

My name is Alberto Williams (They/Them). I am a 26-year-old Afro-Latin (African and Mexican descent) queer and gender nonconforming student at The Ohio State University. I was born and raised in the impoverished southern side of Chicago, IL. My father immigrated from the western parts of Mexico, so he could attain a better life for himself and, eventually, his family. My mother's heritage migrated from the south to Chicago, IL to escape being lynched by white men.

Being raised in an underprivileged, desolate, and neglected portion of Chicago, IL came with many challenges. Schools were underfunded, food deserts were aplenty, and many kids in my environment joined gangs and sold drugs to make a living not only for themselves, but also their loved ones. Gang and drug life took the lives of many youths in my neighborhood, including my older siblings. I saw first-hand the consequences of the gang and drug-selling lifestyle. I, fortunately, was a very sheltered child and attended a church in Hammond, IN called First Baptist Church. Unfortunately, First Baptist Church of Hammond, IN held a very discriminatory and hateful stance against homosexuality, and, when I came out as a homosexual in September 2015, I was excommunicated and ostracized from my community and lifeline. The ostracism and rejection continued from family, friends, other LGBTQ+ individuals and communities in Chicago, IL, and even at my current school due to my race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. My intersectional identity created a history of rejection, harassment, and ostracism. With time, however, I began to learn my experiences as a queer person of color are very common within my community. These disparities exist due to centuries of discrimination towards black and brown individuals, as well as LGBTQ+ individuals.

Putting those minority identities together creates a unique set of experiences and challenges a heterosexual cisgendered person of color and a white LGBTQ+ won't experience. Remedy of this issues is education on intersectionality, its challenges, and ways to become an advocate and challenge implicit biases. With the Ohio Senate Bill 83, however, intersectionality education will not be possible, leaving individuals like me susceptible to discrimination and harm. According to The Trevor Project, 1 in 4 African American transgender and non-binary reported a suicide attempt in 2022. I was one of those individuals, and I won't be the last one due to centuries of bigotry, prejudice, discrimination, and lack of education. The Ohio Senate Bill 83 would enable this issue to continue into future generations, greatly affecting all minorities.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. We don't have to continue the cycle of segregation through the silencing of minorities and their history. We can make a better today and tomorrow. If education is meant to be the great equalizers, then let's make education BE the great equalizer!