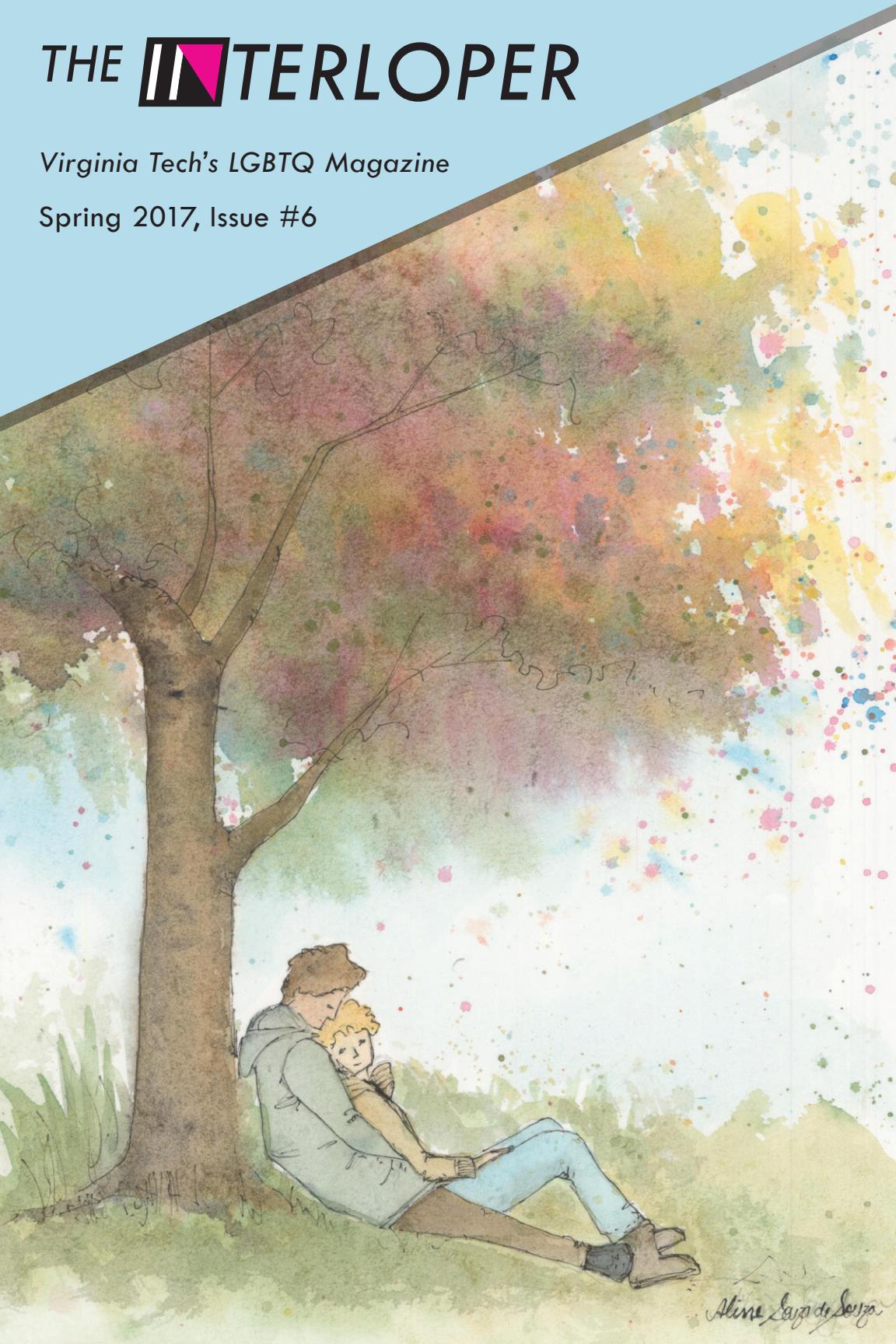


THE INTERLOPER

Virginia Tech's LGBTQ Magazine

Spring 2017, Issue #6



Aline Saya de Souza

Letter from the Editor

Here we are again, only this time, on the other side.

This past semester has been quite the whirlwind of downs, more downs, and then a slight up only to be followed by an even-larger down. This was not the place I—or I assume *many* people—thought we would be after last November's election.

But here we are. And I like to think that despite all that is bad, we as a community are stronger than ever, and we will fight like hell to do what is just in this world.

Last semester, I wrote about the place *The Interloper* community has in my heart and how important that community is to not only the vitality of the magazine, but also to enriching our campus community, the New River community, and other communities to which we belong. That, to me, is important: we belong.

Now that we are facing constant threats and real violence to our communities, I am proud of my *Interloper* family and community for their perseverance in the face of adversity. I am proud of our recognition and fight for not only tolerance in a world of hate, but also for acceptance and inclusion, while at the same time recognizing the importance of self-care, community care, and intersectional diversity and differences among us. I am proud of how we fought for our little publication to make sure that it represents how amazing this community really is and to be a space for people from all walks of life to find their voice.



Photo by Jessica Herling

In this issue of *The Interloper*, on our 3rd anniversary of publication and our 6th issue, we sought to feature these issues through a wide variety of different stories. We talk about the Women's March and the idea of inclusivity (p. 29), academic accessibility (p. 4) and the production of knowledge, representation and space for LGBTQ people in the media (p. 10), and even LGBTQ spaces here on campus and in the classroom (p. 7). This issue is all about perseverance and strength in these troubling times.

I am proud of this issue's contributors answering my call for community. I hope you are too.

In solidarity,
Maggie

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LGBTQ Millennials

by Conor Dunn

The struggle is real in '16.
You think we are GTL,
Grenades, DTF. This ain't no
Flashback Friday. TBT.

For real doe. Have a seat.
Have several seats, basics.
Trap queens, fuck boys. You
Thirsty. Can't hang. Weak.

We'll make you believe, not
a belieber. We goals. We bae.
We slay, for days. We Transformation
Tuesday. Flash-forward Friday.

... It's Problematic: The Complicity of Academic Jargon

its prablə'mædɪk
tə kəm'plɪsɪti əv ,ækə'dɛmɪk 'dʒɑ:gən

Amanda Phillips and Jonathan Banda

Some disclosures stand to be made. We, as the authors of this essay, have spent what now feels like an eternity in graduate school. We have just completed our course work for our Ph.D.s, the past few years of our lives spent caught in seemingly endless debates about what makes up our social (and material) worlds and how can we best respond to the structures that twist, torque, and pattern our existence. We value academia and its discourse and its bullshit and its freedom and its complexity. That being said, we feel complicit. We feel sickeningly complicit in the rise of Trump.

This isn't a personal complicity, but one for our broader disciplinary homes of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Sociology, Anthropology, History, Philosophy, Cultural Studies and our field of Science and Technology Studies challenge us to explore and embrace difference. Difference lurks in the crockpot of primordial stew we eagerly feed out of on our meager stipends. We seek to understand the many ways others negotiate and understand the world.

Often, the critique leveled against our fields, one that often falls from the lips of students who sometimes feel forced into our 1000 level courses, is that we preach the subjective. By studying people, social formations, or culture, we lack rigid empiricism. Aberration from a norm, or our failure to completely explain the world, puts us at odds with

elegant formulas that places laws of nature into discrete wrapped boxes (which, we claim, are also socially constructed).

Playing fast and loose with subjectivity does not make us complicit, but we are beginning to think that reliance on jargon might. Academia is full of words that lack easy explanation. In our search for difference we need to develop novel ways of describing this observed phenomena. This vocabulary is complicated – intersectionality, biopower, homonormativity, performativity, epistemology, the list goes on ad infinitum. We understand these words to map onto real phenomena, but they resist canned elevator pitches.

Let's take a look at biopower for a minute. Even if you have never heard this term before, you may have heard of its originator,

the French philosopher, Michel Foucault. Biopower is a tiny word to describe an expansive political phenomenon. Essentially, Foucault argues that, beginning in the 18th century, “life itself” became the focus of political interventions on individual bodies and populations. Paradoxically, the modern biopolitical system aims to foster life, but in order to do so, it also depends on the neglect, or extermination, of other lives. In order to “make live,” it must also “let die” (2003: 254). Biopower is a pernicious force we cannot always see, yet it shapes us and makes us question the level of agency we truly hold in the world.

How do we make sense of difference? Philosophers and social theorists of all persuasions have long grappled with this problem

and proffered numerous terms to describe how humans relate to

each other. Take intersectionality, for example, a framework that tries to account for the varied dimensions of social life (e.g., gender, sexuality, race), but has little to say regarding the dynamics of our everyday encounters. Within this understanding of the world we all exist with overlapping identities that impact or privilege us in divergent ways. These multiple ways of being influence how we are recognized under the law, within

social life, and how we understand our relationship to others.

Intersectionality breaks from a traditional identity politics where members might organize under a single banner of feminism, LGBTQ+, or disability rights. More so, it is challenging to see the differences others understand to be true about themselves. To embrace an intersectional identity of yourself requires an empathetic attunement to the lives of others as well. This orientation imposes, at least to some degree, a blind trust in the experiences of the people around you.

Both biopower and intersectionality require you to embrace the power of invisible forces as, if not controlling, at least structuring your life. This

in itself is distinctly opposed to the American ideology of boot-strap-lifting-up-folks making their own way

in the world. No matter how flawed and exclusionary we understand this mantra to be, it seems unfair to deny its seductiveness. America requires your labor, your body, your taxes, your soul. Can’t we be allowed some fantasy of success and eventual reward? To accept the power of a larger structure you cannot see denies us some portion of this fantasy. For many that loss is too much to bear. >>

America requires your labor,
your body, your taxes, your
soul. Can't we be allowed
some fantasy of success
and eventual reward?

The rise and eventual ascendance of Trump to the highest throne in the country points to radical political and social change. Most significantly the dampening and elimination of rights that flourished under the Obama administration. But isn't change what us humanistic thinkers want? Don't we search and scour the universe looking for ways that our world might be different, that we might somehow find a way to break from the status quo? Sure this change marches us to a fiery authoritarian path to hell, but it is change nonetheless. How did the left lose its apparent claim to radical pathways of social change?

Concepts used to better approximate the human condition, become shortcuts for the dynamic ways we enact and reconfigure our world(s). The complexity of our language stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric employed by the current Commander-in-Chief. "Make America Great Again" might be a clunky campaign slogan, but it reflects the seductive simplicity of Trumperian rhetoric. His childlike cadence with its sweeping pronouncements of good, bad, sad, and wrong condense rather than complicate the world. He acknowledges the failure of the American dream - but blames groups and people rather than a corrupt system. Plain speech is the hallmark of his success.

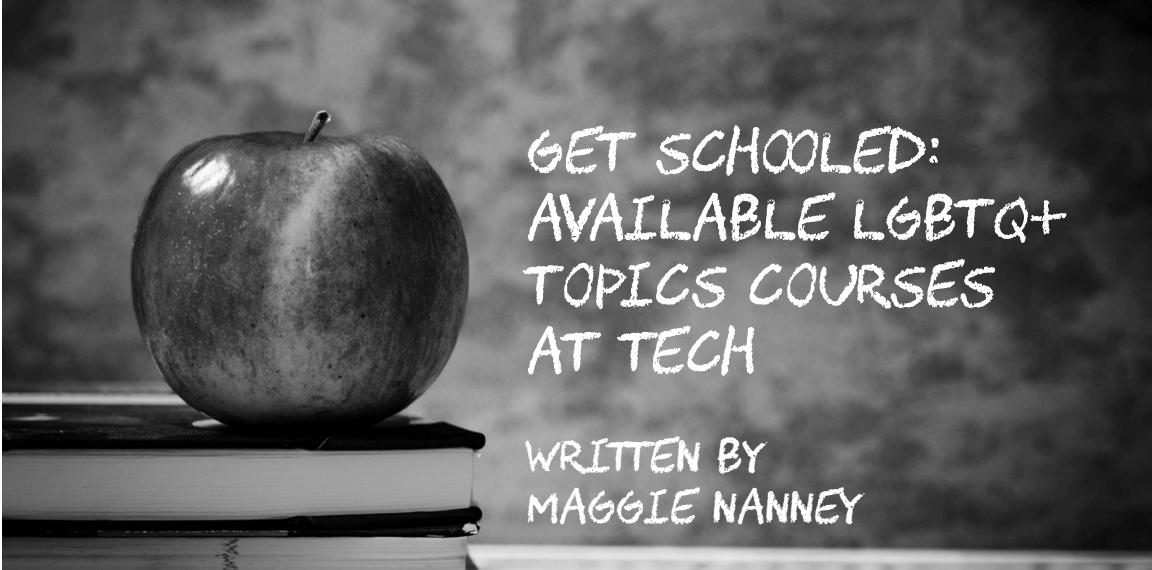
We want to fight the rise of Trump and continue the fight for all forms of social and environmental justice, but we need to take a page from their playbook and simplify. We must develop a language that

speaks to difference, complexity, and invisible structures in a way that resists alienation. This will mean compromise, conversation, and negotiation. Also this means making our work more accessible and less reliant on jargon. We must engage in open pathways so that the groups, cultures, and institutions we study can make sense of what we say about them.

In *Precarious Life* (2004), Judith Butler (yes, we are referencing Butler in an essay about jargon) argues that the immediate American militarized response to 9/11 missed an important opportunity for collective grief; mourning a loss, she argues, can be productive politically when we recognize our shared vulnerability as humans and dependency on others. Mourning, she argues, exposes the ties we have to others, ties that constitute us "in ways we cannot always recount or explain... in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control" (23). The injury many of us feel as a result of Trump's presidency also demands that we recognize our shared responsibility for the political tide that he fueled and utilized. It may well be that, in our attempts to theorize and understand the Other, we have reinforced the processes that divide us in the first place. ■

Judith Butler. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London and New York: Verso.

Michel Foucault. 2003. Lecture 11, 17 March 1976, 239-264 in *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France*. Picador Press.



GET SCHOoled: AVAILABLE LGBTQ+ TOPICS COURSES AT TECH

WRITTEN BY
MAGGIE NANNEY

There I was, guest lecturing in an Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies class, talking a million words a minute about trans issues as they related to queer theory. Then I look over and see the glazed eyes of the students, lost probably somewhere between the time I was talking about white-washing Stonewall, the capitalist sponsorship of Pride, or my homonormative critique of same-sex marriage. I stop. "This is all a little much, but if you're interested, you should consider taking LGBTQ Issues next spring," I tell them.

"What?" A student asks.

Little did I know, students didn't know that they could take classes on LGBTQ+ related topics across campus. So, I decided to do that work for you and I went through the course catalogue on a hunt for LGBTQ courses offered this past academic year *in (almost) all 148 majors.*

List of Classes I *Know* Cover LGBTQ Issues and Topics:

Course	Title
HD 2314	Human Sexuality
HD 4364	Gender and Family Diversity
HIST 3164	Sexuality in American History
SOC 2014	Dating, Marriage, and Divorce
SOC 2024	Minority Group Relations
SOC 2034	Diversity and Community Engagement
SOC/AFST/WGS 2264	Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
SOC/WGS 2284	LGBTQ Issues
SOC 3004	Social Inequality
SOC 3014	Gender Relations
SOC 4014	Sociology of the Family
WGS 1824	Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies
WGS 2114	Feminist Theory
WGS 5984 (GRAD)	Sexualities and Queer Theory

>>

As I was compiling this list, I discovered that very few classes actually talk about sexualities and gender diversity (at least, that one can glean from the course catalogue). That is not to say that classes not listed here (or mentioned below) do *not* talk about LGBTQ issues, but as a student looking for classes to take, it would be hard to know whether or not these issues come up from merely the title, and I wouldn't want that labor of having to "be the queer kid" always fall on me to bring these topics up.

So, here is my challenge to the university to be more inclusive and interdisciplinary in their subject matter: I would like to see courses across campus not have LGBTQ topics just "come up" but rather be a core subject matter. For example*:

- In a class on "Black Women in the US" (AFST 2734) we need to be sure to be talking about intersectional differences, wherein black trans women experience heightened rates of physical and sexual violence and abuse, including murder, than cis black women
- Art classes should be sure to include artwork by LGBTQ artists (and not just Andy Warhol)
- Housing needs may be different for queer families (AHRM 3644) and

clothing and fashion are highly political for LGBTQ people (AHRM 1204)

- Language and culture classes should discuss LGBTQ cultures within those areas (such as French, Arabic, or even Appalachian Studies)
- Even "hard" sciences like biology and psychology need to consider ways to include LGBTQ topics, but in a way that doesn't re-medicalize or depend on models of deviance or deficiency to explain these identities and experiences (BIOL 2404, BIOL 4989, and BIOL 2984 for example)
- Finally, classes can even think about ways to include the current LGBTQ population and community on campus; for example media and politics or magazine writing (COMM 4144) could work with *The Interloper!*

All this is to say that representation and inclusion in our course material matters.

*As stated earlier, it is not clear from the course catalogue whether or not these classes actually do discuss LGBTQ topics as part of the curriculum. There needs to be a stronger institutional effort to make it publicly known/available as to which classes are LGBTQ-subject inclusive. Perhaps an online list that is updated each semester is a place to start. 

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: FLEXIBLE HOUSING OPTION ON CAMPUS

Written by Andrew Pregnall

Living in dorms can sometimes cause anxiety and even issues when it comes to who may live with you, especially when considering sexuality and gender diversity. Within the past few years, however, Virginia Tech has been piloting a gender-neutral housing program available to students interested in living on-campus.

What is the name of the program?

Virginia Tech's Housing and Residence Life has named this program the "Flexible Housing Option."

Are there any restrictions on this program? Yes. Students must be at least 18 years old, and the program is only available in Pritchard Hall and Ambler Johnston.

Photo by Andrew Pregnall



How do I sign up?

Students must fill out a brief application with their chosen roommate on the Virginia Tech StarRez Housing Portal. On this application, students may specify their roommate of choice as well as what bathroom style they and their roommate would prefer (options include normal hall baths and the "Hotel" style rooms, among others).

I, myself, am living in gender-neutral housing this year in Ambler Johnston Hall. Last year, the application took my roommate and me all of five minutes to fill out. Reassuring adults and some other students, however, that we would not fall in love and elope took much longer. 

For all of the information of the "Flexible Housing Option," please see: http://housing.vt.edu/contracts/apply/flexible_housing_option.html

finding Prince Charming:

A (Not-So-Straight) Binge
Watch Reaction of
The Gay Bachelor

Written by Zane Haley

Prince Charming is the least heterosexual re-creation of the most heterosexual show, "The Bachelor." Thirteen men and one Prince, with vodka soda and painted-on jeans, playing a game of In-Person-Tinder. My glass of wine is the only thing lower than my expectations for a quality show on LOGO, sorry Mama Ru, but let's begin with an introduction to the Prince Himself.

Wow, what a stud. He looks like that bass singer for NSYNC, oh shit... that's the host, sorry. Lance Bass may have a voice, but his ability to constantly provide the public with a source of sexual confusion is the more impressive talent. Oh, but here comes the real Prince, seeming to draw inspiration for his hair from the famous hip-hop trio Salt n' Pepa. His name is Robert Sepulveda Jr., from Puerto Rico (fully normalized so our minds don't explode from having to appreciate cultural variety). I hear the show's preconditioning requires two years of constantly demonstrating American values, like appreciating a good ole' mantra without questioning its meaning. But I digress...





The Prince just said that he isn't on the show for a summer camp-esque hookup experience. There are so many more relatable examples to use here for comparison. Try any college in America, or talking to anyone with the *Networking* desire on Grindr. The Prince also thinks that love should come organically and not be sought after. I'm no statistician, but the chances that your love will stem from a thirteen member sample group of the world's population are quite low. Like come on, I could be struck by lightning twice in my life before you fulfill your fractional chance of 13/6,500,000,000 in finding true love. Yes, not everyone in the world is interested in men, but note I deducted 500,000,000 to account for the people who I estimated were surprisingly *not* overwhelmed by the attractiveness of the host, oh, and the Trumpers.

It turns out the men actually don't know who the Prince Charming is when they first meet everyone. If I were on this show, which is impossible because I don't live in LA, NYC, or have a twelve pack, I would totally falsely reveal myself as the real Prince to the other guys in the form of a Maury paternity test result for added wow factor. While I'm busy putting the moves on the real Prince, everyone else will be confused as hell for the entire season because all of the guys look exactly alike. Genius. I truly feel bad for all of the house painters and interior

designers - the amount of makeup in the Prince's palace explains the absence of all putty knives at every home improvement store in SoCal. And to see all of those white walls in such a ritzy neighborhood, a shame, especially when Queen Bey is looking to upgrade to a bigger home to accommodate her new additions.

The first episode ends after a day of drinking and partying by the pool. The Prince seems satisfied with all of the organic connections he has made over the past three hours. It seems like he has known some of the men for longer, probably because he is also from LA and allows location services for his Grindr account. But it's okay! I know what everyone is thinking. Don't worry, he deleted his account before the start of the show. Now, he can be faithful to his thirteen men who all conveniently come equipped with the "Hello! My Name is _____" name tags to avoid confusion and with a side of sparkling wine. ■■■





Tennessee

Written by Ella DiPalermo

Photo by Joshua Ness edited by Sarah Gugercin

Light began to crest over an anonymous suburb. The night's hopeful optimism had melted into a disorienting and toxic magma. I desperately clung to my sheets as my alarm dragged me from an unconscious haze. I was furious at the birds, the trees, and the sun for treating the morning like a routine. My heart had shattered into a jagged shrapnel overnight, clogging, halting the flow through my veins.

"I was so depressed when I thought he would lose," laughed a coworker to my boss. My eyes, blackened and blood-shot from a night without rest, could only fixate on the walls of my cubicle. There were no tears left to soothe them: only salt. I occasionally glanced at the blue light of my desktop, hoping time had made a mistake. Maybe there would be an email detailing where to pinch myself to end this nightmare. Maybe it wasn't really today, but a week ago. I was only met with disappointment. Wednesday, November 9th, 2016, 8:26 AM. My skin, traditionally thick, was left both porous and brittle.

I had moved to Tennessee over the summer for work. I was taking time off from school after an amalgam of personal catastrophe forced a medical withdrawal in the spring prior. I'd long since combatted anxiety and depression, but the previous winter had borne newer, lonelier, bed-ridden, depths. I was becoming loathsome and lethargic. Apathetic, yet angry. Unrecognizable. Flailing, at the intersection of unmet expectation and peak bodily dysphoria.

New York, my home, and Virginia, my sanctuary, had become tainted. I needed to get away; so I ran. Far from

the familiar, far from my people, all the way to Mount Juliet, a quiet exurb of Nashville. I didn't know anyone, I lived alone, and I was content. I had worked through the summer to get healthier, to overcome roadblocks and to dismantle emotional landmines, and I was feeling better. Not great, not even good, but better. But the air, the music, the whiskey of Tennessee was medicinal. I fell in love with the setting. This was my place. I was in control, and for the first time since I could remember, I admitted to loving myself. A month after the move, I began transitioning. Three pills, every day, that was all. Myself and my body had, long since, been estranged. But every pill sewed flesh and consciousness closer together.

I was hyperaware of the intolerance of my environment. I was out to four friends, scattered across the country, when I filled my first prescription. My support base was intimate, yet virtual. Coworkers, neighbors, siblings, parents, didn't know. The workplace exposed a foundational bigotry masked in a charming drawl. I swallowed a lot of anger for the sake of professionalism. I couldn't out myself. No matter the hurt, no matter the language, I couldn't tell anyone. I could be fired, I could be evicted, I could be beaten, I could be shunned. I tried to use a rapidly expiring, straight-passing privilege to educate and subtly beg for understanding. A girl that looks like a boy. The gravel of my voice, the height I stood, the size of my hands, was respected. So I tried to explain. Not "Trannies," but Trans*. Not "Faggots," but queer. On the surface there was an unspoken "agree to disagree" but ultimately conversation was moot. I wouldn't compromise on my rights and they wouldn't fold on their traditions.

I remember, vividly, the moment I felt the most alone. A week before election day, I came back from lunch proudly flaunting an "I voted" sticker on my forehead. My coworker—and closest friend within a few hundred miles—turned, looked at my smile, and said, "That's enough for me to vote against her." Slowly, over the course of days, the office began to agree. Whatever semblance of a connection I had established was ignored and irrelevant. But it didn't matter, we were going to win, they would lick their wounds, I would continue to educate.

Wednesday, November 9th, 2016, 8:27 AM. I rose, like a corpse from her grave, from my desk. My bootlaces wove themselves into the fiber of the carpeting as I carried myself to the bathroom. I triple checked the lock, then proceeded to violently dry heave into the sink. I had nothing left. I stared at the fluorescent-lit contours of my cheeks, began tracing, feeling, worshipping the androgyny. The loneliness, the darkness, the anger, swelled. Loathed or forgotten? I contemplated which explanation I preferred. But as I lost myself in the alternative beauty of my face, I felt power. I felt the rawest pride, a sweltering joy, in who I was. Undoubtedly, I would suffer further. Undoubtedly, I would lose battles, leaving them maimed and discouraged. But undoubtedly, I would fight. I would be trans* even harder, I told myself: *I bet they'd hate that.*

Enduring that environment sparked a confidence in me that previously laid damp and smothered. Months removed from that apathetic nothingness, I had become fire. I fought and I yelled and I undeniably existed. 

BATTLE OF FRANKLIN, TENN.

Drawn by
G.A. LEMEHT Capt. 97th O.N.L. and
Asst. Top. Eng. 29 Regt. 29 Div. 49 A.C.

Scale
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



MARGINALIZED VOICES, COLLEGE RADIO, AND DIY MUSIC CULTURE

WRITTEN BY RACHEL HARGRAVE

Photo by Delia Tomlinson

Platforms for marginalized voices in music are few and far between. Despite progress in the music industry, socially marginalized groups, especially non-male, POC/QTPOC, and/or queer people, are still severely underrepresented and face considerable difficulty on the path to success. Most top-charting pop songs sound like cookie cutter copies of the same songs we've been dancing to for the last five years, with the only difference being a new fresh-faced straight white boy credited as the next big thing. Disenfranchised artists struggle to find a way to reach their audiences. Their lack of mainstream success isn't due to a lack of support, but a lack of open platforms. Major record labels don't want to take risks on queer voices like PWR BTTM or Told Slant, which means they must be picked up by smaller labels. Even though Sleater-Kinney, fronted by bisexual *Portlandia*-creator Carrie Brownstein, may be at the forefront of today's indie rock/riot grrl scene after

over a decade of making music, they still don't have the same reach that The Chainsmokers achieved this year. Two of the strongest platforms for marginalized voices are college radio and D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) music shows. However, both are at risk of dying out, which could be incredibly damaging to the artists who rely on them for exposure.

College radio enables students to shape the sound of a generation; when we think of the '60s or the '80s, we think initially of the music. Each decade has a powerful, unique sound with important shifts reflecting the changing dynamics of the era; college radio gives the youth of the generation the power to create their sound outside of the restrictive control of the record labels and traditional music tastemakers. Because it's unreliant upon traditional avenues like record labels, which are more hesitant to take risks on unconventional artists, college radio is and has always been an intrinsic

part of both shaping the future of music as well as giving marginalized voices a platform and opportunity they would not be afforded otherwise. WUVT 90.7 FM, Virginia Tech's student-run radio station, is an independent radio station. Andrew Barber, WUVT's FM Program Director, notes that "WUVT independently decides what to play and what to include in our collection." He also states that because DJs control the music played on their shows, they can choose to include a diverse range of voices and can center shows around anything, including "women in heavy metal, people of color in indie rock, or trans techno artists."

D.I.Y. music culture is closely tied to college radio as a parallel way for new artists to find their voice and their space. D.I.Y. music is centered around the community building its own culture and music scene; local people are responsible instead of companies or record labels. Giving agency to communities is a powerful way to also give agency to marginalized voices because it enables them to build their space. However, gentrification is driving up the costs of potential venues and forcing artists into unsafe spaces. The very real consequences of this are seen in Oakland's Ghost Ship Fire, the deadliest fire in Oakland's history, earlier this year with thirty-six killed. Because authorities are shutting down events and venues for lacking permits or certain safety features, artists are driven literally underground, often playing in basements. It's a long-standing complaint that cities appreciate the arts but don't do anything to support them; if we want to keep D.I.Y. music culture alive, we need to give it the space to live and to thrive.

Hearing queer voices is vitally important. While we don't think of sound as a physical thing, it can take up physical space: think about how you can feel a bass beat through the floor as it fills up a room, or the way a whistle can cut through the bustle of a crowd. It is important to allow voices to be heard because it allows those voices to take up their own space. Queer voices are all too often silenced and music is a way for them to be heard. Barber says that "queer voices have been prominent in the rise of many genres, particularly but not limited to, disco and more recently hip-hop and electronic dance music;" they've had a major impact on some of the best music of the last fifty years. In order to encourage and support queer and other marginalized voices in music, we need to create policies that create respectful spaces for all individuals, as well as develop "agendas centering marginalized artists" and "criteria for booking queer artists and removing predatory individuals" so that we create a safer, more progressive music scene. Artists like PWR BTTM and Told Slant are important for the representation of queer voices, and losing the way in which they gain exposure and success could be incredibly damaging to music as a whole. ■■■

ARTICLES FOR FURTHER READING:

<http://pitchfork.com/features/article/10018-does-college-radio-even-matter-anymore/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/nyregion/after-oakland-fire-brooklyn-artists-vow-to-keep-partying.html>

That

Tiny Gender Marker: The Difficulty of Changing Documents on Campus to Match Gender Identity

Written by: Ella DiPalermo male female

Trans* students occupy a unique space in modern academia. Beyond being the foundation of queer communities on campuses throughout the world, we also push those campuses towards a more progressive and accepting agenda. It's getting increasingly harder to ignore, or deliberately not accommodate, our existence. At Virginia Tech, it appears like we're on the cusp of an explicitly welcoming campus. There are gender-neutral bathrooms in a significant number of residence halls, there are safe spaces thanks to HokiePride, TransSpace, the LGBTQ+ Resource Center, and the Women's Center, there are support groups available at the campus counseling center.

But there's more to be done. In the eyes of bureaucracy, the queer community can appear to be a single-interest monolith. We want public acceptance; we want to feel like we're safe in a public setting. However, as most in the queer community know, the needs of trans* folk differ greatly than those of cis people. For trans* identifying students like myself, coming out in college also comes with many complications. Beyond the drama and frills of the social media announcements, announcing your identity also comes with seemingly endless lectures on pronouns, names, and general language to everyone. Existing as a trans* person yields a life of defending your identity socially, professionally, and especially

academically. As a student at Virginia Tech, in particular, you're recognized by an ID number that is tied to your full legal name. Your records are tied to a social security number and a birth certificate that may not reflect your right name or gender. In the eyes of the university, you're tattooed with the identity that you fought to liberate yourself from. That name, that tiny gender marker, on your school ID can cause damage every time you pay for a meal or hop on the bus. You're put in a position of outing yourself to your professors and classmates just so you can exist comfortably in a classroom setting. So, as someone growing increasingly intolerant of signing the wrong name on my homework assignments, I did some research into how to minimize this problem.

As I explored this process, I discovered many problems and hoops to jump through before I could access the resources and changes I need. For any student, queer or not, changing your name on university records requires legal documentation that you've changed your name outside of the university—which, depending on the state, can include expensive changes to legal documents—such as a birth certificate, passport, or driver's license—and even sometimes needing to take out space within the local newspaper to announce the change. Part of the

trouble of needing these documents to change one's name is that they need to also reflect a change in not only name but also a change in gender marker.

Upon reaching out to the registrar's office, it became evident that there was no protocol for modifying what gender the university classified you as (information is also not easily accessible online). Before adjusting your name and gender with the university, what should be a reasonable and an easy thing to do, trans* students have to go through a painful legal process (again) of doing this separately in the eyes of the law. In Virginia, the process is a headache. There are petitions and fees and court dates. As far as it goes for state laws covering legally transitioning, however, Virginia maintains one of the more rational processes. Issues particularly arise for VT students that represent states and nations far less progressive than Virginia's own commonwealth. Students from West Virginia, just one state over, need to undergo Gender Confirmation Surgery as one pre-requisite behind legally changing your gender. While many trans* people opt to have certain surgeries, a significant number opt not to or cannot afford to (it is often not covered by insurance and sometimes requires a diagnosis of a mental illness "Gender Identity Disorder"). Both decisions are completely acceptable because there is no right way to be trans*. The problem persists, though, as many state lawmakers don't understand or care, and they implement drastically different requirements on how to properly, and legally, identify. Even beyond recognition of the state, recognition in the household is also a delicate matter. It is an unfortunate, yet frequent, situation where parents, that many students are financially dependent upon for these legal and medical fees, not to mention things like tuition, may be less accepting of your

identity and complicate moving forward. The point here is that requiring surgery to legally change one's gender marker and name is a large administrative barrier to accessing these things for students, particularly if the university requires these changes at the state level in order to have them reflected at the university level.

Trans* folk just want to exist as our whole selves. Yet there seems to be a myth around us that we're lying about who we are. To some unknown advantage, we want to be different, we're trying to cheat the system. Requiring trans* students to undergo legal, medical, and/or familial battles so that our identities can be officially recognized on campus sends the message that we're tolerated and not celebrated. By not outlining an explicit policy on allowing trans* individuals to identify properly, the university fails those students. The process needs to be modernized. Let us identify how we want here. For many, this is an oasis, this is one place where we can exist and celebrate ourselves. Let us be comfortable, let us place the right gender markers on our school IDs, allow us to not have to email professors asking them to use the right names and pronouns. The more accepting the university is, the safer we feel. There is a vile rhetoric circulating in so many state legislatures that trans* students, trans* people, deserve less. It should be on universities everywhere to state proudly that they accept and value trans* students. Certainly bathrooms and safe spaces are a great step, but when we're still referred to with names that harm us, the process of adjusting our identities in the eyes of the school needs to be more straightforward. The evidence coming from our school suggests the onus is on the trans* community to, once again, push for recognition. That is a fight we will always win. ■



Volunteering Opportunities Near You

Written by Emma Klein

Mass mobilization of activists and volunteers is probably the only positive action we've seen since the announcement of the 2016 election results. This great awakening has inspired many people to reach out to marginalized communities and individuals who are immediately affected by numerous problematic (to say the least) policy changes and shifts. There are political, social, and ideological battles occurring simultaneously on so many fronts right now, and this absolutely necessitates marginalized groups forming a unified, unfaltering line of defense against the hatred, bigotry, and oppression our current administration is perpetuating. If you have an hour or two to spare every week, or even every once in awhile, consider signing up for some of the volunteering opportunities listed below; you don't have to be on the front lines of a protest to fight hate.

VOLUNTEERING IN BLACKSBURG

Organization: Micah's Backpack

Location: St Michael Lutheran Church
2308 Merrimac Rd. Blacksburg, VA

Description: Every Thursday during the school year, volunteers help pack bags of food for students in need. Volunteers help set up, pack bags, restock shelves, and break down packaging. They meet from 6:00 to 7:00 at St Michael Lutheran Church, located 5-10 minutes from VT but are not on bus route. For more information, go to micahsbackpack.org.

Contact: hope@micahsbackpack.org
or (540) 951-8951

Organization: Warm Hearth
Village/ Kroontje Health Care

Location: 2387 Warm Hearth Dr, Blacksburg, VA

Description: Volunteers perform music for the Nursing Home, Memory Care and Assisted Living II units at the Kroontje Health Care Center. This includes but is not limited to playing an instrument, singing, and participating in group performances. Warm Hearth is also seeking volunteers for one-on-one visits with residents.

Contact: sleist@warmhearth.org or
mdecosta@warmhearth.org

Organization: New River Valley Community Services, RAFT Crisis Hotline

Location: 700 University City Boulevard Blacksburg, VA

Description: Volunteers provide suicide and crisis intervention, including giving empathy and support and mental health and substance abuse information and referrals to the counties of Montgomery, Floyd, Giles, Pulaski and the City of Radford (including Virginia Tech and Radford University). Raft operates 4:00 pm – 8:00 am Monday through Friday and 24 hours on the weekends.

Contact: Stephanie Bryson at
(540) 961-8422 raft@nrvcs.org

Organization: To Our House

Location: Blacksburg, VA

Description: To Our House (TOH) is a growing group of interested New River Valley citizens who have joined together to provide temporary overnight shelter for single homeless men in the NRV.

Contact: Carol Johnson at (540) 382-6188

VOLUNTEERING IN CHRISTIANSBURG

Organization: New River Community Action

Location: 110 Roanoke Street Christiansburg, VA

Description: Volunteers perform periodic beautification of their shelters. Tasks include yard work, gardening, painting and unskilled building and grounds maintenance. For more information, go to <http://www.nrfamilyshelter.org/>.

Contact: Carol Johnson at (540) 382-6188

Organization: Montgomery County

Emergency Assistance

Location: 110 Roanoke Street Christiansburg, VA

Description: Volunteers stock the food pantry, assist with family and individual intakes, and work in the Montgomery County thrift store. For more information, go to mceap.com.

Contact: Melissa Poindexter at (540) 381-1561 or mpoindexter@nrcaa.org

Organization: Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley

Location: 195 W. Main Street Christiansburg, VA

Assessment Volunteer: Volunteers assist with assessing students who are interested in receiving tutoring in reading or English language learning. Volunteering consists of occasional 2-hour sessions, scheduled to match your availability.

Community Ambassador: Ambassadors spread the word about Literacy Volunteers of the NRV to community organizations and businesses.

This includes activities such as taking promotional materials to key locations, helping staff a booth at your local community festival, or possibly attending Chamber or other community events as a representative of LVRV.

Blog Contributor: Volunteers write 1-3 paragraph blog posts about literacy or related topics. Volunteers choose from a calendar of planned articles. The topic and some bullet points are provided and your article will be edited and posted. Volunteers must attend a 60-90 minute Volunteer Orientation to become familiar with the LVRV mission.

For more information, go to <http://www.lvrv.org>.

Contact: Lisa Quesenberry at 540-382-7262 or lquesenberry@lvrv.org

Organization: Good Samaritan Hospice

Location: 1160 Moose Drive NW Christiansburg, VA

Description: Volunteers offer a caring heart to help people in the final stages of a life-limiting illness, companionship, respite, or run errands. For more information, go to <http://www.goodsamhospice.org>.

Contact: Deborah Lovelace at (877) 381-3171

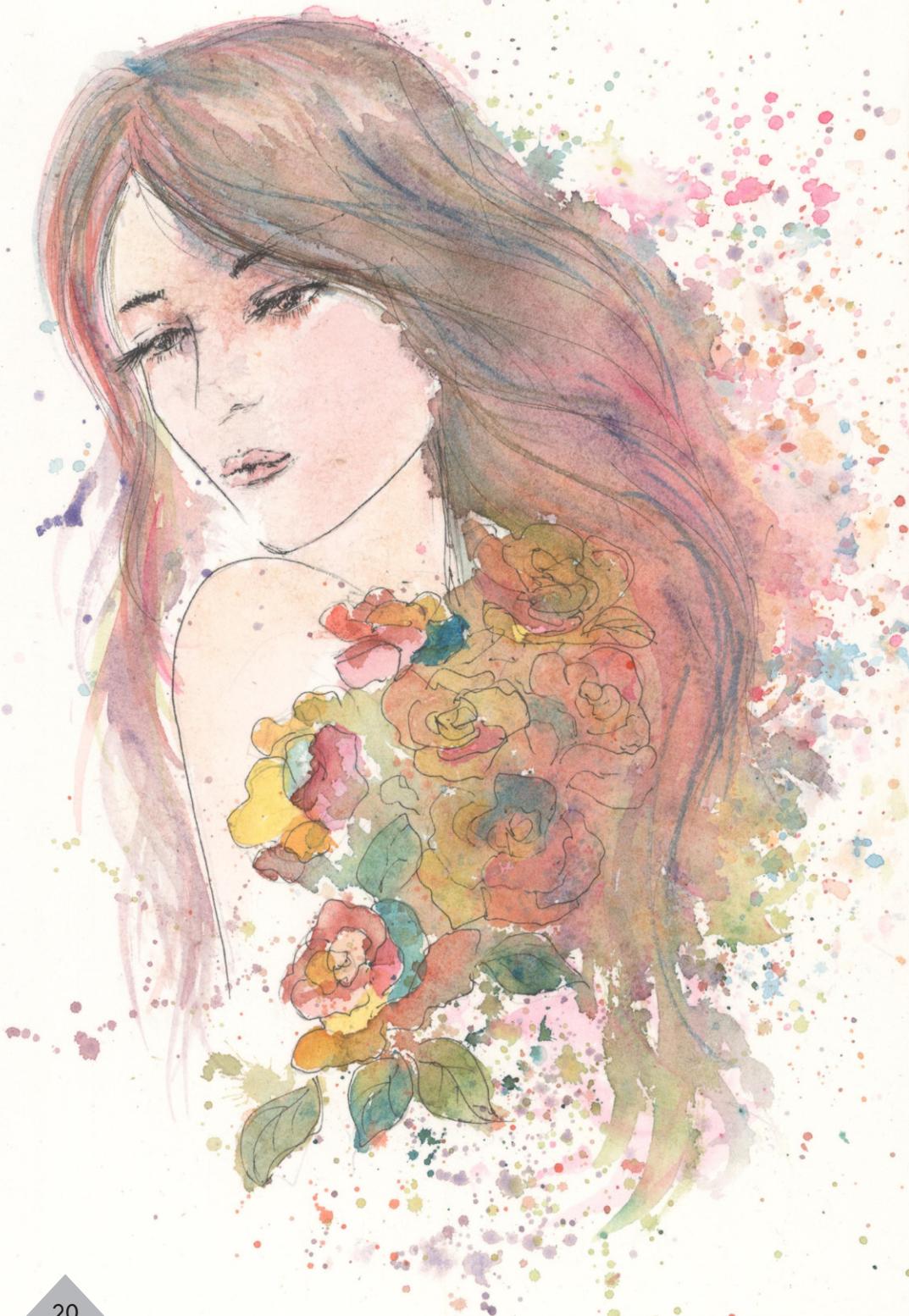
VOLUNTEERING IN GILES/PULASKI/RADFORD/MONTGOMERY COUNTY/FLOYD

Organization: Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley

Location: Neutral settings (libraries, church meeting rooms, LV-NRV office)

Description: After training, tutors are matched with a student seeking English help. They meet for tutoring in a neutral setting, such as a library, church meeting room, or the LV-NRV office for 1-2 hours, once or twice a week. To insure stability for learners, tutors must agree to serve for twelve months. For more information, go to <http://www.lvrv.org>.

Contact: Lisa Quesenberry at 540-382-7262



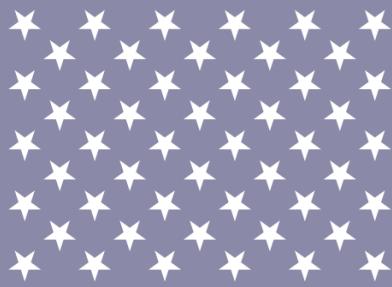
Never Not *a Lovely Girl*

Painting by
Aline R.S.S. de Souza

Self-Care in the Age of Aggression:

Survival 101 for Activists against the Trump Regime

Written by Emma Klein



It's 2:00 AM. You lay awake in your bed and listen to your phone buzz with news updates and social media notifications. You assume that all of the news is bad...and you're right. You assume that the phantom vibrations are either snarky Facebook comments from conservative friends from high school or a string of pro-Trump memes and snowflake insults in the group message you are currently entangled in...unfortunately, you're right on both counts. You feel helpless, overwhelmed, tired, and hopeless.

But you don't have to. You can be strong and consistent in fighting against the waves of oppression if you practice regular and realistic self-care techniques. Whether you are new to activism or you are a long time veteran, follow some of the advice below to equip yourself with the armor you'll need for the next four years.

Unplug and Detox- While it is unquestionably important to stay up-to-date on breaking news, inundating yourself with it all day, every day, is harmful. Don't feel pressured to open every news alert that pops up on your phone or in your inbox. You may even consider disabling push notifications from news applications for now. Dedicate a certain section of your day or week to reading news articles

from reliable sources rather than reading headlines as they pop up on social media. In the same vein, it may be helpful to unfollow friends and family members on social media who spend all day posting Breitbart articles and insulting memes or to simply restrict your social media time so that you spend it wisely.

Remember, constant exposure to the crippling injustices committed by the Trump administration and perpetuated by Congress and state governments can and will lead to a devastating outcome: normalcy. The more you see it, the more compelled you feel to get used to it. This doesn't mean permanently detach or disengage, but take all of the news and political conversations in stride.

Health- Daily mental and physical self-care is more important now than ever. Get sleep. Be physically active in your own way; this could be walking, jogging, lifting, or doing yoga. Stay consistent with medications and consider scheduling a physical with a doctor to get your vitamin and mineral levels checked for deficiencies. Get outside. Eat healthy food, but feel free to indulge from time to time. Seek out therapy animals when they come to Newman Library and spend some time loving on a sweet Golden Retriever. Give meditation a try. Be vigilant of harmful mental habits and reflect on your behaviors to see if you can identify and correct any routines that might work against self-care.

Remember, you can't perform at your fullest potential as an activist if you aren't taking care of yourself.

Entertainment- Watch a Netflix special that isn't political. You could binge a season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* or finally indulge in *Stranger Things*. Attend local concerts and shows; Gillie's, The Lyric Theatre, Shesha Hookah Bar and Lounge, VT Union, and the Moss Arts Center host regular events that are typically heavily advertised. Spend time with friends and agree ahead of time to limit political discussions or to avoid them entirely. Listen to fictional podcasts like *Welcome to Nightvale* or *Alice Isn't Dead* for some escapism. Listen to Virginia Tech's diverse and always entertaining radio station, WUVT 90.7 FM. Read that book you've been picking up and putting down.

The important thing here is moderation. Remember, escapism is fine and healthy as long as it is not a permanent state of existence.

Activism- Once you have your baseline mental and physical health in check, it's time to engage in activism. While it may be tempting to volunteer to support every marginalized group you can find, it is vital that you pick one or two issues to focus on at a time. Activism works as a coalition of people, a united front, not a handful of individuals doing all of the work and getting burnt out. Use your strengths and talents toward your activism efforts; if you enjoy protesting or public speaking, seek out these kinds of events and movements and join up. If you hate crowds, don't protest. Offering to edit flyers or maintain a website for a nonprofit may feel like small efforts, but numerous people making realistic and enjoyable efforts is ideal.

There exists a great deal of tension in some circles concerning the proper approach and execution of activism. >>

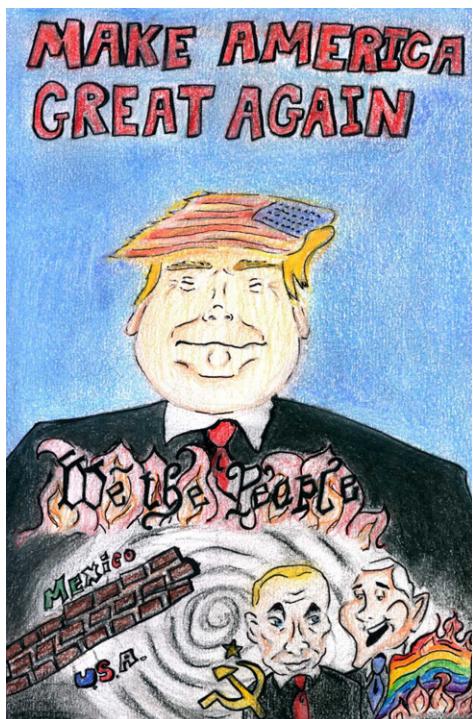


Illustration by Alex Girona

When attempting to get involved in a movement during the New Dark Ages (formally referred to as the Trump Administration), it is absolutely necessary to understand that activism is intersectional; essentially, privilege and subjective experience alter the way in which individuals relate to and fight for certain causes. Many argue that there is no wrong way to participate in activism; this is an incredibly reductionist statement. For example, there were white women at the Women's March scolding indigenous women for being too loud and lulu'ing (similar to a war cry). If you are an individual who has the luxury of institutional privilege and protection, if you are a member of a group whose voice is consistently heard and amplified, it is vital to use your advantages to bolster and support marginalized people. This could be as simple as taking a backseat in a discussion or as complex and uncomfortable as challenging your own ideological and political stances.

Do not be a surface-level activist. Be authentic. Remember that for many people, “activist” is not a title, but a necessary facet of their identity and livelihood. 



Do's and Don'ts

• • • • • • • •

- Do stay active, aware, and outraged.
- Don't allow the sense of urgency or obligation to overwhelm you.
- Do engage in activism that plays to your strengths.
- Don't allow people to shame you for being new to activism or political awareness.
- Do choose one or two issues to focus on at a time.
- Don't undermine the causes that others choose to support.
- Don't allow people to ridicule or deride you for engaging in self-care.

What it means to be QUEER in the age of TRUMP

written by Dana Mulligan

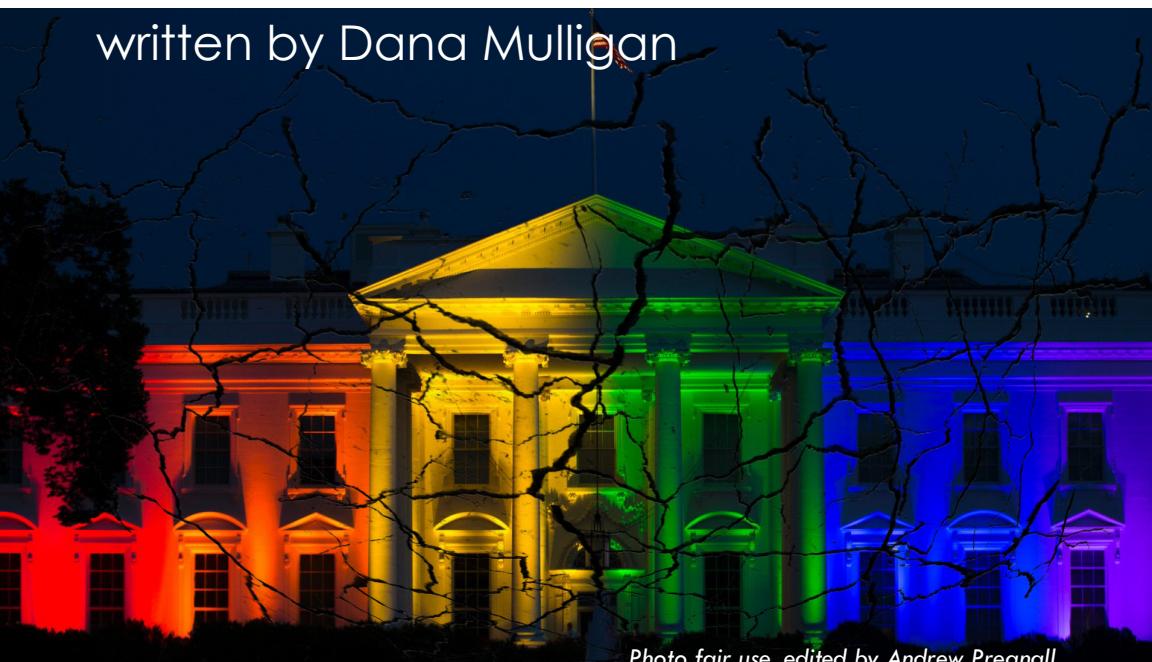


Photo fair use, edited by Andrew Pregnall

When I woke up on November 9, 2016, I called my mother in tears, barely able to choke out, "What if I can't get married? What if I don't have rights?" She did her best to reassure me that the government moves too slowly for any drastic changes regarding the preservation or elimination of my rights to marry the person I love. But as we get further and further into the Trump administration, it becomes more and more obvious that the protection of my liberties as a queer person is not a priority. In fact, the administration's priority seems to be the destruction of LGBTQ rights.

Right now it is a scary time to not be white, wealthy, Christian, male, heterosexual, cisgender, or able-bodied. As a relatively well-off white American that is not religious, I don't have as much to worry about as my black, Muslim, immigrant, transgender, etc. peers.

However, as a gay woman I find my rights increasingly attacked. For now, it looks as if my right to marry the person I love will remain. The rest of my rights however, are not quite so secure. Trump has shown support for the First Amendment Defense Act, which would >>

allow businesses to discriminate against LGBTQ people on the basis of religious freedom. This includes but is not limited to firing someone from their job, denying them tax deductions for charitable contributions, revoke tax exemptions,

and most importantly deny any benefit under a federal benefit program including Welfare, food stamps, or healthcare. Trump's views have emboldened others to support such bills, including Virginia, where a similar bill just recently passed the House of Delegates. Such discrimination against LGBTQ people is already legal in many states. The passage of the First Amendment Defense Act would use federal power to make similar bills legal in all states (so much for states' rights...), which could set a very dangerous precedent. Being HIV positive, transgender, or queer can be life-threatening when it is legal for hospitals and healthcare providers to deny LGBTQ people medical care, for example. LGBTQ rights are not simply about love and marriage, but they are about the right to exist and be treated with human decency.

In an ideal world, my queerness would not be a political statement. It would be simply a part of my being and an expression of love, not a declaration of defiance. However in today's political climate, being a queer person is inherently a political act. Every aspect of our existence is a political decision. Whether that includes public schools having the responsibility to protect us from bullying and discrimination, or a university having the right to deny us acceptance or housing. Whether we have the right to marry our partner, or a clerk having the

LGBTQ rights are not simply about *love* and *marriage*, but they are about the *right to exist* and be treated with human decency.

right to deny us a marriage certificate. Whether we have the right to adopt a child, or a business being able to deny us service. Whether employers have the right to deny us jobs or federal benefits, or we can visit an ailing spouse in the

hospital. Whether or not violence and discrimination against us is protected by law means that my identity is the basis by which these laws determine my life chances—my personal is political.

To exist openly as an LGBTQ person in today's America takes great bravery. I should not have to defend my right to the same protections as straight people (which is not simply just the right to love and marry), but I must fight. I am learning to embrace the political aspect of my sexuality and understand that every political statement I make will be viewed through the lens of my sexual orientation as well as the intersectional differences that I experience based on who I am. To come out, be out, or even simply to just *be* takes carefully calculated choices about what will be the impact in this context? Will I be safe? But, this does not mean that I will sit idly by and watch my rights be taken away from me, one-by-one. No. I will fight by speaking up and speaking out, listening to others in marginalized communities who need that space and support, calling my local, state, and federal representatives, marching for my rights as well as all the rights of people who are not in the majority.

I look forward to the day I no longer have to worry about such things, but until then I am willing to fight for my rights and acceptance in society. 

Horoscope Hookups

By Maggie Nanney * layout by Mariana Sierra



Because you, Aquarius, always put the needs of others before your own, you are the signs' humanitarian. You are a natural with new and creative ideas, always day-dreaming about what could be. You even carry that imagination into your love life (and the bedroom) and always know how to give to your partner(s). Be sure this spring to care for yourself just as much!



Something got you down, Pisces? You are our emotional sign, and you wear your heart on your sleeve. Your friends and lovers always know that you are there for them to be a shoulder to cry on or to celebrate life's big events. Your heart is in the right place, as you are always the most caring of partners. Be careful not to internalize everyone else's burdens and to feel for yourself as well.



Our Aries is all about the thrill of the chase. Our passion seeker, our trouble maker. You always want who you can't have, but that makes you want them even more. You love to be teased, played with, and challenged all the way into the bedroom. While you are more known for your one-night adventures, you are always up for the challenge of a relationship too. Have fun with this one!



Ah, Taurus. Spring is in the air, and so is romance. Of all the signs, you are the most romantic as you love to surround you with all things good, happy, and loving. Everywhere you look you see positivity and radiate joy. As an old-fashioned romantic, you love big gestures and tradition. Maybe consider going out of your comfort zone a bit and try something new with the one(s) you love--who knows, maybe you'll find something new to like.



Gemini, you have a great head on your shoulders, be sure to use it. You enjoy the art of the intellectual puzzle and thrive on conversation between you and your partner. But be careful that you don't act smug about how much you know or what you know--talking about Judith Butler's performativity can only get you so far. As finals approach, be sure to put your study time to good use. >>



Cancer

JUN 21 - JUL 22

Our summertime lover, Cancer, is our fierce loyalist and protector. In life, you are all about dedication, safety, passion, and harmony. You consider those who you love the most your family and you will do anything for them. In the bed, you are all for mutual pleasure and mutual fun! "I love you" means the world to you. We love you, dear Cancer, too.



Leo

JUL 23 - AUG 22

Like the king of the jungle, Leo, your personality is absolutely magnetic. Everyone is drawn to your charisma and charm. You love to be the life of the party--and the after party if you know what I mean. Your heart is as big as your personality, and you love to love and be loved. Your big and dynamic feelings may be a lot to handle for a single person, but those that are drawn to your charm cannot resist.



Virgo

AUG 23 - SEP 22

Virgo, you are a go-getter and you know how to get things done. You enjoy making people happy and always have a 10-step plan on exactly what is needed to get them there. Your relationships are always deep and committed, as you live your life wanting more than anything to bring them the most pleasure. But be wary--sometimes your dedication to detail leaves you missing the bigger picture and can bring trouble!



Libra

SEP 23 - OCT 22

Libra, as we all know, is Latin for "limber" (not really, but should be) and gosh do you have some smooth moves. You thrive on all things beauty and elegance, rich and refined. You appreciate taking your dates to the nicest of places, which probably gets tiresome in Blacksburg. But your drive for perfection leaves you always willing to explore and try new things. Being in the bedroom is your art!



Scorpio

OCT 23 - NOV 21

With great passion comes great sting. Scorpio, you can pack quite the punch. You, lover, are intense and passionate. You fall fast and you fall hard for those you care about, and you aren't about to let go. Because passion rules your life, be sure to check in with your partner(s) about their desires too and make sure that everyone is on the same page.



Sagittarius

NOV 22 - DEC 21

This spring, Sagittarius is going to be considered "the total package" and people are going to flock to you! Both a social butterfly and a deep thinker, you are an adventurer both in and out of the bedroom. You are willing to "experiment" and try new things, but you always stay true to who you are. Seize the day and keep on keeping on.



Capricorn

DEC 22 - JAN 19

We are all appreciative of you, dear Capricorn, as you are our dear friend as well as lover. While some may think of you as a workaholic or head-over-heels and "whipped," you just truly want to put as much effort into every relationship in your life as possible. You dedicate yourself to your personal relationships and there seem to be no limits in how far you'll go for love. This is truly quality love.

...it's destined in the stars!

IN SOLIDARITY?: THE WOMEN'S MARCH ON WASHINGTON

WRITTEN BY PAIGE CRANE

On the rainy morning of January 20th, a friend and I attended Trump's inauguration on the National Mall. I felt uneasy as we joined the inauguration crowd: since Election Day on November 8th, I'd been grappling with the fact that Trump had been elected to the Presidency. I'd spent months watching Saturday Night Live and scoffing at Trump's frequent Twitter outbursts, public relations nightmares, and his minimal knowledge of public service. I was unprepared for the reality that Donald Trump was now "Mr. President." >>



When we reached the National Mall, the tension was palpable. Even among attendees decked out in “Make America Great Again” hats and capes made out of the American flag, the priority seemed to be making sure no one cut in line rather than enjoying such a significant day. A protester walked past us through the crowd with a sign criticizing Trump, eliciting shouts and insults from Trump supporters. Her sign was ripped out of her hands and I inched towards my friend for comfort. What if I were holding a sign with my beliefs for everyone to see? Coming out as gay even to my family had been difficult. I wondered if the downright hostility I witnessed could translate into any danger.

A school group on a field trip to the Capitol stood near us; among them was a girl who stood out from the rest of the crowd. Unlike most everyone else at the Mall, she wore a headscarf—a hijab—and bowed her head while listening to Trump as he spoke of crushing radical Islamic terrorism and hearing the cheers that went up in the crowd. I wondered if she felt as I did, confused and an imposter in our own country.

We were cold, irritable, and altogether drained as we rode the metro home from the inauguration. But the inauguration was not what we went to D.C. for that weekend: the Women’s March on Washington was planned for the next day. I’d read that the organizers had turned in permits for 200,000 to attend the march. I knew I wouldn’t be alone tomorrow in the need to do *something* with the anger, confusion, and unease that I had felt for the past few months.

The day started out at the Dunn Loring metro, waiting in line for passes. We had barely secured a parking pass and were among hundreds of others waiting for a ride into D.C. These were no ordinary

commuters – pink pussy hats dotted the crowd, young students carried handmade protest signs, and parents negotiated the stairs with their strollers and multiple kids in tow. On their faces I saw my own excitement reflected back at me. Our excitement grew with a tweet from the D.C. Metro: “Metro Ridership as of 11am: 275k. For comparison, that’s more than 8x a normal Sat.”

When we finally reached the National Mall, I marveled at the scene. The diversity of people was startling as compared to the 98% white crowd (to my own estimation) I had seen the day before. A rainbow flag flew in the hand of one man. Next to him stood a woman holding a sign reading *“If you aren’t angry, you aren’t paying attention”*. As we became part of the flood of protesters, I realized that I belonged here. Yesterday I had merely been a nervous observer, but today I was proudly marching the streets, yelling for my rights as a gay woman and standing in solidarity for the rights of others. I couldn’t help but wonder what Donald Trump was doing that day, and if he knew how proud we were to be there. The marchers were mosaic of different people fighting for the same thing: to be heard. We only learned later that the permit allowing 200,000 people had been surpassed, to almost 500,000. When we got home that night, I looked up pictures of the hundreds of satellite marches across all seven continents (yes, even the penguins marched). With tears in my eyes, I realized that the world had been with us.

After the inauguration on Friday, it would have been easy to declare the Women’s March a perfect day. Hundreds of thousands of people (the exact number now being debated by the White House) had shown up to protest a myriad of issues and made history. However,



Photo by Mariana Sierra

the Women's March on Washington wasn't a perfect show of solidarity and inclusion. As I read about the successes of the marches worldwide, I also came across several articles criticizing their lack of inclusion. It slowly dawned on me: had the March fulfilled its promise? Maybe not for everyone.

Many hailed the March an event organized around white women's issues and noted the disparity in representation as a result. Others argued that "we should all be women first," a statement that seems to assume that we can just rank our identities and put the inconvenient ones in the background. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of law at Columbia University, described intersectionality to explain why this is simply not possible. Minority identities are often denied basic civil rights and visibility; those with multiple minority identities bare the compounding weight of discrimination.

A gay black woman will undoubtedly have different experiences than I, a gay white woman. To "all be women first" is to assume that my experiences as a white woman are the norm, and those that differ from me are somehow *Other*.

I'm proud I went to the Women's March, and I'm proud to take part in conversations to ensure that the next one - when it inevitably occurs - will be more inclusive, more vocal, and a march for everyone. And I am now prepared for the reality that Donald Trump is now "*Mr. President*." A quote from Cloud Atlas has stuck in my mind since that weekend in D.C.: "Our lives are not our own. We are bound to others, past and present, and by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future." It's our right and our responsibility. ▀

PHOTOS BY PAIGE CRANE





Women's Center

AT VIRGINIA TECH

Promoting a Virginia Tech community
that is **safe, equitable, and supportive**
for women and that **celebrates** their
experiences, achievements, and diversity.

www.womenscenter.vt.edu
www.stopabuse.vt.edu

serving staff, faculty, and students

206 Washington St. (0270)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Phone: 540/231-7806
Fax: 540/231-6767
Email: womctr@vt.edu



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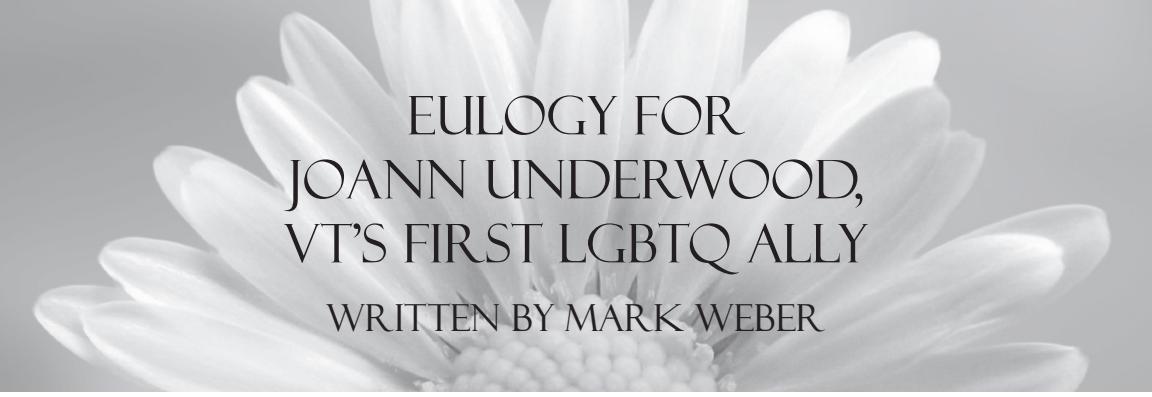
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EULOGY FOR JOANN UNDERWOOD, VT'S FIRST LGBTQ ALLY

WRITTEN BY MARK WEBER

I first met JoAnn in early 1984. I was young and invincible then. Now, I'm 50 shades of grey. She was invited to our Lambda Horizon meeting to give her sex talk. Lambda Horizon was the Virginia Tech LGBTQ student group at the time. Our meetings were held off campus at the Cooper House because we were afraid to meet on campus.

We were able to meet at the Cooper House because JoAnn's husband, Richard, and his colleague, Woody Leech, had made it possible in the late 1970's. And, soon after, JoAnn was allowed to "help the gay kids" with the permission of Vice Provost John Perry. She asked Dr. Perry – "Can I be the person that takes care of the gay kids and be their sponsor?" He replied – "By all means, JoAnn." Little did John Perry know the whirling dervish he had unleashed.

Believe it or not – JoAnn always sought permission for the work she did at Virginia Tech. She just didn't provide the details. And, at the time, it seemed easier for University leadership not to know. The one condition – she had to be invited by the students. No soliciting.

I'll never forget when she came bounding into the room - looking like the wild aunt who gave you your first drink, that you felt comfortable telling all of your secrets. No starched white nurse's uniform for JoAnn. It was a wild and loud arrival – "Did you see my diaphragm? I've lost my diaphragm and I really need it." Next thing you know - she was pitching condoms at us. To be

clear: consistent with Virginia Tech policy, she was not distributing contraceptives. She was helping prevent the spread of STD's. We were hooked and she was booked for her sex talks all across the campus! No need to solicit invitations. Young people wanted to know about sex. Imagine that. And JoAnn was the one willing to talk about sex.

It was love at first sight! She was an affirming force that embraced and loved all creatures – students, faculty, staff, community members including birds and the four-legged types.

She took the fledgling Lambda Horizon under her wing. At the time, students with the support of faculty members and alumni paid for and staffed a hotline. We used the hotline for out or questioning individuals to call and get connected with the local community.

With JoAnn's prodding, we started on the journey in the 1980's from exclusion to toleration – and in the 1990's from toleration to acceptance. She was ahead of her time and built the foundation that celebrates, welcomes and has pride in LGBTQ students today.

It didn't happen overnight... the evolution of AIDS in the 1980's accelerated our work. JoAnn marshalled the Virginia Tech AIDS education committee – formed in early October 1985. We set forth an aggressive agenda for AIDS and other STD's – education across the campus and community. Our work documented in a handout >>

called “Education on a Shoestring – a funding and program guide for creating an AIDS Education Program on a college campus” was recognized nationally.

We were invited to present in New Orleans at the American College Health Association’s 1986 Annual meeting, alongside UC Berkeley’s AIDS education program. JoAnn led our entourage in New Orleans. Imagine JoAnn with her two male undergrad escorts in New Orleans. She constantly reinforced our notion – we, (Keith, another student on the AIDS education committee and I), were much cuter than the boys from Berkeley. No wonder we had more people at our exhibit booth. And then there was the Mississippi river boat. The captain was much too interested in Keith and me for JoAnn’s liking...

You really don’t want to hear how well the conference and presentation went do you?

The AIDS Education Forum we held on campus on March 3, 1986 created a little storm. We invited people with AIDS to come to campus and share their life experience. All of the sudden, University leadership wanted details. JoAnn, Ed Spencer, and other University officials lined up in support. The compromise – we had to have an ambulance ready at McBryde Hall during the forum in case something happened.

By now, JoAnn and the team were encouraging us to request money from the University to support Lambda Horizon, the hotline, and our outreach. We were funded. Again after consulting and with encouragement from JoAnn – we moved Lambda Horizon onto campus. She said with that big laugh - it was time to do it. We were moving from being excluded to tolerated on campus and now we were funded!

My life as a young invincible at Virginia Tech with JoAnn wasn’t always serious – she really wanted to know about being

gay. She came to many of our Lambda Horizon meetings to check up on us! She loved telling the story about the time I invited her to my house for dinner. She was very curious about “Gaydar” and asked me how do you know if someone is gay? I simply stated – “If they have levelor blinds, track lighting and a lot of plants – you could be pretty sure they were gay” – at least in the mid-1980’s that was true! And she had a fit when I told her that the SUV she purchased was a big lesbian truck. Every time I saw her afterwards – she would ask – “Is my car really a big lesbian truck?” Yes, that SUV was...

Then there was the time Keith and I got in trouble – we told JoAnn we were going to make her the official “Fag Hag” of Lambda Horizon. She was very quick to say that she didn’t like that term. After some discussion - she agreed to be our official “Fruit Fly.”

Then there was Harvey. Harvey was African American and presented himself with all of the flair that a drama major does. Harvey loved to call JoAnn *mom* in the most public and private spaces – she loved it when he would yell down the hall in Henderson calling out for mom! After Tech, Harvey served in the Iraq war. He is now an actor in Hollywood. JoAnn and I found him on Facebook one day not too long ago. We called him and she had another fun conversation with Harvey.

JoAnn reveled in the memory of the anti-homophobia rally outside of Henderson Hall. She instigated and the students organized. There is a pattern here. They marched with signs – shouting “Hey Hey Ho Ho, Homophobia’s got to go.” By then Jon Fritsch had become her means to do what needed to be done.

In honor of our work - some got a painting from JoAnn; the one she gave me she titled – *Swirls and Motion*. Another – she



Photo by Mark Weber

was particularly proud of sheep shears – she delighted in calling it the *Gay Blades* in honor of the couple she gave it to.

JoAnn accumulated many accolades. She just loved Jocelynn Elders – The Surgeon General during Bill Clinton’s presidency. When JoAnn retired from Virginia Tech, she received a letter from Dr. Elders congratulating on her years of work and clarifying for the record the job of Surgeon General was taken... just in case JoAnn had bigger ideas.

Of all the accolades, two stand out. She loved and embraced the title “Condom Queen.” I don’t think I met anyone at Wrinkle Village – I mean Warm Hearth - that didn’t know her as the Condom Queen of Virginia Tech. Until recently I gave JoAnn credit for focusing my energy and keeping me out of trouble at Virginia Tech. Just over a year ago she confessed that she really taught me how to do what needed to be done and not get caught! This lesson and many other lessons from JoAnn have served me well in my Federal Career.

The award she loved the most, though, was the Ally of the Year Award and having the award named after her. The Ally of the Year Award was presented to JoAnn at the Lavender Graduation Ceremony for LGBTQ students in 2014.

That’s right – I need to pause here. The students who were excluded from participating in Virginia Tech life are now being celebrated with their own graduation ceremony. It is even on campus!

All the work over the years and the lives touched by JoAnn was summed up by one mother of a gay graduate at the ceremony. She went up to JoAnn at the end of the ceremony with tears running down her face and said, “Thank you”. The mother continued – “I do not think my son would’ve been safe at Virginia Tech if it hadn’t been for you.”

That mom summed it up for all the mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers of Virginia Tech students. On behalf of all of those students, including myself – I want to thank JoAnn’s family for persevering and sharing JoAnn with us.

I wish I could have had the opportunity to meet her husband, Richard, who was clearly the love of her life. Talk about a life that was well lived. She changed the world by loving all. In her honor – on behalf of the Condom Queen of Virginia Tech – love each other like there is no tomorrow and please, please, please do it safely and by all means use a condom. ▀

IN THE MAX'S BATHROOMS*

BY DEVIN KOCH

Max. Maxines. Enter at your
own risk. **THIS WAY TO THE MINISTRY**

OF MAGIC. Urinal: Out of order.
No sex in stalls. Urinate when

sitting down. Don't flush tampons.
Karma is not a bitch. You are.

Tom Lacey has a hot ass AIDS.
666-666-666: CALL ME, OR GO TO

HELL. Flush twice for good luck.
OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE SLUTTIER

THAN THEY APPEAR. Employees and
strippers must wash their hands.

EXIT. Please **ComeUM** again:
YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO.

*The Max is a LGBT Club in Omaha, NE

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Tobias Sweeney

In the continual process of coming out as transgender, I have fielded numerous questions, ranging from the invasive to the interesting:

“Are you sure you’re not just a tomboy?”

To be honest, I wasn’t sure. I never needed a label in the past for the way I felt about my gender. Instead, I chose to dig up rocks at the back of the playground as my friends and I discussed the latest Pokemon games. This blissful ignorance worked up until middle school, when puberty had begun to hit us all, and the growing disparity between our bodies became too much for them to handle. I was left to drift between the strictly binary groups of girl and boy.

“Is this just part of your rebellious phase?”

Again, I wasn’t sure. I had been somewhat rebellious, enough to visit a website like “Twilight Sucks” (the “official” forum for people who hated sparkly vampires) with my parents in the next room over. But more importantly that rebellion was what first led me to meet people who identified as LGBTQ. The T, which I learned stood for “transgender,” was of particular interest to me. I developed an extensive “truly transgender” checklist in my head, which included items such as wanting surgery and hormones, conforming strongly to binary gender roles, and a very limited scope of gender expression.

“Why aren’t you more gentle with yourself?”

It took me a long time to get away from that checklist. During the time, I went from wrestling with methods of binding my chest to wrestling with insurance over the coverage of surgery and hormones. And I still look back to the list as I vie with numerous organizations to finally get legal recognition of my name.

I know I will continue to have to battle for acceptance as I continue to come out. But I will continue to answer questions, and fight. ■■■

Photo by Jessica Herling





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