Dear reader,

Welcome back to the Queer Youth Assemble’s zines! This is our special edition zine themed around "Universal Pride." What does that mean? It means pride is everywhere, for everyone, and not just limited to June. It also means that we went with a space theme! 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. This issue contains one piece with a drawing of nonsexual nudity. 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/they)
Queer Youth Assemble Co-Founder

Kai Khaund (they/them)
Queer Youth Assemble Zine 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.
everywhere.
by Mazzy (she/her)

Gay people are everywhere
No matter where you go you can’t avoid them
Yup, we’ve infiltrated your planet
We’re pushing our agendas on you
We’re brainwashing your youth
Our pride sections are in your Target
Hell, we’ve taken over your month of June!
Because we have nothing better to do
Than make things uncomfortable for you
Sorry
Image description: a digital drawing of an astronaut in space from the shoulders up. The helmet is colored in blues and decorated with stars, lighter squares, and the rainbow pride flag. On the astronaut’s left shoulder is the pink triangle, and on the right shoulder is the trans flag. The astronaut suit is white and the background is colored with purples and blues, and has small stars and planets.
What is universal pride?
There’s no pride for one without pride for all. Gay liberation means trans liberation, intersex liberation, disabled liberation, indigenous liberation, black liberation, religious liberation, women’s liberation. We either stand together or fall together.
Image description: stick figures standing inside a circular progress flag with intersex inclusion. In order from lest to right: a person missing a leg with an orange headband around their Afro, a Sikh person with a red turban, an indigenous person wearing braids with a pink clasp on the ends, a person in a wheelchair with purple hair and one side shaved, a Muslim with an indigo hijab, a Jew with a blue kippah and a cane, a person wearing green noise canceling headphones, and a person with a yellow bob. The piece is titled “PROUD TOGETHER” in pride flag colors.

The bottom text says, “What is universal pride? There’s no pride for one without pride for all. Gay liberation means trans liberation, intersex liberation, disabled liberation, indigenous liberation, black liberation, indigenous liberation, religious liberation, women’s liberation. We stand together or fall together.”
For the longest time, I felt out of orbit
Felt like something wasn’t correct
Something in the universe was out of balance
I could feel a gravitational pull – something
in my heart so strong that at any moment
My limbs
Could rip from their sockets

My blood circulates in the wrong direction
My vocal cords get tangled in my throat; my
voice is plastic
It has an “off” texture, it’s not mine

One day, a friend of mine comes out
They talk about their experience
Coming to the realization that they’re gender
non-conforming
I feel the celestial pull again, this time
stronger
Before I can blink, my body acts on its own
Once again, my mind and body are disconnected
I’m out of orbit
Both internally and externally
The planets have been flung across the universe
The sun flares and roars

My fingers dance along my keyboard like an orchestra playing fortississimo,
With newfound fervor,
Searching for stories similar to my friend’s
Those coming to the realization that they’re transgender and gender non-conforming;
Their pride, their struggles, their joy, their grief

It feels like I’ve opened a door to a whole new universe,
One I was only somewhat familiar with before,
Yet,

It doesn’t feel foreign or strange
It feels nostalgic, like returning home:
Comforting yet chaotic

I read these stories, descriptions of identities, explanations of feelings
And suddenly,

I’ve fallen into orbit.
YOU

A POEM BY FAITH CARDILLO

When I was a kid
I wanted to be an astronaut
My memorabilia sold off to the highest bid
Those fantasies faded with the dreams I never caught

As I got older
I wanted to be the president
But I didn’t want that weight on my shoulders
So I’d work behind the scenes for the main event

Universal pride takes many forms
Sunset-colored ink splashed on my skin
But something new was born
Authenticity created a wide grin
In my universe, a collection of colors are displayed
Black, grey, white, purple
Red, orange, white, pink
Beautifully intertwined to create me

Growing up my pride was music
Self-acceptance found in songs
“Bad At Love”, “Girls”, “She’s My Religion”
But I still was confused and lost

Asexuality is rarely represented in our media
So it’s become my hope and goal
To give one person that representation
To give the world someone to look up to

You are not broken. You are perfect.
I am so proud of you.
Shoot for the stars
Land on the moon or your dream job
Whatever it is,
Be authentically you doing so <3
transness, as defined through insecurity
by Kai Khaund (they/them)

i’m sorry for
overreacting, overcompensating,
expecting people to change for me. it’s only me
after all, not worth much—
even the effort it takes to say my name
is more than i can ask of you.
so i’m sorry. because i don’t know what else to
say
and because i think i need to apologize for
being.
i don’t tell you this is why i hide. because even
as we pretend all is well, i am screaming.
evén as we smile, it’s just to fit in
with the rest of the straight faces
that don’t want us to stand out.
because when you tell me i’m too much i believe
you.
because when you get angry i apologize. because
i want to stand out but i want to succeed
and where’s the middle ground?
this world not built for me and you ask me to be
happy.
this world built for you and you say we don’t
need change.
this world already changed but not enough
to give me room to breathe.
One Song
by Apollo (he/they)

To all the queer youth know this,
You may feel alone, Isolated.
Like you are your own planet yet to be discovered.
You’re not.
Because all our hearts
Beat to the rhythm of one song.
One song that reverberates through every inch of us
Like an echo in an empty hall.

One song in each every queer heart across the galaxy.
One song that drives us.
One song of strength.
One song of an interwoven community built on the might and joy
Of each of us.
One song of bravery.
One song of those who came before,
Who made the path we now must march.
One song of Love.
One song of love that acknowledges, that embraces every flaw and Every pain.
One song of love that holds us up, that holds us together.
One song of love that forms pride.
Pride that spans the world, no matter what.
One Universal song.
by Noam (he/she)

My name is Noam.
It means pleasantness, and that’s how it feels. Calm, and quietly happy. Not exactly silent; I can hear talking and laughter, or my favorite song in the background, or wind whistling through the trees. Not silent, but quiet. The noise in my head is gone. It feels like laying on the grass and looking up at the stars, an infinite universe that I finally feel right in. It feels warm, but not hot. Something like a campfire, and maybe that’s fitting, because you found this name at camp.

Hearing my name is like a breath of fresh air. The relief of coming home at the end of a long and tiring day. It’s comfortable. Familiar. How is it even possible for this name to feel so familiar, after having it for so little time? My name felt like home the moment I heard it.

My name is Noam.
It means beautiful, good looking, and that’s how I feel. Not because of the randomness of genetics that determined how I look, but because of the choices I made. I sculpted myself, and I am a work of art. I was given a self that felt wrong, and so I shaped my name and my appearance until I felt at home. My name is beautiful because I
chose it, and I look beautiful because I chose this.
Noam means beautiful, and I am beautiful, because I am me.

My name is Noam.
My friend once told me the sound reminded her of the word "poem." I think she was right. My name resonates with me like the best poems I’ve read, the ones that feel like they’ve ripped your heart out and mended it all at once. The type of poetry that settles inside of you as soon as you’ve read it, lingers on your mind and flows through your veins and becomes a part of you. I think my name is the best poem I’ve written.

My name is Noam.
It’s a Hebrew name. That was one of my main requirements as I searched for a name. My deadname is Hebrew, too. I’m not that person, and I never was, but I am a Jew. And even as I grow further and further from the way I was born, these are my roots. My family, my traditions, and my history. My name.

My name is Noam.
by Cadence (they/them)

SOLIDARITY OVER ASSIMILATION

Image description: monochrome collage that features an image of the planet Saturn with white text in all caps that reads, "solidarity over assimilation" in the middle of the image.
by Jasper (any pronouns)

CW: nonsexual nudity
Image description: There is a painting with a nude person with short wavy hair in the colors of the transgender flag, which colors are splattered around the subject. They are staring straight forward and stars are in the place of pupils in their eyes. They are surrounded by stars, some behind them and some in front of them, covering their private areas. Behind them are brushstrokes in blue, pink, and yellow moving in different directions over a dark blue background.

Artist Statement: To me, pride is existing as I am regardless of what others say. This painting was a way of me working through my dysphoria by painting my body with the colors of the trans flag, which felt like a way of reclaiming my body when others are telling me what it says about my identity. The stars are meant to represent gender euphoria and self acceptance, along with going with the theme of “universal” pride.
What is man and woman, but a concept?
by Dean Gil (she/her/they)

In the view of anatomy, we can see a man and a woman will be host to their different reproductive organs. Does that in itself make a man and a woman? Can we rely on the sensual exterior to make up such a power dwelling in both? Masculinity vs Feminity is a debate prolonging its existence since the times of cultural understanding. Here we unfold the hunter vs gatherers. Do both not offer ways that create a skillful being, or have the lines of a hierarchy stained this idea? A hunter, depicted with man, is one whose virtues must follow courage, strength, and brutality. To lessen the moral standard of life with sacrifice. A gatherer, depicted with a woman, is one whose virtue follows fragility, patience, and creativity. In writing out both virtues I find a striking resemblance between the virtues of both, leading me to say we could swap a hunter for a gatherer and deem either generic or profound results.
A gatherer needs courage to reach out in collecting supplies, just as a hunter needs fragility to arm themselves with the right weapons and strategy in the slaughtering of food. Why take you to such primal times? Well to showcase such a unique expression that both men and women mean nothing in the labels of one being in the universe. I stand with science in the depiction of biological behavior, yet there is much more to the essence of being human than just your biology. Has the consciousness not reached a level of knowledge where we can clearly say masculinity and femininity are dissipating? Merge both, succumb to these facilities, and here you find the richness of a being with much more utility than the “masculine man” or “feminine woman.”
QYA at Pride!!!
Image Description: A dark purple-navy rectangular digital zine cover. The page is decorated like outer space, with yellow stars dotting the page, and four planets and a moon drawn. A planet that resembles Earth and its moon is in the upper right corner, a yellow Saturn-esque planet is in the middle-right, a pink planet is in the bottom left corner, and a green planet is in the bottom right corner. At the top of the page is a white, all caps heading that reads "QYA special edition zine," and smaller bold text underneath reads "universal pride." There are five illustrated cartoon astronauts on the page, each of which highlights certain pride flags, and each are drawn in light gray suits. In the middle-left of the page, a sideways astronaut is drawn; they are Black, have green gauges and dark hair, and their gray suit has the new polyamorous flag and a genderqueer flag on the panel in the center. In the bottom-left corner, an astronous with light brown skin and pink wavy hair gives a thumbs-up gesture. They have a lesbian flag on their suit panel. In the bottom-middle there is a white astronaut with green hair, who is holding a trans flag. They have an asexual flag on their suit panel. In the bottom-right corner is a white astronaut with ginger hair, freckles, wire-rimmed glasses, and earrings. They have a nonbinary and aro-ace flag on their suit panel, and are waving a progress flag. In the middle-right of the page, there is a Brown astronaut with short blue hair.
THANK YOU!

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

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