# Transcript

## Standing together video

### Shawn

Hate would be you think that you’re better than someone else or someone’s lesser than, and you act on those thoughts.

And I guess it can be a subtle as the condescending remarks where people think it's not hate it’s just like a remark. No, it is hate.

I really want to get into advocacy. I need to advocate for my community and use the privilege I have, to have grown up here, and I sound like this, to combat those subtle things where it starts from.

I'm passionate about making the world a better place. That little Shawn’s can enjoy. Little Shawn didn’t have. Especially moving to Aotearoa.

When I was in Sri Lanka, I was growing up in a civil war. I was quite removed from it because my ethnicity wasn't attacked, but we were still privy to be attacked to a point where my parents don't travel together because if one of them died in a car bomb or a bus bomb or whatever it was, I'd have a parent. It was my normal.

Like, coming here was this haven,

So I'm the oldest child, and oldest grandchild on both sides of my family.

Me being born and assigned male was a big thing for the family carrying the name. All the attention was on me, which I didn't hate.

I think very quickly, my family realised I wasn't the boy they thought I was.

I would always hear, one of my aunties used to visit from abroad, they would say like,

oh, you're turning Shawn into a sissy.

But I also had moments of amazingness with one of my aunties, so she had the two daughters who were my cousins, right. And I used to go over and play with the dolls. And I had to put on the shows and my aunt just let me just do it.

Just two worlds I was playing with. Like where I’d go to release my femininity

and come back where I'd play with trucks.

Teenage years was a big pivot, moving countries and I think moving here, my parents had a lot of weight on their shoulders trying to assimilate into a society that wasn't built for them. Still is not.

We're still seeing stuff like that and hate. How we present in our accent, our clothing, our smell because, you know, people say, you smell like curry and like my mum used to give me, like, dal sandwiches toasted, which I loved and still eat today, but for a while

I’d just throw it out on the way to school. Or I, like, starve myself and eat on the way home because one time I was eating it and one kid was like, “Ew, what are you eating? It looks like diarrhea”. And like pointed at me and got everyone to look at me.

I threw my food out because I was just too afraid to eat.

I realise most of my life was a conversion practice in my school, the forcing me to be something I'm not, the talking me out of things, restricting me from being who I am.

And then I moved to this beautiful city called Wellington, Pōneke. Where statistically, the highest queer population who identify as that.

And I soon realised this idea of gender that's beyond the spectrum of sexuality. And it's quite separate, actually. And there are some beautiful merges. And in my expression of gender, I realised that I'm a non-binary person in a te reo Pākehā world of understanding of that.

When the unfortunate attacks happened in Ōtautahi for the first time in my entire life in New Zealand, my dad said, “please be careful, son”.

Because that attack gave so much fuel for it to be okay, to slur at or comment on, or be even more condescending to people who presented like me. And he knew that.

I am really tired, sorry. I think my community needs a break.

And I just want to have a white picket fence with a car that works, and a dog and doing that while not worrying about what the next kaupapa is, where the next protest is like,

that's all I want.

I just want us to really treat this world like a big playground, respectfully and just live without fighting.

You're doing your best, but you can do better.

We can all do better and be better allies for each other.

Starting there is really important and loving yourself through it. It's still mutual respect right?

Respect and love and kindness is so free.

And when it comes to it, right, it's not going to be the people you vote for that are going to come to your rescue if your house is on fire it’s going to be your neighbour who's a new migrant from a little island called Sri Lanka, is going to come to your rescue no matter what your opinion of them is.

So keep that love.