I Don't Do Boxes
OUT LOUD!
No. 2
I Don’t Do Boxes is a magazine exploring LGBTQ experience. Each issue is edited by a team of queer-identifying youth and published at Elsewhere, a living museum set inside a former thrift-store in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina. I Don’t Do Boxes is supported by the Guilford Green Foundation and the Fund for Democratic Communities.

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Dear Reader,

This is our anthem: We will write our lives, draw our stories, and sing our songs. We will live our lives out loud.

Our voices are powerful. They are diverse and they are strong. Even when we speak softly or sing quietly, we make powerful noise. When we tell our stories and sing our songs, we let our lives be known. And sometimes, we even get to know ourselves.

The second issue of I Don’t Do Boxes: Out Loud!, amplifies a collection of stories, poems, artworks, and sounds exploring LGBTQ experience. Through an open call for submissions we invited queer youth, musicians, and artists to explore the power of voice in different ways. We received stories and artworks exploring the nuances of identity, the struggle for acceptance, and strategies for sustained resistance. As you read along we invite you to listen to an accompanying compilation of music, sounds, and recordings from queer-identifying musicians from around the country. From raucous punk anthems to ambient noise experiments, queer oral histories, and queer-hop beats, listen closely to our anthem and you may hear yourself in the intimate stories shared.

As you’ll see, we’ve filled this issue with an array of stories, images, and sounds, but there’s always room for more. Even in our attempts to be open and inclusive our editorial team recognized the limitations of the works presented here, noting the challenge of representing a diverse collection of voices that reach across race, class, sex and gender.

With this in mind, you’re invited to join our anthem and send us your voice. Change will come, but it takes work. Make your voice heard and sing out loud. We’ll be there listening and ready to dance along.

Sincerely,

The I Don’t Do Boxes Team
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I am duality.

Eliana Weiner (Greensboro, NC)

One day I am ‘they’ - dressed like every Queer living in Brooklyn and the next I am ‘she’ - wearing a flower crown, long skirt, and bare feet. I should not have to have a mental projector that tells those I interact with who I am each and every day day. Why do I have to be ‘woman’ or ‘gender fluid’? I do not have to be one or the other. It is my identity; my self and I will call me what I wish.

Do not try to tell me who I am. “But if you identify as gender fluid, you can’t also be a woman-” No. That is bullshit. Check your bullshit before speaking to me.

I am duality.

What do I have to do to make you listen? Because even you, who call yourself a Queer ally/activist eager to make all feel included ask me to reevaluate the identity I have struggled with for all 19 years of my life and finally feel comfortable proclaiming.

I do not believe we, as a collective, need to shove ourselves into boxes with labels It is just that I, as an individual feel so good that I finally have some sort of long-winded identity that I am proud of.

If you want to call yourself an advocate for all-inclusivity of humankind do not tell me I can’t identify as one thing or another, because that’s what you were taught in your four-white-walled-gender-theory-class-that-one-time-sophomore-year, because let me tell you that if you have not lived as me, you cannot tell me what I can or cannot be; not now, not ever.
If I want to be torn between taking over the world one-Queer-at-a-time
and living quietly on a farm with no one but my wife, our cows, and our dogs
then let me be torn
but do not tell me what to do, what to be.

It is my life, which means my identity - identity is not supposed to be easy.
It is supposed to be a hard, painful path to discovery and I have given a lot of
time to that path and I deserve to have my identity accepted.

And no, my path is not yet over
and, no, this identity is not the first I have had
and, no, I do not expect it to stick forever.

But for now, just let me be messy and confused and dual
because it is who I am.

Untitled

ROBERT BRAXTON (CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA)

I look at him I see beauty.
I look at his body I see desire.
I look at his hands I see want.
I look at his face I see wishes.
I look in his eyes I see love.
Just his look fills my heart.

When I see him, I’m breathless.
When he talks to me I’m speechless.
Hold me in your arms tight and never let go
for my love for you is hard not to show.
I am standing in the check out line
with a bag of groceries for a romantic dinner
when the cashier,
noticing either the rainbow pin on my bag
or the thin silver ring in my nose
tells me:
“You know, I totally support the gays.
I think that all love is the same.”

And I want to ask her
if any of her ex-boyfriends
were ever dragged through the streets by their collars
and given black eyes and broken teeth
because they dared to kiss her.

Instead, I bite my tongue and keep quiet
because everybody knows that the gay rights movement
needs the support of straight, white, cisgender, journalism majors
swinging their star-spangled hips and their Bible belts
to the tune of Being Savior
who then turn their backs
whenever we decide to use the word “queer.”

I have seriously had someone tell me
that I should be thankful for you
letting us get married.
Don’t tell me not to be angry
when my lover can be legally fired in 29 states
me in 33
there is a reason y’all are fighting for gay marriage
and not queer rights.
I know it is easier
to see white picket fences over barbed wire
but this? This is the truth:

The group with one of the highest rates of drug abuse and suicide
is queer homeless youth
and 1 in 2 trans women of color will be brutally assaulted or murdered before their 40th birthday. My lover could not make it through the night because someone across the street decided that they were not human enough. And you want me to be thankful.

Like thankful for Macklemore putting his throat on the line to bring “gay representation” to the hip-hop industry not like Angel Haze, Le1f, Mykki Blanco, Zebra Katz, and every other queer rapper who came before him.

Like thankful for the HRC for bringing awareness to white, cis, monogamous families then turning their backs on queer people of color and leaving trans kids in the streets. Like thankful for straight allies whose definition of allyship is not hating queers.

To the people who think the A in LGBTQIA stands for Ally you are not entitled to space in my community when there are states that would prefer cession over the legalization of marriage equality. You are not entitled to space in my community when there are people who have to decide if it is worth the risk of being beaten or arrested just to use the bathroom that matches their gender. You are not entitled to space in my community. You are not entitled to space in my community.

That isn’t to say I’m not thankful for the people who speak up in the places we can’t but there is a difference between speaking up and speaking over.
In a crowded room, your voice will always be heard.
We are still fighting to be heard.
We still have to wear oppression under our skin.

So our love? Is not the same.
My love is boys with skinny wrists
having their chests filled with the word faggot
who then still have the room to hide their boyfriends’ heart
in their throats.

My love is girls who, after only holding on to their breath
because they were told they were going to Hell,
were still able to find God in their lovers’ veins.
My love is kids with coyote genders so wild west
they have to run rivers through their bloodstreams
just to see the sun rise.

My love is learning to fuck with the lights off
because our bones creak too loud in the bright
and there are fathers waiting at the bottom of the staircase
looking out for supernovas to turn into black holes.

My love is full of kindling
because we were not worth your ashes.

Downtown
Luke Legrand (Greensboro, NC)

Down here you know what you are, and everyone else knows it too. If you’re confused, well, they’ll be happy know for you and pass that information along.
A man is man, just like a tree is tree, or a dog dog. To truly embrace an inner identity that conflicts with the outward appearance of smooth integration into southern society is to be a pariah without a savior. You’re a sinner, and not the quaint kind of sinner who drinks too much or works to little or cusses too often. No, no, you’re beyond help. The poor boy who got lost along the road to the light, possessed of dark forces and too much thinking. A perverse and corrupted channel of evil from the outside; a blight on home and family and church.
Now, I am not a religious person, never took to the theatrics of blind faith. But, as a child with no say in the matter, I went and sat quietly; never really bothered to pay attention, save the odd sound bite worth transmitting to friends in happier places. An illustration of abject moral depravity parading as religious superiority.

We were out (in every sense of the word) young and wild and feeling free. Energetically engaged in some errand of exuberant youth with thick boots and too much makeup. I can't remember the name of the club, a dark little hole, smoky, and packed; the kind of place that knew what we were and welcomed us in without IDs. A drink in one hand, my trusty cigarette in the other, I felt the firmness of it first. His hand sliding unashamed across the raised denim of my rear pockets. Then his voice, icy and slow, as his fingers groped above my belt. He wanted me he said, he had ideas for me, he knew a place where we could be alone, and he had better treats than beer and cigarettes. I turned slowly to face my unwelcome suitor, steeling my nerves for a fight that would not come.

I wouldn't have thought a spray tanned face could flush, returning the wearer to a more natural color, but it happened. I knew that face too, wide and slick with a thin mustache and bald forehead, skin the color of a carrot's peel and shallow gray-green eyes. He had been a deacon at the church for years, an old man with a young wife, and a penchant for protesting violently whenever a gay bar was set to open, or anything else not strictly in accordance with his personally revealed understanding of the scriptures. But his highest success was the erection of a sixty foot crucifix in the parking lot of a business owned by a fellow church-goer on the morning of our town's first Pride celebration. A looming idol to gore, an enormous naked man, gashed and bloodied, with a sign reading, “You are not welcome, here in God's house.”

Yet, here he stood, the majesty of his post diminished by the smoky interior and his unflattering leather pants. Face curled in horror, his fingers shoved in the waist of an under-aged church member’s shorts.

I'd like to say I didn't spread the word, that I held onto that moment as a personal triumph, a glimmering example of the nasty hypocrisy intolerance breeds and permits. But, youth is an untamable beast, and I told everyone. Down here we are always willing to tell you what you are, if you're confused.
Erasure on the Steps of the American History Museum

MICHAEL G. WILLIAMS (DURHAM, NC)

On April 25, 1993, I sat on the steps of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and watched a troupe of drag queens and a column of Roman Catholic nuns pass delightedly through one another as they walked in opposite directions. I was at the National March on Washington and I was waiting to meet my Internet boyfriend for the very first time.

His name was Brian and we were both residents of an online community called LambdaMOO. In the early rush of our conversational relationship he told me about having gone to see his favorite group at the Beacon Theatre in New York the previous autumn. I had never been to New York, had no idea what the Beacon Theatre was or who Erasure might be, but I loved reading the words he wrote about going to see them perform two nights in a row. In the absence of being able to meet in the pubescent flesh, our passions were poured into introducing each other to all the things either of us wanted to share with our minds. We talked about all kinds of things – my love for Southern cooking and experiences as a trumpet player across a spectrum of performance styles and scenarios; his love for dance music and New York urbanity – but nothing made an impression on me as great as that left by his talk about this gay music star who was out and proud and unabashedly living the life he desired.

Ultimately, the overlap in the pop culture romance Brian and I were sharing boiled down to music and British comedy and as first year college students that was all we really needed. I mailed him cassette tape copies of symphonies in which I'd performed. He mailed me a VHS rip of the LaserDisc version – look it up, it was an awesome format – of Monty Python and the Holy Grail so I could see its extra features. The very best thing he did, though, was send me mixtapes assembled from every Erasure cassette available at the time. I listened to them on an old green Walkman knockoff with big disk-shaped earpieces encased in gray foam.

I had to split up from the collegiate activist group with whom I'd ridden to DC that day so I could meet Brian. He and I both knew where the American History museum is because we'd both been there in high school. To be precise, we both thought we knew how to find it. I had to stop and ask directions of a motorcycle cop who was parked in the middle of the street, arms crossed, watching the flood
of queers young and old stream by. He had a toothpick sticking out of one corner of his mouth and he nodded at me from behind aviator sunglasses. “I’ll tell you where the museum is if you’ll answer one question,” he said. “Why are you here?” There were any number of ways to answer that but I nervously said, “Because for one day I want to get to experience what you feel all the time: what it’s like to be a part of the majority.” What I did not tell him was that I also wanted him to feel what I felt all the time: what it was like to be on the outside. The word “privilege” didn’t have the social currency then it does now, but that’s a pretty good approximation of the resentment I felt at the time for straight society and its authority figures.

The cop, true to his word, gave me the directions I needed.

Brian showed up after I did and the moment we laid eyes on each other we knew we were destined to shake hands and walk away. It was the opposite of love at first sight: disinterest at first sight. We just weren’t into each other. We had written extensively, talked on the phone twice (long distance calls were not in our budgets), exchanged packages but never photos. We were each simply not the other’s type. We’d been fast friends and we’d both chosen (perhaps unconsciously, perhaps consciously) not to give ourselves a chance to dispel the perfect other we’d assembled in our own imaginations. I remember we hugged, sat down on the steps overlooking Constitution Avenue and waited to think of something to say. Eventually he asked if I had, on the bus ride there, listened to the Erasure tapes he made me. I said yes, of course I had, and produce the player from my backpack.

That one archaic act – his arrangement of 90 minutes of Erasure on a Memorex tape, inserted into the cassette player I carried with me everywhere – was the proxy for a physicality unavailable to us when we wanted it and unwanted by us the moment it became available. Brian asked if we could listen to it together. I said yes. We each held one headphone to one ear, side by side while the queer world flowed past us, and listened to Andy Bell sing to us. I can’t remember what song we played. I was too busy experiencing the moment to record it.

When it was over, we both started making excuses about needing to go back to the groups with whom we’d traveled. We shook hands, walked in opposite directions and never met again.

Brian and I did some token keeping up via LambdaMOO. We still loved to converse, we just knew it was no longer a sexual or romantic thing and we were on the hunt for one or the other at the first available opportunity. Later that year, he dropped out of MOO life after a real-life friend and neighbor of
his was the villain in one of the first publicized cases of online bullying (see “A Rape in Cyberspace”, http://bit.ly/1mtJQvL, for the original Village Voice piece from December, 1993). I thought at the time he might be embarrassed because he’d introduced his neighbor to LambdaMOO in the first place. Maybe it was unrelated. Maybe he simply moved on to other sites or other pursuits. Maybe he just thought there were more interesting ways to use the Internet as it became more widely adopted and adapted.

On LambdaMOO, disconnected players are listed as “asleep”. Brian slept for years. He logged in once in the late ‘90s and sent me a message to say hello. I sent him a message back with an updated email he could use to contact me. The phone number and mailing address I’d had for him were inherently impermanent, attached to being a student at NYU. I never heard from him. Eventually Brian was “reaped”, the equivalent of being cremated and having one’s estate liquidated. The tapes got eaten by the old cassette player when it finally started to die and I mourned them like lost loved ones. Life moved on, though, and on and on: just tons of living piling up between the me in any given moment and the kid who sat on the steps of our nation’s scrapbook and listened to Erasure with his boyfriend of five minutes before and five minutes hence.

That moment has stayed with me: more than that moment, in fact. That cop, that whole day, that whole time in life, are all treasured memories as vivid now as when they were made. Erasure became one of my favorite bands. In the two decades and change since that time, I’ve bought every Erasure cassette (and then CD, and then download) as they came out. iTunes tells me I have more hours of Erasure in my library than even I might have believed. I’ve listened to a couple of those hours writing this. The countless times since 1993 when I have heard Erasure – dance floors, road trips, in the background at a coffeehouse, alone in the deepest corner of the night – I have thought of that boy and that meeting and what it felt like to be in the majority for the very first time.

I can feel the foam speaker pad against my ear. I can hear the tinny music. I can see the drag queens and the nuns. I remember spotting those same nuns again later, walking around the National Mall wearing buttons that read VAGINAL POWER, thanking queers for being there, spreading love and gratitude I wanted so badly my Generation X reflexes refused to let me believe they were sincere. I’m still not entirely sure.

I don’t know where Brian is now, but I hope he is happy. I hope there is joy in his life. He gave me a lot of joy just by telling me about one band. I will always love Brian for that gift of Erasure and for shaking my hand in a moment we wanted to share before we grew up.
Untitled

Anonymous

My Human Illumination Virus has finally taken me mind, body, and soul. I found myself floating somewhere in-between. Brace yourself for a cosmic orgasm. My H.I.V. didn't kill me. I am not dead. Was I alive before? I resist the easily forgotten and invisible nature of past lives. Landed me in this body. I broke through, peeled off the worn out layers of systemic oppression coating this form. I woke up to a life I didn't ask for but now am more than willing to defend. I am not alone. I choose a radical orientation to my H.I.V. I will not be silenced. A spiritual activation, indigo trailblazer. My heart beats still. Three letters don't define me. Stigma cannot blind me. I am made more real. I am here. They expect me to lose the war they started in my body. I am triumph. They expect me to be in fear. I choose to love. I am aware.

Instead of polluted tunnels pumping red I see magical pipes of light connecting me inside. A virus like this has power if I let it but I choose to transcend it. Love is still a work in progress, to myself and to give to others.

Organic and elastic. I am malleable and transformative. Not dense and destructible.

Thriving with disability.

Note: I wrote this a little while ago. I have been living with HIV for 3 years. It's a healing process... I am way stronger now than I used to be, and this piece was a string of thought about my experience leading up to basically now as a pos human. I am deeply spiritual, and that is how I have coped with the emotional trauma.
The Fall of the Hero

Daniel Jones (Centerville, GA)

We arrive at the Anime Weekend Atlanta annual convention ball and already people are rushing over wanting to take pictures of my beautiful friends in their gorgeous My Little Pony gala costumes. No one wants pictures of me. I'm just wearing a suit and tie. However, they did paint a “cutie mark” of a time turner on my face. My friends decided I would make a good “Dr. Whooves” who, by the way, isn't a canon character but still manages to be exceedingly popular. I just hold their bags and smile off to the side. I have no expectations for the evening. In the romantically lit ballroom, filled with decorations of red flowers and people looking their absolute best, no one will notice me. I accept this and prepare myself for a night of playing games on my smartphone while my friends dance with attractive, straight cis-men in ties.

“Look!” cries my best friend, Jessica. She points to a table not far from the entrance to the ballroom where a beautiful girl, dressed in a stunning white ball gown and a pale blue and pink wig and unicorn horn stands there, is waving and taking pictures for people. “It's Princess Celestia!”

Of course, Jessica wants a picture with Celestia. She is dressed as Twilight Sparkle and Twilight Sparkle is Princess Celestia's apprentice. I did not know Princesses did apprenticeships.

Jessica runs over to the Princess and asks for a picture. Her friend, Jennifer, takes the picture while I hold her stuff, then we request to sit with the Princess at her table. I pull out a chair for my friend Jessica, I am quite the gentleman, and I take a seat next to her, a seat away from the beautiful Celestia who sat next to a man dressed as Roy Mustang from the anime television series Full Metal Alchemist.

This man is not unattractive and he pulls off the cosplay quite nicely with his dark hair and eyes. I'm impressed especially with his uniform which is not the cartoonish blue color most people go with when trying this cosplay. It looks like a real military uniform. I wonder if he made it. He didn’t even need a wig, his hair was naturally black and messy.

The not unattractive man wraps his arm around Celestia, smiles a charming smile and chats with everyone at the table. He acts as if he has known Celestia forever. I assume they're a couple.

My friend Kirsten, dressed in a bubble gum pink wig for her Pinky Pie cosplay, tugs on my arm and leans into the table a little.
"Guys, I really want to go dance!" she squeals excitedly, bright eyes gleaming. That high pitched Pinky Pie voice is annoying, but it goes along with the theme. She is dressed from head to toe in pink with candy decorations on the skirt and stripes on the top. Kirsten is a good contrast from Jessica, who was dressed in a more serious, dark blue gown that sparkled and gleamed because, again, she is Twilight Sparkle. If the dress didn't sparkle, it would defeat the purpose.

Everyone at the table agrees we should go dance. I stand from my place at the table and make sure I still have everything I came with on my person. All I care about is that I have my phone to entertain me while my friends dance. I will not bother to ask anyone. Who would ever want to dance with…?

"Hey, Danny!" says my friend Jessica, grabbing my arm before I can walk off ahead of the group. "Celestia wants to dance with you!"

Wait, what?

"Really?" I turn back around, past the point of surprised. The beautiful girl is smiling at me. Why doesn't she want to dance with her boyfriend? "You want to dance with me?" I need to be certain I heard right.

"If you don't mind," says the beautiful Princess. God, she's gorgeous. But, taken of course…by a real man.

"Um…well…sure, I don't mind at all," I manage to squeak awkwardly with my heart pounding in my chest. I hold out my arm to her politely and she takes it with a pale, delicate hand like porcelain. I shudder a little excitedly at her touch and lead her out to the dance floor.

"My name's Lochlan, by the way," she says to me in her sweet, angelic voice. "What's yours?"

"Emily…but, you can call me Danny!" I quickly add, "I'm gender queer."

You dufus, I think to myself furiously. Why did you tell her that? You've barely come out to half your friends, but you came out to a total stranger? She's gonna think you're a freak now.

"Oh, that's cool," she says, giggling a little. I blush. That's a new one.

Her tone gets more serious. "You know that Roy Mustang back there?"

"Yeah," I respond, glancing back at the not unattractive man. "What about him?"

"He won't leave me alone," Lochlan whispers. "I told him I don't play for his team and he said: 'That's okay, I can change your mind.'"

"What a jerk," I tell her, while inwardly having a minor heart attack while letting her words wash over me. She doesn't play for his team. So, she plays for mine? Oh God, what do I do? I have never been in this predicament before.

"Well, you're with me now, so maybe he'll leave you alone." I tried to make it sound flirty, but I think it just came out shaky and dorky.

Either way, she smiled at me again and said, "I hope so."
By this point, we are on the dance floor and we turn to face each other. I notice she has the most beautiful blue eyes I’ve ever seen. They glitter faintly in the dim lighting of the ballroom. My racing heart stops and promptly drops into my stomach.

We dance horribly, but don’t care. I’m staring into those beautiful, shining blue eyes, lost in another world and listening to the Princess tell me about herself. She wants to work with animals. She also happens to have a pet snake and I feel a tad envious. I always wanted a snake.

We dance absorbed and enchanted by each other, then notice that the music has stopped. We are still dancing. Awkwardly, we laugh and take a step back from each other.

Come on, I tell myself. Don’t blow this. Don’t look like an idiot in front of her!

The next song is about to start. I pull her to me once more, prepared to continue our absolutely terrible dance when, very unexpectedly, the moment is shattered as the not unattractive man comes up behind the Princess and grabs her by the shoulder, asking her to dance with him.

She hesitates to answer and looks at me, fear instead of excitement now reflecting in those eyes I lost myself in just moments ago.

Say something! I tell myself. Tell him to back off! Protect her!

No words make it to my lips. He takes her away from me. The Princess looks desperately back to me, clearly wanting me to step in and stop him. Instead, I stand immobile on the dance floor, unable to do anything but mouth an “I’m sorry,” and watch helplessly as he takes the Princess away.

I lose her in the crowd, though I expect she will go back to the table at some point. That gives me an idea! I will make it up to her at the table right in front of that creep!

I begin my search for the woman who walks around the ballroom regularly selling roses and buy a pink one before rushing back to the table. I plan to give it to her; offer to escort her elsewhere. My friends and I could wait with her until she could get a ride. Maybe we could all go eat somewhere in the convention center and lose him in the crowd. Either way, I will rescue her.

I reach the table and her stuff is gone… and so is his. I turn to my friend, Kirsten, who has returned to the table to text, and ask her where the Princess has gone.

“I think she left to get away from that creepy guy,” she responds, looking up from her phone. “Who gave you the rose?”

I don’t answer. I stare down at the flower in my hand and think about the flower I had before. I should have spoken up for her on the dance floor. I was supposed to be her hero, a knight in shining armor. Instead, I was a fool in a tuxedo who let the most beautiful young woman ever held in their arms be stolen from them. I let my Princess down.
Red Behnke (Saxapahaw, NC)
Sonder
When you can't escape your gloom,
When you feel trapped inside...

the darkest prison of your mind;
music can spark a tiny flame.

the shadows recede with a reverberating echo,
Lydia Henderson (Nashville, TN)

Spark
Guen Montgomery (Urbana, IL)
*Kitty Surprise* (top), *B+V* (left)
IF HE CAN DO IT... WE CAN DO IT.

WAS THERE EVER A DOUBT?

WE'LL! ALL RIGHT! IF IT'S REALLY THAT GOOD!

IT IS! IT IS!
Jamin Guinyard (Greensboro, NC)
*Power (top left), American Gothic (right),
Mask (bottom left)*
Alex Sharp (Reidsville, NC)
Melosis
Peter Pendergrass (Greensboro, NC)
Blank Faces
Digital Dating
(In a Small Town)

PETER PENDERGRASS (GREENSBORO, NC)

Meeting people online is one of those things that everyone hates to acknowledge, but many (if not most) of us have done. There are many ways to connect with new people online, and some of them are more accepted than others. If you add a friend of a friend on Facebook, learn about them through their profile and posts, and eventually meet in person, just about everyone will agree this is normal and appropriate. But what if you’re trying to meet people out of your friend group? What if you’re interested in dating? What if, even though you’d never admit it to most of your friends or any of your family, you’re looking for sex? Welcome to the world of online and mobile matchmaking.

Until recently, looking for love online was taboo. Today, almost everyone uses some form of social networking, and whether we like to talk about it or not online dating is normal. Even if you meet a cute person you like face-to-face before connecting online, you still end up flirting with them on the Internet and mobile apps. Still, words like “desperate” and “sluty” come out in conversations about online daters, as if meeting online is a last resort, only for those who are unable to attract someone in person. Not only is this just plain wrong, it’s also a heterocentric attitude. For queer people, especially in small cities and towns with less visible community, online dating was revolutionary.

Everyone needs community. For queer people, community is more than a social necessity, it’s a crucial source of solidarity and support. In order to develop community, we have to be able to find each other. This is one of the most difficult parts of being queer, and if you think it’s tough today, imagine how things were 100 or even just 50 years ago. Not only has finding each other been a constant challenge for queers, there has always been the added variable of recognition. With online dating, the ambiguity (and risk) of cruising was minimized. If you lived somewhere cruising wasn’t even an option, the Internet provided a way to connect with other queer people near and far.

My first experience with online dating was when I was 12-13 years old. There used to be a magazine called XY. The best thing about it was its website, where users could create profiles and search for others nearby. As far as I know, XY was the first gay youth dating website, and one of the first gay dating sites in general. I befriended a good number people, a few of whom I met in person, most of whom I only interacted with on AIM (AOL Instant Messenger, which is what
everyone used before texting and Facebook chats). At the time, about a year before I came out, it was thrilling to connect with people who were gay and bi (queer identity hadn’t become a big thing yet), around my age, and having similar experiences. We helped each other figure things out: our selves, our sexuality, our life situations, etc. With the support of both online and IRL (in real life) friends, I came out to many of my friends and family members via e-mail and AIM. I was part of the first generation of kids to grow up with the Internet, and I was part of the first generation of queer kids to come out on the Internet.

As more people began to use online dating platforms, mobile devices were thrown in the mix and the number of sites (and apps) multiplied. Simultaneously, the culture of online dating, at least from my perspective, changed for the worse. Many online dating platforms have become impersonal, dehumanizing, and largely anonymous, especially on gay cis-men-focused platforms. I can’t imagine my first experiences with queer community being Grindr, Adam4Adam, Manhunt, Jack’d, Hornet, etc. I don’t have the life experience to speak authoritatively about online dating for female-bodied queer people. What I have been told in conversations on the topic is that it’s significantly less fucked up. That said, there are issues across the board: most online dating platforms aren’t inclusive of variant or otherwise complex gender identities, and they tend to assist prejudice, objectification, and irresponsible sexual health practices. Especially in the world of M4M (male for male) online dating, racism and body privilege are constantly occurring on a massive scale.

Many problems contribute to the greater issue. One is that online dating isn’t properly acknowledged. It’s no longer taboo, but it’s like a shadow norm. Another problem is that adults don’t teach young people how to engage with online dating like they teach them about what some refer to as traditional dating (i.e. asking someone out in person). Yet another problem is that young people today are thrown in the tank with the big fish. Even after years of online dating, I feel super weird when I get propositions from people who are 20 and even 30+ years older than me. When you’re young and don’t have any real life dating experience (which most adults who are coming to online dating for the first time do have), online dating is very real, very emotional, and very confusing.

For these reasons, I put together a rough guide to online dating. It’s aimed at young people, but it’s appropriate for any age. It’s my hope that, be it on OKCupid, Grindr or any of the other platforms out there, at least a few people will be able to use this knowledge to help them have an easier time as they look for queer love online:
Digital Dating Tips & Advice

**Be Yourself:** When it comes down to it, yourself is the only thing you can be. Don't pretend to be someone or something you aren't. The number one thing you can do to guarantee you won't find romance is to lie about yourself.

**Be Honest:** Have a clear, recent picture of yourself, and provide your real age, etc. Be specific about your desires, expectations, and boundaries. It's always your right not to disclose. Don't allow anyone to pressure you for information.

**Be Kind and Respectful:** Slurs, hate speech, and other oppressive language is never okay. It's common to see profiles that say things like White only. No fems. Just a preference. This is racist and sexist. Remember, there is a person just like you on the other side of the screen.

**If They Won’t Stop, Block:** If you’re receiving messages from someone after you’ve told them that you’re not interested, do not hesitate to block them from contacting you. You can also report the user for harassment.

**Stand Up For Yourself:** If you get a rude or otherwise inappropriate message from someone, let them know what they said is not okay. In fact, letting those people know that what they said is not okay is an important thing to do.

**Use Your Voice For Good:** If you see slurs, hate speech, or other oppressive language in a profile, it's okay to send a message letting the user know that it's offensive and wrong. You can report such users to admins, who may be able to have the content and/or user removed.

**Do Not Meet Up With Anyone Anonymously:** I cannot stress this enough. Do not meet in person with anyone who won't provide their full name, their phone number, and a clear, recent picture of themself. No exceptions. It's more than just a bad idea. It is a dangerous thing to do.

**Phone A Friend:** When meeting someone in person, let a friend know who it is, when you’re going to meet up, and where you’ll be. Agree on a time you’ll call to check in afterwards. It is ideal to meet in a situation that’s with or near friends, or at least in public.

**Take A Break:** Online dating can be overwhelming, upsetting, disappointing, or all of the above. When you feel this way, log off, maybe even for a few months. If you want to give it another try, go for it, always keeping in mind the things above.

Do you have online dating advice or stories you’d like to share? We’d love to hear from you! Send a submission to education@goelsewhere.org today!
rapture/rupture

Cynthia Lee (Greensboro, NC)

I.

beloved, our love was not enough
you were my mirror
when you moved i moved
me an imperfect copy
you opening inside of me
but as much as i tried, i was not enough

II.

i was drawn to you as a parched traveler to water
i was drawn to you as moth to flame
but i was a foreigner in your world
beloved, i was not bengali enough

III.

one day you said,
“you have become very soft,
like a bengali woman.”
like you.
but i could not be you
my body would erupt with otherness
my stride too large my eyes too small
the questions simmering unasked
and as much as i loved kathak
its hair-prickling rhythms and mathematical precision
kathak was not enough
IV.

you did not know how to love me and give me my freedom
your third world greed broke my first world heart
you did not know I might exceed your imagination
and perhaps, beloved teacher, you were not enough

V.

i imagine us in a room together
just you and i in a room alone
an open channel between two hearts
two women dancing and reciting bols
like and unlike each other
but there is never just a room
there is always the world outside
and in the end, beloved,
our love was not enough
Things she doesn’t see

Marley Dossey (Greensboro, NC)

Some days I am unstoppable

Some days I know she’s here and she won’t leave

But now it’s all starting to kill me

These feelings I have

She told me “I won’t lie”

And I agreed to do the same

But it’s hard when I’m so afraid

She knows I love the ladies

I know she plays with darkness; I know she hides from the light

I am the only one who knows about her

Everyone knows about me

They don’t laugh, but they avoid

They don’t fight, but they hate

I am another stereotype
So why would she love me?

It's crushing me with its weight

The secrets I tried so hard to keep

I keep what's hers, but what's mine flies away into others

I tell her I miss her

I tell her I love her

I tell her goodnight

She says the same to me

Goodnight, but I'll never sleep

I love her

She deserves to know

And I tell her every day

“I love you, you're beautiful, don't do it again”

She says it back…and this is my addiction…the love I have for her
The Summer
Michael Johnson (Lincoln, NE)

I have glimpsed in my dream last night that which may be no more than a dream. It comes, from somewhere in the sands of time, moving its liquid thighs, sloughing through the air and rippling through meadows to woods, minds to words. It is:

Not quite a freedom because of the great weight of debt— the debt of prize livestock to their farmers.

It is:

The untethered salad days.

It abides in the future, within the coming stretch of three months who's like I may never see again. A time in which I will be able to do anything and be cared for in everything. All the responsibilities of youth (read none); all the freedoms of adulthood.

This was my dream: The lot of us, I and my friends, we were out, on a farm somewhere. Exploring, talking, doing, all with the purpose that a certain sort of passionate purposelessness brings. The sun was shining, the hillsides were growing— it was palpably, subtly Summer— and the same as our usual brand of unquestioned reality.

More than tawdry, clichéd Summer. It wasn’t even vacation. Unshackled from high school and true youth; Promised to our separate colleges? Ha! They are promised to us and two times ringless fingers braid the blue sky.

We were in the country and our bellies were full. Check our wallets for credit cards and trace them to our parents to find where we still call home— a digital vestige of our umbilical cords. Our hair was combed. The women (Women!) bared their shoulders for sun’s sake, shade’s sake, sweat’s sake, self’s sake. The men (Men! Add some wonder to that exclamation point and you’ll be reading it right) were unshaved.

The women bared their shoulders, I among their rank, and the men went unshaved.
This is carelessness and vanity, not sex.

But I drank it in, nonetheless. Innocent attraction; the facts of life and no one there to demonize the eyelashes, scratchy stubble, soft lips, or adam's apples that nature had seen fit to call good.

We gallivanted: ‘scaping ‘cross ‘scapes, adding abuse to the apostrophe.

We found each other and we found our cars and we sped off to wherever we wanted to or needed to go. There was gas in our tanks.

Let me say that again: There was gas in our tanks! Check our credit card histories; you know it to be true!

There was gas in our tanks and dust in our lives. Thick coats of grit, stuck to the birth slime coating our napes and crowns and hackles and— all over is what I’m trying to say.

There was dust in our lives— enough to write in, to draw stick figures and penises in, enough to still be washed off, enough to show we were healthy, that we’d been places.

Hey.

I lied.

We could try to wash it off (why would we though?) but the dust was stuck beneath shirtstraps, busily browning elastic waistbands and humorously ageing beards— Ha! As if anything could age us! Finally, I understand the mystical “Youth” that is spoken of. For all my life, and all my life for the next two months until I turn eighteen, I have been youth, known youth, and heard of Youth, that which is bought at a Peruvian fountain, that which is drained from a chalice, that which is sucked from the marrow and the teats of life; That which all of the “Adult” world craves.

Well, now I finally understand.
I don’t want to pretend I am an expert. I have had a premonition, that is all.

But this freedom is not real— we are not truly without debt and if we think so, we are ignorant.

A calf can never repay its mother’s milk.

In fact, no matter what, we are all ignorant as we go into this next world, no matter what admissions days at colleges want us believe, no matter what books we buy from the campus book store, no matter how many non threatening upperclassmen named Lisa or Eric call us with easy voices and multicultural last names, we are ignorant.

And we are ignorant of the next one when we come out of it.

And hey, I’m down with that.

It’s the natural progression, that’s all.

And the depth of all possible ‘ignorance’ is so deep, the pit so steep, that those darling small ripples made when we tossed a stone— just to see what would happen— are made all the more valuable by considering what you have, rather than what is still to be gained.

I guess what I’m saying is

  this summer

I’ll have to make some ripples  and

Time runs. I’ll will find where its many legs are taking me soon enough.
Constantly Being  
SEBASTIAN STRYER (RALEIGH, NC)

Always shifting  
Ever changing  
Rippling through a spectrum  
Diverse as a Prism’s after-light

Up down left right  
Under over Sideways  
An infinite cycle is  
Carouseling out of control

In the middle  
At the extremes  
Rocketships of wisdom  
Explode on gender

At peace flitting about  
Fluxing around  
The pathway is fluid  
Liquefied into bottles of self
Music You Need to Know

TOP FIVE LIST FROM PETER PENDERGRASS

Top Five Songs for Falling In Love
1. The Knife - Heartbeats
2. The Drifters - This Magic Moment
3. Exposé - Point of No Return
4. Kingdom (feat. Kelela) - Bank Head
5. Janet Jackson - Would You Mind

Top Five Songs For Escaping The World:
1. Twinsistermoon - I Wish I Could Drown The World In Reverberation
2. Cocteau Twins - The Spangle Maker
3. Peaking Lights - Silver Tongues, Soft Whispers
4. Natural Snow Buildings - An Isolated Place For Target Practice
5. Philip Glass - Glassworks

Top Five Ways to Respond To Homophobic Bullshit:
1. A big loud, “FUCK OFF!”
2. Make out with your partner / a friend, if you have one handy.
3. If you know the person, make them trend on Twitter in a bad way.
4. Ignore the bullshit and strut into the horizon. Higher ground.
5. Throw a strawberry milkshake at them, and make sure it splatters.

Best Dance Music Ever:
1. 80s & 90s House Music
2. Vogue / Ballroom
3. Contemporary Future Bass & R&B
4. DISCO!
5. 90’s Techno & Dance

Top Five Albums For Your Life:
1. Lauryn Hill - The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill
2. Grouper - Cover The Windows And The Walls
3. Twinsistermoon - When Stars Glide Through Solid
4. Björk - Medulla
5. Grace Jones - Nightclubbing

Top Five Sounds You Heard This Week:
1. A little kid belly laughing.
2. A speeding train in the middle of an outdoor wedding.
3. A room full of people breathing sweetly.
4. Owls hooting at each other outside my window.
5. The words, “I love you,” every time.

Top Five Snacks:
1. Cold pizza
2. A smoothie with chia seeds
3. Spinach and sriracha hummus
4. Cold kosher pickles
5. A spoonful of almond butter

Top Music Videos You Shared Online Recently:
1. SZA - Ice Moon
2. Holly Herndon - Chorus
3. Neneh Cherry - Buffalo Stance
4. Fatima - Family
5. Le1f - Sup

Cutest Musician You Know:
Kyary Pamyu Pamyu
## TOP FIVE LIST FROM PETER MUNIZ

### Top Five Songs for Falling In Love:
1. The A Team - Ed Sheeran
2. Drunk - Ed Sheeran
3. This = Love - The Script
4. Ex to See - Sam Hunt
5. Love Somebody - Maroon 5

### Top Five Songs For Escaping The World:
1. Dark Paradise - Lana Del Rey
2. Where the Story Ends - The Fray
3. Our Last Days - The Fray
4. Silence & Faith - The Script
5. Little Bit of Truth - You Me at Six

### Top Five Ways to Respond To Homophobic Bullshit
1. One Step Closer - Linkin Park
2. Marchin On - One Republic
3. I'm Coming Out - Diana Ross
4. Love in the 21st Century - Neon Trees
5. Fuck Love - Iggy Azalea

### Best Dance Music Ever:
1. Chocolate - The 1975
2. Do What U Want - Lady Gaga
3. Love Without Tragedy - Rihanna
4. Partition - Beyonce
5. Ching-A-Ling - Missy Elliot

### Top Five Albums For Your Life:
1. Hands Held High - Linkin Park
2. Nirvana - Sam Smith
3. Beat of the Music - Brett Eldredge
4. Too Little Too Late - JoJo
5. Miss Independent - Ne-Yo

### Top Five Sounds You Heard This Week:
1. Knocking on a door
2. Door bell
3. Glass breaking
4. Spoon in a bowl
5. Washing in the spin cycle

### Top Five Snacks:
1. Pretzels
2. KIND granola
3. Oreos
4. Fruit Snacks
5. Tostitos

### Top Music Videos You Shared Online Recently:
1. A Sky Full of Stars - Coldplay
2. Home - Edward Sharpe
3. Heaven Is A Place On Earth - Belinda Carlisle
4. Classic - MKTO
5. Sweet Dreams - Beyonce

### Cutest Musician You Know:
Chester Bennington

FAVORITES FROM QORDS

1. Annah Anti-Palindrome
   (San Francisco, Experimental)
2. Allison Weiss
   (Los Angeles, Indie Rock)
3. MEN (New York, Dance)
4. Bearsnail (Denver, Indie Folk)
5. Romantic Animcal (New Orleans, Southern Moonswoon)
6. RVIR (Olympia, Punk)
QueerLab Resources

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Triad Health Project - www.triadhealthproject.com
Planned Parenthood - www.plannedparenthood.org
STI Testing
   www.youthaidscoalition.org/std-testing-in-greensboro-nc.html
Yoga for Queers & Misfits -
   durhambodyworkandyoga.wordpress.com/yoga/yoga-for-queers-in-gso
Positive Wellness Alliance - www.positivewellnessalliance.org

COMMUNITY

Equality NC - www.equalitync.org
InSIDEout (Durham) - www.insideout180.org
Queer People of Color Collective -
   www.facebook.com/pages/Queer-People-of-Color-Collective-QPOCC
Bayard Rustin Center at Guilford College -
   http://www.guilford.edu/academics/multicultural-ed/bayard-rustin-center/
NC A&T PROUD - facebook.com/PROUDNCAT
Guilford College Pride -www.guilfordpride.tumblr.com
Elon University Spectrum & LGBT Alumni Network group
   http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/lgbtq
The Point Foundation (LGBTQ Student Scholarships) - pointfoundation.org
Southerners On New Ground - www.southernersonnewground.org
Guilford Green Foundation - www.ggfnc.org
YouthSAFE - www.gsafe.org/YouthSafe
UNCG Pride - www.facebook.com/UNCGPRIDE
PFLAG - www.pflaggreensboro.org
Safe Schools NC - www.safeschoolsnc.com
SPARK (Atlanta) - www.sparkrj.org
LGBT Center of Raleigh - www.lgbtcenterofraleigh.com
Time Out Youth (Charlotte) - www.timeoutyouth.org
Youth OUTRight (Asheville) - www.youthoutright.org
NCCJ of the Triad -www.nccjtriad.org
**QORDS THEME SONG**

```
C                  Am
We are strong
F      C        G
Cause we’ve come together
C                  Am
And we are young
F          C        G
and we hope for better.
C                  Am
And we love Queers
F          C        G
We are proud & southern
C              Am
And we are here
F   G         C
And we’re not goin’ no where
C    G               F
And we’re lovin’ without fear. YEAH!
```

Words and Music Laila Nur
(www.reverbnation.com/lailanur)

By empowering Southern queer youth and building community through music, QORDS is a vehicle for expressing gender and sexuality, and harbors an environment of self-discovery and social change. Learn more at www.qords.org

**MUSIC, MEDIA & BLOGS**

Black Girl Dangerous -
www.blackgirldangerous.org
Against Equality -
www.againstequality.org
Feministing - feministing.com
Autostraddle - www.autostraddle.com
Elixher - elixher.com
B Scott - www.lovebscott.com
Hartbeat - ihartbeat.tumblr.com

Quirky Black Girls -
quirkyblackgirls.tumblr.com
Kid Fury (The Read) -
soundcloud.com/TheRead
Rookie Mag - rooikiemag.com
Keepin it Queer - keepinitqueer.com
Homoground - homoground.com
North Carolina Girls Rock -
girlsrocknc.org

Peter Muniz (Greensboro, NC)
*Equal Love*
Out Loud! A COLLECTION OF QUEER MUSIC, SOUNDS AND VOICES

PLAYLIST

1. Quilla and QueerLab, We Don’t Do Boxes 3:33
2. The Tomboys, Self Portrait 3:40
3. My Gay Banjo, How Many Kinds of Courage (Song for Chelsea Manning) 2:51
4. Miah Luz, Sound of Her Wings 5:38
5. Homewreckers, Redemption Ceremony 2:45
6. Peter Pendergrass and QueerLab, Sound Art Experiment’s Medley 5:43
7. Maya Songbird, Regal Slut 2:53
8. Half-Breed, Dancing On the Floor 3:06
9. TreZure aka WidoW, Me Against the World 4:09
10. Les Tresvinos, Love of Mine 3:32
11. Maria DeGuzman and Janet Cooling, Tip of the Problem 5:33
12. Jimi Pancakes, Seeds 4:05
13. Hyster Majesty, I’m a Computer 3:33
14. Potpourri of Pearls, Just Be Love 2:54
15. Bowsprit, James 5:46
16. Schmekel, Gay Shame 2:50
17. Peter Pendergrass, Ghost Hand 4:40
18. Meg Scott and Rob Phipps, Paper Dolls 4:17
About the Collection

*Out Loud!* brings together a diverse collection of original music, sound recordings, and oral histories exploring LGBTQ experience from around the country. Pump up the volume, share these tunes with friends and let’s dance OUT LOUD!

**Listen Online:** soundcloud.com/elsewheremuseum/sets/out-loud

1. *We Don't Do Boxes* was created during a vocal improv workshop led by **Quilla** (Anna Luisa Daigneault) a Canadian-Peruvian vocalist, keyboardist, and composer on April 30, 2014. http://www.quillamusic.com/

2. **The Tomboys** are Nego Crosson, Larkin Carroll and Gigi Burkhalter. Their music is described as “sexy queer nostalgia drenched in the revolution.” www.facebook.com/thetomboys/

3. **My Gay Banjo** is Owen Taylor and Julia Steele Allen on guitar, banjo, uke and vocals. Singing homespun gay-themed duets and occasional queered-up mash-ups, My Gay Banjo plays songs for you and your kind. www.mygaybanjo.com/

4. **Jeremy Lee Harris** (aka **Miah Luz**) makes optimistic doom and gloom combining piano balladry manipulated ambient noise, and looped beats chiseled from found objects to create a dark, electric, lo-fi soundscape. www.miahluz.bandcamp.com

5. **The Homewreckers** are a queer-core, pop-punk outfit from the salty depths of Brooklyn, NY. They were founded in 2008 when Cristy Road and Jackie O. got together to write emotionally-distraught pop-punk songs about queer problems and manic depression. www.the-homewreckers.com/info.htm

6 & 17. Track 6 brings together a medley of experimental sounds created during a QueerLab workshop led by interdisciplinary and multimedia artist **Peter Pendergrass** on May 14, 2014. And track 17 is an original song titled Ghost Hand. peterpendergrass.com

7. **Maya Songbird** is a flamboyant songstress born in the historic Castro district of San Francisco who sings of sex, love and living the life in the bay. Creating music that takes you on a journey through whimsical ambient sounds, across hints of house beats and trippy synthesized tunes. www.mayasongbird.com

8. **Half-Breed** started in 2012 between roommates, Micaila Hopkins and Ashley Nieves. This two piece band keeps it simple and upbeat. There are no big pedal boards or synth tracks to fill in for lack of members; they are just two POC queers making music. www.half-breed.bandcamp.com

9. In an age where female emcees (MC) are near extinct, **TreZure** is determined to change the landscape of a male dominated industry. A staple of
North Carolina’s underground hip hop scene, TreZure’s music envelopes the listener in a world filled with pulsing basslines, chest pounding drum laden tracks, incredible metaphors, witty vernacular and down right honest, in your face lyricism. www.reverbnation.com/trezureakawidow

10. Les Tresvinos (aka Megan Denton and friends) is a lover of all things kind and pure.

11. “Tip of the Problem” is written from the viewpoint of a gay teenager struggling to survive. Lyrics by Janet Cooling and music composed by María DeGuzmán. Janet Cooling is a professor of Art at San Diego State University and María DeGuzmán is Professor of English & Comparative Literature at UNC-Chapel Hill.

12. Jimmi Pancakes is DIY queer musician who learned to play guitar via a “How to Play Guitar” video, happily recorded a few original songs in her bedroom, and went on tour once during the worst economic recession since The Great Depression. www.jimmipancakes.bandcamp.com

13. Hyster Majesty (aka Kaitlin Froom) is a genderfuck Goddess and queer riot grrrl making art and music out of astrophysics and archaeology, depression and anxiety disorders, glitter, trash, stickers, and teenage girls’ diary writings.

14. Formed in 2011, Potpourri of Pearls explores the sexy and strange currents of synth pop, drawing from visual/performance art, mainstream pop/r&B, house, new wave, and a perversion of 90s easy listening music. www.potpourriofpearls.com

15. I am Samuel. When I sing and play guitar I am Bowsprit. This song was inspired by the novel Another Country by James Baldwin. It is a long, winding story of love in New York City that explores same-sex relationships, interracial love, and the intricacies of social expectations. I found it very moving, so I wrote a love song to Mr. Baldwin and discovered more about my own relationship with my sexuality in the process.

16. Schmekel was a prominent force in the Brooklyn, NY transcore scene of the early 2010s. Mixing traditional klezmer motifs with punk sensibilities, Schmekel (which means “little penis” in Yiddish), challenged listeners to think critically about Judaism, queerness, and the sounds that accompany both. www.transjews.com

18. An original song written for a graduate school class at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro by Meg Scott and Rob Phipps. It was put together with the help of her son Rob who composed the music, sang, and recorded the song in his bedroom.

19. Hear about the often heartbreaking yet inspiring story of Raven Ridley Hilferty Ducamp - growing up intersexed, queer, bipolar and as a foster child. This podcast was produced by writer and multimedia artist Deonna Kelli Sayed.