



My name is Alex, I'm 24, gay and my pronouns are he/him (this is gradually blurring so I lean towards queer). I grew up in Auckland and studied in Wellington before ricocheting back to the big smoke for work (after travelling overseas in an eat-pray-love attempt to find myself). Wellington was really pivotal for me; I was open about my sexuality in the later part of school but the 'liberal-bubble' that I had at uni allowed me to meet with more LGBTQIA+ peers and engage in conversations on queer-culture and intersectionality. This empowered me to not only love my queer-identity, but understand the importance of my involvement in this community. I work in technology for a big firm, and while I love my job, I'm really wanting to engage in communities outside of this. My overall ambition is to leverage the skills I have to make meaningful change for others.

What made you want to join the RY board?

I started to truly understand my sexuality in about 2008 (give or take a year or so as it wasn't exactly like a light being switched on). I look at the landscape now compared to then and it's obvious there has been such a dramatic and incredible shift in the attitudes that the people and systems around me express towards the queer community. School was the most challenging time of my life - I felt alone; my peers, family, the media, my education, political and legal system all told me I was abnormal and that my identity was wrong. This was really difficult, and while I think it's what made me who I am today, no one should have to feel that way.

Historically it's groups like RY that have empowered people, like me, to love their identity and that generate change which has put us where we are now. While we have strong queer visibility, working in the internal D&I and LGBTQIA+ networks at my workplace, I see firsthand that this is still crucial conversation - particularly as we shift a focus to more neglected communities such as those that are gender diverse, trans or queer-identifying. I want to be a part of a community that generates change and believe that the board provides me with the platform to leverage my skills and experience, as well as utilising my professional network to provide opportunities and support to young individuals going through what should be an exciting journey.

RainbowYOUTH is on a journey to proactively and respectfully uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. How would you contribute to this journey?

It's obvious, even more so given the current climate we're seeing in the US and other parts of the world that no country is exempt from engaging in the conversation of racism.

There are fundamental issues of systemic racism and neo-colonial constructs that repetitively harm minorities, perpetuate inequalities and impose bias within the community.

As a privileged Pākehā I acknowledge that I have benefited from these constructs, and while I can never truly understand the harm inflicted, it is because of this that I have a responsibility to ensure that I commit myself to support this community and help to dissect and deconstruct these behaviours and ideologies that are woven into New Zealand's society. I believe that I have the self-awareness and motivation that is necessary to support RY to focus on this. Being a part of the rainbow community, we need to acknowledge that these issues are intersectional and it is essential that this be a part of what we do. I love that this is a priority for RY and am committed to this and look forward to being a part of it.

What particular skills do you think you have that would make you suitable for the RY board?

My professional and academic experience has essentially provided me with a tool-box of skills and capabilities that I continue to grow and utilise throughout my career. I want to be able to produce meaningful change for others by leveraging these within RY, but also use this as an opportunity to mentor those who want it, and to provide opportunities that might not otherwise be available. Going into my career was daunting and I didn't think it would be an inclusive space for me, to the point where I almost opted to conceal my queer identity or not apply for jobs in my desired field at all. People shouldn't have to feel that way - any workplace environment should be safe and inclusive and I want to use my experience and networks to break down these assumptions and obstacles.

In addition to this, I also understand how organisations operate, how to develop strategies, manage projects, assess risks, and transform them to deliver sustainable value. I am a strong and personable communicator, leader and decision maker and would love to contribute these skills to RY.

The fact that I work full-time may bring to question if I can handle the additional workload and the answer is yes, I do have time and I am fully capable. My firm is committed to allowing us to contribute to external parties like RY and I'm sure would even assist if necessary.