I haven’t been called hateful slurs, like “dyke” or “fag.” I haven’t been physically or emotionally bullied. I haven’t felt excluded or limited within my school or home environment. I don’t have to live a life of pretending or in misery.

I was able to come out at a young age and without experiencing any backlash. My friends and family were very accepting and loving, and my peers and teachers continued to treat me with kindness and respect. Although I have yet to face much adversity as a LGBTQ+ person, there are many people who haven’t been as lucky. I can’t just stand by and let them suffer. I have to find ways to help and protect them.

My name is Zoë and I am a high school junior at Clark Street Community School (CSCS). I am also one of the part of the L in LGBTQ+, and the founder of the #IFeelSaferWhen campaign. I developed a training kit that communities could use to make their environment safer for everyone.

Lighting the Spark

High school student Zoë Wyse discovered her passion for social advocacy and writing for LGBTQ+ rights during a pivotal writing workshop at the U.W. Her #IFeelSaferWhen campaign is just the start.

LGBTQ+ issues, and came out of it with a passion for advocacy and a way to use that passion to begin making positive change. During my time at Rise Up & Write, I realized that safety is necessary to progress, as an individual and as a society. We cannot grow, learn, inspire and innovate if we don’t feel safe. Safety is crucial to our person, our community, and our entire world. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs recognizes that people must achieve a feeling of safety and belonging before they can even begin to work on personal development and growth.

These concepts resonated with me because I waited to come out until I felt comfortable and safe enough to do so, and now that I’m out, I feel much happier. I am able to better show my support and passion for the LGBTQ+ community. I am able to discuss and fight for LGBTQ+ issues more openly, including connecting with people that share my interests. When campaign. I’ve discovered what social justice issues matter to me. I realized that I am an activist and have the power to make a difference. Once again, I’m one of the lucky ones. I’ve had the opportunity to rise up and fight for social change. And I know this luck, this privilege, is my obligation to be tenacious and continue with such meaningful work.