

The Coming Out Monologues At UCR, 2007

Sponsored by Queer Alliance at UC Riverside

NOTES WITH REGARDS TO ASSEMBLING THE SCRIPT

From Brian Oglesby

I am the Script Supervisor. For TCOM, this meant that my job was to oversee the selection of the monologues, the editing process, and the assemblage of the script.

In terms of assembling the script, this is the process we used and the observations we made. If you decide to assemble your own version of The Coming Out Monologues at (Your School Here), we would love to hear your feedback on the process.

THE PROCESS in a nutshell

We started by soliciting scripts from the community. We worked very hard to have as diverse a pool of submissions as possible. We looked to represent different types of coming out narratives, different backgrounds, different moments within the coming out process, different reactions to coming out, and different orientations.

- One of our limitations was that we could only use what was submitted to us. Although we did very active outreach, this limitation means, for example, that we did not have a personal coming out narrative from someone who is intersex.
- Another similar limitation came from our limited outreach power and thus some of the biases that this created. Most of the stories we had came from college educated or the college-aged people, most from UC Riverside or surrounding schools (UC Irvine and LMU in particular).

We then had a small committee read and review the monologues. We made some selections for inclusion at this point, but not all. The idea was to solidify our understanding of the project by hearing a number of reactions to the submitted monologues.

A smaller group of us then took the monologues, edited them for performance, and made final selections with regards to the monologues we would have in the show.

Finally, I took the monologues, edited them one last time, contacted the writers to confirm their “okays” on the final version of their monologues, made necessary adjustments for unhappy writers, and assembled the order. I also timed the final versions of the monologues to give us an idea of how long each act would be –

and also cut several more monologues here in order to control time and arc of the play.

EDITING the monologues

- Monologues had to be edited both for time and for quality and content. We asked the community for their personal narratives – and we did not limit ourselves to accepting work only from writers or playwrights of course. One of our responsibilities to the writers was to create a full cohesive show that would keep the audience’s interest and so we worked to trim and improve the scripts while maintaining the integrity of the author’s narrative.
- Things we noticed:
 - Many monologues attempted to describe the *entire* coming out process. This means that these monologues came off as summarizing and unfocused. For some of these, we focused on what seemed to be the crux or heart or center or whatever you want to call it – one particular aspect of the coming out narrative. Example (I just made this one up, don’t look for it within TCOM script): a monologue about the writer discovering he’s gay with a schoolyard crush ends with a quick summary of the rest of his life and how he came out to his family and religion and the whole bunch. Our edits would be to focus the monologue on the schoolyard crush.
 - Many monologues sounded like an LGBT panel and we theorized that these writers do many panels. We wanted to focus on a narrative moment and the significance of that moment.
 - Many monologues included information (or words) that we could dramatize better.
 - In the interest of time, if the words or sentences were not vital to understanding the narrative or the personality of the character/person, they had to go.
 - An enormous responsibility we had was to MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY of the writer’s coming out narrative. I mentioned this before, but it’s important enough to repeat. These are their stories. We wish we didn’t have to change a single word, but we had to make it our policy to edit so that we didn’t have to discriminate against the non-writers who submitted. Yes, we rejected some of the monologues because the writing was not very good and we were afraid the writer would think we were rejecting their narrative, but rejection was a function of time and energy. We only had so much we could give to the scripts.
 - Before the monologues were handed to the actors, *we made sure to ask the authors to review the edited monologue and give a final “okay.”* We worked with unhappy writers to fix the script so that it would work for performance and make the writer happy. This was the hardest but most important and rewarding job.

- As Script Supervisor, I did not submit a monologue. We tried to avoid including monologues from members of the script committee. Conflict of interest.

ASSEMBLING THE SCRIPT once the monologues had been selected

- I knew how long each monologue would roughly take based upon timing myself reading them. I also knew the basic style and identity of each monologue and performer and wrote them down on index cards in order to visually order the narrative. Some monologues had logical places right away.
- The three categories that became acts – Coming Out to Friends/The World, Coming Out to Family, Coming Out To Self – were natural to the monologues we had selected. We did not reject any monologues to create that format.
- If the monologues you select suggest another format, go for it. I would recommend this structure simply because by focusing on the more external aspect of the act of coming out – the “to whom” – there is a great deal more freedom and diversity reflected in the internal aspects – the orientations for example.
- We worked to balance funny with serious, to mix it all together, keeping in mind how the audience would (likely) feel after each monologue.
- We added the narrator to cement and frame the script. We think it worked.

WE WANT THE COMING OUT MONOLOGUES TO BE A LIVING SCRIPT

That means we invite you to use our script and substitute monologues of your own for ours – or pick some of our monologues to fill holes in your show. And we hope that we will be updating this, adding more monologues every year.

IF YOU PERFORM THE COMING OUT MONOLOGUES PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING FOR THE SCRIPT

- If you create your own version of TCOM: Always be in contact with the writers about changes you make. This is their narrative and these changes can be sensitive.
- Always give the option that the monologue can be submitted anonymously.
- Please credit the author of the piece in the program unless anonymous, whether the monologue is new or from the UCR version of the script.
- If you use any of the monologues from QA at UCR’s script, in addition to crediting the author, please credit the following people as editors: Brian Oglesby (UCR Script Supervisor), Noel Mariano and Cathy Cathers (UCR Senior Editors), Angela Strauss and Alyssa Crom (UCR Editors)
- Have fun. It’s not worth doing if it’s not fun.

Questions?

Email: Coming.out.ucr@gmail.com

Yours,
Brian Oglesby
The Coming Out Monologues Script Supervisor, 2007