

QUEER



VOL. 1 ISSUE NO. 1

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Creator's Note

This magazine has been one of the most fun and stressful things to put together. However, the Queer magazine team has prevailed nonetheless. I am proud to present to everyone our first issue. I hope you enjoy it!

Reflections On Joy and Ac- countability as a Queer Black Woman

Milan Carter

“My queer identity is so much greater than a single ‘coming out’ story. I never have to announce my Blackness, and after a few defeatist semi-coming out experiences, I am very protective of my queerness”

June has quickly become the apex of a pandemic and a civil rights movement, with typical Pride Month festivities taking a backseat during a widespread push for systemic changes. In the midst of a time I expected to be filled with celebration, the call for “equality” that Pride Month amplifies now feels distant. It has undoubtedly been difficult, a chore, even, to create happiness for myself while carrying the weights of too many -phobias and -isms to name. My usual summertime feelings of shameless freedom have melted away, and I am left with an endless news cycle and an unhealthy hyper-awareness of my brown skin.

However, a small beacon of hope revealed itself when I unexpectedly discovered my old middle and early high school journals. In one journal, I found a duo of letters that I wrote to myself, finally acknowledging

my queer identity and reassuring future-me that I would find a place in the world. A divine intervention which reminded me that being Black and queer is to know a sacred joy unlike any other.

In one letter, I pleaded with myself: “You have a lot to think about and a lot to forget, too. But at this moment, promise yourself to continue to grow. Work through this for however long it takes.” My younger self knew that even now, I would sometimes feel that Blackness and queerness were incompatible, deadlocked into a debate of “pick a struggle.” While this internal battle lessens every day, I am often troubled by the thought that I “succumbed” to my truth of being a queer Black woman. Although, at my core I know that describing my journey towards self-love and acceptance as “succumbing” is deeply misleading—an ugly way to describe a beautiful evolution.

My queer identity is so much greater than a single “coming out” story. I never have to announce my Blackness, and after a few defeatist semi-coming out experiences, I am very protective of my queerness. Not secretive, by any means – just more aware of how I expend my energy and to whom I allow access to my beautiful, complex, and unafraid spirit. Being Black in America taught me the importance of self-preservation and celebration long before I knew that queerness would require the same.

The struggle of fighting against myself made me construct elaborate lies about who I was and who I wanted to become. In the same letter, I would go on to question myself about this facade, writing: “The other part of you feels so guilty [for staying closeted]. You have enough resources [...] to donate money, attend events, and be an advocate. So why don’t you?” While quarantine made me question my talents and usefulness, I could not have received a more powerful call to action than the one I gave myself.

When my old wall of lies began to crumble, an unimaginable renaissance was waiting for me on the other side. In the beginning, I cried an ungodly amount of tears and danced through them to the sounds of Madonna and Diana Ross. I would chat with my life-long best friends, laughing at the social

constructs that others worked so hard to force upon us. I reminisced about the first time I fell in love. Then, I finally acknowledged how she broke my heart. And it was really, really painful to confront, but through it all I never felt bitter. The relationships I forged with old flames and chosen family members were filled with more love than I believed I deserved, and learning the boundless nature of queer love and Black friendship made me appreciate the gift I had unknowingly been given. How lucky am I to never lack a shoulder to cry on, a hand to hold, or a culture to call my own?

In the past few weeks, so much of my joy has come from knowing that I am exactly who younger-me wanted future-me to be. Every day I feel such a deep sense of gratitude for the generations of labor and years of self-discovery that define the life I know as a liberated, queer Black woman. My Blackness is rooted in resilience and beauty, while my queerness fills me with a love so powerful that it is impossible for me not to radiate confidence. Once I stepped into the life I was destined for, Pride extended far beyond one month of celebration—it is now my daily act of resistance.

Lights

Camera

ICE??

LIGHTS, CAMERA, AND ICE?

Well, it's that time of the year again! People are putting up lights, glitter is everywhere, and now it is perfectly acceptable to wear gaudy over-the-top outfits on the way to the grocery store (I mean some of us do it year-round, but now you can join!).

The winter holiday season is one of my favorite times of the year: so glitzy, so gorgeous, so... well, gay! There is a joke in the drag community that you either started doing drag at Halloween or at pride, but I was a little bit of a different story. My very first Drag Show was a Christmas show. I wore a green velvet coat over a red dress, and my hair was two wigs that were held together with a few pins and a prayer. I thought I was hot stuff. Looking back, I honestly didn't look quite as busted as some other performers during their first times. However, I forgot one grave detail: ICE.

Now, ice and snow can be really pretty and can even make great backgrounds for photoshoots, but for a queen's first gig, it makes walking to the bar a perilous journey. I remember it clearly. I got out of my friend's car, put one sequin-studded stiletto foot down on the ice, and instantly found myself slipping out of the car, onto the ground, flat onto my back (not the fun way) in a gravel parking lot covered in ice and snow. Picture a Christmas themed Stepford Wife malfunctioning and forgetting how to stand. After a lot of work and with help from friends and some very kind lesbians, I was unceremoniously hoisted off the ground and back onto my heels. We carefully made our way across the parking lot with about as much grace as a 92-year-old lady walking to Sunday service.

The bar was dusty and old, but it was one of the few places in town that hosted drag shows, I bought an underwhelming gin and tonic (that's how new I was, I still had to buy

all my drinks) and the show began. There were kings that wore basketball shorts and t-shirts, queens that couldn't lip sync for their life, some amazing performances, one from a queen wearing a giant bell as a dress and another wearing so much tinsel that she must have been melting under it all. People fell off the plywood stage and our "green room" was a curtain set up in the corner. Looking back, it was one of the worst venues I have ever performed in, but I hold it close to my heart.

Leaving the bar at the end of the night, walking out into the lightly falling snow and all the twinkling lights, I was head over heels – quite literally since I, again, slipped and fell on the ice, but I was hooked. The magic of that first gig, the sparkles of lights and glittering snow was an enchantment that still holds me transfixed to this day. This year the holidays will be different, the gatherings smaller or non-existent, but there is still the joy of the decorations, the lights, and silent muffled mornings after snow. Holiday drag shows might not be happening in your local bars, but many of us have moved online. So, get back on your computer (I know we are all on them too much) and find you a local online show. Support your kings, queens, and things as we all put our big Ho Ho Holiday shows on. We will be together for a holiday show again; I am sure I will slip on the ice in drag, and if I know drag performers there will be more glitz and glamour and sexy Santas and elves and other childhood ruining numbers to keep you warm through the cold winter.

Maybe by the time we are all together again, I will have invested in some attachable cleats for my heels, but it's been years and I still haven't, so no promises.

Much, much love,
Tilia Cordata

On the Confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett

| Sophia Lee

The confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett was a tactical move, one that went far beyond the scope of politics. It is no coincidence that in the wake of demands for massive structural change, we have been met with denial, ridicule, and outright violence from one side of the political aisle and complete apathy from the other. Much more than an obvious power grab, it is a message to marginalized communities across the nation: no matter how much progress we make, no matter how far we come, we will never be safe as long as we are subject to the whims of an institution that depends on oppression to function properly.

Barrett has been flagrant in her attempts to strip the LGBTQ+ community of our rights, often leveling the “strong arm of justice” against our very existence. Despite only being appointed to the federal appeals court just three years ago, she has made countless moves to undermine the protections we’ve been afforded. In 2016, in a lecture she gave at the Jackson University Public Policy In-

stitute, Barrett defended Justice Scalia and Justice Thomas’s dissenting opinion on the ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a landmark case in which state bans on gay marriage was deemed unconstitutional (Morrow). Within the same lecture, she claimed that Title IX protections should not be extended to members of the trans community all the while misgendering trans women as “physiological males” (Morrow).

Her stance on reproductive rights is, as one can imagine, willfully ignorant of the complexities of abortive practices, making no distinction between the different situations in which an abortion might be necessary including: in the case of sexual assault, potential harm to the pregnant party, fetal diagnoses, etc. In 2018, Barrett was one among four judges that suggested that Indiana laws requiring funerals for aborted or miscarried fetuses were constitutional, adding also that banning abortions on the basis of the child’s sex, race, and developmental disability was perfectly lawful (“Statement: Judge...”). The list goes on and on.

And now, handed to her on

“A JUSTICE WHO CANNOT
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OF A GRAY AREA SHOULD NOT
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a silver platter is *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, a case in which the Supreme Court will decide whether or not faith-based child welfare organizations can turn away queer couples looking to adopt or foster on the basis of religious freedom. If that sounds familiar, that’s because it’s the same argument that’s been leveled against the queer community time and time again. A plea for legislative immunity when stripping away the rights of an entire population. An appeal to the standard of white, cis-heteronormativity that preys on “otherhood” to survive. And, in the meanwhile, all the compassion in the world for unwanted children falls by the wayside, the very same people “championing” a fetus’ right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, barring willing parents from giving them a home. Among them is Justice Amy Coney Barrett, whose long-standing relationship with the

Alliance Defending Freedom gives cause for worry. An organization most well known for backing Christian baker Jack Phillips, who sued the state of Colorado under the guise of religious freedom and won, the Alliance Defending Freedom is anything but what its name purports (“Report on the Confirmation…”).

A justice who cannot even entertain the idea of a gray area should not be setting precedents for centuries to come. A justice who cherry-picks when to recognize someone’s humanity based on facets of their identity should not be dictating who meets the standard for federal protections and who does not. Someone’s identity is not up for debate. Someone’s choices are not up for debate. What is, however, is the way we respond to these people—with an empathy and a generosity that Justice Barrett does not seem to possess.

Dating as a HOMO

CHRISTOPHER LOPEZ

Being gay and dating in 2020 is hard and straight people just don't get it. I was talking to my friend about my dating troubles once and he said that I just needed to find some gay dudes and stop falling for straight ones. See, herein lies the problem, how do you tell if someone is gay? It is easy to say that you should not fall for straight people, but if I reversed the roles and told a straight person to not fall for a gay person the response would be "I did not know they were gay". This exhibits straight privilege: Our world is built upon this concept that being straight is the norm and that being gay is not. As a gay man, I do not knowingly hit on straight men, but have crushes on random guys in the hopes that they might also like guys.

Now let's talk about meeting people online. As queer people, we are forced to meet online, because 1. It is one of the only ways to know for sure that someone is into you and 2. It presents us with a variety of people. Yet, while this may sound ideal, it actually sucks. You can call me old fashioned, but I have received enough Dms from 70 y/o white dudes to tell you online dating is not the move. Online dating is encapsulated in this cloak of shallowness, that prevents people

from actually talking. I know this because I am guilty of it! Our society has become obsessed with looks over actual substantive value and this can be seen in queer dating as well. However, this is another privilege that straight people have; they can meet people in person. Being gay, you are always faced with the questions: "What if they do not like the same gender?", "What if they are homophobic?", "What if they think I am a creep?". You get the point. Straight people often are not faced with any of these questions. Yet, these are the questions that burden all queer people.

So you may be asking at this point, "Okay, I get it. Dating for queer people sucks, but what's the point?" Well, in reality, there is no point besides that— dating for queer people is harder so do not be an asshole to your friend when they are queer and griping about being single, or do not be a douche when your friend who is gay happens to have a crush on a straight person.

"I have received enough Dms from 70 y/o white dudes to tell you online dating is not the move."







Homemade Earrings, Box Dye, and Sylvia Plath – The Creation of My Queer Utopia

| Milan Carter

We met each other at an interesting time in our lives. Our relationship and the formation of our friend group were nothing short of happy accidents.

It was love at first sight. Well, technically not first sight. We'd crossed paths in group chats and Zoom calls, exchanging hopes and dreams about our college years. She was a mystery to me, outgoing and beloved by everyone who was lucky enough to meet her, but reserved in other more subtle ways; she hid the most vulnerable parts of herself away from prying eyes. For reasons still unknown to me, occasionally she would lift her veil of extroversion to show me a glimpse of her true self. That was when I fell in love.

We met each other at an interesting time in our lives. Our relationship and the formation of our friend group were nothing short of happy accidents. I bumped into her in the Cornell store, and the rest of the day was a whirlwind. Another soon-to-be friend saved me from a lunch date that wasn't going too

well. If he hadn't left his dorm at that exact time, we wouldn't have crossed paths. Two more members of the bunch were integrated after their names came to us in a slew of hookup drama. Sometimes I think about all of the little things that had to happen that day to bring us together. But once we all met, it was impossible for us to be separated.

One night, I found myself laying in bed with her, our friend sitting across from us reading his favorite Sylvia Plath poems aloud. It was euphoria, the way the words gently floated off worn pages—winding, embracing—as she rubbed my back with gentle hands. Was this what it meant to be in college? To have all my disjointed dreams finally come together to form a new reality? The idea of being queer and happy always seemed so distant to me, and now I had everything all at once. I wonder how I

made it to that moment. My feelings hung somewhere between pride and doubt. I reveled in the small pocket of joy we had made for ourselves but still questioned whether this utopia was sustainable. I was proud that I was finally thriving and not just surviving, but I couldn't shake the fear that our connection was formed too quickly and would soon collapse under pressure.

The next morning she and I slipped out of bed into the crisp morning air. We decided to go to the farmer's market with the other members of our group. The line was long and we stuck out like sore thumbs. Somewhere between our obnoxious laughter and loud retelling of personal stories, I slipped my hand into her back pocket and inched closer. A clear sign of our to-be-defined togetherness. Once we got to the front of the line we immediately gravitated towards a jewelry stand near the entrance. One of our friends picked up a pair of pea earrings and I immediately grabbed a similar pair. "You have big pea energy," he said, offering me the larger pair in exchange for my miniature version. "Agreed."

As I strolled through the market, holding her hand and discovering new things about her, I could only think about what a queer day I'd had. Queer in every sense of the word. I spent the entire night before with a girl I was just getting to know, had queer poetry read to me, and continued

a multi-day date at the farmers market-reusable tote in one hand, homemade earrings in the other. It was a strange sequence of events, so stereotypical and humorous and perfect.

Many weeks have passed since this first blissful weekend, but my queer utopia remains. My friends and my lover have held me through gut wrenching cries, exuberant dance parties, and many, many boxes of cheap hair dye.

All of us are so compatible with each other and no one ever goes without feeling loved, heard, or understood. If anyone finds an object that has the potential to be an earring, I can make it. If I need a makeup artist, someone to gossip with, a friend to psychoanalyze me, someone to make me laugh without saying a single word, or a homegirl always down for an adventure-I have it all. We are all loud, emotional, irrational, hopelessly romantic, empathetic, and queer. Everyday I come home to a girl who loves me, unruly boys who balance me out, and a tiny queer utopia filled with homemade earrings, box dye, and a book by Sylvia Plath.



KAREN's Corner: The Death of Masculinity

As I sit here with my son watching little men prance around on T.V. acting like unrefined women on some show with a guy named Paul, I am utterly appalled by the state of our nation. How can we as a nation created under our lord and savior Jesus Christ condone these actions? These people walk around like they aren't living in sin and living with mental illness. Men are men and should act like it. Jesus wouldn't wear nail polish or skirts like some celebrities in these leftist magazines. Celebrities like Harry Styles have begun to act like sissies and wear dresses and skirts and are setting a bad example for our children. He used to be so normal and handsome, but then he had to go and become a snowflake. Those clothes and products are made for WOMEN. One day I was making dinner for my husband and saw my son wearing eyeliner. EYELINER! Can you believe it!? When I tell you I just about lost my marbles, I had a whole fit. Yet, because I am a modern and progressive woman I decided to have a talk with him. He told me he saw other guys doing it on Tic-Toc and thought it looked cool. See, that is what is wrong with generations today, they just play monkey see monkey do and have no regard for traditional gender roles. Men today just are not the same as they were when I was growing up. They are just too... fruity. My Gerald works a 9-5 and always comes home at 6:30 on the dot and would never even think about wearing eyeliner and you know what I do to reward him? I make sure to always have dinner on the table when he gets home and make sure to have a spic and span house. Don't worry though, Gerald makes sure to always take care of me too; he even puts down the toilet seat when I ask. I was using my Gerald as an example for my son and he brought up some imaginary term called heteronormativity? He was trying to make the argument that as a society we are socialized by our gender to act a certain way. I don't know where he gets these wacky ideas, but here are my two cents. I make a conscious choice to serve my husband and I definitely could decide to get a job and work in the economy. I mean Trump has done so much for us middle-class families, so I just know there is a job waiting. However, just like men today choose to wear eyeliner, I choose to be a stay at home mom. Therefore, heteronormativity is most definitely a wacky claim made by liberals. Anyway, I have to start baking for the PTA bake sale, but I'll be back later.

**Much Love,
Karen**

The Truth All Hets Need to Know...

|Christopher Lopez

As a gay man, I know this to be true: at some point whether we like it or not someone is bound to find out that we are gay. Our relationships can become strained and they can snap like a rubber band with enough stress. We may lose some of those that are closest to us— it's happened to me, it's happened to people I know. After coming out, I was met with two types of reactions: lectures and homophobia. It would be a fantasy to think that gay people live the same life after coming out; we begin to have different outlooks on life and interactions. We face discrimination despite the recognition of gay marriage in the States, and coming out can further our dilemma. Coming out means having to face everything the world hands to you despite not ever having a choice. That is because it is one thing to be perceived as gay and another to identify as gay. Some of us may live in a dream where this type of discrimination seems non-existent. This is the bubble that we live in before fully being out.

I lived in a bubble where I was out to only a select few people and as soon as I was leaving for college, this bubble popped. I was

forced to come out to my mom's religious friend. Please do not misconstrue my following statements. Religion and queerness can exist together. Religion does not need to be used as a tool of separation when it comes to the LGBTQ+ community. Yet, in this case, I was forced to come out and was stuck with the claim that being gay was the ultimate sin. This is because, to my mom's friend, I was not made in God's image, because "God is not gay." God is the person who leads us away from temptation of the flesh. This temptation is what led her to an affair. It is what led her to ruin her life. Yet, I had no experience with the temptation of the flesh at the time. My virgin self was just living a happy gay life. However, in her eyes, my "choice" to be gay was the same as her choice to start an affair. Yet the difference, KAREN, is that you chose to have an affair. I did not choose to be gay.

The thing is, I knew. I knew that if I came out to this woman, my bubble, this fantasy that I lived in, would be gone. It would have been great to live on in ignorance. I would have been privileged enough to not know the drawbacks

“However, in her eyes, my ‘choice’ to be gay was the same as her choice to start an affair.”

of queerness. I would not know, from my own experience, the discrimination that queer people still face in this generation. My interaction with this woman was pure prejudice and homophobia.

So, this is the truth that no gay person wants to tell straight people. Open your ears and listen up. We face discrimination that can be far worse or far less than my experience. I have heard the stories from people who were kicked out of their homes and disowned. I have heard the stories of those who have had homophobic slurs yelled at them as they were almost run over by cars. All of this simply for being queer. However, I don't want to have to tell you that I am still discriminated against. I don't want to have to tell you that,

quite frankly, in addition to my basic anxieties about simply existing, your small gay jokes, or stereotypes about gay people are ignorant. I shouldn't have to. If you truly want to know our struggles, I couldn't tell you. The only way is to observe, be empathetic, be nice, and be curious. Many of you may see this article as me just whining. But, Obergefell V. Hodges (if you don't know this case and you call yourself an ally... uhhh you gotta do some research) was simply just a door being beaten down, allowing our marriage to be recognized. This did not give us a voice and this does not end our struggle for equality.



collage and photo spread

Staff



