

Autoethnography of a Queer Racialized Athlete

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ABSTRACT

Over four decades of research has suggested that there is a high prevalence of homophobia and transphobic attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices within sport and physical activity. These realities serve as barriers or deterrents to participation for many 2SLGBTQIA+ people and groups and can also make sport and physical activity unwelcoming and even unsafe for those who choose to participate. In this important body of work, there remains a glaring absence of racialized 2SLGBTQIA+ athletes' experiences. To help to address this gap, the primary purpose of my research was to explore how marginalized communities experience overlapping forms of discrimination in sport. Adopting an autoethnographic methodological approach, I wrote a series of vignettes about my own experiences as a queer racialized athlete in Western Canada. While writing the vignettes was a reflective process in and of itself, I also followed the tenets of critical discourse analysis to think about my experiences in relation to the broader cultural context. This resulted in the creation of three themes: intersectionality, microaggressions, and homophobia. Each worked independently and together to create an unsafe space for me, impacting my athletic experiences and life more broadly in negative ways. Reflecting on my experiences critically, however, also allowed me to think about resistance and resiliency. My hope is that my work contributes to existing literature and provide insight for other queer racialized athletes who may have had similar experiences in sport.

Autoethnography of a Queer Racialized Athlete

My name is Nickholas Basilio. In 2003, I was born into a world where being racialized and clearly flamboyant meant that I had years of racism and homophobia ahead of me. Growing up, I did not see anyone like me. I did not see anyone who was Asian, who was gay, and, even more so, someone who was these things and an athlete at the same time. Although I could not articulate this at the time, I realize now that I was born into a world where being Brown, gay, and flamboyant would result in ongoing experiences of racism and homophobia. While I loved sport for many reasons, there were also many negative experiences along the way, experiences that led me to question whether or not I belonged. In this paper, I share parts of my story in order to explore overlapping or intersecting forms of discrimination to augment our understanding of barriers to participation in a social space that is popularly constructed as being for everyone — sport.

Review of Literature

Within critical sport studies, there is a growing body of research on the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, and additional gender and sexual identities) athletes. Specific to the Canadian context, where much of this research has been conducted or grounded in Canadian data and experiences, recent research has highlighted how sport is often unwelcoming to and sometimes unsafe for 2SLGBTQIA+ people (e.g., Bridel et al., 2024; Denison, Bevan, et al., 2021; Denison et al., 2023; Greey, 2023; Herrick & Duncan, 2023; Voth & Yi, 2024). Research has also revealed that gender and sexually diverse youth drop out of sport at higher rates than their cisgender and heterosexual peers (Doull et al., 2018), which is concerning as the benefits of sport and physical activity participation are well documented in general and for gender diverse and sexual minorities specifically (Doull et al., 2018). This finding is perhaps not that surprising as there remains a high prevalence of homophobic and transphobic language within the context of sport (e.g., Denison, Bevan et al., 2021),

something which is continued and perhaps even exacerbated after an individual chooses to come out to others in their sporting space (Denison, Jeanes, et al., 2021). Finally, scholars have also noted there remain many other barriers to sport and physical activity participation for 2SLGBTQIA+ adults, such as isolation, stereotypes, body image issues, mental health challenges, lack of representation, lack of inclusive facilities, access to information and opportunities, gender and sexuality-based policies, and many more (Herrick & Duncan, 2018a). Interventions to address discrimination targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals should focus on spaces, policies, and language (Herrick & Duncan, 2018a); acknowledging how to promote and maintain safe spaces is vital for 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples.

People with intersecting identities, such as me, face more than just homophobia, but also racism, ableism, and classism, etc. For instance, a scoping review by Joseph et al. (2022) discussed the experiences of cis and trans women in sport and physical activity in Canada, emphasizing the barriers and sport-related needs of racialized women in these spaces. Similarly, a systematic scoping review by Lim et al. (2021) examined that sport and physical activity participation and involvement varied across individuals in different social positions due to oppression and privilege. At its core, whiteness is embedded in the broader systemic practices of social spaces such as sport, but it still is not talked about as much as it should be. Indeed, despite a growing body of literature exploring 2SLGBTQIA+ people's experiences in sport and physical activity, there remains a glaring absence of conversations about racialized 2SLGBTQIA+ people's experiences (Herrick & Duncan, 2018b). Put simply, the current body of literature fails to talk about a part of sport and physical activity that is very important: the voices of racialized 2SLGBTQIA+ people. As noted above, I sought to help address this gap by turning a critical lens to my own experiences as a queer racialized athlete, recognizing that my experiences are shaped by the broader sociocultural context, specifically socially constructed norms related to race, sexuality, and gender.

Some Comments on Autoethnography

After reading many texts about the "what," "why," and "how" of autoethnography, along with examples of previously published autoethnographic texts, I came to understand autoethnography as a research method that incorporates an individual's personal story (*auto*) through the use of cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices (*ethno*) to describe and interpret, amongst other things, social life (*graphy*) (Adams et al., 2014). As such, autoethnography is often

described as a form of research that is personally and socially constructed. I was particularly influenced by Adams and Holman Jones (2011) who have argued that autoethnography is a queer method, describing in their work the relationship between autoethnography and queer theory. They suggested that the intersecting ideas of method and theory allow us to think beyond binary categories and create fluidity by exploring the relationship between personal and political, personal and cultural, personal and historical, etc., all which are governed by dominant and largely reductionist norms, values, and beliefs (Adam & Holman Jones, 2011).

I first reflected on and then wrote about my lived experiences through a series of textual vignettes, many which focused on sport participation. The creation of the vignettes involved setting time aside to write about my experiences, my memories, and my thoughts. Additionally, whenever I remembered an experience, I made note of it, and then further expanded on that when there was an opportunity to do so. At one point during the creation of these vignettes, I returned to my hometown where these experiences took place. While sometimes difficult, being back in those spaces allowed me to retrieve and re-live (to a certain extent) memories that I wanted to capture in text and share. That said, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of vignettes and memories. A key consideration of autoethnography is that there is not just one story, interpretation, or truth to an experience. This is particularly relevant when reflecting on vignettes and memories, as memories are shaped by time, emotion, and context (Sparkes, 2024). Note that while these limitations exist, they do not weaken the validity of the conclusion.

Once the vignettes were created and I was happy with both the content and style, I subjected them more specifically to critical discourse analysis (CDA). Through discussions with my supervisor, I understood that there were different approaches to CDA and, in general, that CDA can refer to various methods of critiquing qualitative research materials (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 119). That said, underpinning this type of analysis is the examination and interrogation of power and the creation and maintenance of belief systems. "CDA is designed to disclose the ideologies and, thus, make explicit how dominance works through text and language" (Markula & Silk, 2011, p. 119). Thus, I sought to make sense of my vignettes on my own and then through discussions with my supervisor with a particular focus on dominant ideas about race, about gender, and about sexuality — and their intersections — and how these dominant ideas were reproduced and resisted in my experiences of social life, including but not limited to sport. All aspects of my research complied with ethics approval obtained through my university.

My Story in a Series of Vignettes

Early School Years

At age 7, my whole life was packed into two suitcases as we relocated from my birthplace to a small town in Western Canada. The town's slogan was "where life makes sense." This was not the case for me. Growing up in this town Asian and — as I would realize — gay, I was an outsider. At school, I was made to feel different, and made to feel that I did not belong. Classmates stretched the edges of their eyes to mimic mine; they tried to speak with a thick accent as a joke. At lunchtime, they looked at me in disgust when I opened the meal that had been prepared for me, commenting on the unfamiliar aromas. This last memory is vivid:

I walk through the doors of the cafeteria and immediately the noise fills my ears. My eyes search the sea of students looking for at least one familiar face. Finding no one, I locate instead an empty chair at a table where there is already a group of students. I take out the lunch that my parents prepared for me. "Ewwwww, what is that and what is that smell?!" I am hurt and surprised because this is the food I grew up eating and had seen nothing wrong with. I decide I will not be bringing Filipino lunches from this day on.

At home, cultural and religious expectations influenced the views and traditions of my Filipino family. This includes ideas about what it meant to "be a man," which often equated to being stoic. Growing up, I was taught to suppress my feelings and was always told that "boys don't cry" when I challenged this notion. An unspoken rule in the household meant that certain topics were not allowed for discussion. This did not leave much room for exploration or discussion about my feelings and questions about my sexuality. It also did not help that I am an only child. When I began questioning my sexuality, the idea of being gay was near to impossible. So, these questions remained unvoiced and unanswered. And as these questions continued to wander in my head, I thought to myself: *Could I really live up to being the child that my Filipino parents were expecting?* It was such a weird time in my life. I felt equally visible at school, but also invisible at home because of my difference.

Colours of Speed

Another vivid memory, this time as I began to wonder about getting involved in sport and physical activity:

I sit on the sidelines and watch my classmates play hockey, football, and participate in various forms of dance. I am frustrated. I want to join but find myself thinking about how I was living in a

completely different country when they were learning to play, and then how I had spent time adapting to my new life. The lack of program information and advertising, such as details about youth programs, club sports, registration processes, and locations, does not help. I explore the idea of possibly joining a sport, but my classmates seem so different from me. I do not see anyone like me, anywhere. I see no one like me in sport. I hear this little voice in my head telling me that sports are for my classmates — my White, straight, richer classmates — and not for Filipino gay boys.

At age 12, I started running. What started as walks after supper turned into jogs and then runs. Each time I went out, I started to pick up the pace more and more. It was not forced. It just happened. In some ways, it feels like yesterday:

Running is euphoric to me. As I run, the familiar houses on my street blur into the background. I feel the rhythmic thud of my feet against the ground and the resistance of the wind against my body. I feel my sweat dripping as my body absorbs the sunlight. All I hear is my short and fast gasps of air, and my heart beating almost as if it wants to burst through my chest. I allow my mind to wander and to not think about anything else. Nothing else matters. All my worries, my thoughts, my problems go away. Running gives me the momentum to keep going. When I am stressed with the amount of schoolwork I have to do, when I am upset from a disagreement with my parents, when I am mad at myself, when I am happy with my accomplishments... I run.

Ultimately, what I found though, was solace in running during my coming out journey, and perhaps a way to become active in sport.

It is an afternoon in early April. After last period, I walk to my usual exit, which is by the gymnasium, to meet my ride home from school. I stop in front of the bulletin board and my eyes wander the colourful flyers. I see "Track and Field Tryouts Monday @ 4PM." I had previously heard it on the morning announcements but had not given it much thought. Seeing this flyer though... for the very first time in my life, I feel a possibility of being seen, of belonging. In the back of mind though, I cannot be sure if I want to try out simply because I love running or because I long to belong, as I sense my classmates do.

The following week I took the leap and showed up for track and field tryouts, and I made it!

The Locker Room Challenge

Days, a week, then a month went by. Everything was going well. I was so eager and had literally hit the ground running. But things changed and I was not ready for what the rest of the season would be like. The locker room was the worst part: the boys' locker room where I had to get changed alongside my teammates. I had taken to pretending that I did not notice the other athletes watching me to see if I was watching them. I ignored the occasional phrases such as "that's gay" and "no homo" that were casually thrown around. It was okay because it wasn't directed at me. *Right? I felt a sense of belonging? I felt seen?* Then, this:

I am half naked, with only my underwear on. One of my teammates comes over to me and whispers in my ear, "faggot." My cheeks burn red, a mix of humiliation and anger. The laughter and screams of delight from others are muffled but I hear them still. All I can do is stare at the unlaced runners on my feet. If I move even the slightest, I am stuck. I cannot move. I do not know what to do. Should I change and leave? Should I stay?

Should I say something?

Nothing. I physically and mentally do nothing. I stay for practice. I do not tell anyone this has happened.

Two weeks after that incident, I was once again headed to the boys' locker room and a group of my teammates were sitting by the door. One of them walked in at the same time as me and another yelled, "watch out for the tranny going in with you!" My so-called teammates laughed as they grabbed something from their bags. The laughter that followed was somehow even worse. The worst thing was, I couldn't tell anyone.

Weeks go by, but before and after practice I continue to use the boys' locker room. Every single time, I replay those two scenes in my head, over and over. As I change, the smell of sweat, the loud laughter and banter, the bangs from the lockers being closed – it all takes me back. I hear the words thrown at me with such hatred. But it does not stop at the two instances. As I am changing, I hear pieces of conversations from my teammates. "Did you see how he ran like a girl?" They barely use my name anymore. I am now the gay, the faggot, the fag, the sissy.

An all-gender locker room was put in place by the school a good number of years before I started there as a student. Conveniently, it was right beside the gymnasium where the gendered locker rooms were located. I eventually turned to it to avoid the boys' locker room. In the all-gender locker room, I found comfort. That said, I did not understand how something that was put in place as an effort to create a more inclusive and comfortable place for people, as a form of allyship and act of progress, could be so invalidated by my classmates.

While I found comfort there, I would also be lying if I said I was not scared of getting caught using the all-gender locker room. I felt embarrassed and scared at the fact that I was changing there, embarrassed and scared that one of my teammates or coaches would see me walk out and ask a question I was not ready to answer. It was as if there was a spotlight on me. I anticipated hearing something like, "Oh look the faggot finally found a place he belongs," or something worse.

I listen to the rhythmic tick of the clock. It seems to synchronize with my heartbeat and foot taps. I am on the edge of my seat waiting for the bell to ring so I can quickly get changed.

That became my routine for the rest of my first season on the team. It continued as a routine throughout my whole time as an athlete in high school.

Beyond the Locker Room and Onto the Field of Play

Beyond the locker room, beyond my teammates, I still anticipated a level playing field once out on the track and in competition. Do not popular sport narratives include the notion of fair play and equality? But...

I walk up to my lane and begin to set my starting blocks. My surroundings fade – the screams from the crowd, the announcements over the loudspeakers spewing meet information – are mostly muffled as I concentrate on getting the right settings. Then, I hear one sound above all. The whispers from my competitors. It is not the usual pre-race conversations or the encouragement of good sportsmanship. I finish setting up my blocks and lower myself into the ready position. I try to block it out, but it takes me completely out of the zone. I am in my starting position and I cannot get the voices out of my head.

"There's no way that faggot is going to win."

The gun goes off.

Beyond the Finish Line

Despite everything, I continued with the team. At the time, I thought that if I was not being accepted by my teammates then I needed to be the best athlete I could be. I trained harder, I ran faster, I jumped higher, but no matter how well I competed, the comments did not stop. The weight of the bullying finally became heavier than the physical exhaustion, because for the first time since joining the team, I wanted to quit. I am usually not a quitter, as I have never given up once I have truly put my mind to something:

I go to my coaches' office. The words are on the tip of my tongue. I feel a lump in my throat. My hands tremble as I gather the courage to finally tell someone about the years of bullying. Could I really tell them? Would they understand? I had planned to say, 'I have something to tell you.' Instead, I lie: 'It is a work conflict.' I feel the weight of my decision. My shoulders are somehow heavier, making it harder to breathe. They try to convince me to stay, but they are asking the wrong questions. I mean, could I blame them? They had no clue what was happening. I turn around and walk out of the office, closing the door behind me. I stand there for a minute feeling a strange mix of relief and sadness. Did I make the right choice?

Being an athlete to me meant a significant amount of training and effort to become the best athlete you can be. Beyond the issues I experienced on the team, I started to lose sight of this in other ways, becoming fixated instead on fitting into idealized gay body standards of the time and for my age — tall, lean but muscled, six-pack abs, and, sadly, White. Growing up in a small town, my only insight into queer culture was through social media. On these huge platforms, I saw these characteristics and these bodies celebrated, praised, and liked by millions. In the privacy of my bedroom, I stared at the mirror endlessly, fixated on if my collar bone and ribs were showing through my skin, if my arms were skinny enough, if my stomach was lean enough.

Epilogue

After quitting track and field in my last year of high school, I found myself drawn back to running a few years later. One day, I tentatively laced up the same runners I used in my last season, noticing they were still stained red from the track:

The escape I once felt now feels more like a chore. My rhythm is off, my legs are heavy, my breaths uneven. The worst, and maybe unexpected, part is that all my negative memories come rushing back. But I run to

convert my emotional pain into kilometres. I think to myself that maybe running will never feel the same again. Or maybe it will feel like something new.

I forged onward. As I went on more and more runs the kilometres increased as did my love for it. Again.

On Intersectionality, Microaggressions, and Homophobia

The concepts of intersectionality, microaggressions, and homophobia helped me make the most sense of my experiences and as such became the central themes of my analysis. Although I have presented them in separate sections, there are overlaps between the three.

Intersectionality

Coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is both a theoretical framework and methodological approach that is used to help understand the multiple and “intersecting” systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). More specifically, intersectionality is a concept, and a tool used to explore the ways, for example, gender and race intersect to create individuality within a social and political context dominated by White, cisgender, heterosexual, middle class norms and values (Rose et al., 2021). Intersectionality aids in the recognition and understanding of certain types of problems, such as the multiple forms of inequality. It urges us to think beyond singular identities such as “woman” and “man” and to acknowledge (or think deeply about) how people experience social life at certain intersections, such as gender, sexuality, race, and class. Relevant to my experiences, Herrick and Duncan (2018b) have noted that identity must be a key consideration when exploring 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals’ physical activity opportunities and experiences, noting the complexity of intersecting identities and the impact on physical activity experiences. More specifically, we must think about how overlapping minority identities and pre-existing systems of oppression are ingrained in sport and physical activity, therefore, impacting experiences in multiple and complex ways.

Thinking about the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race in my own experiences was central to my critical reflections. I found that Dickerson’s (2016) work resonated with me in this regard, work in which he shared a reflective exploration of his experiences as a biracial hockey player in a predominately White space. Highlighting the intersections of race, masculinity, and identity within the context of hockey and life in the United States, Dickerson discussed how he experienced overt acts of racism, but also subtle microaggressions and racial stereotypes. He also commented on the influences that his racial identity

had on others' perception of masculinity. Dickerson noted that he felt pressured to suppress his thoughts and emotions and felt frustrated to be the one to always explain racial problems or challenge racist behaviour and comments. The author was constantly reminded that he was not just seen as another player, but as the Black player. That said, Dickerson also made clear how his love for the sport surpassed the fact that there was a lack of other racialized players. Similar to Dickerson, it was my love for running that maintained my commitment to the sport, choosing to — as much as possible — ignore the racism, homophobia, and femmephobia I was experiencing. In this, Dickerson and I share the struggle of broader questions about power, privilege, and how sporting spaces are created and maintained in relation to our identities, impacting individual and collective experiences.

Microaggressions

A concept attributed to Chester M. Pierce in 1970, microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination, both non-verbal and verbal, and can appear to be inoffensive remarks and covert acts by individuals and groups (El-Bialy & Mulay, 2020). Accumulated over time, microaggressions can and do affect people's mental and physical wellbeing in negative and harmful ways. Indeed, research has established that, overtime, microaggressions can have similar impacts on individuals as overt racism and discrimination do, contributing to, for example, increased stress, decreased sense of self-worth and self-esteem, depression, and anxiety (e.g., Newcomb & Mutanski, 2010; Poštuvan et al., 2019).

In their work exploring the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in sport and physical activity, Herrick and Duncan (2018b) noted the prevalence of microaggressions in these spaces. Some specific examples they referenced vis-a-vis 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and groups included people being congratulated for not "acting gay" or "looking trans," or someone being told that she/they is/are, "too pretty to be a lesbian." One participant in their study specifically noted that, "sometimes the stuff that happens is such a small thing... you don't know if people are going to actually believe you that it's happening or are they even going to see that it's happening" (p. 328). Due to the nature of microaggressions, it is difficult to differentiate them from innocent and derogatory comments.

Reflecting on my own story, what seemed harmless, everyday comments in the moment, such as a joke or an off-handed remark about the shape of my eyes or the packed lunches I brought to school, I recognize now as forms of microaggressions. In addition, out of concern of not appearing to be overly sensitive, as well as fearing my traditional Filipino family and their

values, I didn't say anything at the time of these occurrences. As an athlete when I heard comments such as "that's gay" or "no homo" in the locker room, I understood it as the norm; this was how athletes spoke. I had no idea, however, the short and long-term effects that these comments would have on me. I did not realize it then, but comments such as "that's gay" or "no homo" reinforced a negative connotation in using words such as "gay" and "homo" as a synonym for something negative. But they stuck with me regardless, as did the microaggressions I experienced outside of sport. That said, I mostly tried my best to ignore them and the impact they had on me.

Homophobia

It has been well established in research and by advocacy groups that 2SLGBTQIA+ people routinely experience discrimination and exclusion in sport. Recently published research done in the Canadian context — studies based in Canada, drawing on Canadian participants and experiences (e.g., Denison et al., 2023) noted that this discrimination and exclusion, which might include verbal insults, physical assaults, and threats of violence, continues in contemporary times. Many of the incidents I shared happened in and around 2019, which was only a few years ago. Despite efforts to reduce homophobia in sport, such as education programs and media campaigns, barriers to sports participation for 2SLGBTQIA+ people remain (e.g., Denison et al., 2023; Herrick & Duncan, 2018a).

While homophobia has significant reach and impact on queer people in sport, male athletes, regardless of their sexuality or competitive level, often face homophobic slurs and insults from their peers, coaches, or physical education teachers. This is most prevalent in youth sports and is often used in spaces such as the locker room during training/practice, competition, and classes. Homophobia often comes in the form of banter commonly referred to as "locker room talk" and is typically used to reject anything perceived "feminine" and to thereby reinforce dominant masculine norms including appearance, behaviours, and attraction — i.e., heterosexuality. Individuals who don't conform to these norms are the ones who are often targeted by this language (Denison et al., 2023). This includes boys and young men who are gay, in which case the discriminatory language cuts even deeper. Along with microaggressions, overt homophobia reinforces the idea that queerness is not welcomed in sport and physical activity, which often suggests to athletes (and others involved in sport) that remaining closeted is a safer choice. This was certainly the choice that I made although my teammates were, nevertheless and to say the least, making assumptions about me regardless.

During my time as an athlete, I endured homophobic slurs and harassment from my teammates. The fear of using the boys' locker room, the alienation from using the all-gender space, and the anxiety that followed me onto the track left me feeling ostracized. What I experienced was a weaponization of my sexuality, no matter how hard I tried, no matter how successful I became. An idea that has appeared in the research on 2SLGBTQIA+ athletes is the notion of "athletic capital" (e.g., Anderson, 2014), which is the idea that the better an athlete is and the more they contribute to the achievements of the team or dominate their sport, the less likely they are to experience homophobia. Athletic capital has been argued as a way for 2SLGBTQIA+ athletes to be more accepted by their teammates. Anderson (2014), for example, noted that many of the openly gay collegiate athletes he interviewed, "used their athletic ability to buy resistance against homophobia" (p. 3). It is important to note that the vast majority of participants in his study were White, cisgender, middle/upper-class, and able-bodied.

In my own experiences, I believed if I was not going to be accepted for who I was, then I would be accepted if I succeeded in sport. If I was a valued member of the team because of my athletic performance, how could they not accept all of me? In the end, however, it did not matter how good I was. It did not matter if I was the fastest runner on my team. I was still gay. While perhaps a useful concept to describe other queer athletes' experiences, my athletic-ness did not gain me any so-called capital, any acceptance within the team because the culture of the team, of the sport in which I was involved, remained hostile. My false sense of hope that "being the best" could make a difference was instead tarnished by the harsh reality of homophobia and of racism.

Closing Thoughts

From a young age, I learned that inequalities existed. My first hand experiences of racism and homophobia — and their intersections — as I have discussed in this paper, led to my need to advocate for change. My autoethnographic work here is a starting point. By adopting an autoethnographic method, it offered me a way to analyze my lived experiences in relation to broader cultural and systemic issues. Without question, I had glimpses of a better future during my time as an athlete. That said, never in a million years would I have envisioned myself spending two summers doing research about my experiences as an athlete in a research-intensive post-secondary institution, let alone having this undergraduate research be a focus of a story published in the university's campus-wide e-newsletter. However, the work does not end here.

I encourage other scholars to build upon my work, to write about their own and/or gather and share others' lived experiences. Growing our knowledge of intersecting forms of oppression is critical for addressing the gaps in research and, ideally, in policy as well. While I am thinking specifically about inclusive and safer sport policies within the Canadian sport system, this could also include policy related to physical education or education writ large, healthcare, etc. As we learn more, we can do more.

Through the research process, as well as the recognition of my story by others, I realized my experiences as a queer racialized athlete were challenging, without question, but also that I was resilient. I am here, healing, facing, and sharing my story. Doing this work helped me find my love for running again. I hope that other queer racialized athletes will read my story and realize that if they had similar experiences, these experiences were reflective of the culture of sport — a culture that has been and remains challenging for people like us, but also for many others whose identities do not conform to dominant norms. But, change is possible, both at an individual and systemic level.

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