

Something Queer Is Going On...

My identity lies in how short I cut my hair in third grade, and how alienated I felt when I saw my classmates' facades of horror as I continued to use the girl's bathroom. It lies in the amount of pink clothing I wore in an attempt to discourage the jeers, buying into predetermined gender roles, no matter how much my subconscious hated it. It lies in the torturous months I waited for my hair to grow back to a socially acceptable length.

My identity lies in the friends I made freshman year; two people who then identified as girls dating each other, plus a transgender girl. It lies in the hours of self-reflection and introspection this sent me into, finally resulting in a realization. It lies in the pixie cut I got a few months later, the sounds of the scissors drowning out my memories of third grade as my qualms fell to the floor and were swept up by the barber.

My identity lies in the Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) meetings I went to in secret, telling my parents that I was studying after school with friends. It lies in the wonder in my eyes as I watched queer upperclassmen just openly be themselves. It lies in my parents' reaction to me partaking in the Day Of Silence: "that's so nice of you to do that for your friends!", oblivious to the fact that my noiselessness was just as much for my own sake.

My identity lies in the hours I spent hidden in a corner of the library with books that chronicled the stories of queer high schoolers. It lies the secret sounds of pages flipping, each one fueling the feeling of solidarity I felt with the protagonist. It lies in the overwhelming desire I felt to become an expert on queer theory.

My identity lies in the times I systematically told all my close friends this secret I'd been harbouring for too long. It lies in the knowledge that this was the hardest my heart had ever beat and the most I'd ever shaken, but the relief would be worth it. It lies in the accepting hugs from some and the surprising but welcome whispers of "me too" from most of them.

My identity lies in the way my heart jumped to my throat on June 26th, 2015. It lies the way my hands shook as all my queer friends and I texted each other immediately. It lies in the way I smiled at my parents as they told me this news I already knew while my brain screamed "I can get married!"

My identity lies in the hours I spent crying around the words in my throat that seemed so simple in theory, but were apparently painfully impossible to articulate. It lies

in my parents' concerned but knowing and patient looks as they coaxed the confession out of me. It lies in the way my eyes hurt from crying when I woke up, but it was balanced by the feeling of a giant weight off my shoulders.

My identity lies in the newfound freedom I felt to blossom fully into this person I was meant to be. It lies in the lack of embarrassment I felt when expressing that I wanted to claim "LGBTQ+ issues" for a powerpoint topic in my history, or english, or psychology class. It lies in the way I no longer shied away from wearing rainbow bracelets and adorning my backpack with "bi pride!" or "love equality!" pins.

My identity lies in the articles my parents would see and now leave on my desk, knowing that I'd be interested in anything with headlines along the lines of "First Transgender _____!" or "Lesbian Couple Says _____!" or "Fight for _____ Rights Continues!" It lies in the way my sister helped me tape pictures of rainbows on my walls and arrange the way a rainbow flag draped over my bed post. It lies in my increasing conviction surrounding this aspect of my selfhood.

My identity lies in the feeling of my heart soaring everytime I open the door to a new store or restaurant and see a certain colorful flag displayed somewhere proud and visible, and the way I automatically feel trust for a place that does so. It lies in the way a fellow bus passenger gushed, "I love your haircut!" and before I could express verbal gratitude had a follow up question, "Are you straight? I'm not," eliciting a grin from me. It lies in the heartwarming feeling of having this wonderful identity in common with so many others.

My identity lies in my habit of consciously seeking out queer actors and authors and musicians and public figures and movies and books, knowing how important it is for them to be normalized in mainstream media and society. It lies in the way I became the informal LGBTQ+ spokesperson in my classes, as I'm always the one to ensure that we don't leave queer people out of the picture. It lies how I'm always the person that my classmates glance over to when queer issues are mentioned, and how little I mind this act.

My identity lies in the way my stomach plummeted when I saw the results of the 2016 election. It lies the protests I went to with fire in my heart, exchanging a grin with those holding signs reading "QUEER PEOPLE AGAINST TRUMP" and "GENITALIA DOES NOT EQUAL GENDER." It lies in the feeling of strength I gained by thriving around like-minded people, and the knowledge that when I started chanting "Trans Lives Matter!" I would be met with rousing cheers of support.

My identity lies in the way it shone through at both Women's Marches, knowing that I'm representing and fighting for queer women in every step I take. It lies in the justified excitement and anticipation, and ultimate satisfaction, of going to my first pride parade. It lies in the fulfillment and encouragement I felt when surrounded by so many queer people unabashedly being themselves.

My identity lies in the LGBTQ+ summit conference hosted by my school that came together with my contributions, including no less than a full drag show and a visit from Janet Mock. It lies in the music we blasted at this summit, ranging from the soundtrack to *RENT* to Troye Sivan to the ever iconic Lady Gaga. It lies in the tears that grew in my eyes when one of my friends chose to come out as a transgender woman in front of every attendee of the summit.

My identity lies in the vouchment I received from several teachers and our student council president that I'd be the right person to speak to the whole Physical Education and Wellness department about gendered locker rooms. It lies in the way I held my ground throughout the whole discourse. It lies my freshman gym teacher approaching me afterward and applauding me on how far I'd come as a person since freshman year.

My identity lies in the flurry of exhilaration I feel everytime I check the box for Gender Studies as a major preference for potential colleges. It lies in the way I speak up with unwavering certainty in any and all discussions during my Gender in Literature class. It lies in the confidence I feel when sporting a tuxedo, rather than a dress, at wind symphony concerts.

My identity lies in the trans friends I've made in the past four years, the ones going on hormone replacement therapy and the ones not. It lies in all my lesbian friends, those who've had a new girlfriend every month and those who haven't even held hands yet. It lies in my non-binary friends, the ones that wear dresses with unshaven legs and the ones that have wear button-ups with unbound chests.

My identity lies in the transition from mentee to mentor that I've experienced in recent years. It lies in my shift from a bewildered 14 year old to a trusted source of queer info, all the while maintaining my sense of curiosity. It lies in the common knowledge that I'm someone people feel comfortable confiding in, as a role model and more importantly, a friend.

I've loved watching myself grow to love and understand my beautiful identity, and I love the sodality of acceptance I discovered along the way. I hope to continue to live as someone who impresses this sentiment onto others. I cannot wait spend the rest of my life discovering all aspects of this community and myself!

