

PAMPHLET 2

SUMMER 2021

THEY CALL US DYKES

THEY CALL US

They Call Us is a literary magazine created by powerful women and gender minorities wanting to empower other women and gender minorities. Using media, art, and literature as a means to inspire, They

Call Us wants to tell the everyday struggles of women and gender minorities from around the world.

The purpose of art is to create change, so They Call Us works to unite womxn and artists to tell the stories of those that are normally silenced.

Our goal is to ignite conversation and encourage people of all ages, races, sexualities, genders,, nationalities, abilities, and the like to share their stories. They Call Us wishes to diversify the messages we see online and change the dialogue to give credibility to all of us who have felt helpless and lacking a credible voice.

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Artwork by Anna Skladany

FOREWORD

By Cassidy Delahunty

Artwork by Anna Skladany

During my time as a biology student, I've learned that there's a lot we don't know yet about pretty much everything. We can try our best to describe and categorize what we see, but the scientific truth will always be shifting and changing as we learn more information. Anyone who's ever studied electrons past a high school level knows that multiple theories can conflict with each other but also be true at the same time. This is why I love science: It isn't a static database of objectively true facts, but instead a human effort to continually improve our understanding of the world around us. No topic is a better reflection of this than sex and gender.

Bigots like to use science to argue that there are only two genders, or that sex is equivalent to gender. However, the fact of the matter is that science doesn't agree with those bigots. Like every topic in biology, biological sex cannot be easily simplified or explained. Sure, maybe "male or female" is a quick and easy designation that might be used to sort participants in research studies, but it doesn't accurately convey the fullness and complexity of the subject. As scientists, we must be seeking to describe the world around us as accurately as we can, and two simple categories just don't cover it.

There is no definition of "woman" you can write based on biological or anatomical factors that includes all women and excludes all non-women. If you say that all women have vaginas or uteruses, you include trans men, and exclude trans women and cis women who have had hysterectomies. If you define a woman as

someone with typically female secondary sex characteristics (breasts, lack of facial hair, wider hips, etc), you of course exclude some trans women, but also exclude cis women with certain medical conditions, such as polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). If you say that all women have two X chromosomes, you completely ignore the wide array of chromosomal combinations outside of XX and XY. Consider someone with XO chromosomes, XXY chromosomes, or even XXX chromosomes. Where do they fit in?

Even if we stick to definitions of only sex, and not gender, there are still a lot of people who end up not fitting into one box. If sex is defined by a combination of chromosomes, anatomy, reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics, then there will inevitably be lots of people, cis and trans, intersex or not, who deviate from the definition of one sex without clearly fitting into another. Researchers estimate that an entire 1% of the population might not clearly fit into either sex.¹ That might not seem like a lot, but that's about the same percent of the population that has red hair.

None of this is to say that we just need to start creating more categories to box people into. The point is that biological sex (and its relationship to gender) is more complicated than most people know; trying to define or group people by their sex becomes instantly more complicated and more unreasonable once you know just how intricate biological sex really is.

The only definition of "woman" that encompasses all women and excludes all

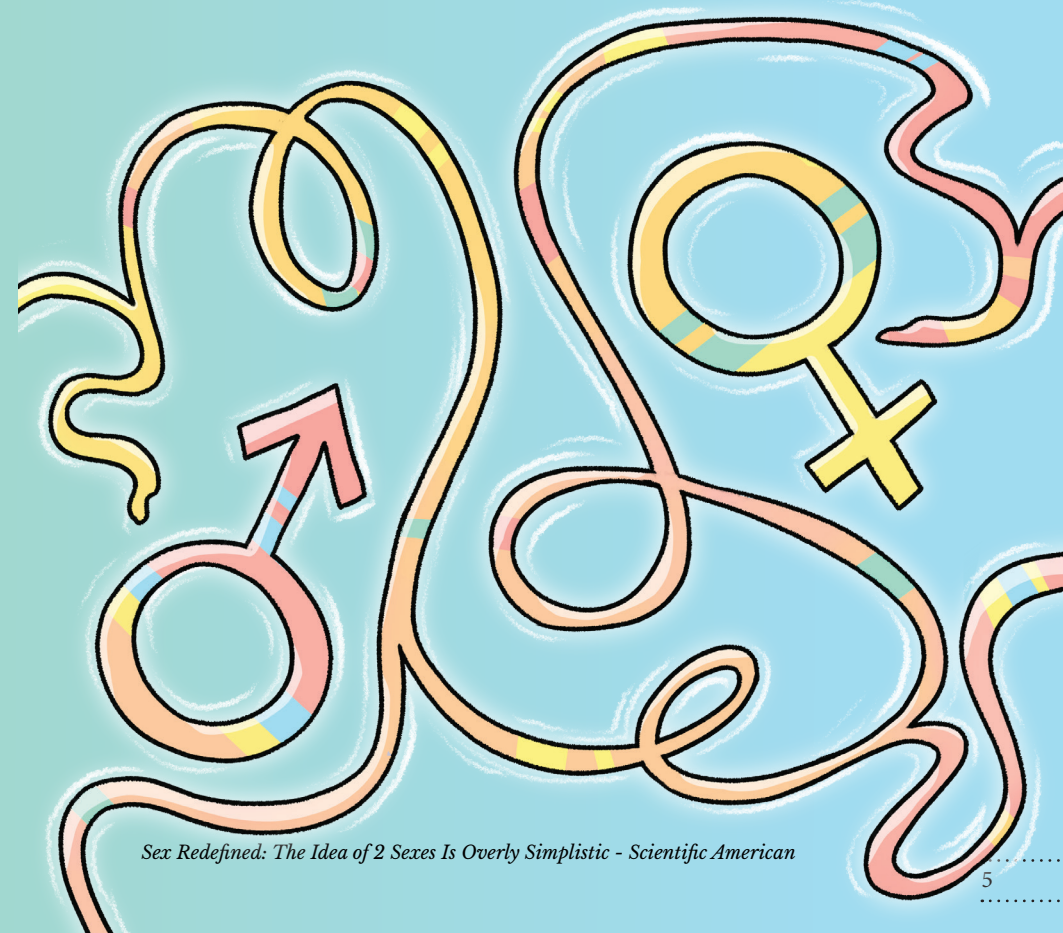
non-women is as follows: A woman is someone who identifies as a woman. Women can have any genitals, any chromosomes, any secondary sex characteristics, and any gender presentation. All that you need to be a woman is to identify as one. We have a lot of scientific evidence, biological, neurological, and sociological, to support this.

Being a lesbian myself, I know that being queer isn't just about the science. We are more than data and numbers and facts, and a study or a textbook will never be able to fully describe the experience of being queer. The point of this foreword isn't to try to explain all of human sex and gender in biological terms, but to demonstrate that the science is on our side. I take comfort in the fact that bigots can hate me and yell at me and disagree with my existence as much as they want, but they'll never be right.

This edition is not going to be one that is centered on the science of gender and sexuality. This edition is about the lived experience of being queer, being proud, and the effects of being deemed "outsider" or "unnatural." As far as the queer community has come in recent years, we are still outsiders in many ways: to the government, to the medical system, and to the world. But as much as we may be outsiders, we aren't going anywhere, and we won't be pushed out.

We still have a crazy long way to go, and in the present moment, we have a lot to fight for. But we will always have our strength in numbers, our pride, and each other.

And, of course, we'll always have science.



Sex Redefined: The Idea of 2 Sexes Is Overly Simplistic - Scientific American

THE HISTORY OF THE WORD

By Meg Harris

Artwork titled "The same, in our own way"

By Can.s.m

This edition we wanted to explore "dykes" as a culture, as an identity, but first as a word.

Historically, there is not a concrete origin to the word "dyke", there are some theories that the term is derived from the word "bull dyke." The first conclusive record and definition of the word dates back to the mid 19th century when the word was used to describe a "very well dressed man."

The culturally, "dyke" is more related to gender expression and gender perspective than sexual orientation as seen in its original longer form referenced earlier "bull dyke". A "bull" as a masculine connotation and "dyke" - a part from a well dressed man - is also known as a ditch or dip. Together the phrase "bull dyke", when directed at a female presenting person, implies that the person is "manly" and somewhat aggressive. Although bulls are usually aggressive when a man tries to antagonize it, so maybe the analogy isn't that far off ;).

In the early 20th century "dyke" began to appear in black literature. The word is used in "Topic Death" by Eric Walrond "Home to Harlem" by Claude McKay. Both pieces were written by men when describing lesbian women and masculine presenting women. It was not until the mid 20th century that the word enters cultural lexicon to become synonymous with "lesbian."

An interesting part of word's history here is that by the mid 20th century, "dykes" appears two fold; both as a descriptor within the gay community and as a derogatory term externally. The former use emerged primarily in the 1970s when queer feminist

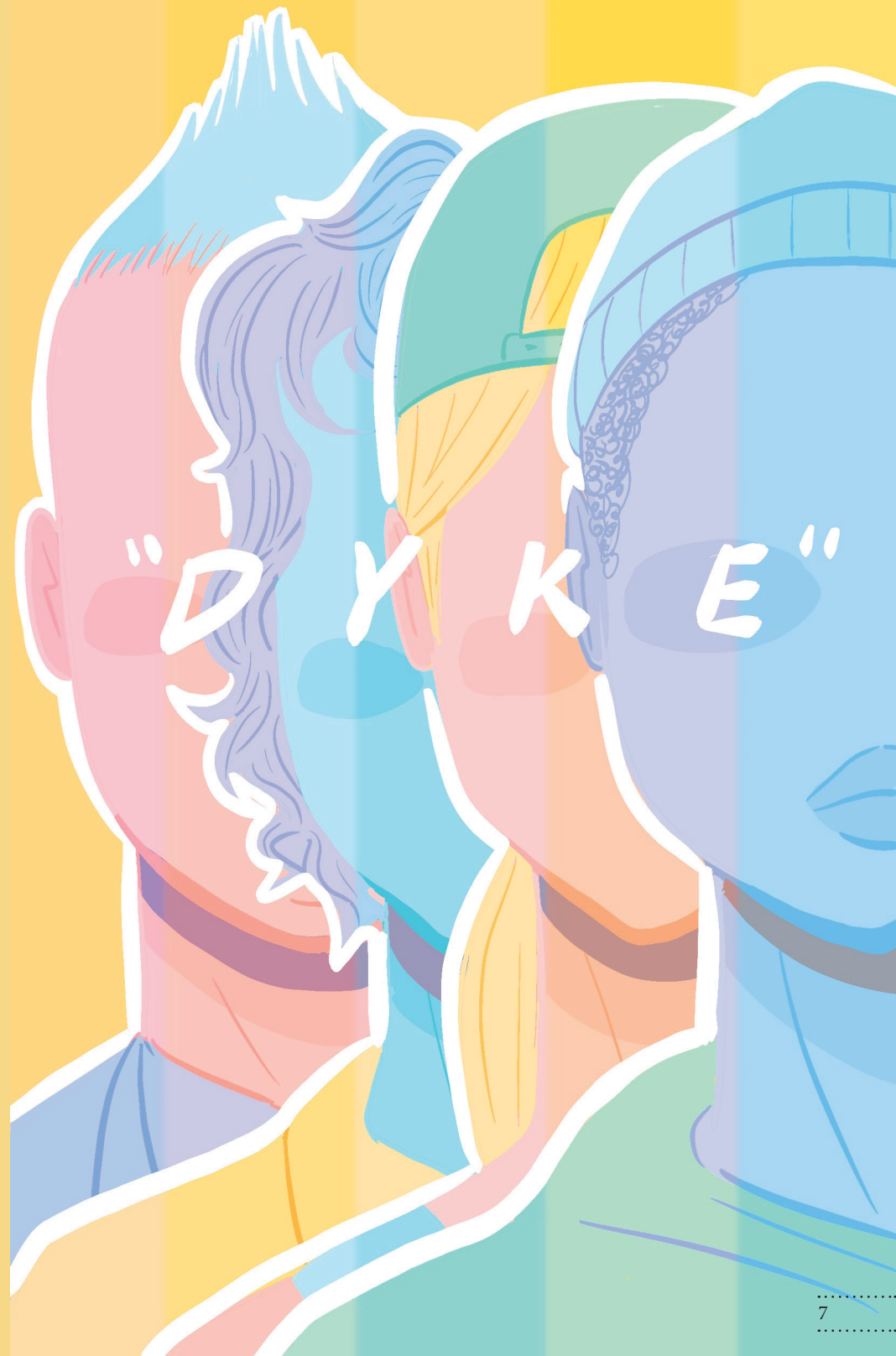
began reclaiming the word as an empowering expression of self identification. It was then that "dykes" really began to lose its power.

However, it is important to note that the ghost of those who weaponize the word still lives on. At present Youtube and other social media sites still recognize the word as a slur and choose to remove comments that use it. Similar to many other slurs, both racially and sexually, there is still a vivid debate on if the word has been fully reclaimed or if the orthodox "bull dyke" still carries a venomous power.

We chose dykes as a word and its history for this edition for the same reasons we choose every topic, to showcase the nuances. They Call Us Dykes seeks to engage with, discuss, and analyze how queerness intersects with feminism. We hope these creative pieces serve as inspiration, education, or hey, maybe you'll just like the colors.



Spears, Richard A. "On the Etymology of Dike." American Speech, vol. 60, no. 4, 1985, pp. 318-327. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/454909.



EXPLAINING QUEER HAIRCUTS TO MY MOTHER

By Anna Skladany

Artwork by Anna Skladany

When I first cut my hair short, it was easy to pretend it was just an experiment. I had cut my hair short before but this was shorter, newer territory that I was scared to explain. I didn't have to, not really. Most everyone liked it and my mom said it was stylish. But what I secretly liked the most about it was the rumour that followed me, ghosting along the back of my neck like a freshly-snipped ponytail; are they...you know...?

When I first shaved the sides of my head, my parents didn't really understand. I was too tired, too wary of explaining, so I said it helped keep me cool in the summer. It wasn't exactly a lie, but in truth I had wanted to do it for a while. The full truth was that it was an unequivocally *gay* haircut.

When I first got a mullet - a proper mullet, the sides shorn tight and the top brushed back with a bit of Old Spice hair paste and the back swinging down past my shoulders - my mom asked me a dreaded question. She asked, in the distinct way that understanding middle-aged parents do, all hesitation, open-ended questions and expectant silences, why I got a haircut like that, vaguely aware that she probably already knew the answer. Leaning over onto the kitchen counter, absentmindedly pulling from a bag of Lays, I opened my mouth to speak.

Because I like it.

Because it's different.

Because it's *queer*.

There was so much more in my mind, pressing against the back of my lips that I could have said to her that day. Words tumbled around my throat, words I knew required more explaining than I had the energy for - definitions I held close to my chest. Femme and masc and genderless clothing, dysphoria and euphoria and queer visibility and an altogether far too recent history of fear and hiding. I swallowed back each and every one of them.

"I like it. It's fun. It's different."

"Is it okay if I finish off the chips?"





ARTIST STATEMENT

"I like this piece because, when I look at it, I am reminded of moments when I would like to present feminine but feel uncomfortable doing. Even my tears will be seen through the male gaze by the outside world. It's a paralyzing feeling at times."

WHAT THE STARS CAN'T SEE

By Kailah Peters

Artwork titled "strawberry fields" by Dean March

PART ONE

Stars are bored creatures, watching earth like we watch television. They love to peer in on intimate moments, but their perspective is limited by rooftops and awnings. The poor stars will never know of me and you, not truly.

They see us walk to the train,

but we don't hold hands in public.

They see me hold the door open for you

but miss us flirting over sushi.

They see you help me with my hood as we leave the restaurant.

They know we will walk to get hot chocolate then walk back to my place.

But they don't know I kiss you in private.

Maybe they have suspicions. Maybe they can tell from the way I look at you. Maybe the stars know we are queer but don't bring it up out of politeness.

Do you think tonight we can sit on the back porch? I want the stars to see me holding you.

PART TWO

The room is dark. No one speaks except the movie screen. Her hand is inches from mine and all I can think is she's beautiful. I try to breathe in the courage to touch her, but courage must be absent from this thin air. She is beautiful, and I want to hold her hand. She is beautiful, and I want to unfold myself before her. I want to write myself into a novel so she can leave funny comments in the margin. I want to tape those comments to my bedroom wall so I can always sleep next to her thoughts. She is beautiful, and I want to tell her that. I want to morph my lips to the shape of her mouth. When our lipsticks bleed together the color is always a mess, but reddish brown around her mouth has never looked better. She is beautiful, and I want her

I want her

I want her.

“WE’RE DYKES! WE’RE OUT! WE’RE OUT FOR POWER!”

Significant political movements in the history of lesbian and queer rights.

By Meg Harris

Sources: <https://seesaw.typepad.com/dykequarterly/dyke-a-quarterly-begins.html>
<https://www.nycgbtsites.org/site/lavender-menace-action-at-second-congress-to-unite-women/>
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/06/dyke-marches-assert-political-power-and-visibility-but-theyre-under-threat.html>
<https://youtu.be/2iIXv65met0>
<https://www.facebook.com/DykeMarchChicago/>

1970
Like so many political presences, the Dyke movement emerged in the public eye in the 1970s. Make no mistake, we are in not saying that the movement started in the 1970s. Queer women fought for LGBTQIA and womens’ rights long before then, they just got LOUD in the 1970s.

“The Lavender Menace” name was coined by Betty Frieman, who used the phrase in a speech. She used the phrase to imply that lesbians were a threat to the feminist movement. Betty and many others in the NOW movement believed that the ‘gay cause’ detracted from progression of social and economic equality for women.

However, her words brought forth what she tried to ward against. Lesbians who had formally found a home in the feminist movement took this exclusion as a shock. If “the personal was political” how could sexual identify not be part of the movement?

Frieman’s ostracism met criticism from the lesbian and hetero feminist community and sparked the formation of a political group dedicated to gay causes named, you guessed, the Lavender Menace.

At the time, the Dyke and Queer movement



largely in response to the anti-gay bills being pushed by the right wing.

A ground called Avengers, yes Marvel we did it first, passed out 8,000 flyers calling for Lesbians to meet at 5pm at Dupont Circle. There, over 20,000 people walked all the way to the National Mall. The march tradition continues on the anniversary of Stonewall to make themselves visible, fight for their rights, and proclaim their mantra: “We’re dykes! We’re Out! We’re out for POWER!”

2021
Under capitalism’s chokehold, the queer and feminist movement still have a lot of work to do. This year the queer community put on a Dyke March, also known as the Drag March. The protest was purposefully put on separately from the traditional pride parade as many felt Pride had been commercialized and diverged from its original purpose. Particularly with the knowledge that the CPA would be in attendance at Pride.

The Dyke March was meant to be a protest



Photo from a Lavender Menace meeting, taken by Diane Davies in 1970.

among women was known as the Lavender Menace. The main aim of the Lavender Menace was to inject queer rights into the feminist conversations happening at the time. The movement also began to reclaim the word “dykes” as a proud label of self identification.

“Lesbians have long been the object of vicious ‘name-calling’ designed to intimidate us into silence and invisibility,” wrote J.R. Roberts in the 1979 essay, *In America They Call Us Dykes*. “In the Lesbian/feminist 1970s, we broke the silence on this tabooed word, reclaiming it for ourselves, assigning it to positive, political values.”

1003
In April of 1993 over twenty thousand people walked in Washington DC for the first official Dyke March. The movement called for Queer, Lesbian, and Bi liberation. The movement published a manifesto highlighting the importance of grassroots lesbian organizing,



more than a celebration. This event returned the protest to its origins as the Lavender Menace, a space to take a stand against forces oppressing their community and marginalized communities alike. Chicago just hosted a Dyke March in June calling for “abolition now!”

THE QUESTIONED WOMANHOOD OF LESBIANS

By Kailah Peters

Artwork titled “say hi to buttercup!” by Dean March

In 1978, Monique Witting claimed “lesbians are not women,” leaving feminist thinkers stunned and in awe. Her argument stated that womanhood in a heteronormative society is centered around the pleasure of men. The heteronormative society, or the ‘straight mind’ as Witting called it, has developed its own interpretation of history, social order, and culture. This interpretation has created an all-encompassing network of symbolic order that believes the traditional relationship between men and women is a reflection of an innate hierarchy. Women need men as providers, breadwinners, and protectors. Men need women as caregivers. Since lesbians exist outside the scope of heteronormative society with no desire or need for a male partner, they are not women. While this argument may read as antiquated and jarring, it forces us to rethink how we define women.

As mentioned in our introduction, the category of women must go beyond genitalia and sex chromosomes. While those may seem like the most rudimentary breakdowns of gender, they are simplistic and disregard a large portion of the population. So what is

a woman? Feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir would argue that “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman”, implying that “woman” is a kind of social category determined by patriarchal ideology. And we see this every day—women are defined as being small, weaker than their male counterparts, home keepers, child-bearers, etc. Most societal concepts of femininity center around maintaining a hegemonic order that places men as the dominant sex.

So, what happens to the lesbians that exist outside this heteronormative narrative? They are simultaneously not women because of the ways they fail men, but also not men because of the ways they embrace femininity. Lesbians are forced out of the gender binary and thus granted the opportunity to explore their individual experience. This is not to say that all lesbians are non-binary, but that they redefine gender and customize it for themselves. Whether they are butch or femme, dykes or not - lesbians are challenging societal notions of womanhood and working to free all of us from the limitations of the gender binary.

ARTIST STATEMENT

“I made this piece way before the live action PowerPuff Girl series got announced so it is interesting to me that both the CW executives and I are in agreement that Buttercup has big lesbian energy. I might be biased but I have to say that I like my version better!”



BUTCH LESBIANS CAN'T BE HOT

By Morgan Kail-Ackerman

Artwork by Anna Skladany

For information on what femme and masc presenting mean, please read more here: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/lgbtq/terminology>

In middle school, one of my moms hired a babysitter to pick me and my sister up from school. He was young, probably in early college. I do not remember his name, but we can call him Matt.

Matt was normally not around when my mom came home. There was one day however, that he stayed late because my sister wanted to play a board game with him.

My sister and I weren't quiet about our two moms. We loved to openly brag about it, believing it was something that made us special. And Matt, having heard us talk about our family, knew she was a lesbian.

So, when my mom came home from work, Matt said something that would stay with me for a long time - "Wow, when you said your mom was a lesbian, I thought she would be all butch. But she's hot!"

There are so many critiques to this statement that, as an adult queer feminist, I wish I could have said. But I was young and confused and didn't know how to analyze this. I couldn't comprehend that Matt thought because she was a lesbian, she had to be butch. But she wasn't "lesbian-looking", so she was "hot". His ignorant ideas of gender impacted how I viewed sexuality and beauty as I became a teenager.

For all my life, I had statements placed on my moms, which in turn affected how I saw masculinity and femininity. Many kids around me growing up asked which mom was the dad and which was the mom. I would always say that neither of them were the "dad" because they both were my moms. Now, as an adult, I educate people instead, so they don't ask these questions anymore. I tell them that gender roles in a relationship are created through society and there is research behind how, without set gender roles, queer relationships can be a lot healthier. (1) LGBTQ+ people having children don't need gender roles in a family dynamic. I learned this many years later, after I processed what Matt had said. He had a preconceived judgement on what butch women looked like, without realizing the impacts it could have.

Neither of my moms are the "father" of the house because we don't have one. Neither are masc presenting, so there is no reason to call them butch, unless they choose to identify with that word. Their beauty is not affected by the fact that they are lesbians. They are just who they are.

Matt's butch statement changed how I viewed femininity. Because I was queer, because I knew I liked women, I tried to dress masc. I wore backwards baseball caps, big shirts, and baggy pants. Even though my two moms were femme-presenting lesbians, I had this notion that if I

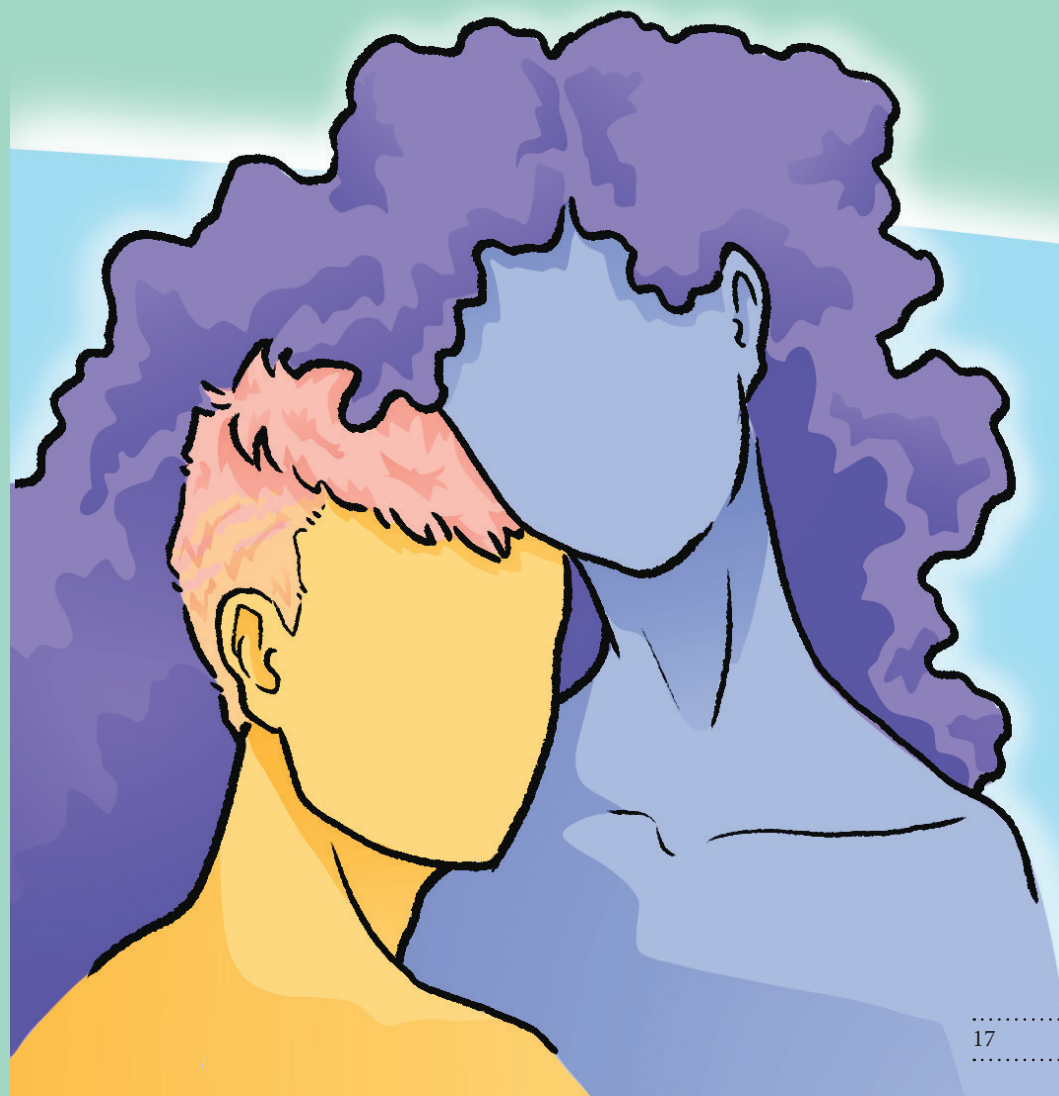
wanted to be with women, I needed to be a masc-presenting person.

Over time, and with society growing more accepting of queer people, I tried to evolve my views of masc and femme. My sense of style has become more feminine, choosing to wear dresses and scrunchies over baggy pants and baseball caps.

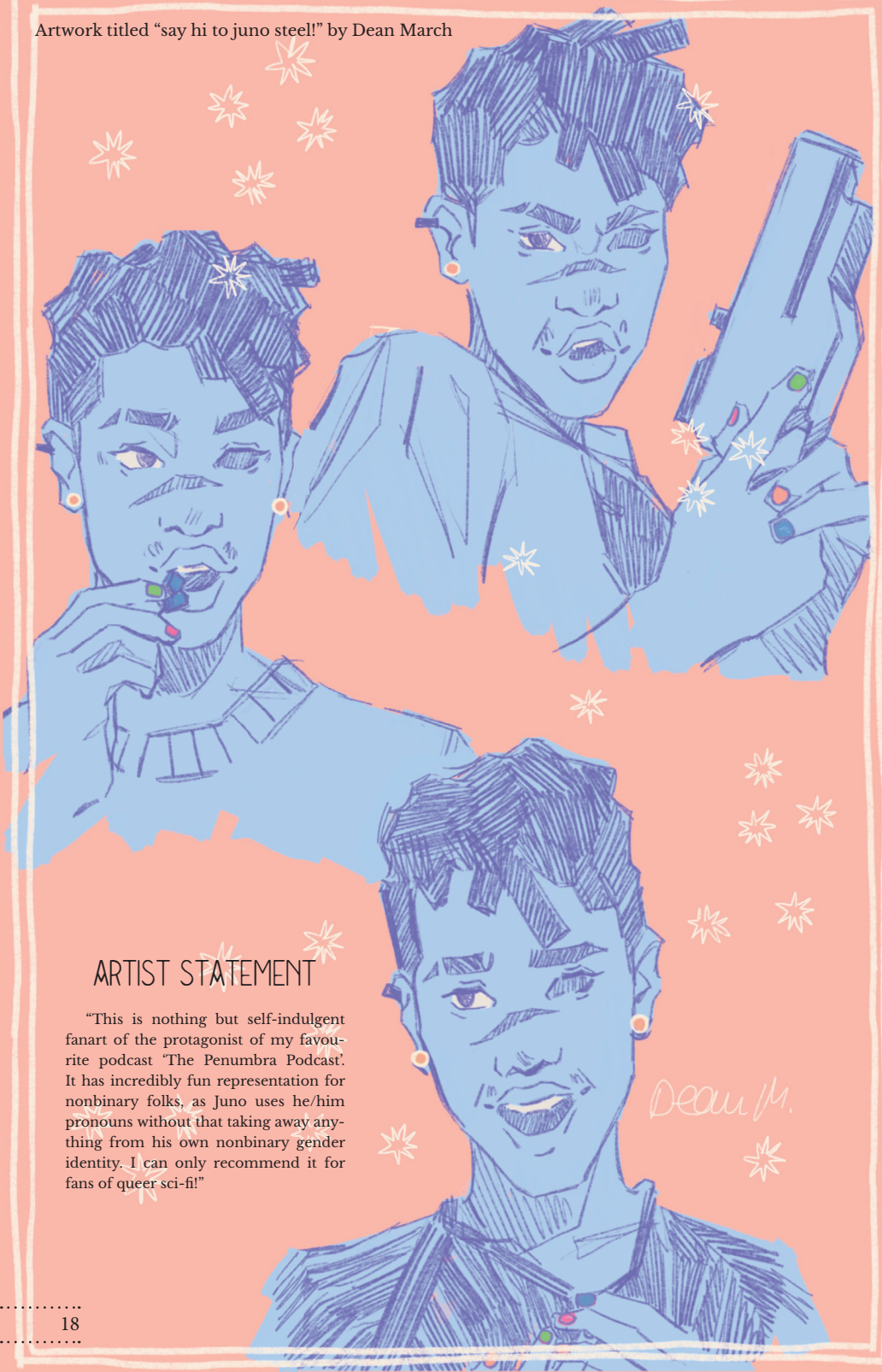
What you wear, how you present yourself, your haircut, makeup, and all the parts of you that society sees affects your identity, especially in queer culture. Because queerness is not something you can see, like the color of one's skin, a lot of queer people choose to represent it in a visual way.

Some people choose to show the world they are queer. And some don't. And some people choose to dress masc or femme because they want to. There are countless reasons people dress the way they do. All of these choices are okay.

But what is not okay is labeling people or commenting on their beauty based on their sexuality. What people wear and how they present themselves, or even their sexuality, has nothing to do with their beauty. People are beautiful because they are, not in the way they present themselves or who they are attracted to.



1. There is a lot of research on this topic, and even more in the works. This is a study I stand by if you want to read about Australian same-sex couples and the positive impact on their children. <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-14-635>



ARTIST STATEMENT

"This is nothing but self-indulgent fanart of the protagonist of my favourite podcast 'The Penumbra Podcast'. It has incredibly fun representation for nonbinary folks, as Juno uses he/him pronouns without that taking away anything from his own nonbinary gender identity. I can only recommend it for fans of queer sci-fi!"

OUR TEAM



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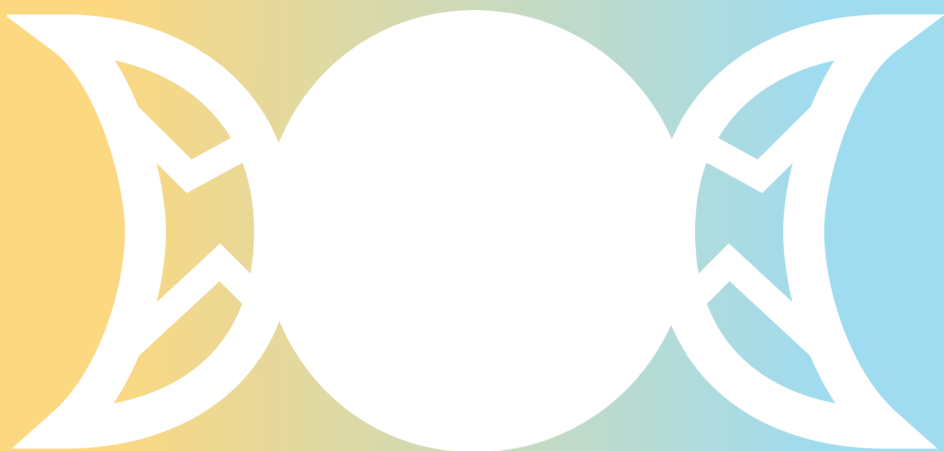
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Thank you for reading!