

FEMINIST RESPONSE TO POP CULTURE //
THE DEVOTION ISSUE //

Rolling Stone



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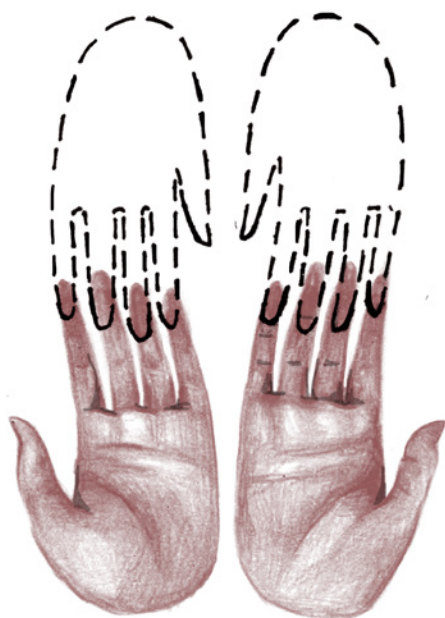
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CONTRIBUTORS



VANESSA MARTIR (“Can You See Me Now?,” page 18) is a New York City-based writer, educator, and mama. She is currently completing her memoir, *A Dim Capacity for Wings*, and chronicles the journey on her website. **What fictional character(s) are you hopelessly devoted to?**

America Chavez as written by Gabby Rivera. She’s unapologetically queer and bad ass, and also vulnerable and hungry for knowledge and love. She has an admirable commitment to changing the world.

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JORDAN MCDONALD (“We Are Not Yours,” page 30) is a writer and student at Dartmouth College, focusing on history, pop culture, literature, and politics as they relate to Black women in the past and the present.

What fictional character(s) are you hopelessly devoted to? Definitely Janie from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. She taught me the importance of telling your own story and the beauty in resilience.

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📍 thebravesome.com



VANESSA BORJON (“I Learned It on YouTube,” page 36) is a teaching artist based in Chicago. She received a BA in poetry from Columbia College, and her work has been published in the *Corazón Land Review*, *Quaint Magazine*, the *Shade Journal*, and *Nepantla*. **What fictional character(s) are you hopelessly devoted to?** Darlene from *Roseanne*. Her moods, her gothy vibe, her artistic interests (not to mention, as a fellow middle child, I felt she’d understand me and my melodrama).

🐦 @doomed2love
📍 @lucusiempre



RANDA JARRAR (“Both Slave and Pharaoh,” page 41) is the author of the novel *A Map of Home* and the collection of stories *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali*. She’s a fat femme and loves french fries. **What fictional character(s) are you hopelessly devoted to?** The Virgin Mary. I was a Palestinian single teenage mom, too.

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FROM THE EDITOR

What are the unspoken things you are devoted to and, more importantly, what do they reveal? In this issue, we reach under the topsoil and grab at the roots of our cultural beliefs. Devotion isn’t just about loyalty; it’s an examination of habit—a mixture of internalized superiorities and inferiorities, ideologies, and obsessions that influence our identity and choices as media consumers and pop cultural enthusiasts. What we are devoted to dictates our priorities and decisions—parenting, the Netflix series worth a weekend binge, a new album

drop, protests, and podcasts. Devotion speaks volumes.

We’re not here to tell you what to be devoted to; these pages were created so you can lose yourself and/or find yourself in feminist media that pushes you forward onto new ground. These days, attention is a commodity so it’s critical to reflect on to what and whom we are most devout, who and what is most deserving of that attention—and whether we include our own selves in that consideration.

Ruminate on the devotion of Dr. Willie Parker in his mission to provide marginalized women access to repro-

ductive care and abortion. Or behold Jordan McDonald’s marvel, “We Are Not Yours: Black Women Are Supreme but Not Godly,” a critical exploration of what is lost in the deification of Black women. What do we make of Jay-Z’s newfound devotion to vulnerability and what it says about masculinity, as examined by Fredrick Salyers in a review of 4:44? Or perhaps you feel like being worshipped along with Randa Jarrar in “Both Slave and Pharaoh: Finding the Divine in BDSM” and exploring the healing and release in her personal transformation from lover to goddess. In this



OLIVIA M. HEALY (illustrations, page 41) is inspired by the ancient Egyptian, Japanese, and postmodern interpretations of the figure. Psychology, mindfulness, sexuality, and gender are all themes that frequently come up in her illustration. **What fictional character(s) are you hopelessly devoted to?** Cersei Lannister from *Game of Thrones*! She's a bit of a controversial character to be devoted to, but I find her so interesting and strong.

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DIANA EJAÍTA (Cover) is a Nigerian Italian fine artist, illustrator, and textile designer. Currently working in Berlin, her heart is based in Lagos. Her work focuses on womanhood and social, racial, and gender equality. **What fictional character(s) are you hopelessly devoted to?** Mami Wata, a deity of folklore from central West Africa connected to water, creation, playfulness, trust, and healing. She is a powerful, careful fighter, and sometimes appears as a man.

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issue, we also point to problematic devotion: Samantha Ladwig calls out Hollywood's devotion to heteronormativity during the golden age in "Cover Story: How Hollywood Closeted Queerness for Capital." And in "Dressed for Protest: Remodeling the Quinceañera for Immigration Reform," Emily Prado introduces us to devoted youth in action in Texas.

And there's more. So much more. Devotion isn't just one story, but we have one message:

Bitch Media is devoted to creating a space where marginal communities not only matter, but are covered and

represented as essential contributors and consumers of media, politics, and pop culture. It's time to pause, take a breath, and trace where cultural and spiritual devotions lead.

I hope you find that the trace leads back to yourself. —LISA FACTORA-BORCHERS

ABOUT THE ART

Read about all of the illustrators, comics creators, and designers featured in this issue, including their pop culture devotions, at bit.ly/art-devotion.

—KRISTIN ROGERS BROWN

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS In the review of *Mean* (#76), LGBTQ was misspelled as "LQBTQ." The error was ours.

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DEPARTMENT OF EVERYTHING:
A LITTLE OF THIS, A LITTLE OF THAT.

6 SPORTS PODCASTS TO ADD TO YOUR LINEUP

It's no secret that there's no shortage of men with opinions about sports. If you're tired of having sports mansplained to you, fear not—here are some amazing women-, femme-, and nonbinary-hosted sports podcasts to add to your lineup. —BRITNI DE LA CRETAZ



RESTING PITCHFACE

A hilarious baseball podcast with “a Nationals bias,” *Resting Pitchface* is hosted by Kay, Laura, and Syd.

These three friends provide the kind of baseball commentary you would get if you were hanging out with your besties. They're prone to going off on tangents about things like hair bleach and whether Trevor Bauer tastes like Old Bay, and they're nothing if not a delight to listen to.



BURN IT ALL DOWN

This podcast is a who's who of amazing women sports writers. Hosts Jessica Luther, Shireen Ahmed, Lindsay Gibbs, Brenda Elsey, and Julie DiCaro tackle sports

and politics with a decidedly feminist bent. Plus, they feature amazing guest hosts, such as Katie Barnes of espnW.



THE JUMP

Rachel Nichols offers all the NBA commentary you could ever need with her rotating cast of hosts. Nichols is sharp, and probably one of the most

knowledgeable and prepared journalists in the game. She's not afraid to share critical commentary or go after the stories others might shy away from.



THE HARBALL TIMES AUDIO

It's a big deal for a website like *The Hardball Times*—one of the go-to sites for niche baseball content and hard-core fans—to produce an all-women,

femme-hosted podcast. Jen Mac Ramos, Mary Craig, and Sarah Wexler provide insightful and awkwardly endearing comments on the game while tackling tough topics, including domestic violence and LGBTQ issues.



VOXWOMEN INSIDER

Cycling doesn't always get the glory it should, but *Voxwomen Insider* provides the pedestal it deserves. Hosted by professional racers Abby

Mickey and Loren Rowney, the podcast gives a look into cycling that you can only get from people who have lived it. It's your one-stop shop in the world of women's cycling.



2 DRUNK FANS

This irreverent podcast is hosted by Gabby Rosas and Stephanie Yang, who talk about all things women's soccer. Their affection for both each other

and the game comes through loud and clear. They're sometimes NSFW, but always a lot of fun. And Yang's quirk of saying “buddy” and “bob” is kind of great and makes you want to be her friend.

KEY WORDS

DI·VINE RA·CI·SM |də'vīn||'rā,sizəm| (N) (DIVINE RACISM)

A term coined by William R. Jones that theorizes God as an active participant in the maintenance of racial inequality and further implies that God is the “founding father” of a society's racially superior group.

IN THIS ISSUE: “We Are Not Yours: Black women are supreme but not superhuman,” p. 32

BLACK MADONNA

DECIPHERING THE GOSPEL OF BEYONCÉ



Beyoncé is fond of bending symbols to her will. From sinking a police car to dressing her dancers as Black Panthers, Yoncé has made it clear that she's aware of her place in our culture and understands the responsibility of wielding such vast influence. Because of this, it's worth considering her references within her political context as a Black mother to Black children.

Celebrity is a fickle thing, and the risk of losing control of the narrative arc of one's career is high. Beyoncé saw this firsthand when rumors swirled around her first pregnancy, so it's little wonder then that she seized the reins for her twins. As *BuzzFeed's* senior culture writer Anne Helen Petersen wrote in her book *Too Fat, Too Slutty, Too Loud: The Rise and Reign of the Unruly Woman*, "Today, pregnancy and motherhood are one of the primary ways in which a female celebrity maintains attention." Knowing this, Beyoncé took it a step further, using her pregnancy and the birth of her twins Sir Carter and Rumi as a mythmaking opportunity by wrapping herself up in the imagery she wanted to define her place in the cultural landscape.

Beyoncé enjoys a specific kind of power few Black women ever attain, and it's part of why Black women are among her most devoted fans. Here is a Black woman creating clear boundaries about how much of herself will be accessible to us. "You get this much and nothing more," she seems to be saying. Her art exists for your consumption, but her body itself does not.

Her pregnancy announcement was at once simple and full of fanfare: a solitary photograph posted to her Instagram account fully staged and very clearly planned down to the smallest detail. In it, she subtly evokes the Virgin Mary, most frequently depicted in Western art in red and blue as a symbol of her dual divinity and humanity. The appropriated mosquito net as veil completes the statement. By invoking this imagery, she deliberately aligns herself with the treasured iconography of "the blessed mother," a likeness that has long been inaccessible to Black women due to the historical violence of stereotypes. Her very skin becomes political in that the perceived failures of Black mothers are often identified as the locus of larger societal dysfunction. The lavish funeral wreath behind her associates her pregnancy with fertility and the blossoming of new life while simultaneously acting as a halo, framing her face and body and connecting her to the divine. She is blessed by the new life inside her.

The caption also sends an indirect message. A curt three sentences acknowledges the "we" of her pregnancy—her husband, Jay-Z, yet he is nowhere to be found in the image. Beyoncé isn't even wearing her wedding ring in the photo. By excluding him, she centers herself, her belly, and her twins and leans more heavily into the symbolism of the blessed Virgin, maintaining the focus of this constructed image on her as the new Black Madonna.

The photograph announcing the birth of her twins reinforces the established motif: the colors of divinity remain, as does the halo wreath of flowers framing herself and her children. The mosquito-net veil is cast off her face, no longer necessary for protection. The purple gown extends into the grass beneath her, merging her with the vivaciousness of the new life blooming behind her. Her twins are held front and center, joining to form her three hearts. The sun shines down and frames her face: a heavenly light from above to manifest the divine.

In both photos, Beyoncé chooses to hold the gaze of the onlooker by staring

directly into the camera instead of at her belly or her twins, forcing us to reckon with our own gaze. We have not come unto the scene as voyeurs to a private moment; we are being invited in intentionally by the subject. Beyoncé knows we are looking and she wants us to know that she knows. With her eyes, she gives us limited access to her body, her scrutiny a reminder that we too are being surveilled in this moment. The image becomes transactional in nature: subject and subject rather than subject and object. She retains control of the interaction by admonishing us for our eager intrusions. The Black Madonna has returned, and she is deigning to share with us the fruits of her womb. We are blessed to behold it. —CATE YOUNG

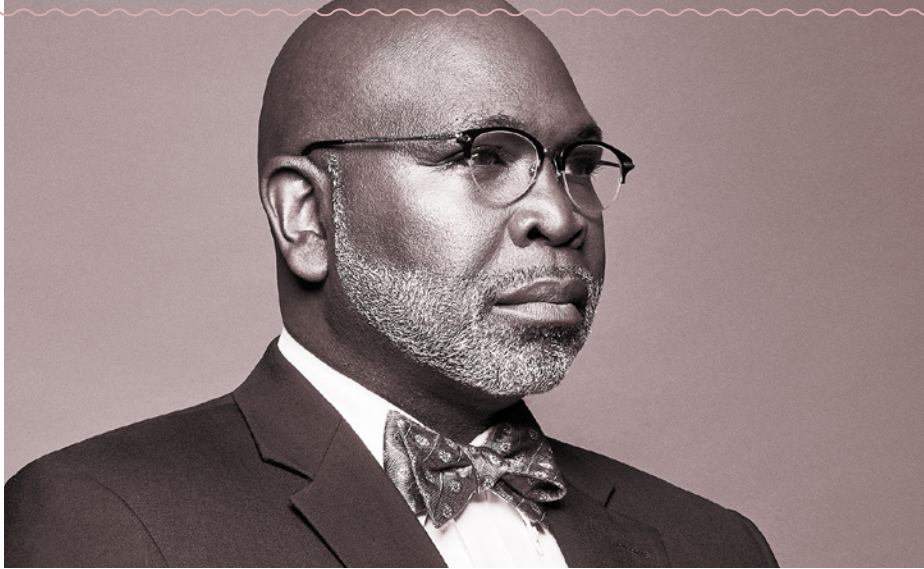
This article first appeared online. Read the full version at bitchmedia.org.





REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS CORNER

UNLIKELY DISCIPLE OF ABORTION:



Dr. Willie Parker is an itinerant abortion provider who gave up a private practice and a penthouse in Hawaii to provide safe abortions for women in the South in communities like the ones in which he grew up. His work was captured in the 2016 documentary film *Trapped* and in his book, *Life's Work: A Moral Argument for Choice*. Parker is mounting the moral case for abortion rights and fighting to keep abortion clinics open. *Bitch* spoke with Dr. Parker about heteronormative patriarchal Christian traditions, politics, and his personal saints.

—DAHLIA GROSSMAN-HEINZE

“Devotion” is a word I couldn’t get out of my head while reading your book, especially when you described your work as “sacred.” How do you see “the sacred” and the idea of devotion in your work?

To describe my work as sacred is to place reproduction in the context of the religious and the spiritual, where it’s long been, in rejection of patriarchal norms that would subordinate the value and the lives and the importance of women. And I’m devoted to ritualistic practice coming from a place of deep commitment. Part of my pushing back

on patriarchy and the imperilment of women by religious traditions is to invoke the same language, but to imbue it with the content that would elevate women to the same status that men take for granted. My work is sacred because I don’t do my work despite my religious and spiritual understanding, I do it because of it, and that to me is the crux of the counter-narrative to this religious encroachment on the humanity of women. My work is sacred, I’m Christian, I do abortions, and there are no zero-sum relationships between those understandings or those terminologies.

What do you make of the announcement that the Democratic Party won’t withhold financial support from candidates who oppose abortion?

If we use the analogy of a ship in the sea of politics, we have to ask: Are women’s reproductive rights and freedom an essential plank in the hull of the Democratic ship, or is it a mast on a speedboat? As a mast on a speedboat, it’s present, but it’s not critical because you have other means of moving the boat. If the party is equivocating on this issue, it is saying to women that they are optional. One thing I learned in relationships, both personal and political, is that you can’t afford to make someone a priority who makes you optional.

The Democratic Party, by this move, would be making women and their reproductive lives and health optional.

You grew up in Alabama, and you now move between Alabama and Georgia as an itinerant abortion provider. What does it mean to you to care for women in communities like the ones in which you grew up?

The people who are being denied [abortion] access are primarily poor women and women of color, and I know that lived experience personally—being reared in abject poverty and being a person of color. So it became important to prioritize the care of the most vulnerable women in this country, using the logic that if those women are okay, everybody else is going to be alright. It’s about making sure that those women aren’t left out, and the way to do that was to move home and to provide care in one of the most underserved regions in the country.

In your book you mention your “personal saints”: civil rights leaders and others who have influenced your work and philosophy. What inspiration do you draw from their work, and how do you see its connection to yours?

When I look at these very human people who found something that was larger than them, something that mattered, something that made whatever efforts they expended a worthy cause, I took heart and notion from that.

I know that some people choose the issue, but sometimes the issue chooses you. Being a women’s health provider, having my lived experience in the South with poverty and racism and then having one of the major defining issues of human rights be the reproductive rights of women, it was just the confluence of my background, my values, my religious and spiritual values rooted in Christianity and compassion that pulled all of that together for me. I saw people like Dr. King and Malcolm X, who were deeply principled on the basis of their religious understanding, and it fueled their

DR. WILLIE PARKER'S SACRED WORK

notion that their religious values obligated them to participate in the human-rights issues of their day. I channel and derive my drive and clarity to do the work that I do from making those observations about why and how they did the work that they did.

I was really struck by how you phrased this in *Life's Work*—Why did you make the decision to exercise Christian compassion not by proxy, but with your own hands as an abortion provider?

In my situation, it wasn't enough to be empathetic or sympathetic toward the fact that women need abortion care. As a women's healthcare provider, it felt like a compromise to understand the importance of that care to women and to fail to provide it if the only reason that I wasn't providing it was the default to patriarchal customs that are rooted in Christianity, because if I looked deeply in my faith tradition, there was nothing morally or mutually exclusive about being an abortion provider and a Christian.

For me personally, it wasn't enough just to be pro-reproductive rights in rhetoric or in politics. The fulfillment of what moved me was to acquire the skills to become pro-reproductive rights in action. The only solution [that would] quiet the stirring in my inner witness was to begin providing abortion care for women because I know what it means when it's not present.

You make the point that pro-choice advocates have failed to give a moral or ethical case for abortion rights and instead ceded that ground to anti-choicers. How do you think pro-choice advocates can better make the case for abortion rights?

We have been reared with the cultural narrative that America is one nation under God, so while we have an official separation between church and state and don't have a national religion, we do. It is a de facto heteronormative, patriarchal, Eurocentric understanding of Christianity and that has led to the exclusion of many people who don't fit that narrative.

There's no need for people who don't have a religious practice to concede that the only way to address issues of morality is through religion, because when we've done that, we've created a huge vacuum in the public space that has ceded the moral high ground to people who have cynically manipulated religious understandings for the injustices that we face, such as LGBTQ discrimination, frank racism, rampant sexism and patriarchy, and anti-immigrant sentiments. The major concession that has been made by people who are pro-reproductive rights is that they have failed to mount the moral argument for reproductive rights. We are already engaged

If we fetishize motherhood and make it so essential to the identities of women, then that means any woman who is rejecting that notion and disrupting that process is either morally unfit or mentally unstable. One of the ways that people who are supportive of reproductive rights can refuse to unwittingly undermine the interest of women who are trying to make that decision is to reject the notion of the primacy of motherhood to the identity of all women. For example, women who are materially situated where it is not a question of economics or a strain or a complex family structure, those women, when they become indifferent as

“I don't do my work despite my religious and spiritual understanding, I do it because of it.”

in questions of morality; they're just not religious, especially when you're talking about justice. We should not concede the moral case for the justice work that we pursue.

Anti-choicers seem to effectively argue for the potential each possible pregnancy holds, but how is it that they have so successfully removed the woman, and her potential and humanity, from the equation altogether? And how can pro-choice advocates reorient this issue to prioritize the woman?

By creating the notion that fetuses are tiny people and then invoking an absolute interpretation of the disruption of life processes as murder, the anti-choicers have been able to short-circuit any critical and nuanced thinking about a process that's occurring in the body of a woman.

to whether or not a woman has to wait 24 hours to carry out her reproductive life goals, they unwittingly participate in the coercion or the victimization of women who are not similarly situated.

We have to be mindful of the privilege we hold and we have to apply that filter to our analysis of reproductive rights. If we're mindful of the privilege that we hold when laws are posed that don't necessarily affect our specific position, we have to be mindful that we stand in solidarity with people who will be affected by those laws. People who are supportive of reproductive rights have to be unequivocal in making it clear and explicit that women's bodies and lives are not public property.

This interview has been edited and condensed. Read the full interview online at bitchmedia.org.



STARVED

FOR SAINTHOOD: THE DIVINE HUNGER OF CATHERINE OF SIENA



When 33-year-old Catherine Benincasa lay dying of starvation, her final words were of triumph; she had done this to herself, on purpose, for God. She died in 1380, following years of self-inflicted torture, defying the entreaties of her fellow clergy to eat the food placed in front of her. She had long believed herself to be following the direct orders of God, including the direction to hate her mortal body and to neuter all of her bodily impulses. Decades later, she was canonized as Saint Catherine of Siena, her suffering recast as martyrdom, and her writings on self-denial and starvation inspired future generations of young women of faith to starve themselves in emulation of her. Her self-hatred is anathema to 21st-century ideals of sepia-tinted self-actualization, but the core tenet, that women can harness power by conquering their bodies, is identical.

Today's lifestyle Instagrammers promote a tough-love approach to the body,

can unleash, led to canonization for the medieval saints and is a path to internet fame for today's generation.

It was not Catherine's eating habits that led to the influence she wielded, but rather her conviction that she was acting on orders from God. The divorce of her body from her soul, perhaps partly achieved through self-punishment, allowed her the confidence to raise her voice at a time when women were culturally silent. Yet for all her power and conviction, her religious fervor eventually alienated those around her.

Catherine was chided by those around her to just eat, but of course it was not so simple. Malnutrition had changed the way her body functioned, and—combined with her staunch belief to be acting on God's instructions—she found eating repulsive. She moved from abstaining from some to all food, and finally even water; the very act of eating caused her to vomit. It's challenging for today's psychiatric and medical professionals to treat disordered eating with talk therapy and IV fluids; for 14th-century clergy, her case was simply untreatable. The further removed Catherine became from her body, the less power she retained over herself, but conversely, the more powerful she seemed to feel. In death, she triumphed over her own body, a personal achievement, not a religious one.

Catherine was devoted to her faith much as today's orthorexics are to what they see as a healthy lifestyle. Both goals, taken to the extreme they so often land upon, imbue a sense of personal mastery even as they destroy the body. Our current society continues to teach young women that bodily urges—from sexuality to hunger—are not to be trusted, and that much of their personal power lies in their body. We remember Catherine not only for her health issues, but for the power she exerted during times when young women were so often sidelined and ignored. She was rewarded for her faith with canonization, much as today's social-media stars hope to increase their number of likes and followers with each pound they lose. —ANN FOSTER

In the many eras and cultures in which women's bodies are the only thing they have control over, we find women who take firm control by malnourishing themselves.

suggesting that through laxative detox teas and diets, one may finally reach a sense of nirvana. The same notion that women are their bodies drove Catherine and other early saints to cut off their hair, stuff nails in their shoes, and self-flagellate past the point of open wounds. In the many eras and cultures in which women's bodies are the only thing they have control over, we find women who take firm control by malnourishing themselves. This act of conquering oneself so no one else can, of mystifying the men around you with the power this

Drawn • Out • **SUN GOD** by Whit Taylor



COVER STORY

How Hollywood closeted queerness for capital

BY SAMANTHA LADWIG

The early years of Hollywood were chock-full of risqué films. Depictions of abortion, drug use, prostitution, sexual desire, and other taboo topics were scattered throughout the silent era and early sound films.

Homosexuality was also frequently projected onto the big screen during those early years, from Marlene Dietrich's tuxedo-wearing, girl-kissing performance in *Morocco* (1930) and Joan Blondell helping Barbara Stanwyck undress in *Night Nurse* (1931) to director Charles Bryant paying homage to Oscar Wilde with an all-gay cast in *Salomé* (1923). At the time, filmmakers had the freedom to depict certain realities that the industry would eventually deem immoral.

The same can be said of stars offscreen as well. There was a level of discretion within the industry, not to mention a publicity system contrived by studios that covered up any mishaps by paying off reporters or offering up a juicier scandal. These schemes allowed stars to live somewhat authentic lives without their romantic pursuits, queer or otherwise, interfering

with their professional ones. Unless their so-called immoral interests directly threatened box-office sales, the industry turned its head.

That is, until 1929, when William H. Hays drafted what would become the Hays Code, or Motion Picture Production Code, a set of moral guidelines by which studios were forced to abide. Content that included, or alluded to, profanity, nudity, white slavery, use of the flag, a woman's virginity, criminal sympathy, kissing, or homosexuality was either off the table completely or could only be depicted with extreme caution.

Hays wasn't a new fixture in Hollywood. In January of 1922, Hays, who at the time was chair of the Republican National Committee, was hired as president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. Between the rape and murder of actor Virginia

Rappe, for which actor Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was acquitted, and the ongoing uproar from religious groups who believed motion pictures were the downfall of American ideals, the industry was forced to acknowledge its faults and needed Hays to help repair them. Working with studios, Hays highlighted problematic scenes that the censorship board would surely disapprove of and, as a result, cost the film its distribution. Hays revamped Hollywood, but it was in 1929, when the stock market crashed—pushing the roaring twenties into the Great Depression—that the industry experienced the full impact of Hays's influence.

The economic downturn proved to be profitable for Hollywood. Movie theaters filled with people seeking pleasant distractions from their financial predicaments. But the newly invented talkies brought with them yet another wave of moral critique. Religious groups pointed to what they deemed suggestive, and therefore inappropriate, dialogue in films such as *Baby Face* (1933) and *Red-Headed Woman* (1932) to validate their arguments. With the public already in distress, these conservative arguments had more impact. Once again, the need for wholesome content became a top priority. This time, Hollywood knew it was going to need more than censorship to hold the public's interest.

Enter the golden age of Hollywood, an era that would produce some of cinema's biggest classics while simultaneously controlling the onscreen and offscreen lives of its stars.

It's not that LGBTQ actors in Hollywood pre-1929 lived out and openly with welcome arms from the public, but what was once a fairly easygoing industry suddenly turned into a strict moral front where the line between personal and professional blurred. During the early decades of film, stars were contracted to studios, and as a result of the Hays Code, their morality clauses intensified. LGBTQ actors were forced to make a choice: give up love or give up acting.

If they chose the latter, these actors were generally presented with a solution to silence



any potential rumors. It was popular during these years for studios to create romantic relationships between stars as a way to promote upcoming releases. LGBTQ actors were offered “lavender marriages,” a pairing of one or two actors whose partnership would divert sensationalist gossip when one bad headline could tarnish an actor’s career forever.

Janet Gaynor, the first person to win an Academy Award for Best Actress, entered into a lavender marriage with renowned costume designer Adrian Adolph Greenberg, credited for his work solely as Adrian. Though Gaynor’s sexuality has been speculated about, Adrian was openly gay. That is, until the Hays Code came into play. Adrian’s contributions to costume design are some of the biggest and best, including Dorothy’s red slippers in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and the gowns of Joan Crawford, Joan Fontaine, and Rosalind Russell in *The Women* (1939). Both movies were released the same year he and Gaynor exchanged vows.

Actor and all-American heartthrob Rock Hudson entered a lavender marriage in 1955, when *Confidential* gossip columnist Hedda Hopper presented Hudson with an already drafted article outing him. While Hudson’s publicist, Henry Willson, deflected Hopper with a handful of headlines on other stars, Hudson quickly tied the knot with Willson’s secretary, Phyllis Gates. There has been speculation about whether or not Gates was aware of Hudson’s sexuality, but it was no secret in Hollywood.

Not every Hollywood star had to make the tough choice though. Neither Marlene Dietrich nor Greta Garbo, women the studios marketed as exotic European babes, shied away from their bisexuality. Director George Cukor held weekly, men-only pool parties at his Los Angeles home. Actor Patsy Kelly openly identified as a lesbian and linked herself to actor Tallulah Bankhead. Director Dorothy Arzner lived with her partner, choreographer Marion Morgan, for more than 40 years. Despite their frank openness, these stars continued to have lively, award-filled careers. But not everyone who chose to remain open was gifted the same treatment.

Actor William Haines, who starred in movies such as *Show People* (1928) and *Tell It*

to the Marines (1926), among others, was the top box-office star of 1929 and refused to enter into a lavender marriage. Haines’s homosexuality was widely known in Hollywood. From promoting gay establishments to openly living with partner Jimmie Shields from 1926 onward, to being picked up a reported three times by the vice squad, Haines overwhelmingly refused to live a closeted life. When Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios executive Louis B. Mayer gave Haines an ultimatum—marry budding starlet Joan Crawford or forget about making movies—Haines walked away.

Despite the severity of this era, this wasn’t the first time the industry put its box-office sales at the forefront of its priorities, manipulating the public to ensure success. Film producer Carl Laemmle pioneered this approach when in 1910, he falsely informed the newspaper *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that actress Florence Lawrence had been killed in a trolley accident. Immediately following its release, Laemmle revealed that Lawrence was very much alive and, in fact, starring in his upcoming film, *The Broken Oath* (1910). Nobody knew who Lawrence was at the time. But after the story broke with Laemmle’s proclamation trailing behind,

enter into a lavender marriage and who didn’t. Garbo’s and Dietrich’s bisexuality fed into the exotic facade that Hollywood had created and wanted for them. Cukor’s and Arzner’s jobs were behind the camera, which separated them from public scrutiny that focused entirely on its onscreen faces. Thus proving that Hollywood didn’t concern itself with personal matters unless they influenced the industry.

Censorship rules lifted as film entered the 1950s. Between the birth of television and the rise in popularity of foreign films, Hollywood found itself on the losing side of its competition. Once again, studios found themselves at the drawing board, strategizing about how to get back on top. The public was no longer interested in wholesome narratives. They wanted the racy, romantic, and controversial stories that foreign directors such as Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini were offering. And it wasn’t just the public who sought the nontraditional; Hollywood filmmakers such as Billy Wilder and Otto Preminger craved this transition as well. With so many finally on the side of open-mindedness, the Hays Code crumbled.

It’s difficult to pinpoint just how many lavender marriages occurred during the

LGBTQ ACTORS WERE FORCED TO MAKE A CHOICE: GIVE UP LOVE OR GIVE UP ACTING.

her popularity soared, assuring the upcoming film’s financial success.

Fast-forward to today, and we still see instances of financial gain at the expense of public manipulation. From Taylor Swift’s timely sexual assault trial to Angelina Jolie finally breaking the silence about her divorce from Brad Pitt, it’s no coincidence that these stories happen to grace the front pages right before the release of Swift’s album and Jolie’s film.

The industry, from the beginning, has prioritized itself over the lives of its players. Looking at the list of golden age LGBTQ actors, it’s clear that outside of ticket sales, there wasn’t an established criteria for determining who had to

golden age of Hollywood, partly because of celebrity discretion, and partly because many LGBTQ actors identified as bisexual. What we do know is that the studio’s level of interference jumped significantly as the industry was pushed into the more conservative 1930s, proving yet again that Hollywood itself was the top priority. **b**

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DRESSED FOR PROTEST

Remodeling the quinceañera for immigration reform

BY EMILLY PRADO

Some kids inherit their mom's dimples or crooked smile. Viridiana Sanchez Santos says she has inherited her mother's will to make change.



PHOTO VIA @TZINTZUNCRIS / TWITTER

At age 16, Sanchez Santos has organized a school-wide walkout against ICE raids, trooped alongside her mother during the nationwide Day Without Immigrants march, and most recently stood with 14 other teenage girls donning sunny ball gowns in protest of SB4, a law that directs local police resources to identifying people who are undocumented. Although she had been politically active with her family since grade school, Sanchez Santos credits Cristina Tzintzun, executive director of Jolt Texas, with helping her find her own voice as an activist.

"I knew that it was time for change when my community wasn't speaking out," says

Sanchez Santos. "When I saw that my community was scared of Donald Trump and his hateful supporters, I wanted to be more involved in helping out, so I just stopped being afraid."

With the support of Jolt Texas, Sanchez Santos played a key role in an hour-long demonstration dubbed "Quinceañera at the Capitol" that quickly went viral. Equipped with quinceañera dresses and sashes that read "No Racism" and "Accountability," the girls performed choreographed dances to Los Tigres del Norte's "Somos Mas Americanos" and Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)" on the steps of the

Texas State Capitol in downtown Austin, a popular setting for quinceañera photo shoots. After their dance, the girls spoke with legislators who backed SB4 to explain how the law would personally affect them and their families. They also reminded legislators of their impending status as eligible voters.

Fifteenth-birthday celebrations honor a girl's transition into womanhood in Latin American tradition, but Sanchez Santos says the significance of her quinceañera gown shifted during the rally: "This time I was not wearing my dress for my life—I was not [taking] another step into my life. This time it was because I wanted my whole community to [take] one more step into the next step of *their* lives. I did it for my community."

When Trump was elected into office, Tzintzun was six months pregnant. As a nationally revered advocate for the Latino community and former executive director of the Workers Defense Project, a group she cofounded at age 24 dedicated to upholding labor rights for construction workers in Texas, she planned to launch Jolt after her maternity leave, but couldn't wait any longer. She called for a Love Trumps Hate rally the same week of the election and expected about 100 attendees. Instead, 2,000 showed up.

Tzintzun attributes Jolt's unique approach to organizing as the root of success for its campaigns. She says, "There are two kinds of power that drive change: there's power of institution and power of inspiration.... I think [for] a lot of the work that [involves] immigration and race, the Latino community tries to say, 'We're just as American as everybody else,' and tries to hide our culture in the process. At Jolt, we say the exact opposite."

After witnessing the immense level of change that came from working with mostly undocumented construction workforces for more than a decade, she wanted to expand on these lessons to reach a broader Latino community. Though the current political climate encourages Brown people to retreat in fear, Tzintzun is focused on empowering a new generation of leaders who are boldly Latino. “We put our culture and who we are front and center. People want to see themselves embodied,” she says. “The quinceañera [protest was] about our culture and our pride and who we are, and that is what made it so powerful.”

Sanchez Santos immigrated to the United States from Mexico at age 6, and has lived in Austin ever since. Under President Obama, she became eligible to receive Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which granted her protection from deportation, the ability to get a work permit and driver’s license, and the right to go to school. The fate of DACA is uncertain under Trump, who moved to end the policy in September.

Yet in the face of fear, Sanchez Santos says her bravery is inherent. “I just hate seeing white [supremacists] step all over Latinos. They don’t even know us and they treat us badly, but we don’t deserve that. We have done nothing wrong to them. We come here to work, to help our families financially, and they have no right to just want to kick us out of this country because we’re still helping out their country. We’re working for them. We’re doing jobs that they don’t want to do. We’re here,” she says. She also admits she fights to maintain her courage. “I do get scared sometimes with what’s going on, like with what happened in Charlottesville. That did frighten me a little bit, but it just made me even stronger because I know that what we’re doing and what we’re working hard for is pissing them off. It’s working.”

As an organizer, Tzintzun says it’s her duty to help activists navigate their concerns. “We live in a time when undocumented and immigrant communities are really

under threat,” she says. “We have to honor that fear but we also have to move people beyond fear to courage and conviction. That’s our job as organizers; acknowledge where people are at, and then talk about the power of coming together. Allowing fear to arrest us from action is exactly what these legislators want, and that’s [how] we let them win, so we need to move beyond that.”

In Texas, Latinos currently account for 40 percent of the population and are estimated to become the demographic

THOUGH THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE ENCOURAGES BROWN PEOPLE TO RETREAT IN FEAR, TZINTZUN IS FOCUSED ON EMPOWERING A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS WHO ARE BOLDLY LATINO.

majority by 2030. Jolt’s long-term vision is engaging all eligible voters; currently one in three is Latino.

“We see this moment as a real crossroads for Latino and immigrant communities in Texas,” explains Tzintzun. “While we’re going to fight back against SB4, we’re also going to build the real power needed to transform Texas. Where we’re really waging our bet is on young Latinos [who] we believe are the future of Texas.”

Sanchez Santos speaks in affirmations and hopes to become a doctor one day, opening low-cost clinics for people without adequate resources or access to medical care. She says activism is important because “it gave me a voice and it made me unafraid.” For other young people interested in activism, she urges them to just get involved. “Think of all the bad things that are happening now and literally everything that we’re getting put through—think about it and act on it,” she says. “Don’t just let people step all over the Latino community. Don’t be scared. Do it for what you love and what you care for.”

As for Jolt’s future, Tzintzun says she hasn’t had the chance to take her maternity leave yet, but she is invigorated by the future. “We look forward to the long-term fight. Not just to beat back SB4, but to beat back a slew of legislation that has attacked LGBTQ communities, that has attacked the rights of women, that has been an assault on poor people, and really anybody that doesn’t fit into the elite financial interest of the Republican party and a bigoted minority that currently controls the state,” she says.

“We have tremendous power,” says Tzintzun. “We know what the quince girls represent and what our community represents is the future. The hate and the bigotry of the legislators currently in power represent that past, and that’s why they’re so afraid of allowing our community to have full rights and equality. They recognize [that] when we fully recognize our power, they will no longer be in power themselves.... We’re coming for you because this is our state, our home, and we’re not going anywhere.” **b**

Interested in supporting Jolt? You can help by following them on social media, spreading the word on upcoming actions, and sharing your artistic skills to tell Jolt’s stories through a variety of mediums. Send an e-mail to info@jolttx.org.

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SACRIFICIAL IDOLS

In J-pop, teen dreams become nightmares

BY CATHERINE KOMURO

When I try to talk to people about idols, I falter. I say things like, “Maki Goto is my Britney Spears” or “Mikitty was like Christina Aguilera to me.” That’s a gross oversimplification, even on a good day. The appeal of idols, to me, is seeing supposedly ordinary girls perform superhuman feats of stamina.

Britney gets a pass for lip-synching because she’s dancing for 90 minutes. Idols aren’t let off the hook that way; they bounce from radio interviews to daytime variety shows to two-hour-plus evening concerts, and still no one dares lip-synch. It’d be an insult to the fans who came out to cheer them on, towels and glow sticks held high.

And then they get up the next morning and do it all over again.

From the time I was 13 years old, I was obsessed with the Japanese supergroup Morning Musume and its ever-shifting lineup. Girls aged out and “graduated” to be replaced by a new crop of faces, and why shouldn’t I have been one of them? I taught myself their choreography from promotional videos, played every CD on endless repeat

until I knew the songs by heart and could identify each girl’s voice. I drilled myself on imitations, trying to swap between Charmy’s breathy squeak and Miki “Mikitty” Fujimoto’s vocal fry in the beats between lines. Every year, I scoured Japanese newspapers and fan-run forums for news about that year’s auditions, making my older brother help me with kanji I didn’t understand.

Idols are universally acknowledged as manufactured—even by their fans. To an awkward teenager, this can seem like more of a feature than a bug. A crack team of marketers and stylists packaging me as my most appealing self sounded like exactly what I needed. And if they were building me a personality, I wouldn’t have to worry about fleshing one out on my own.

That I believed becoming an idol could make me my best self shows that Morning Musume functioned exactly as it was meant to. The idol mill can only run if it is fed a steady stream of fresh female bodies. Morning Musume’s televised audition process, from its inception in 1998, invoked an aspirational fantasy of ordinary girls catapulted into stardom through sheer hard work. In 2000 and 2001, auditions for the fourth and fifth generations of Morning Musume ballooned to more than 25,000 applicants (though numbers dropped in subsequent years as producer Tsunku implemented narrower age restrictions).

Idols are meant to provide a vision of accessible femininity to girls: something you can grow up to be. For boys, they’re meant to be accessible in a different way: the attainable celebrity girlfriend, the girl next door. These dual purposes are supported in part by how bloated idol groups become. Morning Musume’s current roster stands at 14 girls ranging from ages 15 to 22. AKB48, a massive group established in 2005 that maintains its own theater in Tokyo’s Akihabara neighborhood, consists of 125 girls between the ages of 12 and 26. With such a diverse lineup, any fan can find a favorite to look up to or lust after. Particularly devoted fans may become wota, who function somewhat like cheer squads for their favorites. They develop specialized chants and nicknames for their favorite singers and synchronized dances to their songs, dominating concert venues with their coordinated performances.

Accessibility, or the illusion of it, is built into most idols’ contracts. The girls are subject to grueling schedules to keep them in the public eye as much as possible. In a

Below: Morning Musume '17



2009 interview with the *Japan Times*, fifth-generation Morning Musume member Risa Niigaki said that the girls were each allotted a total of 15 vacation days per year. Contracts often also include morality clauses restricting not only public conduct but private relationships as well.

Morality clauses, and the violation thereof, have been a constant source of tension in the idol industry for more than a decade. Ai Kago of Morning Musume was dismissed from her talent agency after being photographed smoking on several occasions and visiting a hot springs with an older man. Her bandmate Maki Goto found her own image tarnished when her younger brother burglarized a construction site; Goto was interrogated about the crime in interviews, and publicly blamed herself for being inattentive to her brother's needs. However, the most controversial aspect of an idol's "accessible" image is the chastity clause.

Although Morning Musume members were forbidden to date (the revelation of Mari Yaguchi's secret relationship forced her resignation from the group in 2005, and Fujimoto left the group for the same reason two years later), two high-profile cases from competing megagroup AKB48 have garnered intense media scrutiny in recent years. In 2012, tabloid *Shūkan Bunshun* published a tell-all from a man claiming to be the boyfriend of AKB48's Rino Sashihara. While Sashihara denied the allegations, she was transferred to Fukuoka-based sister group HKT48 as a result of the scandal.

Yet more troubling was the reaction to the news that Minami Minegishi had spent the night at the house of a member of boy band Generations. The scandal, again reported by *Shūkan Bunshun*, caused AKB48 producer Yasushi Akimoto to demote Minegishi to "trainee" rank within the group. (Ironically, Akimoto is married to Mamiko Takai, a

former idol. The two met while Takai was a member of the 1980s idol group Onyanko Club, also produced by Akimoto. Takai retired upon announcing their marriage.) The official AKB48 YouTube channel also posted a video of Minegishi, her long hair shorn into a messy crew cut as a sign of contrition, sobbing as she apologizes to her fans and pleads to be allowed to continue as part of AKB48.

exception to the rule. They react to any threat to this fantasy with extreme hostility, accusing idols caught dating of "cheating on their fans" and "betraying" them.

This hostility goes beyond nasty comments on the internet. In 2014, a man attacked Anna Iriyama and Rina Kawaei of AKB48 and a staff member with a handsaw at a meet and greet, leading to increased security measures

FANS ARE OFTEN UNABLE TO RESPECT BOUNDARIES BETWEEN AN IDOL'S PUBLIC CHARACTER AND PRIVATE LIFE, BELIEVING THAT THEIR SUPPORT OF THE FORMER ENTITLES THEM TO THE LATTER.

The video generated instant controversy. International media picked up the story, and fan forums exploded into arguments over whether or not AKB48's management had overreacted to the incident. Many fans felt that Minegishi was at fault for violating her contract, vowing that they would no longer support her. However, she was reinstated as a full member of AKB48 later that year.

Demands on idols to appear "accessible" and "attainable" cultivate a sense of entitlement in fans that reinforces the use of chastity clauses despite the Tokyo District Court's 2016 judgment that such terms are unconstitutional. Men in fan forums (some of whom are significantly older than the objects of their devotion) frequently state that they would not support idols with whom they didn't think they had some "chance." The entertainment industry depends on the vast amounts of money these men spend on lottery tickets for meet and greets, multiple pressings of CDs, photo books, and other merchandise. While the idol contracts forbid them to date fans, these men nurse the hope that they can be the

at future events. In 2016, a fan-turned-stalker flew into a rage and attacked Mayu Tomita of the group Secret Girls after her agency returned a gift he had mailed to her. The multiple stab wounds she incurred left her with vision problems and difficulties speaking, bringing her career to a premature end.

Due to the manufactured nature of idols, their image of accessibility may do more harm than good. Fans are often unable to respect boundaries between an idol's public character and private life, believing that their support of the former entitles them to the latter. Idols are reduced from person to object, and attempts to assert their personhood frequently provoke intense backlash. The myth that an idol is universally beloved can only hold true as long as she can juggle chastity with an illusion of approachability—an impossible standard at best. **b**

CATHERINE KOMURO is an Asian American writer living and studying in Tokyo. Her former dreams of an idol career are now confined to the karaoke box.

Bitch List

The best of pop culture on the horizon, handpicked by Bitch staff



WHO FEARS DEATH

This year will see the HBO series based on Nnedi Okorafor's 2010 sci-fi fantasy novel *Who Fears Death*. The novel is a coming-of-age story set in a postapocalyptic Africa and follows Onyesowu, a young girl trying to understand her magical powers. She has to battle her sorcerer father to unite the land in which she lives. The show will be executive produced by George R.R. Martin (*Game of Thrones*) with Okorafor consulting. *Who Fears Death* was awarded the 2011 World Fantasy Award for Best Novel and the 2010 Carl Brandon Kindred Award "for an outstanding work of speculative fiction dealing with race and ethnicity." Read the book before the series premieres! —**DAHLIA GROSSMAN-HEINZE**,

SENIOR ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

DOGS WE SAW THIS WEEK: A PODCAST

Bitch HQ sits in a tiny space above a restaurant on Alberta Street in Portland, Oregon. My desk is right next to a window that overlooks a bustling corner of people walking their dogs and getting coffee. Every day, I make at least one major announcement about a cute dog either: crossing the street, losing its mind over meeting another dog, and/or taking its doggone time catching up to its human companion. Did I ever think that I'd stumble upon a podcast that meets me where I'm at with my dog observations? No. *Dogs We Saw This Week: A Podcast* is exactly what its title promises. I want to hear more about Rocco—in detail. You probably need to hear about Rocco and the random pop culture discussions peppered in between whether or not he is afraid of briefcases in general or briefcases when women are carrying them because he's sexist. And you probably also need to laugh.

—**KATE LESNIAK**, PUBLISHER



GRACE TALUSAN

Grace Talusan writes uncommon stories about family, displacement, identity, and all the unsayable things that come from being born in a country that is not your home and exploring the country you call home in which you do not always belong. Talusan's portfolio is a passport to improbable survival. She is the recent winner of the 2017 Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing for Nonfiction, and when a writer licenses herself to offer this kind of borderless exploration, the gift is to all who wander.

—**LISA FACTORA-BORCHERS**, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR



SHE FIGHTS FOUNDATION

"What if girls didn't question their strength?" This is the driving philosophy behind She Fights Foundation's Youth Boxing Program, which offers free boxing lessons to girls ages 14 to 19 from low-income neighborhoods in NYC. Not a teen? She Fights has also created Feminist Fight Club as a means to build community around women fighters, encouraging them to hit back against the sexism and misogyny that run rampant in the ring, to show up for one another, and to support women in combat sports looking to make it to a professional level. Contact sports changed everything for me when I discovered them in college. Now that my knee won't let me play rugby anymore, I'm thrilled to find an organization pushing women to be the strongest versions of themselves, whether it looks "cute" or not. —**SORAYA MEMBRENO**, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY

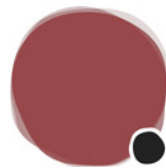
ELECTRIC ARCHES

Eve L. Ewing's debut poetry collection, *Electric Arches*, reads less like poetry and more like a dream or a trance. Published by Haymarket Books—a radical, independent, nonprofit book publisher in Chicago committed to “books that contribute to struggles for social and economic justice”—Ewing's poetry offers a rich portrait of liberated Black girlhood. Which is not to say that these poems live in a world without all the current struggles of systemic racism and misogyny, but rather that Ewing has bestowed upon us a vision of what it might look like to subvert it, to have power over it. Hers is a world where we have magic at our fingertips. Even if you don't think you're a “poetry person,” or better yet, especially if you don't think you are, this is a book to keep within arm's reach. **—SM**



PERIOD.ORG

Cofounder Nadya Okamoto got the idea for Period during her first two years of high school when her family was without a physical home. “I was constantly thinking about the balance and spectrum of privilege around me, and connecting with homeless women who were in much worse living situations than I was,” writes Okamoto, now a Harvard sophomore. “Hearing how periods were one of their biggest challenges pushed me to realize how strongly I believed menstrual hygiene was a right, and not a privilege.” Period's mission includes serving people who may not have access to menstrual products, educating high school and college students to destigmatize conversations about periods, and working as advocates for supportive public policy and law. Keep an eye out for their annual conference Period Con, and check out their website to learn about how to start a chapter or support their work. **—KRISTIN ROGERS BROWN, ART DIRECTOR**



HISTORY OF THEM

Are you loving the new *One Day at a Time*? Well, cocreator Gloria Calderon Kellett has another show up her sleeve! The upcoming semiautobiographical *History of Them* will be something like a mix of *How I Met Your Mother* (for which Kellett was a staff writer) and *One Day at a Time* as the series follows a multi-cultural relationship, narrated by the couple's future daughter. Can't wait to see what real-life gems Kellett mines to explore romantic relationships between Latinx and white folks. **—DGH**



IN THE SERVICE PODCAST

The restaurant industry has been accruing bad headlines for a while now, whether it's the wages that keep workers poor or white American girls traveling to foreign countries and stealing recipes. However, it's rare to hear about the industry from those within. That's where *In the Service* comes in: Cohosts Kath and Jan have 20 years of New York City restaurant experience between them, and their witty, sometimes laugh-out-loud funny podcast explores what it's really like to work in the industry, discussing everything from getting tips, encountering sexism, and navigating those Yelp reviews we all love to write when the service isn't up to par. Kath and Jan also interview other industry professionals, including chefs, restaurant owners, and those who keep the restaurant industry alive. If you want to know how restaurants survive and thrive, this is definitely the podcast for you. **—EVETTE DIONNE, SENIOR EDITOR**



CAN YOU SEE ME NOW?

The fragility of maternal transition

The process of becoming a mother, which anthropologists call “matrescence,” has been largely unexplored in the medical community. Instead of focusing on the woman’s identity transition, research is focused on how the baby turns out. But a woman’s story, in addition to how her psychology impacts her parenting, is important to examine, too. —ALEXANDRA SACKS, M.D.

WHAT NOT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU’RE EXPECTING

It starts the minute a woman announces that she’s pregnant. Her body becomes something that belongs to everyone but herself. People touch her belly without even asking. Strangers and friends alike monitor what she eats, drinks, does: “Are you walking enough? Are you walking too much? Maybe you shouldn’t be eating that? Eat this, not that. Drink this, not that. Your feet are swollen; you’re doing too much. You need to sit.” The pregnant woman is rarely asked what it is she needs, or how she really feels.

At 28, I found myself pregnant, in an abusive relationship, and unhappy in my corporate job. I didn’t have a close relationship with my mother and still don’t, so navigating pregnancy and my entry to motherhood was especially isolating. This was exacerbated when my pregnancy was diagnosed as high risk, and I was put on bed rest for six weeks after I nearly miscarried at two months. I later swelled up so badly that my feet looked like two pot roasts. When I talked about how miserable and uncomfortable I was and how I cried every day, my daughter’s father responded: “You’ll be fine. Women have been doing this for millennia.” I stopped complaining and suffered in silence.

Doula and midwife Carmen Mojica, whose work focuses on women of color, says:

There is very little attention given to the emotional and spiritual transformation and challenges that women experience in childbirth. Often, I find myself validating feelings that are everything but happy and joyful. Pregnant women are expected to be excited and happy throughout their whole pregnancies. I ask pregnant women how they are feeling, and many times, they aren’t happy. They are scared, uncomfortable, anxious, indifferent, and/or ambivalent about their pregnancies.

I heard the “pregnant woman in the field” story for the first time when I was pregnant. It goes something like: “During slavery, women working in the fields would just squat, push the baby out, tie the baby to their backs, and keep on working.” When I spoke to women about this, they shared similar stories, ones where the woman was Indigenous and she birthed while hugging a tree, or the field was a rice paddy. No matter the circumstance, the point of the story is to imply that birth is easy

by **VANESSA MÁRTIR**
illustrations by **HANNAH PERRY**

and that we should and can just jump back into our regular lives as soon as possible.

I was in labor for 26 hours. The contractions were unrelenting. When I was asked if I needed an epidural, my mother reminded me, “Your sister never needed that.” My aunt said, “Me neither.” I turned the meds down.

I had to be induced at hour 16 because I was stuck at three centimeters. Sensing what I was dealing with, my doctor whispered, “I shouldn’t be telling you this, but you’re having back labor, the worst labor. The pain will get worse once I give you the Pitocin. You are not weak for needing help, Vanessa.” That’s when I finally got the epidural. I had an emergency c-section 10 hours later.

The next day, the staples holding the wound shut snapped in two places. I was told that the wound would not be restapled; instead a visiting nurse would come to my home every day for four weeks to dress the wound, at a cost of \$30 per visit.

My mother came the first day to prepare a Honduran remedy to induce my production of breast milk. Then she was gone.

My daughter’s father went back to work days later. I don’t remember him ever asking for paternity leave, or whether it was even an option then. Saying we couldn’t afford it, he pushed me to end the nurse services after two weeks. The nurse cautioned against this, but still taught me how to dress the wound myself, which was excruciating. She didn’t look at my daughter’s father as she walked out.

GO IT ALONE, AND SMILE

“The culture in the United States, specifically, is not family friendly,” declares Mojica. “There is a lack of understanding about the trials and tribulations of motherhood, and a myth that women are tireless beings who are supposed to bounce back from pregnancy and childbirth intact and unchanged. This is most reflected in the shitty maternity leave that women get, if at all, and the lack of social structures for working mothers, as well as the fact that there is virtually no medical attention in the postpartum period, with the exception of a six-week visit in the majority of cases.”

In her essay “Writing the Wrongs of Identity,” Ghanaian American writer Meri Nana-Ama Danquah states,

In those lies black women are strong. Strong enough to work two jobs while single-handedly raising twice as many children. Black women can cook, they can clean, they can sew, they can type, they can sweep, they can

scrub, they can mop, they can pray... Black women are always doing. They are always servicing everyone’s needs, except their own. Their doing is what defines their being. And this is supposed to be wellness.”

The expectation to go it alone and not complain crosses racial and ethnic lines, even when mothers have some support in their transition to motherhood. This is especially the case for second-generation immigrant mothers and those whose parents are poor and have limited resources.

Toni, a 60-year-old who raised her 35-year-old daughter as a single mother, reflects:

As a Black woman, I think I was treated with the familiar stereotypes: that I would be super-woman, stoic, when I became a mother. Black women can’t be vulnerable or sick; we are invincible. And if we are sick or raped, we should shut up and suck it up, or we are not ‘real Black women.’

Lisa, a Chinese American mother to a 17-month-old, says:

I felt constantly exhausted and overwhelmed, and I really felt the lack of having my independent life or pursuits. And I didn’t feel that I could voice that to my parents or to my in-laws, because both my mom and my mother-in-law were at-home mothers but had more kids and fewer financial resources and less spousal help. I felt ungrateful if I complained about anything, incapable for not being able to do ‘better,’ pathetic for being so tired. And every time I tried to bring it up with my mom, she was dismissive. She would say things like, ‘You’re lucky your husband helps at all,’ or ‘We couldn’t afford takeout when you were little,’ or ‘You want a break?! But don’t you love your daughter?’

I was scheduled to return to work six weeks after the birth, but I was struggling. The c-section wound was still very painful, and I was having trouble weaning my daughter off breastfeeding. When I told my boss I needed more time, she said if I didn’t return when I was supposed to, she would let me go. And that’s exactly what she did.

These are the inflexible systems and perspectives that don’t allow for community, compassion, or empathy. My daughter’s father left me alone to care for our daughter and tend to a wound from a major surgery. My mother thought her duty ended after she helped feed my daughter. When people visited, it was to see the baby, and I had to smile and play the role of hostess despite the pain and exhaustion. And after all of that, my boss fired me.

YOU ARE NOT WEAK FOR NEEDING HELP

Pregnancy and childcare are not the entirety of parenting, but they are an undeniably enormous part of a mother’s well-being. A report released in May 2017 by PL+US: Paid Leave for the United States, a nonprofit that advocates for paid family leave, revealed that millions of Americans aren’t offered a single day off of work following the birth or adoption of a child, and one in four new mothers go back to work 10 days after childbirth. The PL+US report shows many companies are providing these benefits only to top-level employees, despite the report’s finding that “the people who most need paid family leave are the least likely to have it.”

Even when disability leave is offered, it is at 50 percent pay, which often isn’t enough considering daycare expenses when it’s over. The newly released Care Index revealed that in 33 states, the cost of infant care is higher than the cost of college tuition: \$9,585 vs. \$9,410 per year.

In the midst of these realities, government benefits for the poor such as welfare and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as “food stamps,” have been consistently cut over the past 20 years. The Trump administration has proposed more than \$190 billion in cuts to SNAP over the next 10 years by changing eligibility rules and increasing work requirements, despite reports that have debunked the stereotype that receiving assistance discourages working. According to a recent report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an increasing share of individuals who receive benefits through SNAP live in households where at least one person is working.

These programs are rooted in capitalist, patriarchal, and misogynist systems that seek to limit women’s options and resources, especially those of women of color, so as to control

them and “keep them in their place.” These systems do not protect us and do not allow space for us to heal or transition into our new roles.

Despite being disproportionately affected by poverty and the lack of access to childcare, mothers of color are often left out of conversations on women’s rights. While reproductive rights are essential, so is the ability to parent with dignity while meeting basic personal needs, which includes paid maternity and/or family leave. Studies have found that women who took longer than 12 weeks of maternity leave reported fewer depressive symptoms, a reduction in severe depression, and improvement in their overall mental health. But that isn’t the whole story of the transition into motherhood.

Mothers of color also need help that would allow them to have time away from children and childrearing to remember that we are more than our roles as mothers. We have to work on our own pursuits, to walk, to interact with our friends, to live. We need safe new-mom groups to connect with other new mothers and to discuss not only our child’s development, but also our own transition into parenthood. And when necessary, we need access to mental-health services.

grin-and-bear-it attitude that tells us that we just have to “do what you gotta do,” even if that means working multiple jobs and never using sick leave or taking a day off.

I come from a people that didn’t go to therapy. Mental health wasn’t a priority. It wasn’t something we talked about, though I can see now how my mother suffered (and still suffers) from various mental-health issues. I don’t blame her for not going to therapy or taking care of herself. She was parroting what she was taught in her homeland of Honduras, which was then reinforced in the Black and Latino communities she’s lived in since she arrived in the United States at age 15.

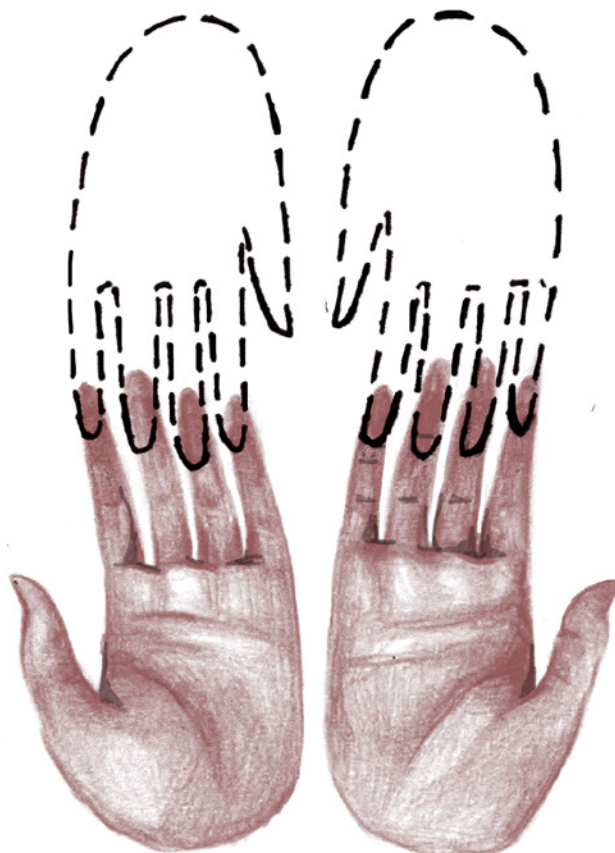
The stigma surrounding mental health is very much connected to familial silence. We’re taught to not discuss our family business, and doing so is often seen as a betrayal. When Trinidadian immigrant Cheryl sought therapy after her divorce in 1987, “for the emotional pain of my teen marriage, for the endless silence between my parents, and for the heartbreaking scars of migration, my mother cried, no bawled, like I had just told her I was going to kill myself. She had grown up with familial silence, and now she felt betrayed that her beloved daughter was going to spill long-held secrets. She accused me of not respecting the job

Pregnancy and childcare are not the entirety of parenting, **but they are an undeniably enormous part of a mother’s well-being.**

A safe new-mom group would be a space to discuss all aspects of motherhood, where being the only new mom of color in the room will not subject you to racism and microaggressions. Safe places to talk about the transition into motherhood should not erase the needs of parents who do not use the same language or parenting labels like “mother,” or who do not identify as a woman, or consider themselves straight or able-bodied, or come from a nuclear family. The parenting margins include queer and gender-nonconforming parents who also need open spaces to discuss their transitions into childrearing. Discussions on these transitions should bring people out, not push them further into the isolation that is a signature experience for many new parents. Many feel alone. It’s critical to remember that there are all kinds of ways to build family and that all of us need community and solidarity.

In her 2017 *New York Times* article “The Birth of a Mother,” Dr. Alexandra Sacks writes, “When people have more insight into their emotions, they can be more in control of their behaviors. So even when the focus remains on the child, understanding the psychology of pregnant and postpartum women can help promote healthier parenting. Mothers with greater awareness of their own psychology may be more empathetic to their children’s emotions.”

Women of color, especially those raised in poverty and second-generation immigrants, have been taught to adopt a



she had done as a good mother; she said I was ungrateful and always wanting more than she could give.”

According to the Seleni Institute, African American and Latina women have a higher risk of developing perinatal mood or anxiety disorders (PMAD) when compared to white women. There isn't enough research on why that is, but stress, particularly poverty and scarce resources, are proven contributors to the development of PMAD. If left untreated, intense stress can trigger mood and anxiety disorders that disrupt the overall health and functioning of mothers of color.

Erica, a married mother of three, shares that after suffering from postpartum depression (PPD) after her second child, she believes that PPD is connected to lack of support and resources:

My son was [born] premature, and my husband and mother couldn't get off work, so I was home with a 3-year-old and an infant. The worst moment was when I found myself standing in the hallway with the baby and the thought occurred to me that I didn't care if either one of us survived the night. The next week was the holidays, and my mother-in-law was coming. She saw me and took the baby, and Lauryn.... I wanted to die. I wanted to burn the house down with us in it, because there was a pain so terrible in me I couldn't even explain it. And then the pain was taken over by a nothingness, and emptiness.... The only thing that worked was my mother-in-law taking the children, cooking, cleaning the house, making me go to sleep, and making me eat—that saved me.

Providing access to mental-health services is critical, but we also must work to deconstruct cultural views that shame mothers seeking out mental-health services. It is not a sign of weakness to ask for help, and we need to push back against the notion that we're bad mothers when we seek improve our own emotional well-being.

YOU SHOULDA THOUGHT ABOUT THAT BEFORE YOU GOT PREGNANT

Many women feel like their dreams die when they become mothers. This doesn't happen to men in the same way. It's women who are told that babies come first and our needs come later. Taking care of ourselves is conflated with taking care of our children. Having dreams outside of motherhood doesn't make us bad mothers. If anything, by fulfilling our dreams we are showing our children that they too can pursue their own.

Connie, a Colombian mother of three, says that Latinx culture “looks down on mothers who aren't consumed by motherhood and marriage.” She says:

To seek joy elsewhere is selfish and ungrateful. I also lacked role models in my family and community that did not see children and marriage as a completion of their life. I love my family, and my partner; however, I have other passions that fill me: My teaching career, while exhausting and demanding, gives me a sense of accomplishment. Exercise, and, of course, writing. I'm learning to not apologize for the latter.

So what can we do? How can we support mothers during the transformation and transition into motherhood and beyond? We can start by dismantling the idea that the sole or primary purpose of women is to become mothers. This isn't just about gaining autonomy, but means understanding that these limiting and gendered ideas offer additional fuel to those who oppose paid parental leave and subsidized childcare.

The truth is that getting fired from that corporate job was a blessing in many ways, though it threw me into a tailspin. But in that tailspin, I started writing my first book. Once while I was writing, my daughter's father—who was jealous of anything that didn't involve him—told me, “You think you're gonna be a writer? You ain't gonna be shit.” After that, my journey became two-pronged: leaving him and finishing the book. I had been miserable in corporate America and knew I couldn't go back. I wanted to finally own my identity as a writer and pursue it as a career. Along the way, I found teaching as another calling. In 2010, after three years of working as an editor and teaching on the weekends, I quit my job to pursue writing and teaching full time.

I am living my dreams, fulfilled by my work, and I am a better and more present mom because of it. Still, it was lonely being a single mom, and I felt largely unsupported and uncared for, suffering from bouts of depression and living in poverty for some time. Like I had been taught, I

grinned and bore it, but am now dismantling that so I can be more whole for myself, my daughter, and my partner. This essay is part of that journey.

During the process of interviewing 20 women of color for this piece, I learned that the majority felt as I did when I first transitioned into motherhood: lost and utterly alone. The interviewees often said, “No one ever asked me these questions.” I realized I wasn't asked these questions either, and we have to tell our stories so the false ideas of motherhood end with us.

“Decolonizing motherhood is a process of shedding behaviors and beliefs about birth, the body, and the female body in particular,” says Mojica. “I think it involves unlearning the belief that raising a child is a solitary event and returning to practices that are community based. Other countries still observe the cuarentena, or the 40 days after birth; that would be one starting point that as a culture we can provide better support. To decolonize motherhood would involve decolonizing the idea of family from nuclear to extended and chosen family. We would have to unlearn that family life occurs in isolation and begin to push back against capitalism and patriarchy.”

To decolonize motherhood, I have to start with me, in my home, with my family. So for my daughter's 13th birthday, I planned a brunch celebrating both her entry into womanhood and me, who mothered so differently and broke a cycle so that my daughter won't have to flee like I did at age 13 and make her way in the world alone. I invited 25 strong and inspiring women of color to remind us how right Maya Angelou was when she wrote:

*Now if you listen closely
I'll tell you what I know
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is gonna blow
The race of man is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
'Cause nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone. **b***

VANESSA MÁRTIR is a New York City-based writer, educator, and mama. She is currently completing her memoir, *A Dim Capacity for Wings*, and chronicles the journey at vanessamartir.blog. Vanessa is the founder of the #52essays2017 challenge, and created the Writing Our Lives Workshop.

This feature was originally published online as part of our 2017 series on Fragility. Visit bitchmedia.org to read about gaming, childhood silence, and more.



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UNDIVIDED STATE

A conversation on feminism and spirituality

HOSTED BY LISA FACTORA-BORCHERS | PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Among all the falsehoods constructed about feminism, one of the most persistent is the notion that it does not mix with spirituality. This is largely due to the patriarchal interpretations and practices of world religions. So Bitch asked some of our favorite thinkers, activists, and scholars—writer and faith organizer Zaynab Shahar, author and Temple University assistant professor Nyasha Junior, author Alexis Pauline Gumbs, editor Krista Riley, and author and rabbi Danya Ruttenberg—to discuss their experiences. We learned that not only do feminism and spirituality overlap, but for many, there is no separation between the two.

Let's start with foundations: How would you describe your spiritual practice and identity?



NYASHA JUNIOR: I was raised as a Christian. I am a fourth-generation member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. My beliefs and practices have changed over time, but I still identify as Christian. I don't separate my spiritual practice from other life-affirming practices that sustain me. Such practices could include brunch, Ashtanga yoga, or dance parties with a friend's toddler.



KRISTA RILEY: I became Muslim about 10 years ago through a mix of exposure to classical Arabic and the richness of the Qu'ran's language, as well as to close Muslim friends in my life who have embodied a critical engagement with religious principles and a strength derived from their faith. Although some of my religious ideas and practices have shifted over time, Islam continues to help me stay grounded and connected. Along with my personal daily religious practice, I also coordinate a small gender-equal and queer-affirming Muslim circle in Montreal.



ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS: Black feminism is my primary spiritual practice, and it is informed by many other spiritual traditions. My practice of Black feminism comes from a deep place of faith and incorporates breathing, meditation, movement, many forms of prayer and ritual, and ancestor reverence. The container for the ceremonies I facilitate is called Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind.



ZAYNAB SHAHAR: From an early age my mother stressed that I had the freedom of religion, the freedom to choose my religious beliefs, but anything I chose had to be accompanied by deep study and critical inquiry. I couldn't just become a passive believer or a sheep. Inquiry and study were the closest thing I came to spiritual practices growing up. I grew up reading adult books about different religions, primarily Judaism, Buddhism, and witchcraft. I encountered a very watered-down Sufism in books about witchcraft and neopagan mysticism as a teenager. In 2012, I made the decision to convert to Islam. I flew to Washington, D.C., with my mother and took shahadah with Imam Daayiee Abdullah, who is the only openly Black gay male imam in the United States. Three years later I became a dervish under the late Sheikh Ibrahim Farajajé. Ibrahim Baba affirmed in me that there is a way to inhabit Muslim identity that is nondualist and polydoxical, and encouraged his dervishes to embrace organic multireligiosity as a means of embodying Chishti Sufi conceptions of oneness. It's through him that I eventually became more comfortable with understanding myself as nondualist, polydox, and able to inhabit multiple spiritual locations at the same time.



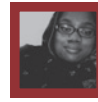
DANYA RUTTENBERG: I'm an observant Jew. I keep Shabbat (the sabbath) and Jewish dietary laws, celebrate holidays, and pray in pretty traditional ways, all that stuff. I grew up with a pretty standard assimilated American Jewish experience: synagogue twice a year, lackluster religious education. And it wasn't until late college and the years after that I discovered that my tradition was actually an exquisite treasure trove of wisdom, a path into the present moment, a relationship with the divine, and a guide to how to be of service in the world.

How would you describe the relationship between feminism and your spiritual, religious, or faith identity?

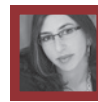


NJ: I don't identify as feminist. I don't find it to be a useful label. I draw strength from the Black women who served in formal and informal leadership positions in our church and in the wider community. They did not identify themselves as Black feminists or womanists although their commitments and activism could be thought of as reflecting feminist and womanist values.

as representations of key energetic forces in the universe in a manner similar to the way Yoruba practitioners understand the Orisha. That means that my practice is also very grounded in nature, which is also in alignment with the practices of Black feminists, who have historically advocated for the planet without being called "environmentalists."



ZS: I consider myself an embodiment of the crossroads between anarchism and Black feminism. White Western anarchism is known for its tagline "no gods, no masters" as a rejection of the long-standing marriage between religion and politics that had a vise grip on so much of European history, which is understandable. However, coming into myself as a Black anarchist has meant understanding that for so many Black folks throughout history, faith was instrumental in smashing the system. I think of the practices of enslaved African Muslims, such as the Maroons, who would go into spiritual seclusion to pray, meditate, and seek guidance from God in how they were going to liberate themselves from slavery. Piggybacking off of what Alexis said, I think about the poetry of Black feminist writers such as Lucille Clifton, Audre Lorde, and so many others who are playing with imagery and symbolism from a wide spectrum of religions. What's even more beautiful is the inherent interspirituality of how that interplay manifests when an anthology of their work comes together in order to construct this multilayered Black feminist cosmology of liberation. So much of how I dream of smashing the state, how I engage in the process of otherworld building, has a lot to do with Black feminist foremothers whose poetry and writing let me know that the personal is political, and spirituality is so much of what is going to see you through to the other side.



DR: I was a feminist long before I got interested in Judaism, so there was no question for me that every and any engagement I had with my tradition would be predicated on the fact of my personhood. I pray in communities that consider the full participation and leadership of people of all genders and sexualities to be nonnegotiable; I am ordained clergy; my theology is informed by, and builds upon, the great work of the feminist thinkers and leaders who have been working over the past 40 years. There are plenty of places where Judaism has either not been fantastic about the status of women,

"I don't separate my spiritual practice from other life-affirming practices that sustain me. Such practices could include brunch, Ashtanga yoga, or dance parties with a friend's toddler."

—Nyasha Junior



APG: All of this is one because Black feminism is my spiritual practice. I identify as a Black feminist because the ancestors who inspired me to engage this practice identified as Black feminists (Audre Lorde, June Jordan, etc.).

When I say, "I am a Black feminist," I am saying a prayer that includes and cites them. I am quoting them with my life. The ancestor reverence that I practice is informed by New World Ifa/Yoruba practices and exists alongside the Ifa/Yoruba practices that we hold sacred in our household. I also see Black feminist historical figures and writers

or has missed a memo; we can embrace what is, overall, a powerful framework for holiness while also doing the work of healing, rebuking, and growing our tradition within the textual conversation and the community today. For me, it's also about building into the empty spaces as well. For example, my most recent book, *Nurture the Wow*, looks at the way traditional spiritual practices can transform some of the hard, crazy-making moments of parenting—but also at how *parents* can transform some of our understanding of things like God, prayer, and spirituality. The people who wrote the books and designed the religious frameworks

were not the same as those who engaged in the labor of childcare for most of history, so there are entire complex facets of human experience that are missing from our conversations about what holiness even is and how one might get there. So that's really about building a bridge on which traffic flows in both directions.



KR: My feminism and religious identity enhance each other. My feminist analysis pushes me to ask questions of religious texts and religious communities: Whose perspectives have dominated in the interpretations of religious ideas?

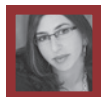
Who is being left out? This practice of looking religious texts in the eye and wrestling with them, rather than glossing over the uncomfortable parts, allows me to feel like I can claim my religious place with honesty and integrity. On the flip side, my religious practices help me connect to sources of strength and hope when it comes to engaging in feminist and antiracist work. When this work is done in community with others, it also becomes a source of joy and mutual inspiration.

If you identify with or come from a religion with patriarchal roots, how do you sustain yourself?



NJ: I think that this question reflects a similar perspective as those who find feminism and religion to be incompatible. In my experience, women within faith communities are not thinking about “patriarchal roots.”

They are living, loving, and serving in many different ways within their communities.



DR: Judaism definitely has patriarchal roots, but it's also a deep and powerful path to connection with the divine and community. I try to allow myself to be not only nourished by, but also challenged by my tradition. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote, “Prayer is meaningless unless it is subversive, unless it seeks to overthrow and to ruin pyramids of callousness, hatred, opportunism, falsehoods. The liturgical movement must become a revolutionary movement, seeking to overthrow the forces that continue to destroy the promise, the hope, the vision.”

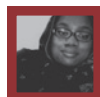
Parenting is also a key spiritual practice for me—one of the most challenging ones, for sure, but probably the one that's transforming me most powerfully.



APG: Obviously Black feminism does not have “roots” in patriarchy, except that it is a response to racist heteropatriarchy. But of course sometimes that's the problem. In seeking to respond we may take on the values of those forms of

oppression in an inverse and pervasive way. I know for myself the forms of oppression that Black feminism seeks to evolve us all out of are deeply internalized and cause self-judgment, divisions from potential comrades, and behaviors that show that a part of me still has more faith in institutional power than in the people. I sustain myself by simply deepening my practice of Black feminism. The Combahee River Collective Statement teaches us that “Black women are inherently valuable.” And Black feminism is the practice of believing and acting on that, even when it is pure faith/evidence of things unseen in my daily life and in our current society. So specifically, I chant quotes from the ancestors who inform my Black feminist practice. I make intentional spaces to share food and poetry with other Black women and other people whose lives are

informed by Black feminist possibility. I read the sacred texts created in the past and being created now by Black feminists. I exercise devotion.



ZS: I think the notion of “roots in patriarchy” is an awkward misnomer. Is something rooted in patriarchy or dominated by it? What does it mean for a religion to be “rooted” in anything? Western atheism is rooted in

white-supremacist patriarchy, except nobody would describe it as that even though its principal actors are white men who make their money saying epically foul shit about...well, everyone else who isn't one of them. Subsequently, I can't think of a religion, faith, or mode of spirituality that isn't somehow connected to or a response to patriarchy. I think patriarchy is one of the roots of many religions, but I don't think it's the soil itself.

I meditate, tend to my altars, go into spiritual seclusion when called, water my plants, observe the cycles of the moon, and study. I study the work of Black feminists, abolitionists, political prisoners, poets, sci-fi/fantasy writers, fiction writers, etc. I study the writing of Sufis, Buddhists, witches, healers, empaths, folks in the realm of African traditional religion. In the fall and winter, I spend my evenings sitting on the shoreline of Lake Michigan watching the moon rise and praying.



KR: While there have always been patriarchal structures that dominate, and as Zaynab points out, this isn't limited to religious communities, there has also always been resistance. Even stories from the earliest days of Islam have

women not only questioning the Prophet's decisions, but also questioning the language of the Qu'ran. There is patriarchy in my religious traditions, and I don't dispute that, nor do I think it's unique to religions. I just don't believe it's the only thing that's there. God and Islam (or any religion) have to be bigger than humans can imagine them to be. That's the whole point of a belief in the divine or the transcendent. And in that case, I just keep reminding myself that I'm not really accountable to other humans for how I interpret these things. If I'm hurting someone in any way, then of course I'm accountable, but I don't owe it to anybody to align my beliefs or practices with theirs just because that's what they think Muslims are supposed to do.

What feeds the resistance to multiplicity or duality? Why do people struggle to comprehend multiple identities?



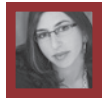
NJ: Many people assume that religion is generally oppressive to women, and they question how it could be useful to women who identify as feminists. In many instances, these questions are from people who are outside of those communities and/or who do not understand feminism.



KR: I agree with Nyasha that the assumption tends to be that religion as a whole is oppressive to women. That narrative plays a huge role in how mainstream feminist histories are told and in the panic that some people express

at the idea of women choosing to be religious. People can't imagine that being the case without some deep level of brainwashing or false consciousness. That said, religions aren't all responded to on an equal level. Ironically, various Catholic symbols that remain throughout

Quebec (street names, crosses, etc.) are now seen as unproblematic “cultural” symbols, while women who wear hijab are portrayed as being in need of saving, which echoes a bunch of colonialist myths.



DR: One of the books that’s been most influential during my spiritual formation was Carol Lee Flinders’s *At the Root of This Longing*. She identified what she described as the four major tenets of spiritual practice—be silent, quell the ego, shed desire, and stay enclosed in the kind of space where you can do deep inner work—and observed that all of these would only be liberatory practices if one started with these privileges in the first place—male privilege, in a nutshell. Feminists have focused on having a voice, knowing oneself, embracing the body, and taking back the public sphere (and the night) precisely because they didn’t come to them freely. The “just add women and stir” method doesn’t work in a lot of ways; Flinders’s lens has helped me engage a lot of the underlying presumptions in my tradition in ways I wouldn’t have seen, and to try to think about what a path forward into wholeness can mean in the context of Judaism.



APG: I don’t think that Black feminism as a spiritual practice or in communion with any spiritual practice is contradictory at all, since Black feminism is based on the resilience and power of generations of people who acted based on profound faith in dire circumstances and who may have had a variety of named or unnamed faith practices. My relationship to Black feminism is expansive, and my evaluation of Black feminism is that it is obviously expansive because it has already contained and embraced multitudes. Which means that, this question is about constriction, and there are definitely dominant practices and thought patterns that attempt to constrict people and movements by saying you have to be this or that. When usually it’s this *and* that. I don’t think that type of constrictive thinking is useful for the world that Black feminism or

one form of collapsing identity replaces another. These modes of dominance have infected so many Indigenous and ancient ways of knowing ourselves in multiplicities and multitudes. So it’s not surprising to me that white Western thought, particularly white Western feminism, frames the integration of more than two identities as “unholy collision.”

What is the greatest misconception about your feminism and/or faith identity?



NJ: People make assumptions about my faith because I am a Black woman. There is a stereotype of Black people as super-religious. Likewise, people assume that I identify as Black feminist or womanist because I am a Black woman.



APG: Sometimes people assume that because I take a love-based approach, I am not angry and not critical of existing systems and practice. Actually, love-based Black feminism, grounded in a love for Black women that radiates out into our whole communities and includes the entire planet, inspires me to be very angry sometimes and to sharpen my critique in the service of necessary change.



ZS: People make a lot of assumptions about my spiritual worldview as a queer Muslim. So much of the queer Muslim narrative has been crafted to appease heterosexual Muslims on the nature of our inclusion in mainstream Muslims spaces thoroughly entrenched in oppression. “We believe in the same things you do, we’re just queer!” Queerness in this sense is subtly posed as a defect, and so much of the existing narrative of de/humanization buys into it to make a point. “If you could just look past our sexuality or gender identity and see that we’re the same as you, all would be good in the ummah!” Actually, I don’t believe in the same things you do. I believe my queerness is the exact thing that enables me to see the divine

“When I say ‘I am a Black feminist,’ I am saying a prayer that includes and cites them. I am quoting them with my life.”

—Alexis Pauline Gumbs

really any progressive movement demands. However, it is very useful in limiting people’s behaviors to actions that reproduce the status quo.



ZS: I think the inability to conceptualize multiplicity reveals a lot about white supremacy, particularly white subjectivity as it leaks into white feminist thought. White people have never had to think of themselves in the language of multiplicity. Occupying the position of dominance makes it so that everyone else has to exist in multiplicities as they are trying to figure out where they land on the hierarchy of white supremacy, but the dominant don’t have to do that grunt work.

Europeans thought they were “escaping religion” when they came up with enlightenment and the notion that intelligence, particularly political intelligence, means relying on “objective reason” and shucking religion from the equation. Instead they only reified the singular standpoint, and

differently, to see how spirituality can work differently, to explode and expand boundaries, upend definitions. My queerness doesn’t mean I want to assimilate into what is, it means I want to violently smash what should have never become. I don’t “do” queer Muslim organizing to assimilate into the land of happy heteros, I do it to get free.



KR: One of the most uncomfortable, and just plain offensive, perceptions about me is because I’m white and don’t wear a headscarf, I’m somehow a more palatable kind of Muslim, presumably less Muslim and less threatening than if I were a woman of color. There’s a sense that any kind of critical perspectives or progressive ideas I hold are because of my whiteness, as if white Muslims are uniquely enlightened, and by extension equipped to “civilize” Muslims who aren’t white. Never mind that most of the strongest feminist teachers and mentors in my life have been women of

color, and that some of the most misogynist Muslims (and non-Muslims) I've met have been white. And that Muslims are just as complex and diverse as any other group of people.

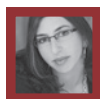
What gifts come with your spiritual practice? How does it transform you?



NJ: As a biblical scholar, it is difficult for me to sit through most church services. The choir may be great, but sometimes, there is an abundance of bad theology. For me, the gift is the gathering of the community. The beautiful hats, the juicy hugs, and the butterscotch candy make it worthwhile. Being in Black sacred spaces is healing. These are spaces where I belong and where I see people who look like me and who love me.



APG: Oh my goodness, *everything!* Everything I have can be traced to this love practice called Black feminism. My relationships with other Black women and women of color are sourced by it. My relationship with other Black folks, other queer folks, plants, animals, the river, everything. Most importantly, this practice—which is, like Krista said, both a daily individual practice and a regular communal practice—has given me permission and tangible faith in loving myself, which is what the intersecting oppressions that sustain capitalism try to steal from me every day. I cannot imagine my life without this love. As June Jordan says, “Love is lifeforce!”

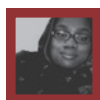


DR: Little by little, it has grown me into someone who is more open, more compassionate, more empathetic, more sensitive to injustice, braver, more in tune with my intuition, more in touch with the flow and stream of all life. It makes it harder and harder for me to sidle past the junctures in my life where my values aren't being lived out as they should be. It helps me to see the divine and the sacred in every person and every thing—and to understand my obligations to the greater whole. It has embedded me in amazing community, and sacred texts such as the Torah and Talmud seem to always reveal new insights and understandings, no matter how many times I've seen something. One of our foundational texts (the Mishnah) says of Torah, “Turn it, and turn it, for everything is in it. Reflect on it and grow old and gray with it. Don't turn from it, for nothing is better than it.”



KR: Like Alexis, I'll come back to the elements of both personal practice and community. I generally pray five times a day, and while I can't pretend that every single one of those prayers is carried out with full attention and focus, even the act of regularly stopping what I'm doing to take time out to pray is an important reminder to put my life into perspective and to take a step back from whatever I'm caught up in. The physical acts of washing before prayer and then moving through the positions of the ritual prayer remind me to pay attention to my body, and because the prayer times are set according to the position of the sun in the sky, it helps me pay attention to the world outside. And it's a time to ask for guidance and to reorient myself.

I also have an incredible online community that has developed through shared religious and feminist beliefs, and this community has gifted me with some of my closest friends and sources of ongoing inspiration.



ZS: I think the gift of being a seeker is the crux of my practice. I first encountered the notion of being a seeker when reading about witchcraft as a teenager, particularly Wicca. In Wicca, a seeker is the first stage before becoming an initiate. I felt drawn to the title of seeker because it describes my outlook on life: a person interested in acquiring spiritual knowledge absent of any desire to assume official titles of religious authority. Even in becoming a Muslim and a Sufi dervish I've never really left that stage of being a seeker that I encountered as a teenager. I'm still a seeker of knowledge, of the divine in odd and interesting places, in the unexpected, in the dark as well as the light and everything in between. My gift is my curiosity, my belief in the inherent abundance of spiritual knowledge, and the endless possibilities in communing with the divine and with others. **b**

Thank you to all the participants in this roundtable for sharing their experiences.

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WE ARE NOT YOURS

BLACK WOMEN ARE SUPREME
BUT NOT SUPERHUMAN

[PLAYING WITH GOD]

In her 1976 choreopoem *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*, Ntozake Shange wrote, “I found God in myself, and I loved her. I loved her fiercely.” Shange likens God to an entity akin to herself—not necessarily a woman, but a feminine presence—from whom she wishes for “not a laying on of bosom and womb, [but] a laying on of hands, the holiness of myself released.” Her words offer a spiritual alternative, a God that lives within her.

It is an audacious assertion that complements the political and artistic reclamation that Shange is known for; her plays and poems constantly reimagined the relationship between Blackness, womanhood, spirituality, and language. Through her decidedly Black feminist work, she brought attention to those who Sudanese poet Safia Elhillo would refer to as “us who falls into the gap we leave in the world.” Her chosen name, Ntozake, translates to “she who has her own things” in the South African language Xhosa, a nod to the “somethin’ promised...somethin’ free” she had been missing.

Decades after Shange’s poem, the image of a Black female God has become a cultural fixation. In 2015, Dylan Chenfeld, a self-described agnostic Jew, began selling “I Met God, She’s Black” t-shirts online. The shirts inspired praise and backlash, enjoying widespread social-media virality, celebrity shout-outs, and “a massive sales and press spike” because they questioned the culturally ingrained acceptance of God as a white man. When interviewed by the *Huffington Post* about his controversial shirt, Chenfeld said that he “like[d] poking fun at sacred cows” by “taking the idea that God is a white male and doing the opposite of that, which is a Black woman.” Though his motivation was partly monetary and antagonistic, he, like many Black theologians and feminists, was investigating the discomfort people feel when they are forced to question their preconceptions about God.

BY JORDAN MCDONALD | ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADEE ROBERSON

It's a phenomenon that's embedded in white supremacy and patriarchy: an insistence on expanding privilege to the realm of divinity. Within this context, the suggestion of a Black female God becomes a radical push against what Black theologian William R. Jones called "divine racism" in *Is God a White Racist?* "Divine racism" asserts that God is an active participant in the maintenance of racial inequality and further implies that God is the "founding father" of a society's racially superior group. Similarly, the cultural inflexibility toward the supposed gender presentation of God could be a divine sexism of sorts. Embedded in Western culture, this phenomenon manifests itself in the depictions of God, Adam, and Jesus as white and male in mass media and religious spaces. Our cultural investment in this understanding of God speaks volumes about our refusal to disavow both patriarchy and white supremacy. In their own way, Chenfeld's shirts attempt to address this very issue. He used fashion to challenge and disrupt social mores, but the young entrepreneur's most contentious question—"Why can't God be a Black woman?"—remains largely unanswered.

Grappling with this question and others, Beyoncé released *Lemonade*, an intimate but unapologetic meditation on the relationship between Black womanhood and American society. The 2016 album depicts the unique social conditions Black women endure: state violence, emotional and physical abuse, and relationships absent of true reciprocity. Buried under these issues, many Black women are taught to find respite in God, to bare their souls to the one who will always listen. And despite making up the primary demographic in Christian, Baptist, and Pentecostal churches in the United States, faithful Black women find themselves having to fight for full support and recognition from the spaces and communities to which they belong and offer themselves. They must negotiate the lack of Black female representation in church leadership positions and the continued depiction of God as an entity opposite to Black femininity, all while attempting to build a spiritual relationship with God. Effectively, both divinity and ministry are made inaccessible to those on the margins.

On "Don't Hurt Yourself," Beyoncé reckons with her frustrations and firmly plants herself in righteous anger and the pains of unrequited loyalty. Taking to her chosen pulpit, she orders us to "love God herself." Her words are more cautionary than suggestion: "Love God herself" is the album's call for reverence, and "Don't Hurt Yourself" is a warning to all those—her husband

included—who take Black women for granted. In the video for "Don't Hurt Yourself," the words "God is God and I am not" are emblazoned on a wall behind Beyoncé. With these words, Beyoncé, a Black woman who has been deified in popular culture, makes a clear distinction between herself and God. Beyoncé is constantly engaged as superior or superhuman: She's affectionately referred to as "Beysus"; has been bestowed with the title of king or queen; and is fervently praised for her awe-inspiring talent and constant artistic evolution. It's a framing that she reclaims through self-celebratory moments such as her maternity shoots and then sheds when she reflects on her vulnerability.

Lemonade is a glimpse into her healing process after her trust is broken and systemic violence takes more Black lives, but it's also her rejection of being a deity. She purposefully places herself among other Black women and weaves her story into the tapestry of Black womanhood in order to remind the world of her humanity. Beyoncé demands the emotional freedoms and respect often denied to Black women. Her continued intertwining of Black womanhood and godliness through the context of motherhood and feminine rage offers a womanist take on the matter of God. *Lemonade*'s journey from intuition to redemption is a guide for healing after personal and societal tragedy. The album asserts God's distinct connection to the inner workings of Black women's lives, and doubles as a formal rejection of the pedestal Beyoncé has been offered.

[IN HER IMAGE]

In the *New York Times*' bestselling novel *The Shack*, protagonist Mack Phillips embarks on a journey to heal from the grief of losing his daughter and the memory of an abusive father. Phillips turns to God, who manifests as a Black woman. In the film adaptation, God is played by Octavia Spencer, a decision that received intense backlash. California pastor Joe Schimmel described the casting as "pretentious" and said the film's depiction of God as a "heavyset, cushy, nonjudgmental, African American woman" and the Holy Spirit (Sumire Matsubara) as a "frail Asian woman with the Hindu name Sarayu" promoted a "dangerous and false image of God." Schimmel deemed their casting a blasphemous example of what he refers to as "Hollywood's war on God."

Our (preferential) depictions of a God often say much more about us than they do about God. If Schimmel were a true essentialist who believed in the most accurate depictions of "the one true God revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ," he would have to then also take issue with the characterizations of Jesus as a white man since he is described in the Bible as a man born in the Middle East to a Jewish mother. Schimmel only has a problem when the distortion of Jesus's image is made into anyone who isn't a white man. His issue with the casting is a product of personal discomfort and centuries of white-supremacist and patriarchal renderings of both God and Jesus. Unwilling to let go of his white male deity, the reimagining of God as anything other is received as a kind of blasphemy. Instead of a "war on God," he's fighting to preserve his own position in society and therefore upholding a history in which God, too, is a weapon to wield.

On May 5, 2017, Afro-Cuban artist Harmonia Rosales posted her painting "Creation of God," which reimagined Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam," on Instagram, through which she revealed once more the power in depicting God as anything other than white male. The painting went viral, and was ultimately placed in the Simard Bilodeau Contemporary art gallery in Los Angeles. In Rosales's rendition of the Renaissance painting, Black women are cast as both Adam and God. Just as in Michelangelo's original painting, Rosales's Black female Adam and God are bridged together by their nearly touching fingertips, as close as they can be without grazing the other, but this time it feels different. By portraying Adam as neither white nor male, the question is not simply about the racialization and gendering of God, but of humanity as well. The continued depiction of Adam—a biblical figure understood as the original human—as a white man reinforces white-supremacist and patriarchal ideas about what it means to be a person. It is a reminder of our supposed distance from holiness and humanity, and an affirmation of white men's social positioning and implied proximity to God. For this reason, Rosales's race and gender bending of both God and Adam was a welcome subversion for those of us who are often

excluded from the narrative of full personhood and godliness. “Creation of God” is a radical reminder of the ways in which both divinity and humanity have been tainted in the interest of maintaining power.

According to Christian tradition, the biblical figure whose story best reveals this human problem is Jesus. Jesus is considered the human embodiment of God, and is frequently depicted as a white man despite his geographic origins in the Middle East. Even though Jesus is not in Rosales’s painting, by portraying God as a Black woman, it implies that Jesus, known in Christian tradition as the son of God, would also be born of a Black woman. In this sense, the suggestion of a Black female deity disrupts our adherence to whitewashed and heavily gendered religious iconography. Casting a Black woman as the creator places all that She would bring about into question. Made in Her image, the blueprint for the divine and the human would have to be reimagined.

The characterization of Black women as God or godlike is often rooted in Black women’s supposed similarity to Jesus because, in many ways, our cultural relationship to Black women in the United States is akin to that with Jesus, a man sent to Earth to bridge the gap between humankind and their creator. Jesus spent his life serving the very people who would later forsake him. He is a symbol of great sacrifice and endurance—after all, Jesus is said to have resurrected after his own crucifixion. Jesus endured pain, betrayal, and a brutal death during his time on Earth. In an interview with the *Paris Review*, author Claudia Rankine stated, “Black women are nothing if not pragmatic, because their whole existence in this country has been about negotiating a life without the fantasy of external support.” As of 2013, the Center for American Progress reported that African American women are more likely to be their families’ sole providers; experience higher rates of unemployment, incarceration, low wages, and domestic violence; and are drastically

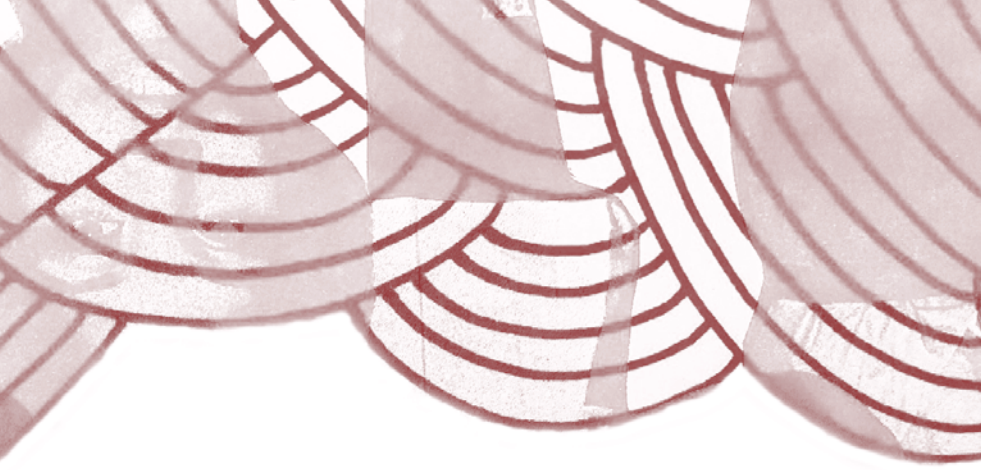


The suggestion of a Black female deity disrupts our adherence to whitewashed and heavily gendered religious iconography.

underrepresented in all levels of government. Black women must survive despite these obstacles, sacrificing ourselves because our communities depend upon it.

Like Black women, Jesus was forced to negotiate a life in which his companions and community consistently doubted and failed him. In *Sister Outsider*, Audre Lorde explains that “[Black women] have cared for whites because we had to for pay or survival; we have cared for our children and our fathers and our brothers and our lovers” and that “our scarred, broken, battered, and dead daughters and sisters are a mute testament to that reality.” Lorde’s indictment of this phenomenon draws a parallel between Black women’s suffering and the crucifixion of Jesus, a figure whose pain is diminished by his resurrection. Our continued resilience in the face of adversity is the reason





society paints Black women as symbols of saviorhood and principled righteousness, a coded expectation of godliness placed upon us in exchange for sacrifice.

When global grassroots movements such as Black Lives Matter are founded by queer Black women and a Black woman is shown on national television taking down a Confederate flag while the rest of the country is still discussing its meaning, it is no wonder we're regarded as a distinct or even a divine presence in the often indistinguishable mess of the world. As our visibility grows, the efforts, experiences, and cultural contributions of Black women have become harder to ignore. But there is a cost to reverence and that reverence also must be analyzed.

[CALLING OUT TO GOD]

In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, catchphrases such as “Black women will save us” and “You should have listened to Black women” were born of yet another inequitable exchange between Black women and the rest of the United States. According to Edison's election poll data, 95 percent of Black women voted against Donald Trump, a percentage higher than that of any other gender-race category. Suddenly, everyone wanted to understand the staggering political differences between Black women and white women, the latter of whom—53 percent to be exact—voted for Trump.

“Black women will save us” became a progressive mantra that sought to highlight Black women's continued fight against oppressive systems. The sentiment grew legs when media began entertaining the possibility of a Michelle Obama presidency. “Michelle 2020” became the light at the end of the tunnel, the former first lady cast as

In the end, the projection of superhumanity onto a marginalized person becomes another form of dehumanization.

America's savior, despite her continued rejection of the informal nomination. Her grace in the face of great scrutiny during her husband's presidency was a campaign of its own in the eyes of the people, a nod to her ability to rise above and endure. Forced to reclaim her image from both admirers and enemies, Michelle repeatedly expressed a disinterest in taking on the burdens of such a life once more. Even as a card-carrying member of the former first lady's fan club, I was disheartened by the relentless nature of the nation's request. She refused and yet her emphatic “no” went unheard.

Statements like “Black women will save us” leave a bitter aftertaste because these expressions forget Black women's social vulnerability. There is little consideration for

the obstacles Black women face to survive and save ourselves in an oppressive society. In the end, the projection of superhumanity onto a marginalized person becomes another form of dehumanization. In the process of being exalted, the superhuman is othered rather than protected or supported. Black women are asked to save people and political systems that do not center or consider us. My question in response to these requests is, “Who will rescue the saviors?”

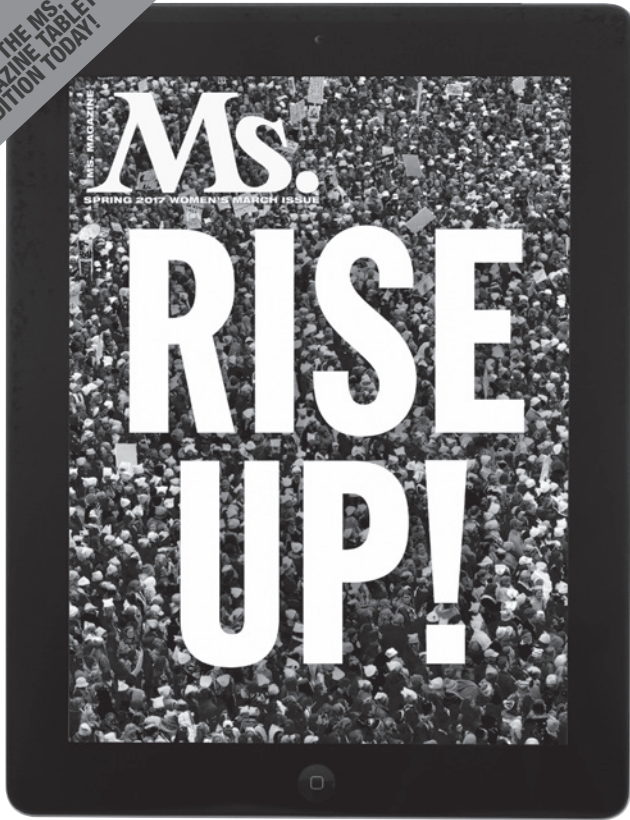
“Black women will save us” fails to hold all those who aren't Black women accountable for themselves, their actions, and their impact. Stripped of our humanity and agency, the refrain does not ask that Black women save, but expects it of us, as if we each were God herself. It is a disturbing testament to the world's continued failure to love us properly.

Actor and comedian Jessica Williams put it best in 2015 when responding to fans who were pushing her to “lean in” and become the host of the *The Daily Show*—a position she had already declined. She tweeted, “I am a Black woman and I am a feminist and I am so many things. I am truly honored that people love my work. But I am not yours.” It was an assertion many Black women, famous or otherwise, have had to make, a demand that we be granted our long-denied personhood. In this way, Beyoncé's aforementioned clarification, “God is God and I am not,” can be understood as a response to this long-standing sentiment that regards Black women solely for their capacity to sacrifice, endure, and bend to the will of others. Reminiscent of the “Mammy” archetype, a slavery-era caricature that defined Black womanhood as perpetual thankless servitude, the cultural instinct to demand too much of Black women, as a child would their mother, is not without its origins. Beyoncé's distinction is a deliberate distancing from both the superhuman and subhuman expectations of Black women. It's a declaration that contended with these expectations and professed that Black women owe nothing to anyone.

We belong to ourselves. We are not yours to deify. God can do the saving. **b**

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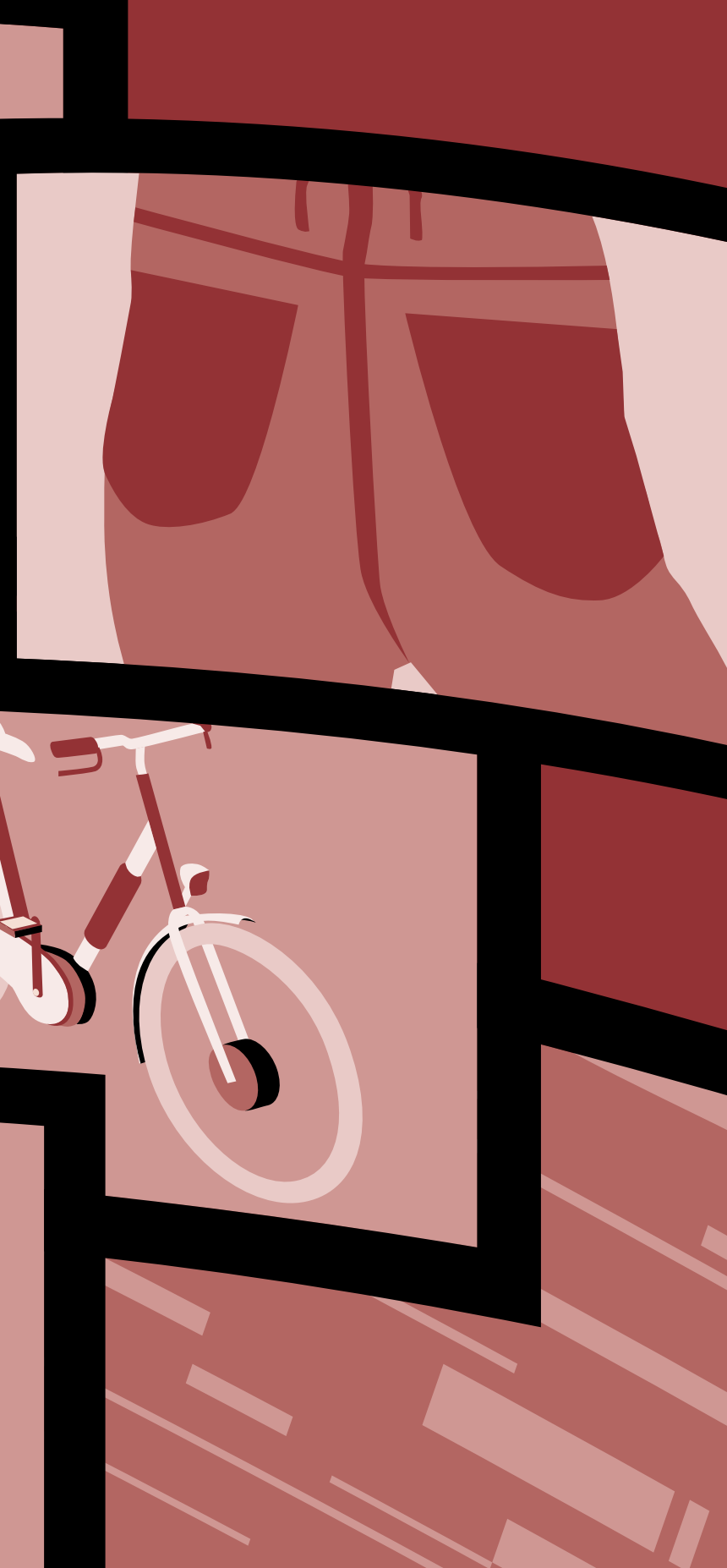
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY HUIYAN WANG



I LEARNED IT ON YOUTUBE

WHAT ONLINE
BEAUTY GURUS CAN—
OR CAN'T—TEACH
US ABOUT SEX

LEXIE LOMBARD IS a bright-eyed 21-year-old from Virginia with a trendy bob, oversize thrifted fur coats, and a cool Manhattan apartment. She just finished an internship with the indie makeup brand Milk Makeup and uploads the occasional “day in my life” vlog onto her YouTube channel, which has more than 430,000 subscribers. Her videos are a collage of interesting, quick-cut clips pieced together to create a brief yet intimate narrative.

BY VANESSA BORJON

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IN A VLOG FROM late May 2017, she layers three- to five-second clips: her bright blue nails type at a computer, her professor assigns a write-your-own-eulogy project to her class, she rides her bike through NYC. Finally, she shares her outfit of the day (“OOTD,” in YouTube parlance) in her bedroom mirror: Adidas sweatpants, a t-shirt that reads “Powered by Pussy,” and pink fuzzy slides.

Lombard has been making YouTube videos since October 2009. When she first created her channel—and before Google bought the platform and allowed its users to change their display names—Lombard went by the handle beautyrush315. One of her earliest videos, which she’s since taken down, was “What Your Mother Doesn’t Tell You About Thongs.” (As a subscriber of hers when I first discovered YouTube, I remember when this video went up.) In it, a 15-year-old Lombard ranted about the horror of panty lines under leggings. In an anecdote about shopping with her mom, she spoke about a truth most girls learn in their early teens: Our bodies always run the risk of being sexualized. Lombard says, “A lot of people think that thongs are kind of controversial. Like, ‘Oh, you wear a thong? You’re a slut!’ So they don’t like to show it off. I don’t know—to me, it’s just a piece of cloth.”

For lots of girls who grew up in the early 2000s, the internet offered an appealing anonymity: Online journals, message boards, and video-hosting sites were places where they could share parts of themselves and their lives that they were instructed not to talk about elsewhere. That silence is implied even in Lombard’s video

title: “What Your Mother Doesn’t Tell You....” Lombard was left on her own to figure out why thongs were considered an unacceptable undergarment for girls her age. But thongs are just the beginning. In the past decade, young women have been using YouTube to pass along advice on similarly confounding, “unacceptable” topics: dealing with their periods, choosing birth control, discovering their sexualities. In a current political climate that aims to silence, shame, and control all aspects of young women’s reproductive health and choice through legislation, these intimate one-on-one videos are filling silent, crucial gaps.

Many of the young women alongside Lombard (some of whom are now among her closest friends) got their start during YouTube’s first wave, when vlogs dominated the young platform’s trending lists. Lombard and her friends, stationed all across the nation, juggled the work of moderating two separate channels: a main channel and a vlog channel. Main-channel videos focused primarily on content that cemented their status as “beauty gurus”: outfit-of-the-week videos, clothing hauls, and first impressions of new beauty products. Their second channels were devoted solely to vlogs where they filmed all aspects of their everyday lives: on campus, grocery shopping, out with friends.

As these beauty gurus grew older, their content matured as well. At the height of their main channels becoming empires of brand deals and sponsorships, they began tackling topics such as sex, relationships, and “story time” videos. The latter are characterized by the exaggerated, sometimes over-the-top tone a YouTuber uses to explain an otherwise pretty mundane story. It’s in these where young women push back against dominant cultural narratives around what girls “should” be doing, and in particular the expectation—put forth in Disney princess movies, teen magazines, and *Bachelor* episodes—that the key to personal fulfillment is a relationship. One of YouTube’s most notorious story-timers is Vanessa Gabriela, or SimplyNessa15; in a recent Q&A that focused on the topic of relationships, she shared that when it comes to love, she’s taking it easy. “As of right now, I’m not really trying to talk to any boys, I’m not trying to talk to any girls. I’m trying to focus on myself, ‘cause before I try to focus on someone else, I need to try to fix me and really do me right now.”

The world of YouTube sees trends cycle in and out of the creator circuit. For a while, everyone was making DIY slime tutorials, and Mukbang, or “eat with me” videos, where YouTubers would literally eat their meals, typically takeout, on camera while “chatting with their viewers.” One of YouTube’s hottest trends at the moment—made popular by rapid-fire, *BuzzFeed*-style cultural reporting—are period-hack videos. One video, by Aspyrn Ovard, is titled “Period LIFE HACKS! Make Your Period EASIER!” In it, Ovard recommends doing yoga to alleviate cramps, staying away from salty foods to avoid bloating, and downloading (cue sponsorship) the Clue period-tracker app on your phone. Ovard’s last hack, however, she presents with hesitation. “This is the number-one thing that is, like, my top life hack, tip, trick—the thing that has helped me the most. And that is going on birth control. I don’t know if that’s bad to say, I’m just sayin’!” Ovard is aware that a majority of her viewers are tween and teen girls, and the messages she’s sending are being consumed instantly through phones and tablets, anywhere, at any time. Her hesitation, like Lombard’s, speaks to the resounding silence around reproductive health, a strange new realm that too many young girls are left to navigate on their own.

And then there are the YouTubers who go further in breaking down this silence. Meghan Hughes, a happy-go-lucky, good-vibes type of gal, has a video titled “THE SEX TALK I WISH I HAD,” in which she addresses masturbation—an activity that has historically been viewed as exclusively the realm of teen boys, and in many ways remains so. “So basically clitoral stimulation is the best thing in the entire world,” says Hughes. She urges her viewers that penetration alone won’t bring them the O, but then clarifies, “Who am I to say that there’s a right or wrong way to masturbate? All I’m trying to say here is that it feels good.” She

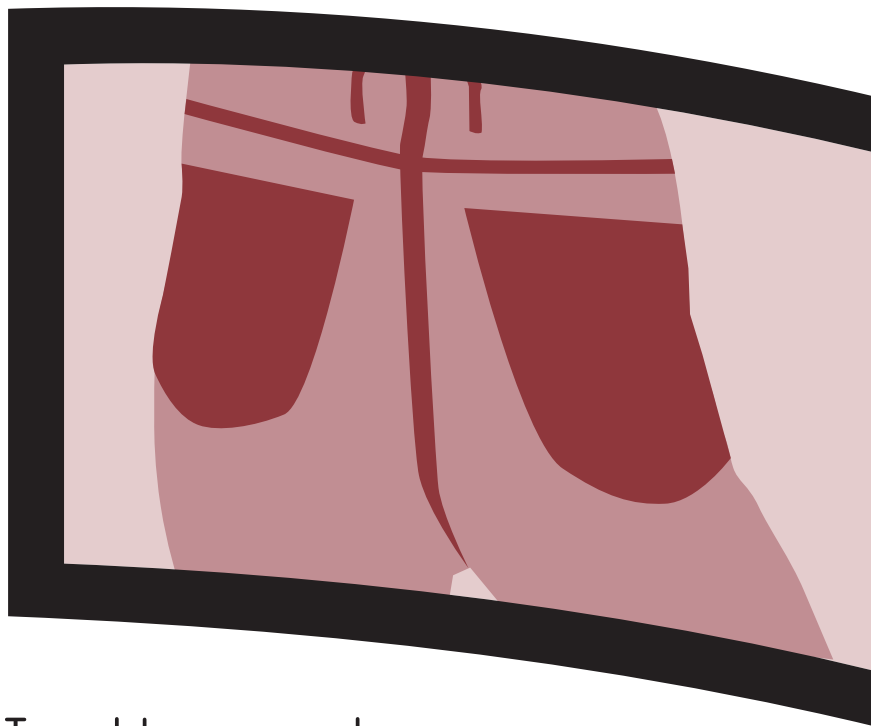
also admits to watching porn “from time to time” since being shown her first porn video at the age of 9 by her childhood friend one day, a very typical introduction to the world of porn by curious young girls. This is perhaps an even more taboo subject than young women masturbating; she addresses this controversy by acknowledging that people have all kinds of opinions on porn, but the fact that she didn’t edit that bit out of her video shows that she’s committed to being open about her sexual interests.

Later in the video, she shares the “terrible and just bad” story of her first time having sex, which was utterly unsatisfying and awkward, as many first times tend to be. She urges her viewers to “be picky for a reason” because it’s important to actually like the people you have sexual relationships with. This seems like more realistic advice to be passing on to young women discovering their sexuality and propensity for being sexual with other people, rather than an abstinence-only talk that often yields more shaming language than it does actual information about abstinence.

These days, YouTube is nothing like it once was. Overtaken by the directives of monetization, the platform now intentionally creates celebrities and one-person empires out of regular people making videos in their bedrooms and basements. It’s become a training ground for young women seeking (or inadvertently falling into) careers as entrepreneurs in beauty, fashion, and social media. And for the menstrual-management industry, it’s also become a way to sell and promote products from tampons to apps through the millions of views generated through YouTube. Management agencies like StyleHaul, which represents more than 6,000 “creatives” online, connect ad agencies to their clients and launch advertising campaigns. On its website, StyleHaul promises to “bring the URL to IRL, uniting brands, creators, and the style obsessed.” And it does: StyleHaul’s audience has a 500-plus-million community reach, sees more than 2.2-plus-billion monthly views, and is 76 percent female and 74 percent millennial. The social reach of these content creators alone is comparable to major TV networks.

A monetized video is easy to spot. It typically has an ad playing before the video begins, or has ads dispersed throughout. YouTubers do have the option to demonetize their videos, which some opt to do when the topic at hand is sensitive (death, mental illness) and might feel inappropriate as a vehicle for ads. A video might also become demonetized if the content is flagged as inappropriate or insensitive, either by users or content moderators at YouTube headquarters.

YouTube began monetizing videos in 2007, when it launched its Partner Program, which involved giving select YouTube pages AdSense units. AdSense units are essentially ads that play while a video runs; the appeal to online advertisers comes in



In the past decade, young women have been using YouTube to pass along advice on confounding, “unacceptable” topics.

With so many
young girls
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of videos a
day, and even
uploading
their own
content using
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how clickable content might be. Case in point: the millions of teen and tween girls scouring YouTube high and low for fashion and beauty advice. Slowly but surely, teenage “beauty gurus” began to make videos announcing their induction into the partners program. While Ovard and Lombard might have very brand-friendly aesthetics and channels, YouTube has the right to remove their content if it’s deemed inappropriate, which it has done to some of their more mature content—including, of course, videos on sex. YouTube is often the main source of income for a lot of its more serious users; and women like these take big career risks by creating authentic content that reflects their lives, knowing that it might cost them the only paycheck they’ll receive that month. YouTube loves content on which it can easily capitalize for views and revenue: beauty hauls, shopping vlogs, anything that has potential to link YouTube itself with an outside company for promotional content. But when it comes to more complex content—which young women discussing sex certainly is—the platform isn’t nearly as interested in their ideas.

Some YouTubers have used this cost-per-click basis of payment to their advantage, and have taken an interesting turn in creating sex-positive content. In Breland Kent’s (GlitterForever17) video, “25 Period Life Hacks For Back to School: Period Phone Case, Tampon Baby Lips, DIY Menstrual Cup Rug!” Kent transforms her home studio into a high-school hallway and portrays a nervous freshman on the first day back to school while on her period. Unlike Ovard and Lombard, her tips are less on the self-soothing side and teeter on shaming the young menstruating person: hiding a tampon in an empty hairspray bottle, keeping an air deodorizer with you after using the bathroom, scenting your pads with lavender oil. In an especially horrendous video titled “10 SMELLY VAGINA HACKS! How to Smell Fresh ‘Down There!’” Kent lists off 20 alternate names for your “down there area”: “conchzilla,” “fermented mermaid tail,” and, probably most disturbing, “rigor-mortis penis coffin.” The juvenile language Kent uses to describe vaginas and their natural processes is reminiscent of the once-ubiquitous “Confessions” pages in teen magazines where girls shared mortifying experiences of bleeding through white pants, accidentally dropping tampons in front of crushes, and other expressions of the idea that girls should be sexy without the embarrassment of actually inhabiting imperfect bodies.

And just as such print stories ran conveniently across from ads for pads, tampons, or pain relievers, Kent’s crude videos are a vehicle for making money. Smack dab in the middle of her video, she quickly drops in a small promotion for her fan merchandise, and lists a link in the description box. With attention-grabbing video titles and a subscriber base of 3 million, Kent is peddling—and profiting from—both misinformation and shaming language.

The power of YouTube is in the numbers. With so many young girls watching thousands of videos a day, and even uploading their own content using iPhone cameras, a new avenue of sex education is on the rise. It’s difficult to open up to healthcare practitioners for fear of shame or ostracization, especially if a parent is in the room. Pop culture has produced some of the most regressive and sexist representations of everything surrounding sex, from individual acts to the very concept of desire; often, young women aren’t sure what to expect from their menstrual periods, their first time having sex, and everything in between. When one of your favorite YouTubers—someone you trust for makeup advice and who you follow on all platforms of social media—starts to share her own experiences with you, you feel as if you’re talking to your older sister’s cool friend. Perhaps lawmakers can take a cue from some of the internet’s most famous YouTubers, and start implementing legislation that allows women to experience the fullness of their reproductive health, rather than slamming it down with a fistful of silence. **b**

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both slave and pharaoh

FINDING THE DIVINE IN BDSM

I wear Abdallah's collar when I'm with Zahid. Abdallah is strictly submissive. Zahid is a switch: he can be either submissive or dominant depending on his mood. He prefers to be dominant, and I prefer that he dominate me.

BY RANDA JARRAR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
OLIVIA M. HEALY



I learned everything I know about being a domme from my experiences with Abdallah. Abdallah is 32, Egyptian, and Muslim. He comes over once a week and stands by my leather couch. He waits for my command. I sit in a big armchair and tell him to take all his clothes off and fold them and put them by the door. Abdallah removes his dress shirt, undershirt, fabric belt, jeans, argyle socks, and boxer briefs, and folds them as instructed. I tell him to sit at my feet, on his knees. He does what I ask. I tell him to lick my boots. He asks if this is hygienic. Abdallah is afraid of germs. This puts him in a bit of a pickle since he's also very much a slave. I tell him to shut the fuck up and lick my boots. He does, and then takes them off and holds my feet in his hands. His hands tremble.

I met Abdallah on Tinder. He was looking for a dominant woman to step on his cock. I was looking for a submissive man who would let me step on his cock. He's here now sitting on the wood floor right across from my chair, on a chain attached to my foot. My foot is on his balls.

Abdallah asks if I want to hear Egyptian music. I say yes.

I tell him that earlier that week, I had bumped into a Palestinian man who said that Egyptians are either slaves or pharaohs. The man was a friend's father-in-law, and he said this not knowing that my mother is Egyptian. He asked me to think of all the Egyptians I knew. "Aren't they either one or the other?" This question made me uncomfortable, especially since it was asking for an absolute judgment about a specific ethnic background. I tend to feel a sense of superiority from people who make generalizations, and this was no different: By saying that people were either in charge or subservient, he wasn't taking into account all the subtleties of power dynamics, of how a submissive person can wield control, of how a pharaoh-like person attains and earns authority.

I wanted to warn him about the dangers and laziness of thinking in binaries. About how if you think about everyone you know, they can easily fit into either of the two categories of slave and pharaoh if you wanted them to. About how this isn't specific to Egyptians. I wished I could talk openly about how complicated something like *BDSM* can be, about subs and dommes, but was too afraid of speaking about something as socially taboo as *BDSM*. Eventually, the man came clean and told me he hates Egyptians because of how they treat Palestinians. He doesn't know how devoted my mother is to my father. That my mother spends her life serving my father.

For years, my father asserted his dominance over my mother, and my mother, a dominant person herself, resisted. But it was in the moments that he was quiet, that he didn't ask for much, that she served him the most—making him

tea, washing his clothes, rubbing his scalp, squeezing him fresh lemons over dishes of meals she had cooked, running a lint brush gently over his shoulders before he headed to work. Whenever I spoke poorly of my father, she came to his defense, saying he was a good man. She saw his complexities, and focused on the good in him. She allowed him to financially support her for decades. And if my friend's father-in-law knew that, he would just say it proves that Egyptians are either slaves or pharaohs.

I ask Abdallah what he thinks of this theory. He says he only knows what he likes, and cannot speak for all Egyptian men. I like that about him. Not so eager to generalize. Plus, he wants to be special.

And so Abdallah is sitting on my floor, a collar around his neck, a leash hooked onto his collar. He's got his laptop open, too, and he's working on a lesson plan for his class tomorrow. It occurs to me to ask him if he wants some tea. But I don't want to get up and make it. Besides, he's my sub—he should make my tea. I want to lean in, unhook his collar, and send him into the kitchen to boil water for my tea. If he were white, I'd do it in an instant. But he is Arab, his hair kinky, his skin the color of my mother's skin, my son's skin, and it takes more gumption for me to dominate him—to domme him around. He's told me that his previous dommes were all white. The image of him on a chain at the feet of a white woman infuriates me. Haven't Arab and Muslim men had enough of being chastised, dominated, humiliated, and incarcerated by white supremacy? I don't ask him this question because it would make me further upset if he told me he didn't mind it. Instead, I tell him he's never allowed to serve anyone else but me, and he lowers his gaze like a good Muslim and says, "Yes, goddess."

I unhook his collar and tell him to go make me some tea. He walks to the kitchen naked and puts the electric kettle on and comes back. A few minutes later, when the teakettle clicks off, I get up to mix the tea, and he asks if he could learn; if I could teach him how to make tea the way I like it. I lead him by the leash to the kitchen, and show him where the spoons are, where the honey is, and how to measure out my black tea leaves. He does, and then we return to the bedroom, to work. A couple of minutes later, I put him on his hands and knees, place my tea cup on the small of his lower back, and pour myself a cup. Abdallah likes it when I treat him like furniture. I love that in my room, with his consent, I can treat a man like furniture.

The next morning, distracted by the thought of him making me tea, by the thought of his naked body, I fill the electric kettle with water, place it on the gas stove, and light the stove. It takes a moment for me to realize what I have



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done, and I turn off the stove and check the bottom of the kettle for damage. There is none. Afterward, the smoke alarm beeps.

Like most people, I had always known about BDSM, but had no idea how it worked. Did domme stand for dominatrix? (It doesn't. It just means a dominant woman.) Did dommes have to wear leather or latex from head to toe and carry whips? (They can, but it's not required. A good domme can make her submissive do anything she wants, no matter what she is wearing or wielding.) Did subs, or submissives, love being beaten? (Some do. But not every sub is a pain sub.)

My experiences with pain during sex were all negative before BDSM. The pain was never consensual. Men gagged me, thinking I enjoyed it. They bit my nipples, assuming that because my breasts were large, they were stronger and impervious to pain. They choked me, their hands over my throat, because I asked them to, but none of them had done any training to figure out how to do it correctly, responsibly. Until BDSM, a lot of sex felt like assault. With BDSM, limits are discussed; classes on bondage, rope tying, slapping, choking, and anything else are offered at different "dungeons," clubs, and other spaces. It's almost the sex education everyone should be able to have. I often wish it was.

My first shopping trip for kinky gear, I was at a small sex shop, perusing the vanilla section—vibrators, beads, lube. But after walking past all that, I arrived at the leather part, with most objects encased behind glass. Instead of the standard whips and floggers, there were leather and metal cages in phallic shapes. I asked the salesperson if I could see one—I was already seeing it, but I wanted to hold the cage in my hands. She complied, using a key to unlock the case, and placed the cock cage in my palm. It looked like a small chastity cage, and I'd never seen one before. The salesperson told me it was for CBT. I pretended to know what that meant, and then frantically Googled the letters on my phone. CBT. Cock and ball torture. This was a thing.

When I was a little girl, around five or six, one of my favorite things to do was to play a game I called "motorcycle." I would beg my brother, or my cousin, or a neighbor, to lie on his back with his legs stretched straight up. I'd grip his ankles and pretend that the legs were the metal arms of a motorcycle, and then I'd place my foot on his testicles and pretend that they were a gas pedal. I had no idea that I was stepping on testicles, only that they were soft like a small jellyfish and felt funny under my feet.

I told this story to Abdallah when we first met up. His response was, "Lucky boys!" He derives no pleasure at all from his penis being stroked or touched. All he wanted to do, all he wants to do, is please me. His hands quivered when I first allowed him to touch me. I'd never seen or heard a man behave so dutifully, so adoringly. He called me his goddess. I told

him to kiss me from head to toe, and he complied, his breath quickening. He loved pleasing me. It's all he wanted to do. I penetrated his mouth and his ass, because I wanted to, and he wanted to do anything I wanted to do.

I understood right away that being in charge of him was a huge responsibility. I had to make sure that when he was gagging, he wasn't really hurt. I had to make sure his breath wasn't restricted if I smothered him with my breasts. Before we did anything, we had very long discussions over text about what he would and would not consent to. This openness, these clear boundaries, felt nothing like vanilla dating or vanilla sex. It was the vanilla stuff that was scary, I finally understood: often unnegotiated or under-communicated. How many times had I been assaulted in one way or another during vanilla sex? Countless. There was the woman who fisted me against my will; the man who thought my gagging sounds were fun; the guys who thought it was fine to slap my ass without asking permission.

After Abdallah, submissive men began flocking to me. They still do. They tell me exactly what they want me to do for them, and ask me what I like. One sub's hard limits was that he would not do race play. He was white. Another sub's hard limit was that he did not want to ever penetrate me, or have his genitals restrained.



With BDSM, nothing “just happened.” Every action, desire, and movement is discussed beforehand. “Please never make me eat my cum,” Abdallah had said. “Please never pierce my skin, or make me bleed, or hit my body. Only my face.”

Kink meant consent, always. It meant a discussion of boundaries, desires, fears. Unlike vanilla hookups, it meant safety. It meant true submission.

Abdallah slowly stopped responding to my texts a few months ago. The silent weeks would be followed by days of ardent messages, begging for my attention. When I gave it, he disappeared again. He was married, it turned out, and I told him that there was no room in our female-dominated relationship for deceit or polytheism. I was a monotheistic-type goddess. When I broke things off with him, I felt a deep sadness. Abdallah was the first good, responsive, and devoted lover I had who, like me, also had a Muslim identity. This shared background made me feel safe, healed me of the years I thought my mother was a pushover, the years of internalized Islamophobia, years that I thought Muslim men were too rigid or stubborn or proud to submit to anyone but God.

I believed I would never find another Muslim person to be kinky with.

I met Zahid a year after I met Abdallah, almost to the day. We both serendipitously wore red-and-white striped tops to our first date. I loved this because we looked like a Muslim version of Where's Waldo? Where's Habibi? I had often thought.

We talked about everything, including whether kink was in the Qu'ran. “When the Qu'ran says to beat or whip someone, it never says how hard,” he said, joking. “Maybe it's soft play.” “Islam means submission,” I responded. “I mean, to say, ‘I am Muslim,’ is to say, ‘I submit.’” He smiled and said, “Or, ‘I'm a sub.’” We talked about how, in one's devotion to God, one yields completely. To be truly Muslim is to understand that God is the only being anywhere who wields any power. For a believer, her Islam—or her submission—means that she places all her trust in God, and dedicates her life to God's worship. To be Muslim is to be one who submits.

Zahid told me he was hit by a train when he was 23. When I asked him how that happened, he said it was because he and his friends were playing chicken with the train. I wanted to tell him how stupid that is, but instead, I asked him if it was something he did regularly: play chicken with the train. He said yes. He did it all the time. He said that the time he was hit was the only time he paused to think about the train hitting him. He said he

blames being hit on that pause. The train hit him, and he spun in place, like a dreidel. He spun and spun before he hit the ground. The spinning absorbed a lot of the contact, so that when he hit the ground, he wasn't too severely head injured. He was airlifted to a hospital. Four years later, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer. He has one ball. I pull on it gently when he's in my mouth to help him cum.


Zahid's Islam is, like mine, more of an identity than a practice. We spent the first day of Ramadan getting stoned and driving 45 miles out of town to attend a LARP, or a live-

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action role play game, where nerds gather in large spaces and pretend to be vampires. We arrived too early, and I began jerking him off in the car, a mile away from the exit. We ended up fucking in a parking lot for half an hour, him calling me his good girl. At the end of Ramadan, he came over, and we drank Eid champagne. We pretended that the label read, "Halal. Enjoy for Eid!" In the morning, I asked him if he thought the pork chorizo I had in the fridge was bad. He smelled it and said he didn't know. I told him I didn't know anything about pork. He said he didn't either, and we laughed. Two Muslims trying to make eggs and chorizo? It didn't happen.

In the past year, my gear has piled up. I bought a paddle with a muffled side and a leather side; a long flogger; a crop; bondage tape; an under-bed restraint system. Anal plugs. A ball gag. A harness for my dildos. A black face mask that allows subs to breathe. My favorite thing ever is a dick leash: a leather collar that fastens at the base of a penis and hooks onto a metal chain.

I initially used that on Zahid. At first, I dominated him most sessions. But eventually we switched, and I relished in the switch.

The first time I asked Zahid to collar me, I was nervous. I didn't want to be rejected. But I trusted him; we had been playing for five months, and I knew I would be safe if I went into submission with him. He said yes. So I brought out Abdallah's collar, which is black leather with red floral stitching, and we stood facing each other. I threw a pillow on my wood floors, the floors Abdallah once licked my feet on, and got on my knees. I asked Zahid if I could look at him, and he said, "Yes." I looked up and he fastened the collar on me, gently, and then hooked the leash onto the metal circle. I breathed deeply. It was a relief to finally be the one taken care of. To not constantly be working to ensure a sub's safety. It was now someone else's turn. 

RANDA JARRAR is the author of the award-winning books *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali* and *A Map of Home*.



FROM THE HQ

THIS IS NOT THE LETTER I AM SUPPOSED TO BE WRITING YOU.

In fact, I'm supposed to be telling you about all the amazing work that Bitch Media has done this year in some snappy, neat, year-end way. But I'm not really a snappy, neat, holiday-card-in-the-mail kind of person. So I'm going to be real with you instead.

This job—director of community—didn't exist a year ago. And even as I was going through the interview process, I have to admit I was a little guarded. It sounded too good to be true. An opportunity to build programs up from scratch and question and change the way things were already done? To reenvision what Bitch could be for our community and break all the rules along the way? It sounded like a no-brainer, right?

But as a woman of color in the nonprofit world, I'd heard that tune before. I'd been lured to numerous organizations with the promise of change-making and impact, only to realize it was just for optics or diversity quotas for grants. Despite the uptick in “woke” content, people of color still account for only 23.4 percent of journalists in large news organizations and an appalling 13.4 percent of editors. I'd seen too many women take on that uphill battle and had told myself I would no longer put myself in the position of being the sole person of color in any organization again.

So when the opportunity at Bitch came along, I called up every writer of color I knew to ask about Bitch: What did it prioritize? Was Bitch as feminist in its practices as in its pages? The consensus was “Bitch isn't perfect, but it's trying.” And I thought about that, for a long time. Was “trying” good enough? I crossed my fingers and accepted the job, but first I promised myself one thing: If nothing else, I can be an advocate for our voices—the voices of poor, Latinx, queer, marginalized, undocumented people—in this space, and it would be worth it.

Since that interview, when Trump declared war on sanctuary cities, Bitch made room for a

piece about ICE operations in my hometown of Miami within the week. And when we talked about increasing our poetry coverage, I didn't have to doubt that our reviews would include books by writers who look and speak like me. I've had the opportunity to engage in conversations on Latinx identity that push against everything that mainstream media depicts, and I've had the support of the brilliant women-of-color colleagues who have joined along the way. In less than a year, I went from cautious skepticism to not being able to picture myself anywhere else.

Because I've seen, time and again, an organization that puts mission and advocacy above all else. As someone who has worked in everything from national nonprofits to local literary organizations, from volunteer-run literary magazines to performance spaces, I know it's so, so rare for an organization to be this willing to be challenged, this aware of where it still has work to do, and then to commit to actually doing that work.

In social-justice circles, we say that it's not the intent that matters—it's the impact. But in media, especially lately, the opposite feels true. When publications like *Broadly*, *Bustle*, *Vice*, or *Teen Vogue* devote more space to marginalized perspectives, we all win, of course. But what I try to never forget is that, at the core of these publications, there is only one intent: to sell things. We've seen publications go through what feels like entire life cycles this year. *Teen Vogue* went from *Vogue Jr.*, to its woke reincarnation, to selling teenagers on \$300 conferences. *Broadly*—*Vice*'s vertical for women—went from “representing the multiplicity of women's experiences” to selling those very women out to white-supremacist trolls for increased traffic. We saw *Bustle*, a self-identified “women's publication” that in fact was only a “women's publication” because its owner (a man) was contractually prohibited from targeting other demographics, attempt to go full-on market research firm until we called it out. And

let's not forget about the numerous publications that depend upon the labor of women-of-color freelancers (not sure if it's faster to name names or just point you to *all of Condé Nast*) and have published remarkable stories this year only to turn around and not pay their writers? None of this is surprising or new. We women of color who have worked in these fields have always known this, have always been able to see through this.

Organizations, magazines, nonprofits—all have a central mission at their core. At Bitch, that central mission is feminism. Just feminism. Not selling feminism, or making it palatable. Just the daily grind that is the real work of intersectionality and justice-making. Remember that episode of *Popaganda* where Sarah Mirk went to Chile to talk to activists about what it was like to live in a country where abortion was completely illegal? Or the heart-wrenching piece by senior editor Evette Dionne on what the continued defense of R. Kelly really says about how we perceive Black girls? Or perhaps you recall the brilliant case for an emotional labor-based economy by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha that ran in *Bitch* magazine a few issues back, which argued for the economic value of invisible labor carried out by disabled, femme, working-class folks? These are the stories that do the work, that open up the most difficult conversations, whether they generate clicks or not.

And so perhaps the biggest thing I can say, as someone who has had a year to see Bitch in action from the inside, is that I find hope here every day.

Despite everyone's initial predictions, this independent feminist media outlet has only gotten stronger in the past 21 years. In 2017, we saw massive growth in our editorial team and our collective vision for the most radical, inclusive, intersectional content yet. And in 2018? That groundbreaking content will reach more people than ever through new projects in audio and video, an amped-up speakers program, and an even more fearless magazine.

I can't wait to show you what that will look like.

But I need your help to get us there. I'm asking you to make a meaningful contribution and help Bitch reach our \$85,000 goal by December 31.

And I say meaningful because every dollar is meaningful to us. You can make a donation at bitchmedia.org/donate or give us a call (I mean it, you can call us!) at (503) 282-5699 and we'll walk you through.

From coverage of under-the-radar pop culture that cannot be ignored, to amplifying the work of the fiercest feminist organizers in local communities, Bitch does the work that no one else in the media can. And that's because our only intent, our only goal, is to be the most feminist media organization we can be. What we've found is that when you start with such intention, the impact always, always follows.

Was “trying” good enough? I crossed my fingers and accepted the job.

I've found a home here at Bitch as your director of community. My hope is that, as you see yourself reflected in this work, you will too.

So perhaps this is not the letter you expected to see. It's certainly not what I intended to write when I sat down to pen our traditional year-end appeal (though when have we ever been traditional about anything, right?). But what I hope you do see is change, and hope, and something you want to be a part of. I know I do.

Feminism por siempre,



Soraya Membreno, Director of Community

MEET THE 2017 class OF BITCH WRITING FELLOWS

As the year comes to a close, we say goodbye to the 2017 class of Bitch Writing Fellows: Vanessa Borjon, Reproductive Rights and Justice; Mailee Hung, Technology; Bemnet Gebrechirstos, Pop-Culture Criticism; and Aqdas Aftab, Global Feminism. You've read their work online and in *Bitch* magazine, but we couldn't let them go without letting you get to know them a little bit better first.

What's been your favorite show or movie of 2017?

VANESSA BORJON: Definitely *Girls Trip*. It spoke so much truth about dealing with toxic relationships and the importance of healthy female friendships. It was also refreshing to have an all-Black, female-led cast in a comedy.

MAILEE HUNG: *Twin Peaks: The Return!* David Lynch definitely has some issues with women, but I think loving a show in spite of its misogyny is a skill we've all had to cultivate. Sigh.

BEMNET GEBRECHIRSTOS: I had high hopes following *The Get Down's* strong start in 2016, but Part Two went above and beyond all my expectations.

AQDAS AFTAB: I am still in awe of last year's *Moonlight*, which carried over for me in 2017. I have seen it around five times now.

What song or album did you obsess over this year?

VB: Totally been obsessed with Ayo, the latest album by Bomba Estéreo!

MH: "Axolotl" by the Veils from their album *Total Depravity*. The band played the song on a *Twin Peaks* episode, and I fell in love with it.

BG: Is it okay if I list two? I'm going to list two.

Solange's *A Seat at the Table* and SZA's *Ctrl*.

AA: The Pakistani song "Phool Khil Jayien." The singer, Abida Parveen, inspires me with how she has defined her androgyny and transgression of the gender binary as inherent to Sufism.

What's the last book or article you read and loved?

VB: *The Sun Is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon. I wasn't expecting to be so moved, but the realness of falling in love as a young person, and the delicate yet honest way it handled immigration, really struck a chord with me.

MH: "The First Social Media Suicide" by Rana Dasgupta. It's an extract from their longer article in *Granta* magazine, which I subscribed to right after I finished reading it. Laurie Penny's article "Life-Hacks of the Poor and Aimless" is also required reading.

BG: *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* by Cedric Robinson. A well-woven collection of texts on the legacies of Black radical Marxists, this book was exactly what I was looking for last summer.

AA: I read *Queering Sexual Violence: Radical Voices from Within the Anti-Violence Movement* (edited by Jennifer Patterson) this year, and felt like I had been waiting for this book my whole life.

A classic Bitch check-in question: If one of your hands was a sandwich that was always there, available to eat at any time and in any weather, what would it be??

VB: Wow, the possibilities! I'd have to go with any kind of sandwich that would taste good with Takis crumbled on the inside. If I'm going to take advantage of a never-ending hand sandwich, I wanna make sure I

find a way to also include infinite Takis.

MH: Jambon-beurre with cornichons and horseradish. I know, it sounds wacky, but I assure you it's not!

BG: A classic grilled cheese with a bit of raw honey on brioche bread.

AA: It would be a sandwich packed with french fries, so I could eat the fries in any weather and ignore the bread.

What are you proudest of as a writer?

What's been something unexpectedly difficult or challenging?

VB: Honestly, I'm most proud I committed myself to this fellowship and found a way to incorporate the things I'm passionate about into the writing I produced.

MH: I think I'm just proud that I'm still writing. Writing is often hard and uncomfortable for me. I [can] get caught up thinking that if I don't feel like doing it all the time or if it doesn't always come easily, then I must not really love it or be very good at it. The challenge is accepting that creative work can't be output 100 percent of the time.

BG: Endlessly creating and growing into myself has been a difficult but sacred process. I'm proud of this exploration of self, and the strength of the communities that guide me, as well as the ancestral relationship I hold to narratives of resistance.

AA: I am proudest of, and most terrified of, the fact that I never feel like my writing is complete or done. I have been thinking more about some of the ideas that I argued for in my pieces, and I have been pushing myself to rethink and revise some of my frameworks.

Read the full version of this interview at bitchmedia.org.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: VANESSA, MAILEE, BEMNET, AND AQDAS.



WHAT ARE YOU *devoted* TO?

Bitch staff give a peek into their devotions, obsessions, and just plain weird habits.

EVETTE DIONNE, SENIOR EDITOR: Beyoncé is the queen of my life. She's already the best, but she still pushes herself to get better. What's more inspiring than that?

KATE LESNIAK, PUBLISHER: First and foremost, I'm devoted to sandwiches. The *New York Times* put out a sandwich issue a few years ago and I have the cover page posted on my desk.

DAHLIA GROSSMAN-HEINZE, SENIOR ENGAGEMENT EDITOR: I'm devoted to horror movies and witches, whatever their pop culture medium.

KORIN LYKAM, DIRECTOR OF DATA AND OPERATIONAL SYSTEMS: I'm here for Sonequa Martin-Green as main protagonist Commander Michael Burnham in *Star Trek: Discovery*. She's a badass, and who doesn't love a smarter-, stronger-, braver-than-average human raised by Vulcans?

LISA FACTORA-BORCHERS, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Filipino tradition celebrates after Christmas Eve midnight mass with "Noche Buena": a family gathering with good food. As a Filipino American, I adapted a bit of the menu so it was not only a Filipino affair of lumpia shanghai, leche flan, and fruit salads, but also included gourmet nachos. I made them so often that eventually my family started calling it Nacho Buena.

ASHLEY DUCHEMIN, PRODUCTION MANAGER: I am utterly devoted to growing myself in every way imaginable. Every time someone thinks of me, I want them to immediately think of Kelli from *Insecure* saying, "You know what that is? Growth."

SORAYA MEMBRENO, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY: I am devoted to food. Of all kinds and in all stages. But particularly, the

food tour. For every city I've ever lived in, I've got curated, customized, all-day food-tour itineraries of all my favorite neighborhoods.

ANDI ZEISLER, COFOUNDER: Books. Physical, beautiful books. Having lived through not one but two recent decades where THE END OF PRINT was forecast with biblical solemnity, I see books as mighty testaments to a love that defies digital colonization. Bury me with books.

PATRICIA ROMERO, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS COORDINATOR: I am devoted to burritos. They are portable and tasty for all occasions. At the movies, the park, school, and any place you can BYOB (bring your own burrito). Burritos make any occasion a happy one.

JULIE FALK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: I am a lifelong lover of mysteries. From Nancy Drew to Agatha Christie to Laura Lippman and Louise Penny, mystery novels have given me solace and escape. Life can't get too bad if there's a mystery close at hand.

KRISTIN ROGERS BROWN, ART DIRECTOR: Miss Sadie Mercedes, the dog love of my life. I spend about 75 percent of our time together attempting to hug her, and the other 25 percent saving her from her main beagle instinct, which is to eat every crunchy thing. She tolerates the hugging.

AMANDA GREEN, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DIRECTOR: I am completely devoted to black cats (especially mine), Pretzel M&M's, and *all* the superhero TV shows.

ALEX DOVELIN, GRAPHIC DESIGNER: I'm devoted to Sailor Moon, my gay childhood icons whose original identities were erased by Western localization. Shout-out to bootleg eBay translations for introducing me to subtitles and queerness.

Want to learn what our staff is reading, listening to, or watching? Sign up for our monthly newsletter, B-Mail, at bitchmedia.org.

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Chelsey Schaffer
Virginia Schmitt
Kate Schultz
Lauren Schultz
Laura Schwemm
Bonnie Scott
Janicanne Shane
Samantha Sivertz
Tiffany Slaughter
Shelby Sloan
Andrea Smith
Jessica Smith
Matt Smith
Rachel Smith
Sarah J. Smith-George
Anja Sorensen
Melissa Spady
S. Stewart-Bouley
Chris Stone
Shannon Sturm
Caitlin Sullivan
Cynthia Sumner
Andi Sweet
Trisha Swindell
Ginny Sykes
Jessica Talley
Rashmi Tambe
Masakazu Tanaka
Kate Tankersley
Rachel Taylor Brown
Joni Teague
Jessica Terlikowski
Shelby Thorne
Carrie Tilton-Jones
Edith Tita
Tomy Torres
Ralph Trueblood
Jalil Tuggle
Shannon Turner
Nancy Valle
David Varley
Sasha Verma
Jessica Veronin
Jessica Voloudakis
Cathlin Walker
Rachel Walters
Meaghan Whalen
Tiffany Wilk
Megan Winget
Pamela Worth
Kristen Wright
Wendeline O. Wright
Meng-Ye Wu
- Tony Wu
Karen Young
Nicole Zayas-Dorchak
Olga Zilberbourg
- HONEY BEES
(SIO-S14)**
- Anonymous (35)
Rachel Aavang
Jenna Abrams
Jasmine Aguilar
Sienna Aguilar
Miss Abigail R. Akers
Michelle Akin
Mary-Ann Alberga
Lauren Alessi
Tasia Alexopoulos
Jean Alger
Heather Ali
Miranda Alksnis
Shannyn Allan
Vickey Allen
Kelly Allevato
Leesa Allmond
Christina Alongi
Sal Alper
Eva Alpert
Colleen Ammerman
Jory Anast
Janessa Anderson
Jillian Anderson
Keller Anderson
Lauren Anderson
Sarah Jane Anderson
Heidi Archer
Whitney Archer
Amanda Armstrong
Shelley Aron
Stephanie Atherton
Nora Baboudjian
Chloe Badner
Caitlin Baggett
Sahar Baharloo
Samantha Bakall
Jodie Baker
K. Lyn Baker
Kelly Baker
Natalie Baker
M. Balbontin-Galleguillos
Samantha Balch
Esme Baldwin
Magdalena Balocova
Andi Sweet
Karrisa Barrera
Katharine Barrette
Charlie Bartlett
Faith Barton
Tianna Barton
Elizabeth Basala
B. Basset
Karla Baumgartner
Kathleen Beardsworth
Rachel E. Beattie
Ondrea Beauchamp
Theodore Beck
Nicki Beckwith
Elissa Beech
Tina Beier
Evelyn Belasco
Julia Bell
Meaghan Bell
Virginia Bemis
Ellen Bendewald
Margarita Benitez
Emily Bennett
James Benton
Rhonda Berchuck
Denece Berg
Ethan Bernhardt
Sarah Best
Kelli Best-Oliver
Khuwailah Beyah
Jane Billinger
- Maria Binkley
Indra Black
Stephanie Black
Heather Blackbird
Anna C. Blackwell
Heather Blake
Leela Blaney
Rose-Anna Bleasdale
Louann Blocker
Elisa Rivera-Boyles
Briana Bloom
Christy Bloom
John Bogeman
Sheri Boggs
Melissa Boles
Wendy Bolm
Carlin Bolt
Laurel Bonner
Mary Book
Kesiena Booth
Annie Boom
Heather Ali
Julie Borden
Katie Borders
Melissa Bornstein
Mandi Borst
Carly Bosco
Dalila Bothwell
Marika Bouchard
Saindon
Drew Bowling
Molly Bowman
Charlene Boyce
Kylie Bradshaw
Rachael Brant
Courtney Bricker-Anthony
Audrey Bridge
Jessica Brittain
Dain Broadbent
Kimberly Brodakin
Heather Brook
Ashley Brooks
Francesca Brooks
Lacy Brooks
Adrian Brown
Ashley Brown
Carson Brown
Stasia Brownell
Heather Brummett
Miguel Buddle
Todd Bulmer
Whitney Burdon
Susanne Bushman
Heidi Butler
Jessica Butterworth
Catherine Buxton
Andrea Byrne
Connie Cadigan
Natasha Cahill
Ashley Cail
Danielle Calder
Shelley Caldwell
Kim Cameron-Dominguez
Kristen Campbell
Morgane Camus
Amy Canaday
Kayla Carbone
Kristin Carbone
Amy Carlton
Shawna Carroll
Kailey Carruthers
Rosa Carson
Laura Carstensen
Harriet Cash
Jonatha Caspian
Christopher Cerami
Heather Chambers
Leigh Chandler
Meghan Chandler
Jacky Chang
Jennifer Charlton
Sarah Chatelain
Pauline Chavez
Laura Cheifetz
- Chia Cheng
Jacqui Cheng
Gail Chester
Tara Chetty
Tammy Chew
Natasha Chiam
Monya Choudhury
Melodie Chouinard
Casey Christensen
Jaime Clanachan
Amy Clark
Brianna Clark
Valorie Clark
Emily Cobbs
Maurine Coco
Jennifer Collins
Julia Collis
Roselyne Collomb
Emma Conner
Megan Connor
Angelina Conti
Wendy Cook
Maureen M. Cooke
Marjolaine Corbeil
Rose Corcoran
Monique Cornett
Laura Cornwall
Rebecca Cory
Amethyst Costello
Kim Cottrell
Kathryn Coulston
Kate Cowan
Mary Cowen
Mattie Cowser
Catriona Cox
Cheryl Crane
Victoria Crank
Lindsay Craven
Emily Cripe
Rea Cris
Olivia Cross
Elaine Crossan
Katherine Crossman
Emily Cruz
Irina Cruz Pereira
Mar Cue Gallego
Sarah Cullingham
Melanie Cummings
Erin Cunningham
Maura Elizabeth
Cunningham
Victoria Curnette
Nora Currie
Cheryl L. Curry
Katharine Curry
Juli Curtis
Lily Curtis
Sage Curtis
Marzena Czarna
Rozie D.
Charmaine Daboiku
Nicole Daenzer
Emily Dahl
Katherine Damon
Halle Dana
Misty Daniels
Elizabeth Daniels-Totten
Loren Dann
Eric Dauenhauer
Miranda Dawson
Kriss De Jong
Alegria De La Cruz
Deborah Debrat
Lillian Deeb
Erin DeJesus
Maria del Carmen
Chrystel Del Giudice
Erin Delaney
Jennifer Delaney
Bailey Dempster
Monique Dennehy
Elizabeth Denys
Erin Depew
Rae Di Cicco

Kate Diamond
 Brianna Dickenson
 Emily Diemert
 Miriam Dinapoli
 Stephanie Diponio
 Emma Ditchburn
 Magnolia Ditzler
 Rebecca Dobrinski
 Cherrie Dodson
 Megan Doherty
 Jessica Dolbi
 Patty Donndelinger
 Norah Dooley
 Sylvia Dorghalli
 Jessica Dorrell
 Kat Doss
 Jenifer Doty
 Megan Dowdle
 Nikki Drake
 Beth Drayton
 Theresa Drouin
 Christina Dueck
 Patricia Duke
 Marion Dumas
 Lindsay Dupertuis
 Gayna Dupont
 Asela Durán Dacosta
 Carmen Duvnjak
 Justine Dvorchak-Rodriguez
 Kayla Dyer
 Mary M. Eaton
 Corrin Eckert-Chu
 Emily Edahl
 Emily Edwards
 Rosalinda Edwards
 Sarah Edwards Obenauf
 Simkute Egle
 Roxanne Elings
 Joanne Eliuk
 Jasmina Eminic
 Charlyse Emmons
 Tara Enders
 Lea Susan Engle
 Gabriella Eriksson
 Tonya Ervin
 Roseann Erwin
 Jackie Esmonde
 Diana Esparza-Lara
 Adelina Esquibel
 Erin Essak Kopp
 Madelyn Etzcorn
 Emily Evans
 Grace Evans
 Heather Evans
 Julie Eyma
 Lisa Fagundes
 Megan Fair
 Ashley Fairlie
 Catherine Falls
 Melissa Farmer
 Kayla Farnsworth
 Jesse Farrell
 Crystal Fattor
 Ansar Fayyazuddin
 Brian Federico
 Jessica Feinberg
 Brian Feist
 Stephanie Felix
 Julie Fellmayer
 Madeleine Fenner
 Deborah Fenney Salkeld
 Margaret Fero
 Francesca Ferrer-Best
 Renee Ferron
 Natalie Fielland
 Lisa Figge
 Sarah Filler
 Monica Finc
 Samantha Fischer
 Kelsey Fisher
 Charlotte Fitz-Harris
 Rebecca Flaum
 Mary-Katherine Fleming
 Erin Fletcher
 Anna Fletcher-Fowler
 Eadaoin Flynn
 Tif Flynn
 Andrew Follmann
 Melissa Fonda
 Teej Ford
 Rachel Forseth
 Ruth Foulis
 Deanne Fountaine
 Emilie Fournier
 Aaron Fox
 Alice Franchi
 Kate Frazier
 Anna Freeburg
 Stacia Frens
 Laura Freund
 Jill Friedman
 Joanna Fritch
 Lisa Fry
 Georgina Fryer
 Derynne Fuhrer
 Shannon Fuller
 Jen Fullwyler
 Missy Furlette
 Sinéad Furlong
 Melanie Gable
 Viviane Gagné-H
 Robin Galbraith
 Laura Galgano
 Alicia Gallo
 Lexi Galton
 Desiré Galvez
 Katherine Garcia
 Anna Gardner
 Cynthia Garner
 Hallie Garvey
 Haley Jayne Gash
 Shani-Lee Gaurin Scott
 Steve Gaynor
 Chani Geigle-Teller
 Scuffy Genius
 Anna George
 Erica George
 Christine Gertz
 Chanel Chiragosian
 Emily Giglierano
 Sarah Gilbert
 Kelsey Gillean
 Crystalline Gillespie
 Mari Gillingham
 Carolyn Gillum
 Kipp Gilmore-Clough
 Carole Giran
 Julie Gjerlev
 Tona Glass
 Katie Gleichman
 Martha Goddard
 Sarah Goepfert-Moore
 Karin Golde
 Julie Gomez
 Carolina Gomez Gilabert
 Erika Gomez Henao
 Traci Gonzales
 Maia Goodell
 Jen Gordon
 Lyndsey Gormley
 Rachael Gorton
 Samantha Gottlieb
 Katja Gottlieb-Stier
 Haili Graff
 Wendy Granger
 Susan Grant
 Genevieve Gray
 Rachel Gray
 Rebecca Gray
 Amanda Green
 Hannah Green
 Jessica Greenblatt
 Laura Greer
 Caitlin Gregory
 Nicola Gregory
 Rebecca Greis
 Amy Grier
 Kayla Grodzicki
 Consuelo Grubb
 Becca Gruseck
 Melissa Gruver
 Madeline Grzanich
 Camela Guevara
 Lynn Gumert
 Suzanne Gunnerson
 Kathleen Gustafson
 Joanna Gutierrez
 Ermina Hadzic
 Kay Hagan
 Adrienne Haik
 Gillian Haines
 Jen Halbert
 M.J. Hall
 Kelly Hamill
 Haley Hamilton
 Pam Hamilton
 Melissa Hamlyn
 Alison Hamm
 Emma Hamm
 Jacqueline Hammond
 Jerusha Hancock
 Devon Handy
 Jordan Hansen
 Linden Hardie
 Kyla Harkins
 Craig Harlow
 Dana Harper
 Celia Harquail
 Amy Harris
 Katrina Harris
 Susan Harrison
 Caitlin Hart
 Chelsey Hartupee
 N. Hasan
 Julia Haskins
 Kacie Hattaway
 Rebecca Haws
 Dorothy Hearn
 Antonia Heffelfinger
 Cheryl Heitzman
 Judy Helfand
 Colleen Hemsing
 Janet Hendrickson
 Alice Hennell
 Leslie Hennessee
 Judith Hernandez
 Liane Hernandez
 Mary Gillingham
 Minda Heyman
 Brian Hiatt
 Kellie Higginbottom
 Cayla Hildreth
 Emily Hiller
 Jensy Hines
 Blair Hiskey
 Miranda Hlady
 Erica Hoard
 Amanda Hobson
 Kelsey Hoffman
 Melody Hoffmann
 Nicole Hoffner
 Kristen Hogan
 Florence Hogg
 Caitlin Holmes
 Marla Holt
 Lauren Homer
 Francesca Honey
 Jane Hope
 Dana Hopkins
 Sara Hopkins
 Sarah Hopkins
 Katherine Houser
 Elizabeth Hubble
 Ashley Huber
 Lydia Huck
 Elise Hudson
 Sarah Huffman
 Diane Hugel
 Jennifer Human
 Emily Humphreys
 Mailee Hung
 Lucia Hunting
 Beth Hutchinson
 Pascale Hutton
 Vanessa Iarocci
 Laura Ifft
 Megan Inbody
 Asiza Isler
 Lucy Israel
 Zoe Jackson
 Alexandra Jacunski
 Melissa Jahnke
 Andrea Jalickee
 Alexandra James
 Rachel Jamison
 Sylwia Jamorska
 Peggy Jankovic
 Gevais N. Jefferson
 Serena Jenkins
 Melanie Jenner
 Deanna Jessup
 Joy Jet
 Lizzie Johnsen
 Andi Johnson
 Dominique Johnson
 Jada Johnson
 Kathleen Johnson
 Lauren Johnson
 Lauren Johnston
 Marjorie Jolles
 Dana Harper
 Angelique Joy
 Hala Kaiksov
 Paula Kamen
 Katrin Kamolz
 Marybeth Kapsch
 Megan Karius
 Priscilla Kasimos
 Marsha Katz
 Kacie Kazmierski
 Mary Celeste Kearney
 Meghan Keating
 Jacqueline Keffas
 Kadie Kelly
 Misti Kennedy
 Kristen Kenyon
 Catherine Kerry
 Emily Kersh
 Kyra Key
 Laura Keys
 Charlene Khoo
 Mary Kibert
 Gemma Killen
 Kat Kimball
 Evelyn Kimbrough
 Courtney King
 Jennifer King
 Karlene King
 Kristina King
 Marcella Kinsella
 Heather Kissinger
 Ingvill Kjørstein
 Caitlin Klask
 Lois Klassen
 Sarah Klem
 Paul Klipp
 Tarah Knaresboro
 Ellen Knutson
 Jenn Kohn
 Leigh Kolb
 Rebecca Koon
 Laura Kopp
 Jennifer Kot
 Ashley Kotkin-De Carvalho
 Lisa Kouri
 Casey Krall
 Keilee Kramer
 Shaun Kronenfeld
 Jennifer Kronk Terry
 Brienna Krueger
 Irene Kuhty
 Morgan Kunze
 Rivka Kushner
 Alexa La Bruyere
 Alexandra Lachszt
 Elizabeth Lacroix
 Sharon Lake
 Kathleen Lam
 Kate Lambaria
 Caroline Land
 Gabriella Landgraf-Neuhaus
 Madison Lands
 Andrea Lanfranco
 Lou Langer
 Mary Lanham
 Sadie Lapshinoff
 Francesca Larkin
 David Larkman
 Susannah Larrabee
 Kirsten Larsen
 Sarah Larsen
 Jess Larson
 Louisa Lauher
 Leona Laurie
 Jaclyn Law
 Harriet Lawrence
 Jennifer Lawrence
 Stephanie Lax
 Stephanie Layton
 Judy Le
 Danielle Lee
 Joanna Lee
 Kristina Lee
 Milly Legra
 Amy Leichtman
 Naomy Leis
 Jeanne Lemba
 Annie Leonard
 Anna Leslie
 Arwen Lewis
 Carrie Lewis
 Mandy Lewis
 Melissa Lewis
 Ellen Lief
 Samantha Lifson
 Amanda Lima
 Marleen Linares
 Heather Linde
 Kate Liverman
 Charlotte Loftus
 Danielle Logan
 Jaime Lynn Longo
 Ashley Loomis
 Rose Lopez
 Rosemarie Love
 Stephanie Lowitt
 Lisa Lucius
 Sarah Ludington
 Jodi Lustig
 Marianne Luther
 Sara Luttrell
 Korin Lykam
 Jenny Macaluso
 Michele Macaulay
 Liane MacGregor
 Nancy MacWhirter
 Aly Maderson Quinlog
 Autumn Madrano
 Danielle Maggio
 Susan Maguire
 Beth Maiden
 Jessica Mailander
 Lia Maitena
 Hannah Maitland
 Krystle Maki
 Lee Malleau
 Maria Mandel
 Aimee Marceau
 Susan Marine
 Mimi Marinucci
 Everett Maroon
 Hilary Marsh
 Deborah Martin
 Jordana Martin
 Sesha Martin
 Letty Martinez
 Kathryn Martinez-Gilbertson
 Ashley Marty
 Robin Marty
 Marina Marvich
 Mimi Massov
 Amanda Matthews
 Jillian Mattiuzzo
 Benji Mauer
 Kris Mayer
 Alison McCarthy
 Rashah McChesney
 Heather McCloskey
 Cara McConnell
 Maggi McConnell
 Allison McCracken
 Caroline McCulloch
 Francesca McDaniel
 Luke McDermott
 Maureen McDermott
 Sara McDermott
 Fiona McDonald
 Laura McFadden
 Ashley McFaul
 Ashley McGhee
 Molly McGlynn
 Isla McIntosh
 Laura McKenna
 Andrea McKenzie
 Maeve McKeown
 Julia McKinney
 Kelly McKisson
 Ruby McLellan
 Guenevere McMahon
 Guinevere McMichael
 Kelly McNeil
 Amanda McPeck
 Koreen McQuilton
 Katherine Meixner-Croft
 Geoff Melchor
 Zoe Meletis
 Lisa Mellman
 Ariana Mendez
 Chloe Menkes
 Saskia Mick
 Meghan Milinski
 Dana Miller
 Dorothy Miller
 Hillary Miller
 Emily Mills
 Cat Minowicz
 Samantha Mita
 Aviva Mitchell
 Eileen Moeller
 Jenny Moeller
 Sara Mohns
 Veronica Mollere
 Pooja Monon
 Anna Montes
 Rhoanna Montes
 Cheyenne Montgomery
 Natalie Monzyk
 April Moralba
 Nancy MacWhirter
 Barbara Moreno
 Chelsea Moriarty
 Stacey Morris
 Michelle Morris
 Anne Morrow
 Gail E. Morse
 Allison Mountjoy
 Anne Mul
 Megan Mulholland
 Victoria Muniz
 Emily Murphy
 K.B. Murray Wrenn
 Quillin Drew Musgrave
 Tracy Myers
 Joelle Nadle
 Natasha Naim
 Sarah Nankivell
 Rebecca Nann
 Laurie Naranch
 Nan Narbo
 Melissa Nascimento
 Leanna Nash
 Angela Needham
 Emily Neie
 Sambriddhi Nepal
 Rachel Newborn
 Hannah Newell
 Bec Newing
 Sarah Newton
 Mahalia Nicholas
 Hayat Nierenberg
 Nicole Nieves
 Lovisa Nilson
 Sunni Nishimura
 Samantha Nizzardo
 Caitlin Nobes
 Bree Norlander
 Stephanie Nunez
 Hayley Nunn
 Brenna O'Brien
 Suzanne O'Brien
 Elke O'Connor
 Jae Of Coursey
 Catherine Oki
 Olga Olikier
 Ellen Olker
 Heather Olmstead
 Karmen Olson
 Tracy Ongbemi
 Kieran Omara
 Ayomide Omobo
 Carla O'Neale
 Gretchen Opie
 Marta Owczarek
 Ozge Ozay
 Rachel Paczkowski
 Emily Page
 Jennifer Pagliughi
 Annemarie Papillon
 Ilya Parkins
 Melissa Partin
 Megan Patton
 Heather Paulson
 Tara Pavis
 Susanna Pavloska
 Nicole Payne
 Victoria Pedonti
 Nicole Pefley
 Katia Pellicciotta
 Cheri Percy
 Zulay Perez
 Skylar Perez-Grogan
 Lynn Peril
 Elizabeth Perini
 Arika Perry
 Devon Peterka
 Valerie Peters
 Lara Peterson
 Teafly Peterson
 Annika Hagley
 Douglas Phillips
 Paige Phillips
 Kelley Picasso
 Angela Piccini
 Amy Piedaloe
 Nina Pine
 Maeghan Pirie
 Amy Plitt
 T. Pomar
 Margo Porras
 Daniel Potvin-Leduc
 Jennifer Powell
 Kellie Powell
 Seaira Powell
 Stephanie Power
 Amanda Powtre
 Heather Prescott
 Patricia Price
 Emily Pringle
 Carlee Purdum
 Jhemari Alexis
 Quintana
 Andrew Quodling
 Maxwell Radi
 Colleen Rain
 Katherine Raines

- Kaylee Ramage
Rebecca Ramirez
Caitlin Rassenti
Mindy Rawls
Ellen Rayner
Elspeht Read
Paul-Newell Reaves
Laura Recker
Susanne Reece
Michelle Reed
Angela Reid
Katelin Reimers
Crystal Reinhardt
Diana Rempe
Samantha Renker
Emma Renold
Anna Reser
Autumn Reynolds
Allison Rice
Jennifer Ridley
Emma Ritch
Jeanne-Marie Ritter
Ines M. Rivera
Bonnie Robb
Kelly Robb
Jamie Roberts
Sarah Roberts
Kathleen Robertson
Lindsay Robertson
Andrew Robeson
Marija Robinson
Sara Rochford
Rachael Rockwell
Anne Rodems
Isabelle Rodriguez
Alyssa Rodriguez
Rossana Rodriguez
Jessica Roellig
Suzannah Rogan
Anne-Sophie Roger
Pete Roman
Taylor Romine
Thomas Romlov
Susanna Rönn
Vicki Rooker
Cristina Rosales
Jessica Rose
Marion Rosenfeld
Yael Rosenstock
Ellena Rosenthal
Kelly Roser
Toffer Ross
Ximena Rossato-Bennett
Jean Rossner
Erica Rotman
Savannah Rountree
Steph Routh
Amanda Rubin
Lisa Rudman
Jennie Runde
Anne Russell
Lauren Russo
Rebecca Ryan
Riika Saarinen
Kat Sabine
Amanda Sabo
Kayleigh Sacco
Regina Sackriider and
Yasmine Branden
Konstantine Salkeld
Lydia Saltzbart
Joshunda Sanders
Joanne Sandler
Lauren Sankovitch
Laura Sapergia
Kelsey Saragnese
Alison Sargent
Anita Sarkeesian
Camille Saunders
Kathy Saunders
H. Savigny
Julia Say
Jessica Scalzo
Beth Schechter
- Alli Schell
Catherine Schick
Jenn Schiffer
Janet Schinke
Lou Schlagheck
Anne Marie Schott
Janet Schroeder
Rae Schuller
Denise Schultz
Michelle K. Schulz
Christoph Schumacher
Andi Schwartz
Regan Schwartz
Kaitlin Scott
Anne Seath
Hilde Segond Von
Banchet
Angelina Seha
Lily Sehn
Kym Seletto
Sheryl Sensenig
Monica Serrano
Arlene Sgoutas
Soraya Shalforoosh
Suniti Sharma
Rebecca Shaykin
Sarah Roberts
Will Sheffer
Andrew Sheldon
Briana Shewan
Katie Shields
Vanessa Shields
Kari Ann Shiff
Shemeena Shraya
Julie Shuler
Renee Shure
Renee Sills
Stephanie Silvia
Brad Simm
Jaime Simmons
Taryn Simmons
Lara Sinangil
Laura Sinclair
Lorraine Sinden
Vera Sines
Kate Singerline
Karen Sisk
Cameron Sivertsen
Rebecca Skirvin
Sean Slattery
Slaven Slaven
Macrina Smart
Christine Smith
Erica Smith
Jennifer Smith
Jennifer Smith
Rebecca Smith
Taylor Smith
Cillian Smithline
Hrafnhildur Snaefriðar-
Og Gunnarsdóttir
Dorothy Snyder
Jay Sorensen
Alyce Souldre
Tiffany Southall
Mara Southorn
Erin Sparks
Liza Sparks
Sarah Spear
Sarah Spence
Tara Spencer
Calee Spinney
Andrew Spivack
Sarah Spurlock
Jane Stafford
Angela Stalcup
Natalie Stanco
Lisa Stanley
Abigail Starkovich
Christina Stathopoulos
Annie Staton-Prokop
Ellen Stearns
Jessica Steffens
Ashley Stein
- Elizabeth Steiner
Caitlin Steitzer
Kari Stemm-Wolf
Janet Stemmwedel
Elizabeth Stephenson
Rayette Sterling
Sadye Stern
Natalie Stigall
Susan Stoltenberg
Kali Strand
Cordelia Strandskov
Jessalynn Strauss
Deanna Straw
Roxanne Sukhan
Florence Sullivan
Lily Sullivan
Rachael Summers
Cassie Swindle
Meaghan Sykes
Melissa Tag
Kaylyn Talkington
Rachel Tamarin
Jamie Tanasiuk
Ranjeet Tate
Anastasa Taylor
Anne-Marie Taylor
Rebecca Taylor
Katie Terry
Nicole Tersigni
Adrienne Tessier
Michelle Teti-Beaudin
Josquin Texier
Vanessa Thibeault
Inga Thiemann
Susan Thieme
Amy Thomas
Jennifer Thomas
Shannon Thomas
Taylor Thomas
Jennifer Thompson
Tara Thomson
Majbritt Thorhaug
Grønvad
Rebecca Thornburley
Vera Sines
Kaitlyn Timmerman
Stuart Tinch
Zoe Tirado
Jacqui Titherington
Robyn Todd
Melody Tolson
Danaca Tomas
Becky Tombleson
Kristine Torset
Kathleen Towers
Jennifer Townsend
Hang Tran
Tracy Traut
Arnette Travis
Fanny Tremblay
Emily Treppenhauer
Maggie Trimbach
Katharine Trovato
Emily Truscott
Eva Tryde
Lauren Tuchman
Lizz Tucker
Heather Turnbull
Angharad Turner
Myroslava Tyzkvj
Jennifer Alexis Unno
Annie Unruh
Finn Upham
Nancy Urban
Leah Urbom
Chiara Rosa Valenzano
Jennifer Van Dale
Rebecca Van Koot
Katie Vandenheuvel
Heather Varian
Ren Vasiliev
William Vaughn
Stephanie Vazzano
Aria Velasquez
- Barbara Vergara
Caitlin Vestal
Helle Vibeke Lysdal
Robin Vican
Gemma Vidal
Kristin Vignona
Val Vilott
Liz Vincensi
Laura Volmert
Peter Walder
Kate Walford
Briana Walker
Regan Walker
Hannah Walker
Bee Walsh
Deborah Walsh
Christiana Walter
Elizabeth Walton
Anna Wang
Aylex Warmbier
Laura Warren
Wendy Warrington
Elizabeth Washburn
Christy Wasserman
Chloe Watson
Rebecca Weaver-Gill
Armelle Weil
Lauren Weinberg
Jonathan Weintraub
Lisa Weir
Kristen Welling
Ashley Wells
Charlotte Wells
Mackenzie Werner
Jennifer West
Samantha West
Tara West
Jennifer Westra
Dan Wheeler
Kevin Wheeler
Julia White
Stephanie White
Eleanor Whitney
Kate Whitney
Karen Whyte
Emily Wickline
Beth Wicklund
Kayleigh Wiebe
Laura Wiebe
Claire Wiese
Julie Wilbur
Sara Wilgaard Sinkjær
Sophie Wilkus
Megan Willesen
Patricia Williams
Alexandra Williamson
Jennifer Wilson
Lauren Wilson
Lisa Wilson
Mildred L. Wilson
Katrin Wintergerst
Lauren Withers
Megan Wittling
Brittan Witzel
April Wiza
Annie Wong
Amy Wood
Madeline Woolway
Kelly Wooten
Erin Wunker
Adrienne Wyatt
Sarah Wyer
Margaret Yardley
Vanessa Yarie
Kristi Yingling
Arlo Yirka
Jade Yong
Lisa York
Ashleigh Young
Amber Zanon
Jacqui Zeng
Tristan Zielke
Avery Zingel
Trudi Zundel
- Sarah Zussman
Elizabeth Zwicky
- POLLINATORS
(S8-S9)**
- Anonymous (60)
Kristi Abrecht
Sarah Acconcia
Valerie Achterhof
Daphne Adair
Abby Adams
Michael Adams
Rosa Adams
Lisa Aepffelbacher
Emma Agnew
Rachael Aguirre
Zaynah Akeel
Courtney Alban
Allison Albright
Kathryn Albury
Evelyn Alcalá
Huey Helene Alcaro
Melissa Aldana
Amanda Alexander
Jamie Alexander
Rachel Alexander
Natalie Alfaras
Kari Alire
Alicia Allen
Kirsten Allen
Rebecca Allen
Samantha Allen
Chloe Allred
Hannah Almetzer
Zoe Altenberg
Andrea Alvarez
Kirsti Alvis
Sarah Amador
Gabrielle Amato
Dawn Amodeo
Elizabeth Anajovich
Julia Anaya
Erin Andersen
Hilary Andersen
Michael Anes
Ashley Anewalt
Leigh Angel
Laura Angell
Brittany Anjio
Iolani Antonio
Danielle Antosz
Corinna Archer Kinsman
Sage Argyros
Jess Arnold
Nessa Arnold
Julie Arnzen
Julia Aromatorio
Colleen Arrey
Lakeishua Arthur
Molly Ashline
Hayley Atwood
Crystal Audi
Alyssa August
Sarah Augusta
Sheri Austin
Nancy Avelino
Mari Avicoll
Annalise Ayala
Lisa Ayala
Reiko Aylesworth
Sarah Azaransky and
Kevin Keenan
Rebekah Babb
Lindsay Baber
Zoe Bachman
Anelana Bachmann
Jill Bailey
Sarah Bailey
Alison Baker
Jane Baldinger
Hannah Baldo
Julia Balén
Lauren Ballard
- Sarah Banh
Gabrielle Bankston
Briana Barajas
Chela Barajas
Brandy Barber
Ashleigh Barbe-Winter
Bridgitte Barclay
Courtney Paige Barnett
Amy Barnette
Jana Baró González
Elyse Barone
Coleen Barr
Hailey Barr
Meredith Barrett
Grace Barrie
Gleni Bartels
Abby Bartholomew
Willard Bartlett
Karolina Bartosik
Carla Bartow
Rebecca Barwick
Penelope Bass
Amanda Bates
Caitlin Bates
Jessica Bathurst
Heather Batson
Alex Bauer
Althea Bauernschmidt
Caroline Bayne
Tamara Beauboeuf
Cassie Becker
Erin Becker
Lisa Bednarski
Sarah Beecroft
Debra Beeson
June Behar
Cassie Bell
Christine Bell
Kriz Bell
Margret Bell
Michelle Belmont
Kathleen Bender
Kenna Benitez
Christine Benjamin
Sarah Benkendorf
Ulla Benny
Jasmine Benson
Irene Benvenuti
Heather Berg
Zachary Bergeron
Emily Berman
Marirose Bernali
Sarah Bernardini
Meg Bernstein
Robin Bernstein
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Jennifer Bielenberg
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Clementine Binks
Bitsy Biron
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Sonnet Blanton
Natalie Blardony
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Sarah Blount
Abigail Blumenthal
Davis Boardman
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Elizabeth Bolin
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Lisa Bonanno
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Marissa Bond
Michelle Bond
Elizabeth Bonesteel
Hannah Bonner
Melissa Bonnici
Noor Bontz
Alyssia Borsella
Michelle Borum
Molly Bostrom
Samantha Botz
Megan Boudreaux
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Sandrine Bourget-
Lapointe
Rachel Bower
Heather Bowlan
Cheryl Bowles
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Riley Boyd
Raechel Boys
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Samantha Bradley
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Gina Breedlove
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Shanice Brim
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Lillian Brown
Tera Brown
Elizabeth Brownlow
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Katarina Brozman
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Olivia Buchli
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Kae Burdo
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Ursula Burger



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- Tieanna Burton-Sharp
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- Jenna Butz
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- Meagan Cahuasqui
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- Hannah Caudill
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- Samantha Clarke
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- Destiny Dejesus
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- Uvaldo Deleon
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- Elizabeth Dellner
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- Tracy Garcia
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- Alexandra Gardner-Nelson
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- Amorette Garner-Williams
- Callie Garrett
- Leslie Garrison
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- Beverly Garside
- Emma Garst
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- Molly Gauthier
- Madeleine Gazzolo
- Bemnet Gebrechistos
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- Britany Geoghegan
- Ashlee George
- Emily Getsay
- Mary Gezo
- Ananya Chemawati
- Megan Gianniny
- Holly Gilbin
- Rachel Gilbert
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- Brooke Gilmore
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- Robin Gitelman
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- John Glucksmann
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- Tobey Goldfarb
- Bria Goldwire
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- Nicole Gonzales
- Colleen Gonzalez
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- Zuri Gordon
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- Kate Graham
- Leilani Graham-Laidlaw
- Savannah Grandey
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- Lorraine Gray
- Lachrista Greco
- Christie Greeley
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- Hannah Greene
- Mira Greene
- Zoe Greenfield
- Claire Greenlee
- Jeanette Greenlee
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- Tylar Gregg
- Laura Griesinger
- Adison Griffith
- Amy Grilliot
- Stephanie Grimm
- Brandy Grondine
- Eleven Groothuis
- Karly Grossman
- Laura Grossman
- James Group
- Misty Grow
- Liz Gruwley
- Letizia Guglielmo
- Ellen Guimaraes
- Emily Guise
- Paul Gullam
- Deah Gulley
- Elizabeth Gulsvig
- Jenny Gumbert
- Kristin Gupta
- Gabrielle Gurian
- Hanna Gustafson
- Stephanie Gustafson
- Andrea Gutierrez
- Wendy Gutierrez
- Emily Gwynn
- Ealasaad Haas
- Monah Habibullah
- Brandy Hadden
- Laura Hadden
- Ian Haffling
- Kristen Hagerty
- Megan Hahn
- Rebecca Hains
- Sally Haldorson
- Amy Hale
- Laurel Hall
- Lauren Hall
- Priscilla Hall
- Rita Hall
- Lauren Hall Vazquez
- Oak Hallett
- Peta Halloran
- Lesley Halm
- Molly Halpin
- Eleanor Hamilton
- Ricki Hamilton
- Lindsay Hamm
- Stephanie Hammerwol

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Agnes Hapka	Natalie Hofmeister	Melisa Jensen	Katherine Keys	Liz Lampman	Karstan Lovorn	Elaina Mataya
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Olivia Harris	Rachel Holloman	Cheryl Johnson	Jillian Kincaid	Erin Lane	Marianne Luft	Wendy Matthews
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Mackenzie Hatfield	Lynne Hopper	Melissa Johnson	Meghan Kiss	Kristiana Lapo	Korin Lykam	Erica Mayo
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Sarah Hausman	Caroline Hostetler	Myra Jolivet	Alyssa Kleynen	Alicia Lawrence	Lisa MacFarlane	Lisa McAllister
Sydney Haven	Carolyn Houk	Andrea Jones	Jax Ko	Jessi Lawrence	Meaghan MacPherson	Meghan McAllister-
Jackson Hawkins	Sierra Houk	Jennifer Jones	Pei Chuan Koay	Annie Lawson	Sophia Madana	O'Day
Karen Hawkins	Sarah House	Kelsey Jones	Abigail Koch	Sue Lazor	Ej Madarasz	Kt McBratney
Laura Hawkins	Stephanie House	Lauren Jones	Lizz Koch	Caroline Leaman	Carly Madden	Megan McCaffrey
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Karen Healy	Alanna Hoyer-Leitzel	Madison Jordan	Michele Kogon	Hannah Lee	Allison Maggart	Taylor
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Karalyn Heath	Amanda Huber	Michelle Joyner	Melissa Koop	Haley Leibovitz	Claire Magula	Monica McCormick
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Emily Henderson	Mary Humphreys	Rai Kampmeyer	Margot Kotler	Allison Levans	Victoria Mak	Chelsea McDonnell
Jamie Henderson	Chelsea Hundey	Ashley Kan	Rachel Koury	Judith Levitt	Elizabeth Malcolm	Evelyn McDonnell
Katherine Henderson	Andrea Hunnicutt	Meeghan Kane	Anna Kovatcheva	Nicole Lewis	Josie Maldonado	Angelina McDowell
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 Nooreen Meghani
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 Shelley Miller
 Shelly Miller
 Tera Miller
 Kristin Milligan
 Chantelle Milliken
 Chris Mills
 Emily Mills
 Julia Minker
 Christine Mitchell
 Hannah Mitchell
 Melody Mitchell
 Morgan Mitchell
 Cristina Mitra
 Lauren Mittelman
 Katherine Mock
 Amanda Modell
 Kasey Moelhman
 Phoebe Mogharei
 Nasia Mohamed Ullas
 Sarah Molitoris
 Christina Mollett
 Elizabeth Monkus
 Catherine Monro
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 Patty Montesi
 Melissa Montez
 Elizabeth Montoya
 Reineke Moon
 Kailin Mooney
 Kathryn Moore
 Melanie Moore
 Meriste Moore
 Nicole Moore
 Rebekah Moore
 Shelby Moore
 Rachel Moorehead
 Mellyssa Rae Moors
 Ruby Mora
 Erica Moran
 Laurel Moreland
 Jessica Moreno
 Jamie Morgan
 Melanie Morgan
 Sally Morgan
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 Cornelia Morley
 Valeria Moro
 Cait Morris
 Jill Morris
 Kelsey Morris
 Leah Morrison
 Erin Morrissey
 Shaez Mortimer
 Lynn Morton
 Ashleigh Mott
 Elizabeth Mott
 Kianna Mott-Smith
 Sarah Mulhern
 Bronwen Mullin
 Krista Mullinnix
 Sheila Mulvey
 Natalie Munderville
 Susan Murai
 Joseph Muriello
 Ali Murphy
 Ebony Murphy-Root
 Victoria Mycues
 Rosemary Myers
 Rozlin Myers
 Vikiy Myers
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 Carlie Mzik
 Madeline Nall
 Gauri Nandedkar
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 Stephanie Nardi-Cyrus
 Zoe Naseef
 Elke Nash
 Avital Norman Nathman
 Jay Nations
 Kirstin Naumann
 Jordan Nawrocki
 Ginger Nealon
 Hilary Neff
 Kristina Neihouse
 Zoe Nelms
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 Tara Nelson
 Jessica Neufeld
 Amanda Neumann
 Sara Neuner
 Jillian Neustel
 Francie Nevill
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 Madeline Newchurch
 Amelia Newman
 Caroline Newman
 Rachel Newman
 Sarah Newman
 Shonet Newton
 Angel Nguyen
 Tuyet Nguyen
 Hayden Nicholson
 Erin Nielsen
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 Cherie Noble
 Robin Nodland
 Erica Nolin
 Fiona Noonan
 Margaret Norcross-Devin
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 Meghan Norsigian
 Kendra Northrup
 Brent Northup
 Jane Norton
 Brigid Nunan
 Julie Charette Nunn
 Julia Nusbaum
 Claire Nystrom
 Kylie O'Connor
 Erin Oakley
 Emily Oberdorfer
 Whitney Oberg
 Jeralyn O'Brien
 Kelley O'Brien
 Shaun O'Connor
 Stacie O'Connor
 Caroline O'Connor
 Thomas
 Marissa O'Day
 Carrie O'Dell
 Tiffany O'Donnell
 Ceylan Odunkesenler
 Kiva Offenholley
 Lisa Oldoski
 Maureen Olejniczak
 Flynnne Olivarez
 Natalie Olivo
 Anya Olsen
 Krista Olson
 Maryanne Olson
 Sarah Olson
 Joseph Ondrechen
 Claire O'Neill
 Annie Oosterwyk
 Ilayda Orankoy
 Ana Ordonez
 Julie O'Reilly
 Jessa Orluk
 Cynthia Ortiz
 Nicole Ortiz
 Meg Osborn
 Holly Otis
 Oriana Ott
 Sophie Ouellette-Howitz
 Doyin Oyeniyi
 Winona Packer
 Stacey Padilla
 Jennifer Page
 Anne Painter
 Brenna Painter
 Jessica Palardy
 Kate Palisay
 Celia Palmer
 Jennifer Palmer
 Jessica Palmer
 Ashley Paltauf
 Samantha Panepinto
 Nichole Paquet
 Miel Paredes
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 Alison Parks
 Tama Parris
 Rachel Parrish
 Claire Parsons
 Kelly Pashby
 Erin Pasquinelli
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 Tina Patton
 Sara Pattschull
 Ella Pauly
 Kimberly Paxton-Hagner
 Katie Payne
 Gretchen Peak
 Susan Pearson
 Linsey Pecikonis
 Julie Pecoraro
 Chris Pederson
 Christina Pederson
 Maria Peoples
 Christina Pelech
 Jennifer Peltak
 Dalhia Pena
 Mel Pena
 Florinda Pendley Vasquez
 Kaitlin Penn
 Lyn Pentecost
 Kara Peralta
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 Alison Pereto
 Cristina Perez
 Angeliqe Perian
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 Elizabeth Perkins
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 Piper Perry
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 Stephani Pescitelli
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 Alexis Peterka
 Bailly Peters
 Megan Peterson
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 Leigh Polodna
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 Stefania Pomponi
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 Madeleine Poore
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 Jillian Portelance
 Erica Porter
 Taylor Porterfield
 Emily Porth
 Yolanda Posada
 Charisse Poston
 Dallyce Potess
 Polly Poupore
 Zoe Power
 Toni Pragov
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 T.W. Prescott
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 Erin Publow
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 Hannah Pustejovsky
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 Bethany Qualls
 Colleen Quesnell
 Katherine Quick
 Amanda Quinn
 Dawn Quinn
 Rachel Quinn
 Shannon Quinn
 Abigail Quint
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 Betsy Rack
 Deanna Radio
 Morgan Rains
 Renuka Ramachandran
 Rachel Ramaswamy
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 Debra Reagan
 Betsy Reed
 Stacy Reed
 Trystan Reese and
 Biff Chaplow
 Katrina Regino
 Roisin Reid
 Caroline Reilly
 Berlyn Reisenauer
 Kat Reiser
 Kaitlin Reiss
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 Courtney Remacle
 Katherine Repage
 Caitlin Rethwish
 Rebekka Reuter
 Taylor Reyes
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 Cornelia Reynolds
 Elizabeth Reynolds
 Keisa Reynolds
 Kelsey Reynolds
 Zachariah Reynolds
 Eboni Rhone
 Taylor Rhyne
 Mary Rian
 Colette Ricci
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 Katie Rice
 Jeanna Rice-Briede
 David Rich
 Nicole Richards
 Margaret Richey
 Margaret Richter
 Abbie Rickard
 Lauren Ridenour
 Shannon Ridgway
 Maryellen Rieck
 Adele Rife
 Megan Rigsby
 Erin Riley
 Alexandra Ring
 Christine Rinne
 Tassandra Rios-Scelso
 Brie Ripley
 Eva Rippeteau-Chavira
 Hannah Risser-Sperry
 Diane Ritchey
 Emily Ritter
 Jessica Riviere
 Signe Rix Berthelin
 Tessa Rixon
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 Molly Roberts
 Prudence F. Roberts
 Rosalind Roberts
 Vanessa Roberts
 Brandi Robertson
 Brenna Robertson
 Kaitlyn Robertson
 Chelsea Robinson
 Emily Robinson
 Erin Robinson
 Heather Robinson
 Julia Robinson
 Rachel Rockey
 Susan Rodarme
 Sylvia Rodemeyer
 Amberleigh Rodriguez
 Andrea Rodriguez
 Chelsea Rodriguez
 Yamile Rodriguez
 Vivian Rodriguez
 Araguaney Rodriguez
 Da Silva
 Lilian Rogers
 Rachel Rogers
 Lauren Roland
 Bridget Rollinson
 Zoe Rolly-Keef
 Katherine Romaker
 Alysha Rooks
 Cheryl Rose
 Shannon Rose
 Willow Rosen
 Jamie Rotante
 Cherise Rowan
 Margo Rowder
 Sarah Rowe
 Nicole Rowlette
 Yajaneyts Ruano
 Megan Rubenstein
 Debra Rubin
 Kari Rudd
 Nicole Rudisill
 Nicole Ruff
 Andrea Rufo
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 Larissa Rugeberg
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 A.I. Ruiz-Sanabria
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 Cynthia Ruse
 Chaya Rusk
 Jessica Rusk
 Candice Russell
 Anna Russett
 Aran Kathleen Ruth
 Hillary Ruth
 Meghan Rutherford
 Kat Rutkin
 Tamara Rutledge
 Jessica Ryan
 Kristy Ryan
 Leslie Ryan
 Sana S.
 Jody Saarmaa
 Nina Sabak
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 Margaret Salisbury
 Lura Salm
 Shauna Salustri
 Marye Salvaggio
 Emilie Samuelsen
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 Christine Sandvold
 Nico Sanfilippo
 Supriya Sanyal
 Stephanie Sanz
 Kyler Sares
 Sonya Satinsky
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 Michelle Schackman
 Lauren Schaefer
 Kristen Schafer
 Melissa Schapero
 Jaime Schatz
 Bep Schippers
 Lili Schliesser
 Jamie Schlosser
 Hayley Schlueter
 Morgan Schmehl
 Kayla Schmidt
 Sara Schmitt
 Hunter Schmock
 Cassandra Schmutz
 Lena Beth Schneider
 Victoria Schneider
 Rachel Schriber
 Leah Schroeder
 Anke Schuetler
 Elizabeth Schulenburg
 Clare Schum
 Martha Schupp
 Robin Schwartz
 Jessica Scolnic
 Amber Scott
 Emily Scott
 Liz Scott
 Katie Scott
 Peyton Scott
 Suzanne Scott
 Cynthia Scovel
 Jordan Scruggs
 Myra Seaman
 Erin Searle
 Elizabeth Seeger
 Abigail Segura
 Christine Self
 Megan Selheim
 Jilienne Sellner
 Alison Semanision
 Annalise Servin
 Danielle Sewell
 Emily Sexton
 Tara Sexton
 Cassie Shaban
 Emily Shaffer
 Katherine Shaffer
 Sabeena Shah
 Kathryn Shallenberger
 Raina Shannon
 Leah Shapiro
 Kate Shaughnessy
 Alanna Shaw
 Monica Sheets
 Summer Sheker
 Kyrstin Shelley
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 Chavonn Shen
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 Leah Shepard
 Madison Shepard
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 Yoohna Shin
 Diane Shinberg
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 Lori Shinseki
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 Rachael Shockey
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 Abagael Shrader
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 Makena Silva
 Arielle Silvan
 Rachel Silverman
 Brittany Simoncelli
 Jen Simonetti
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 Corinne Singer
 Kamardip Singh
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 Isabel Siragusa
 Melodie Sisk
 Lisa Sisler
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 Christi Siver
 Ashley Skaff
 Courtney Skaggs
 John Skorick
 Kirsten Sloan
 Kayla Sly
 Suzanne Smigielski
 Katie Smiley
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 Jennifer Smith
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 Kim Smith
 Kris Smith
 Maggie Smith
 Sabrina Smith
 Sarah Alexandria Smith
 Simon Smith
 Sophia Smith
 Stephanie Smith
 Linda Smith Schaefer
 Stephanie Smolarski
 Emma Snape

Tricia Snell
 Samantha Snively
 Daniella Snyder
 Elizabeth Sohne
 Sojo Sojourner
 Lizzie Sords
 Alyssa Soren
 Katherine Sorensen
 Amy Spalding
 Nicole Speakman
 Maggie Spear
 Lizzy Speece
 Amanda Spencer
 Heather Sperry
 Katherine Spiess
 Fredrika Sprengle
 Amanda Staller
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 Sarah Stangelo
 Eliana Stanislawski
 Amanda Stanley
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 Lydia Stazen Michael
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 Kristin Steele
 Emily Steelhammer
 Meg Stehlik
 Mariel Stein
 Sally Stein
 Thomas Stein
 Alexis Steinbach
 Emily Jane Steinberg
 Jeff Steitzer
 Arianna Stelling
 Jennifer Stepanek
 Kristan Stephens
 Tracy Stephens
 Lara Stephenson
 Elizabeth Stevens
 Nikki Stevens
 Catriona Stewart
 Christina Stewart
 Laurel Stewart
 Leah Stewart
 Julie Still-Rolin
 Natalie Stinson
 Michelle Stoklosa
 Aoife Stone
 Courtney Stone
 Karoletha Stone
 Leighanna Stone
 Hannah Storck
 Katie Storck
 Rachael Storey
 Kari Storm
 Leslie Stoupas
 Katie Stout
 Kaitlin Strain
 Erin Stratton
 Ellen Straw
 Hannah Streetman
 Lauren Strella
 Zoe Strickland
 Anneka Strong
 Jessica Strong
 A.J. Strosahl
 Amanda Stuermer
 Jenny Suchland
 Kayla Sudduth
 Michelle Sudekris
 Marnie Sullivan
 Tiffany Sumner
 Sarah Suniga
 Rachel Sutherland
 Claire Sutton
 Skylar Sutton
 Melissa Swank
 Sarah Swanson
 Annette Swartz
 Corrine Sweet
 Pip Sweikert
 Karen Swietek
 Magdalena Swioklo

Sandi Swiss
 Catherine Sykes
 Vicky Syred
 Rosemary Sze
 Anna Szilagy
 Karen Taheri
 Maddie Tait
 Corina Talavera
 Johanna Tan
 Madeline Taterka
 Carrie Taylor
 Kristin Taylor
 Melonie Taylor
 Neil Taylor
 Pace Taylor
 Sarah Taylor
 Shayna Taylor
 Tania Te Hira-Mathie
 Miss Celeste Teel
 Stephanite Tell
 Lindsay Terhaar
 Patricia Terhune
 Katherine Terry
 Laura Terwilliger
 Rachel Teten
 Nancy Thebaut
 Allison Thomas
 Beatrice Thomas
 Kelly Thomas
 Carla` Thompson
 Jesse T.
 Katrina Thompson
 Emily Jane Thompson
 Ash Thoms
 Bridget Thornton
 Jennifer Stepanek
 Kristan Stephens
 Tracy Stephens
 Lara Stephenson
 Elizabeth Stevens
 Nikki Stevens
 Catriona Stewart
 Christina Stewart
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 Leah Stewart
 Julie Still-Rolin
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 Tiffany Sumner
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 Rachel Sutherland
 Claire Sutton
 Skylar Sutton
 Melissa Swank
 Sarah Swanson
 Annette Swartz
 Corrine Sweet
 Pip Sweikert
 Karen Swietek
 Magdalena Swioklo

Emily Vasseur
 Brittany Vaughan
 Mercedes Vaughn
 Kim Vaupel
 Haley Vecchiarelli
 Jezreel Vedua-Cardenas
 Kimberly Vega
 Natasha Vianna
 Ashley Vigil
 Camille Vill
 Mellissa Villalba
 Christine Vilutis
 Kellie Vinal
 Geoff Vincent
 Fai Visuthicho
 Charli Vogt
 Erin Vonnahme
 Ann Vought
 Alison Vu
 Emily Wade
 Heather Wade
 Theresa Wade
 Resie Waechter
 Anna Wagman
 Amy D. Wagner
 Kit Wagner
 Donnae Wahl
 Britt Wahlin
 Todd Waits
 Erin Walden
 Demi Walker
 Kaitlin Walker
 Ashlyn Wallace
 Kris Wallace
 Taylor Walle
 Jessica Wallin
 Tanisha Wallis
 Aisling Walsh
 Emily Walsh
 Lisa Walsh
 Rachel Walsh
 Emily Wanamaker
 Jill Wantland
 Rev. Cheryl Ward
 Bonnie Warford
 Rachel Warner
 Ramona Warren
 Scotti Warren
 Anna Washenko
 Jamie Wasilewski
 Blayne Waterloo
 Aubrey Watkins
 Heather Watkins
 Laura Watson
 Kelly Wavrin
 Danielle Wayda
 Curtis Wayne
 Tiffany Wayne
 Kelly Weatherby
 Helen Weathers
 Audra Weaver
 Mika Weaver
 Sarah Weaver
 Anna Claire Weber
 Jennifer Weber
 Christina Weber Knopp
 Bianca Weiler
 Katy Tyler
 Mary Weiss
 Brennin Weiswerda
 Jennifer Welch
 Emily Wells
 Kellie Wells
 Emily Wenzel
 Kristen West
 Daria Whalen
 Lizeth Whaley
 Emma Whatman
 Maureen Whitcomb
 Jessica White
 Jessica White
 Kelley White
 Kelsey White
 Laurie White
 Bridget Whitney

Jen Whittton
 Helen Whitty
 Joel Wick
 Catrice Wickham
 Kristen Wieliczka
 Cat Wiest
 Judi Wigren-Slack
 Rose Wilcox
 Siobhan Wilde
 Hallie Will
 Tajalei Willard
 Alexis Willey
 Angel Williams
 Cobretti Williams
 Heather Williams
 Jacqueline Williams
 Jami-Lin Williams
 Kelly Williams
 Levanna Williams
 Margaret Williams
 Meaghan Williams
 Megan Williams
 Melinda Williams
 Corrie Willis
 Alexis Wilson
 Ally Wilson
 Amanda Wilson
 Andi Wilson
 Bailee Wilson
 Erin Walden
 Julie Wilson
 Tiffany Wilson
 Dana Winkler
 Julia Wirth
 Michelle Wirth
 Ingrid Wisely
 Alex Wittman
 Monica Wittstock
 Emily Woehle
 Gus Wolff
 Shannon Wolfrum
 Susan Wolfson
 Samantha Wood
 Molly Woodbury
 Corinne Woods
 Kathryn Woods
 Lauren Woody
 Janet Wooldrige
 Marti Woolford
 Caroline Woolmington
 Eliza Worden
 Sarah Worzer
 Kylie Wray
 Sophia Wrench
 Alexis Wright
 Heather Wright
 Jennifer Wright
 Kathi Wright
 Laura Wu
 Jessica Wuebker
 Lesley Wynn
 Cindy Xue
 Lenore Yaeger
 Wendy Yamilett
 Rachel Yamrus
 Briana Yancey
 Summer Yasoni
 Fuk Yat Cher Chow
 Tina Yeamans
 Kara Yegge
 Emily Yoder
 Christine Yoon
 Grace Yoshida
 Madolin Yoshikane
 Britney Young
 Christina Young
 Emily Young
 Erica Young
 Sarah Young
 Tiffany Young
 Vanessa Young
 Kelly Youngberg
 Christine Youngs
 Amy Yourd

Lydia Yousief
 Colleen Yout
 Mc Yturralde
 Beth Yurosko
 Jessica Yusuf
 Candice Zablan
 Kristen Zapalac
 Martha Zaragoza
 Bianca Zaransky
 Martha Zawacki
 Emily Zaynard
 Cornell Zbikowski
 Erika Zeidhack
 Jill Zekanis
 Aubrey Zill
 Mackenzie Zirk
 Lindsey Zischkale
 Katrina Zwicker
 Melanie Zynel

BUSY BEES
(S5-S7)
 Anonymous (53)
 Rebecca Aaberg
 Matthew Abely
 Danyel Addes
 Reena Agarwal
 Carla Agnesi
 Natalie Agresta
 Laura Ahking
 Minna Ahlers
 Maryann Aita
 Chris Albery-Jones
 Mary Alexander
 Eleanor and Warren Allen
 Noelle Allen
 Jenna Allgeier
 Destiny Allison
 Lindsay Amer
 Emily Anderson
 Lisa Anderson
 Michelle D. Anderson
 Suzanne B. Anderson
 Tami Anderson
 Lia Boyle
 Danielle Braden
 Ann Braithwaite
 Ara Brancamp
 Christen Brandt
 Angie Branham
 Jennifer Brannen
 Olivera Bratic
 Lauren Bratslavsky
 Kristy Brehm
 Sarah Breier
 Amanda Breniser
 Shannon Brenner
 Allison Brimmer
 Melissa Brinks
 Rose Patryce Britton
 Sara Brodzinsky
 Sarah Bronson
 Ann Brown
 Christine Brown
 Christy Brown
 Dey Brown
 Hannah Brown
 Heather Brown
 Jessica Brubaker
 Kathryn Bruin
 Greg Bryant
 Diane Bryden
 Cory Budden
 Kristen Burgess
 Kathryn Burke
 Neva Burnley
 Alison Butler
 Frances Buzzard
 Ria Cagampang
 Hannah Cairns
 Julia Calagiovanni
 Carly Calbreath
 Claire Calderon

Malissa Calderon
 Aine Calgario
 Chelsea Callas
 J.M. Calle
 Kelcie Campbell
 Shawn Campbell
 Daniela Campos
 Megan Cannella
 Rachel Canoun
 Emily Capettini
 Stephanie Cardwell
 Heather Cargill
 Allison Carleton
 Nicole Carlson
 Tessa Carlson
 Desiree Caro
 Rachel Casiano
 Alexandra Catibayan
 Natalie Caudle
 Joanne Cavin
 Andie Celerio
 Deboki Chakravarti
 Eli Chamberlain
 Megan Chambers
 Suzette Chan
 Geraldine Cheng
 Siyu Chia
 Melinda Chow and
 Theresa Zelasko
 Sylvia Chrisney
 Sarah Ciras
 Nicole Clark
 Jennifer Clarke
 Sharon Clarke
 Brenna Clarke Gray
 Jilli Cohen
 Rebecca Cobre
 Elena Cohen
 Melissa Bourdon-King
 Katryn Bowman
 Sherrie Bowser
 Caitlin Boyle
 Lia Boyle
 Danielle Braden
 Ann Braithwaite
 Ara Brancamp
 Christen Brandt
 Angie Branham
 Jennifer Brannen
 Olivera Bratic
 Lauren Bratslavsky
 Kristy Brehm
 Sarah Breier
 Amanda Breniser
 Shannon Brenner
 Allison Brimmer
 Melissa Brinks
 Rose Patryce Britton
 Sara Brodzinsky
 Sarah Bronson
 Ann Brown
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 Christy Brown
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 Greg Bryant
 Diane Bryden
 Cory Budden
 Kristen Burgess
 Kathryn Burke
 Neva Burnley
 Alison Butler
 Frances Buzzard
 Ria Cagampang
 Hannah Cairns
 Julia Calagiovanni
 Carly Calbreath
 Claire Calderon

Jenifer Danes	Carolyn Fisher	Claire Haaf	Jennifer Hutchinson	Julie Klein	Sara Lyons	Katie Miller
Tayja Danger	Hannah Fisher	Amy Hacker	Ella Hyland	Kat Kline	Nell Maccoll	Meaghan Miller
Karyn Daniels	Paloma Fitzpatrick	Erin Hahn	Huckleberry Dandelion	Kathy Kniep	Marta Macdonald	Patricia Miller
Marci Daniels	Justin Flagel	Laura Hahn	Michelle Ibarra	Huaising Cindy Ko	Carmen Machado	Shannon Miller
Nat Daniels	Sophia Muriel Flemming	Liana P. Hails	Kaitlyn Ickes	Ceren Kocaman	Annie Madigan	Poppy Milliken
Charlotte Dann	Jacquelin Foggiano	Ann Halbert	Tanya Ilarde	Christiane Koehler	Nora Madison	Eric Milstein
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Lucy Dao	M Forootan	Bella Hall	Theresa Ireland	Katie Koivisto	Alice Magdziak	Emma Missouri
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Kiya Davolt	Parnee Frederick	Larissa Haluszka-Smith	Sarah Jacobs	Kristen Koski	Mark Manausa	Rachel Monteagudo
Ella Dawson	Heather Frei	Leslie Kathleen Hankins	Carrie Jacobson	Kate Kosturski	Natalie Mangiaracina	Anne Moore
Helen De Main	Nadine Friedman	Amy Hanna	Kelly Jacques	Karen Koy	Koren Manrique	Christine Moore
Laura De Waal	Rosa Friedman	Melissa Hannah	Azra Jakupovic	Diana-Ashley Krach	David Mansfield	Jane Moore
Laura Deavers	Hannah Friesen	Claire Hannum	Lauren Jankowski	Maximilian B. Kral	Sarah Manvel	Janine Moore
Kris Debode	Stephanie Frye	Kristin Harding	Lauren Jasko	Bridget Kratz	Ashley Manzo	Debbi Moran
Kendra Decolo	Rachel Fudge	Jessica Haro	Jennifer Jaynes	Sara Marini	Jamie Marks	Francesca Morgan
Christian Deegan	Shawn Furst	Maya Harper	Lauren Jefferson	Desirae Krell	Lisa Marshall	Kelly Morrell
Allison Defren	Jennifer Fykes	Shannon Harper	Bridgette Jessen	Angela Kreuser	Holly Martin	Eva Moss
Melinda Dejongh	Whitney Gall	Laura Harrington	Stacy Job	Laura Krier	Kerry Martin	Kate Mossburg
Chelsea Del Rio	Kathleen Gallagher Elkins	Catherine Harris	Chelsea Johnson	Laureen Kunches	Jessica Martin-Trulen	Rachel Moulder
Michael Delue	Heather Galles	Dylan Harris	Kathryn Johnson	Sophie Kunert	Kathy Martorano	Kiersten Mounce
Sarah Delury	Michelle Ganow-Jones	Emily Harris	Valerie Jean Johnson	Robin Kurz	Jacqueline Mason	Leila Munson
Avery Dement	Kelly Garbato	Kathleen Harris	Lia Johnston	Kathy Kwon	Laura Mason-Marshall	Megan Murdock
Allison Dennis	Rebecca Garcia	Lynn Harris	Rachel Johnston	Kya Kyzart	Alex Mathison	Kristin Murnane
Kyra Detone	Lillie Gardner	Sasha Harris-Cronin	Claire Jones	Davia Labarre	Larissa Mattei	Laura Murphy
Searah Deysach	Bree Garland	Erika Hartman	Adrienne Joy	Beatriz Lacombe	Alana Matthews	Erin Murray
Debra Dickey	Karen Garst	Lindsey Hartung	Angie Joyce	Maren Laliberty	Kelly Matthews	Jennifer Myers
Melissa Dinwiddie	Monica Gasey	Shannon Harwood	Shannon Joyce	Allegra Lambert	Abby Mattison	Sarah Myers
Diana Direiter	Emily Gaudet	Amber Hatfield	Nicole Juan	Savannah Lampley	Cynthia Mayani	Susan Myers
Melissa Dittrich	Emily Gaudette	Jenny Hatfield	Sara Julian	Elena Lamprich	Ashley McAllister	Anne Myles
Hollister Dixon	Anastasia Geffe	Douglas Hausladen	Anthony Jutz	Margaret Lancelot	Annie McCabe	Alyssa Nabors
Robin Dolan	Brittany Gendron	Kathryn Hauste	Soad Kader	Shoshanna Lansberg	Erin McCallum	Lisha Nadkarni
Leah Dolgoy	Lisa Gidley	Tamara Haywood	Arnold Kahn	Laura Larson	Emily McCarty	Tim Nafziger
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Jessica Dorey	Jamie Gilyazetdinov	Leigh Hellman	Sue Kaliszewska	Nephthalie Lauture	Nicole McClendon	Charissa Nay
Julie Dorn	Kayla Ginsburg	Christina Hendricks	Kim Kaliszewski	Sophie Lavoie	Kelsey McComas	Sarah Nealon
Barbara Dougherty	Noemi Giszpenc	Kirsty Hendry	Jessica Kandler	Kelsey Lawrence	Suzanne McCormack	Michaela Neeley
Cathy Doyle	Rebecca Glassman	Rebecca Henkelman	Rebecca Glassman	Dannielle Laws	Meredith McCullough	Diana Neidecker
Rebecca Dreke	Jessica Glennon	Bianca Hennessy	Shannon Henry	Mindy Lawson	Linnea McCully	Jamie Nelson
Corinne Druhan	Amanda Goad	Shannon Henry	Elisabeth Goebel	Nicole Le Boeuf	Shannon McDonnell	K. Nelson
Catherine Duchastel	Trisha Goerlitz	Victoria Herd	Desiree Herrera	Lori Leaumont	Meghan McFarland	Laura Nemett
Andrea Duffy	Cassandra Gogreve	Elizabeth Hewitt	Elizabeth Hewitt	Layne Lebahn	Samantha McGavin	Diana Nesin
Lauren Dunnington	Lauren Goodfard	Caitlin Hickman	Steve Katz	Amy Lebowitz	Joan McGilton	Matthew Newsted
Jessica Dyment	Rita Gonsalves	Sarah Higginbotham	Kathy Kavanaugh	Alex Lee	Nicole McGrath	Jasmine Nickel
Lisa Dzera	Natalia Gonzales	Cecily Hill	Abby Kaye	Celeste Lee	Caitlin McGuren	Toni Nicosia
Jodie Eason	Cyprus Gonzalez	Louisa Hill	Donna Kaz	McKenzie Lee	Mary McHale	Nora Niedzielski-Eichner
Juliet Eastland	Noémie Gonzalez	Hannah Hilmer	Sara-Jane Keane	Melissa Lee	Melanie McIntyre	Evarimaria Nitnaus
Marlana Eck	Sara Gonzalez	Chelsea Hoag	Shannon Kearns	Christine Lehoullier	Allison McKim	Barbara Noren
Jennifer Edge	Meredith Goodall	Erin Hobson	Erin Keating	Angela Leonard	Kelly McKinnon	Amy Noreuil
Heather Edwards	Maya Goodwill	Jarrah E. Hodge	Julie Keats	Michelle Leonard	Warren McKnight	Kathryn Norris
Kristen Edwards	Amber Goodwyn	Kai Hodges	Lauren Keefer	Erin Lerner	Grainne McMahon	Jamie Northrup
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Carolyn Eichner	Margaret Gorguisian	Carlye Lester	Deena Keilany	Carlye Lester	Messier	Paulina Nowosiad
Mayah El-Dehaibi	Kristy Hogue	Emily Leuba Jones	Andrea Kelley	Emily Leuba Jones	Emily McNulty Scriptor	Elena Nunez
Amy Ellefson	Angela Gougherty	Samara Levenstein	Samantha Kelly	Samara Levenstein	Kate McPhail	Alicia Nuzzie
Elaxis Ellis	Lisa Gouveia	Briar Levit	Susan Kemp	Briar Levit	Christienne McPherson	Courtney O'Brien
Veronika Ellison	Elizabeth Grace	Rachel Levy	Allison Kenngott	Rachel Levy	Cherise Mead	Lindsey O'Brien
Elise Elshire	Jessica Grace	Brigitte Lewis	Cyndi Kernahan	Brigitte Lewis	Dana Mead	Natalia Kay O'Brien
Anhel Escalante	Andrea Grant	Robyn Lewis	Sue Kerr	Robyn Lewis	Kelly Meinhold	Tawny O'Brien
Jennifer Esposti	A. Holubowicz	Risa Lichtman	Mara Ellen Kesterson	Risa Lichtman	Jessica Mejia	Maggie O'Connor
Karen Estlund	Alison Hom	Mickey Lindsay	Yasmin Khan	Mickey Lindsay	Beverly Melven	Linda O'Donnell
Amanda Evans	Laura Hool	Jose Membreno	Jess Kibler	Morgan Lindsay	Denisse Mendez	Dr. Marissa Oehlhof
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Marianne Falk	Stacy Hosking	Matthew Mergen	Sarah Kim	Hannah Littlefield	Matthew Mergen	Taylor O'Hara
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Celia Featherbt	Joe Hudak	Arne Meyer	Aubrey King	Jessica Long	Arne Meyer	Ashley Oliver
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David Fiander	Tracy Hurley	Caroline O'Grady	Heather Kitteringham	Courtney Lutz	Heather Miller	Sarah Otts
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Amanda Fisher	Yamagishi	Jessica Pabon	Suzanne Kleid	Courtney Lynch		Jessica Pabon
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Shelly Stevens
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Aria Velasquez
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Evelyn Amponsah
Donna Renee Anderson
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Elaine Bennett
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Kandace Borgstedt Ortega
Samantha Botz
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Jessica Brickley
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Sarah Brown
Megan Brownndorf
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Ulla Benny
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Nicole Darnell
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Rita Hao
Ivonne Heinze
Chris Henry
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Samantha Irby
Lily Joslin
Caroline Kaufman
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Sandra Kisch
Mary Lesniak
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Kristin Malone
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Hayley Moran
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Laia Pedreno Mateu
Catherine L. Preston
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Megan Ramette
Paul-Newell Reaves

INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

7/1/17-9/30/17

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Albert Kramer and Ruth Jaeger
Gretchen Sisson
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Lynn Coville
Grayson Dempsey
Kate Ertmann
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Melissa Natavio
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Rose Marie Cipryk	Karen Jent	Zachary Phair	Hend Alawadhi	Jaquetta Bustion	Alena Dierickx	Emma Gonzalez
Kali Clark	Wei Jia	Floyd Pitts	Helene Albert	Lanally Cabalo	Noemie Dimaggio	Noemie Gonzalez
Jennifer Clinesmith	Mary Johansen	April Poore	Kristin Alder	Erika Campany	Laura Dindia	Allie Gordon
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Judith Cohan Martin	Laura Jones Martinez	Jhemari Alexis Quintana	Katie Alexander	Melissa Campbell	Paul Doble	Janeene Gordon
Sharon Conlon	Kamri Jordan	Monica Ramos	Courtney Ali	Miriam Cantor-Stone	Lindsay Dodwell	Rachel Gottfried
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Laura Cornwall	Emily Kersh	Fabien Ratz	Laura Allen	Francesca Carella	Anna Doogan	Maile Graham-Laidlaw
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 Emily Levine
 Bronwyn Lewis
 Katherine Lewis
 Rebecca Lewis
 Martha Linville
 Mary Lipiec
 Claire Loht
 Sierra Lomprey
 Courtney Long
 Magdalena Lopez
 Ruth Lopez
 Kathleen Loughran
 Emily Lovelace
 Helaine Lubar
 Sheri Lucas
 Marc Lucke
 Nga Luu
 Sue Lyle
 Peregrine MacDonald
 Morgan MacHoleth
 Alison MacMunn
 Melanie Madden
 Jacob Maddison
 Ellen Maddy
 Madeleine Mader
 Allison Maggart

Sophia Magnone
 Catherine Maine
 Paul G. Maiorana
 Stephanie Malcolm
 Sophie Malek
 Viktoria Malesevic
 Lisa Mangan
 Lauren Mangini
 Elina Mannurova
 Erika Marcinek
 Caitlyn Marianacci
 Eleni Marino
 David Martinez
 Ingrid Martinez
 Julia Martinez
 Amy Marvin
 Susan A. Mason
 Sophie Mathes
 Abigail Matheson
 Elise Matthesen
 Anna Mavrogianni
 Cynthia Mazereeuw
 Marc Mazique
 Anne McCabe
 Sharon McCaffrey
 Katherine McCall
 Beth McCann
 Madeline McDaniel
 Michelle McDaniel
 Kelly McElroy
 Patricia McGhee
 Ashley McGuire
 Jennifer McGuirk
 Hannah McIntosh
 Alex Meehan
 Erica Mehm
 Helena Meier
 Ariel Mejia
 Shelagh Mellon
 Vicky Mellon
 Bryonna Mention
 Tiffany Meuret
 Elizabeth Meyer
 Bill Michtom
 Ann Miller
 Gabe Miller
 Heather Miller
 Katie Miller
 Lindsay Miller
 Norma Miller
 Kristin Milligan
 Julia Minker
 Ruben Miranda-Juarez
 Eamae Mirkin
 Melodie Miu
 Katherine Mock
 Safaya Monaghan
 Erin Monahan
 Tomika Moody
 Melanie Moore
 Michelle Moore
 Kathy Moores
 Eileen Morales
 Brittany Morehouse
 Michelle Morkert
 Valeria Moro
 Beth Morris
 Kristina Mukendi
 Bailey Mullins
 Susanna Murphy
 Julia Murray
 Kit Myers
 Joe Nachison
 Sara Naeseth
 Sarah Needle
 Barbara Neely
 Rachel Nelson
 Vanessa Nelson
 Sambriidhi Nepal
 Jillian Neustel
 Laurel Newnham
 Arielle Newton
 Dan Nguyen

Samuel Nicholes
 Emily Nicholls
 Jasmine Nickle
 Ramona Nievelnkötter
 Shannon Nobles
 Amy Noll
 Nadia Nooreyzedan
 Dorothy Norris
 Gladys Nubla
 Sue O'Brien
 Hanna O'Donnell
 Maryellen O'Hare
 Rebeca Orellana
 Rufus Orsborne
 Nicole Osier
 Michelle Ott
 Lea Ouai
 Louise Ousley, PhD
 Elizabeth Owuor
 Larisa Ozeryansky
 Christina Palutis
 Alexandra Parker
 Sean Parmelee
 Monica Paul
 Christine Pearson
 Diana Pembor
 Kaitlin Penn
 Analee Pepper
 Elisa Perez
 Alicia Perkowski
 Emily Perper
 Piper Perry
 Amber Petersen
 Susan Peterson
 Mary Pettinelli
 Peggy Phair
 Jaime Phillips
 Therese Phillips
 Holland Philpott
 Emilie Pichot
 Kirstin Piehl
 Kristen Pitts
 Marie Maude Polychuck
 T. Pomar
 Lallon Pond
 Jennifer Poteat
 Daniel Potvin-Leduc
 Princy Prasad
 Stacey Preston
 Madeline Price
 Darleen Principe
 Felicity Proctor
 Lisa Prodrumo
 Neil Provo
 Daniel Purdom
 Nora Puricelli
 Cassandra Quick
 Joseph Quickle
 Janice Radway
 Robyn Raichle
 Claire Randolph
 Clara Raubertas
 Alice Rauth
 Jacob Ray
 Kati Reardon
 Charlotte Reber
 Lindsay Redifer
 Alison Rees
 Heidi Reich
 Susanna Remold
 Iris Rennert
 Anna Reser
 Clare Rettig
 Cynthia Revolorio
 Itzel Reyes
 Amanda Reyna
 Elizabeth Reynolds
 Heather Reynolds
 David Ricardo
 Carl Ricciardelli
 Jeanna Rice-Briede
 Brett Riley
 Drewallyn Riley

Olivia Riley
 Sarah Rittenhouse
 Mackenzie Rizzo
 Marcia Robertson
 Anne Robertson Brown
 Lena Robinson
 Rebecca Rodrigo
 Angela Rodriguez
 Arturo Rosario
 Christina Rosema
 Emma Rosloff
 Jennifer Rotter
 Kiki Roumel
 Cecile Rousset
 Allison Rowe
 Melanie Rudd
 Rea Rustagi
 Julienne Rutherford
 Kat Rutkin
 Dan Ryder
 Meredith Sadler
 Marnie Sager
 Hannah Samuels
 Jessica Sandelson
 Delorianne Sander
 Erin Sanders
 Alicia Santurde Gómez
 Marla Sanvick
 Elise Sarty-Peterson
 Jessie Sater
 Alison Satterlee
 Alisha Saville
 Ryan Scates
 Colleen Schaal
 Saskia Scheffer
 Bethany Schiedel
 Anna Schlosser
 Briyani Schneider
 Cassandra Schroeder
 Emily Schroeder
 Lana Schwartz
 Amber Scott
 Liz Scott
 Rachel Scott
 Jourdain Searles
 Megan Seger
 Bernadette Segura
 Harriette Seiler
 Susan Sender
 Lisa Servon
 Jackie Sestak
 Stella Shaffer
 Aaminah Shakur
 Gilda Shannon
 Kyrstin Shelley
 Chavonn Shen
 Amy Sherd
 Jessica Shimiek
 Diane Shinberg
 Rebecca Shisler
 Christianna Silva
 Katheryn Simpson
 Dionne Sims
 M'Balía Singley
 Tara Sketchley
 Julie Slater
 Gavin Slee
 Katherine Smeal
 Laura Smith
 Molly Smith
 Zinnia Smith
 Kate Smyser
 Emma Snavely
 Michelle Snow
 Megan Sociedadade
 Jody Sokolower
 Kaitlyn Soligan
 Adriana Somma
 Yeon Soon Shin
 Lea Soranno
 Melissa Spears
 Blaed Spence
 Jessica Spencer

Katherine Spencer
 Madeleine Spencer
 Kris Spencer-Jones
 Ania Spyra
 Lisa St. John
 Franziska Stuerzenbecher
 Sarah Marie Stahlke
 Loraine Stevens
 Lacey Stewart
 Samantha Stewart
 Amy Stilgenbauer
 Alexandra Sillianos
 Angela Stockman
 Sue Strasbaugh
 Laura Stravino
 Jessica Strong
 Lauren Stuck
 Allissa Stutte
 Kelly Sullivan
 Sarah Suniga
 Kristen Sunter
 Judit Székács
 Zeba Taft-Dick
 Kelly Tagalan
 Saskia Talay
 Zeba Talkhani
 Jenna Tan
 Joanna Tanger
 Rebecca Tansey
 Megan Tarbett
 Katlynn Tatterson
 Marcia Taylor
 Penelope Taylor
 Sharine Taylor
 Lisu Thachet
 Julia Thiel
 Albert Thomas
 Amy Thomas
 Natalie Thompson
 Nino Tinikashvili
 Cheryl Tkalic
 Rachel Tohn
 Linda Tomassi
 Crystal Tompkins
 Sarah Tracy
 Cecile Tresfels
 Nitya Trip
 Rhea Turner
 Robin Turner
 Dyna Tuytel
 Rebekah Tweed
 Chelsea Tynan
 Michael Ulrich
 Morgan Valentine
 Goldie Vanheel
 Kim Vaupel
 Claire Venet-Rogers
 Juliette Verley
 Esther Vincent
 Tri Vo
 Dirk Von Der Horst
 Carolyn W.
 Julia Wagner
 Ellison Walcott
 Regina L. Wallace
 Kelly Wallin
 Naomi Walmsley
 Vivienne Walz
 Melissa Ward
 Maya Ward-Fineman
 Sarah Warren
 Glenna Washburn
 Laura Watson
 Darryl Wawa
 Misti Webster
 Anna Wedberg
 Elizabeth Weimer
 Leah Weinstein
 Emily Weiss
 Natalie Weiss
 Natalia Werdung
 Greta Werner
 Jenn White

Geoff Wickersham
 Sarah Will
 Caitlin Williams
 Denise Williams
 Rebecca Williams
 Ally Wilson
 Kayla Wilson
 Kailey Wingfield
 Craig Winter
 Aimee Wodda
 Sadie Wolfe
 Sophie Wolpert
 Sarah Worden
 Jo Wright
 Yizhi Wu
 Jennifer Wu
 Rebecca Wymmer
 Rebecca Yant
 Bernardita Yunis
 Holly Zadra
 Jacqui Zeng
 Karen Zgoda
 Valery Zorrilla
 Tara Zoumer

**IN HONOR/
 MEMORY OF:**

Ada Lovelace
 Agnes Connor
 Alice Michtom
 All missing and murdered
 Indigenous Women
 All the womanists before
 me
 Angela Davis
 Anni K.
 Anya Gabriela Kuppersmith
 Audre Lorde
 Ava Duvernay
 Aya de Leon
 Betty Jane Williams
 Carole Strumph
 Catching Sight of Thelma
 @ Louise
 CeCe Boone—wish you
 were here friend
 Charlotte Perkins-Gilman
 Christine
 Clare McKenna
 Darcey Michie
 Diane B Ferrer
 Domestic violence victims
 everywhere
 Donna Noll
 Dot Britton
 Dr. Ernst
 Ebru Ustundage
 Edie Windsor
 Emmaline Strook
 Femme Den
 Fuck Bustle
 Grace Paley
 Grandma Pauline, one
 fine Bitch, in the
 truest sense!
 Helen McBrearty and
 Anna Lundy
 Howard the Cat! <3
 Juliana Jarrett-Morales
 My Daughters: Chelsea
 @ Martha
 Smashing the patriarchy
 dead
 Irene Peslikis
 Jane Claire Fantry
 Jane D. Patterson,
 woman veteran
 Kennels Jenkins
 kimberly priset
 Kym Scott Black
 Latasha Harlins



FROM HERE TO ETERNITY: TRAVELING THE WORLD TO FIND THE GOOD DEATH

CAITLIN DOUGHTY

{ W. W. NORTON & COMPANY }

review by Sonya Vatomsky
illustration by Cris Latorre

RATINGS:



Buy it



Borrow from a friend



Skim it



Skip it



Caitlin Doughty is no stranger to death. She's a mortician at Undertaking LA, founder of the Order of the Good Death, and has spent almost 10 years coaching us into a better relationship with our inevitable doom. Her YouTube series "Ask a Mortician" is a myth-busting, truth-telling take on our funeral-industrial complex, and her new book, a sequel to 2015's *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory*, has her traveling the world to see what Americans can learn from the death customs of other cultures. Throughout its eight chapters, *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death* looks death in the face with curiosity, an open mind, and a heaping tablespoon of sugar (to help the decomposing bodies go down).

Alone, or with fellow "death-positive" royalty such as Sarah Chavez of the Order of the Good Death and author Paul Koudounaris, Doughty explores Indonesia, where cleaning

your grandmother's corpse is not morbid but a way to sustain familial bonds, and Japan, where mourners go through cremains with chopsticks after staying together in a corpse hotel. Such rituals are a far cry from those in the United States, where the body is whisked away as quickly as possible and dressed up with embalming fluid and makeup. In the past, before the funeral industry really took off in this country, these customs might not have seemed so strange—even here, it was common for people to spend time with their dead loved ones and wash and dress them. This interaction is a powerful one and is necessary for our hearts and brains to begin processing the loss. Have you ever landed at home after a vacation and felt miles away from your previous destination, not just literally but emotionally? Allowing ourselves to experience the journey with our senses helps us better understand where we're going and where our loved ones have gone.

In La Paz, Bolivia, people gather to pray to ñatitas: flower-adorned, chain-smoking

skulls celebrated as sources of good fortune and protection. Doughty meets with women whose homes are filled with multiple *ñatitas* and watches them “[use] their comfort with death to seize direct access to the divine from the hands of the male leaders of the Catholic Church.” It’s a beautiful ritual of respect for the dead and hope for the living—a reminder that death is, among other things, a feminist issue. When deathcare industrialized in the early 20th century, Doughty explains, there was a “seismic shift” in who cared for our dead—the job went from “visceral, primeval work” performed by women to a “science” performed by well-paid men. Women remain tasked with death, just less lucratively; they are more likely to care for aging parents and relatives. Additionally, death is woven into reproductive rights and the high number of people who die from domestic violence. It’s

From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death is a testament to the ubiquitous yet kaleidoscopic nature of loss, whose shards reflect the light of its community. While the previously unknown traditions from around the world encourage our meager death rituals with a kind of you-can-do-it pep, the stops in U.S. states such as California and North Carolina show the places where it’s already being done, whether in innovative recomposing forests or using the country’s only open-air funeral pyre, which was wheeled up the driveways of those who wanted to go out in flames before finding a permanent home in Creston, Colorado. Like Indonesian mourners brushing clean the bodies of their dead relatives, Doughty’s book exposes our human need for ceremony as a way to assign meaning to our lives—and to the end of them. — S.V.

RATING: ♥♥♥♥

THE EXTRA WOMAN: HOW MARJORIE HILLIS LED A GENERATION OF WOMEN TO LIVE ALONE AND LIKE IT

by Joanna Scutts
{ LIVERIGHT/W. W. NORTON & COMPANY }

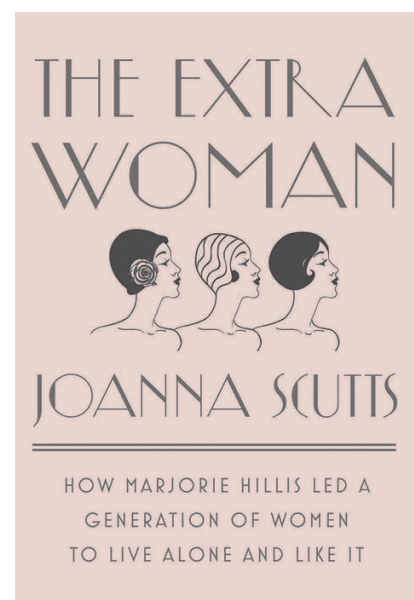
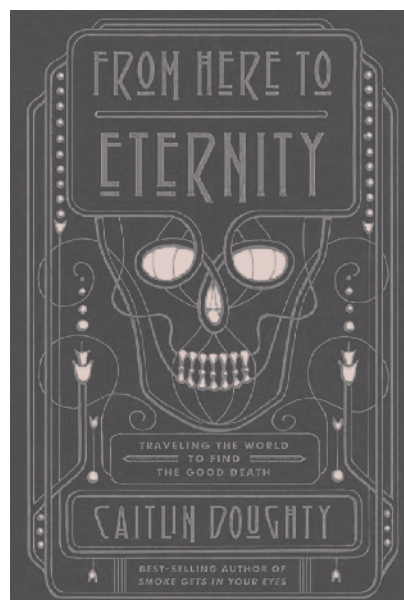
I’ve been single for most of my adult life, and during that time there has been a proliferation of single ladies on television from *Living Single* and *Girlfriends* to *Sex and the City* and *The L Word*. I’ve even lived through the “Black Professional Women Are Doomed to Never Marry Because Their Standards Are Too High” era that was replete with *Nightline* specials, Steve Harvey’s sketchy relationship-advice books, and magazine cover stories.

Pop culture analysis of single women is inherently political because it interrogates American culture’s deeply ingrained cult of coupledness. Instead of following the

From Here to Eternity is a testament to the ubiquitous yet kaleidoscopic nature of loss, whose shards reflect the light of its community.

no wonder why, when Doughty visits a U.S. recomposition site that aims to turn human remains to compost, she notices that the main players in the project are all women.

The same is true for the broader death-positive movement, where people such as Katrina Spade of the Urban Death Project (fitting last name, Katrina) and Michelle Acciavatti of Ending Well are all leading the charge toward a more authentic death. Recomposition, the search for that elusive good death, and so many other elements of the movement toward death acceptance are not just a reclamation of grief and of the body but a radical act; a “way to say, ‘I love and accept myself,’” according to Spade. Doughty agrees: “There is a freedom found in decomposition, a body rendered messy, chaotic, and wild.”



age-old heteronormative belief that women are meant to shape their identities around male husbands, thriving single women represent a freedom that disrupts patriarchal norms. The result is a fear that women won't need men or might be happier without them. In *The Extra Woman*, cultural historian Joanna Scutts traces the fear of single ladies and the idea that women can live happily alone to Marjorie Hillis's 1936 work, *Live Alone and Like It: A Guide for the Extra Woman*. Hillis, a longtime *Vogue* staffer, pioneered writing about the pleasures of the single life by offering a self-help message that was a "beacon of social change and a precursor to the feminist revolutions of the 1960s and '70s...[making] single women visible and their way of life viable, free of the sympathy and scandal it had attracted in the past."

Hillis followed up with seven more books, published between 1936 and 1967, that empowered women to enjoy their own

company with or without a partner. This message definitely resonates in the United States, particularly now that single adults are the majority. In her 2016 book, *All The Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation*, Rebecca Traister specifically outlines how the reinvention of single womanhood as the norm has allowed for more visible calls for pay equity, a higher minimum wage, and affordable healthcare. In this new world, the benefits of single life as a woman outweigh the drawbacks.

Scutts, to her credit, addresses the unique position of single Black women even though it's not fully contextualized. My experience at the intersection of implicit race and gender bias has been fraught and at times lonely. Certainly, I love my freedom and my homegirls. I'm in love with my own company. The time I would devote to a partner is poured into teaching, mentoring, and

Scutts does an excellent job of including data and some stories of Black women, as well as the restrictions imposed by race on their daily lives. What's missing is a look at how race has impacted our very different experiences of unmarried life.

Scutts honestly and correctly frames the lives of single women both past and present as "balancing the fantasy of independence with the fear of being alone." I was delighted that the book educated me about a woman who bravely reshaped the conversation about the possibilities for white women of a certain economic class, though it made me wonder about how the "extra women" who looked like me responded to Hillis, if at all.

—JOSHUNDA SANDERS

RATING: ♥♥♥

While The Extra Woman is both scholarly and accessible in many ways, it could have offered a stronger contextualization of the stories Hillis chose not to tell.



writing. But I am also confronted with messages that women of other races don't face, such as "You're not simply single by choice; you're single because *no one wants you*." (OkCupid, for instance, has published research showing that Black women write the most messages of any demographic but are the least likely to receive responses, which really sucks.)

The Extra Woman doesn't capture experiences like these, perhaps because of the time period in which Hillis was writing. So while the book is both scholarly and accessible in many ways, it could have offered a stronger contextualization of the stories Hillis chose not to tell—mainly those of women who *could not* marry, rather than those who simply chose solitary living.

WHERE THE PAST BEGINS

by Amy Tan
{ ECCO }

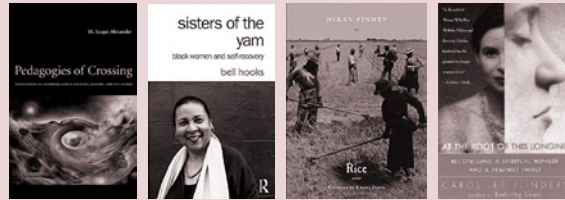
Amy Tan's new memoir, *Where the Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir*, is the result of her editor and publisher, Dan Halpern, recommending that she put together a book of her e-mail correspondence. "Letters to the Editor" is the only section of the book that retains that original idea. While a whole book of those e-mails would have been lovely, I am glad that Tan decided to dig into her past, using boxes of her life's memorabilia and miscellanea as memory aids.

Where the Past Begins is dense in ideas though not in language, and it is packed full of varying anecdotes about the author's life,

BITCH READS: FEMINISM & FAITH

For some, reading can be a spiritual act. It can infuse energy or act as a companion in uncertain times. Some of the participants in our roundtable on feminism and faith (“Undivided State,” page 24) shared books that played a critical role in their spiritual development. Everyone agreed there were too many to name, but we pared it down to these must-reads.

—LISA FACTORA-BORCHERS

**ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS**

- » *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* by M. Jacqui Alexander
- » *Soul Talk: The New Spirituality of African American Women* by Akasha Gloria Hull
- » *Opening to Spirit: Contacting the Healing Power of the Chakras and Honouring African Spirituality* by Caroline Shola Arewa
- » *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde* by Audre Lorde

ZAYNAB SHAHAR

- » *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery* by bell hooks
- » *The Way of Tenderness: Awakening through Race, Sexuality, and Gender* by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel
- » *The Earth Path: Grounding Your Spirit in the Rhythms of Nature* by Starhawk
- » *Motherwit: A Guide to Healing and Psychic Development* by Diane Mariechild
- » *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose Through Nature, Ritual, and Community* by Malidoma Patrice Somé

NYASHA JUNIOR

- » *Rice* by Nikky Finney
- » *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler

DANYA RUTTENBERG

- » *At the Root of This Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst* by Carol Lee Flinders
- » *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* by Abraham Joshua Heschel
- » *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, translated by Walter Kaufman and S. G. Smith
- » *Guide for the Perplexed* by Moses Maimonides, translated by M. Friedlander
- » *All About Love: New Visions* by bell hooks
- » *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation* by Alan Lew
- » *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power* by Audre Lorde

most of which illuminate how, for her, memory and creativity are deeply intertwined. For example, in a chapter titled “Genuine Emotions,” Tan describes the way a medication she started taking to allay seizures had the secondary effect of putting her in an extremely good mood. “I felt the ticklish squeezing sensation in my heart—the pulling of a heartstring, you might call it,” she writes. She describes the research she did to figure out what that tickle was, and because of her newfound interest in the physicality of emotion, she reaches down into a place of traumatic triggers and physical responses of the body. Her shift from “This med made me too happy” to “And now I will explore trauma” is seamless, the arc demonstrating the wide-ranging nature of her thought process. By the end of the same chapter, she’s describing how emotional memory feeds into her fiction, writing out an imagined scenario of a heartbreaking moment in a little girl’s life.

The other thread in the book is Tan’s relationship with her volatile mother, who struggles with mental illness. Such relationships are heavily featured in her fiction: Tan’s most famous novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, explores daughters repeating versions of their mothers’ mistakes. As she writes in this memoir, “My mother was mother. There were many times in childhood when I wished that were not so. But when I was grown, she was inextricably part of the way I thought and observed and to wish she were not my mother would be like wishing I were a different person.” Tan writes about her mother matter-of-factly but with love. She doesn’t sugarcoat the terrible moments in their relationship, including an incident in which her mother came close to killing her, but also tells her mom’s story with empathy, shining light on the trauma in her mother’s life both in China and the United States, and examining how that affected the both of them.

Tan’s memoir is scattered with themes of class and language and immigration, but they aren’t her focus. Instead they’re part of the complex web of her parents’ lived realities. For example, though she bemoans the election of Donald Trump several times, she only faces its repercussions when trying to imagine whether her conservative Christian father would have voted for the man, and what that would mean

about her father. The book feels rather apolitical at times, which can feel like an evasion on Tan’s part. Her memoir is ultimately deceptive in the way good books are; it seems effortless, as if there were no other way it could have been written than exactly how it is. —ILANA MASAD

RATING: ♥♥♥♥

THE PROMISE OF PATRIARCHY: WOMEN AND THE NATION OF ISLAM

by Ula Yvette Taylor

{ THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS }

The Nation of Islam wouldn’t exist without the women who made sacrifices to appease their husbands’ egos. In *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam*, African American Studies scholar Ula Yvette Taylor details how these women wagered their pride in the height of the feminist movement and civil rights movement for the betterment of the Nation of Islam. Clara Poole learned about Islam when she was desperate for her

husband, Elijah Muhammad—a drunk who gambled away their money—to become a better father and partner. Islam brought a moral code, and those who didn’t honor the religion’s teachings were looked down upon.

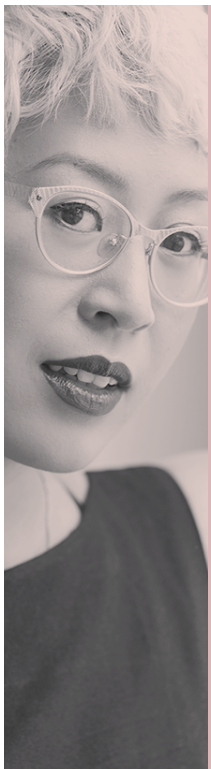
The book refutes the idea that women in the Nation simply accepted the roles “assigned” to them. Though it seems like they existed in the shadows, Poole and Belinda Boyd—the wives of Elijah Muhammad and Muhammad Ali, respectively—were instrumental in writing their husbands’ speeches. While their husbands functioned as figureheads for the Nation, the women in the organization pushed for their rights under the guise that it would allow them to “expand” their civic duties as wives, mothers, and daughters. These women became teachers and ministers, advocated for better living situations, and marched alongside their male counterparts. For the love and betterment of the Black Muslim nation, women traded their survival for their full autonomy.

However, they actively challenged Elijah Muhammad and questioned how Islamic

teachings were weaponized against them. For instance, Sister Doris 9X of San Francisco tried to follow the Nation’s rules about birth control, but after her 12th child, she asked her doctor to insert an intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD). Although the idea of bringing so many Black people into the world can be seen as radical, these ideas about birth control were still seeped in the paternalistic, patriarchal notions about ownership over Black women’s bodies. The Nation of Islam tried to “civilize” Black women by encouraging them to dress modestly and stay slim. These well-intentioned but misguided efforts to protect the virtue of Black women by demanding that they cover up weren’t effective. It only reinforced the idea that Black women weren’t in control of their bodies and needed to be disciplined. At times, women rebelled in an effort to create a better future for themselves. Taylor uncovers how women secretly worked or furthered their education, even when they were ordered not to. They were deemed “difficult,” an issue that Black Muslim women are still dealing with today.

Much like Black Muslim women today, these women were not afforded the luxury of sitting silently and playing by the rules. Optics don’t and can’t matter to Black Muslim women because we are already criminalized and considered inherently dangerous. (Black Muslims were thought to be a cult, and the FBI heavily monitored the movements of the members of the Nation of Islam.) Mainstream Western feminism hasn’t been able to articulate the struggles of Black Muslim women. I grew up around these seemingly difficult women; they had to be “difficult” to protect their loved ones and survive. Taylor parses through the many layers of what it means to be a Black Muslim woman while letting the tenacity, wit, and strength of the women in the Nation of Islam shine. —NAJMA SHARIF

RATING: ♥♥♥♥



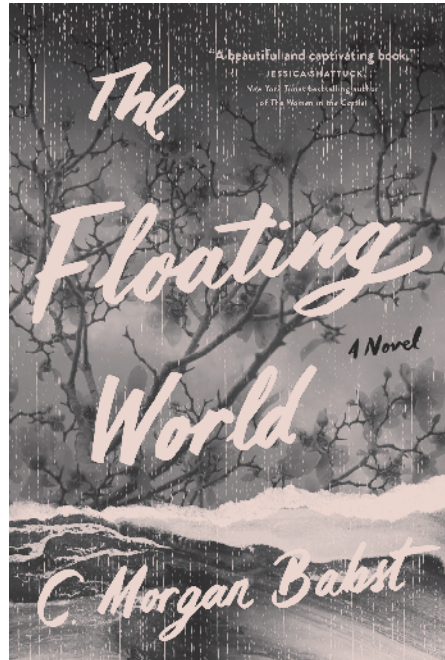
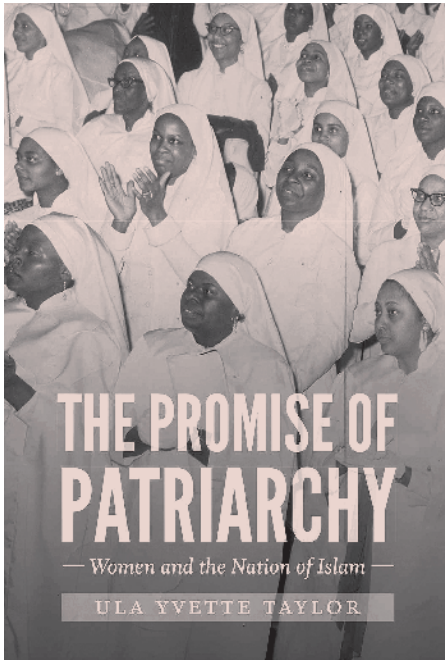
WHAT I’M READING

Esmé Weijun Wang

AUTHOR, *THE BORDER OF PARADISE: A NOVEL*

SELFISH, SHALLOW, AND SELF-ABSORBED: SIXTEEN WRITERS ON THE DECISION NOT TO HAVE KIDS (EDITED BY MEGHAN DAUM)

I’m currently in the thick of reading Selfish, Shallow, and Self-Absorbed: Sixteen Writers on the Decision Not to Have Kids, edited by Meghan Daum. I’m a woman in her mid-30s; I’m also married. Many of my friends are currently parents or are trying to have children, and although I’m aware that I have a so-called ticking biological clock, I also know that I’m not interested in child-rearing. Reading this book has helped me feel less alone in that decision. Though each of the writers in this anthology have different reasons for choosing not to have children, I’ve found myself identifying with aspects of all of them.



questions people seldom think to ask: What happens if you have a mental-health crisis in the middle of a natural disaster?

More than just an account of an embattled family facing a storm, *The Floating World* shows us New Orleans beyond the magic of Mardi Gras. It is not the grotesque “N’Awlins” of tourists’ construction. In Babst’s hands, the Big Easy is a three-dimensional character in its own right whose natives sometimes navigate race, class, and history with difficulty. Through the affluent Boisdorés, we see the various wards of New Orleans in heartbreaking contrast: the wealthy ones on higher ground and the poor ones submerged beneath 10 feet of water. It’s clear why certain neighborhoods filled with Black and Brown people bore the brunt of Katrina’s wrath. And in the novel’s final pages, Babst gives us a glimpse of the growing New Orleanian diaspora who stay

The Floating World aches with loss as it depicts the “bathtub ring around the city” that Hurricane Katrina left behind.

THE FLOATING WORLD

by C. Morgan Babst
{ ALGONQUIN BOOKS }

We often imagine the narrative of storms like Hurricane Katrina as a single catastrophic event. Perhaps it is true that there is more to examine in the aftermath, the haphazard way tragedy rearranges us. Sometimes the story buried in the detritus reveals the damage that happened long before we knew what to call it.

C. Morgan Babst’s *The Floating World* unflinchingly examines the wreckage of one New Orleans family’s life in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This visceral debut also pays close attention to the personal depressions that sent the Boisdoré family into a spiral. At first glance, the story is preoccupied with the fate of Cora Boisdoré, who chose not to heed the city’s mandatory evacuation. Cora’s parents, Tess and Joe, are trying to help their adult daughter through

a trauma she cannot name while navigating their damaged marriage as they walk around the magnolia tree lodged in the kitchen of their home. Each Boisdoré must decide which familial relationships to salvage from the rubble and which to surrender to the pre-existing rot. The family’s struggles become a metaphor for their beloved city.

Perhaps the most unexpected jewel in *The Floating World* was the author’s compassionate depiction of mental illness. Cora represents the eye in the storm her family endures after Katrina; we first encounter her nearly catatonic, with her parents and sister circling her with worry. Her depression and post-traumatic stress disorder make her the quietest character in the book. Despite her relative silence, Cora is the one who speaks the loudest about the courage it takes to seize your autonomy with mental illness. *The Floating World* offers frighteningly real answers to

away because they have nothing left to rebuild.

The novel’s description of post-landfall New Orleans is intimate and precise without veering into trauma porn. *The Floating World* aches with loss as it depicts the “bathtub ring around the city” that Hurricane Katrina left behind. Like New Orleans, the story is not easy to digest, but nothing so beautifully complicated should be. The city sits ever dignified and asks that you sit with it without turning away from the muddy parts. Sometimes, as Babst deftly reveals, a storm merely exploits the fragility that already existed in the infrastructure of a city, of a marriage, of a family, of a mind.

—DARA MATHIS

RATING: ♥♥♥♥



SUPERGIRL

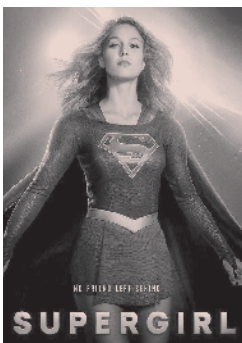
DIRECTORS:
VARIOUS

{ THE CW }

review by Cate Young
illustration by Cris Latorre

RATINGS:

- ◆◆◆ Watch it now
- ◆◆ Queue it for later
- ◆ Turn it on in the background
- ◆ Forget it



When it premiered in October 2015, *Supergirl* beat the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the DC Extended Universe to the punch by fronting a superhero story with a female character. In the intervening years, we've seen *Wonder Woman* smash records and *Captain Marvel* step into production, but the little Kryptonian who could is still the only woman fighting for justice on our television screens week after week. Yet, as the show closes in on its third season, it's still struggling to juggle its brand of empowertising with actual substance.

Kara Danvers (Melissa Benoist) is a girl and that thinking permeates much of the first season. From Cat Grant (Calista Flockhart) naming Kara's alter ego *Supergirl* to Kara's pushback at what she sees as an infantilizing moniker, much is made of the fact that girls have power. Many of the show's major characters are young women who are finding their own personal and

professional strengths. Strong female bonds run through the show's DNA, manifesting in Kara's relationships with the women around her, including Cat, her sister Alex Danvers (Chyler Leigh), and her nemesis-turned-friend Lena Luthor (Katie McGrath).

The problem, as it often is when feminism finds its way onscreen, is that *Supergirl* largely excludes girls of color from its "empowering" narrative. The show's feminism is flimsy, relying on the propensity of female characters to use violence with equally as much vigor and skill as men. In contrast to the recently canceled *Agent Carter*, which used items coded as traditionally feminine to fight the patriarchy, *Supergirl* simply has its female heroes defeat male villains in battle; it measures female strength by its ability to conform to ideas of traditional masculinity. But platitudes have their place, and girls of color deserve access to the same trite confidence boosters as everyone else. It would serve the show's message of tolerance and inclusivity to introduce other female characters of color

so that Maggie Sawyer (Floriana Lima) doesn't bear the weight alone. While Maggie played an integral role in bringing to life one of the most well-regarded coming-out stories, her Latinidad is never explored on any meaningful level. If there were other major women characters of color, that narrative hole might not have been as conspicuous.

But *Supergirl* has shown itself to be less than adept at handling racially charged narratives. While the show traffics in racial metaphors on a regular basis, it falters when dealing with them head on. Hank Henshaw (David Harewood) and James Olsen (Mehcad Brooks) are main characters portrayed by Black men, but Hank is an alien from Mars who chooses to present that way. As the second season tackles alien immigration as a not-very-subtle parallel to the ongoing debate over undocumented immigrants in the United States, there is ample opportunity to deal with race in a more direct way. Instead, the show relies on basic tropes of decency in the face of difference. Why not address the fact that the Phorians (a race of telekinetic aliens who present as Black) might be considered more menacing because of their Black skin and the established bigotry of human beings? Why not lean into the fact that life is easier to navigate for the aliens who are able to "pass" as human? Instead of delving deeper, *Supergirl* offered a belabored plotline about James connecting with a young Phorian boy over the similarity of their lives. The show banked on their shared skin color to do the heavy lifting instead of writing better arcs for them.

However, the show's biggest disappointment has been sidelining James. After Cat's exit in the second season, the photojournalist is named acting CEO of CatCo, a media empire where Kara works as a reporter. But rather than running said empire, James sulks about being on the outside of the Department of Extranormal Operations (the fictional government agency where the rest of the main cast all works in some capacity), and eventually develops Guardian, his own superhero identity. Between this nonsensical plot and the abrupt end to his romance with Kara, there isn't much more to expect from his character. It would be great to see James embrace his power as a journalist to speak truth to power instead of boxing himself into the narrow definition of "superhero" to which the show subscribes. Beating up poor people isn't the only way to make a city safe, and Batman already exists in this universe.

In two seasons, *Supergirl* has done a lot of things right, but it's made many missteps too. With a new season's worth of stories to tell, we can only hope that it will be more cognizant of the way it co-opts the language of the oppressed to make a point about

characters who would never be harassed or abused in the real world. — C.Y.

RATING:  

GEETA'S GUIDE TO MOVING ON

Directors: Phil White and Reshmi Hazra Rustebakke
{ OPEN TV }

Geeta Gidwani (Puja Mohindra) is in a stage of life that many of us can relate to: trying to find her bearings in the heart-breaking cesspool of a breakup. Her situation is especially dramatic because her fiancé and partner of 10 years, Dani (Andy Nagraj), delivers the bad news just hours before their engagement party. Geeta's life immediately descends into chaos: Who is she without the man she moved to Chicago for? Will she ever be able to get out of bed without her family dragging her out of it? The web series *Geeta's Guide to Moving On* is a portrait of a woman facing these obstacles and wobbling toward recovery.

Supergirl's feminism is flimsy, relying on the propensity of female characters to use violence with equally as much vigor and skill as men.

Below: Stills from *Geeta's Guide to Moving On*.



Those who have had their fill of *Eat Pray Love*-esque narratives that center on white women who overcome emotional pain by exploring—and exoticizing—other cultures will be happy to know that Geeta's characters are people of color, adding a refreshing element to familiar breakup and self-discovery plotlines. Women of color are hardly ever given the opportunity to experience growth

but—most importantly—a necessary challenge to the tokenism to which women of color are usually subjected.

When Geeta moves in with her parents post-breakup, they're concerned and intrusive—as South Asian parents often are—and suffer alongside her, actively trying to help her get over Dani. The meddling but loving pair offers an authentic and welcome depiction of South

Geeta's Guide to Moving On gives space to a woman of color to simply be.

onscreen, and *Geeta's Guide to Moving On* closes that gap by excluding whiteness from the narrative altogether.

Geeta's story is told through eight-minute episodes that feature her support network: There's her South Asian family, who drag her to a divorce support group in the absence of a more appropriate type of free therapy; her aunts, who provide biting and surprisingly tech-savvy commentary about Geeta's life; and her best friend Akua (Danielle Pinnock), an athletic fat Black woman who never hesitates to push Geeta toward her true potential. In a time when friendships between women of color from different ethnicities are rarely portrayed onscreen, Geeta's friendship with Akua is sweet, sometimes full of tough love,

Asian parents, and their relationship to Geeta shows a parent-daughter dynamic that is, again, a marked contrast to the independent-white-girl-finding-her-way narrative. Rather than walking away from everything to “find herself,” Geeta finds solace and salvation in her support network. Their reassurance—even when Geeta is in deep denial—is heartwarming.

Each episode is prefaced with a lesson on how to move on, each one more relatable than the last. From the introductory “It sucks and that's okay” to Geeta's flailing attempt, in a later episode, to appear happy and healthy when it becomes clear Dani isn't coming back to her, the web series explores the agony of being lost in your 20s, portraying the ensuing confusion and need to feel anything but

despair and emphasizing the importance of gentleness and human connection in hard times. The typical onscreen exoticization of Brown women means that narratives about their lives are generally about being othered, rather than being human. *Geeta's Guide to Moving On* gives space to a woman of color to simply *be*, with weaknesses, strengths, and the ability to express them without the stereotyping of the white gaze.

There are currently three episodes available for streaming, so there are myriad paths the story can take (I am curious to see what Geeta will do about her passion for dancing now that her life has changed), but *Geeta's Guide to Moving On* gives us a necessary twist on a familiar story. —NICOLE FROIO

RATING:  

THE MISANDRISTS

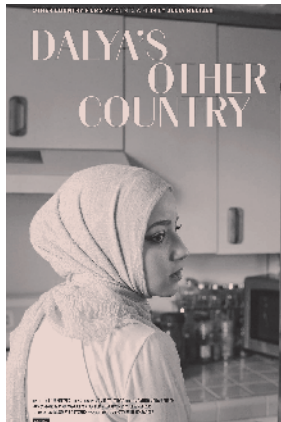
Director: Bruce LaBruce
{ RASPBERRY & CREAM }

“Blessed be the goddess of all worlds, that has not made me a man,” intone the solemn women, sitting down to dinner. “Glory be to the mother, and to the daughter, and to the holy cunt.” Abounding with over-the-top dialogue like this, *The Misandrists* mainly exists to lampoon radical feminism—and celebrate it at the same time. It's an ambitious and baffling conceit, and while Bruce LaBruce doesn't have enough of a coherent thesis to bring it together, his attempt is strangely fascinating.

Set in Germany in 1999, *The Misandrists* delves into the world of the Female Liberation Army (FLA), a terrorist rad-fem cell dedicated to the extermination of men and the dawning of a new all-female world. When Volker (Til Schindler), a wounded male radical fleeing the police, stumbles across the FLA's rural “school” for young girls, Isolde (Kita Updike) hides him in the basement. Eventually, the two become lovers while Isolde nurses Volker back to health. But as tension grows among the other girls, Isolde's secrets—and those of her sisters—are revealed.

Isolde is a transgender woman in a cartoonishly gynocentric FLA: Each member cups their hands while praying to emulate a vagina; the initiates are taught about human parthe-

Below: Still from *The Misandrists*.



nogenesis as a method of eliminating the need for sexual reproduction; and Big Mother insists her girls are “free to love whomever [they] want, as long as she has a vagina.” Isolde’s presence subverts the FLA’s convictions, and acts as LaBruce’s mouthpiece to dismiss prevailing notions that trans women are male in any sense or should be unwelcome in women-only spaces.

But if this is the crux of LaBruce’s valuable rad-fem critique, it’s also where his ideas flounder. For one thing, the FLA is a strange conglomeration of second- and third-wave feminist ideologies, convinced the phallus is an instrument of patriarchy while trying to reclaim pornography for the revolution. Big Mother and her collaborators are at once regressive and progressive, ludicrous and rational. After a while, it’s difficult to ascertain who LaBruce intends to be cheered or booed, and why. What is the viewer to make of a radical movement that (tentatively) welcomes a non-op trans woman, but forces Volker to have gender reassignment surgery without anesthetic? (Ever one to push buttons, LaBruce screens graphic vaginoplasty footage while Volker screams in agony.) How much of *The Misandrists* is satire, and how much is earnest? It’s unclear, both to the viewer and seemingly to LaBruce himself.

That muddled quality isn’t *The Misandrists*’ only flaw: Most of the German cast’s English delivery is sluggish and unanimated, making interactions flat and off-putting. But the film’s problems also contribute to its campy charm, and Updike’s complex performance as a Black trans actor playing a Black trans role is notable and timely. *The Misandrists* is a wild and bizarre film: confusing, absurd, and—for better or worse—utterly unique.

—SAM RIEDEL

RATING: 

DALYA’S OTHER COUNTRY

Director: Julia Meltzer
{ JOURNEYMAN PICTURES }

When is the last time you watched a coming-of-age film about a Muslim girl from Syria? Considering that representations of Muslims and Arabs are sorely lacking and thoughtful representation is even rarer—for most of us, the answer is *never*. Fortunately, Jewish filmmaker Julia Meltzer recognized this problem and decided to do something about it. Her hour-long documentary *Dalya’s Other Country* premiered as part of PBS’s POV series in June.

In 2012, Dalya and her parents were asleep in their home in Aleppo, Syria, when a bomb exploded right outside; the war had come to their backyard. The family decided to flee the country and split up since Dalya’s

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THREE WAYS OZ CHANGED TELEVISION FOREVER

Think back to 1997. Bill Clinton was president, Black people populated prime-time TV shows, and HBO was finding its footing. The premium cable network needed something good to separate it from every-

thing else on television. *Oz* was the show that made HBO elite. In the 20 years since, prestige dramas from *The Wire* to *Orange Is the New Black* have become fruit from *Oz*’s tree. —EVETTE DIONNE

1 It introduced mass incarceration into cable television.

Oz chronicled the lives of inmates, correctional officers, and politicians at and around Emerald City, a low-security unit in the fictional Oswald State Penitentiary. Never before had there been a series that laid bare the lives of incarcerated men. From their same-sex romantic relationships to their complicated backgrounds, the Emmy-nominated series humanized prisoners.

2 *Oz* revolutionized hour-long dramas.

Oz came before *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and other iconic television series that peppered the golden age. When *Oz* debuted in July 1997, other networks weren’t invested in dramas. Now these series—including *The Walking Dead*, *Game of Thrones*, and *Breaking Bad*—exist in abundance.

3 It refused to shy away from the brutality of prison life.

When Tobias Beecher (Lee Tergesen) first arrives in Emerald City, he’s raped by Vernon Schillinger (J. K. Simmons), the leader of *Oz*’s white supremacist group. Vernon then abuses and harasses Tobias by repeatedly raping him and forcing him to dress in women’s clothes. It’s difficult to watch, but also mirrors the dynamic that’s often present in prisons. *Oz* didn’t shy away from these dehumanizing aspects of prison.



WHAT I'M WATCHING

Ariel Dumas WRITER, *THE LATE SHOW WITH STEPHEN COLBERT*

MOULIN ROUGE! (DIRECTOR: BAZ LUHRMANN)

Moulin Rouge! lays out its whole deal in the very first scene: Ewan McGregor mourns his lost love while pecking away on his typewriter. And he's not like your idiot ex who thinks owning a typewriter gives him a personality. Ewan has to use one because it's the year 1900. Moulin Rouge! exists because the summer of 2001 was a more innocent time. George W. Bush hadn't started any wars. The United States still liked Ben Affleck. So when someone asked, "Hey, what if we mashed together history's most iconic rock songs and let Nicole Kidman take a whack at 'em?" this country said, "AW, HELL YEAH."

parents' marriage was already unraveling. Dalya and her mother, Rudayna, went to Los Angeles, California, where Mustafa, Rudayna's oldest son (and coproducer of the film), lived while her father went to Turkey. The documentary begins in 2013, shortly after their arrival in Los Angeles. Dalya has just begun attending an all-girls Catholic high school where she is the only Muslim and the only hijabi. The film traces her development through her teenage years and ends in 2016, right after Dalya's high school graduation, as she protests Trump's Muslim ban at the Los Angeles International Airport.

This film is a must-see for many reasons: It handles topics that are considered taboo without sensationalizing them, including Dalya's experience of wearing a headscarf; her parents' trials with infidelity and divorce; and what happens to families and a country as a result of war. Dalya's family is middle-class and her mother is a U.S. citizen, so their experience is not that of most Syrian refugees. What I most appreciate about the film is that it uses that to its advantage. It doesn't try to be *the* voice of Muslim girls, but shows the experience of one in particular. In doing so, it challenges the stereotypes that mainstream media offer and reminds people that there are many ways to be a Syrian Muslim woman.

Another refreshing perspective is how the narrative explores Dalya's shifting identity. Sometimes she feels that she'll never be at

home in the United States and other times she's able to embrace the relationships she has built with close friends and to appreciate her life here. This tension between one place and the other, which has been well-documented by hyphenated Americans and immigrant communities alike, is not often addressed onscreen. I love that the film allows the viewer to question, along with the protagonist, which country is Dalya's "other country" after all.

—STEPHANIE ABRAHAM

RATING:

A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

Director: Penny Marshall
{ COLUMBIA PICTURES }

"Girls can't play ball!" a man yells as he stands on top of the dugout to mock the women playing in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL). To shut the man up, Ellen Sue (Freddie Simpson) fires a ball that pegs him right in the shoulder, knocking him down. Twenty-five years later, women in baseball are still experiencing the sexism portrayed in this 1992 feature film.

Girls were initially included in baseball, but when the pastime became a professional sport in the late 1800s, it was marketed toward white men. Now though, girls are fighting to reclaim their space in the sport. Mo'ne Davis

was the breakout star of the 2014 Little League World Series, becoming the first girl to throw a shutout game in the tournament's history. In 2016, the Sonoma Stompers became the first men's professional baseball team to draft multiple women. This season, pitcher Stacy Piagno collected her first win with the team, making her just the third woman to get a win in men's professional baseball.

Yet professional baseball teams are much more willing to celebrate the 25th anniversary of *A League of Their Own* than the actual women of the AAGPBL. Many teams, including the Boston Red Sox and the Miami Marlins, have honored the film. But when it comes to celebrating the actual players, Major League Baseball relegates women to the sidelines, as baseball has done since Albert G. Spalding proclaimed that a woman's place was in the stands.

Even rarer still is the acknowledgment of Black women in the game. The film alludes to it with a singular scene: A Black woman walks onto the field, picks up a baseball, and fires it to Ellen Sue, who is standing much farther away than the closest catcher, Dottie (Geena Davis). After the throw, the woman simply nods at Dottie before walking away. The Black woman was modeled after Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, who showed up to AAGPBL tryouts but was told to leave because she was Black. Professional teams never honor the women who played in the Negro Leagues because women are still not seen as legitimate ballplayers.

Until professional baseball gets comfortable acknowledging the women who have played baseball, it will be impossible to get to a point where they are equally included. Women players deserve to be recognized, but 25 years is not long enough to undo more than a century's worth of discrimination.

—BRITNI DE LA CRETAZ

RATING:

CRAZY EX-GIRLFRIEND

Directors: Various
{ THE CW }

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend undercuts many rom-com tropes, including the love triangle,

romantic destiny, and, of course, the obsessive crazy ex-girlfriend (“That’s a sexist term!”). Throughout the first two seasons, however, the show’s protagonist, Rebecca Bunch (cocreator Rachel Bloom), also rejects another sexist trope: women as rivals. One needn’t look far to find it in pop culture: *My Best Friend’s Wedding*, *Mean Girls*, and the *Real Housewives* franchise portray women as conniving and catty, their relationships often defined by competition.

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend turns the girl vs. girl trope on its head by portraying complex female friendships. Perhaps the show’s most unlikely friendship is between Rebecca and Valencia (Gabrielle Ruiz), the long-term girlfriend of Rebecca’s “one true love,” Josh Chan (Vincent Rodriguez III). They initially play tug-of-war over Josh’s attention, but surprisingly bond when Valencia volunteers to plan Rebecca and Josh’s wedding. Rebecca and Heather (Vella Lovell) also have an ex in common: Greg (Santino Fontana). When Heather ends things with Greg so he can date Rebecca, she doesn’t blame her friend. Instead, she offers Rebecca sex and relationship advice, and when they are both single, they become roommates. Rebecca, Valencia, and Heather are able to overcome the past and move forward with maturity, grace, and mutual care.

When Rebecca and her “best friend” Paula (Donna Lynne Champlin) first meet,

Paula is threatened by Rebecca’s impressive education and law career. Yet her attempts to sabotage Rebecca quickly end, and the two fall into a deeply codependent relationship. Paula becomes obsessed with helping Rebecca win Josh’s love, and they struggle to navigate healthy boundaries and individual needs. Eventually, Rebecca stops demanding all of Paula’s time and supports her efforts to earn a law degree, and Paula stops interfering with the details of Rebecca’s life. Like all the female

Ex-Girlfriend demonstrates an important truth: one woman’s career, relationship, or well-being is not a threat to another’s. When women believe in each other and offer validation and encouragement, they can become their best selves.

In season two’s finale, Valencia, Heather, and Paula are all at Rebecca’s side when she learns that Josh has jilted her on their wedding day. In a dramatic closing shot, we see the four women standing

Crazy Ex-Girlfriend takes all the clichéd reasons women might be rivals and turns them into catalysts for individual development.

friends in the series, they learn how to forgive, apologize, and help each other grow. While so many other stories depict women tearing each other down, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* takes all the clichéd reasons women might be rivals and turns them into catalysts for individual development. This show and its characters refuse to take the easy way out.

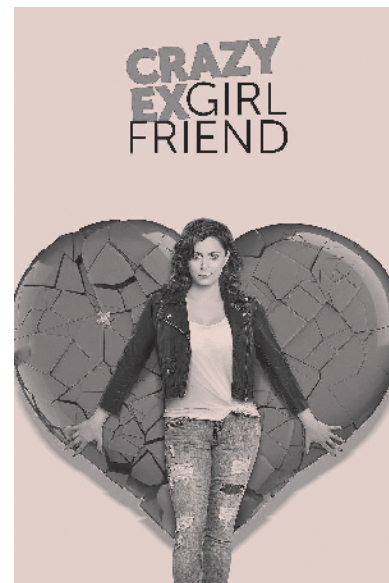
By showing female characters who reject competition in favor of friendship, *Crazy*

together on a seaside cliff, united in their desire to protect one another. Whatever mistakes and triumphs come next season, the women will face them together.

—KATHLEEN J. WOODS

RATING: 

Below: Still from *A League of Their Own*.





4:44

JAY-Z

{ ROC NATION }

review by Fredrick Salyers
illustration by Cris Latorre

RATINGS:

- 🔊🔊🔊 Buy it now
- 🔊🔊 Buy a few of the tracks
- 🔊 Stream it and decide
- 🔊✖ Pass



Many Black men have listened to Jay-Z through 13 studio albums, a record label, a clothing line, a cognac brand, legendary verses, and immense fame. They refer to him as Hov, an exalted figure who is rich in experience and wealth. When he speaks, they listen. On *4:44*, Hov utilizes that influence to ask the question: What does it mean for Black men to practice vulnerability? *4:44* offers a sonic foray into Jay-Z's innermost thoughts about Black wealth, self-awareness, and his marriage. On the album, he reintroduces himself as a transparent and intentional rapper who has mastered the game of life, or more specifically, the game of capitalism. In this competition, men test their wills to earn more dollars than the next man, but for Black men, this is a game of survival. In order to escape the streets and sit in boardrooms, Black men must harden themselves.

While growth and vulnerability are powerful, does it have to occur at the expense of

those who love them? There is a stillness between Black men, a tension filled with topics avoided and words unspoken. When hanging up the phone with my best friend of 15 years, I still hesitate to say “I love you.” It took me four years to come out to him as gay, and another four years to come out to my college homies. As a Black gay man, I feel anxiety when addressing other Black men. I fear that my love for them will be seen as soft and anything I say or write in service of my brothers—specifically the heterosexual ones—may fall on hardened hearts.

When Black men express their feelings, they often are forced to confront the dangerous paradigm of hypermasculinity. Being perceived as soft or feminine is a gamble. Jay-Z has embodied this mentality on some of his most memorable records, including “Big Pimpin’” and “Song Cry.” He has selectively shared his emotions while attempting to conquer or collect as many women as possible. The album’s title track, “4:44,” apologizes for that behavior.

“I apologize/ Often womanize/ Took for my child to be born to see through a woman’s eyes,” he raps. “Took for these natural twins to believe in miracles/ Took me too long for this song/ I don’t deserve you.” At the age of 47, Shawn Carter has awakened—wiser, more mature—and knows that his indiscretions have brought shame to his family.

As I listened to the album, I vividly remembered the men I have loved and how we fell out of love. I vividly remembered the men who raised me, felt their impressions in my bones. I reflected on the Black boys I’ve taught and mentored over the years. All of these Black men have experienced similar journeys inward to understand themselves.

fully. I experienced this isolation one final time when struggling to come out as gay.

I wanted to be open and proud. I wanted to maintain my dignity, my family, and my friends. I didn’t want to change the softness in my voice or suppress parts of myself labeled as deviant or damaging to my people. When Black men express themselves in a way that shatters the paradigm of Black masculinity, it often leads to tangible penalties against Black bodies, psyches, and spirits.

Black men often isolate themselves as protection, as a refuge to bury feelings, to sublimate their emotions in sacrifice of stereotypes that limit authentic connection. On “Family Feud,” Jay uses the title as a multifaceted analogy of his wife and

Black LGBTQ people. In “Smile,” Jay-Z’s mother, Gloria, recites a poem about living in the closet, assumably in service of her son’s public image:

You live in the shadows for fear of someone hurting your family or the person you love/ The world is changing and they say it's time to be free/ But you live with the fear of just being me/ Living in the shadow feels like the safe place to be/ No harm for them, no harm for me/ But life is short and it's time to be free/ Love who you love, because life isn't guaranteed/ Smile.

Jay-Z draws a direct lineage from his mother’s growth and maturation to his own. “Smile” suggests that love and liberation isn’t

When Black men express themselves in a way that shatters the paradigm of Black masculinity, it often leads to tangible penalties against Black bodies, psyches, and spirits.

The components of these experiences depend on the interchanging variables of love, dialogue, and, sadly, isolation.

I have experienced this isolation a few times on the journey to finding and understanding myself. First as a young boy with an estranged father, and then much later when I attempted to validate myself by performing the dominant, heteronormative standard in my teenage years. I would boast about having any girl I wanted. I would draw all of the attention on myself from girls, and eventually other boys, because I wanted to be affirmed. In reality, I was terrified that no one saw me

children, the current climate of hip hop, and the Black community: “Nobody wins when the family feuds/ We all screwed ‘cause we never had the tools/ I’m trying to fix you/ I’m trying to get these n*ggas with no stripes to be official.” He uses his influence to draw a connection between wealth and the importance of familial bonds. It’s not enough to possess material wealth because true abundance comes from a strong foundation.

Typically, Black men see themselves in direct competition to white men, often overlooking the impact that has on other Black people, specifically Black women and

limited to Black men. Black queer people and Black women also need affirmation from their communities.

4:44 initiates a larger conversation among Black men. We can follow in his footsteps, or learn and prevent similar missteps by practicing transparency and vulnerability in all of our romantic and platonic relationships. Jay-Z’s newfound vulnerability challenges preconceived notions of Black masculinity. But the next question is: Are Black men listening? — F. S.

RATING:   

SOMETHING TO TELL YOU

Haim
{ POLYDOR RECORDS }

Despite the swirl of classic-rock comparisons and pop-girl-squad murmurs surrounding Haim, this pop-rock trio has been in a class of its own from the start. Few bands can launch six successful singles off a debut record, as Haim did with 2013's *Days Are Gone*, and fewer still are capable of justifying a spot near the top of festival bills for three years after the band's only album.

Neither the concept of the family band nor the soft rock sound have been strong signifiers of "cool" in the 2010s, yet producing musical cool is exactly what Este, Danielle, and Alana Haim do best. The band's second release, *Something to Tell You*, demonstrates that these musicians have expertly polished that sound, but the album is too rooted in tried-and-true tactics to reward many repeat listens.

Of course, any debut as big as Haim's immediately sets a high bar, so *Days Are Gone* was always destined to be a tough act to follow. The biggest issue with *Something to Tell You* is that it follows the band's formula for success too closely. Individually, the songs are likable enough, and the hooks burst with stadium-tour energy, but the album doesn't offer

enough distinctive storytelling to be memorable. "Cause I got something to tell you, but I don't know why/ It's so hard to let you know that we're not seeing eye to eye," the sisters harmonize on the title track's chorus. It's an apt thesis statement for the album, which revolves entirely around romantic relationships, especially longing and heartbreak.

The 11 tracks all seem to follow a loose narrative structure: the strained realizations between two people who don't want the same thing at the same time, a struggle for communication, the loneliness that comes with breaking it off for good. Each sister contributed lyrics to the record, and perhaps out of concern for continuity, they seem to follow an unofficial Haim style guide: writing exclusively in second person, telling stories through statements that feel personal but guarded in their choice of language. Their music plays with the idea of vulnerability, but never quite makes the leap. Dealing in generalities isn't necessarily a fault when crafting a relatable pop song, but most successful songs state familiar feelings in a way that feels original. At times, Haim's simplistic language feels more like they're reaching for a medium to support a melody rather than trying to evoke anything genuine.

Still, with Haim's trademark '80s shimmer at the heart of the album, it's hard for the band to veer too far off course. Embracing any era's "revival" sound means risking getting written off as pastiche, but the trio's unexpected compositional twists and winningly weird production choices give the record just enough of a modern edge. As on *Days Are Gone*, Haim is still at its best when it gives tracks a bit of space to sprawl and experiment, as it does in the drawn-out ending of "Ready for You" and in the crashing escalation of "Right Now." The only disappointment is that the band doesn't do it more often. It's moments like these that keep middling tracks from blending together and offer an intriguing direction that warrants exploration on future albums. Though *Something to Tell You* draws attention to the gap between the Haim sisters' instrumental prowess and lyrical approach, it showcases, more than anything, that they're reliable. Promising that the next time the band has something to tell us, Haim gives us multiple reasons to stick around and listen. — KAREN MULLER

RATING:  

From SZA and Kehlani to Solange and Jhené Aiko, female vocalists are reviving R&B as a therapeutic space to heal from a destructive pop industry.



GIRL DISRUPTED

Sevnyn Streeter
{ ATLANTIC RECORDS }

Sevnyn Streeter does not have much left to prove. Since landing her first record deal as a teenager, she's toured with Beyoncé, scored a gold record, and gently curved Justin Bieber in her DMs. For more than 16 years, Streeter's musical brilliance has been used to craft pop singles for artists such as Chris Brown, Tamar Braxton, Brandy, Alicia Keys, Ariana Grande, and Kelly Rowland, but on her first solo album,

BITCHTAPES MIX: DEVOTED TO LOVE

Girl Disrupted, she turns the attention back to herself.

“Livin,” the introductory track, explains the significance of the album’s title: “I came across this title, *Girl Disrupted*, and I loved it so much but little did I know that that shit was actually going to happen to me in life for real.” Drifting from a background echo until it overtakes the foreground of the track, she discloses, “I suffer with depression.”

From the outset, Streeter is up-front and personal about the conditions under which she recorded *Girl Disrupted*. Between the announcement of her album in 2015 and its eventual release, Streeter was steered off course by depression, the death of her grandfather, and a highly public breakup with rapper B.o.B.

While these circumstances are unique to Streeter, the predicament is not; lately numerous albums have honed in on the pressure to be a productive artist regardless of personal turbulence. From SZA and Kehlani to Solange and Jhené Aiko, female vocalists are reviving R&B as a therapeutic space to heal from a destructive pop industry. The reprise of rhythmic soliloquy gives way to first-person narratives, confessionals, and self-reflection, cutting through taboo and stigma around depression and trauma.

Beyond the first song, the rest of the album is not explicitly tied to depression. Instead, it is concerned with the aftermath. Her lyrics focus on finding stability after having a world rocked by depression. “How do I address the present situation?” Streeter asks on “Present Situation,” conflicted about how to move forward in a murky relationship. Longing for loyalty on “Before I Do,” and demanding freedom from deceit on “Translation,” she seeks clarity and reassurance from those around her, perhaps to grapple with a newfound perspective on life’s overwhelming lack of certitude. But just as frequently as she makes an ask of the world, she turns the questioning inward, such as the way “Present Situation” arrives at the candid conclusion, “And I can’t lie, I love it/ I can’t lie, I love it/ It ain’t right, I love it/ I wouldn’t have chose this life, but I love it.”

But for an album largely about communicating, it is not really that wordy—the true strength of the album is in her choice

Self-love is difficult but fulfilling and beautiful work. Rapper extraordinaire **Miss Eaves** understands that delicate dance all too well. Through her music, she preaches the importance of confidence and the rejection of weight stigma, and she’s bringing that message to this “Devotion” playlist. Her playlist is full of songs about embracing your body as it is—haters be damned.



PLAY AT

[BIT.LY/DEVOTIONTOSELFLOVE](https://bit.ly/devotiontoselflove)

1. The Cardigans, “Lovefool”

I’m a romantic, and I’m always endlessly falling into these unrequited-love situations. “So I cry and beg for you to love me” speaks so honestly to my feelings when I want someone who does not want me back.

2. Sia, “Pictures”

This song so perfectly sums up the sentiment of a person who makes shrines to their ex in their mind while their new partner begs them to move on. I am usually the one begging my partner to take the pictures off their wall, so I have found a lot of solace in this song.

3. Lizzo, “En Love”

I love this song so much because it is all about being totally in love with and devoted to yourself. Recently I have taken a step back from looking for romantic relationships for a while and have turned all of my love inward. “En Love” is the soundtrack for this part of my life.

4. Aesop Rock, “No Regrets”

Sometimes your role in the family is to leave and return, leave and return again (at least that’s the story I hear in this captivating, wordless song).

5. Bikini Kill, “Rebel Girl”

This is how I feel anytime I meet another woman who is totally killing it and I just want to sit in her presence and absorb her energy: “That girl thinks she’s the queen of the neighborhood/ I got news for you, she is!/ They say she’s a dyke but I know/ She is my best friend, yeah.” YAAS!

6. Ducky, “Work”

All I do is work—not in a dull way. When I’m working on projects I’m passionate about, it is easy for them to consume me. This track is a total banger and also speaks to my workaholic nature.

7. Junglepussy, “Bling Bling”

This is another self-love track about being dedicated to doing your own thing. “It’s a full-time job fuckin’ loving yourself/ Nig-gas try to rob a bitch for her self-worth and her mental health,” Junglepussy raps. I love that it bucks the idea that women need to have a husband (or a man at all) to achieve fulfillment in life. Do your own thing.

in collaborators and beats. Recruiting an impressive crew of guest features, including The-Dream, Wiz Khalifa, Ty Dolla \$ign, Dave East, August Alsina, Jeremih, Cam Wallace, and Dej Loaf, Streeter shows the strength in community and collaboration to carry out a project. Primarily sticking to the wellsprings of R&B, Streeter reworks the hooks, drum loops, and symphonic samples from the past for her present musical moment. On “Before I Do,” Streeter pays homage to Aaliyah by sampling “At Your Best (You Are Love)”; “Anything” draws on the hook from the Wu-Tang Clan’s 1994 single of the same name; and the lyrics of “Ol Skool” reference the golden eras of hip hop and R&B. Meanwhile, “My Love For You” samples MXXWLL’s “4U” and references contemporary social-media moments such as the Bow Wow challenge.

Preoccupied with the past and its relevance for the present, *Girl Disrupted* seems dated. Despite the range of sounds from angelic, sensual ballads to pregame thirst traps, the album is predictable. It emphasizes radio-ready singles at the expense of securing longevity. A few experimental accents outside of the realm of mainstream hit-making would have positioned Streeter as an artist who disrupts the status quo.

— CHANELLE ADAMS

RATING:  

SUPERSCOPE

Kitty, Daisy & Lewis
{ SUNDAY BEST RECORDINGS }

Kitty, Daisy & Lewis appear to be a nice American rockabilly-inspired band that is heavily and patriotically in love with their own legacy. On *Superscope*, songs such as “Black Van” and “Down On My Knees” are familiar and comforting because of their simple and uplifting melodies. We’ve heard this kind of music before: traditional rockabilly with mostly fun and high-energy love songs, music you can lose yourself to in wild swing dancing. This genre was mainly popular around 2010, with artists like Duffy, Amy Winehouse, and Holly Golightly providing dance-floor hits. Since their sound is fundamentally American in its texture and rhythm, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that Kitty, Daisy & Lewis are an Anglo-Indian band from Britain, not the archetypal white Southern American rock ‘n’ roll band they appear to be.

In her book *What Are You Doing Here? A Black Woman’s Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal*, journalist Laina Dawes painfully describes the dilemma of loving rock ‘n’ roll. Her close family was disappointed in her choice to listen to “white people’s music” rather than embracing her own musical heritage, and she felt isolated within the predominantly white, heterosexual, and male metal community. I wondered if Kitty, Daisy & Lewis faced the same struggles while

recording *Superscope*, but the album doesn’t show this kind of conflict. Through their music, they’re presenting a rock ‘n’ roll heaven in which artists can make any kind of music, no matter their heritage or nationality.

The album’s fun, loving, and optimistic spirit sounds like storming through Arizona’s bare sunny deserts to drink milkshakes and eat hamburgers at the local diner. “The Game Is On” is a lively tune that makes you want to get up and dance. The vocals evoke Blondie in its heyday: “I want to take a rest/ Have fun at best/ And I don’t give a fuck.” Those lines seem to summarize the album’s theme perfectly and effortlessly. *Superscope* is about forgetting all your troubles and letting go of the black clouds that sometimes invade our everyday lives. It’s musical escapism, a retro haven from the outside world.

The album then surprises with “Team Strong,” a country ballad that begs a romantic setting, like holding someone tight in a smoky pub. I’ve never been a big fan of country tunes, but the sweet melody and adventurous lyrics are irresistible: “Put your face on and let’s go/ Don’t you know we can’t go wrong?” This song, as well as most of the other songs on the record, feels a bit too long, with several redundant and pale guitar solos, following the recent annoying trend of six-minute songs—at the minimum. Perhaps Tame Impala’s 2015 “Let It Happen,” which consists of 7:55 minutes of tumbling guitar solos, was an influence on this redundant length. However, despite some of its flaws, *Superscope* is a must for old-school Americana fans. —NITZAN PINCU

RATING:  



WHAT I’M LISTENING TO

Harloe SINGER, SONGWRITER, AND PRODUCER

DARK SIDE OF THE MOON (PINK FLOYD)

For most of this year, Dark Side of the Moon has continually come up in sessions and hangouts with friends. Recently, I sat back to listen to it from beginning to end. The details in it are so special and unique, and I love that it feels like the best live show ever. There’s no real formula or specific structure—it just feels so good. It took me a second to let it sink in, but once I was in, I was hooked. “Time” is my favorite song. It’s on repeat.

OKOVI

Zola Jesus
{ SACRED BONES RECORDS }

One year ago, as the United States was moving toward a Donald Trump presidency, Nika Roza Danilova, a.k.a. Zola Jesus, returned to the woods of Wisconsin where she grew up, built a cabin, and began working on what would become *Okovi*—her fifth and strongest album thus far. It’s full of



Although it's not an explicitly political album like Austra's Future Politics, Okovi mirrors the strife of existing as a minority in the United States in 2017.

the operatic vocals, pulsating synths and drum machines, and soaring string arrangements that first gained her popularity with 2011's *Conatus*.

In the press release for the album, Danilova declares, "This album is a deeply personal snapshot of loss, reconciliation, and a sympathy for the chains that keep us grounded to the unforgiving laws of nature." As one of the more experimental synth-pop artists, Danilova powerfully uses her voice to soar above—and at times drop into—each track's instrumentation. On *Okovi*, her sense of urgency is simply unparalleled. When she sings, "To be a witness/ To those deep deep wounds" over a gorgeous string arrangement on "Witness," she sounds a call to look within—and then deep beyond.

For most of *Okovi*, the world outside is one of unpredictability and uncertainty. The opening single, "Exhumed," begins with a fast-paced string arrangement that is looped over and over again. Asymmetric drum-machine beats fill the holes in the soundscape until the bass line enters and sends the song off its course. Near the end of the song, Danilova pushes her vocals up so many registers that they feel like they are going to escape the bounds of the song. On

the next song "Soak," Danilova pushes the cinematic feel of her music into the realm of the demented, performing from the perspective of a woman who is facing death at the hands of a serial killer. Unlike the protagonist in Lana Del Rey's "Serial Killer," in which she uses sociopathy as a metaphor for love, Danilova's narrator is a symbol of the powerless who are seeking agency in a moment of great suffering. As loud and aggressive drum clashes and keyboard slams reroute the song, the narrator struggles to tell the story on her terms—trying to regain control every time the song slows down.

Although it's not an explicitly political album like Austra's *Future Politics*, *Okovi* mirrors the strife of existing as a minority in the United States in 2017. Of course, Danilova is creating from the position of being a white female artist, which makes her choice to name the album *Okovi* (after the Slavic word for "shackles" or "chains") a loaded one, given that the word evokes chattel slavery. For Danilova, "okovi" is shorthand for the clash between the darkness and light that has been a theme for her entire discography. This contestation most viscerally plays out on "Veka," the standout track on the album. Amid blurry keyboard parts

and spoken bits, Danilova's vocals powerfully roar into the song, beckoning, "When the words become you/ When the story builds you in/ Who will find you then?" With an emotionally well-timed drop around the three-minute mark, the song explodes into a brazen synth-pop dance track.

At the end of the record, words go missing entirely as an instrumental of keys, bass, and strings closes out the album. The shackles are left as an open question, as something that can only be addressed through reflection on how one fits into a bigger picture. And as dark as *Okovi* gets, there always remains a glimmer of hope that we can do something else, including using (our) white privilege to point to the darkness lurking outside.

—CHRISTINE CAPETOLA

RATING:   

ADVENTURES IN FEMINISTORY: THEY CALLED HER DOCTOR D

By Cynthia Greenlee and Jaz Malone



Dr. Dorothy Lavinia Brown was the first woman surgeon to graduate from Meharry Medical College in Tennessee.

The state's law made almost all abortions illegal except in cases where it was required to save a woman's life.

She operated on women with injuries from botched abortions, and saw the damage inflicted by these laws.

After growing up as an orphan, she believed that every person should choose when or if to be a parent.

Dr. D was elected to the Tennessee Assembly as the state's first Black woman legislator and, in 1967, she introduced a bill that would have allowed abortions in rape or incest—six years before Roe v. Wade.

It didn't earn her friends, and it angered allies, who said her days were numbered as a lawmaker.



"You would have thought I opened up the gates of hell."

The bill never passed.

Although Dr. D later lost a bid for a Senate seat, the bill was among the first abortion reform measures across the country.



Dr. D continued her medical practice, advocated for "Negro History Month" in the state, and was the first unmarried woman to become a foster parent in Tennessee.



For more about Dr. Dorothy Brown, read the full version of this comic published in the anthology by Comics for Choice, and online at bitchmedia.org.

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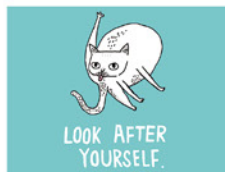
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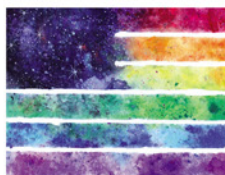
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