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I would like to thank Frank Theatre and Simon Fraser University for inviting me to be a part of Q2Q. It is an honor to share this platform with such an esteemed panel of guests.

I became a playwright to find my voice as a gay man. I wrote a one-man show that was tailored to suit my unique talents as an actor.

*NGGRFG*, tells the story of a young boy/man's successes and challenges being black and gay. The play resonated with audiences of all ages.

I did not set out to write a post-dramatic piece of theatre; these are some of its tenets that make it a post-dramatic play: *NGGRFG* consists of 7 stories and is told in a non-chronological order. The main protagonist addresses the audience directly thus breaking the fourth wall. Removing the vowels from the title was the first step in setting up the post-dramatic device used in the play. As seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XshAhq2RQhM>

Audience members commented on how the play's style invited them into the story as participants rather than preaching a patronizing message of tolerance. I do not think another writing and performance style would have been as successful.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Fringe Festivals and the queer community. The festivals are a cost effective way for me to self-produce. Fringes attract diverse audiences who have the power to effect change outside of the art community, like the Vancouver School Board, who commissioned *NGGRFG* for a fifty-school tour. Sometimes you have to "preach to the choir" in order to attract a specific audience. The LGBTQ populace supported my madcap idea without question and created buzz that drew in those who may never have come to the show on their own volition.

Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, Tony Kushner's *Angels In America*, Brad Fraser's *Poor Superman* and Darrin Hagen's *Witch Hunt at The Strand* are all brave plays that have challenged the public's perception of the LGBTQ community. Thanks to these works, the world sees us as living, breathing people with strengths and foibles. Playwrights like the ones mentioned have helped reshape the way the world views contentious topics like AIDS, homophobia and gay sex.

I feel the question, "Is the queer playwright an oxymoron?" to be a multi-layered one with no simple answer. On the surface, it seemed the answer was, yes. Then I dug deeper. "Queerness" by nature breaks down heteronormative constructs, but not every LGBTQ person is a playwright. Queer writers ask the who, what, when, where, why and how, whereas others in our populace may not dig as deeply. The investigation into these questions has allowed us to better understand our place within the zeitgeist of the human experience. Because of this, I do not think that being a queer playwright is an oxymoron.

I believe there is a "queering" within traditional theatre with story lines that portray LGBTQ characters in more in-depth ways. We are no longer just the butt-end of predictable jokes. Lately there is a "straightening", for lack of a better term, in my own writing. I aim to create heterosexual characters who are not stereotypical oppressors, but our allies and supporters.

As my voice as a queer writer strengthens I strive to broaden my perceptions of the world around me.