# **Medium/Heavy Copy Edit Sample**

# **Charlene Jaszewski**

COPYEDITOR NOTES

1. NOTE: the name “bell hooks” should NOT be capitalized.
2. We decided to capitalize “Black” and “White” (parallel with Latino, etc.)
3. I saw instances of “transmen” (which is technically correct also) but changed them to “trans men” to be parallel with “trans women”
4. We bolded colons after bolded text
5. On pages with heavy statistics (p. 70 for example) I left percentage signs, but changed to “percent” in instances with only one percentage
6. CHECK: in PT 1, author says she’s lived in this body for 29 years, in PT she says 28. I corrected to 29.

# ­­01\_Intro

Gender is complex, as are all facets of humanity. Humans invented gender, so we should do our best to understand it.

I am not a scholar of gender studies, but I have a gender and a body, as do you. Every person that might look at this page has the experience of inhabiting a body in a gendered world. I felt compelled to write this book during my own experience of shifting from being completely apathetic about my own gender to being knee deep in wading through its ongoing transformation. Drawing helped me to process my bodily experiences and connect with people around the world about this intensely personal and sensitive topic. Because so much of gender is visually oriented, it seems fitting to convey these abstract and amorphous concepts through the universal language of illustration.

This book is many things:

* An accessible entry point to understanding the vast complexities and histories of gender expression.
* A self-education tool that will allow for non-judgmental exploration of your own gender, increased empathy and understanding of others’ experiences, and an invitation to consider the intricacies of intersectionality.
* A look into how co-existing identities (race, class, gender, sexuality, mental health) relate to gender within larger social systems.
* The story of my gender and how it changed over time, as well as stories from a wide range of people about their gender identities, difficulties, thoughts, and experiences—punctuated by some really good outfits.
* A hand of reassurance in the big dark scary abyss of finding oneself in the world. It cannot be underestimated, the power of seeing yourself in other people and feeling less alone in alienating experiences. For the queer, transgender, asexual, uncertain, self-conscious people looking at this, you are not alone!

The purpose of this book is to synthesize information about a huge and complex topic into an accessible and beautiful format that is explained from a non-academic, intersectional perspective. Some of the information is personal and is meant to be interpreted as such. All experiences of living in one’s body are unique and personal. This book makes every effort to include as many perspectives as possible, with the knowledge that some voices will be missed or inaccurately portrayed. To anyone that reads this and does not feel represented, I am very sorry and hope to learn more from this experience.

# 02\_Hello

**About me**

**Name:** Iris Gottlieb

**Age:** 29

**Pronoun:** She (for now)

**From:** Durham, North Carolina

**Race:** White and Jewish

**Gender identity:** Boy (for now)

**Favorite ice cream:** Cookies n’ cream

**Profession:** Illustrator, writer, scientist, grump, animator, maker of bad jokes

**Favorite object:** My collection of four thousand found shark teeth

**[Basics Chapter Opener]**38\_Gender is a Social Construct

Humans invented gender.

We also invented written language, math, religion, race, and measured time. These concepts are relevant and important but only exist within the scope of humanity.

Outside of us, they are meaningless.

# 20\_Gendered Before Birth

Gender is the first piece of data we gather about a person, the first inquiry from the outside world of who we will turn out to be. The query begins before we are even born and continues thereafter.

[Caption for sonogram image: Sex can be determined as early as sixteen weeks into pregnancy.]

# 12\_Temperature-Dependent Sex Determination: A Note About Little Baby Sea Turtles

In most species, sex is determined during fertilization. However, the sex of baby sea turtles (and a handful of other reptiles) is determined by the temperature of the area in which their fertilized eggs are laid. If the surrounding sand is consistently cooler than approximately 82 degrees Fahrenheit, there will be mostly males, if it’s above approximately 88 degrees Fahrenheit, there will be mostly females. If the temperature fluctuates, it will be a mixed group.

Climate change is causing warmer sand temperatures and therefore a disproportionate ratio of females to males, making reproduction more difficult.

# 51\_Introduction to Some Terminology

**agender:** Not identifying with any gender.

**aromantic:** Experiencing little or no romantic interest in others (this is a spectrum).

**asexual:** Experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others, or low or absent desire for sexual activity. Not all asexual people are aromantic (one is a sexuality, one is a romantic attraction). Asexuality is different from celibacy! Celibacy is an intentional choice to abstain from sex; asexuality is not.

**assigned sex:** The sex assigned to an individual at birth, which usually corresponds to the gender identity a person was raised with. It may or may not align with a person’s gender identity.

**biological sex:** The physical characteristics of reproductive organs, secondary sexual characteristics, chromosomes, and hormones. This is not binary; some scientists argue that it is a continuum.

**bisexual:** Attracted to both men and women; also sometimes defined as attraction to more than one gender, or attraction to the same gender and other genders.

**butch:** Usually refers to someone born female who mentally, emotionally, and/or physically identifies as masculine of center (MoC), which means dressing or having mannerisms that are more traditionally masculine. (I feel a bit strange about the term masculine of center because it implies there is a “center.” However, it is used as a succinct umbrella term for non-feminine presentation.)

**cisgender:** Someone whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are the same.

**drag queen/king:** A man who dresses in women’s clothes, or a woman who dresses in men’s clothes, usually for entertainment. Being a drag queen/king does not indicate someone’s sexual orientation, though it is usually associated with queer/gay communities.

**femme:** Someone who mentally, emotionally, and/or physically identifies as feminine. Often applies to queer women.

**gender binary:** The idea that there are only two genders: male and female.

**gender dysphoria:** The feeling that one’s body and one’s gender identity are misaligned.

**gender expression:** How one displays their gender through dress, social behavior, or demeanor.

**gender fluid:** Someone whose gender varies on the spectrum and is expressed dynamically.

**gender identity:** The internal feeling of one’s gender. This can be different from gender expression and sex assigned at birth. Some common identities are: woman, man, transgender, genderqueer, agender.

**genderqueer:** Someone who does not identify with the gender binary. This term is often used as an umbrella that includes gender-fluid, agender, gender non-conforming, etc.

**heteronormativity:** Though this term originally described the assumption that all people are heterosexual, the definition has expanded to encompass assumptions about gender. Heteronormativity manifests institutionally (not including gender-neutral options on forms, or gendered bathrooms) and socially (asking a male-presenting person, “Do you have a girlfriend?” or having a bachelorette party with dick-shaped candy).

**heterosexual:** Someone who is attracted physically and emotionally to people with a different gender from their own within the gender binary/heteronormativity.

**homosexual:** Someone who is attracted physically and emotionally to people of the same sex. Note: This word is not used much anymore, as queer, gay, and LGBTQ+ are generally accepted into the vernacular now.)

**intersex (formerly hermaphrodite):** “A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.”—Intersex Society of North America.

**pronouns:** The pronouns people identify themselves with (she/her, he/him, they/them, ze/zir). It is not optional to call someone by their preferred pronoun, it is a required act of respect.

**queer:** An umbrella term that encompasses all non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender identities.

**transgender:** Someone who identifies with a gender other than their sex assigned at birth.

**two-spirit:** Umbrella term used by First Nations people to recognize people who are a third gender (which is a blend of masculine and feminine energy), multiple genders, or identities that operate outside of the western dichotomy of sex orientation and gender.

# 21\_Infinite Combinations

Sexuality, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and anatomy are a fluid part of human identity, which is becoming more and more fluid with each generation. All of these factors may shift throughout one’s life and any combination is possible.

[Image of the chart with symbols]

**Sexuality:**

Asexual

Demi-sexual

Homosexual

Bisexual

Pansexual

Heterosexual

**Gender:**

Transgender woman or trans woman

Cisgender woman or cis woman

Genderqueer

Non-binary

Agender

Transgender man or trans man

Cisgender man or cis man

**Gender Expression:**

Androgynous

Feminine

Masculine

**Sex:**

Female

Male

Intersex

**Attraction:**

Aromantic

Homoromantic

Heteroromantic

Panromantic

# 24\_Gender Identity

Gender identity is our internal sense of self as a gender—who we know ourselves to be. A cisgender person has a gender identity that is consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender or genderqueer person has a gender identity that is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Examples: female, male, agender, boy, non-binary, genderqueer

# 45\_Pronouns: What They Are and Why They Matter

We use pronouns to describe each other all the time: s Most people don’t actively choose their pronouns because they align with their gender identity by default.

For a cis woman, her sex is female, her gender is woman, and her pronoun is she/her.

For someone gender non-conforming, transgender, agender, or intersex, these assigned pronouns may not feel aligned with their gender identities. It’s vital to respect someone’s chosen pronoun and/or name (a former name no longer in use is often referred to as a “dead name”). Many people who are in the middle or completely outside of she/he identities choose to use the gender-neutral they/them pronouns which replaces she/her or he/him grammatically and in concept. The excuses of why people refuse to refer to someone in their life as a gender-neutral pronoun include:

* “It’s too hard.”
* “It’s unnatural.”
* “It’s not that big of a deal.”
* “It doesn’t make sense grammatically, it’s plural.”

None of these are good or valid excuses to not try! Everyone will mess up in the beginning and that’s okay; just making the effort indicates consideration and respect.

In response to those excuses, I would ask you to consider these points:

* It’s really not too hard. We easily learn to call newlywed people by a new last name.
* Language evolves. This is an evolution of language. Everything feels “unnatural” at first but then becomes normalized. We created language, so we can change it.
* Think about if everyone in your life began calling you by pronouns different from your gender. You’d feel pretty bad, wouldn’t you?
* Someone lost their wallet. There, you did it! You used a singular “they.”

OPTION: table (and then follow with the sentence starting, “none of these are good or valid…”

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Excuse** | **Response** |
| “It’s too hard.” | It’s really not too hard. We easily learn to call newlywed people by a new last name. |
| “It’s unnatural.” | Language evolves. This is an evolution of language. Everything feels “unnatural” at first but then becomes normalized. We created language, so we can change it. |
| “It’s not that big of a deal.” | Think about if everyone in your life began calling you by pronouns different from your gender. You’d feel pretty bad, wouldn’t you? |
| “It doesn’t make sense grammatically, it’s plural.” | Someone lost their wallet.  There, you did it! You used a singular “they.” |

# 11\_Non-binary (no title)

All of these people identify as non-binary.

# 06\_David Bowie

“I don't know where I'm going from here, but I promise it won't be boring.”

―David Bowie

David Bowie was known and idolized for his wild fashion, gender exploration, and musical legacy. A leader of the glam rock movement, Bowie embodied many personas throughout his life, most famously that of Ziggy Stardust, a fictional bisexual alien rock star, a flamboyant performer with bright hair, full makeup, and androgynous over-the-top costumes. His personas had moments, phases and recurrences reflecting how consistently he shifted his presentation. However, no matter who he was at any moment, he was still Bowie.

He was the first superstar to completely shatter the mold of masculinity without it being directly tied to any specific sexual orientation. Bowie created a category of identity that was revolutionary in its fluidity and exploration of gender and sexuality. Dresses, face paint, glitter, onesies, bright hair, high heels, blouses, lipstick, silk scarves, gaudy jewelry—nothing was off limits.

Both an entertainer and master of shape-shifting in music and fashion, his presence has had lasting effects on the creative world. Taking fashion elements from many cultures and eras, today’s fashion—from Alexander McQueen to Lady Gaga to queer youth today—shows his influence.

(caption: Costume by Kansai Yamamoto)

# 22\_Gender Dysphoria

Gender dysphoria is when your body doesn’t feel in alignment with your gender identity.

One can feel uncomfortable socially, physically or emotionally, and may alleviate that discomfort by socially transitioning (changing pronouns or name), changing style, or physically changing through surgery or hormones. These are all important ways of achieving comfort in one’s body.

If it’s hard to imagine what that discomfort might feel like, do this thought experiment: you wake up one day to find you have all of the sexual characteristics, wardrobe or gender roles of a gender you do not identify with. If you are a cisgendered male, imagine having breasts, a menstrual cycle, or a feminine name. You might feel uncomfortable and ask people to respect you by calling you by a name that better suits your internal identity or seek medical treatment to become masculine presenting.

There is a narrative that transgender people have always felt as if they’ve been trapped in the wrong body. While this is true for many people, oftentimes gender dysphoria develops and changes over time and is helped by one or more of the preceding options, but not all. Cisgendered women can opt to have their breasts reduced, enlarged or removed to feel more comfortable in their body while not shifting their gender identity. Female-assigned gender non-conforming people (born female but who identify as neither male nor female) can take testosterone hormones to develop secondary sex characteristics (facial hair, deepened voice, broad shoulders) but never use male pronouns. The needs and desires of someone to feel at home in themselves can vary widely. Changes can be made suddenly and in major ways or slowly in small increments, and every iteration is valid and okay.

# 46\_no title

Children should be believed when they state they are a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth.

And should be believed if they want to change their gender the next day.

# 28\_Gender Expression

Gender expression is how we present our gender to the outside world (via fashion, hair, mannerisms, etc.) and how society perceives our gender.

Gender expression is deeply tied to traditional gender roles, division of labor, systems of oppression, and cultural norms. Keep in mind that gender expression does not necessarily indicate gender identity! For many reasons including (but not limited to) preference, comfort, safety, geographical location, and religion, someone’s gender might not be presented in the social norm fashion of that gender. A boy living in a religiously conservative town may not be able to present as feminine though they wish to. A cisgender boy can wear dresses and still be a cisgender boy.

Examples: high femme, androgynous, masculine, feminine, butch

# 27\_[image of the various clothing]

All of these clothes belong to one person’s wardrobe.

# 08\_Animals in Shirts (no title for page)

Animals showing their gender expressions in the wild.

Just kidding—animals don’t have a social gender construct.

# 23\_The How, What, and Who of Attraction: The Difference Between Gender Identity, Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

Gender Identity is the Self (internal understanding).

Sexual Orientation is the Who of desire (external desire for others).

Sexuality is the How & What of desire (how you like to be intimate).

It can be really difficult to separate the three, as we often think of them as one thing. It’s okay to be confused! A good exercise in thinking about these as distinct elements is to assess your own landscape of attraction.

1. What’s your gender identity? Cisgender woman, transgender boy, genderqueer or not sure yet?
2. Who are you attracted to? Everyone? Someone of the same gender as you or different? Not attracted to anyone?
3. How do you like to be intimate or in relationships with people? Monogamous? No sex at all? Several romantic partners? And what happens behind closed doors (or open if you’re into that) with the person you’re attracted to?

# 64\_Spotlight on: Prince

“I’m not a woman/ I’m not a man/ I am something that you’ll never understand.”

—“I Would Die 4 U”

I love Prince in all his eccentric purple glory. His given name was actually Prince (full name: Prince Rogers Nelson), after his father’s jazz stage name, a name fit for someone who would become one of the top-selling musical artists in history and a fashion icon of the twentieth century.

Prince was a musical genius and an incredibly prolific artist (forty-two albums and vaults full of unreleased music), but when we think of Prince, we think of his colorful, flamboyant, unapologetically androgynous and wildly sexual presence. He showed the world a different expression of blackness as one of the most gender-fluid performers to date. He defied the confines of race, sexuality, gender, and fashion, wearing wild outfits, eyeliner and possessing an air of mystery. A- He was a Black man who proudly and confidently embraced the masculine and feminine within himself. He broke all the rules.

He was full of complexity and contradiction, and perfectly demonstrated the distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. He was a straight feminine man, and both a queer/transgender icon and a conservative Jehovah’s Witness. His complexity forces us to challenge the assumptions we hold about the intersection of gender, sexuality and religion.

Later in his life (after he’d become a Jehovah’s Witness), he gave a few interviews in which he seemed to be anti-gay. His former bandmates (and ex-lovers) Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman said that he asked them to denounce their homosexuality before he’d play with them again. However, several years later they performed on the same stage.

How can a gay icon be against homosexuality? How can a pioneer in freedom of sexual expression be straight?

Well that’s just it: people are complex and ever shifting. One category never automatically means another. Regardless of his political or spiritual beliefs later in life, he paved the way for people to feel freer in their expression of identity.

# 66\_Asexuality

Asexuality isn’t talked about too much, but it should be!

Asexuality is a sexual orientation in which people do not experience much (if any) sexual attraction, and have a low or absent desire for sexual activity. Unlike celibacy, it’s not a choice, and has nothing to do with romantic or sexual orientation (who you’re attracted to). Much like the term queer, asexuality is an umbrella term under which many types of more specific orientations fall. Just like any other facet of identity, sexuality is on a fluid spectrum. One might only experience sexual attraction if they feel an emotional connection (demisexual) or have romantic attraction without the sexual component. Most people who identify as asexual maintain that identity consistently, even if they are in a relationship long term.

I identify as asexual, so it’s very important to me that this topic be included in this book. There is almost no representation of asexuals in popular media and it’s often not believed to be a real orientation, so I want to give it attention and representation. Having no interest in sex is shamed in American culture, making it very hard for people to come out as asexual. Because of this, there can be a lot of internalized shame and feelings of inherent brokenness.

People often try to convince asexual people that they aren’t, attributing it to past trauma, or firing off any number of backhanded compliments or blatant insults. For future reference, don’t say any of the following to an asexual person:

“Maybe you haven’t been with the right person.” (Irrelevant)

“Don’t be a prude.” (I’m not.)

“That’s not real.” (Yes, it is.)

“It’s just a phase.” (Nope, it’s my sexuality.)

“You never know until you try.” (Yeah, I do know.)

“Don’t you mean celibate?” (No, that’s a choice.)

“What about kids?” (There are other ways to have kids, and it’s fine if I don’t want them.)

“You probably just had a bad experience once.” (Irrelevant, or I had a bad experience because I thought I was *supposed* to want to have sex.)

It’s so important to trust people when they express this identity and support them in what might be a potentially difficult experience. Disbelief and shame can lead people to put themselves in uncomfortable sexual situations out of perceived social obligation or pressure, or worse, to avoid romantic relationships completely for fear of eventual rejection.

Asexuality can also be really great! There is absolutely no limit to how romantic and loving relationships can be with someone who is asexual. There are so many ways to be intimate without sex. With sex off the table, there is more time for reading, walking, seeing friends, exploring other interests, and maybe a bit more free space in your brain for things that make you happy and fulfilled. Asexual people are just like sexual people in that not all of them want to be in a relationship.

Asexuality is not a lack or a deficiency of something valuable—it’s just a different sexuality. You’re not less valuable than another person with a different sexuality! You’re important, and you are not alone!

# 67\_Boys Will Be Boys: How Toxic Masculinity Shapes the Male Population

The term “toxic masculinity” has reentered the public sphere following the waves of sexual harassment incidents coming to light on the national stage. Toxic masculinity describes a dynamic in which men express their gender identity by suppressing emotions, expressing feelings with anger rather than vulnerability, and exhibiting dominance over one another and women/other genders. This societal idea of how to achieve masculinity leads to toxic behaviors such as sexual harassment, domestic and sexual violence, misogyny, homophobia, and substance abuse. Let’s be clear:

The term has a surprising origin in the mythopoetic men’s movement of the 1990s. This movement claimed that men were stripped of some fundamental masculinity during the industrial revolution and there was a need to restore a sense of the “deep masculine.” According to this group, men’s loss of masculinity was the direct result of spending excessive time around women, being falsely (in their minds) accused by feminists of sexism, no longer having non-competitive male bonding time, and stifled emotional expression. It’s deeply ironic that toxic masculinity originally pertained to society’s (perceived) toxic effects *upon* men, versus the toxic effects men’s behavior has on women and other genders.

# 19\_Homosexual Behavior in Animals

It’s debatable whether animals have sexualities (sexual preferences or attractions outside of the survival instinct to have sex to procreate). A huge number of animal species have been observed engage in mating behavior—not necessarily sexual behavior—with individuals of the same sex. There are many explanations for this: expression of dominance, courting behavior, non-sexual partnership, affection, or stimulating reproductive hormones without a viable mate.

Here are a few of the many species that exhibit frequent same-sex behavior or have long-term, same-sex partners: black swans, dragonflies, elephants, bats, whiptail lizards, hyenas, penguins, cows, giraffes, dolphins, and marmots. Bonobo apes are, as a species, almost entirely bisexual and engage regularly in non-reproductive sex with both males and females. By the way, humans evolved from apes, and most ape species are very sexually fluid . . . just sayin’.

Although homosexual behavior is common in the animal world, it’s rare that an animal will choose that “lifestyle” to the exclusion of heterosexual behavior. One outlier is the domesticated sheep—10 percent of male rams will exclusively mate with other male sheep, even in the presence of ewes (the opportunity to carry on their genes).

There’s nothing unnatural about it.

# 53\_Physical Sex

Physical sex is the physical, biological makeup of one’s reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics (facial and body hair, vocal range, breasts).

When a baby is born, the doctor looks at their genitalia and decides what gender the baby will be raised as. This is not a very precise science and doesn’t consider many of the other factors that contribute to one’s physical sex characteristics.

Many people believe sex, unlike gender, is immutable, which is not true. Scientists are beginning to believe that sex is not binary—there is a spectrum. For example, n,andlack

Much like one’s gender presentation, sex which can shift over time. One can also make changes to their sex through surgery or hormones.

# 29\_Anatomy of Gender

(labeled in boxes that correspond to their respective body parts)

Unbounded possibility of imagination, vulnerability, brilliance, creativity, anger, love, and complexity.

Upper lip hair is common in women, particularly non-White women.

Vocal range and presence of an Adams apple. Vocal range changes with puberty or hormone therapy.

There is a great range in natural breast size and shape among women. Some have had breast tissue removed to align with their appropriate gender, to alleviate discomfort, or due to illness like breast cancer. Men also have breast tissue, and they can also get breast cancer. Women, both trans and cisgender, may have breast implants to align more with their gender.

Hip width is generally greater in bodies that have uteruses for childbirth.

Gonads (internal sexual organs, ovaries or testicles). Many men and women have had their gonads removed for medical reasons, such as ovarian or testicular cancer.

Facial hair is affected by testosterone levels and can be altered (decreased or increased) with hormone therapy. Trans men can grow beards and people with biologically male-dominant traits can remain relatively hairless their whole lives. Cisgender women also have testosterone, which plays a role in body and/or facial hair growth.

Body hair is often thought of as a male trait, but all humans (and all mammals, even dolphins) have body hair. Many women have more body hair than men. Female hairlessness is a White beauty standard, bringing shame to women of color, who tend to have more body hair.

Genitalia and reproductive organs do not always reflect chromosomes, hormones or gonads. Genitals can be changed by surgery and hormone blockers. Sex organs are not determinant of one’s gender.

# 26\_Intersex

There is a fundamental problem in the way society—and particularly, doctors—determine the sex (and therefore assumed gender) of babies at birth. The practice of sex assignment of newborns has been strictly female or male. The binary is still upheld in many societies worldwide, including in the United States. If a baby is born intersex (has some sort of non-traditional genital or gonadal structure) it is considered an “abnormal” state, and someone (usually a doctor) chooses a sex, and the baby either has surgery or is prescribed hormones (or both) to make it “match” the assigned sex. This amounts to non-consensual gender reassignment surgery, unethical gender mutilation and possible sterilization for thousands of children born with non-binary genitals.

Intersex children forced into a binary sex are having someone else determine what their body will be before they’re allowed to grow into their gender identity. As they grow older, they may experience at best, limited access to appropriate health care because of their unique situation, or at worst, discrimination, stigmatization, or even murder.

Because this subject is so taboo, people assume being intersex is a rare occurrence, but it is actually quite common. The following statistics from the study, “How Sexually Dimorphic Are We?” by Anne Fausto-Sterling et al. show that the variation and rate of non-binary sexual characteristics is vast and common. Note: this is a very small sample of the huge variation of ways to be intersex.

Numbers of intersex births are always debated (because definitions of what makes a baby “intersex” are not standardized) and change dramatically depending on what article you read, but these numbers are supported by the Intersex Society of North America and American Psychological Association:

Total number of people:

* whose bodies differ from standard male or female = one in a hundred births
* who have visibly atypical genitalia = one in fifteen hundred births
* who receive surgery to “normalize” genital appearance = one or two in a thousand births
* who don’t have XX or XY chromosomes (such as a female with only one X or someone who has XXY chromosomes) = 1 in 1,666 births

# 04\_Slug Sex

We’ve all seen a slug (and have possibly stepped on one). Slimy, slow, and squishy, these shell-less terrestrial gastropod mollusks also have one of the most sexually fluid existences. Slugs are hermaphroditic, meaning they have both male and female reproductive organs. This is a common trait among invertebrates and plants which gives them an evolutionary advantage: any individual of a species can mate with any other individual. If there are no available partners, the individual can fertilize themselves!

Terminology note: while the term “hermaphrodite” is outdated and offensive when referring to human beings (intersex is the appropriate term), the word is still acceptable to use when referring to non-human species. Sexual polymorphism also describes species with both sexual organs.

When two leopard slugs (or any slugs) find each other in the wild, they will entangle in a slimy spiral, hanging upside down to exchange spermatozoa. The evolutionary ingenuity of sexual polymorphism is that in addition to being able to give and receive sperm, both individuals possess eggs. They can fertilize each other’s eggs, producing twice the number of offspring while simultaneously achieving genetic variation.

If something goes . . . um, wrong, the slugs will become stuck in their tangled state, and a sacrifice must be made to get free: one of the slugs must bite off the male organ of the other. Because the now-amputated slug retains its female reproductive organs, luckily it can continue to mate and reproduce with other individuals that have male organs.

Slugs who don’t find a mate can fertilize their own eggs with their own sperm, resulting in viable (but less genetically diverse) offspring.

Don’t underestimate the humble slug.

# 54\_Etiquette

**Do:**

Be patient with people’s processes! Everyone moves at their own speed.

Ask people’s pronouns even if you think their gender is obvious. Sometimes gender expression and identity are different! While it’s not relevant to some people, it’s really important to others and is a small, meaningful, quick gesture everyone can do.

select.

Be nice!

Center: Practice makes ~~perfect~~ progress

**Don’t:**

Ask someone’s birth name!

Give backhanded compliments! (“But your name is so pretty!” “You’re too pretty to be gay!”)

Misgender someone behind their back!

Make someone else’s gender about you. If you feel uncomfortable, spend time processing it on your own, with friends or in therapy.

Comment on people’s bodies (particularly if someone’s body is changing). It is only appropriate if the person initiates the topic themselves.

S if you’re cisgender and are asked your pronoun

Be mean!

# 69\_Gender Roles: The Parts We Were Cast to Play

Gender roles are expectations about behavior, appearance, communication style, demeanor, and work based on assigned sex. There are similar manifestations of gender roles across countries, cultures, races, religions, and time. However, there are also variations in and deviations from masculinity, femininity and the associated roles of the two within and between cultures.

Let’s get one thing out of the way: all gender roles have been socially created. We made them. Some behavior, tendencies, and traits are strongly biologically influenced depending on the sex of a person, but they are rarely, if ever, a reason behind enforcing gender roles.

These gender constructs do not properly reflect the true abundance of intelligence, power, autonomy, and analytical ability of women, nor the emotional potential, gentleness, and nurturing qualities of men. Everyone is a complicated soup of human traits, interests, skills and expression, but society doesn’t allow for much wiggle room outside of traditional gender roles or provide many role models for those who want to break away from expected behaviors.

Gender stereotypes (alongside race, ability, and socio-economic factors) have contributed to the rise in toxic masculinity, a culture rampant with sexual assault, enormous pay wage gaps, male-dominated governmental control of women’s reproductive rights, and a media culture that portrays mainly heteronormative models of relationships and gender.

Butch women partnered with femme women are expected to hold distinct gender roles and divisions of labor, with the butch partner having a gruffer personality and being less vulnerable, and the femme partner doing the emotional heavy lifting. “So, who wears the pants?” is the quintessential question that sums this up—it assumes one of the two women must be closer to a man to be in a functional relationship.

Within heterosexual relationships, the woman is expected to want children. “When are you going to have kids?” And if she has them, she is expected to be the primary caregiver while the dad is available only for fun weekend times or discipline. On the flip side, this gender assumption often leaves fathers without an equivalent paternity leave, increasing the need for women to take time off from work while also reinforcing the idea of a more absent father figure. However, if the father does provide more than the absolute minimum of childcare and/or house upkeep, he’s given high praise (while women receive no praise at all for doing the same things).

Male bosses are expected to be firm, tough, and stern as a measure of career success and power, while women in powerful positions displaying the same characteristics are thought of as bossy. “Boss bitch.”

Gender roles are applied in childhood. We’re told how to act. Girls are supposed to be sweet and nice, boys aren’t supposed to cry. We saw it modeled in the adults around us (our parents, our principles) and in all forms of media, so of course we tended to emulate it, were expected to fulfill it, and have come to expect it for ourselves.

Humans really like categories. We make them all the time—it helps things feel ordered and othered. It can be really difficult to break from the expectations of what you should be, based on what you look like. It can be painful or mundane—but sometimes revolutionary.

[Advanced Chapter Opener]

# 03\_Intersectionality

(image: each circle should have one of the following words in it: sexual orientation, gender, religion, race, ability, age, location, socioeconomic class)

“In every generation and in every intellectual sphere and in every political movement, there have been African American women who have articulated the need to think and talk about race through a lens that looks at gender or think and talk about feminism through a lens that looks at race.”

—Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw

Intersectionality is a term that has existed since the late 1980s, coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, professor and civil rights advocate. The term was originally created to describe and study the lives of Black women and the ways in which their systemic disadvantages are not defined just by their womanhood, but by their blackness. Crenshaw states, “The term was used to capture the applicability of Black feminism to anti-discrimination law.”

The intersectional theory, in short, studies how different power structures interact to affect the lives of minorities. It highlights how each person is complex and multi-dimensional, and how those factors can combine to form systemic oppression and erasure. One’s experience in life is never isolated to only one sector of their identity—they’re not just their gender or race—their experience is an intersection of identities that lead to more or less privilege or oppression.

The experiences of an elderly Black woman and a young Latino man in the same neighborhood will be completely different.

Intersectionality serves to highlight how marginalized members of certain populations are erased—such as women’s movements that do not include trans women or the showing White men as the faces of the HIV/AIDS crisis. As much as intersectionality illuminates oppression, it also reveals the populations with the most privilege. This insight is important, as it is often harder to recognize our own privilege than recognize the oppression of others.

This book looks at gender from an intersectional perspective to explore why is it important to take all facets of a person into account when discussing the concept and experience of gender.

In short, things are more complicated than they seem.

# 05\_Louis XIV and the High Heel

This outfit could be in a modern-day drag show.

After the death of his father, Louis XIV was made the king of France and ruled for seventy-two years, beginning at the age of four (obviously the age in which you become fit to make national decisions).

While we might see this fashion as being emasculating or effeminate with its lace, high heels, long fur jacket (and Louis’ long hair), at the time it was an outfit which unequivocally represented the wealth, power, and masculinity of a king. Unlike today, where fashion is different per gender, in France in the 1700s, fashion demonstrated a demarcation between social classes. There was gendered clothing, but only upper-class nobility (of both genders) wore specific kinds of garments, fabrics, and aesthetics.

In this period, practicality (or lack thereof) was the indicator of wealth. Louis XIV made high heels popular worldwide, not for women, but for men. He was relatively short (5’4”) and heels boosted his physical stature of power. Heels are found in pictures dating back to ancient Egypt, where the wealthy wore heels to differentiate from the barefooted poor. On the practical side, Persian soldiers at the beginning of this millennia wore boots with heels to more easily stand in stirrups to shoot arrows. Later in Europe, the high-heeled look was again adopted by royalty. The high heel represented a lack of practicality: the higher the heel, the less one could easily do manual labor—the work of the lower class in French society. The height of the heel at one point indicated the wealth of the wearer. High heels were banned for anyone outside of the royal court, though knockoffs were worn by people who knew the king would never be looking down at their feet to notice and be caught.

Women of upper-class status began wearing heeled shoes to masculinize their fashion, to indicate wealth and proximity to power. Heel styles diverged over the course of the 1700s, with chunkier, more square shapes for men’s shoes and more slender, tapered shoes for women.

It wasn’t until the 1800s—the age of enlightenment—when practicality returned to favor in upper-class society. Men’s fashion moved away from ornate luxury, starting a more pronounced gender division in Western European fashion. When the intellectual enlightenment era took hold, men were expected to pursue academic, practical, and artistic endeavors. In contrast, women were expected to be submissive, emotional, and uneducated, all of which was accentuated by the impractical nature of the heel, which became solely associated with femininity.

Until Prince. That dude wore heels his whole life and he was still one sexy MF.

# 07\_Frida Kahlo

“I used to think I was the strangest person in the world but then I thought, there are so many people in the world, there must be someone just like me who feels bizarre and flawed in the same ways I do. I would imagine her and imagine that she must be out there thinking of me too. Well, I hope that if you are out there and read this and know that, yes, it's true. I'm here, and I'm just as strange as you.”

—Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo was a revolutionary in many senses. She existed in the in-betweens: between gender, sexuality, and race. She was engaged in a lifelong exploration of inconsistent realities within herself and among people.

Kahlo contracted polio at age six (which caused a lifelong limp), and twelveyears later she was involved in a serious bus accident that left her bedridden for several months and permanently disabled. While bedridden, she delved into painting self-portraits, saying, “I paint myself because I am often alone, and I am the subject I know best.” Her gender fluidity was unabashedly represented in her work. She also painted about miscarriage, heteronormativity, birth, and disability, topics still not fully accepted into non-taboo dialogue.

KahloKahlo had an iconic and recognizable look: striking black hair, a beautiful face with an intense stare, a dark mustache and of course, her famous unibrow. Her sartorial style spanned a wide spectrum, from men’s suits to ornate traditional Mexican dresses.

Her unconventional and often toxic marriage to painter Diego Rivera was marked by affairs on both sides, Kahlo’s with both men and women—Communist Leon Trotsky, famous women such as Josephine Baker, and even some of Diego’s own mistresses.

Not only did she live outside of societal restrictions, but both her work and personal story continue to push others to confront the in-betweens.

# 10\_Young Kids in the 1800s Were Gender Neutral

Gendered clothing for young children was not a culturally normalized concept in the United States until the early twentieth century. Before then, for centuries, young children under the age of six or seven wore white dresses which were popular for their practicality—easy to bleach and easy to pass down to child after child. Boys switched to pants and shirts around the time when they received their first haircut.

[caption for image: Outfit of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1884]

# 13\_Spotlight on: Coco Chanel

Pants: we all wear 'em. But we didn’t before Coco Chanel.

The French clothing designer Coco Chanel brought women into the modern era by incorporating elements of menswear into everyone’s wear. After World War I, Chanel introduced a radical idea: design affordable clothing for women as a fashionable symbol of liberation from constrictive corsets.

In 1926, Chanel released her version of the little black dress, and *Vogue* dubbed it “Chanel’s Ford”—just like the Model T brought the automobile to the everyman, her dress was accessible to women of all classes.

After World War II, when fabrics were expensive, Chanel embraced this constraint, building her fashion brand on unconventional practicality. Black was elevated beyond the realm of funerals, costume jewelry was paired with simpler clothing as a cheaper way to maintain femininity, and suits invoked the power of men for women entering the post-war workplace. Although scandalous at the time, pants were introduced as womens wear, which provided more comfort and practicality to women.

The staples of today’s women’s fashion—comfortable fabrics, tweed jackets, simple silhouettes, branded perfume, costume jewelry, the little black dress—were all Chanel’s creations. While Chanel remains a legacy in the world of fashion, she didn’t totally favor the way she shaped womens wear, saying at age eighty-six, “I came up with [trousers] by modesty. From this usage to it becoming a fashion, having 70 percent of women wearing [them] at evening dinner is quite sad.”

In my opinion, 70 percent of women wearing trousers to dinner is not sad at all. Not having the option to wear them to dinner is much sadder.

# 14\_The Quiet Southern Epidemic: HIV/AIDS in Black and Latino Gay Male Communities

The AIDS epidemic of the 1980s was one of the most prominent medical, political, and social issues of the time. It ravaged gay communities, killing huge numbers of homosexual and bisexual men, as well as intravenous drug users and sex workers. However, access to information and healthcare was, and still is, disproportionately divided between people of different races, classes, and geographic regions.

After the fight against AIDS in the 80s led to development of HIV drugs that inhibit the disease’s progression to AIDS, many thought that the HIV/AIDS crisis was mostly under control. This assumption is not only incorrect, but dangerous. The southern United States is now home to the highest percentage of people diagnosed with HIV in the U.S., accounting for 50 percent of new HIV infections in 2016.

HIV transmission rates between Black and Latino men who have sex with men (MSM) are high: one in two Black men and one in four Latino men will contract HIV through sexual encounters with men in their lifetime. Many MSMs do not self-identify as gay or queer. [While these CDC studies did not specify these figures were for the South, it does acknowledge the South has the highest rate of HIV transmission in the United States.]

These high rates are both caused and influenced by factors such as inadequate sex education, conservative legislation, and religious and institutional homophobia. Along with limited financial and medical resources for treatment, these factors present significant barriers to obtaining both preventative care (to curb the rate of infection) and treatment if infected.

Undocumented Latino men face additional issues: they may not be able to seek treatment due to citizenship status or lack of insurance, and even if they do, they may not speak English well, if at all. Disclosing sexual history is already an incredibly intimate act, and a language barrier could further inhibit the sharing of deeply personal information.

In this region, where queer and gay identities are still widely stigmatized, there exists a culture of shame and secrecy. I grew up in the South, where schools more often than not teach abstinence-only sex-ed. In an environment that doesn’t even acknowledge straight sex, imagine how difficult it must be for someone to safely have queer sex and get access to medical and mental health treatment related to their sexual orientation.

The South is the most religious part of the United States. While in many religious communities, being out as LGBTQ+ or HIV is very difficult, surprisingly, individual spirituality/religion has been shown to have positive effects on health outcomes/treatment among Black and Latino MSM.

HIV statistics in the United States as of 2016-2017:

* 70% of HIV infections occur in MSM populations
* 50% of new HIV infections are in the South
* 13.4% of the United States is Black
* Young Black gay men are most affected by HIV
* 44% of people diagnosed with HIV are Black
* 18% of the United States is Latino

These statistics are sobering to say the least, and hopefully the more this issue is brought to light, the more potential it has to change for the better.

# 15\_Equality ≠ Equity

The same inputs do not necessarily produce fair outcomes.

Suddenly giving an individual or population the same rights, resources, or opportunities as non-marginalized groups does not erase preexisting systems of discrimination and historical disadvantage.

The concept of equity takes into account an individual or population’s unique needs in order to create “success.” This acknowledges people have different needs; groups that have been oppressed need more resources to have the same opportunities and resources as non-marginalized groups.

You get one so I get one = fairness is not an adequate or complete way of gaining equality.

Fairness means meeting varied needs in varied ways.

If you have two ladders of equal height, but one starts at the ground level and one starts on a platform they won’t reach the same point despite their sameness. The platform is privilege—a starting point with an advantage can reach a higher point faster.

# 16\_no text/dr.pepper

(Image: Dr. Pepper can, right page)

# 17\_White Feminism

“The problem, and what [many feminists today] are not saying is that women of color in general—and especially Black women—have always been more likely to be feminist than White women. And the problem I have with the idea that the women’s movement or the feminist movement is somehow a White thing is that it renders invisible the people who have always been there.”

—Gloria Steinem

White feminism is a broad term used to describe feminist movements that focus primarily on issues that affect White women but do not acknowledge White privilege. This is represented in many ways from subtle to overt, small to grand. Second-wave feminism, a movement in the 1960s that came into being in response to women’s changing domestic roles in post-war United States, is a big example of this concept. White writers and thinkers such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Simone de Beauvoir led the public face of the feminist movement, focusing on issues of workplace, inequality, and sexual freedom while ignoring any semblance of intersectionality around race, class and sexuality.

“[In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan] did not discuss who would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home if more women like herself were freed from their house labor and given equal access with White men to the professions. She did not speak of the needs of women without men, without children, without homes. She ignored the existence of all non-White women and poor White women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure-class housewife.  . . . When Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, more than one-third of all women were in the work force. Although many women longed to be housewives, only women with leisure time and money could actually shape their identities on the model of the feminine mystique.”

—bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*

Today we still praise White women (ahem, Lena Dunham) for their feminism far more easily and widely than non-White feminists, despite their consistent failure to include perspectives outside of themselves, their perpetuation of a false sense of gender equity, or their adoption of outright racist or classist views. While the principles of White feminism do include valuable tenets of equity, they lack complexity and diverse perspectives.

We are in a moment of forward momentum and White liberal populations revel in being “woke,” while simultaneously ignoring large sectors of the population who began and continue to lead liberation movements. Those who are often in the most marginalized and oppressed groups—Black women and men, indigenous populations, immigrants, Muslim communities, trans women, disabled folks, sex workers, genderqueer people, and rural populations—are erased as players in the celebration of milestones like gay marriage, the Women’s March on Washington, or advancements in AIDS research. “Whitewashing” is when historical events, media representation, and/or credit is given to White people as the face of success, erasing the non-White people who either made it happen or are deserving of praise.

American history as a whole is a one-sided story from the perspective of White men (and later women) and often the women of color who have led socio-political movements haven’t been given appropriate credit and recognition for their incredible work. What it boils down to is, people who face systemic and daily oppression are far more likely to be actively working to dismantle it. After all, the people who benefit from the oppression of others have no incentive (other than basic decency and a desire for equity) to change the systems that give them power, money, freedom, and control of resources.

# 18\_Black Women as the Backbone of Resistance

These are some of the incredible women who have fought for liberation, rights, and freedom since the 1800s.

**Alicia Garza**, **Patrisse Khan-Cullors** and **Opal Tometi**, co-founders of Black Lives Matter

**Angela Davis**, author, professor, prison abolitionist, co-founder of Critical Resistance

**Assata Shakur**, member of the Black Liberation Army

**Audre Lorde**,author, librarian and civil rights activist

**Bessie Coleman**, first Black and Native American U.S. pilot

**Claudette Colvin**, pioneer of the civil rights movement. Arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat nine months earlier than Rosa Parks did.

**Coretta Scott King**, civil rights activist

**Diane Nash**,civil rights activist and a leader and strategist of the student wing of the Civil Rights Movement

**Dr. Dorothy Height**,educator and civil rights activist focusing on women’s issues in the Black community

**Elaine Brown**,former Black Panther chairwoman, prison activist, singer, and writer

**Ella Baker**,human and civil rights activist and primary advisor of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

**Fannie Lou Hamer**,voting and civil rights activist, vice chairwoman of the Freedom Democratic Party and co-founder of the National Women’s Political Caucus

**Flo Kennedy**,lawyer, civil rights activist and frequent cowboy hat wearer

**Harriet Tubman,** abolitionist. Escaped slavery and rescued over three hundred people from slavery in the Underground Railroad.

**Ida B. Wells**,journalist, suffragist and co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

**Katherine Johnson,** one of the first Black women mathematicians for NASA

**Kathleen Cleaver**,law professor, Communications Secretary for the Black Panther Party

**Lena Horne**,singer, dancer, civil rights activist, actress. The first African American to serve on the Screen Actors Guild board of directors.

**Juanita Hall**, first African-American to win a Tony in 1950 for her role in South Pacific

**Mae Jemison**,NASA astronaut, dancer, professor, engineer, physician and first African American woman to travel in space

**Mahalia Jackson**,legendary gospel singer and civil rights activist

**Majora Carter**, American urban revitalization strategist and founder of Sustainable South Bronx

**Mary Church Terrell**,suffragist, civil rights activist and one of the first Black women to earn a college degree

**Mary McLeod Bethune**,President of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the Southeastern Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (SACWC), founder of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), top advisor of the National Youth Administration for Franklin Roosevelt and founder of Bethune-Cookman University (she was very busy)

**Maya Angelou**,poet, singer, civil rights activist, professor, first prominent Black female memoirist, author of “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.” Awarded three Grammys for spoken word albums, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and National Medal of Arts, and earned 50+ honorary degrees.

**Pauli Murray**,lawyer, author, priest and co-founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW)

**Phillis Wheatley**,first published African American poet

**Rosa Parks**,civil rights activist. Known as “the mother of the freedom movement” for her refusal to give up her bus seat for a White passenger.

**Ruby Bridges**,first African American child to desegregate the William Frantz school in New Orleans and founder of the Ruby Bridges Foundation

**Septima Poinsette Clark**, educator and civil rights activist, vice president of the Charleston NAACP branch and founder of Citizenship Schools to teach adults to read in the Deep South

**Shirley Chisholm**,first African American to run for the nomination of a major party for President (Lost to George McGovern). Also founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Women’s Caucus

**Sojourner Truth**,abolitionist, author. Helped recruit Black troops to join the Union Army.

And countless others who have and will fight for change.

# 25\_How Toys Might Create a Generation of Scientists

Starting from a very young age, children are given toys and clothing that prep them to fulfill traditional gender roles. Girls are given crowns and pink clothing in everything from dresses to bikinis. They get makeup kits, dolls, toy kitchens and malls, inundating them with messages about motherhood, beauty standards, and domesticity. Meanwhile, boys are given blue clothing adorned with trucks, planes and dinosaurs, and they play with cars, guns, building blocks, trains, and plastic tools. They’re taught to value practical labor, engineering, figuring out how things work, and sadly, violence.

Childhood interaction with gendered objects, imagination games, and gender roles during play (i.e. playing house vs. playing cops and robbers) has a profound impact on subconscious decisions made later in life.

White men have dominated STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math), both historically and currently. Women are increasingly studying or employed in these fields but have a lot of ground to cover to reach equal representation. Women have been (and still are) actively discouraged from studying these subjects, and STEM fields are not benefitting from the incredible contributions of women.

“It’s possible that in the long run, the stereotypes will push young women away from the jobs that are perceived as requiring brilliance, like being a scientist or an engineer,” says Lin Bian, researcher of developmental psychology at Stanford. By assuming that female children will not be interested in STEM careers down the line, parents do not encourage early exploration of these ideas, leaving girls with less encouragement and confidence than their male counterparts.

In addition to childhood play that involves active exploring-oriented play, we need more role models for girls to look up to. There are not many well-known women in STEM field. There are immense obstacles to giving girls fair and equal educational and work opportunities in general, but especially in the science fields. Women of color have a significantly lower number of positions in the STEM field due to even more systemic roadblocks. However, many organizations are creating programs which will allow young girls of color in the United States to gain exposure to these skills early in life.

There are simple ways of exploring—digging around in the dirt to see what bugs live there, learning the basic science of baking. or figuring out how to build a fort that doesn’t fall down. If you’re a parent, learn alongside your children and see the world through their curiosity.

Instead of giving your little girl a dollhouse for her birthday, consider giving her a simple telescope to look into space or an art farm to see how ants work as a team that you can learn about together.

Gender is Not a Naturally Dividing Force for Interest or Intelligence.

Boys are taught to steer away from pink but have no natural aversion to it. Girls are taught to value themselves by beauty standards but have no genetic aversion to dirt. By letting kids determine what they naturally like rather than suggesting what they *should* like, we will produce a generation of kids who are able to navigate the complicated world of gender with more confidence, skills, and sensitivity to equity.

# 30\_Masculinity (beard), no title

Accessing femininity within oneself and being emotional, vulnerable, and affectionate doesn’t make men less male.

Power doesn’t equal strength.

# 31\_Pink is for Boys, Blue is for Girls

World War II was a turning point in color history. Up until then, pink was a unisex color with a slight bent towards masculinity. Pink derives from red, blood, war, and strength. Blue (usually lighter blue) was a girl’s clothing color evoking gentleness, daintiness, and passivity.

An article in the June 1918 issue of the trade publication *Earnshaw's Infants' Department* stated, “The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl."

After the war, men returned to reclaim their positions as workers and businessmen, adopting blue as a power color. Women were pushed out of the workplace and back into the home, taking pink with them.

# 32\_Cuttlefish

Cuttlefish are some of the most masterful camouflagers in the animal kingdom. Since males outnumber females four to one, and females are picky (turning down 70 percent of “offers”), competition is fierce during mating season. Large males attempt to gain the attention of females through posturing or displays of flashy skin patterning. But don’t count out smaller males: one of their tricks is to change their patterning and color to mimic that of females, sometimes even pretending to carry an egg sac. Then while two large males are fighting it out, the sneaky smaller male slips past them unnoticed and mates with the females. Some cuttlefish have even been spotted with half-and-half skin markings: a male pattern that faces the female cuttlefish next to them (*hello ladies!*), and a female pattern that faces males (*nothing to see here, just us ladies hanging out!*)

Brains win over brawn.

# 33\_Spotlight on: The Zapatistas

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is a leftist indigenous group in Chiapas, one of the poorest states in Mexico. The group began as a secret organization with a mission to protect rural communities in Mexico through peaceful tactics, but violence when necessary. The women in Chiapas, the Zapatistas, have historically had very few rights, all of which were contained within their home rather than in public or governing bodies. However, in the last three decades they have created a self-sustaining infrastructure that prioritizes women’s rights and gives much of the decision-making power to women.

The Zapatistas passed the Women’s Revolutionary Law, which was written and approved in 1993, and published in January 1994. It states:

1. Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine.
2. Women have the right to work and receive a fair salary.
3. Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.
4. Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and hold office if they are free and democratically elected.
5. Women and their children have the right to primary attention in their health and nutrition.
6. Women have the right to an education.
7. Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage.
8. Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers.
9. Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.
10. Women will have all the rights and obligations elaborated in the Revolutionary Laws and regulations.

One of the factors that made these laws even more possible to maintain was the banning of alcohol (and drugs), which still remains in place today. Eliminating alcohol from their society greatly reduced domestic violence against women and kept the little money available with the people of the EZLN.

The essential underpinning of the EZLN was that women’s rights within their community were integrated with their fight for rights and recognition from the Mexican government—they recognized that women’s rights were necessary for the larger fight to succeed. When Comandanta Ramona, one of the leaders and founders of the EZLN, passed away, it was said by fellow member, Subcomandante Marcos, that "the world has lost one of those women who gives birth to new worlds."

# 36\_The Bechdel Test

**Question:** What do these movies have in common?

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part II

Lord of the Rings I, II and III

Ratatouille

The Grand Budapest Hotel

Avatar

The Little Mermaid

Citizen Kane

The Social Network

Finding Nemo

**Answer:** None of them have two named female characters who speak to each other about something other than a man (or a male fish child in some cases).

The Bechdel test (or Bechdel-Wallace test) was originally created in 1985 as a joke by Alison Bechdel in her comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*. Today the test is used by many film critics as a basic standard for feminism and female representation in films, video games, and television.

Obviously not all films would pass with these criteria, like certain non-fiction stories, films set in certain contexts (a male prison), or stories with essentially one character. This test also doesn’t cover the full gamut of equal representation of gender by any means, nor does it measure the depth of non-male characters.

Only about 58 percent of films in the database at bechdeltest.com (going back to the nineteenth century) pass the test, so incomplete as the test may be, it still shows that equal gender representation in the history of films could have been much better.

# 37\_Biology Doesn’t Make Gender

There is a debate in the scientific and social world about how much of a factor biology plays in the difference between men, women, and everyone in between. There are theories and findings that are completely contradictory to one another:

* that men and women have entirely different ways of processing info, problem solving, experiencing emotions, and that men and women have areas of inherent intelligence based on their biology
* that genders and sexes are not tied to biological factors in any way
* that biology and social constructs weave together to create our individual and collective gender identities

“The human brain may be a mosaic, but it is one with predictable patterns.”

—“Patterns in the human brain mosaic discriminate males from females” by Adam M. Chekroud, Emily J. Ward, Monica D. Rosenberg, and Avram J. Holmes.

Much of the scientific debate revolves around how our brains influence our behavior. As discussed in the physical sex section of this book, anatomy and gender can be intricately tied, but anatomical and biological sex does *not* determine the gender of a person.

Neuroscience gets hazier. Many scientific publications have findings with an anti-transgender bias, viewing biology as “immutable and factual.” This leads to gender essentialism, which is the belief that there are two fundamentally different categories of humans: men and women, each of which share a baseline set of characteristics (their “essence”) determined by their biological makeup. Studies have shown that asking people to read scientific articles favoring gender essentialism (whether they are factual or not) increases prejudice.

There is evidence that all brains have a mixed bag of male and female characteristics which are heavily influenced by the gender in which you were raised (due to neuroplasticity, the ability of the brain to change in response to circumstances). This school of thought believes our brains are on a spectrum with very few people (0-8 percent) exhibiting *only* masculine or feminine attributes and the rest have either a mosaic of both extremes or a mix of everything in the middle. How we are raised undoubtedly plays a role in the adults we become, even if our genders would most likely turn out the same no matter what our upbringing is. Trauma, parenting style, and role models certainly influence how we think of and present ourselves.

“In humans, the fact that you're raised as a particular gender from the instant that you're born of itself exerts a biological impact on your brain.”

—Neuroscientist Margaret M. McCarthy

Sex is an important and necessary thing to take into account in many medical and biological contexts including development of drug treatments, mental illness treatments and reproductive health. However, the need to categorize our brain functions into two distinctive and deterministic categories is not a useful way of assessing how we will all behave or what we will be skilled at.

“Talking about average differences is misleading if that's all we do. The brain is not a uniform entity that behaves as something male or something female, and it doesn't behave the same way in all contexts.”

—Anne Fausto-Sterling, a professor emerita of biology and gender development at Brown University

# The Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act (HB2 Bill)

There are countless ways that governments have discriminated against queer and gender non-conforming people, including the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act passed in 2016 in North Carolina, which prohibits people from using public bathrooms that align with their gender, and forces them to use the bathroom for the gender listed on their birth certificate. This means transgender men would be forced to use women’s bathrooms and vice versa.

“Local boards of education shall require every multiple occupancy bathroom or changing facility that is designated for student use to be designated for and used only by students based on their biological sex.”—Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, General Assembly of North Carolina

Let me pause on this absurd law as it deserves some analysis and is very personal to me as a genderqueer North Carolina native. The law claims to be protective, but it is simply transphobic.

Firstly, the lawmakers behind HB2 are afraid that transgender women are only using the women’s bathroom for predatory purposes that put cisgender women in danger. However, being a visible trans woman using a men’s bathroom can be incredibly scary and oftentimes, even more dangerous.

Secondly, enforcing this law forces trans men to use the women’s bathroom. So, instead of forcing people to use the bathroom with people that look like them, the law is doing the opposite and inviting men (yes, trans men are men) to use the women’s bathroom—the exact issue they were fearing.

# 39\_An Ecosystem of Identities Collapsed into Two: How Colonization in North America Imposed a Strong Gender Binary

"We define “othering” as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities.

—John A. Powell and Stephen Menendian

Let’s rewind. If we think about the root causes of sexism, misogyny, racism, classism, ageism, ableism, and all the -isms in this country, they are all about pretty much two things: othering and power. If we seek out the root of many of those dynamics, we will find that colonialism and imperialism brought an “othering” mentality to so much of the world and with it brought the gender binary.

“Colonization itself was a gendered act, carried out by imperial workforces, overwhelmingly men, drawn from masculinized occupations such as soldiering and long-distance trade. The rape of women of colonized societies was a normal part of conquest. The colonial state was built as a power structure operated by men, based on continuing force. Brutality was built into colonial societies.”

—Raewyn Connell, Australian sociologist

Most Native American cultures existed within their own systems of equity between themselves and the natural world. When colonists arrived in North America, they imposed the notion of hierarchy: humans above nature, Whites above non-Whites, men above women. When the European model of power was imposed on indigenous peoples, a model in which wealthy White men exclusively held the decision and law-making power, gender roles were automatically and simultaneously imposed upon them as well. Even though many Native American women held the highest positions of leadership in spirituality, governing, and families within their communities, they were seen as subordinate to men.

"That we do not fit easily into preexisting, officially recognized categories is the correlative of our culture of origin . . . Neither does our thought fit the categories that have been devised to organize western intellectual enterprise."

—Paula Gunn Allen, First Nations scholar

Caption for second image: Lozen of the Apache tribe—a woman warrior who fought to protect the Apache people with her revered and magical skill of locating threatening enemies—surrounded by native fauna and flora of North America.

“Strong as a man, braver than most and cunning in strategy, Lozen is a shield to her people.”

—Victorio, an Apache chief

# 40\_Gayborhood Fast Facts: The Castro

**Where:** San Francisco, California

**First gay bar:** Missouri Mule, 1963

**Where is it and who lived there?** The SF gayborhood is notorious for migrating across different areas and wasn’t established in the Castro district until the 1970s. What makes a gayborhood special is less about notable residents that live there, and more about a general sense of community. Many prominent queer figures lived in North Beach (Allen Ginsberg, Tommy Vasu) and Telegraph Hill (Mona Sargent, founder of the city’s first lesbian bar “Girls Will Be Boys”) and the Tenderloin (Felicia "Flames" Elizond). Bobbi Campbell, a nurse and AIDS activist who lived in the gayborhood, was one of the first and most public people with AIDS. He nailed a sign to the front of Star Pharmacy on Castro Street warning men about the symptoms of “gay cancer,” thus creating San Francisco's first AIDS poster.

**Noted for:** The GLBT History Museum (the first such museum in the United States) and Pink Triangle Park, which memorializes LGBTQ Jews persecuted in the Holocaust—named for the pink triangles queer people were forced by the Nazis to wear on their jackets. The Rainbow Honor Walk on Castro Street showcases twenty-four influential queer faces of history such as Sally Ride, Alvin Ailey, Maurice Sendak, Freddie Mercury, Divine and many others from arts, politics and activists.

**Queers by the numbers:** In 1980, approximately 17 percent of San Francisco identified as LGBTQ. Today it’s sadly much less gay (~6.2 percent) and less racially and economically diverse due to rapid gentrification.

**Gayest Feature:** A rainbow crosswalk

# 41\_Residential Schools

“The dehumanization suffered by our elders and our communities in the residential schools has had an intergenerational effect on aboriginal communities, and especially on two-spirited members of the community. The association of two-spiritedness with sin, and the erasure/denial of their very existence is the dominant culture/colonizer speaking with the voices of our elders.”

—Michelle Cameron, author of “Two-Spirited Aboriginal People: Continuing Cultural Appropriation by Non-Aboriginal Society”

createdthat indigenous, First Nations children attend a in W The government’s intention was to put as much linguistic, familial, geographic and cultural distance between the children and their native cultures as possible in order to gain systemic dominance. Stripping children of their traditions and languages at a young age left the younger generation in a cultural limbo, making it difficult for them to either reintegrate into their own culture or fully enter Eurocentric culture.

Attendance in these schools was an incredibly abusive and traumatic experience, and created a strong, divisive gender binary that did not previously exist in most indigenous cultures. Cindy Hanson, President of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, writes, "The Indian residential school system was, like other colonization programs . . . purposefully gendered to undermine and remove indigenous women’s traditional authority, agency, and roles within families, clans, and traditional governance systems.”

Women learned to be subservient as men took on more patriarchal roles in the family, often being more in control and having more decision-making power. Children were raised in nuclear family structures rather than in extended families and community. In many cases, two-spirit identities were damaged or lost in the process of forced assimilation. Communities who were taught to have certain prejudices now have to relearn how to revive other gender identities within the community.

# 42\_Spotlight on: Marsha P. Johnson (1945-1992)

Marsha P. (the P stands for “pay it no mind”) Johnson was a prominent figure in the LGBTQ liberation movement. Hailed as the “queen of Christopher Street” in New York City, Johnson was a Black transgender woman who performed as a flamboyant drag queen and model and was a lifelong activist. She was deeply beloved by the community she was a part of, but she’s often forgotten in the narratives of queer and trans history.

Johnson was in the front lines of the Stonewall Uprising and later became active in the Gay Liberation Front, an activist group fighting to dismantle structural gender inequality and shift the notion that a heteronormative nuclear family was the ideal familial or social centerpoint.

Along with Sylvia Rivera, she founded the STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) house, which provided shelter for homeless queers, young drag queens, sex workers and transgender youth in New York City. Johnson was a sex worker herself and often homeless, so she knew how important it was to provide services to sex workers in NYC who were often denied adequate services. The program no longer exists, but it became blueprint for providing services to homeless queer youth.

Into the 1980s, Johnson continued to fight for rights denied to LGBTQ populations and joined ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). After many incredibly successful direct actions, ACT-UP divided into smaller factions and led to organizations that continue to provide some of the largest services to the AIDS community.

Johnson struggled with mental health issues throughout her life, a fact that was used as evidence to support the claim that her 1992 death was a suicide. After being reported missing, her body was found in the Hudson River. Her community believes Johnson was killed, and in 2012 her friends got NYC police to reopen the case as a possible homicide. Her death remains unresolved, but she continues to be a force of strength, hope, inspiration, and leader in the fight for queer liberation. Her legacy as a true queen lives on.

# 43\_The Dangers of the Coming Out Movement

If you are in an environment where you don’t feel safe to be publicly in your gender or sexuality, it’s okay to protect yourself until it’s safer.

There can be a tendency to overemphasize coming out as a brave act and one that is the golden key into the queer community. While it is a courageous act to be vulnerable with a larger community of friends and family, the act of coming out can lead to serious and dangerous consequences when made under societal pressure. There is no obligation to come out to be one’s true and honest self.

It is incredibly important for the queer and transgender population to be visible, recognized, and respected. However, the faces of coming-out stories have predominantly been people with societal privilege. Queer and trans members of any community can potentially experience negative reactions or treatment when their gender or sexuality becomes public. However, queer people who experience other forms of marginalization because of race, class and geographical location often face more extreme consequences of coming out, such as workplace discrimination, physical and sexual violence, harassment, online bullying, rejection from loved ones and unstable housing.

If you know someone who has not yet publicly come out, be a support to them until they are ready to tell people. Don’t pressure them or present coming out as the entry fee into the queer community. Too much value put on public visibility can risk harming individuals who do not have the privilege to guarantee their safety or stability once they come out.

Support them and be glad they trust you enough to let you into an incredibly personal experience.44 \_ no title (bell hooks quote)

“Visionary feminism is a wise and loving politics. It is rooted in the love of male and female being, refusing to privilege one over the other. The soul of feminist politics is the commitment to ending patriarchal domination of women and men, girls and boys. Love cannot exist in any relationship that is based on domination and coercion. Males cannot love themselves in patriarchal culture if their very self-definition relies on submission to patriarchal rules. When men embrace feminist thinking and practice, which emphasizes the value of mutual growth and self-actualization in all relationships, their emotional well-being will be enhanced. A genuine feminist politics always brings us from bondage to freedom, from lovelessness to loving.”

—bell hooks

# 47\_Spotlight on: The Stonewall Uprising

1961: Homosexuality is criminalized—not explicitly illegal—in all states except Illinois. Illinois is the first state to “decriminalize homosexual acts” by repealing sodomy laws in 1961.

June 28, 1969, 1:20 a.m.: A revolutionary moment in queer history.

At the time in New York City, gay bars had gotten approval (since 1966) to obtain liquor licenses, but police raids were still common because people could still be arrested for “gay behaviors” such as kissing, touching, contact dancing, and cross dressing. Stonewall Inn was one of the few bars where people could dance openly. Stonewall Inn wasn’t just a bar, it was a safe social and community space for queer, homeless transgender youth and drag queens to go at a time when most gay bars wouldn’t allow people in drag to enter, and there weren’t “community centers” for youths rendered homeless by familial rejection.

On the heels of many other gay bars being shut down, the routine police raid of June 28 turned into a six-day riot, when Stonewall patrons refused to go quietly. After a woman being violently arrested yelled, "Why don't you guys do something?" the growing crowd of bystanders did something. Police had always operated on the wrong assumption that the queer community wouldn’t fight back—that shame and fear would prevent them from outing themselves through protest, or that gay men were too effeminate, weak, and passive to ever fight back. had

Michael Fader, a patron involved in the riots said, “There was something in the air, freedom a long time overdue, and we're going to fight for it. It took different forms, but the bottom line was, we weren't going to go away. And we didn't.”

For six , the area near Stonewall sawnprotestors rocking cars trying to drive by, can So New York.

The Stonewall riots finally ended, but the event sparked the start of public , and birthed the Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Activists Alliance and the first Gay Pride parade, held the year after the riots (known in that year as the Christopher Street Liberation Day).

June 26, 2003: Homosexuality is decriminalized in the final fourteen states (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri, Utah, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Idaho, and Michigan).

June 24, 2016: The Stonewall Inn is designated as a U.S. National Monument, the first to be dedicated to LGBT history.

# 48\_Sexual Double Standards

First page:

A woman sleeps with five people in one month.

Society says: she’s a slut.

Second page:

A man sleeps with five people in one month.

Society says: he’s a player.

(no image)

# 49\_ Spotlight on: Anohni

Anohni, formerly known as Antony Hegarty of Antony & the Johnsons (named in honor of Marsha P. Johnson), is a transgender singer and musician known for her genre-bending music and outspoken stance on gender, environmentalism, and the connection between the two.

“Everyone has a spectrum of masculinity and femininity inside them. In every individual, a war of misogyny is raging. Every man is repressing and oppressing the femininity within themselves, raising up male values as governing values. Because that's what we've been taught to do, just as every woman has. Misogyny isn't just something that affects women. It affects men.”

The process of changing one’s personal and public gender identity is brave and incredible, particularly when one’s name is how they are known by the world—Anohni had had an almost twenty-year career in Anthony & the Johnsons. She released her first album under the name Anohni in 2015. It was a new professional identity, though it had been a name used in her personal life for quite some time. She stated, “To call a person by their chosen gender is to honor their spirit, their life and contribution.”

Like it or not, we take cues from famous people—what to expect of ourselves and of others, and what is culturally accepted. To see Anohni shift identities is important. She’s a shining example that one’s identity should not be hidden because of fame. And in fact, her ability to change and morph her identity while in the public spotlight gives visibility to the fact that identity does grow.

# 50\_ Third and Fourth Genders

,There might be several variations within each—a man who does culturally feminine labor, for example. Regardless, there was often an inherent acceptance of the variance among people.

Hijra, two-Spirit, il femminiello, muxe, kathoey, waria, mahu (māhū), sworn virgins (burrnesha), ninauposkitzipxpe, mino, sekrata, sistergirls & brotherboys, quariwarmi, travesti: these are words from around the world to describe people outside traditional gender binaries. Some are revered as being spiritual leaders, shamans, or healers; others are ostracized or seen as outcasts within society. While the mino (female warriors) would both be considered gender non-conforming from a western lens, it’s unclear if the group considered themselves as a separate, non-binary gender or a religious/specialized subset (there’s is a lot of debate among historians). More accurate examples of separate genders might be the fa’afafine of Samoa, khanith of Oman, or yan daudu of Nigeria, who actively identify as genders outside the binary.

Almost every country has had a group of non-binary gender people.

The United States and Canada:

In many North American indigenous tribes, there was a concept of a third gender, now often referred to as “two-spirit” people. The role these individuals played varied widely according to each community’s language, spirituality, and established gender roles. Some believed two-spirits were able to see the world through the eyes of both genders, acting as forces of balance between feminine and masculine energies. Note that two-spirit does not indicate the sexual or romantic orientation of an individual, only their gender.

Madagascar:

Gender non-conforming individuals in colonial Madagascar are referred to as Sarimbavy. Boys who exhibit more interest in traditionally feminine tasks, dress or social interactions are raised wearing women’s clothing and work in feminine roles. Within their communities, Sarimbavy are highly respected, participating in sacred events as spiritual conduits imbued with supernatural powers. The Sarimbavy were described by early 1900s colonialist research, specifically a text published in 1933 by German psychiatrist Iwan Bolch, “Anthropological Studies on the Strange Sexual Practices of All Races and All Ages.”

India:

Hijras are one of the most well-known third-gender populations. Made up of transgender women or intersex people who dress in women’s clothing, the hijra occupy a unique role in Indian society. However, not all transgender people in India are hijras. The hijra presence in religious texts dates back thousands of years to the Indian epic poem Ramayana (from around 500 BCE). The hijra had long been portrayed as holding mystical abilities in Hindu culture, but after colonization their identity became feared and shamed. Hijras face violence, teasing, ostracization, and exploitation, and most survive off sex work. However, India is taking steps to protect and help transgender people by providing gender-affirming medical services and legally recognizing the third gender.

Thailand:

Kathoeys are people assigned male at birth but live as women and are legally recognized as a third gender. Many describe themselves as “a second kind of woman” or “having a female heart.” Thailand is outwardly very accepting (partly in an effort to encourage gay tourism), but discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia are still major issues, especially outside of major cities. Homosexuality was decriminalized in the 1950s, but there are few explicit legal rights or protections for LGBT people: no hate crime laws, same-sex unions are not legal, and transgender and intersex individuals are often left out of human rights and policy discourse.

Ancient Inca:

Third-gender people (quariwarmi) were shamans who performed rituals in which they accessed the past and present, masculine and feminine, and the living and dead. These rituals sometimes involved homosexual behavior.

55\_no title

Women’s underwear of the 1800s was definitely not designed for comfort.

# 56\_Who’s Smarter? Weigh Their Brain

In the 1800s, it was a commonly held theory that men were scientifically more intelligent than women because their brains were larger, and that White people were scientifically more intelligent than all other races for the same reason.

Paul Broca was the man behind the theory that “proved” these biological differences. He did obtain data from a comparative study of the craniums of cadavers but skewed the data with his own racism and sexism. Unfortunately, he put forward his data as objective fact and indisputable science before there were standards for medical studies.

“We might ask if the small size of the female brain depends exclusively upon the small size of her body. Tiedemann [German anatomist] has proposed this explanation. But we must not forget that women are, on the average, a little less intelligent than men, a difference which we should not exaggerate but which is, nonetheless, real. We are therefore permitted to suppose that the relatively small size of the female brain depends in part upon her physical inferiority and in part upon her intellectual inferiority.”

He has, of course, been proven completely wrong. Let me repeat: THIS IS NOT SCIENTIFIC DATA. There is no biological difference between races and there are no intellectual disparities between men and women, but his theory, which was bolstered by “science,” has been influential for two centuries.

# 57\_When Black Boys Become Black Men: Police Violence Against Black Men

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”   
—Nelson Mandela

Black boys in the United States are systematically set up to fail.

In order to understand the depth and complexity of most societal problems, we must take into account all of our and others’ identities. Gender and race are our only identifying features and when we treat them as such, we fail to recognize crucial points of intersectionality. Race and gender are the reasons for police violence, school systems failing Black boys and the judicial system failing Black men.

In the eyes of the police and much of popular culture, Black boys are suspicious in almost any space they occupy—in wealthy White neighborhoods, in Black neighborhoods, and in many public spaces. Since Black males are the most targeted population for unwarranted police stop and frisks (which can be violent or fatal), from childhood on, Black boys are primed to be wary of the police.

Research finds that when police look at an image of two boys, one Black and one White, doing the same thing, they perceive the Black youth as being older than they are and perceive the White youth as being younger:

“Black boys can be misperceived as older than they actually are and prematurely perceived as responsible for their actions during a developmental period where their peers receive the beneficial assumption of childlike innocence.”   
—"The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children”

These misconceptions create a catch-22 for Black youth approached by police, leaving them with few to no safe responses:

* Option 1: Run because you do not want to be shot.
* Option 2: Stay and accidentally move, an action which is imagined to be you reaching for a weapon.
* Option 3: Stay and try to calmly ask questions and get pushed to the ground.

The fear of police violence that begins in one’s youth is a self-fulfilling prophecy as an adult.

Some of the unarmed Black men killed by police in the past ten years: Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Oscar Grant, Aaron Campbell, Orlando Barlow, Steven Washington, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, Kendrec McDade, Kimani Gray, Philando Castile, Jordan Edwards, Alton Sterling, Walter Scott, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice.

The *Washington Post* found that 234 of the 963 people (24 percent) police shot and killed in 2016 were Black. Only 13.4 percent of the United States is Black.

# 58\_When Black Boys Become Black Men: Disproportionate Incarceration of Black Men

We’ve all heard the fact that slaves were only worth three-fifths of a person, but that fact had less to do with describing how slaveholders viewed the slaves, and everything to do with taxation.

Before the civil war, the government was changing taxation from that of land value (which landowners devalued) to population. Since representation was tied to population, and the larger northern states had higher populations than the southern states, southern states proposed including slaves in population counts to increase their seats in the House. However, they didn’t want to pay higher taxes on the increased population. The Three-Fifths Compromise was reached after much debate, and it increased Southern states’ legislative representation, bolstering the political power of slavery states to pass pro-slavery laws.

Slavery was legally abolished in 1865 with the Thirteenth Amendment and took with it the free labor base in the southern states, which quickly had economic effects. However, the Thirteenth Amendment contained a loophole that former slaveowners quickly took advantage of: slavery was permissible if it was punishment for a crime. Following abolition, “Black Codes” were implemented to define a plethora of “crimes” that could result in incarceration (and thus, available slave labor): vagrancy, interracial relationships, unlawful assembly, or selling produce without permission from an employer. Additionally, orphan minors could be forced into labor. Convicts were “leased” to the highest bidders to perform manual labor in coal mines, railroads and logging companies. During this era, the number of incarcerated people—most of whom were Black men—rose tenfold.

While that time seems like the distant past, very little has changed in the ways Black men are treated—the same actions under a different name. The school-to-prison pipeline is a term that describes the disproportionate number of underserved Black and brown youth that end up incarcerated, stemming from zero-tolerance policies combined with racially biased punishment in school. According to the Department of Education, 70 percent of students involved in in-school arrests or referred to law enforcement are Black or Latino. It’s important to note that Black and brown boys do not commit more punishable offenses but are punished more frequently and harshly than their White classmates. Because of these policies, most students who experience higher rates of expulsion and suspension are at a higher risk of dropping out and becoming incarcerated.

“African-American males are six times more likely to be incarcerated than White males and two and a half times more likely than Hispanic males. If current trends continue, one of every three Black American males born today can expect to go to prison in his lifetime, as can one of every six Latino males—compared to one of every seventeen White males.”

—Report of The Sentencing Project to the United Nations Human Rights Committee 2013

Police discriminate against Black men, Black boys, Black people because of the narrative created by those in power (including the police) that perpetuates systemic oppression. One in three Black men will go to prison at some point in their life. Non-violent crimes, such as possessing small amounts of weed, can send Black men to prison for many years, placing them at a disadvantage in the job market, and perpetuating the need to seek alternative ways of making a living once out of prison. Many times, those ways lead them right back to prison. It’s a vicious and cruel cycle that needs to be addressed.

# 59\_Gender and Mental Illness

Different genders experience mental health differently and are treated differently for the same mental illnesses.

Let’s take depression as an example. Picture someone who is depressed. I’ll bet most of you imagined a woman, not a man. According to statistics, women are twice as likely as men to develop depression (either chronic or episodic) at some point in their lives. This may be true, however, the scale on which these statistics are measured might be flawed.

Lisa Martin et al. conducted a "gender-inclusive depression scale" in 2013, which used more prevalent male symptoms like anger, substance use, risk-taking, and irritability to reduce the gender bias in studies about depression. By using a scale that included a wider range of depression symptoms experienced by all genders, they found that 30.6 percent of men and 33.3 percent of women met the criteria for depression.

There are different schools of thought about this gender disparity (or lack thereof). On one hand, women experience systemic hardship on a much grander scale: greater likelihood of trauma, less economic resources, stressful work and home responsibilities, postpartum depression, and often, single parenthood. There is no way to separate these life conditions from mental health—they are undeniably linked and often lead to other mental and physical illnesses. Due to social circumstances and systemic gender disparities, women are more likely to experience this type of emotional and physical overworking.

On the other hand, social gender norms may restrict men from reporting their experiences with depression, skewing the data in a way that underrepresents depression in men. There is not much space created for men to cry, ask for help, or show sadness. As with many facets of masculinity, their experiences are filtered through the hegemonic norms of “manliness.” More vulnerable emotions are often expressed through anger, aggression, substance abuse, gambling/risk-taking, or violence. We then categorize these as anger issues, alcoholism, promiscuity or being a player rather than seeing them as manifestations of depression or anxiety. While abusive behaviors might be expressions of sadness, emptiness or discontent, there isn’t an excuse for that behavior—ever. But if we as a society can reduce the stigma of men being vulnerable, more men may seek treatment for mental health issues. White men account for seven of ten suicides in the United States and men on the whole are three and a half times more likely to commit suicide than women.

Feeling isolated in an experience can be even more dangerous than the experience itself. We need to make it known that mental illness affects everyone and talk about how it affects populations both differently and similarly.

Note: see page X for info about mental health issues in the LGBTQ community.

# 60\_ The Myth of Rosie the Riveter

We all know the iconic image of Rosie the Riveter: feminist hero of WWII and general symbol of feminism, right?

Well . . . maybe not so much.

The idea we currently have of this powerful image is mostly based on fiction. We think of the “We Can Do It” poster as a representation of female empowerment and feminism, but that wasn’t the intention when it was originally issued. Although there were many recruitment posters at the time for female labor (with the men away at war), the “We Can Do It’ poster wasn’t one of them. Westinghouse Electric Corporation commissioned artist J. Howard Miller to paint a series of motivational posters to hang in its factories. The “We Can Do It” poster was one of many, and only hung for two weeks, an unmemorable blip. J. Howard Miller didn’t even name the woman in his poster “Rosie”; that name came from the next incarnation, painted by Norman Rockwell for the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1943. His version had a burly woman eating lunch, her foot smashing a copy of Mein Kampf. The name on her lunchbox? Rosie.

The “We Can Do It” image resurfaced in the 1980s during the 40th anniversary of World War II and was quickly adopted as a feminist symbol of power, strength, and independence. Interestingly, some say that image was chosen over Rockwell’s, mostly because it wasn’t copyrighted, and also didn’t contain the Hitler reference, which made it more easily used in multiple contexts. Regardless, the myth of Rosie holds much optimism in her lore: inspiration, independence, strength, and a symbol of desegregation among female factory workers. Yet she was still clean and in make-up, a proper woman even in the factories.

Betty Reid Soskin, the country’s oldest park ranger, works at the Rosie the Riveter museum in Richmond, California. Betty was alive during the time of Rosie’s inception, and her memory of the reality behind the propaganda was not so rosy. She was a member of an all-Black, segregated women’s factory union. When reflecting on the notion that the factories were a place of integrated unity among Black and White women, she says, “If you knew the sequence by which people were hired—first to be hired were the men who were too old to fight; second, the boys who were too young to be drafted; third, single White women; and when that pool was exhausted, married White women. And not until 1943, the first Black men were hired, as helpers and trainees only, to do the heavy lifting for the women they brought on board. And while there were some Black women who worked as laborers, sweeping the decks while other people worked, it wasn’t until late in 1944, early in 1945, that Black women began to be trained as welders.”

# 61\_Feminization of Poverty

Women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor. Poverty can extend beyond lack of financial wealth into poverty of opportunity, health, education, safety, decision-making power in households or government, basic freedom and human rights, and resources.

Single mothers around the globe are the most at-risk population for extreme poverty due to many factors: lower-paying jobs (because of the global gender-wage gap), only one income, no healthcare or employee benefits for part-time work, housing instability, or lack of access to healthy and consistent food. On top of this large-scale inequity, single mothers are responsible for basic household labor and emotional support as the primary caregiver to their families. When some or all of these factors combine, it creates an uphill battle to achieve financial, emotional, and domestic stability for single mothers and their children.

Global statistics are hard to confirm because most statistics are an amalgamation of several organizations’ research with different methods and scopes\*. However, the worldwide pattern of poverty is clear:

* The international poverty line is $1.90 a day
* In 2016 there were 40.6 million people in poverty in the United States (12.3% of the population)
* Globally, on average, women earn 23% less than men
* Women are 38% more likely to live in poverty than men
* 75% of women in developing regions work in the informal economy (jobs or work not taxed or regulated by the state)
* 13.4% of children live in relative income poverty across OECD countries, which are primarily European
* 14% of children in the world live in single-family households, 80% headed by women
* In 2014, 30.6% of single female-headed families lived in poverty (compared to 15.7% of single male-headed families)
* 31.6% of single-parent households live in poverty, three times higher than households with children and two or more adults (10.2%)
* 44% of the “extreme poor” worldwide are children
* 59.5% of children living in poverty lived in families headed by women
* 103.6 is the childcare cost of a single parent’s minimum wage income in Washington DC // $22,631 for one year of infant care; $21,840 full-time minimum wage salary // 10:1 is the wealth ratio of White families to Black families
* There are 105 girls for every 100 boys living in extreme poor households, across all ages.
* 122 women between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four live in poor households for every 100 men of the same age group

In 2016, the U.S. population was:

* 76.6% White
* 13.4% Black
* 18.1% Latinx
* 5.8% Asian
* 1.3% Native American

The percentage of women in poverty:

* 9.7% White
* 21.4% Black
* 18.7% Latinx
* 10.7% Asian
* 22.8% Native American

The percentage of children in poverty:

* 10.8% White
* 30.8% Black
* 26.6% Latinx
* 11.1% Asian
* 25.4% Native American

The percentage of households headed by a single mother

* 15% White
* 49% Black
* 26% Latinx
* 11% Asian
* 10.2% Native American

The percentage of households headed by a single mother in poverty

* 30.2% White
* 38.8% Black
* 40.8% Latinx
* 20.0% Asian
* 42.6% Native American

\*Data from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (36 countries), U.S. Census, World Bank (89 countries) and Oxfam

# 63\_We Are Not Only Our Categories

Much of this book focuses on defining terms, identities, and categorizations that break down groupings of gender, sexuality and identity into smaller ones. It’s useful to have this language when introducing concepts, explaining unfamiliar experiences to those outside of yourself, and connecting with people who share that experience. Sometimes, though, a million subcategories can feel just as divisive as two broad categories.

In having infinite identities and descriptors—particularly around gender and sexuality—we must also keep in mind that belonging in an identity doesn’t necessarily mean you must remain in that identity forever, or that you must adhere to all the unwritten rules that define that label. At the end of the day, we are unique and impossible to categorize.

Let’s keep flexible and open, allowing for change within ourselves and others. Every change is valid in every stage.

All of us are shapeshifters.

# 65\_Ungendering and Desexualizing a Body: Eating Disorders

I’ve had anorexia since 2006, and I will likely always have it to some degree. Its severity ebbs and flows; I’ve had episodes where I just don’t eat much, and I’ve had stressful times where I’ve been put into residential treatment. Twelve years after my most severe period of sickness where I almost died, my body has been permanently affected by the disorder, and I am reminded often of my history. Now more than ever I can see the conflicting cultural assumptions of gender, sexuality, femininity, race, class, and mental illness at play within my own body.

My anorexia came along with puberty: I developed breasts and started my period earlier than most of my peers. I hated it. I did not want an adult female body, a feeling I’m sure many middle schoolers share. I developed anorexia when I started to get attention from boys and felt deeply uncomfortable with it. While it was devastatingly shameful to be so visibly ill at my worst point (weighing only ninety pounds at 5’7”), there was safety in being sexually invisible and inhabiting a genderless, almost non-human body.

I essentially stopped physically and emotionally developing at age seventeen. My period stopped for six years, I had early stages of osteoporosis, no hormonal hunger signals, and limited social interactions. I still feel resentful towards my illness for robbing me of my late teens and early twenties. And yet, I feel grateful to have developed such a strong system of self-preservation in the face of things that felt dangerous: being sexualized, being female, being at parties, being expected to abide by social norms. I fully bypassed that world to the detriment of many other things—but that time granted me a unique opportunity to be self-aware and exist outside the pressure cooker of adolescence.

Now when I relapse, it’s much more conscious—this is not to say it’s consciously chosen (no one chooses to have an eating disorder)—but I am aware that being a string bean (very thin) allows me to be closer to the gender I align with. Having a lanky boy body with fewer curves helps me deal with the dysphoria of being genderqueer. Thinness makes me feel less feminine, not more. Our bodies and genders are inextricably entangled and the way people read our bodies informs their idea of our gender.

-------section break------

Eating Disorders: It’s Not Just Young White Girls

Anorexia and other eating disorders are usually depicted in two ways in media:

* A young, White, already skinny upper-class girl is driven by societal or parental pressures into an eating disorder. She is either trying to become more attractive (thin) to be more sexually desirable and feminine, or she’s restricting out of a desire to exert control in an otherwise out-of-her-control life.
* A middle-aged woman or frumpy girl (still White) is shown binge-eating ice cream after a breakup and is “letting herself go.” This stereotype shames overeaters and perpetuates fat phobia.

These portrayals are an inaccurate and incomplete depiction of people’s struggles with eating disorders.

than the stereotypes (if not more):

* Men who feel pressure to be more masculine/have a more muscular body can develop addictive behavior around exercise and severely restrict or alter their food intake.
* Genderqueer or transgender people who do not feel comfortable in their bodies but who aren’t able to surgically change their bodies feel they can have some level of control with food.
* Women who have experienced sexual assault might overeat to dissociate from trauma or make themselves feel more protected from the threat of male violence (by becoming overweight, and thus, societally less attractive).
* People who have mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, PTSD and OCD might be more likely to develop an eating disorder. the elderly
* Elderly people are assumed to not be as sexual or desirable as they once were, putting huge pressure and self-doubt on feeling attractive and confident.
* In certain cultures where it is rude to turn down offerings of food, one may purge in secret or restrict when alone.
* Children who are raised around diet culture or explicit beauty standards (such as parents who have eating disorders or enrollment in child beauty pageants) absorb that as normal behavior for adults.
* Children raised in homes where food was scarce adapt a scarcity mentality.

If you are not expected or “supposed” to have an illness, there is a much smaller chance you will feel comfortable sharing your struggle and receiving help or support. Because eating disorders are the deadliest mental illness in the United States, it is vital that we begin to see people outside of the stereotypes, do not shame them, acknowledge that they are suffering, and broaden our vision of who needs and is granted access to expensive and often exclusive medical care.

And for the love of God, do not say “eat a hamburger.”

# 68\_ Medical Bias

Medical study results—and therefore medical treatments—are biased towards men.

Most medical institutions do not have gender participation requirements for a number of reasons, and more men participate in clinical trials than women, skewing data in potentially dangerous ways.

Drugs are prescribed at a dosage that is safe for men but often too high for women. Technology for heart disease is based on male-driven data, though heart problems manifest very differently in women who have just as much heart disease (it’s the #1 killer of women). Study results are lumped into one group, eliminating potentially vital information that will affect sexes differently.

In order to give equal medical care, we must collect medical data equally.

# 70\_Pink Tax

Women, on average, pay 7 percent more than men for the same products with different marketing.

* For personal care products, women pay 13 percent more than men
* For clothing, women pay 8 percent more than men
* Girls’ toys cost 7 percent more than boys’
* Girls’ children’s clothing costs 4 percent more than boys’

And don’t forget service discrepancies; from haircuts to dry cleaning and even mortgage interest, women pay more for many things than men do.

# 71\_ Lions

In the Mombo area/Moremi Game Reserve of Botswana’s Okavango Delta there are lionesses who roar, have manes, and occasionally engage in male mating behavior. This is most likely due to a genetic trait within the area’s population that results in increased testosterone. This is borne out by the fact that the maned lionesses seem infertile (they are seen mating but never get pregnant).

These lionesses often trick outsiders, protecting the pride from predators and competitors.

# 72\_Advertising

We recognize the overt ways that advertisements throw gender in our faces, but there are so many subtle and subliminal ways that ads can send the message of unhealthy gender norms. Together, those things can have huge, lasting effects on how we view gender roles.

Gender stereotypes are, and have always been, all over the advertising world. Some of these are obvious and familiar to those of us who have seen a television commercial or a magazine ad. A thin, bronzed White woman laying on a beach to advertise something totally unrelated, like beer. Young boys playing with Hot Wheels cars. Men driving sports cars. Women cleaning. Men ogling women. Buff men. Homemaker women. White people.

In today’s ads, sex and strong gender stereotypes overtly and subtly enforce roles of femininity and masculinity. If we buy the right things, we will be thinner, stronger, more beautiful, more handsome, richer, sexier, and smarter. We will fit in with our own gender and/or be more attractive to the opposite gender.

In 1911, the world came to the understanding that “sex sells.” In a print ad for Woodbury Soap Company, an image of a woman being held by a man with the slogan "A Skin You Love to Touch” was published as the first major advertisement to objectify a woman. Not only does it claim that she would feel good in her own skin, but more importantly, that she’ll have skin a man would like to touch. This implies that a woman’s skin should be perfect primarily for the man to enjoy and secondarily for her to enjoy, and that she is meant to mold to his desires.

Self-objectification happens when people see themselves as objects rather than humans. All genders and body types can experience self-objectification, but it primarily affects women, who see themselves portrayed in media as unrealistic, dehumanized bodies used for a man’s pleasure. Seeing oneself portrayed as an object in mass media leads one to believe they are an object.

Bodies are used all the time in advertising to send specific, if subtle, messages to audiences. Even though objectifying women doesn’t work very well when trying to sell products to women, it is effective in perpetuating gendered beauty standards. Similarly, handsome, muscular men in ads enforce the idea that in order to be manly or masculine, one must have a body that would require quitting work to spend eight hours a day at the gym. Larger bodies in ads are usually laced with shame and blame, causing internalized social discrimination of overweight people.

I haven’t yet mentioned gender non-conforming people in advertisements since historically there have been almost none. The only instances of gender bending have been men in dresses as a joke or men making fun of other men for being too sensitive. In the past couple of years, there has been an increase of visibility of LGBTQ+ people in commercials and print ads. Fashion has always played with androgyny and lately there has been a resurgence of gender bending in the fashion world, which has made its way into print ads. It gets a bit confusing because many of the models who wear clothing typical of a different gender on the runway are cisgender. Remember, gender expression doesn’t always mean gender identity (a man wearing feminine clothing can still identify as a man).

Non-binary models are still few and far between and many of the opportunities to fill that androgynous niche are being filled by people who identify within the binary. And most of the models who are non-binary still fit the mold of thin and White. People like Rain Dove (non-binary model), Andreja Pejic (trans model) Maria José, Amandla Stenberg (non-binary actor and model), and Aaron Philip (disabled, trans, gender-fluid model). are pushing the boundaries of non-binary people being in the spotlight and are hopefully some of the first in a long line of gender-variant people as the faces of media to come.

In 2017, Britain banned advertisements that promote damaging gender stereotypes. This includes objectifying or sexualizing women and girls, encouraging unhealthily thin bodies, or supporting a culture that mocks gender non-conforming people.

There is still a lot of work to do in breaking advertisement stereotypes of bodies, race, and gender, but we can all work to be less influenced by what advertisers tell us we should be.

# 73\_ Spotlight on: Kate Bornstein

“Safe gender is being who and what we want to be when we

want to be that, with no threat of censure or violence.

Safe gender is going as far in any direction as we wish,

With no threat to our health, or anyone else’s.

Safe gender is not being pressured into passing, not

Having to lie, not having to hide.

Sane gender is asking questions about gender—talking

To people who do gender, and opening up about our

Gender histories and our gender desires.

Sane gender is probably very, very funny.

Consensual gender is respecting each other’s definition

Of gender, and respecting the wishes of some to be alone,

And respecting the intentions of others to be inclusive in

Their own time.

Consensual gender is non-violent in that it doesn’t force

Its way in on anyone.

Consensual gender opens its arms and welcomes all

People as gender outcasts—whoever is willing to admit it.”

—[Kate Bornstein](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5854.Kate_Bornstein)

Kate Bornstein is a gender non-conforming author, theorist, and artist who is very vocal about gender identity and mental illness. Her journey with gender has been very public and honest, but it has not been a linear one, by any means. Bornstein was born male and had male-to-female sex reassignment surgery in 1986. After the surgery she identified as a woman and lesbian, but over time that identity shifted into one of being non-binary, with which she still identifies.

She is the author of several books, including *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us,* and editor of *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*, an anthology of short stories written by queer people. You should read them!

She also has an incredibly witty way of naming her works, with titles including: “The Opposite Sex is Neither” and *A Queer and Pleasant Danger*.

# 78\_made up gender (no title)

Just a reminder

that we created gender.

We get to break the rules of gender because they aren’t real and aren’t useful.

The notion that we can’t change the way things are now is untrue.

By not playing by the gender rules, we move away from gender being necessary and toward everyone living life unabashedly and unafraid in the body they want, loving who they want and dressing how they want.

We’ve gotta learn to undo our own creation . . . or at least try.

# 79\_Tan France

There is a common misconception among both straight and queer people that all sectors of the LGBTQ community overlap, interact, or share space regularly. This isn’t true in most circumstances. I cannot speak for everyone, but in my life as a queer person, I am rarely around cisgender men (gay or straight), two-spirit people, or people who identify as lesbian. I am around lots of people who identify as femme, queer, trans, and genderqueer.

It makes sense. Most groups of people who fit into an umbrella category of any sort generally do not interact with every other sector of that same identity, and that’s really okay. So be aware that when you speak with someone in the LGBTQ community, they may not be personally familiar with the experiences of others in that same wide community. There is room to grow and understand a huge variety of experiences within a vast spectrum of the LGBTQ world.

“Honestly, I hate to admit it, but I’m not immersed in the gay community. Therefore, I’m ignorant. I don’t know the correct pronouns . . . I feel fucking stupid, quite honestly. I’ve always looked at trans people and I’ve thought, “Why don’t you just—? Like it costs so much and it can be really painful. Why put yourself through that? It seems quite a traumatic experience. I truly didn’t understand what that meant to actually have the surgery done and feel that change. There are so many people out there like me, who are ignorant, who don’t understand. I always felt for the plight of trans people. However, I always thought, “Is it necessary for you to have this top surgery, for you to feel like a man?” The fact I didn’t understand that beforehand makes me feel silly… I think that probably most straight people assume that because it's LGBTQ, we must all understand each other's plight. But that couldn't be more wrong.”

—Tan France of *Queer Eye*, in conversation with Skyler, a transgender man featured in Season 2, episode 5

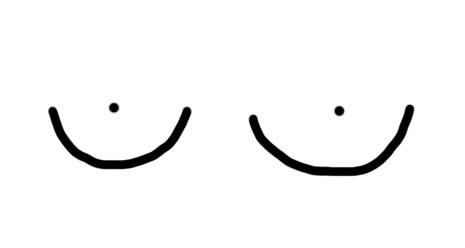
# 80_No boobs.jpg80\_

(no boobs page)

in an ad: okay

on the beach: okay

in a photograph: okay



(boobs page)

in an ad: not okay

on the beach: not okay

in a photograph: not okay

**[Personal chapter opener]**74\_ Surgery Journey

May 1, 2018

In three weeks, I am scheduled to have both of my breasts removed.

At the time of this writing, I have lived in this body for twenty-nine years, and while I am uncomfortable with how it conveys my gender, I will also mourn what I lose by changing my body permanently through surgery. I wish someone had told me about the grief that comes along with correcting gender dysphoria. How it is possible to simultaneously experience the sadness of loss of self, and the joy of reaching a truer self through that loss.

Sadness is okay, and sadness doesn’t indicate it’s a wrong choice.

It’s hard to parse out the elements of grief as I say goodbye to a physical and emotional part of myself—something that has literally been attached to me for all this time. Something my body made from itself. Something that has represented so much struggle for so long. A decision that means saying goodbye to my previous genders.

I am voluntarily ridding myself of something that is objectively valued as a sign of beauty and replacing it with visible scars of my decision. My internalized transphobia speaks loudly as I fear that I am trading a standard of beauty for a standard of stigma. I know I will be loved well by those people who don’t care about some fatty tissue, and I might inspire some people to love people who look like me, but I have to convince my emotional self of that as well. It’s pretty ironic that altering my body to facilitate self-confidence creates a new realm of self-consciousness.

I feel grateful I have the ability and safety to do this, but I feel angry that I have to. That I have to get surgery to wear a t-shirt in the world without upset. That I have to prove to the government that I am “trans enough” or in enough emotional pain to qualify for surgery. That I have to fear for my safety and my future healthcare because of this. That the current president of the United States has banned the word “transgender” from use by the CDC.

I want people to know that it’s okay to feel angry and scared and sad about saying goodbye to some of yourself and still know that it’s the right thing to do.

# 75\_Surgery Journey

June 3, 2018

I haven’t felt very confident in the past two weeks; I’ve felt tired and disheveled and sore and gross. But I last night I laid on the kitchen table while my partner held my head and a friend poured hot water over my dirty dirty soapy hair, washing it for the first time since surgery. It felt like a baptism into my new self, a cleansing of worry and doubt. I put on a shirt afterwards and finally knew for the first time that it was the right decision, even with all the emotional complexities that still exist.

# 76\_Surgery Journey Week Three: First Skin

June 11, 2018

At every appointment I’ve had and every time someone has needed to touch my chest before and after surgery, I have fainted or become wildly nauseous. I have been so overwhelmed by the sensation of patchy numbness, tingling, scarring and touch in a place that is totally new to my recomposed body. When the large Ace wrap came off I hunched all day so the fabric of my shirt wouldn’t touch my skin.

I took a shower for the first time earlier this week. I stepped into the tub and the moment water hit my back I became paralyzed in a half-crumpled sob. I kept my eyes closed for the duration, helped around in my darkness by my patient partner. After stepping out of the shower, I was bandaged up while still shut-eye so when I opened them I couldn’t see the scars.

But three weeks post-surgery today, I looked at the bottom incisions last night for the first time (not the nipple grafts, cuz that’s too intense for right now). It was really okay. The body is amazing in its ability to heal, recover, and remake itself anew. I wore a T-shirt today for the first time into the world. It’s light purple and flat against my front. I can finally stand up straight. My mom helped me try on a jumpsuit with my eyes closed. It fit like a perfect flat, baggy sack.

I am experiencing a lot of firsts. First touch, first skin, first shower, first T-shirt, first time standing upright. This is an overwhelming process, even as I step into it a little more each day. I relate to myself in a different way, afraid yet embracing. Realizing I don’t need to be any gender other than whatever the hell I am. I don’t need to be trans, non-binary, or any title at all. I’ll stick with being a rectangle she-boy who loves Harry Styles and stripes. It really doesn’t (and shouldn’t) matter to me or anyone else that I am some amorphous being. Cuz it’s all made up by us humans to begin with.

And so, the process continues.

\*\*\* I’m going to do one for a couple more milestones so want to leave some pages available for that\*\*\*

# 77\_Surgery Journey Week Four: Home

June 18, 2018

It’s been easy this week.

I don’t have many profound thoughts other than feeling more at home in my body. I can touch and look at my incisions, which are turning pink and smooth. Every day they change, and every day I am getting used to the previous day and being surprised by the next. I got scared they placed the nipples too far apart (in what feels like my armpits) but apparently, they are just like that on boy people. I learned that under every boob is a pec muscle that can twitch and move. I was afraid of this change, afraid of this process, afraid of regret, afraid it would hurt and look ugly—afraid in general. But now I feel good.

I’m making another big change in a week: after five and a half years in California, I’m moving home to North Carolina. It feels like a wave of transition as I move back to my home place with my home self. I will feel all of these feelings while driving away from California and settling into my new old place, but I have been slowly planning both transitions for years and will feel slowly more and more sure about them with every passing week.

# 62\_Learning Only Ends When We Do (Afterword)

Gender, and all its millions of intersections, is incredibly charged: emotionally, personally and politically. It’s a topic that hits the most sensitive nerves in some and the angriest nerves in others. It ostracizes people from their biological families and creates loving communities of chosen families. It is a death sentence for some and a lifesaver for others. It gives power to some and makes others feel powerless.

The process of learning about gender is never finished. Our cultural understanding of gender is always evolving and the genders of those around us (as well as our own) are always shifting.

It’s okay to mess up and say the wrong things along the way—when you first experience someone around you changing their pronouns or name, you won’t get it correct every time in the beginning. It’s okay as long as you’re honestly trying (like, for real). You’ll probably get better at adjusting with each person you know who changes their pronoun or name. You’ll become more comfortable with someone you know who turns out to be gay. When talking about the generation after yours, you might use language that is now outdated or offensive (“transvestite” or “homosexuals”). Ask or research what the more appropriate words are and don’t defend what is now offensive. Language changes! When you think you’ve figured it all out, you haven’t. Someone will always have something to teach you, intentionally or not.

We all come from different backgrounds, grow up with different cultural understandings of the world, have different educations, are exposed to different types of people and come to explore topics at different ages. It can be easy to forget that we learn in different ways and have different interests. Ignorance doesn’t always mean bigotry, but an unwillingness to learn is not okay.

It can be hard to talk about these issues without being immediately politically divisive or alienating to those who don’t have these conversations in daily life. We don’t need to point out every infraction or call out every misstep or shame anyone who hasn’t been exposed to conversations about gender —that’s not an effective method of inviting connectivity or empathy. Rather, we can ask in a loving and kind way to be open to hearing the experiences of others.

In writing this book, it’s been a difficult balance to be gentle while not permitting disrespectful, harmful, and oppressive behavior. I personally don’t think gentleness is always the right approach. However, I do believe it’s important to allow people the space to mess up while they grow, and to simultaneously hold one another accountable when we are screwing up. Shaming those who speak incorrectly rather than engaging in conversation or recommending resources can breed silence, defensiveness, and a resistance to hearing a new perspective. I am very shame-prone. I have felt alienated plenty of times within my own community of radical queer people for being less versed in history or lingo, simply not knowing, or disagreeing. I shrink away easily when I screw up and it’s been an intensely difficult emotional process to try to be okay with misstepping or being accidentally offensive — it feels terrible. But it’s a work in progress and if we can all get a little more comfortable being the ones who both say and hear “Hey, that wasn’t cool,” we might access more moments of learning than we expect.

34\_You Are Not Alone (not sold on the title, but works as a placeholder)

In writing this book, I want to help build empathy and understanding among people who are not familiar with people who fall outside the lines of binary genders by telling personal stories, giving facts and history, and praising revolutionaries. I’ll also be revealing the difficulties of embodying these genders, because we cannot only feel the joy of something in its most positive moments unless we also feel the sadness and hardship in its darkest.

Despite all of the amazing parts of embodying a gender that’s different than your assigned sex— community, fun, fashion, acceptance, love, humor—being transgender can be really hard, dangerous, lonely and scary.

Transgender people are at a much higher risk of psychological distress, mental health issues, bullying, sexual violence, murder, and suicide than non-trans people. In most of the United States and much of the world, being transgender is still not safe, despite growing acceptance and visibility. Religion, geographical tradition, class values, homophobia, and fear can create hostility and hate.

According to the Williams Institute at UCLA, as of 2014-2015:

The above statistics are true for the 2014 survey. Below are statistics from the 2015 survey (most up to date) but many questions only focused on experiences in the last year:

* 40% of trans people attempted suicide in their lifetime
* 77% of trans people experienced some form of mistreatment in school, including verbal harassment (54%) and physical harassment (17%)
* 15% of respondents who had a job in the past year were verbally harassed, physically attacked, and/or sexually assaulted at work
  + 23% of those who had a job in the past year reported other forms of mistreatment
* 26% reported that an immediate family member stopped speaking/ended their relationship altogether because they were transgender.
  + 10% experienced violence from a family member, and 8% were kicked out of their family home
* 3% of trans people had medical professionals refuse to treat them in the last year
  + 33% had a negative experience with a healthcare provider in the last year related to being transgender
* 13% experienced sexual violence in K–12 because of being transgender.
* 1% reported that they experienced sexual violence at work in the past year because they were transgender
* 30% of trans people have experienced homelessness, 12% in the last year
* 58% experienced some form of police mistreatment including verbal harassment, repeated misgendering, physically assault, or sexually assault (no specific breakdown)

# 35\_You Are Not Alone (cont.)

Statistics about violence against the trans community are sobering and illuminate how far we have to go in making the world feel safe for people of all genders.

**However, there is help out there for you.**

**Trans Lifeline:** 877-565-8860 (24/7)

**The Trevor Project Lifeline:** 866-488-7386 (24/7)

**The Trevor Project Text:** text the word “trevor” to 1-202-304-1200 (4–8 p.m. EST)

**The Trevor Project Chat:** visit the Trevor Project website to access (3–9 p.m. EST)

**GLBT National Hotline:** 1-888-843-4564 (M–F 4 p.m.–12 a.m. EST)

**GLBT Youth Hotline:** 1-800-246-7743 (M–F 4 p.m.–2 a.m. EST)

**GLBT Trans Teens Online Talk Group:** ages twelve to nineteen (Wednesdays 7–9 p.m. EST) (https://www.glbthotline.org/transteens.html)

**Fenway Health LGBT Helpline:** 617-267-9001 (ages twenty-five+); 617-267-2535 (ages twenty-five and under)