

Rainbow Writers & Artists

Presented by The Rainbow Community
Center of Contra Costa County &
Saint Mary's College of California





Awed by her splendor
Stars near the lovely
Moon covers their
own
Bright faces
When she
Is roundest and lights
Earth with her silver

...

I was so happy
Believe me, I
Prayed that the
Night might be
Doubled for us

...

You may forget by
Let me tell you
This: someone in
Some future time
Will think of us
—Sappho

*Artwork by Monica
Daggett*

She Loves Me
Tonya Gida

She loves me,
She loves me
A mantra, a prayer
Don't ever leave me
Who cares if they stare
Words fill her ears and clutter her mind
Saying she's broken
She tries to be fine
Weeks turn to years and her heart turns to ice
Freedom a novelty pilfered in spite
Days set ablaze with stolen kisses and wine
Dreams filled with screams just passing the time
With stars on her knuckles and blood on her lips
She demands to be noticed
There's nothing to fix
She loves me,
She loves me
A mantra, a prayer
Stay with me always
What a torrid affair

[We/Our]
Heather Andrews

The poison apple in hand,
 the antidote on the table,
 where gaze settles lazily.
We contemplate if it's really
 worth the pain promised,
 or if the sweetness is greater.
Our eyes shake in our head,
 and our hand/foot to match;
 the rattle threatens the apple.
Poison seeps into blood stream,
 our life measured in
 mere minutes to seconds.
Antidote beckons, asking us
 to desert our cause and
 explore a world of healing.
We resist because we like the pain,
 isn't that what we tell
 ourselves and our kids?
Or maybe we're just too scared
 to let the poison apple fall
 in favor of the antidote.
For why would we venture from
 what we know when what's out
of reach could be even worse?

It's Not a Joke

Anonymous

I'm so tired. Tired of watching people walk all over us and laugh our problems off as if they were some kind of running joke. This is not a joke. I'm sick of hearing stories of bullying, depression, disownment, and suicide that seem to dominate the LGBTQIA experience. But it's not just that. It's the little things, the daily reminders of intolerance that I can't stand. I hate hearing things like "That's so gay" and "Don't be such a fag" thrown around in casual conversation as a way to put people down, making it seem as if being gay is somehow a bad thing. But what I hate even more is when those things come from people I love. Friends and family who I think the world of throwing these slurs around without a second thought. And because I love them I make excuses for them. "They're not homophobic" I tell myself "They don't mean any harm. It was just a joke".

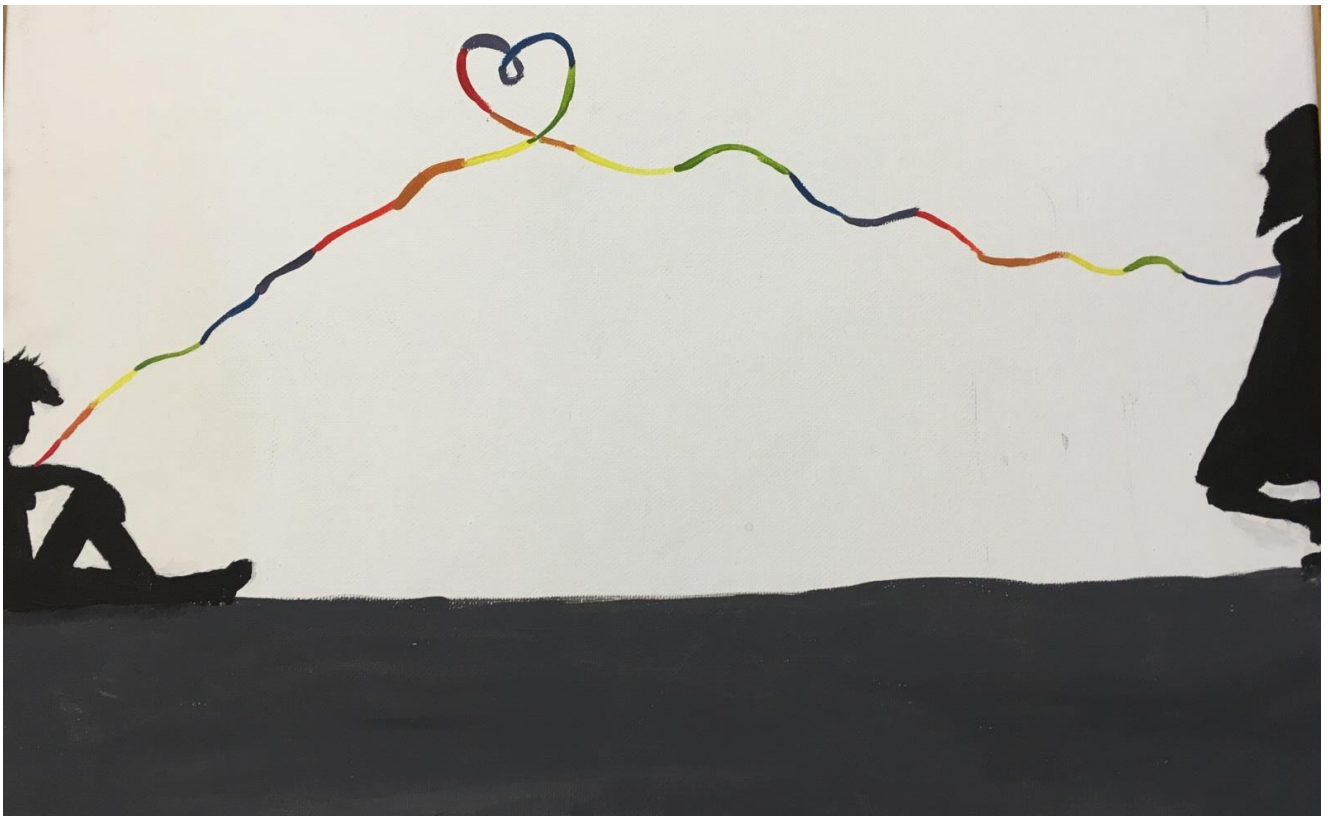
There it is again. That idea that we as a community are a joke, some kind of rainbow clad freak show there for other people's amusement and scorn. All of these little microaggressions pile up and weigh us down. Because we live in a society where gay equals bad and gay equals stupid because so many people don't think we're worth the effort it takes to say a kind word instead of a cruel one.

And yet when the people I love use gay as a derogatory term, I stay silent to avoid being labelled "oversensitive" or "uptight". I don't tell them how uncomfortable I am when I hear them say those things. Or how I can feel my stomach twist into knots of frustration and disappointment every single time. It's not right. I shouldn't feel the need to keep quiet when they're the ones who are casually demeaning an entire group of people. So I say it's time for us to speak up. To tell our parents, our siblings, our best friends, our classmates, our colleagues, even strangers on the street to look in the mirror and wake up from their little fantasy world where it's ok to turn us into a sideshow. To tell them that this is not ok and we won't silently sit back and take this abuse anymore. Because it doesn't matter that they didn't mean any harm if someone still ends up hurt because of it. And it doesn't matter that it was just a joke if it causes someone to stay locked in the closet too insecure to come out.

All I'm asking is that we all think before we speak just long enough to realize that what we say affects the people around us. It's such a small change and yet I can't help thinking that it would make a world of difference to a lot of people, mostly because I know it would make a world of difference to me.

Porcelain
Heather Andrews

Two trap one,
beneath porcelain.
Without captivity,
 can there be freedom?
One side conforms,
becomes femininity.
The other breaks free,
 in a flash of accidental blue.
At eternal war,
the two reside.
At my allowance,
 one wins.
Do I want one
 to preside in conscience?
Do I want one
to preside in consciousness?
A nightmare
 tells me I do.
A dream-state
 reminds me I don't.
So two continue
 to trap one.
At constant war,
 beneath porcelain.



Fated

Taylor Gida

Formula for Love

Anonymous

A quiet thump-thump of a heartbeat in my ears

Reminds me that I'm alive

And the ache in my chest

Assures me that I am human

Though such assurances sound hollow

When words sit heavily on my shoulders.

I've been told that I am lucky

Because I will never know heartbreak

But under their breath I hear them sigh that I am cursed

Because I will never know love.

Living in a world defined by love and sex

Is like drowning in the ocean

Because you learned to swim in the desert sands.

It is knowing every lyric to a popular song

But never understanding why it matters

It is watching real life as if it were a movie you didn't want to see

Because the formula of boy meets girl equals love

Has never made sense when I am in the equation.

The World Was Suddenly Different

Tonya Gida

Beatrix hated mornings. Alarms, traffic, long lines at the coffee shop – there was nothing good about mornings. Like most people though, she endured them because while mornings sucked being fired sucked more. Beatrix would know, she had been fired four times.

Then the world was suddenly different. Alarms, traffic, and coffee shops became irrelevant. A plague swept through the country, the dead began to rise, began to eat the flesh of the living.

The first few months after the fall of civilization had been a blur.

Run, run, run.

Kill, kill kill.

Just survive.

She had latched onto a rag tag group of people, white collar and blue collar held no meaning anymore. They struggled to survive, picked off one by one. Beatrix felt as if she wasn't living, just passing the time until her own inevitable death. Suzanne was bit outside of an abandoned grocery store that they had been looting, Beatrix watched as her husband mercifully put her down. Alberto was torn to shreds on what he claimed was his twenty-first birthday, he'd tried to grab Beatrix's hand as they latched onto him. Mark blew his brains out in a quaint little house they had been holed up in. Beatrix had pried the gun from his hands and considered doing the same.

There were endless days and longer nights melting into one long, endless existence...

Then the world was suddenly different. Then there was Darlene. With a gun on her hip and gleam in her eye, she charged in like a knight, saving the day when all had seemed lost. Beatrix was smitten.

Darlene took what was left of their group to Sanctuary, a fortified makeshift town with more people than Beatrix had seen in... well she didn't know how long. She had lost track of the days somewhere along the

way. The people of Sanctuary looked to Darlene for everything. She was their leader, their champion. She united them – gave them shelter, gave the hope.

Beatrix's group was given living quarters and half of them took full advantage of the safe place to sleep, while the other half decided to explore what they hoped would be more than just a temporary residence. Beatrix was one of the former. It was the first good night of sleep she had had in such a long time that when she woke up she was reminded of why she had hated those early mornings from so long ago.

The world was suddenly different. Tentative days in Sanctuary, turned into comfortable weeks; the word home began to have meaning again.

Beatrix watched as Darlene led her people; watched as she went out day after day to save more. Beatrix wished she was as brave, wished she had the courage to go back out beyond the wall with her. She imagined it sometimes, except in her daydreams she was the one who rescued Darlene and it was all very sappy and cliché.

Beatrix found other ways of being useful instead. She cooked. It wasn't the gourmet meals she used to make to impress her friends, not by any means, but it was good. People complimented her and she was reminded of old aspirations of becoming a chef in some fancy restaurant, she'd had dreams of impressing Gordon Ramsey himself... she sometimes wondered if he was still alive, still cooking fabulous meals even though the world had all but ended.

Darlene was a fan of her cooking. A fact that made Beatrix far too happy. She almost squealed with delight when Darlene paid her a gracious compliment but she reigned it in and managed to squeak out a thank you instead. Darlene had smiled as if she knew what an idiot Beatrix was.

Darlene didn't always make it to meals. Sometimes she was out beyond the walls of Sanctuary, sometimes she was overwhelmed with tasks and requests that needed to be dealt with inside the walls. Sometimes she was just exhausted and couldn't be bothered.

Beatrix decided to make a bold move. After a missed dinner she made up a plate and marched over to Darlene's quarters, then she stared at the door for a good ten minutes trying to get up the courage to knock. Darlene opened the door before she managed it.

Darlene started missing more meals after that and Beatrix was always sure to go find her. One day she started eating with her. Those meals together were spent talking and laughing, getting to know each other in ways they had forgotten was possible. They told stories from Before, about who they used to be. Then they told stories of After, of how they became the people they are.

Beatrix kissed Darlene when she began to cry.

The world was suddenly different. The monsters beyond the wall were still there. There were still people to feed and people to lead but now there was something to hold on to. Someone. Happiness, real happiness was something that Darlene had almost forgotten, Beatrix was eager to remind her.

She woke up one morning, too early for her liking, and found Darlene watching her with a look in her eyes that spoke of words they were too afraid to say. Beatrix kissed her again.

Darlene left on a supply run one early morning. Beatrix hated mornings. Hours turned into days. Suddenly the world seemed different, because the monsters beyond the wall were still there and Darlene was with them.

Fourteen days. Two weeks. That was how long Darlene was gone. Beatrix counted each sunrise. It had been a group of four, but only two returned. Ja'mal, Darlene's right hand man, carried her in, both looking like they had fought their way out of hell. Maybe they had. They were beaten and broken but thankfully alive.

Beatrix kissed Darlene as they waited for the doctor, whispered 'I love you' against her lips, words weren't nearly as scary as the thought of losing her. Darlene felt the same.

The world was suddenly different. The monsters were still out there but Darlene was home.

The Cusp

Heather Andrews

What floats on the cusp of my consciousness—
a fingertip out of my grasp—
perturbs my state of grey content.

No longer able to rest in my cove
of absolute solitude,
I reach out to that unknown existent.

As I am scattered towards what has
awakened me,
I feel my perception of color increase.

What floats on the cusp of my consciousness—
now enlightening my very being—
vivifies the depths of Self previously unfamiliar.

I explore the remote profoundness of me—
brought to life by the expansiveness of you—
and what is found, confounds.

And as that previously unknown entity,
finally encompassing my senses,
becomes my every breath—
I Learn To Feel—



Midnight Mistress By Anonymous

Belonging
Heather Andrews

Why do they belong?
Do they belong?
When the cold of night wraps its
Slender tendrils around your throat,
Do you belong?
Do you belong?
think you belong?
Belong-
-ing is something you know deep in
your heart is unobtainable.
So why do you try to belong?
They know they are condemned to
a desolate corner,
They know they cannot understand
why they breathe,
So you don't belong.

The Reasons Why

Taylor Gida

We stand on the edge of a new era wrought with change and possibility and the future looks brighter than we could have imagined and you look me in the eye, laugh and say why would we need to change this story when it is one of triumph? The reasons are too numerous and the response too long for this lighthearted conversation but I know I have to try. And my answer is this:

Because if you're asking why the story needs to change then you've probably been reading the contrived, simplified fairytale and not the raw, gritty, based-on-a-true story on-going series that is this fight

Because we have earned the right to little pieces of paper declaring the legitimacy of our love, but not the right to feel safe in our own skin

Because loving someone of the same gender is still considered unnatural

Because most people understand that there are gay people and straight people but don't believe the rest of us exist

Because we are "confused" or "experimenting" or just "not ready for a real relationship"

Because I know that I will inevitably be asked "is there a man in your life? Why don't you have a boyfriend yet?"

Because even other queer people stop me, squint in confusion and say they do not understand

Because when I gave you permission to tell my story, you erased my identity and replaced it with one you understood better and I felt a wave of nausea and defeat from my place across the room

Because watching porn will not help me "figure things out" no matter how many people tell me otherwise

Because I'm too queer for their heteronormativity but never queer enough for your exclusivity

Because it's tiring to explain that I exist

Because I don't know how to explain that I don't want to catch the bouquet at a wedding because I can't imagine myself getting married at all

Because I don't know how to explain that I feel complete when I am single when everyone around me tells me how sad, pathetic, awful it is not to find love between intertwined hands or crumpled sheets

Because they don't know that each word twists knots in my stomach and drives a knife in my heart because I don't want to be sad, pathetic alone

Because I'm tempted to measure my worth with dating apps and matchmaking websites despite not wanting what they have to offer

Because people cannot divorce the idea of love from sex as easily as they divorce themselves from the people they once swore to love forever

Because I've been told that it's unfair to withhold sex due to my discomfort

Because I'm only worth waiting for if my body is the prize for your patience

Because I'm told that my sexuality is irrelevant in every space that isn't specifically designed for it regardless of the fact that it is relevant to me every day, at all times, not just for an hour every other week

Because life is too precious to spend hating yourself for things you can't change

Because even I've wondered if I was making up labels to fit into the queer community

Because I feel as if I can't have a normal relationship just because I'm wired a different way

Because I have spent most my life hearing about how wanting sex is natural and that it is part of what makes us human but I sit in my room fighting back tears and wondering if there was something fundamentally, inhumanly wrong with me for not having those feelings

Because I can't bring it up when my throat constricts and my lips refuse to form the words that will make me other

Because being the teacher, the expert, the authority on the identity I label myself with is impossible when I'm still trying to figure it out for myself

Because I have spent most of my life making excuses and telling white lies rather than admit what I feel

Because the longer I sit with a group of friends, no matter if they are straight or queer or some combination thereof, the more I realize I can't relate to half of what they say

Because I've been told in no uncertain terms that my sexuality makes me un-dateable

Because sex without love is a good time but love without sex is a disaster

Because too often we are defined by what is between our legs and who is between our legs instead of the thoughts in our heads and the feelings in our hearts

Because we've drawn lines in the sand as if this were a battlefield and we waved our rainbow flag as if we'd won the war instead of only being victorious in a single battle

Because I'm constantly being bombarded with images and lists of names of the dead, conscious of how many of them are being buried under markers with the wrong name and nothing is being done to stop it

Because it's all too easy to conjure up the negative aspects of my sexuality even when I've been given more support than most of the people I know

Because this list is not complete, will never be complete for as long as I live

Because everything I have said is an honest to God fact of my life that I cannot change

Because I know that there are other people just like me who have the same thoughts and feelings I do

Because I want to give those people a chance to grow up in a world where none of this remains the norm

Because I believe there could come a day when all of this is a distant memory, where no one is condemned for falling in love, pitied for being happy without it, killed for expressing themselves or locked in the closet for fear of judgment

Because I can't give up now, not when we still have so much work to do