DECEMBER

QYA ZINE

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"Moments to Live For"

"Representation"

Cover art by Savanah, pg. 10

Dear reader,
Welcome to the third edition of the Queer Youth Assemble monthly zine. Inside, you will find beautiful pieces of art, writing, and poetry created by Queer Youth Assemble members. The content within this zine varies greatly from one piece to the next, highlighting various elements, themes, perspectives, and our creators' lived experiences. We acknowledge the intersecting elements found within the content of this zine, and encourage you to read with both compassion and understanding.

Due to our strong belief in uncensored creativity, we decided to not put content limits on our creators for this publication. However, we understand that some of the content within this zine may be triggering to some readers. In this and future QYA zines, a list of specific triggers can be found at the top of each page, and any potentially triggering themes can be found at the beginning of each zine. Potentially triggering themes in this issue include transphobia, suicide, and trans death. If you find yourself struggling after reading, we encourage you to reach out for support.

We hope you enjoy this publication, and are inspired to create whatever your heart desires.

With love and care,

Esmée Silverman (she/her)
Queer Youth Assemble Co-Founder

Alice Mead (they/them)
Queer Youth Assemble Writing Team Lead

WHAT IS QYA?

Queer Youth Assemble is a non-profit youth-led organization dedicated to serving queer youth across the United States and its territories. We are committed to nurturing the joy, interests, and talents of queer youth, and giving queer youth the resources and support to create positive change within their communities. We envision a day where all queer youth are happy, supported, and able to reach their fullest potential.

REPRESENTATION

by Jasper W.

TW: transphobia

Trans people have existed since the beginning of time. Even if our existence has been denied for centuries, we still remain. Today, some people's reactions to seeing a trans person is to laugh or feel sick and disgusted. In some of the first films, there were men in dresses mocking the idea of a man dressing like a woman. We were always the joke and what made the film a comedy. In the 1910s, actors like Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel would dress as women; even the Three Stooges took part in this. It became a normal thing for films to have the comedic punch-line be a crossdresser. This has impacted how people think of those who actually do things like drag or identify as transgender.

In 1952, the story of an "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty" had become headlines. Christine Jorgensen was a military soldier who had undergone one of the first successful sex-change surgeries. All she wanted after her surgery was to live a quiet life, but the media had other plans. She became known as the first openly transgender person, although this wasn't exactly true. Many cultures have embraced and included trans people for many years. During the early 1900s many trans women, like Lili Elbe, were the first to receive a gender reassignment surgery. Christine had one of the first successful outcomes of this surgery, which set a model for all transgender women after her. She faced many roadblocks, including not being able to change sex markers on her birth certificate and other official documents.

In the 1960s, a new transgender trope had been brought to light, the psychotic-killer stereotype. This stereotype was seen in films like Psycho, the film of a crossdressing man named Norman Bates. This tremendously damaged the trans image. This movie is one of the most popular out of this genre, and the writer even stated that "gender non-conformity is frightening and unnatural." Psycho was the first of many movies that painted their villain to be a "mentally-ill" killer. Movies like Dressed to Kill, Silence of the Lambs, and Cherry Falls set the examples of transgender people. These were horrible interpretations and only made the image of trans people more negative. For years people believed that transgenderism was a mental disorder or a result of childhood trauma. This has enforced a harmful stereotype that it's unnatural to be transgender or that it's just all in their head. Additionally, this stereotype can lead people to believe that trans people are just men in skirts or women who are tomboys.

Up until the 2000s, the only people playing transgender or gender non-conforming characters were cisgender actors. Movies like Boys Don't Cry, The Danish Girl and The Crying Game all featured trans characters, but they were all played by cis actors. Cis actors can't fully capture the trans experience in their performances. Once the cameras are off and they take off their makeup, they're still cisgender. This encourages people to think that trans people are just men in wigs or women wearing suits. Most people in charge of casting choose cis men over actual trans women because they may look "too much like a real woman." This idea harms the community because it upholds the myth that trans women have to have masculine features or be seen as "trashy" or "bad". It also begs the question: is the representation even worth it if the media is refusing a real trans person who understands what it's like to be trans in the first place?

Throughout history, trans people have always been seen in movies and TV. We've been mocked and harassed and yet we still remain. With shows like Pose, we can look forward to a future of representation that portrays us realistically and positively. Growing up, many trans kids don't get to see characters that they relate to reflected on the screen. This is harmful for trans children because they don't see anyone on the TV or in their books that are like themselves, and if they do they get the message that being themselves is wrong or bad. They need to see and understand that they aren't unnatural, they're trans and they are beautiful. The best way to truly get authentic representation is by casting trans people regardless of race, body type, or how masculine or feminine they look, as well as creating characters that combat harmful stereotypes. Even if these points may be small, they can have a huge effect on the world's image of trans people. All we want is to be seen as human. Trans lives are human lives, and are just as precious as any other.

"Christine Jorgensen." Google, 22 June 2020, https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.biography.com/.amp/activist/christine-jorgensen.

"The Film." DISCLOSURE, Netflix, 27 Jan. 2020, https://www.disclosurethemovie.com/about.

Donegan, Siobhan. "Trans Representation in Cinema and TV." LGBT Health and Wellbeing, 28 July 2021, https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/lgbt-health-blog/trans-representation-cinema-tv/.

NOT A PHASE

Heath Suzor (he/they)

Image Description: A moon phase painting. It is made on an 8x10 inch canvas panel using acrylic paint. There are seven moons, each a different part of the moon phase. The moons are colors of white and grey, and the background is a mix of pastel colors that come together as a rainbow. The painting has a texture of slight bumps, creating a partial three-dimensional appearance. On the bottom right, there is a signature of HS, the initials of the artist. The signature is a silver color.

ON BEING A NEURODIVERGENT, QUEER STUDENT

by Nikei Akira (they/them/he/she)

When I was 6 years old, I was diagnosed with autism and ADHD. I didn't exactly have a grasp on what that anything meant at the time of my diagnosis, and I didn't find out until 4 years later. I realized later on that the school district I was in didn't have the best hand at dealing with neurodivergent students, and my experience at school became less enjoyable every day.

When I was 13 years old, I began to seriously question my sexuality. I was doubting myself and my identity and I began to experiment a little to figure things out. I came to the conclusion that I was bisexual then; 2 years later, I came out as pansexual instead. My parents were fine with it, fortunately. My school, especially the students, were less than accepting. I was open about my identity, but scared at the same time. The fear only increased as I got older.

When I was 16 years old, I began to question my gender and if I really felt female. Spoiler alert: I didn't fully feel female. I felt completely different, hell, I felt more than society would expect. I felt like my gender identity could shift at the worst possible times, and I felt like this body wasn't mine. I came out as genderfluid a year later, and adopted my new name. My parents were skeptical at first, and my school had a tough time adjusting. I feared exclusion from the community being the only openly non-binary student in my graduated class. I feared being constantly misgendered and being deemed "disrespectful" for correcting people on my pronouns.

You could probably guess that I was relieved to finally leave high school. But even in such a liberal college, I'm still scared. Most students are still untrained regarding issues experienced by minorities. They still resort to preying on those identifying as queer, neurodivergent, POC, or under the transgender umbrella. School policies claim to help them, and yet they still execute so much that hinder their progress. Ableism is evident in certain professors, and deadnames are constantly used in school-related documents. So much trouble still lurks in the school regarding these communities, which hurts as a student who identifies with multiple minority groups. Requests for more awareness are rarely fulfilled, especially when required online classes on important issues don't involve us. We are hardly able to reach out to the higher-ups for general help; we only have those in similar communities as us to rely on. We have to turn to other students for help.

It's bad enough when staff barely pays attention to one community, but when you are a part of multiple of these communities, it practically feels like a slap in the face. Even when they can provide for one, they may not be able to provide for another. We have to take our own measures to try and help ourselves, which is a tough act to perform considering the challenges we already face, the ones we will have to face on the way, and how that will affect us.

I'm aware that the majority of this is pessimistic, but there are ways to turn things in our favor, and that is to gain confidence in ourselves and keep hope in our hearts. One day, the staff will listen to our cries for help and our efforts to push forth awareness will be fulfilled. One day, our peers will finally realize what it means to be a minority suffering in a school environment. But the only way we can make it happen is if we realize that we are not alone, and we have the ability to help people understand. This goes for any minority community you may be a part of, not just the LGBTQIA+ community. All of our efforts to push awareness are a shove in the right direction. Simply put, we can't just rely on time alone, which sucks. But someday the tables will turn. We just need to keep enduring the crap we're buried in and pull ourselves and each other out, kicking discrimination in the butt for the benefit of us all.

A LOVE POEM

by a sapphic mystery poet

You fill up my heart without even saying a word
I'm in a trance and you have no clue at all
My eyes begin to stare and my words clutter
I'm so self conscious yet I'm so lost in you

I'm so lost in your crystal eyes
I'm lost in the nonchalant way you move
I'm gone when you smile after saying hello
I feel so helpless when I'm in your presence

I feel a million butterflies when I'm with you
They flutter whenever your thought appears
They begin to fly when you get closer to me
When I think they're gone, they return
I can't stop falling for you no matter how hard I try

I don't think you like me back
I don't think I can tell you that I do
I'm so flustered by you
I can barely speak when you're around

I want to share all this with you
I just can't without losing my words
I hope I can muster up the courage soon
To tell you something I should have told you long ago

That I really like you

MOMENTS TO LIVE FOR

by Alia Cusolito (they/them)

TW: trans death, suicide mention

In honor of Transgender Day of Remembrance and Intersex Day of Remembrance which happened recently, I hope to bring some comfort to all those who struggle with staying here or who have lost someone to suicide. As the days grow shorter and the nights colder, our eyes begin to dim and we pull our jackets tight against the wind. Here are some warm thoughts to bring you some peace for a moment.

- When it's raining on the highway and you drive under the overpass and the rain stops for a split second. It's just quiet.
- The smell and feeling in the air before it rains.
- The excitement of kids when they look outside and all run to the window because it's snowing.
- When people get really excited because “This is my favorite song!!”
- When it's summer and it's warm and windy outside, it feels like the world is hugging you.
- When people give compliments about something you're insecure about and without realizing it they make you so much happier in your own skin.
- The fact that humans make toast. We cook bread twice.
- It's amazing how we make art and have emotions and can feel empathy and feel the ways others do. We are so complicated and beautiful and we don't just survive, we try to live and some of us value that life over material things.
- When a baby holds one of your fingers with their whole hand.
- When older people are happily telling you stories about when they were kids.
- Humans decorate their homes with little things they like and then have all of their friends come over to see their space because it makes them happy.
- We're all so unique and humans are beautiful.
- The in-between transition time of a quiet sunset and sunrise. The sky puts on a light show every night and every morning and we see it as so romantic.
- All the favorite songs you'll have that you just haven't heard yet.
- The silence outside when it snows.
- Clothes that are warm after they come out of the dryer.
- The times when it feels like time isn't real and we are infinite. Not in a never ending way, in the way that we all contain multitudes.
- The stars. The feeling of looking up and feeling so small and thinking about aliens.
- When something funny happens in class and you have a friend and you look at each other and have to stop yourself from laughing.

- When a toddler says their first words and everyone cheers, or when they stand up and suddenly see the world from a new level and everyone is so proud.
- We buy jewelry for those we love. We decorate them with little pieces of metal to show our appreciation for them. That's adorable.
- Opening the windows in the summer and listening to the sounds.
- Found family is beautiful. Here's a quote from Hector Xtravaganza (1965-2018): "Blood does not family make. Those are relatives. Family are those with whom you share your good, bad, and ugly, and still love one another in the end. Those are the ones you select."
- Bees sleep inside flowers sometimes!
- Eating a popsicle in the shade on a hot summer day.
- When you're feeling nostalgic then realize you can still do the things you love from your childhood.
- When you get a new haircut and everyone asks, "Did you get a haircut?" Like, yes, of course I did, where else would the hair have gone, but we ask anyway!
- The fact that people have favorite colors. They are all perfect but somehow each of us find one that feels like home.
- When you do something that feels simple to you, but to little kids it's an amazing feat that is deserving of never-ending praise.
- The scream when someone jumps into a pool and it's cold.
- When someone tells you they're proud of you. (I'm proud of you. I mean it.)
- Some people won't understand this one, but: gender euphoria (The opposite of dysphoria). Live for the moments when you feel any kind of euphoria. I promise they will come.
- The sound and feeling when an airplane flies over while you're outside during summer and have nothing to do. Not bored, just content.
- When you see a new person and really want to be friends with them and even though it's so awkward you go say hi, and suddenly there's a new connection in the world.
- The fact that people plant flowers in our yards just because we think they're pretty (or to make comfy beds for the bees).
- When you haven't seen someone for a long time and you meet again and they're completely different but that growth is so beautiful. You can be nostalgic about their old self but also celebrate the new path their life has taken.
- The smell and feeling of opening a book: so many possibilities.
- Humans being the person they feel on the inside with all their possibility and beauty.

by Savanah (they/them)

Image description: A digital drawing of a house from the outside. It is night time and snowing. The house has a brick foundation and tan wooden paneling. Warm orange lights glow from inside. There are 6 windows of varying shapes and sizes on the house, including one on the door. Next to the door is a light-up doorbell. The house has grey steps that lead to the door in the front. On the porch is a waving rainbow pride flag. Smoke is coming out of the brick chimney on the roof. The sky is a dark blue with an almost full moon. Snow is on the ground and on the house. The snow is on the roof and the window ledges.

SUBMIT A QUEERY

by a white transmasc individual

It's getting chilly, so today I invite you to my cozy little metaphorical fireplace (many blankets available) to answer our newest Queery: “I feel non-binary but I'm not sure. I’m afraid my parents won't accept me and I'm scared.” Thank you for the submission friend! First and foremost, I want to remind you that it is ok to be scared, and also that it will all be ok (pinky promise). You are certainly not alone in these feelings, and they were ones I also experienced when questioning and before coming out.

So, my best advice is to look at your situation and work from there. I cannot stress enough how good it feels to learn to understand yourself, and to be surrounded by people that are like you or accept you. Depending on your situation, this could look a couple different ways:

-If you’re pretty sure your parents will not accept you: this is something that is very difficult to deal with. For your safety, I’d suggest trying to conceal your identity as much as is healthy. Look for community online, at your schools GSA, or in local queer groups.
-If you’re pretty sure your parents will be accepting, though perhaps confused: in this case, try to expand your circle of queer community as well. Once you have a foundation of support and more experience with self advocacy, coming out to your parents may be easier.

For many queer youth, losing parental support when they need it- like when trying to discover their identity- is incredibly challenging. We at QYA want to remind you that there is family beyond parents; support outside your blood relations. So do what you can to explore your identity, build your community, and try things out. If you want your parents to be there alongside you, loop them in when you feel ready. If you don’t, or you know they would do more harm than help, then work on finding that mentorship and support in other places. I promise, it’s out there.

My dear queers, that is all I have for now. I’ll see you in our next edition with Submit a Queery, where queer fears fall on queer ears. DM our Instagram @queeryouthassemble if you have a "queery" for our next volume of the zine! And all of us at QYA wish you a very gay day.

THE COMFORT OF REALIZATION

by Jay Barry (they/she)

There's that feeling
The feeling that strikes at you from no apparent source
Not the feeling of hiding something from someone
More the feeling of hiding something from yourself
The little anchor pressing on your heart
With no chain to lift it up

Slowly you start to feel it
And then you start to recognize it
Whether the first or fourth time
It feels familiar all the same

Starting to realize you're hiding yourself
Realizing the signs over time
It wasn't just a cuff
It wasn't a random adrenaline boost
It was real

Knowing what needs to be done
But being afraid of the result
The effects on you
Either by yourself or someone else
The anchor weighs heavier before it lifts

Time passes
And you start to accept it
Then all of a sudden
That door opens
The fog clears
You take the step off into it
And the cleared fog turns the anchor into a carnation

And that's it
You can finally think clearly
Without the anchor weighing you down
You feel an invisible but clear comfort
The comfort of realization

THANK YOU!

Stay tuned for next month's edition
& QYA Zine announcements!

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