Inside:
"Women's History Month from the Perspective of a Trans Woman"
"Thoughts on a Queer Future from a Queer Girl"

Cover art by spoupysoupy (ae/aer) on pg. 9
Dear reader,
Happy Women's History Month and welcome to the sixth issue of the Queer Youth Assemble monthly zine! This issue we are focusing on uplifting the voices of women and fem-identifying people of all different self-identifications. Inside, you will find beautiful pieces of art, writing, and poetry created by Queer Youth Assemble members. 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 sexual assault and brief mention of menstruation. 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.
It was a cold New England morning as I scurried into my freshman English class. My heart was racing, my breathing was out of rhythm, and my head was spinning. I had barely slept the night before. I was in the midst of a panic attack, not over something that someone did to me, but something that I was doing to myself.

I was living a lie.

Without thinking, I grabbed a piece of paper, pointed the pencil to the first available line, and haphazardly started writing “I am Esmée, I am a girl.” I did it again, and again, and again, and again. Eventually, I had filled up the entire page with that one line, a line that would echo through my head the entire day.

Womanhood has always been a strange subject to me. Being born male and raised in a sports loving household, I had little to think about regarding gender identity... at least according to my parents. Truthfully, I was always fascinated by feminine things such as jewelry and fashion during my childhood. When I was around 9, I would play with dolls and watch barbie movies with my younger sister to pass the time. While playing with traditionally feminine toys and wanting to dress in a feminine way doesn’t at all correlate with gender identity, it was, in a way, a sign of what was to come.

Fast forward to the day of that breakdown. As a high school freshman, I was terrified of looking like or addressing myself as a woman. My middle school years had been muddled with parents telling me to fit in. I somehow convinced myself that anything feminine, even unisex clothing, was something that I needed to hate.

Eventually, my gender dysphoria caught up to me, and I had to confront what I had been running from for so many years: my gender identity.

I came out as transgender during my sophomore year of high school, although heavily closeted. Even while being closeted I wasn’t necessarily interested in conforming to the stereotypical view of women. I was interested in sports, dressed conservatively feminine, never wore makeup (still don’t to this day), and wasn’t afraid to be loud. All traits not associated with being stereotypically feminine.

Something changed for me however during my junior year, when I was able to start estrogen, and was invited to an online group of other transgender females. They all showed me that being a woman was not a black and white choice, but rather that gender expression was an infinite spectrum, one that had no right or wrong answer. This revelation allowed me to authentically express who I was while allowing me to feel comfortable enough to say I was a woman.

I finally felt connected to my woman identity, and it felt incredible.

Three years later, I say these words with great pride: I am a transgender woman. I am a woman. I am proud. I am Esmée.
Lesbian Companionship
by Jesse/Finch (he/they)

Companionship between butch/masculine people (left); Two butch people sit on the floor of a bedroom. One, wearing a red sweater and cargo pants, leans on the other, who sits cross-legged wearing a blue turtleneck and brown pants. The background consists of plain walls and the modern lesbian flag, updated to reflect the multiplicity of lesbian and sapphic identity.

Companionship between butch/masculine and femme/feminine people (left); Two people stand in a field of flowers. One, more feminine with long red hair and a blue sweater holds the other, a butch person with facial piercings, who wears a green button-up over a tan sweater with a lesbian pin.

Companionship between feminine people (above); Two femme people sit cross-legged on the floor of a bedroom facing one another. One has blue hair, ear piercings and a green sweater. The other has dark brown hair, a tan sweater with hearts, and blue pants with flowers. The wall is decorated with colored posters and the aromantic lesbian flag.

Companionship between butch/masculine and femme/feminine people (left); Two people stand in a field of flowers. One, more feminine with long red hair and a blue sweater holds the other, a butch person with facial piercings, who wears a green button-up over a tan sweater with a lesbian pin.
orange juice blood
by clem (they/it/she)

i. i am drunk off the grape-flavored cold medicine still lingering on your lips
and aren’t girls so goddamn pretty against the oil and wax of paintings in the louvre
hands trailing so their fingerprints will stay and
you know, sappho told us that we would be written in the stars but perhaps we can also be
written in paint
and the museum steps and the double heartbeats pressed close underneath a universe
and i think there’s something perfect about the creases of your envelopes and stamps and
lines, so who’s stopping me from
kissing you on the roof, pretending that we are ok, that we’re sitting on the front steps
of the louvre.

ii. i watch the outline of your wrist pressed to my cheek; and the curve of your hip against
bathroom tile is fluorescent light and the empty medicine cabinet and sunflowers pinned to my
front door and
if only we weren’t a tape measure apart in an american small town,
if only i could paint you on the inside of my eyelids and
get lightheaded at the swirls of oil paint across your ribs and
collarbone because
we exist just in this corner of the universe yet you are
all soft everythings and starry eyes.

iii. they say van gogh ate yellow paint but we will eat the sun instead,
be something bright and bleached and cold, like
psych ward walls
and contradictions because we’re warm enough in just our skins, fueled by stuttering veins
of orange juice blood. spin me through galleries older than
my beating, spacedust heart so we can pretend
again, again, that
we aren’t just two kids holding hands and dreaming on the roof
in an american small town.
Thoughts on a Queer Future from a Queer Girl

by Ellen Richards (she/they)

The future is queer, this much we know. I would like to share some of my thoughts on this beloved phrase. Sometimes I pause during the day and really think about this idea - the idea that there is a queer past, present, and future. I think about how much effort is put into censoring queerness from our education, media, and history and how it remains a constant in our lives regardless. It is perhaps the most interesting yet frustrating experience of my life to live in a place and time where my identity is not treated as essential to understand or respect. Yet this feeling is not a unique one, I believe all LGBTQ+ people may identify with this struggle in some way.

In my life, coming to terms with being a lesbian completely changed how I viewed myself, those around me, and my relationships with different aspects of my life. It felt like all my previous expectations for my life were ripped apart at the seams, and I was handed a couple of markers and a blank piece of paper to try and come up with some new plot lines. My past, present and future are left completely untethered from their predetermined destination. While an immense weight was lifted off my shoulders by this realization, the lack of understanding surrounding LGBTQ+ identities is so much more inhibiting than it is assumed to be.

The greatest gift I could have gotten growing up is the shedding of expectations and a more nuanced understanding of myself and my community. Although initially, I must admit I couldn’t help but feel fearful. Not out of identifying as queer, but for the gradual process of letting go of my denial. I had to admit I was wrong and that I didn’t always understand myself perfectly. In order to move forward, I had to accept that everything I thought I knew about attraction or romantic love was imagined up until that point - and that realization scared me the most. Every inconsistency – my indifference, the sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach – something just felt off, something wasn’t adding up. The few things that brought me comfort in this time were writings and video essays on others’ lived experiences being LGBTQ+ and being able to discuss queer experiences with friends. Having access to LGBTQ+ media and a strong community of support helped me come to terms with my own identity.

It is becoming more and more clear that not every youth who could benefit from this support has access to these vital resources. With Florida’s implementation of the “Don’t Say Gay” Bill barring the discussion of LGBTQ+ topics including sexuality and gender identity in schools, it appears that waves of intolerance persist. How does one go about dismantling relationship and gender expectations? How should we determine our individual paths without an instruction manual? The future can seem uncertain, but when I think about our queer future, I know we have one worth fighting for. I think our queer future looks bright.
all bodies are beautiful
by anonymous

Image description: This art depicts two women of different body types holding up their arms, which are bent at the elbows. One is slimmer with visible arm muscles and the other is bigger and has a more curvy figure. They are both wearing the same set of purple athletic wear. They are depicted with stripes of multiple different skin tones to show that all bodies are beautiful.

Image description: The phrase "trans women are women" is displayed across a trans flag.
Women’s History Month from the Perspective of a Trans Woman
by Jay/Avery Barry (she/they)

March has always stood out to me
A month of change
The changing of the seasons
The growing of leaves
The celebration of women who’ve made change
Yet I’ve never felt so connected to it

This year
It’s me who’s going to change as well
I know I’m a woman now
And so the month of change has changed for me too
It may take time to be confident in my identity
But I feel encouraged

By all the trans women of the past
They’ve made history
And have made change so that many of us can be ourselves
So this Women’s History Month
Remember everyone who’s made those changes
And celebrate their names
So all women can continue to celebrate this month
Women of Many Shapes and Sizes
by spoupysoupy (ae/aer)

Image description: Four women are shown in individual panels. The first is a white wheelchair user with short purple hair and tattoos. The second is a black woman with cornrows wearing glasses, overalls, and a shirt with the trans flag. The third is a black woman with heterochromia and a pink afro accessorized with hair clips. They are wearing a pink Hello Kitty shirt and stickers and makeup on their cheeks. The fourth is a racially ambiguous woman with a medium length mohawk hairstyle. They are wearing a green button-up shirt with an intersex pin and a lesbian pin. They have a Nasogastric tube and a drip bag is pictured in the background.
She gives you two options; Barbara or Barb. You tell her, drenched in foolishness, that both make her sound old, and she laughs in your face. It’s a bit like getting burnt, but all of her fire is concentrated in her eyes, so when she pulls you across uneven sidewalks, it’s only cold.

Sneaking into a pool at night leans into the self-awareness she’s forever trying to inject you with, but living inside some teen movie isn’t for you, the one endlessly falling out of your own skin.

Regardless—regrettable and thrilling—her straw-blond hair is either a shackle or the red string of fate or a half-hearted justification, so you follow her like a Great Value® Eurydice.

When you jump the fence and tangle and twist onto the concrete, her hands can, for once, ease some of the pain.

A modern miracle, she says. You are, of course, inclined to agree, and here, an attempt at romancing bursts from your ribcage; I could write a sonnet about your hair, and what bursts from her is that same laugh, a nails–chalkboard orchestra, except the chalkboard is your heart or maybe your kidney. (or your adrenal gland—don’t offer up the big ones yet)

Her texts are famously cryptic, so you’re left swimsuit–less and shivering, and a semi-ironic but really just ugly t-shirt will be left drenched in the laundry room for days to come, and you’re going to get a cold. Just accept that, here and now.

The thing is that she doesn’t seem real. She never does.

Of course, you know she is—personhood isn’t an interpretative art. And you’re never going to succeed at narration because nothing could ever fully encapsulate what lies beneath the skin of girls who torment other girls with something surpassing friendship, and you’ll always be stuck leaning into tropes.

You reflect and try to parse the unreal and the fully autonomous, but nothing serves as more of a distraction than a pretty girl with a condescending grin, and deconstructing anything is a futile effort.

Here and now, your only salvation comes in the form of her hands bringing you down into the freezing water.

In that moment, she’s controlling the narrative, and maybe—just maybe—all is redeemed.
Freeze by Talyn (anything but she/him)

Freeze. I find myself doing that a lot. My name is Talyn. I’m a fem-presenting nonbinary person. Most of our regular readers will know me for my poetry, but what I’m writing about today can’t fit in a poem. Please be cautious while reading. Trigger warning for sexual assault and a brief mention of menstruation.

I’m 13. I go to my friend’s house so his mom can keep an eye on me while my mom shops. He pulls me to his room to play video games. It’s routine for us. It’s a normal Wednesday. Until he pauses the game to look at me. “My mom told me you aren’t a girl,” he says. I smile simply at him. “Yeah, I’m nonbinary. Not quite a girl not quite a boy,” I explain, wanting to get back to the game. I was winning for once. He frowns and tells me I look like a girl as he moves closer to me. I chuckle and try to scooch to the side. I’m on the edge of the bed and almost fall. He grabs my hand and pulls me over to him. We rough house sometimes but this didn’t feel like that. I try to get away. He holds me there. I’m 13 and can’t get away. I’m a kid. Next thing I know his hands are under my shirt roaming over a body that’s not his. I freeze. “Let me go,” I demand. I’m 13 and my friend is making me uncomfortable. I’ve never experienced this. I walk home feeling gross and like something is wrong with me. He never talked to me again. I was 13 and didn’t know what to do.

I’m 14. I’m joking around with my boyfriend and he calls me his joyfriend. I remind him I prefer to be called girlfriend. While I’m nonbinary I still prefer some feminine terms. He laughs at me and says that then we should do things boyfriends and girlfriends our age are doing. I freeze. We were playing GTA and I’m 14. I know what my friends are doing with their partners. I didn’t want to be part of that. I’m 14. I laugh it off and go back to the game. He sits behind me and wraps his arms around my waist. Something I’m used to. I smile and keep playing. His hands start to wander and I freeze. I try to push him off but it doesn’t work. I’m 14 and my boyfriend isn’t listening to me say no. My step dad picks me up and I sit in my room in silence for the rest of the night. I’m 14 and am afraid of my boyfriend.

I’m 15. I’m walking to the bathroom during class. I had to change my pad. I see someone from my old school walking on the other side of the hall. I smile kindly and keep walking. He follows me. I’m 15 and am being followed into the gender neutral bathroom. I do my thing and walk back out. He’s standing there. I try to slip past him to wash my hands. “Hey [deadname].” I freeze. I hadn’t heard that name in school in a long time. I don’t answer. He continues on about how he heard I’m not a girl anymore. I ignore him still as I pray my binder isn’t showing. He walks closer. I’m 15 and wearing shorts on a hot day. He says how he knows that’s not true and that I’ll always be a girl. He yanks on my shorts leaving me in just my underwear. I’m 15 and someone I was happy to see has humiliated me. He laughs and leaves “Bye [deadname].” I fake a stomach ache and lay in bed crying the rest of the day.

All of this is because of who I am. All of this has happened because I feel comfortable in my skin. This isn’t to scare anyone away from coming out. I’m still so much happier since I’ve come out. I encourage you to come out if you’re safe to do so. This piece is just to bring light to the harassment and abuse women and fem-aligned folks deal with. Please remember your worth and that you matter even if you’ve experienced something like this. You are so valid and loved.
Image description: Digital art that depicts the profile of a person with pink skin and red hair. They are surrounded by grey flowers and leaves. They are depicted in front of the demigirl flag. The name 'Emanine' in all lowercase stylized letters is written at the top of the image.

Image description: A digital drawing with a transparent background of a character brushing another character's hair. One of the figures is cut off at the bust and facing to the left, with a soft look towards the other. She has teal hair and a purple tank top. The other is positioned behind her, looking down at her, and is cut off at half body. She's holding a pink hair brush and his hand is on the other’s head. She is wearing a blue tank top and a darker blue pleated skirt. His hair is split dyed blonde and teal.
Thank You!

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

Visit us at:

Website: queeryouthhassemble.org
Instagram: @queeryouthhassemble
Tiktok: @queeryouthhassemble
Twitter: @qyouthhassemble

Page decorations by Jesse/Finch (he/they)