

QYA *October Zine*



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Youth of Arkansas"

Poetry, Art, and More!



Dear reader,

Welcome to the opening 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 hopelessness, anger, childhood being cut short, transphobia, and mention of suicide. 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 potentials.





NEOPRONOUNS

by Noah (they/he/xe/ze)

As more people feel comfortable expressing themselves in the world, sharing your pronouns is quickly becoming commonplace. Pronouns show up in emails, blog posts, and on name tags. They're an important part of communicating with each other. Most people are familiar with pronouns such as he/him/his, she/her/hers, and the singular they/them/theirs. Neopronouns are more elusive, typically being reserved to trans and nonbinary spaces. So what *are* neopronouns?

Neopronouns are nonstandard gender-neutral alternatives to he, she, and they, and are a way for people to express themselves and their gender identity. Contrary to its name, neopronouns are not "new" at all. They have been around for hundreds of years, evolving with the English language. In fact, one of the earliest sets of neopronouns in the English language is thon/thons/thonself, making its debut in 1858. Thon, a conjugation of "that one," was created by Charles Crozat Converse and sparked some interest from linguists before eventually being forgotten.¹ Variations of the pronouns e/em were made by James Rogers in 1890 and Michael Spivak a century later, and are still in use today.²

According to the Trevor Project, only about 4% of those surveyed reported using neopronouns or a combination of neopronouns and gendered pronouns.³ Their lack of use in common vernacular often leads to misinformation and confusion outside of trans spaces, but they are incredibly important to those who use them. Using someone's correct pronouns isn't just respectful, it's suicide prevention. Even if you don't understand neopronouns, using them when asked can save a person's life. Here are some tips to start:

- Introduce yourself with your own name and pronouns. This shows that you're an ally and someone they can feel comfortable sharing their pronouns with.
- If you don't know how to pronounce someone's pronouns or use them in a sentence, ask them!
- If you use the wrong pronouns, give a short apology and correct yourself before moving on.
- Remember confidentiality: only use their correct pronouns around people they are out to.

Whether someone uses he/him/his, ze/zem/zir, or no pronouns at all, using their pronouns can make the world a brighter and safer place for LGBTQ+ individuals.

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/third-person-gender-neutral-pronoun-thon>

² <https://medium.com/matthews-place/the-history-of-neopronouns-366b1fee48c4>

³ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Trevor-Project-Pronoun-Research-Brief.pdf>

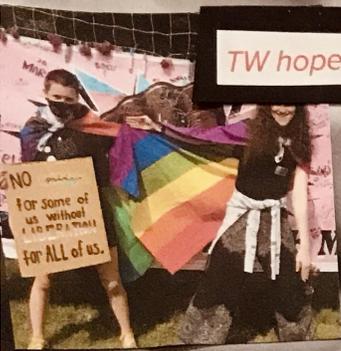
PROUD FROGGY

by Kiri



Image Description: A green colored frog smiles as they sit in a red wheelchair. A trans pride flag sticks out the back of the wheelchair.

TW hopelessness, anger, childhood being cut short



Listen to us: a letter to adults
by Alia Cusolito



What does it mean to grow up in a world with no future?
Plastering posters on the walls and a smile on my face,
Covering my crumbling facade of hope with action;
Always, always, doing something,
Fighting us and them and me.



START WHERE YOU LIVE



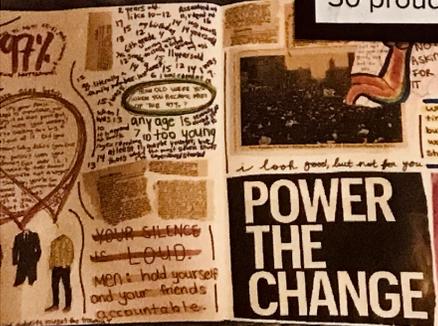
why does everything
take so long to
change
except the climate
i hate this omfg

It's not enough to cover the noise,
But our voices are loud and supported,
We hold each other up as we break down walls.
I feel hopeless, but you say we're saving the world.
I'm just a kid. I'm trying to stop being afraid.



The Learning Curve
of Gender Pronouns

"These kids will change the world someday!"
I was twelve, and I was a kid, and I was fighting.
I couldn't cross the street on my own but you could look to us to save ourselves.
"The kids will save us," you say
So proud, so grateful, so relieved.



BLM



I'm 16 now, still fighting.

I'm just a kid.

You trust so much in us because you don't want us to look to you,

Ask what change you're making.

We scream in your faces what you need to do

But I'm just a silly child.

I'm not old enough to understand.

"These kids will save the world one day."

So hopeful.

But when we tell you what's next,

How you can help,

You realize, maybe you showed us too much
Hunger Games growing up.

Are we too rebellious, too revolutionary?

You asked us to change the world.

Now I see you didn't expect us to be capable,

You expected us to be more palatable,

More polite.

I'm still a kid, but I'm capable.

We deserved to grow up in a world where the future was uncertain but bright.

Instead, it's certainly dark, and you've sent us out on a mission to find a lightswitch;

You think it's that simple.

I wish we had more time to just be kids.

But here we are, so now

Listen to us.

ALIA POSTED ABOUT THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF SCHOOL: "WHAT OTHER
EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL LABOR DO QUEER AND TRANS KIDS NEED TO
PUT IN BEFORE WE'LL BE SHOWN BASIC RESPECT?"



PARTS THAT CAN'T BE SEPARATED

by Natsu Beggs (he/they)

I am queer. I know that I don't have a gender preference and leave it at that. I don't have to put a label on my sexuality. Not having a label doesn't erase who I am. I am also trans. The idea that I am defined by my chromosomes or what's between my legs is quite archaic to me. I am as much of a man as the guy using the urinal in the men's restroom. Even when I sit in a stall not wanting to come out until he's gone out of pure fear.

I am Japanese. I am what Japanese people call a "hafu", or "half", the term used to describe specifically half Japanese and half white people. I get comments saying that I'm "not really Japanese" or that I'm "Americanized". Being a born American and speaking English does not erase the Japanese permeating my house from my mother's lips, nor does it erase the Japanese that I am. I am also American. While I am half Japanese, I was born and raised in the United States. I don't need to speak English at every waking moment to be a citizen of a country with no official language. I am "really from" America, and I am "really" Japanese.

I am neurodivergent and mentally ill. I have a wide array of diagnoses, from major depression to Tourette Syndrome. My Tourette's often gets me strange stares and has even resulted in people - although well-meaning - putting their hands on me because they thought I had a seizure. It is important to note that one is never supposed to restrain a person having a seizure.

This isn't some "woe is me" article. I live a happy and fulfilled life, and I am simply trying to give you background on the parts that make me. These parts cannot be separated. If you see me as queer and only that, you do not see the color of my skin, nor do you see the workings of my brain. If you see only one part of me and define me by that, you are looking at a singular swirl of blue in *The Starry Night*. You cannot claim to know the full picture if you only focus on one part. Therefore, you cannot claim to know me and understand me if you define my whole being with a part of me. The definition of Natsu Beggs is specific and can fill encyclopedias. Even my parents cannot say they know my inner workings, and you, a stranger, cannot claim to know what makes me "me" after learning about my struggles. You define me by my struggles because that is all I have given you. What have the people you claim to know given you? Can you truly make assumptions about parts of a person's life if you've only seen a few parts, like the blobs of paint that make up a Monet? Try asking them, maybe they'll tell you, and maybe you'll listen.

PIECES OF THE PAST

By Bella Perez (she/her)

"I wanted to represent the icons of queer history and how their actions have made it possible for artists like Lil Nas X and Doja Cat and Dorian Electra (to name some examples) to be themselves and be as popular and successful as they are."



Image Description: A close up portrait of Lil Nas X. The upper left side of his face is replaced by that of Marsha P. Johnson. The bottom right side of his face is replaced with the grayscale face of Christine Jorgensen. His left shoulder is replaced by that of Gilbert Baker, with the original pride flag draped over it. Lil Nas X is in his 2020 Grammy's pink cowboy outfit. His eyes are replaced with rainbows.

SUBMIT A QUEERY

By an anonymous white transmasculine nonbinary individual

As this is our very first edition, I, an incredibly responsible, knowledgable, and comparatively elder queer, will not be answering a Queery, but instead, simply telling you a thing. This thing, you may ask? Labels are not always all that.

And I know, you may be thinking “but I like them!” or “they’ve improved my life so greatly!” These absolutely are benefits of labels, and reasons why I too use several of them. However, their downfall occurs when we as a community become so obsessed with perfectly categorizing ourselves and others that we don’t ever reach a place of contentment and understanding.

I believe this is a misunderstanding of what labels are really for. Each of us, as individuals, are so incredibly unique. For most of us, a label that truly encompasses our experience is one we have to create. And for some, this is a delightful and exciting exercise. But truly, labels are just ways to communicate a bit of us to others in a neat little package. So don’t let people tell you you can’t “technically” be that or should actually call yourself this. A label is not meant to be an absolute, but merely a descriptor and identifier amongst many others.

So here I am to tell you all: it is ok to be unlabeled. It is ok if your identity takes several labels to explain. It’s ok if your identity is a shrug of “I have no clue.” It’s ok if sometimes your identity seems contradicting. The only thing that is not ok is policing how others experience their queerness and the ways in which they choose to label it.

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.



AND

by Eclipse

I love him and her
I love xim and them
Why is it so hard for them to understand
I am allowed to love whoever I love
No matter who or how many people that is
Polyamory is real
Polyamory is valid
We are not unloyal
We are not whores
We deserve respect and validation as well
If you do not see it
Perhaps our hearts are bigger
Than your brain



A LETTER TO THE TRANSGENDER YOUTH OF ARKANSAS

by Kai Livingstone (they/them/fae/faer)

TW for transphobia and mention of suicide

“But when they're under 18, they need to grow up first. That's a big decision, there's no going back.”

A seemingly innocuous sentence,

One would think Arkansas state Rep. Robin Lundstrum would be talking

about drugs or alcohol,

or some other harmful behavior, like vaping.

Instead, Rep. Lundstrum was talking about healthcare for transgender youth,

or rather, the ban she proposed on it known as House Bill 1570 -

the Save Adolescents From Experimentation (SAFE) Act.

This bill bans critical, life-saving healthcare for trans youth

such as puberty blockers and hormone replacement therapy.



To those who voted to pass this bill, and later override Governor Hutchinson's veto:

you have rejected science,

and this will harm the children you swore to protect.

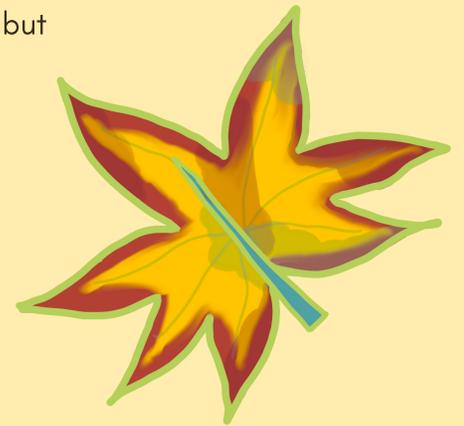
You want these children to “grow up” before making “irreversible decisions” but

I am here to tell you that

it is impossible to “grow up” when one sees

no point

in reaching their 18th birthday.



Did you know,

the Trevor Project reports

that more than half of transgender youth

have seriously considered suicide?

To the transgender youth in Arkansas:

I, too, was a transgender youth at one point.

I know you're terrified, just as I was at your age.

It feels like there's no hope,

no purpose to life

or to “growing up”

when you can't live and grow as who you are

and these laws will not help that fear.

It is okay to be afraid, but

I am here to tell you

that there is joy to be found

in growth

and in change

and that we, the trans adults who came before you,

love you

and will continue to fight for you.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/04/06/politics/arkansas-transgender-health-care-veto-override/index.html>

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2019.pdf>

“TWO GHOSTS HUGGING CUZ THEY’RE NOT GAY NO SERIOUSLY THEY’RE NOT GAY”

by Leila (any pronouns)



Image Description: two ghosts are hugging on a purple field, the sky is the colors of the asexual flag with three big purple clouds

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

Tiktok: @queeryouthassemble

Twitter: @qyouthassemble

