



## FAILING TO IDENTIFY MY QUEERNESS

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I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO THINK THAT QUEER ASPECTS OF THEIR IDENTITY ARE JUST A PHRASE. EVEN IF THEY LEARN THEY DON'T IDENTIFY WITH A SEXUALITY OR GENDER THEY ONCE IDENTIFIED WITH, AT LEAST THEY COULD BE OPEN-MINDED ABOUT THE FLUIDITY OF THEIR PERSONALITY. IT'S BETTER TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO THINK YOU MAY BE CERTAIN THINGS, EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT. IF YOU TRULY ARE WHAT YOU WANT TO IDENTIFY WITH AND YOU'RE HIDING IT, THEN YOU'RE HURTING YOURSELF. SEXUALITY AND GENDER ARE ON A SPECTRUM, BUT SOCIETY DOESN'T RECOGNIZE THIS. PEOPLE WHO NEED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THEMSELVES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT EXPOSED TO AN ENVIRONMENT THAT HELPS THEM UNDERSTAND THAT LIFE IS MORE THAN THE HETERONORMATIVITY THEY'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO.

WHEN I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD, I ASKED MY MOM WHY I NEEDED TO WEAR A BRA- I DIDN'T LIKE HAVING THAT I WAS DEVELOPING A CHEST THAT REQUIRED ME TO WEAR ONE. I BLAMED HER FOR IT. MY MOM FELT BAD AND RESPONDED WITH A SENTENCE THAT I CAN'T REMEMBER, BUT I REMEMBER FEELING BAD, UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WAS NOT HER FAULT THAT I FELT LIKE THIS, AND SO I TOOK IT BACK AND THOUGHT I SHOULD JUST EMBRACE IT. AS I GREW UP, I PREFERRED TO DRESS LIKE A "TOMBOY." I HATED DRESSES AND I HATED JEWELRY. THEY ONLY MADE PEOPLE PERCEIVE ME AS A YOUNG GIRL GROWING UP. I'VE ALWAYS HATED BEING CALLED A GIRL. PART OF ME NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY, SINCE EVERYONE ALWAYS TOLD ME THAT IT WAS JUST GROWING UP. REGARDLESS, THE OTHER PART OF ME UNDERSTOOD EXACTLY THAT I WAS JUST NOT SOMEONE PEOPLE KEPT SAYING I WAS. UNFORTUNATELY, I DID NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO LEARN FURTHER ABOUT WHAT I FELT IN MY CLOSE-MINDED LATINX FAMILY OR THE FRIENDS I HAD FROM MY PREVIOUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL. LUCKILY I'VE BEEN ABLE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SPECTRUM OF GENDER. BECAUSE OF MY INTERNALIZED TRANSPHOBIA, IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT FOR ME TO REALLY ACCEPT THAT I'M NON-BINARY, BUT I'VE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT MY FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY WHEN IT COMES TO PRESENTING MYSELF.





UNDERSTANDING MY SEXUALITY HAS BEEN A LITTLE EASIER. I STARTED TO REALIZE I LIKE GIRLS IN THE FIFTH GRADE, BUT I DIDN'T THINK MUCH OF IT WHEN I WAS YOUNGER THAN THAT. I LEARNED ABOUT GAY MEN AND LESBIAN WOMEN AT A PRETTY YOUNG AGE, AND SO I THOUGHT IT WAS OKAY TO BE ROMANTICALLY INTERESTED IN BOTH ANYWAY. REGARDLESS, IT HAS BEEN A SOMEWHAT JOURNEY. MANY TIMES, I HAVE QUESTIONED WHETHER I'VE JUST SAID TO MYSELF THAT I WANTED TO IDENTIFY AS BISEXUAL BECAUSE I'VE WANTED TO THINK THAT I AM. THIS HAS MADE ME ALSO QUESTION IF I'M REALLY ONLY ATTRACTED TO WOMEN OR ONLY ATTRACTED TO MEN; I THOUGHT I WASN'T ALLOWED TO LIKE BOTH. NOW, I ALWAYS THINK ABOUT THE SIGNS THAT SHOULD HAVE ALLOWED ME TO REALIZE THAT I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN BOYS AND GIRLS, EVEN BEFORE I COULD REALIZE THAT I WAS. UNDERSTANDING THAT SEXUALITY CAN BE FLUID, I IDENTIFY AS QUEER, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE SOCIETY UNDERSTANDS THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT GENDERS, AND I'M ATTRACTED TO PEOPLE'S PERSONALITIES MORE THAN OTHER ASPECTS OF THEM.



I'M GRATEFUL TO MY MOM EVERY SINGLE DAY FOR HAVING TOLD ME WHEN I WAS YOUNGER THAT SHE WOULD ALWAYS LOVE ME, NO MATTER WHO I LOVE AND WHO I TOLD THE WORLD I WAS. SHE'S THE REASON I'VE BEEN ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT I'M QUEER, EVEN THOUGH IT HAS TAKEN ME TO UNDERSTAND MY SEXUALITY, AND IT'S STILL TAKING ME TIME TO ACCEPT THAT I'M NON-BINARY. MY GENDER HAS BEEN HARDER TO ACCEPT BECAUSE I'VE FACED MORE BACKLASH FROM MY FAMILY, AND IT'S EASIER TO IGNORE SOCIETY'S OPINION AGAINST THE SPECTRUM OF GENDER THAN MY FAMILY'S. I WANT PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEY'RE NOT ALONE, SO I SHARE MY STORY IN DETAIL ABOUT WHAT I'VE HAD TO GO THROUGH. THANKS TO MY MOM AND THE MOST SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS I'VE BEEN LUCKY TO HAVE, I'M ALWAYS OKAY WITH EXPLAINING WHY I FEEL AND EDUCATING OTHERS, EVEN WITH THE FEAR THAT I MIGHT GET HATED FOR IT. NO MATTER HOW HOMOPHOBIC OR TRANSPHOBIC MY CROWD MAY BE, I CONTINUE TO EXPLAIN AND I CONTINUE TO STAND UP FOR MYSELF AND MY COMMUNITY.

