer, cripple, gimp, disabled, abled, etc. to describe my experiences as a disabled person. I cannot and will not speak to all other experiences of disability. They are valid and real, but they are not mine.
- I am aware of my privilege as a white, cis, disabled man with speaking and intellectual privilege. I definitely make mistakes, and I do my best to hold myself accountable.
- I am also aware how I am marginalized within queer and non-disabled communities.

# What We Will Talk About in The Next Hour

- My journey within queerness and disability circles
- The Trouble with 2SLGBTQ+ Events and Accessibility
- Confronting Ableism in 2SLGBTQ+ Communities and Organizations: What I Want You To Know
- What Can We **ALL DO** to Organize Accessible 2SLGBTQ+ events?
- Stories

# My Journey within Queerness and Disability Circles

- I came out as gay two weeks before my 16th birthday, on April 22, 1999. I was beyond scared. I was worried how my family would deal with the news that not only was I disabled, and needing help with everything, but now I was adding the burden of being gay too.
- There were no pamphlets on how to come out as gay and disabled, and I was sure that my family would disown me.
- Of course, they didn't, and were quite accepting of this newfound identity that I took on.





- I identified as gay for the first decade of my queerness. ‘Gay’ felt the most appropriate and comfortable to me at the time.
- I wanted so badly to fit in with my gay peers and colleagues; I wanted the casual, easy sex that I saw able-bodied men having and I was determined to have it.
- “Pity Sex”
- I learned very quickly that the gay community didn’t know or understand how to navigate my disabled body, and that hurt me in ways that I, even now, can’t really explain.
- I did everything I could to minimize my disability in queer spaces in my late teens and early 20s. I was so scared that my disability would be a huge deterrent to inclusion in the LGBTQ2S community and I wasn’t wrong.
- I was lonely and I was angry as hell about being excluded — in many ways, I still am.





- At the same time, I was having trouble coming to terms with my queerness in disabled spaces, and I just didn't feel comfortable anywhere I went.
- Disabled people were not entirely able to handle my queerness and so I felt very alone and isolated in both communities that I subscribed to.



# My Journey with Internalized Ableism

- Ableism is the discrimination in actions or inaction against disabled people.
- Internalized ableism happens when you turn that dislike of disabled people in on yourself.
- For a long, long time I felt as though I wasn't good enough, and that no one will like me. I hated my disability, my disabled body, and I was certain 100% that no one would like me.
- PS: You don't grow out of internalized ableism, it is a constant, and something that I talk about a lot in my work, because I live with it.



# The Trouble With 2SLGBTQ+ Events & Accessibility

- One of the key reasons why so many 2SLGBTQ+ celebrations across Canada and the world are inaccessible to disabled people is because so many organizers don't actively confront their own ableist views around disability before they start planning.
- You must look inside yourself and consider how ableism and privilege informs the way you see the world as you start planning.
- Disability tends to be tacked on as an afterthought in the planning process of many 2SLGBTQ+ celebrations, or if it is thought of beforehand it is not well-executed because it is handed off to folks who have no lived experience.
- It isn't just the main events that disabled people want access to; they want to be able to go to all the parties afterward, and consistent access is not really considered.
- Pride Leaders don't listen — Toronto Pride stories.
- Disabled people are never ever celebrated during 2SLGBTQ+ events; where is their float, the power wheelchair grand Marshall, etc., the hot leather daddy in a wheelchair as part of the celebration.
- Disabled people are not put in positions of power during Pride, nor paid to help make tangible changes. (If you can find a budget, please hire disabled people)
- Queer events are often held in inaccessible spaces

# Confronting Ableism in 2SLGBTQ+ Communities and Organizations: What I Want You To Know

- You won't change ableism overnight; it is important to be anti-ableist every day and to work at it.
- In your organization or ones that you are working with to plan events, talk about ableism often so that it is a term they are used to and they understand.
- Remember that even the most well-intentioned people can do ableist things, and if we want to move forward, we can't shut down the conversation by simply saying "You are an ableist".
- Just because someone does an ableist thing this does not make them a bad person.
- Challenge the teams to think about when they become disabled, what kind of access to events will they want?

# What Can We All do To Organize Accessible 2SLGBTQ+ Queer Events That Are Actually Accessible

- Think outside of physical accessibility only! Consider things like: attendant care, ASL, service animals, Mental Health needs as part of what access looks like. These needs are on-going and continuous and they need to be fostered throughout as you plan.
- So many queer spaces are not accessible spaces; consider looking outside of queer community to find an accessible space and making it queer. Talk to theatre spaces, libraries, community centers, to find spaces that work.
- **HIRE DISABLED PEOPLE** with varying disabilities to help consult during the planning process. Their lived experience will really help you understand access on a complete level.
- Before you even start planning anything else, put access needs first.

# What Can We All do To Organize Accessible 2SLGBTQ+ Events That Center Disabled People

- Have disabled people prominently featured in queer event pamphlets or online materials
- Create events around disability (ie Deliciously Disabled Sexy Party, Sexiest Wheelchair Dance Party, Etc)
- In order for ableism to be gone and accessibility to be truly felt, disabled people need to be celebrated, not just included.
- Take fun key queer events (drag shows, dance parties, etc.) and make them all about disability... this is a fun way to bake disability in your programming.

# Stories About Helping to Organize Queer Events

- Deliciously Disabled
- Pride 2014 in Toronto
- Boys in Chairs 2023

# THANK YOU!

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