

## Laverne Cox:

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newwave@tulane.edu

Laverne Cox, actress, reality TV star and transgender advocate, known most recently for her role as Sophia Burset on the critically acclaimed Netflix series, "Orange Is the New Black," spoke in McAlister Auditorium on the Tulane University uptown campus Monday (Feb. 17) evening.



Speaking to a large audience in McAlister Auditorium on the Tulane uptown campus, actress and transgender advocate Laverne Cox discusses her journey to become her authentic self. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

When she was a little boy, Cox took a dance class with a teacher who told his mother to send her son to therapy before "he ended up wearing a dress in New Orleans."

"It only took 20 years," said Cox, who stood elegantly dressed in an emerald green and black belted, sleeveless dress, and pointy toed heels. "But I made it! I'm here!"

It was the first time that the Alabama native had lectured in New Orleans. As a public advocate for transgender visibility and equality, she's shared her story with millions starring in VH1's award-winning reality show, "TRANSform Me."

Cox spoke eloquently about her journey to become her authentic self and how outlets like the performing arts and friendships with other transgender females

helped her along the way.

In a question and answer session after her lecture, she also was able to address issues of creating a public health model that includes transitional surgery and hormones for those who need it.

“Transitioning is not elective or cosmetic â?¡ I had to transition when I did or I would have killed myself,” Cox said.

In addition to telling the multidimensional stories of the underrepresented transgender community, Cox advocates that in a broader sense, we need to diversify our understanding of masculinity and femininity, “stop policing gender,” and realize that our traditional binary model of gender isn't necessarily healthy.

Her inspiring words were brought to campus by the [Tulane Black Arts Festival](#) (Feb. 17-â?¢Feb. 23) with this year's theme, “Enlightenment, Empowerment and Engagement,” and [TUCP Direction](#).

*Elisabeth Morgan is a freelance writer living in New Orleans. She graduated from Tulane University in 2011 with a BA in French and English.*