QYA Nov. Zine

Inside:
"A Love Letter to Being Trans"
"Bridging the Gap Between Queer Youth and Elders"

Cover art by Leo Brainard, pg. 5
Dear reader,
Welcome to the second 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, gender dysphoria, and religious trauma. 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.
Nature has made a mistake,  
For I am your prince, not princess  
I try my best, to play along  
But this game is unfair and cruel

I am your son, not daughter  
You call me beautiful, but I am not  
I want to be handsome,  
Not beautiful.  
I want to be me.

“Olly” is who I am, deep down inside,  
“He, Him, His”  
And even though you’ve lost a daughter,  
You’ve gained a son  
Who just wants to be loved as well
When I came out to my old church as simply “queer” or having homosexual tendencies at the age of around thirteen, the pastor hugged me, and I was congratulated. A week or so later, I asked a guest pastor what he thinks about homosexuality and the church. I set up a meeting with him, bringing along my parents, my Sunday School teacher, and a family friend. The pastor explained to me that my homosexuality and transgenderism was “an abomination in the eyes of God,” but so were other things that plenty of people do, such as sex before marriage. I cried then, and surprisingly, I can’t pinpoint why. I felt validated, because abominations in the eyes of God were prevalent in society. The word “abomination” stuck with me. It assumed that being queer or genderqueer was not a natural state of being. Every newborn is without sin, so this must be learned behavior, right? Like adultery and divorce? That’s what I thought for a long time. There are disputes about the Greek translation of that part of the Bible, whether it was “man shall not lie with boy” rather than “man shall not lie with man”. There is also a dispute over whether the Old Testament is even relevant specifically to Christianity anymore.

But I am telling you, the reader, right here, that if you’ve ever been given the same message I got from the pastor’s words: fuck that. No one gets to tell children that they are abominations, no matter what their book of faith is. If they see homosexuality only as sex and debauchery instead of people who can have healthy, loving relationships, that’s their problem. People have free will; the way they interpret their book of faith is more of a reflection on them rather than their god. I am not writing this to be agreeable, but I’m also not writing this to start a fight. I am writing this for me, at thirteen years old, letting the full weight of the pastor’s words hit me that night as I sobbed into my pillow.
Two identical androgynous white figures sit on a picnic table, one in front of the other. The one in front is in color, and the one behind is in pencil, except for his boots. The picnic table is covered in colorful spiral designs. Under the picnic table is a black and white ink drawing of a person being crushed by a lion, it appears to be a statue. On the right is a green bush. On the left is a gray building with colorful spirals. In the background is a dark blue shadow of a large building, like a castle. The sky is blue, cloudy, and has a crescent moon in the top right corner.
“Don’t you hate yourself?”
I know I’m not the best at this whole social norms thing,
but last I checked that is not what you ask right after I tell you my pronouns.

“You wish you were cis right?”
Ah yes, let me just
Become nonbinary
But in the cis way.
No really, what are your suggestions?
Clearly you must know
Right?
Otherwise that's an awfully arrogant icebreaker.

Stop making me trans
As in not-cis,
When I am trans as in Rebellion
Revolution
Ms. Marsha Pay it no mind
Mind your own damn business!
It’s you who said trans is ugly, weird, wrong, Sick.
“Born sick, but I love it”
Come any closer and I’ll sneeze the trans all over you
(you know so much about us, you must have heard about the gender cooties)

I’m trans as in
Buzzcut, makeup, five-inch heels and a double mastectomy
Trans as in
I wore the secret clothes shoved in the bottom of the back drawer outside today
Trans as in
Every trans person I meet is family and I’m showing you the gender neutral bathrooms

I am trans like history
Like genderfuck
Genderpunk
Here, Queer
And not about to shut up
I’m taking part in my own self discovery
Self actualization, self fulfillment
Every second of my existence

I love who I am
Can you say the same?
I love who I am
being trans made it that way.
Image description: A ghost hovers to the left of a black trans person holding a baby. They are standing in a clearing in a forest. They are surrounded by trees and flowers, and appear happy. The parent is wearing a sweater which is blue, pink, and white, the trans flag colors. The title says “Happy Trans Parent Day” and the caption says “three friends: one’s transparent, one’s a trans parent, and one’s the baby.”
Submit a Queery

by an anonymous, white, transmasculine nonbinary individual

We have our first submitted Queery folks! Let’s get right into it: “Sometimes I really wish I was a guy and hate my body but sometimes I like being a girl, what am I supposed to do?”

This sounds like a very classic case of Gender Crisis, so let me reassure you friend: you are absolutely not alone! I promise, you have time to understand yourself, and time for your identity to morph and shift and be reborn a hundred times. And while this can sound very scary, it is one of the most exciting, beautiful parts of being queer I think.

So my suggestion to you is this: experiment. Some people are genderfluid and feel like different genders at different times, and maybe that’s you. Others are trans but have fluctuating amounts of dysphoria or more fluid expression. It is ok to change your labels every five seconds until you find something you feel explains you, and even that may change at some point. My best advice is that you trust in yourself and remember the validity of your experience.

For some more practical tips, consider:

- Joining a GSA at your school! These are great places to connect with queer people and talk with those that experience similar things. If you don’t have access to a GSA, online queer spaces are also great! Whether it’s a Tiktok account, Discord server, Tumblr, whatever, these are also places that can help connect you to resources and community!
- Play with your expression, and remember you are allowed to (and should!) have fun with it! If you can, buy a binder and see how that makes you feel. Go thrifting and buy clothes that make you feel more you, and donate them again if they end up not being right.

Always know, there are people here for you. You will find your people, and on the way, you’ll discover yourself too. Until that point, QYA is here for you as well; our DMs are open.

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.
I have two moms. They’ve been married for 17 years, which is as long as it’s been legal in the state. One was born in Ohio in 1962, the other in Massachusetts in 1967. The Stonewall riots catalyzed the U.S. LGBTQ+ rights movement in 1969. It’s safe to assume my two year old mother wasn’t marching the streets of New York. Even as a queer and trans kid with gay parents, this is the best timeline I can give you. I don’t know my own community’s history. I could go downstairs right now and ask, but it would be uncomfortable. I’ve never spoken to my parents about their sexuality, their experiences as queer people, the discrimination they’ve dealt with, the protests they went to. I want to know. But I’m uncomfortable.

My moms have two kids. One is queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming, the other is cishet. Even as queer parents of a queer kid, they don’t know my story. They could come upstairs right now and ask, but it would be uncomfortable. They’ve never spoken to me about my sexuality or gender. I never had to come out to them, I just asked them to use a different set of pronouns for me. It was surprisingly difficult for them to adjust to the new terms and way of referring to me. They’re accepting and understanding, they’ve fought for LGBTQ+ rights, they’re even queer themselves. Why is it difficult? I always remind myself that just because they’re gay doesn’t mean they know what it’s like to be trans or GNC. But why can’t I just tell them? Why can’t I talk to them about my experience with my gender and sexuality? Because it’s uncomfortable.

When am I supposed to bring it up? At the dinner table? I need a designated space to have these conversations, not just with them, but with all queer people of all ages. I want to hear about what it was like to be queer in the early stages of the LGBTQ+ rights movement. I want to make it known that we still have a long way to go. I want to hear the experiences of older trans and GNC people. I want to share with them the trans and GNC experience of youth today. I want to gain wisdom from my queer elders. I want to share my perspective as a young queer person. I want to be passed the torch. I want the torch to be passed to me.
To make this difference in my community, I recently co-founded an intergenerational GSA at my church. The name was quickly changed to ‘all-ages’ GSA, as soon as I realized that not all ages know the word ‘intergenerational.’ Even though I go to a very welcoming Unitarian Universalist Church, not everyone is educated on the queer experience. Last year at our congregation’s annual meeting, there was a proposition to change the pronouns in the bylaws from he/she to they and him/her to them. People were confused, upset, angry even. Some people brought up the issue of grammatical correctness, even though the singular ‘they’ has been used for centuries. In the end, the change wasn’t passed. My 12 year-old nonbinary friend was devastated. Later that day, they came up with the idea of forming a GSA at our church.

Our minister wears a rainbow stole. We have messages of pride outside the entrance. And still, there is a lack of understanding; a lack of connection. Even the old married lesbians aren’t up to date on the correct terms and language for everything. By creating an intergenerational GSA, we are creating a space where we can connect, share experiences, and learn and grow together. Not only is this crucial to the health and happiness of queer youth, it is also a key step in making change. If we’re not all on the same page, it’s much harder to get things done. Whether my parents come to the GSA meetings or not, this initiative will open a door for communication. I hope it will open a door not just for my household, but for everyone in my church community. I hope it will inspire others to build their own doors.

I wish all queer kids could have access to an opportunity like this, even if it isn’t in the form of a group or a GSA. Even if it’s just a queer neighbor, teacher, relative, or family friend; a safe queer adult to talk to. And I know, it’s going to be uncomfortable. Push through the discomfort. Start with a question, or offer up something about yourself. The more we can connect; the more we can become unified, the more change we will be able to make. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to go downstairs and talk to my moms about a few things.
The Good Ones
by Eclipse (anything but she/he)

I thought I hated people.
I thought I hated everyone.
I thought all people were the same
I thought no one would ever be nice to me
I thought I hated people

Then one lucky day I get sat next to a boy in science
He makes me happy and I gain a best friend.

Years later I meet a boy with a similar liking to bees
He makes me laugh, I gain a beebling.

I then meet a boy who makes me feel like a princess
He makes me feel like I'm going to be okay, I gain a partner

I keep going on and collecting people I don't hate.
A server of people who make me happy.
A lunch group that motivates me to deal with school.
Theater kids who make me feel less alone.

I don't hate people. I just needed to find the good ones
THANK YOU!
Stay tuned for next month's edition & for QYA Zine announcements because... we will be taking submissions soon!

Visit us at:
Website: queeryouthassemble.org
Instagram: @queeryouthassemble
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