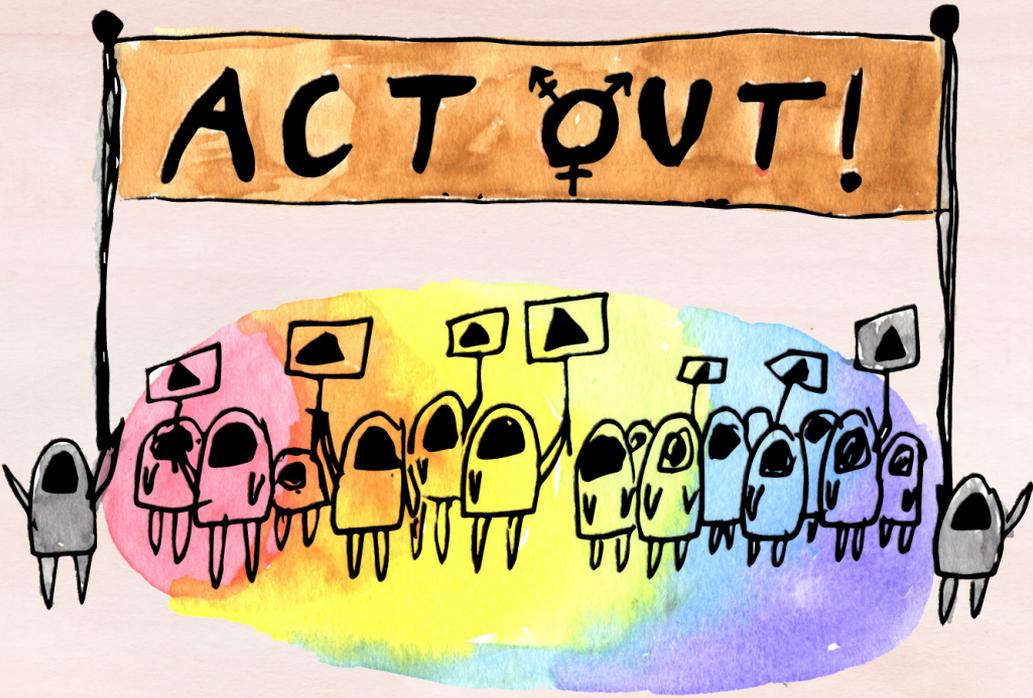


I DON'T DO BOXES

No. 3



I DON'T DO BOXES

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ACT OUT!

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 Queer People of Color Collective.

www.idontdoboxes.org



elsewhere

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Cover Art: Christopher Kennedy



1862: Albert D. J. Cashier, a transgender man, serves in the Union Army in the Civil War.

JUNE 2015

Dear Reader,

In this third issue of *I Don't Do Boxes: Act Out*, we're speaking out about all the things we were told we couldn't say and we're armed with all things we were told wasn't meant for us. Our editorial team sent out a call for submissions for queer creatives to send us poems, essays, stories, and art surrounding the theme of acting out.

We all struggle with taking action – whether it's getting out of bed, writing our scholarship essays, correcting pronouns, or saying what we really think. And as queer people in the south, we're constantly on the brink of choosing between action and safety, between justice and survival.

And no matter if you're acting out of rage, love, or fear, it can be terrifying. But actions don't have to be grand to matter. Acting out doesn't just mean protesting in the street – it's any way that you use the power that you have. It's building your own community where there is none. It's experimenting. It's rewriting histories to include people who've always been left out. It's creating art. It's letting yourself be loved for who you are when you've always believed you're wrong. It's resistance. It's allowing yourself to exist, unfiltered, with or without boxes.

We hope that the varying perspectives in this issue will help our readers continue to explore ways of acting out. You already have the power - it's just how you decide to use it.

Finally, a note on survival: it's okay if the person you need to fight for most is yourself. If you need permission to reach out, here it is. Exhaust every resource to keep yourself from burning. As your battle dies down, breathe and pull another from the open flame.

Collect others. Heal together. Survival is the greatest act. The rest is an encore.

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
It is our duty to win.
We must love and protect each other.
We have nothing to lose but our chains.”
— Assata Shakur

Sincerely,

The *I Don't Do Boxes* Team

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ACT, EXIST, FADE

JOHN DOSSEY

*to act is to be real
and wave your hands, showing the
world how real you are
to act is to have others who are
willing to be real alongside
you, waving and screaming
"we are here, we are here
and we are many in numbers"
and we wave, and we shout
we are real, we exist,
and this advances us
but at what cost?
i act as i sit and watch and
exist
i act by living in a world that
hates me
my fear is not of ridicule,
for of that i have had plenty
my fear is not of words,
for those are misinterpreted
and faulty communication
no, my fear is of death
and of becoming the next
"his name was" trend
i am more than a name
i am more than my body,
which is misinterpreted
even more than my words
i act by existence,
my screams are real
and my chains creak under my strength
no, you need not write
"his name was john"
for my legacy is more than a name
i act by existing
and for that i may have my existence stolen
for simply daring to walk the street
with the body i was born in
and the mind that is my own*

*the mind that screams deafeningly loudly
against unhearing ears
to act is to live,
to subsist
but to subsist is to be seen
with broken and scratched lenses
by a world who wants us to go
away
to act is to be real,
to be alive
to live
and to live is to die
but death mustn't be so bad
after all,
only those who existed once
have a chance to
unexist*

UNTITLED

ROBERT BRAXTON (CRYSTAL RIVER, FLORIDA)

author's note: written for and about the Aids crisis.

It was a time and place no one wanted to be.
No one knew if it would be you or me.
The loss of friends, I could have been a lost friend too.
Some said I'll never love again, and as sad some said I deserve all the bad.
I missed the life I once had, missed the family, missed the friends all part of a
nightmare that seemed to never end.
People left, and people died, but the nightmare continued when I opened my eyes.
Everything felt like it was falling apart, it broke my faith and my heart.
Every time I thought life couldn't get worse another rode off in a hearse.
Couldn't remember how to smile or have fun, it's true when they said only the good
died young.



QUEER AS DISABLED

BILL PAPPAS (CHAPEL HILL/CARBORRO/BOONE/ASHEVILLE)

author's note: I am writing this in response to my anonymous piece "Human Illumination Virus" from last issue. I can no longer remain in the shadow of stigma and therefore I choose to be stronger. My heart can be strong enough for all of us. I am thankful for language and the light it shines on the dark corners of transformation.

Walking, breathing, loving, trees of life.
We are sharing seeds. Ideas and semen. Love and blood.
My body has been colonized. Open embodiment. Wild. Inknowing.
reSelfing reWilding
this is my give back. Take back. Reach around love
planting
Pleasure is power
Sensually activated
Kundalini rise, chakra align, cosmic reboot
Butt fucking
Relearn sex as sacred]
Protect the faggot magic
Sex workers, magic makers, sex magic, sex liberators
Flaunt my sex in all directions. Call the corners
A gentle anarchy
The New World Disorder
Viral underclass
Sexual camaraderie.
Be loud and graceful.
Transmuting our fear
Throw off shame. Love my ass.
I am erotic space. Light hearted.
Shared experience, lived.
Faggots like me.
Reveal ancient memories
The water will wash away all that is outdated and not serving
Our future heart
Wet and willing
I am
Encouraged by the flooding of my soul and bloodstream
With this cosmic energy
Just remember and be earnest.
Love action.
Fluid flowing fun finally!

Time for transparency
Technician of the sacred
I refuse to accept your fear.
Banish shame, stigma, ignorance
Binding spell.
Love is not judgment
The bottom of the pyramid must become the top
Poz for pleasure, taking back the sacred masculine
IT'S A VIRUS, IT DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE
The truth of a body
I love AIDS
It is in sharing defiance that hope resides
I cum as rain against the destructive fire of our enmity:
extinguish our hostility
to self and other.
Squishy love.
The Human Illumination Virus
What orgasms aspire to be
Any place can be prison if you allow it.
My body was mine.
It started out as a biological weapon now it's a source of illumination
The migration of fluid of words (spoken and unspoken),
and actions between bodies.
Beautiful and fearless.
I am living.

Seed your soul
You are hiv positive.
Restore your sexual sovereignty

I refuse to succumb to this interdimensional virus of fear. Traversing the terrain of transparency, I am acting out with every beat of my heart. The fact that I am still alive is a protest and a celebration..



MASC 4 MASC: THE DENIAL OF FEMININITY IN THE GAY COMMUNITY

NATHAN CORNELL (GREENSBORO, NC)

Since years before the enforcing of the Hays Code - a set of movie production guidelines which forbade “any inference of sexual perversion” (i.e homosexuality) in film- feminine men or “sissies” have been an on-screen euphemism for gay characters; a trend which still persists in popular media and the minds of gay men and straight people alike. This now widely accepted notion of what “gay” is has created countless problems within the gay community.

While femininity is not necessarily rare in the gay community, it is beginning to be seen as a negative trait; men are plastering their profiles with phrases like “no fems” and “masc 4 masc”, and calling themselves “straight-acting” as if being heterosexual is the same as being manly, and therefore being gay is to be feminine. This kind of thinking is very dangerous in a community always pushing for unity and respect while breaking down binaries and stereotypes alongside the rest of the LGBT population. The growing divide between the masculine and feminine parts of the gay community, and the concept of “straight-passing privilege” (being seen as masculine enough to not be immediately assumed gay) have done nothing more than create a sort of improvised hierarchy within the community placing the manliest of the bunch at the top, the feminine members at the butt of every joke, and leaving those in the androgynous middle pressured to choose a side.

But the sissy stereotype and the masculine-feminine divide also affect the way the outside world sees our community.

I remember a day, about a year ago, in one of my junior year classes when we somehow stumbled onto the subject of homosexuality and gay students at our school and in our community. I remember how almost every student who would try to crack a joke would put on a limp wrist, a high voice, and a “sassy” tone to imitate what they perceived “gayness” to be, and, of course, everyone else would laugh and try their hand at the mockery. However when certain names would slip into the conversation, people wouldn’t think twice to shout out; “But they don’t act gay.” Now by this point I can’t help asking myself “what did they mean by that? He doesn’t like shopping? He doesn’t have a high voice? He doesn’t like glam pop? What on earth is acting gay?” Now, these months and months later, I know that the straight-person’s perceptions behind “acting gay” are as simple as “acting feminine”, and that while the traits I mentioned are neither good nor bad traits, the assumptions behind them, and the historical context of men acting feminine being hilarious on the basis of

being embarrassing, have driven many gay men to a point of adopting a hyper-masculine façade in order to escape the “sissy” image.

I can also recall a queer friend of mine watching another openly gay boy bounce from person to person through a room socializing in his normal manner, and my friend then remarking; “Gays like him are why we get made fun of.” This remark took me a hot minute to process. I just couldn’t understand how anyone in a community that faces enough hate already could attack one of his own. Just seeing this effeminate boy be himself - something we all want to be able to do comfortably - was enough to make this then-friend of mine upset enough to remark that the boys femininity was embarrassing to the whole community.

The growing distaste for the effeminate in our community is plaguing us and serves only to further divide and distress every member. If we truly wish to achieve the familial unity we crave, we have to rise above the misconceptions our heteronormative upbringings have instilled in us and realize that all portrayals of masculinity, femininity and any blend of the two are all perfectly valid manners of self-expression for a gay man to channel, and that denying another man’s expression of himself for the sake of easier coexistence with the straight world is not the way to go about reaching equality. Every gay man (and woman) deserves the right to express him or herself however he or she feels comfortable without any hate, especially none from within their own community.



DO YOU KNOW WHO THIS PERSON IS?

MICHAEL G. WILLIAMS (DURHAM, NC)

Those are the words my father spoke as he held up a copy of my hometown newspaper. It was early 1992 and I was a high school senior deep in enemy territory. My parents were fundamentalists. My sisters had moved on into their adult lives. My family's only friends were relatives and the people who went to their church, two circles nearly entirely overlapping on the Venn diagram. In many ways, we lived in a walled city and that day's paper had been an artillery shell sailing in.

No, I should back up. I'm making it sound like we lived in cult-like isolation and that isn't true. Well, it's mostly true, but it's more complicated than that. To paint the home my parents made for us in flatly negative rhetoric would be a terrible lie. I grew up happy. My parents weren't rich but we did more than okay. We certainly didn't lack for anything. My mother is a terrible spendthrift, something I certainly got honest, and so we usually had a bunch of nice stuff and zero money. We went to the beach every year, though we were routinely reminded the behaviors we observed were not the way people live if they love Jesus. We laughed all the time. My parents are loving people. My mother is of the old school of Southern charm, so she shoveled homemade biscuits down us and played just enough Pinochle to maintain her reputation as a small town card shark. My father has a dry, subtle wit and an air of quietly philosophizing. She likes Nicholas Sparks' books – I can't quite bring myself to call them novels – and he would read the telephone directory if it were written by John Grisham. If there's ever a film adaptation of a best-selling book about a lawyer who finds love where he least expects it while framed for a terrible crime, my parents will die of sheer unironic pleasure.

They encouraged my sisters and me to excel. They sent me to trumpet lessons because I thought trumpet players looked cool. When it turned out I was pretty good, they couldn't stop singing my praises. They pushed my sisters to advance their educations and to have careers – and to become wives and mothers. We were to go run around in the woods, to find things out for ourselves, to have secrets, to fall down, to get in trouble, to set ourselves challenges and conquer them.

We were never to take any ill treatment from another. My father's advice from early on was, never start a fight but always finish it. When I was very young, I busted a kid's lip because he kept calling me names. My mother bought me a Kit Kat bar as a reward. "Never let people push you around," she said to me.

“Always look out for Number One.”

My parents expected great things from us. It wasn't the same as being pressured: not exactly. Our parents made it clear they loved us, and had confidence in us, and that we would prove ourselves worthy. Anything less than an exuberant effort was considered wasted potential, explicitly a sin. We were expected to assert ourselves over the various domains of our lives, to be the winners. It was our world, and everyone else was just living in it. I was to bust that kid's lip if he mouthed off too many times.

The world was our oyster but we were confined to its shell. I grew up in the mountains, where Asheville was considered the big city: unsafe, with sidewalks and buses and too much traffic and people with crazy ideas. Every danger imaginable lurked beyond our rural hamlet's borders and those hobgoblins of fear multiplied with every season. My mother warned me I should never use my car's horn because someone might get the road rage and shoot me. When a cousin – not by blood my mother is always quick to say – had a mental breakdown and went on a rampage my father sat up all night in the dark with a loaded rifle across his lap and a wad of Red Man chewing tobacco in his cheek. “I reckon if a tree branch had moved,” he said to me, “I'd have shot out the window to get it.” We had strict curfews. They waited up for us. I was not given my own keys to the house until I was sixteen. I was expected to conquer yonder hill, yes, but I was to stay a little bit dependent and a little bit afraid.

So there my mother and father were, working like mad to build around us a wall of comfort and support, digging a deep moat of fundamentalist faith, and trying like hell to keep us inside. They had been over that wall before – had lived elsewhere, had seen some of the world – and they regarded it with deep suspicion. The other side of the wall was full of the singing of sirens.

I never had a problem trying to live up to my parents' expectations. I bought the whole anything-less-than-100%-is-a-sin thing hook, line, and sinker. I was no good at sports, but I was great at music. I got fantastic grades. I blew the tops off the new standardized tests. Enthusiasm was easy and my parents rewarded it with constant praise. My problem was, I never got the whole “a little bit afraid” thing. Oh, I felt afraid, yes, I just never made peace with it. My reflex reaction to fear had been observed – and rewarded – early. Whenever I felt threatened, I tried to appease whoever threatened me. When that didn't work I would bust that threat's lip wide open.

I knew I was queer from early on. I also knew being queer in that place, with those people, was forbidden. Other people could tell it about me. There's a difference between hateful and unobservant. I tried to make up for being gay by being exceptional in every other regard and, frankly, most of the time I succeeded. When that didn't work, when my parents or their religion tried to make me feel bad about it, they sparked a flame of righteous indignation and curiosity. In 7th grade I found out I was not the only boy in the world who liked other boys (and will thus forever be indebted to '80s talk show host Phil



Donahue). In 8th grade – 1987 – I found out I wasn't even the only one at my school when a boy came out and wound up being run out of town, followed by another in 10th grade and another in 11th. I was under constant suspicion as one of the likely gays of my school but that cover of being good at things – my suit of armor crafted from blue ribbons – was enough to keep me from getting my ass kicked.

I had many amazing experiences in my pursuit of being too good to judge but it was extraordinarily taxing. By the time my senior year rolled around I was a jumble of anger and absolute certainty in my own rightness. I despised the anti-intellectualism of my town. I loathed the chosen ignorance, the fashionable public performances of racism and misogyny and homophobia. I hated the haters. I wanted to force the people around me to feel bad about the way they had made me feel bad.

My choices were limited, though. Conformity and self-imposed censorship are symptoms of the enforced détente we call “politeness” and my sleepy little mountain home placed an immeasurable premium on politeness. I had ACT UP sensibilities but I lived in an HRC town. I did what I could, but all my snark, all my sarcasm, all my quiet reading of utopian science fiction about diverse populations, all my furtive glances, all my unsuccessful cruising, all my lurking in the shadows of a queer subculture concealed just out of sight around me: they felt great and they changed me but I was not changing the world. My isolated acts of verbal and sexual rebellion were pebbles cast at oceans: tiny ripples that would never disrupt society's waves.

So I began to think of the entrenched homophobia around me as a domain to conquer, another challenge to overcome by creative means. I'd been trained for that from birth.

My senior year I let one of my oldest and closest friends interview me about being gay in our town. It was printed in our local newspaper, which set aside one section for local journalism students every week. When it was Stephanie's turn, I was her story. She published it using a pseudonym for me, of course, and she lied and told everyone the “David” whom she interviewed went to a school other than ours, but she ran all of her questions and all of my answers verbatim. That was my anger on the page. Those were my words.

Those were my word choices, my turns of phrase.

One of my sisters read the interview the morning it was printed, called the other of our sisters, and said, “Have you read the paper? Do you know who that is? That's Michael.” They both recognized me. She said she couldn't help hearing it in my voice.

That afternoon my father called me into the kitchen, sat me down, held up the newspaper to that page and said, “Do you know who this person is?”

“Me?” I asked. There was a long moment, a second that stretched interminably before us. Cracks in the earth’s mantle between us – the normal tensions and stresses of parents and child – puffed dust into the air and expanded into chasms with no end to their depths. The look on my father’s face – a pinch of Red Man held halfway to his mouth – was too much. I couldn’t do it. Years of seething against their religion and against the town where we lived and the people and the chortling, pig-faced, genetic anemia, and I couldn’t do it.

I didn’t have the guts. He was my father and I had always tried to overcome his prejudice by excelling, not by rebellion. Oh, I rebelled – I had defied countless teachers, gotten substitutes fired, had my way – but I couldn’t rebel against him. I could only try to impress.

“No,” I said, as though still finishing my thought, “I don’t know who that is.”

I watched my father take a long breath. My mother slowly returned to whatever she was doing. We were quiet for a long time.

“Well,” my father said, “You should stay away from him, whoever he is.”

There were angry letters to the editor. A teacher I had previously idolized made explicit and deeply insulting jokes about “David” and then looked me right in the eye while the other kids laughed. We never spoke directly to one another again. Other queer kids called Stephanie and asked if they could talk to me, and so I met my first boyfriend. Through calls to Stephanie and letters to the newspaper I got offers of friendly advice, of shoulders to cry on, of prayers for my soul, of people who wanted to cast out the demon of homosexuality. I called an evangelist who did a Sunday morning hellfire and brimstone routine on the local channel. I told him he would be in Hell before I would, but I did it from a payphone outside of town.

That summer my parents forbade me getting a job waiting tables because, as my father put it, “Ninety percent of the men in that industry are queer as a three-dollar bill.” It was the first time I heard that phrase.

For years I looked back with shame on that day. My upbringing convinced me I could meet any challenge, overcome any test. I often felt I had committed something like a sin when, at 17, I could not conquer my own family, my parents’ home.

I became an activist. I liberated myself from my parents’ religion and rejected the concept of “sin” even as I lobbied higher-ups in their church on behalf of the queer youth in their congregations. I was a writer for *The Lambda*, UNC’s queer monthly magazine. I went to Pride when it was a march, not a parade. I volunteered as a “peacekeeper” for those marches, which meant I wore a special shirt and essentially volunteered to be the first one beaten up. I ran for Student Congress as openly gay. I was in the cabinets of multiple Student Body Presidents. I stood in The Pit and argued the Bible with traveling preachers. I



came out swinging every chance I got. I went in search of the straight world's lip and I tried to bust it.
I got a job waiting tables.

I wore a tee shirt to Thanksgiving with a three-dollar bill on the chest – but I wore another shirt buttoned over it.

Of course I eventually came out. I came out repeatedly, in fact, as my parents had a gift for pretending previous comings out had never happened. Those cracks between us that showed in the space between “me?” and “no” on that winter afternoon widened over time into real problems. By the time I was 30 we were speaking maybe every six months and only long enough for them to ask about religion or to ignore my boyfriend's name, and then we were done again until the next major food holiday.

We patched things up eventually, but in the grand Southern tradition of never talking about what was being patched up. My sister graduated from college in her 40's. My parents had to meet my boyfriend and be polite because it was my sister's big day and they couldn't make a scene. It turned out everyone was fine with everyone. Now they're back to singing my praises for every little thing. I'm a distance runner and they constantly ask about my next race. “I tell everyone who'll listen,” my father says, “Just how proud I am of what you do.”

My parents never again mentioned that newspaper interview and I have not gone out of my way to tell them what they already know: that it was me, that those were my words, that everyone who read it heard them spoken in my voice. When I was a teenager I did not have the guts to rebel against my parents – not directly, not that moment of that day – and as an adult I don't feel the need. The world has moved on without them. They still toil to keep out the hobgoblins of fear, most of whom it turned out were simply agents of progress. Instead of making me angry it makes me feel pity for them. My parents huddle behind sandbags filled with Fox News. The less they like the world around them, the deeper they retreat into fundamentalism. When I was young I thought I needed to fix that in them. Now I realize I just need them to respect that I am not, at least in that specific way, broken by virtue of being different. Now they treat me with respect. They stopped asking about religion. If they fail to rise to the challenge of the world – or me – being different from what they hoped, well, that's their wasted potential, not mine.

My mother once told me, years later, they knew I was gay when I was eleven. They knew before I did. I thought she was going to apologize for all the anti-queer prejudice they doled out, but no, and I've never asked them to do so. What would be the point? Maybe that I'm writing this means I should ask them. Maybe it means I do still need to conquer that final domain.

Or maybe the challenge set before me, the test I'm trying to overcome, is to look forward rather than back. It isn't that I failed to rebel against my parents when my big chance presented itself. I did rebel: by going to school where I wanted,

by doing what I wanted, by getting that job waiting tables. I acted out, but I did it by acting instead of reacting. My parents tried to carve out a niche in the chaos of the world and retreat into it and I have rejected that. Instead, I have carved my initials into the bark of this hateful, frightening, intolerant and unjust world wherever and whenever I have the chance.

Twenty years later it's my world. They're just living in it.

RETITLED

PETER MUNIZ JR. (GREENSBORO, NC)

What is it about love that we crave so much?

Now I know this is a kind of a cliché question to start off with but it still has yet to be answered.

Is it the look in another person's eyes when they look at you that absolutely melts your heart?

Or is it that they are the person always there for you when you need someone the most?

Is it both?

I suppose it could be.

I think that the most important reason we crave love is that it makes you feel special.

It makes you feel special knowing that you are always one's mind.

It makes you feel special knowing you have someone to come home to after work.

It makes you feel special when they text you in the middle of the day simply because they miss you.

It may seem like its always about you, you, you
but it's not.

You give someone the comfort knowing that you feel the same as they do.

You send them the "I miss you" in the middle of the day.

You listen to their ranting about work when they get home.

You always have them on your mind.

You are the person that makes them feel special.



NAKED

LEILA JINNAH (NEW YORK, NY)

The building of an identity is fundamentally internal, but in order to express this it becomes a practice of external presentation. A person's relationship to how they present themselves is a visual cultivation of both an intra and interpersonal dialogue. The self-perception made evident in choice of presentation, along with external social expectation or values compiles a visual identity of an individual. The concealing and revealing oneself, both physically and mentally, cannot be separated. This is part of the human experience. It is complex relationship that is expressed differently from person to person. To embrace oneself is a difficult task as humans are not simple creatures. Understanding of the multidimensional self can only begin to be explored once one acknowledges that full comprehension may never occur without contradiction or tension. How one uses the medium of dress is a visual representation of this self-understanding presented through aesthetic choice, conscious or unconscious. This is the dialogue that so inspires me.

Marcel Duchamp posed for Manray as Rose Selavy, his drag identity. In one image, he conceals his masculine bone structure, embodying the "feminine" image. In the next, he is still dressed as Rose, only he does not conceal his strong jaw, and bulging chin, blurring the boundaries of masculine and feminine, revealing and concealing his physical self. These images showed me that one could completely reveal their gender while simultaneously questioning its validity as a sole identity.

To represent this dialogue of the intimacy in constructing self-identity, I started taking intimate objects and moving them to the surface. This enables them to stand as garments on their own. In doing this research, the thong jumped out as an object that embodies this idea of concealing and revealing in a physical way. It was worn to conceal a stripper's genitals out of respect for guests in the 1930s, and became a highly sexualized object as it was consumed by western culture. It covers and suggests. I used this shape, and removed it from its familiar context, draping it to have the same function in relation to the entire body. The shape lends itself to covering and exposing.

To take this idea of bringing physical vulnerabilities to the exterior even further, the body itself needed to be emphasized. I painted both male and female bodies to create an imprint of the body on the fabric, translating a gendered body to a neutral canvas-like surface.

By creating these layers of body, body representation, and thong shaped garments, the wearer is allowed to choose the way they represent themselves. The wearer can interact with the clothing choosing to be male or female, naked or covered, but always carries the same mood and aesthetic. Embracing the beauty of the body, yet not forcing it to become a specific identity is the overall function of this collection. The building of these layers is where identity is formed, yet constantly subject to change. This is how I act out.



1

2

3

4

5

6

~~Naked~~

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leila jinnah

leilajinnah.com

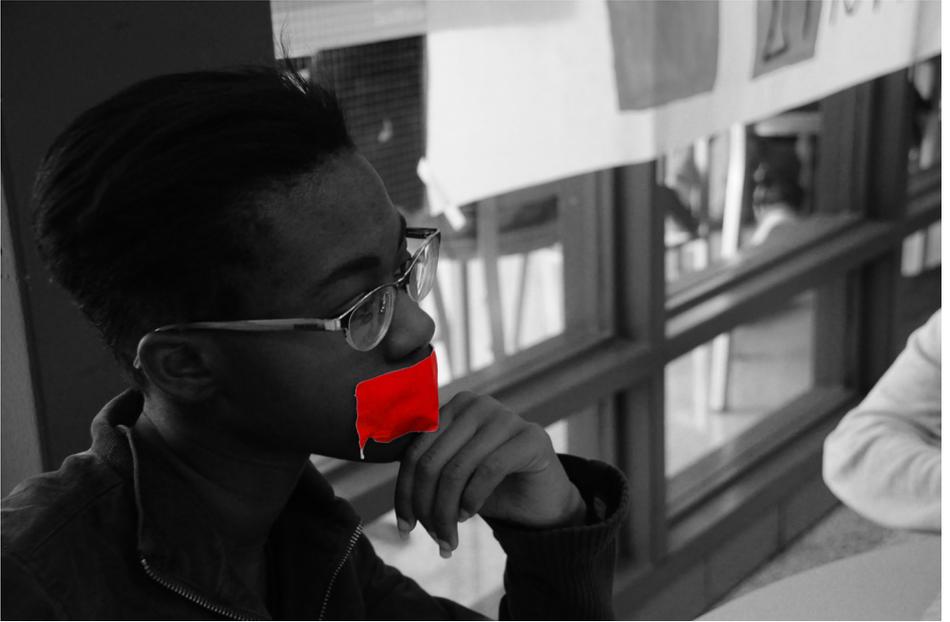
Leila Jinnah (New York, NY)

Naked

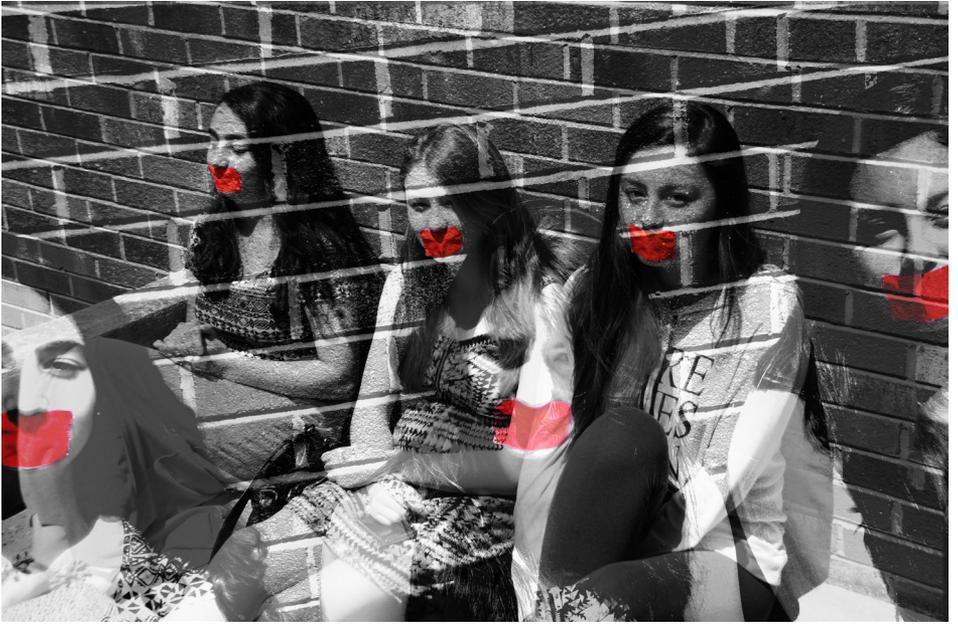
Leila Jinnah (New York, NY)
Naked







Taylor Davis (Winston-Salem, NC)
Day of Silence



A gate is like a door. It is part of a fence or wall. A gate opens and closes.



and-white
a pepperc
door down
front room
Jem was in
Miss Carole
said, "This
North Alab
mured
share
(When
1861, V
child in
full of Liquo
publicans, pr
ground.
Miss Caroline
about cats. The
other, they wore
warm house ben
Cat called the d
mice the class
worms. Miss
denim-shirted
whom had c
they were a
erature. Mi
said, "Oh,
Then she
bet in enorm
asked, "Doe
Everybody
last year.
I suppose she
I read the alpha
brows, and after
Reader and the sto
Register aloud, she
looked at me with more th
told me to tell my father no
would interfere with my reading.
"Teach me?" I said in surprise.
anything, Miss Caroline. Atticus ain



Helen is opening the gate.

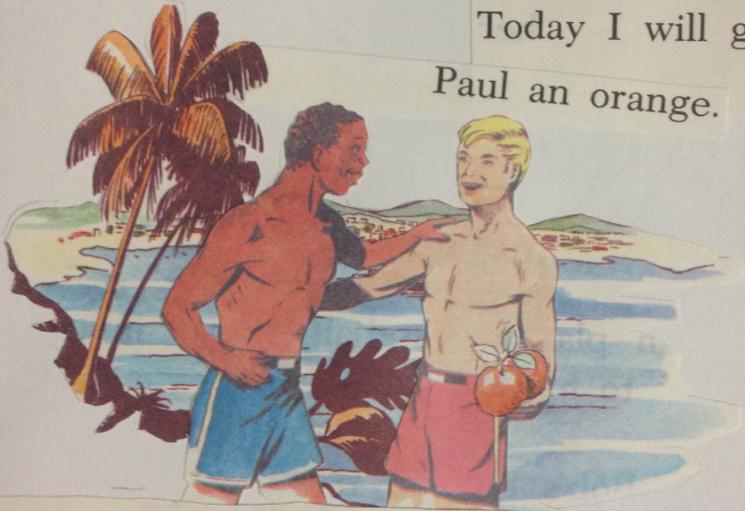
gate

Michael Elizabeth Johnson
Gate (left) Gave (right)

gave

Yesterday Paul gave me a banana.

Today I will give
Paul an orange.



There are many kinds of fruit.

SELF-PRESERVATION
LYDIA GRACE HENDERSON 04/15

About Protest Love In Act

Love In Action is a Christian organization that aims to "cure" LGBT people through harmful shame tactics all in the name of God. They have recently opened a youth chapter in our area. It is easy to see how problematic this is. These children may be being forced into these programs by their families (since children legally have few rights & legal guardians make all the decisions).

Join us in protest @ the



Finding freedom in Jesus Christ.

HOME
WHAT WE ARE ABOUT
HOW WE CAN HELP

CALENDAR
SUPPORT US
GET IN TOUCH

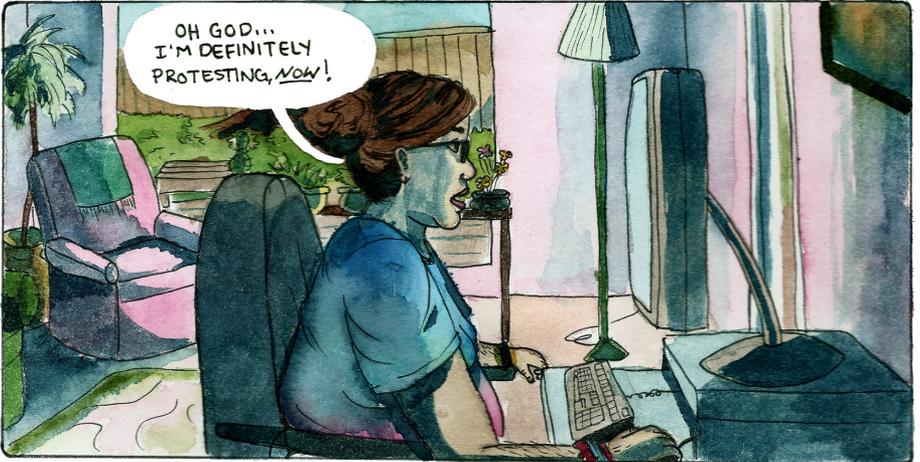


... SHIT... DID MOM AND DAD PLAN TO SEND ME TO THIS PLACE ???

Refuge

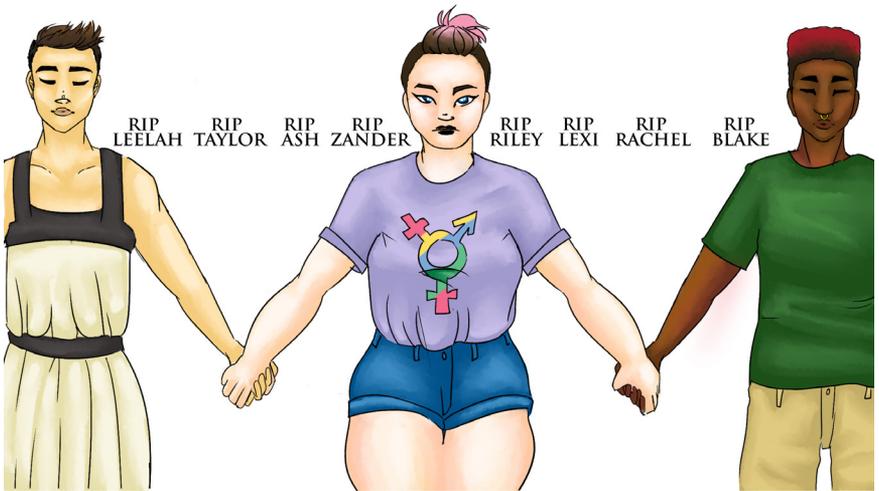
Love In Action International exists on a beautiful 5 acre "park like" setting on the northern edge of M... area called Raleigh. We have 19,000 square feet of space in three buildings, the grounds we have prayer gardens, hundreds of beautiful trees, two peaceful reflective chapels, and a baseball field located just one and one half miles north of I-40 and conveniently located for my travel.

Refuge is an intensive program designed to minister to adolescents struggling with brokenness such as promiscuity and **homosexuality**.



Lydia Henderson (Nashville, TN)
Self-Preservation





Virginia Walker (Alexandria, VA)

Maria De Guzman (Chapel Hill, NC)
Awash in Oil or Fossil Fuel Investments (top), Cargo of History or Scream in the Night (middle), Caught in a Shower of Light (bottom)





Carmelo Cruz (West Palm Beach, FL)
Selected Works





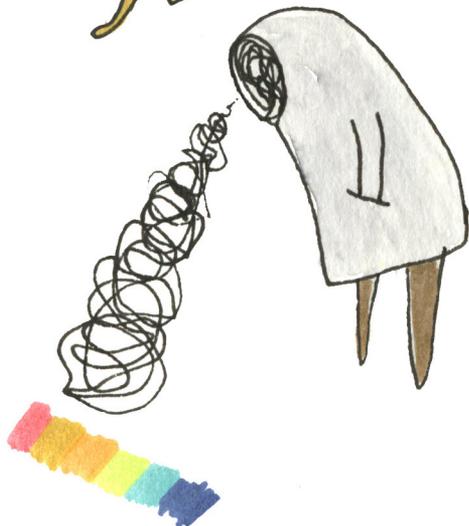
Allison Daniel (Greensboro, NC)
Este no es un cepillo de dientes



Marlow Col

Marlow Col (France)

SLUMP!



Christopher Kennedy (Brooklyn, NY)
Slump!

ARE YOU IN A SLUMP?

CHRISTOPHER KENNEDY (NEW YORK, NY)

I spend a lot of time thinking about how my body takes up space. On my way to work, on the subway, when I'm in line ordering a burrito. From the way I stand and the way I walk, to eye contact and the gesture of my hands.

Over time I've noticed an almost unconscious desire to reduce the amount of space my body occupies. It starts with a slump of the shoulders, and then my head moves toward the ground and I begin to place my hands inside of pockets. It's easier with a scarf or hood because it also helps to avoid eye contact with any agro straight men. And before you know it, my entire body is slumped over like a hunchback.

I don't know. Maybe I just need to do more yoga, or see a chiropractor, or listen to some motivational mixtape. Maybe it's just how my body is. Maybe it's a fear of being outed, of having to recognize and defend my "queerness" even if I'm just walking down the street. Maybe I have a chemical imbalance, or a lingering social anxiety from some internalized childhood trauma. Maybe I should go see a therapist or get one of those ergonomically correct chairs?

As a kid I learned early on that the way I spoke, the way I walked and acted was far too feminine for most to accept as "ordinary." And so almost daily I was harassed at school - called a sissy, gayboy, fag, rainbow, a girl, pussy and more. I usually sat in the corner and pretended to read. I ate my lunch in a bathroom stall, and hid in an abandoned locker room during gym class. To cope I removed as much of my body to avoid any kind of harassment. While this is something many experience, I realized that I continued to move in this way throughout adolescence and into adulthood even within spaces I knew to be safe or affirming.

As a grad student I discovered the works of Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, Stephanie Springgay, Elizabeth Ellsworth and others. The idea that we perform our "self" and that this self is performed in turn by others was revolutionary to me. I began to think about the performativity of the body as a kind of "inter-embodiment" of the everyday. Our unconscious desires and socio-cultural forces shaping, twisting, negotiating how we enact this self and how we move in turn. I think about this like a quilted network of threads, pulling and tugging, worn through and through. Theoretically this made sense, yet in practice I still find myself grasping for a way to understand what my friend Athena likes to call a "choreographic problem."

But what if this "spinal slump" isn't just a problem? Maybe it's also an opportunity. A chance to create both a real and conceptual dance; an internal dance with the self and a public dance with the other. Or maybe a score or "dance-map" based on gestures that bring attention to the physical form and experience of queer embodiment? Maybe a kind of movement-research to physically explore the tension and anxiety from years worth of slumping?

To tell you the truth, I don't really know. It's still a daily struggle to figure



out what to wear each day, and how to act, and be in the world. But I will say for all those suffering from “spinal slump,” I feel you. Believe me, I feel you. And somehow, somewhere I know I can hear Oprah whispering: “GET THAT HEAD UP. GET THOSE SHOULDERS BACK. YOU ARE A PERSON IN THE WORLD AND YOU ARE FUCKING AMAZING. THIS IS YOUR BEST DAY!”

I mean you can’t say no to Oprah. So next time you see me slumping on the streets, maybe we can slump and dance together. Until then, I’ll be working on my upward facing dog.

UNTITLED

ANONYMOUS

trigger warning: suicide, depression.

I had my right hand on the steering wheel while my left had just laid next to my side. I could feel the right side of my car driving off the pavement. I could hear the rocks hitting the side and the tires running off the pavement making loud sounds. I saw the empty farms and to my right and then trees, big trees. I had my mind set that I was going to drive my car right into those trees and possibly putting an end to all my worry and pain. I couldn’t bring myself to do it. Instead I yanked the steering wheel to the left, getting the car back on the road. I started to question myself and my state of mind to what I really wanted to do.

As a teenager, I’ve gathered a couple speeding tickets and everyone always told me that “One decision could change my whole life” and they had no idea how much I knew that. I had the decision of whether I wanted to erase myself from the world or fight through battles I thought I couldn’t get pass. My best friend told me that sticking around and difficult times in our life are the times that make us stronger and I couldn’t decide if I wanted to believe her or not. I ended up taking her advice and I’m pretty sure I made the right decision to stick around. There are times that I wish I could go back to that time in the car on that gloomy day and change my decision but now, at least, I see that I can possibly move on and fight though the battles that I thought I would lose to.

FAMILY FEARS

SEAN TRULL (GREENSBORO, NC)

Personally, I struggle with acting out. Not because I'm uncomfortable, or because I'm in any physical danger, but because I'm afraid of judgment. Even when I know that yes, now I need to act out, now is when it's okay to do something about it, I just can't. There's always that fear that one day, because I stood up for myself, I'm going to have to deal with it coming back to bite me in the ass. When someone repeatedly uses an incorrect pronoun I really do want to say something, but it's so much easier just to ignore it, even though it feels so much worse. I like standing up for other people, I can do that, and I just can't seem to stand up for myself. My goal is to be able to act out, to stand up for myself, even to the more unaccepting parts of my family. I remind myself every day that I'm strong enough for this I can stand up for myself and tell them all that this is it This is who I am and that's okay, that's fine with me I could care less about anything that you think Granted, I'm still terrified, when someone says my name My birth one, not my real one, the one I really hate And there are some people I can face and say "It's he, not she" But some that I'm just too afraid, even though I shouldn't be Especially my grandmother, my dad's side, not my mom Conservative right wing woman, strict, the kind who knows each psalm Coated in honey and kind intentions but really just wants perfection Gets you alone so you can "talk" determined to win by attrition I couldn't tell you why I'm scared, but I'm terrified of her She symbolizes someone who could never call me sir Always "ma'am" and dresses and skirts and hips and "but you're so pretty" Well pretty means nothing but shit when you're me, I would rather be filthy Months weeks days before, I resolve myself to correct and remind But the second she saunters her way over here, my resolve weakens and I am resigned To listen and flinch every time she says she, or her, or anything else about me That's false and untrue and it's more than annoyance I know, I KNOW that she sees "It doesn't make sense" She says over and over, "You are a girl, as you're born you will stay" I just can't convince her that I am a boy; to her it seems to be only that way So silence will reign when it's my turn to speak, Even though I know I should speak up And the day that I stand and we see eye to eye will be the day that I've had enough



RESTLESS THOUGHTS

WALT RAKESTRAW (GREENSBORO,NC)

Love is very strange,
If you search,
You can't find it,
If you leave it be,
It will find you,
Everyone wants "Love,"
And everyone expects others to find "Love,"
It's a way of life,
But my question is why do we limit love?
Why do we set standards for something that is unmeasurable?
It's inevitable,
Everyone will experience love,
But some will be shunned because of it,
Some people will kill others when they experience an emotion that is not exactly
how they believe it should be,
I just cannot wrap my head around the thought of someone thinking that another
human being does not deserve love,
Respect,
Attention,
Or even life just because they want something that everyone else wants,
But in a slightly different way,
We were not all made from a cookie cutter,
We do not all think the same,
We all experience the world in a different way,
So let me be happy,
Let love creep into my heart the way it wants to,
Let me be different from you,
Because if you want me to be just like you,
If you want everyone to be just like you,
The world won't make it another day.

TOXIC MASCULINITY BLUES

BEN FISHER (GREENSBORO, NC)

No fats
No femmes
Masculinity above all else
I remember him saying,
“I want to date a man.
I have no respect for drag queens.”
Let’s be clear
The sissies and the fairies
Are the ones being beaten down
Down in the streets
These are the brave ones
Your toned Planet Fitness body
Might be delectable
You might not sashay
Like the queer coquettes
But this won’t save you
It won’t endear you
To the folks who believe
That your identity is a fad, a trend, a lifestyle
Passing for straight is a farce
Invisibility is not liberating
We the queers
We believe we are more highly evolved
But we absorb and inculcate
Norms, binaries, conventions
As readily as any other
Heed Jimmy Baldwin’s warning:
“It took many years of vomiting up all the filth
I’d been taught about myself, and half-believed,
before I was able to walk
on the Earth as though
I had the right to be here.”
Will we vomit or will we simply regurgitate...
All of the filth
That causes us shame
That tells us to hate “fat” bodies
To hate femininity
Don’t all of us have a right to be here?



1966: Vanguard, a group made up of queer and trans youth, pickets San Francisco’s Evan Compton’s Cafeteria due to their mistreatment of transgender patrons.

ACT OUT! / 39

THE PERFECT IMPERFECT LOVE

ANONYMOUS

One looks upon the rose
And cannot but help
To admire it's beauty

And one cannot help
But to want that rose
To pick and cherish it

Not a soul in the world
Would not love to have
A rose of its own

No soul in history has
Gazed upon it and said
It is not a glorious thing of red

It's beauty praised
Throughout the world
The symbol of true love

It is undeniable
How brilliant it is
To have to admire

Clip off a rose's thorns
To smooth it out
Shaping it how they please

To hold, and to adore
Not problematic in the least
At least, without its thorns

But should it come
With those thorns still there
Most admirers turn away

Not worth the pricks
Not flawless enough
To warrant the trouble they say

Yet a rose is not a rose
Without those difficult thorns
That scare the others away

And the blood red flower
Appreciated so much more
When it has the thorns

Because the thorns are a test
And the flower the reward
Which make the thorns worthwhile

I would have no rose
But one with thorns
And I'd adore every single one

Because the Rose is worth it
And the thorns precious as well
Because they're each part of the rose

I would take up that rose
Any day, thorns and all
And love it with all my heart

And even as that rose
Wilts with time
As its beauty fades away

It still would be worth
Bearing every single thorn
Up to its very last day

Time may take its toll
But my rose I will still adore
Until either that rose is gone

Until either that rose is gone
Shriveled back into dust
Or until I pass away

And no matter which
I will have been glad
I had that rose along the way.



WILL “BETTER” EVER BE GOOD ENOUGH?

GUIDO VILLALBA-PORTEL (GREENSBORO, NC)

Toward the end of my senior year of high school, my guidance counselor approached me and tried to get me involved in a video which passed on the famous “It Gets Better” message to inspire hope in LGBTQ+ youth. How dare he ask me to do that when I was still throat deep in the closet? Didn’t he know that if I participated everyone would end the rumors about me and crown me the queen I was too afraid to be? Sure, looking back at these questions now, it seems hella senseless that I cared so much regarding what people thought of me. Despite the inane importance of my “reputation,” I had copious doubts about it getting better. The more I thought about it, the more a question surfaced in my mind: How was I supposed to relay a message I didn’t know to be true?

I went on to ignore Mr. Wall; shortly thereafter I graduated high school. In turn, I began taking baby steps out of the closet by telling my closest friends, parents, and brother. Unsurprisingly, they rolled their eyes and sighed, “Tell me something I don’t know.” It took a couple years, but I began accepting the new life outside the captive glass closet I was accustomed to. I left Winston-Salem and traveled as far away from that closet as I could; confidence and pride worked themselves into my life after what seemed like eternity.

As an undocumented queer, my whole adolescence was lived through four separate perspectives. In one, I insisted in leading the quintessential heteronormative lifestyle, and in the next one, I secretly watched Project Runway and read my mom’s Elle magazines after the lights went out (huge shoutout to the September 2007 issue with SJP on the cover!). I also portrayed myself as an American without impediments due to a broken immigration system, and finally I was a proud Argentine with strong Latin-American roots y todo. Yes, I still struggle with this. Yes, the silly-ass shame I felt early in my life has shaped me into the person I am today. Minor psychological consequences and all, I wouldn’t change my experiences for the world.

In 2013, Greensboro (thirty minutes from aforementioned shattered closet remains) became my home and my closet afterlife commenced. Even with all the fratstars at the bars staring and casting shade at my sartorial choices or friends and family asking, “Guido, what the hell are you wearing,” I was ecstatic to perpetually fly my freak flag. I knew that if others saw how comfortable I was in my own skin, they would surely follow suit. There was no doubt that life got better with a capital B after all the suffering. If there’s rain, eventually the sun will come out, right? Makes sense. Suddenly, I began exploring the boundaries of my new queer life and sharing experiences with others which opened my eyes to the blatant homophobia, racism, classism, and misogyny that doesn’t just live in the south. Money, companionship, and all the trivial worries began to matter

less as I processed my observations and began asking myself, “Is ‘better’ really good enough for me?” Most importantly, “Is ‘better’ good enough for anyone?”

No matter how satisfied we are on our journeys, we must fight. It is our duty to fight. We must educate everyone we cross paths with on LGBTQ+ literacy (and these terms keep evolving everyday, y’all, trust). Our comfortable, capitalist American society is and will always continue to erode minorities’ equality and liberation in order to reinforce their white supremacy mountain, whether its meant to be climbed or not. Without a doubt, most people mean no harm with society’s misogyny at the source of our homophobia, but it’s damn near time to start challenging our conditioned beliefs. Silence is just as dangerous as consent.

Not too long ago, a Guatemalan, undocumented, trans woman was seeking asylum in an ICE detention center in Florence, Arizona where she hid from sexual and verbal abuse from all the male detainees and ICE staff. Not too long ago, a trans man committed suicide after winning prom king at UNCC and inheriting all the unsolicited harassment that came with it. Not too long ago, the state of Indiana signed into law the Religious Freedom Restoration Act which at its birth gave the right to deny someone business based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Today, many Republicans want the 2016 Presidential candidates’ promises to uphold the similar, controversial Religious Freedom Acts in certain states. Today, if you happen to go on Grindr or any other online forum with personal ads, you’ll see “Masc 4 Masc” or “No Femmes” posted all over. Today at work, I witnessed everyone pointing and making fun of a trans woman who only asked for a sweet tea and a turkey sandwich for lunch. Misogyny runs rampant in 2015, and what’s more ridiculous is that some halfwit came up with the word “Meninism.”

For the transgender population it doesn’t get better and their futures are just as bleak as their life expectancy. Too blunt? Not blunt enough. Just like “It Gets Better” wasn’t enough for Blake Brockington, Penny Proud, Lamia Beard, Ty Underwood, Yazmin Vash Payne, or Taja DeJesus to name a few of the 2015 casualties (all who just happen to be black or latina... what a coinckyding!). Let’s stop covering this up and try to raise that global life expectancy higher than twenty-three.* Black trans women, like Angel Elisha Walker, disappear everyday and the mass media doesn’t say a word. It’s funny to me how Jenner is still being talked about when the real issues aren’t, and people still don’t even try using our preferred pronouns. It doesn’t take much to do better than rock bottom, so why not stop the game of deception? Better doesn’t suffice; we need to bring these facts to light and into every space we sashay in.

It is our duty to free all trans women seeking asylum like Nicoll Hernandez-Polanco, to remember all of our fallen sisters and brothers, and to speak up and educate when we see discrimination of any kind. Especially if any of those targeted stand under our umbrella-term of a family. Our generation is opening doors left and right, but we cannot forget about those behind us. This is our movement and it is our duty to make all of our lifestyles part of the status quo. I hope this message resonates with you as you digest our content. It is our duty to act out.

*https://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/spade_3_1_11/



QUEERLAB RESOURCES

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Planned Parenthood - www.plannedparenthood.org

Positive Wellness Alliance - www.positivewellnessalliance.org

STI Testing - www.youthaidscoalition.org/std-testing-in-greensboro-nc.html

Triad Health Project - www.triadhealthproject.com

Yoga for Queers & Misfits - durhambodyworkandyoga.wordpress.com/yoga/yoga-for-queers-in-gso

COMMUNITY

Bayard Rustin Center at Guilford College -

<http://www.guilford.edu/academics/multicultural-ed/bayard-rustin-center/>

Elon University Spectrum & LGBT Alumni Network group -

<http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/lgbtq>

Equality NC - www.equalitync.org

Guilford College Pride - www.guilfordpride.tumblr.com

Guilford Green Foundation - www.ggfnc.org

InSIDEout (Durham) - www.insideout180.org

LGBT Center of Raleigh - www.lgbtcenterofraleigh.com

NC A&T PROUD - facebook.com/PROUDNCAT

NCCJ of the Triad - www.nccjtriad.org

PFLAG - www.pflaggreensboro.org

Queer People of Color Collective - <https://www.facebook.com/MSUQPOCC>

Safe Schools NC - www.safeschoolsnc.com

Southerners On New Ground - www.southernersonnewground.org

SPARK (Atlanta) - www.sparkrj.org

The Point Foundation (LGBTQ Student Scholarships) - pointfoundation.org

Time Out Youth (Charlotte) - www.timeoutyouth.org

UNCG Pride - www.facebook.com/UNCGPRIDE

Youth OUTRight (Asheville) - www.youthoutright.org

YouthSAFE - www.gsafe.org/YouthSafe

