



# God Save the Drag Queen!

By Noel Bynum

When I arrived at UNC as a first year, I had only seen one real-life drag queen in my life at Club Odyssey in Winston Salem. I had no clue what drag was, or what it could be. I thought, like many others including people within the LGBT community, that drag was fun and/or funny; however, I didn't really understand it. Flash-forward now to my senior year; I've been involved with UNC's drag show -- planning, performing or coordinating -- since my second semester in school.

Open and safe gender expression is the most important part of the show because, ideally, drag shows provide a safe-haven for any type of alternative gender expression. This goes beyond simply putting on clothes of the opposite sex and involves transforming mannerisms, language, dance moves, attitude or even eyebrows. This process varies, of course, based on the performers. Some identify as transgender; others like myself do not, but are comfortable identifying with gender bending traits. Sometimes we get the occasional ally who will dress up. I think what people get out of the process is how ridiculous -- in both a funny and daunting way -- the gender binary really is. In other words, dressing up and acting like people of the other gender -- or even attempting androgyny -- forces you to realize how many minute details people attribute to gender identity.

For two fabulous nights a year, the gender binary is no longer the standard and individualism and self-expression are instead lauded. The audience too picks up on this inclusive and supportive vibe, making it a little more special than your average dance competition or a cappella concert. Almost like performing for a 450-person family full of people you know -- even when you don't actually know them.