Dear reader,

Welcome back to the Queer Youth Assemble's zines! This is our fall 2023 zine themed around "Euphoria." Euphoria refers to not only gender euphoria, but all types of queer, trans, and nonconforming joy! 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 no potential trigger. 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.
eating out in the field
no one has asked me
if i’m
something or other
some things are manageable
and I see what the future could be
she plays the guitar like I never could
and I know she feels safe
just like me

I am here
we are real

in the ramp cabin, the other kids don't flinch
when my wrist pops out of place
she says she's low
I say come sit
our chariot
will arrive soon
and tomorrow
the real world will slam into me like
a car crash
and tomorrow
you will go back to your new house after fleeing your
old one
and tomorrow
we will be
5, 6, 7 hours apart

tonight I grip your hand in mine
I will not be crushed
euphoria
tightness in my throat, my chest
broken teenage rebellion
an unfinished fantasy
shards of dreams cutting the roof of my mouth
Wishing for a different me
Like the one I imagine
Mirror says, "But that's not you"
But I think someday it could be

Two people, so separate
How I look and who I am
The real me seems so far away
I'm starting to feel desperate

Pulling up my thick brown hair
All the way up to my ears
The mirror's voice goes quiet
And I see the real me there
ID: a two-panel comic in a simple style with black lineart and flat colors. The top panel shows a person in a red hoodie with shoulder-length hair looking in a mirror. They are unhappy and their eyes are covered by a black bar. Surrounding them are the words "she," "daughter," and "girl," each with arrows pointing at the person. The bottom panel shows the same person in front of the mirror, but their hair has been put in a small ponytail and appears short from the front. Their eyes have been uncovered and they are slightly smiling. Beside them is the word "me" with an arrow pointing at them.
Unshackled from norms that tried to confine,
Expressions of self, far and wide they shine,
A prism of colors, vibrant and free,
Reveling in the beauty of authenticity.

For too long, society's chains held us tight,
But now we rise with radiant might,
Embracing the essence of who we truly are,
Unveiling a truth that reaches afar.

As the sun dips below the horizon's line,
We bask in the glow of gender divine,
Transforming, evolving, breaking old walls,
A symphony of voices, heard through all halls.
ID: A picture of a landscape, taken during the day, with an unpaved dirt path going between two stretches of mowed green grass and two trees in the foreground. In the background are a mass of trees and bushes, in less clear focus. The sky above the trees is blue-gray and cloudless, with a rainbow arching from mid-screen to the upper right corner. End ID.
Being trans often feels like I'm trapped
Trapped in my own body
Trapped in other people's false ideas
about me
Trapped in a world that hates me

And it feels like I'm trapped,
But transness is the opposite of that
Transness is freedom

This is the most free I've ever felt
I am free to choose my name for myself,
And glow every time I hear it
I am free to look in the mirror and, for
the first time,
Feel at home with what I see
I am free to dream of how I want my body to be
And to make that dream a reality

Transness is the freedom to create my own path
And I am choosing to walk down it
I didn't choose to be trans, but I am choosing myself
And I am free
"advertising transgenderism"
by Kai Khaund (they/them)
a couple days ago, my coworker who i've known for nearly a year revealed that she doesn't respect trans people. those were her exact words. she mentioned a trans coworker at her other job, who "decided to be a boy now." my coworker was unaware that i identify as trans and, supposing i would agree with her, began to rant about the transgender movement. along with saying that florida's politics were too progressive, she repeatedly said that trans people "shouldn't advertise." what are we advertising? nothing. our existence is not being sold. as a way to vent frustration, i decided to make a series of satirical "advertisements" targeted towards "selling transness." being transgender hurts in a lot of ways, but we're not defined by that hurt. that's why these "ads" sell every part of transness—the hatred as well as the euphoria.
[id: traditional illustration on lined paper of a person with a striped red shirt pulled over them, showing only their stomach and parts of their hair. The drawing is outlined in blue, and the word "free" is written in blue on the top left. end id].
I always knew that you would surprise me but I never expected this!

Do you give me permission... to be trans?

You don’t need my permission.

But you’re The creator, don’t you control me?

I can’t control you any more than a parent can control their own child.

So being trans is not something I need to ask for... I can just...

It’s something I just discovered that I am.

I can’t in good conscience let you take this leap, without you knowing what it means.

Take my hands.

Now close your eyes.

Now feel.
Panel 1 - A femme-presenting celestial being, speckled in stars, giggles. She says, “I always knew that you would surprise me, but I never expected this!” Panel 2 - A child wearing a purple t-shirt. They ask, “Do you give me permission…to be trans?” Panel 3 - The child and the celestial being stand face-to-face. The being smiles and says, “You don’t need my permission.” The child responds, “But you’re the creator, don’t you control me?” The being answers, “I can’t control you anymore than a parent can control their own child”. Panel 4 - The child has an epiphany and says, “So being trans is not something I need to ask for…I can just…” Panel 5 - The child continues “…it’s something I just discover that I am?” The child looks up, small tears beading up in their eyes. Panel 6 - The celestial being smiles, small sparkles form by her eyes. Panel 7 - The child and being stand face-to-face again. The being says, “I can’t in good conscience let you take this leap, without you knowing what it means.” Panel 8 - The being says, “Take my hands.” The child and being’s hands interlock. Panel 9 - The being says, “Now close your eyes.” The child’s eyes close. Panel 10 - The child and being sit facing each other, eyes closed, foreheads touching. Nebulas, stars, and galaxies form behind them. The being says, “now feel”. Caption: Insta: @gabrieljoyyy. Dialogue adapted from Barbie (2023) written by Greta Gerwig and Noach Baumbach.
For me, euphoria is nothing without dysphoria. What is euphoria if not absence of dysphoria? Euphoria is a light in the darkness that transness can be. The freedom, even momentary freedom, from the weight the bogs so many of us down.

So when I think of euphoria, I think of a lightning strike of joy. A joy so all-encompassing that it feels the light that it casts will blot out every shadow of darkness that ever was. And yet, when that joy fades, the cold, inky darkness is still looming in the background. Still looming in the foreground on the cloudier of days. However, every time that all-consuming light is lit, the darkness gets a bit brighter. As the days go on, the darkness becomes lighter and lighter, and the walk home becomes shorter and shorter.
If I was a moon, I would be a new moon, just barely starting to wax. The slivers of light few and far between. But as I grow older and freer, and the walk home becomes briefer and more enduring, my moon will wax and wax. It will wax until it is a crescent, and soon after, a gibbous, finally, a full moon. A moon whole in its confidence, a moon which has not disregarded its darkness, but lived in it. Wallowed in it, even. Month after month. Until it managed to push out the darkness with the light, pure as milk.

I await the day when my moon is no longer new, when it is whole and contented. I await that day, but in the meantime, I relish in those moments of the fleeting light that is euphoria.
Cover Image Description
by Jesse (they/any)

[ID: A Blue zine cover, taller than it is wide, approximately in the proportions of a standard piece of paper. Five illustrated people, drawn from the waist-up, are oriented in different positions across the page, all facing inwards towards the center. At the top-center is a white person with pale skin and facial piercings, who is smiling with their eyes open. They have medium-length brown hair with blue highlights, and are wearing a green sleeveless shirt with a pink heart. To the right is a Black person with dark hair in twists, smiling with their eyes closed. They have gauges, facial piercings, and are wearing a blue collared shirt with a daisy graphic on the front pocket. In the upper-left of the page is a white person smiling with their eyes open. They have pink heart earrings, mid-length purple hair with bangs, and are wearing an oversized yellow sweater. In the bottom-center is a person with light brown skin, long pink fluffy hair, and piercings, including dangling star earrings. They are smiling with their eyes closed, waiving their right hand, which has sapphic love symbol (two interlocking Venus signs) and flower tattoos. They are wearing a short-sleeved purple collared shirt over a white shirt. Behind them to the left is a person with dark brown skin, shirtless with visible "t-anchor" top surgery scars, smiling with their eyes closed. They have blue earrings, and short green curly hair. In the top left of the page are blue bubble letters that read "2023." In the center of the group of people is "zine" in the same font, oriented in an uneven and vertically slanted manner. In the bottom right is the title of the zine, "euphoria," written vertically in the same letters. End ID.]
THANK YOU!

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

Visit us at:
Website: queeryouthassemble.org
Instagram: @queeryouthassemble
Tiktok: @queeryouthassemble
Twitter: @qyouthassemble

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