

THE ALTERNATIVE

STUDENT MAGAZINE



ALTON COLLEGE



PRIDE @ ALTON

OPINION PIECES,
CREATIVE WRITING AND
MORE ON THE THEME OF
'PRIDE'

SUMMER COMPETITION

FIND THE WINNING
PIECE INSIDE ON PAGE
TEN!

EDITORS NOTE

Before I go off on a long monologue about how this issue is important to me, I should definitely thank my awesome editing team - Zoe Offen, Immy Edwards, Jack Jillings, and Lucy Wootton - without whom it definitely wouldn't have been possible. You'll get to know them as you see some of their pieces throughout the magazine. This physical copy that you're (most likely) holding right now is the handiwork of our graphic designers, James Edwards and Eve Gresham, who, no offence, have probably put more hours into this than is healthy. You can also read a digital copy, as well as supplementary articles, on our website, which is linked at the bottom of the 'For Students' Moodle page. The rest of the articles that you're about to read are all of your submissions - and you can be in their place next time by sending something of your own in - details below.

I'd also like to wish a special congratulations to Angelica Wade for submitting the creative writing piece 'Even in darkness, colour can be found' which won our Summer competition. You can read it on page 10!

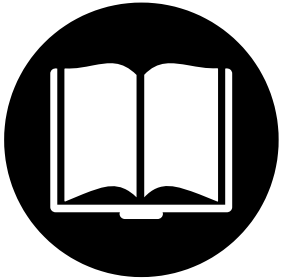
The idea of theming this issue around LGBTQ+ pride started out in my mind as a bit of a joke. I know that sounds bad, but as someone who's been closeted for a long while (hi Mum and Dad, I know you're reading this, because I probably made you. I'm bisexual) it didn't really seem like something that could ever come to fruition. I also know what it's like to come to college and be scared to show people who you are. Trust me, I've been there.

But, as you can probably tell, the team entertained my maybe-not-so-crazy idea. And, when we shared it with our gaggle of first-year contributors, there was a palpable sense of excitement that has really spurred us on through the production process (which has included us trying to cram in as many rainbows as respectably possible). So, here's the final product. Our biggest hope is that at least one LGBTQ+ person sees this magazine as a message that they don't need to be afraid to live authentically. There's also plenty for allies inside, too. We hope you enjoy.

Emma Wilkins

P.S: In our next issue, we'll be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Alternative by looking back at some of the teams and editions that have come before us. See you then!

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SUMMER COMPETITION WINNER!

Congratulations to Angelica Wade, who won our summer competition with her creative writing piece 'Even in Darkness'.

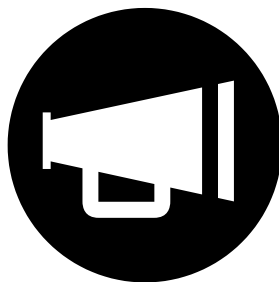
Gold. Streaks of it pierced the sky in sharp spears. Like a halo, providing the light of our lives, the sun lay above the earth in slumber. She was averse to subtlety, screaming her light through the sky.

READ THE REST ON PAGE 10!



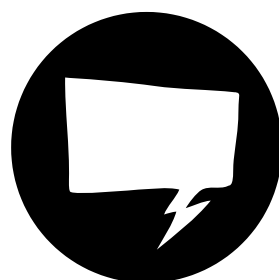
'An Easy Alliance'

Interview with the leader of the Alton College GSA on page 6!



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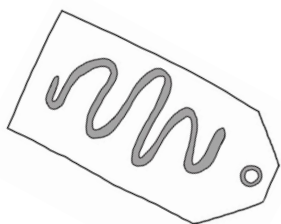
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LABELLING IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY



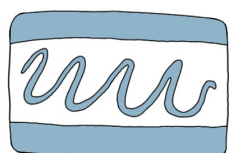
Within the LGBTQ+ community, there is a lot of pressure for individuals to conform to a specific label(s) to allow an understanding of their identity from other members. While this may be done with good intentions and for the purpose of ease, it can often have a negative effect on those involved. They may feel under stress due to the misconception that anyone who identifies as a part of the LGBTQ community must adhere to a label that perfectly defines them regardless of their own beliefs or opinions. This is simply not true.



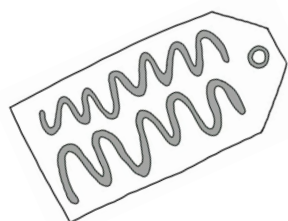
One of the amazing things about being a part of the LGBTQ+ community is that it is (supposed to be) a place where anyone outside the 'norm' society can escape and feel as though they belong. A major part of the reason why this is slowly becoming untrue is the stress being put on young people to immediately know what box they fit into. That's not the point of this community – it's almost the complete opposite.



For some people, having an explicit set of identifiers to belong to is great. If you think you've got your identity sorted and are comfortable with labels, then go for it! You should feel content and proud to be who you are, and no one should be able to take that away from you; your identity is valid.



That being said, there are those who suffer under the pressure to fit in or use the label that they 'are'. Take Hannah for example. Hannah is a cisgender female who is attracted to all genders. By definition, this makes Hannah pansexual, but she doesn't feel comfortable using that. She tries it out a few times, but it never sits right with her. So, after some research, Hannah decides that while she is attracted to every gender, bisexual feels more like her. Hannah is bi because that's what she chooses.



Alternatively, Jake is a transgender man who is attracted to men. However, Jake doesn't like identifying as 'gay' because of his associations with the word due to the environment he grew up in. As a result, Jake identifies as 'queer'. He has no negative associations with the word and likes the ambiguity of it.

It's important to note that this is also applicable for gender identities. Any set of pronouns is valid with any label you want to use no matter how vague or specific it may be. For example, many chose to use the term 'gender-queer' to define their gender identity and some just use a set of pronouns.



Your identity is yours and only yours and it will take time to figure it out, there is no rush or need to find a label and no correct way to go about it. There is no right or wrong way to label yourself. Whether you want to use a complicated set of explicit identifiers because they help you feel like you belong, or you use an ambiguous label – or none at all!

Rosie Aslin

DOUBLE RAINBOWS

Gen. 9 v14: “Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, [15] I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind.”

pride

/praɪd/

noun

confidence and self-respect as expressed by members of a group, typically one that has been socially marginalized, on the basis of their shared identity, culture, and experience.

I have been a Christian all my life; kept a Bible with me, been to church every Sunday near on seventeen years, prayed before dinner... but one thing that I was rarely taught about in the church or spiritual environment was the LGBTQ+ community. I soon came to learn of the LGBTQ+ community through friends and cultural media, finding that their symbol was the rainbow.

One of the most famous stories in the first half of the Bible (specifically the book of Genesis) is the story of Noah’s Ark. God saw the evil the world had created and decided to send a flood to wash away the wicked, sparing one good man whose name was Noah. Noah took his family, the animals (two-by-two) and placed them on a boat, saving his relations and the creatures of the earth.

When the water finally receded, God is said to have created a rainbow as an oath to never again destroy the Earth with flood. This was a sign of unity and relationship between God and the people of the world.

Fast forward to the present, and the rainbow is being used by pride cultures across the world, symbolising diversity, inclusivity, life, healing, sunlight, nature and harmony. It was first created by an openly gay activist and drag queen called Gilbert Baker.

Baker is said to have been inspired by Judy Garland’s “Over the Rainbow”. This actress, most famous for playing Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz, was a gay icon amongst her adult life and was frequently called “the Elvis of homosexuals”. The film itself can be implemented into experiences of Pride today, the message being that you can – and should – go after your heart’s desire, despite the challenges along the way.

The Stonewall riots from 1969 also played a key role in influencing Baker. These acts of fierceness took place in New York City after the police raided the gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, and began to arrest lesbians, trans women and men in drag. The “street kids” were the first in a crowd of passers-by to fight against the authority, throwing projectiles and eventually setting fire to the bar. The riots and street protests that came after this event lasted just under a week and two major LGBTQ+ communities were set up as a result of these events.

Having these two key influences, Baker looked and saw the rainbow as “a natural flag from the sky”. The flags were handmade and first used in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade to symbolise the unity and strength of the parade, just like the way God is said to have used it to show his unity between the Earth and himself.

Gal. 3. v28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

James Crook

AN EASY ALLIANCE

Why gender and sexuality alliances are important

You would expect a group of LGBTQ+ teenagers, who have all experienced homophobia, transphobia or erasure, being left in a room unsupervised together, to get very angry and political.

Nope. We elected Xander as our leader because they bring cake; the other day we spent the whole lunch playing Just Dance. 9 people trying to do a 4 person dance does not, in fact, end well.

I talked to Xander more about their experience with the club over their one-and-a-bit years of attending.



Xander - GSA Leader

Why did you originally join GSA?

"I joined the GSA to meet other people like me. Initially, joining college was such a big step and I was really worried I wouldn't find any friends. I thought joining a club with lots of other queer people might give me a better chance at having a social life, both in and out of college. Lo and behold, it did!"

What have you enjoyed the most about being part of the club?

"The wonderful people! Everyone at GSA are such amazing people and it's hard to find any way to find fault. It's like a little family! It's great being in a big group, with everyone chatting or playing games but it's also nice to talk to members individually. Form individual friendships and listen to their stories! Baking has just become a staple at the club which is really nice! Everyone has a different style and it's a way to show creativity in a different way other than through academic skills.

What are some of the struggles you've faced as a non-binary person?

"Definitely people not understanding the concept and being quite awkward about it. Somehow identifying as neither gender really freaks people out and they don't know how to act around me. Like I'm a different person than I was before I told them. Pronouns are another thing people struggle with. Since they often assume my gender they'll use female pronouns and even when I tell them I use 'them/they' pronouns, they don't try altogether or they make a big deal about it if they mess up."

What do you wish more people knew about the LGBTQ+ community?

“That we’re just like anybody else. There’s nothing wrong with us because we like the same genders or identify differently than you perceive. We’re not confused and it’s definitely not a phase. Even though labels might change, that doesn’t mean we were lying to ourselves. It means we’ve decided we don’t fit into that box anymore because it doesn’t define what we feel or who we are. If you verbally abuse us in the street, it’s not going to turn us straight. It’ll severely affect our mental health but we’ll strive to be gayer than ever just to spite you. No matter how much you hate us, we’re not going to go away.”

What would you say to anyone wondering if they should join the club?

“GSA is a wonderful place! If you’re a bit shy or feel anxious about coming to a meeting, I promise you’ll be welcomed like family. Every week we have home baked food like cookies or cupcakes and we usually just sit and chat in little groups. There is nothing to fear. Every now and then we may bring games in to play as a group but there is no pressure to join in. Everyone at GSA is absolutely lovely and accepting! Although it’s sometimes chaotic, the group dynamic works really well and everyone is so inclusive and accepting of each other! Every week we do names and pronouns as a reminder until we’re able to remember them initially so please don’t be worried that your pronouns will be gotten wrong.”

Is there anything else you’d like to add?

“The GSA is a really important club to some people. It’s important to some that they can enter a room and be themselves with others they feel safe with. GSA is a safe space and it always will be. This means that whatever happens/is said in GSA, stays in GSA. This is very important, especially in regards to the confidentiality of those who attend.”

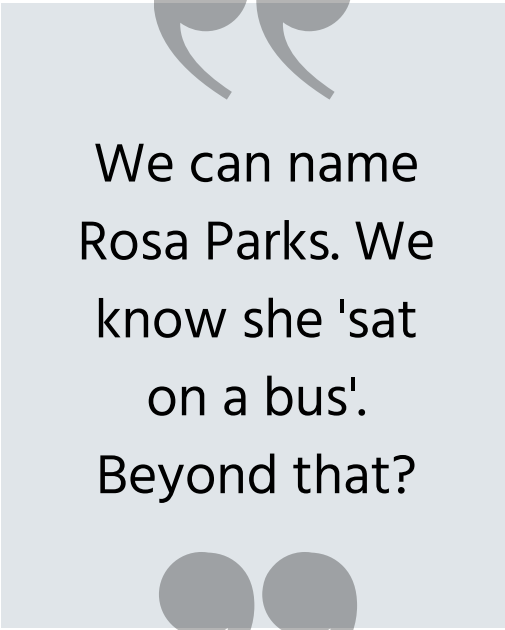
Everyone at GSA is absolutely lovely and accepting!

Emma Wilkins

GSA runs all lunchtime every Fridays in 739 (second floor Austen) and is open to everyone!

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: WHERE WERE WOMEN?

When the civil rights movement is the topic of conversation, no doubt the first figure that comes to mind is Martin Luther King Jr, perhaps Malcolm X – and rightfully so. Both men had a huge impact on the campaign in America and have marked their place in History as inspiring leaders that headed the vital and righteous fight for black equality. But what about women? Most of us who have watched Horrible Histories can at least name Rosa Parks and sing about her bus boycott. So we know she 'sat on a bus'. Beyond that?



We can name
Rosa Parks. We
know she 'sat
on a bus'.
Beyond that?

It seems strange that, in a campaign fighting for the rights of an entire race of people, women would not have any bearing on the battle – or even be involved. Of course, anyone can tell you that black women did, indeed, exist seventy years ago, and have not sprouted into existence in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, textbooks have erased the importance of women throughout History; the Civil Rights Movement is no different.

As modern Historiography evolves, so minorities slowly resurface from beneath the rug of elitist History that they have been swept under. A subject notoriously dominated by high-ranking white men, both as the studied and the studiers, it is only in more recent years, with the diversification of the field, that we have been able to appreciate those hidden by the oppressors and the privileged.

Before we look at who, we should ask: why? Over the summer, I had the opportunity to hear the interesting perspective of Oxford Graduate Georgina Ellis, whose dissertation focused on female leadership in the American civil rights movement. According to her, the erasure of female leadership stems from a combination of misogyny and modern day perception of what 'leadership' is.

What is a leader? To most, it is someone along the lines of a good speaker, a charismatic personality, someone who can boost morale and capture the nation's attention; I, for one, would have said the same a few months ago. This wouldn't be wrong, per se, though it would be limiting. Because when we reduce leadership to only this, it is unsurprising that the leaders arising from History are exclusively male. Women in the past never had the option to be these things in a society that saw them as subservient and lesser. How could they fulfil this criteria when they were still expected to be housewives, nannies and secretaries? Thus, they resorted to non-traditional forms of leadership that are yet to receive widespread recognition.

This isn't the only way in which sexism affected historical leadership; apart from the sexist filter with which History has been studied, black women in particular suffered from the moral weight of the civil rights campaign. They were encouraged to face misogyny rather than contradict it so that all efforts could be invested (in solidarity with their black male counterparts) in 'defeating' racism. Once more, women were guilt-tripped into silence for the benefit of men – even with other, greater goals in mind at the same time – and to the detriment of their own gender. So, women and their leading roles in the protests were disregarded, overlooked and later, overwritten.

But in a generation where we increasingly have the chance to uncover these truths, I'll steer away from criticising. Instead, let's shine a light on one inspirational female figure that stood out to me, because it's about time we started being proud of the History of women:

The Montgomery bus boycott that Rosa Parks is so famously known for, that propelled Martin Luther King Jr into the public eye, was actually ignited by activist and educator Jo Ann Robinson, who planned the boycott three years before Parks spontaneously protested the segregation of black and white Americans on public transport. Despite facing rejection from the Women's Political Council and later, once president of the WPC, from the city hall council, Robinson persevered. Independently, she organized the boycott. After Parks' arrest and with her permission, Robinson spent the night mimeographing 52000 handbills calling for the Montgomery bus boycott.

A formidable soldier of social justice, she was recognised even in King's memoir as: "Apparently indefatigable, she, perhaps more than any other person, was active on every level of protest". This woman was not deterred by multiple arrests or acts of intimidation – even by police, who threw rocks through her window and acid on her car – that resulted in guarding of her house, instead working diligently with the Montgomery Improvement Association and other WPC members to sustain the boycott for over a year. Robinson was eventually successful, and the triumph of the boycott inspired many all across the country to rise up. To quote Robinson herself, "The boycott was the most beautiful memory that all of us who participated will carry to our final resting place."

Not only erased by History but also by fellow participants, such as Edgar Nixon, an African-American civil rights leader who claimed the boycott was an idea that he was the lone supporter of, it is important we remember and take pride in incredible characters like Robinson.

This is one of many women who played a key role in such a historically important era of History – for instance, Daisy Bates, Ella Baker, Ericka Huggins and Coretta Scott King, to name a few, though there are countless others. Considering their huge impact and admirable efforts, it seems wrong that we, as a society, don't recognise them as household names in the same way as Dr. King.



Jo Ann Robinson

People like Robinson make me proud to be a woman. To see the astounding achievements of women who had to fight discrimination on two sides – not only racism but sexism – and to see how much they were able accomplish when they had such little support and opportunity is inspiring. Now, to follow suit of the aptly named film *Hidden Figures*, as society uncovers those lost in the white-and-male tides of time, there is no better moment to sing our pride of womanhood.

Zoë Offen

EVEN IN DARKNESS, COLOUR CAN BE FOUND

Gold. Streaks of it pierced the sky in sharp spears. Like a halo, providing the light of our lives, the sun laid above the earth in slumber. She was averse to subtlety, screaming her light through the sky.

And there is a group of four, laughing together on the side of the street. And they're plastering streaks of multicoloured paint onto each other's faces. And two lovers sat in their car, still in their driveway. And they were settled in the front seat, lips tangled together before they decide to drive to the parade. And they all realise that they don't have to be alone because of who they love.

Paints were smeared over faces, coating them in any and every colour. Reds and blues and purples, they all appeared; grouped with other colours, they created different motifs, forming a pattern over the crowd. Their painted faces, their laughter, their screams of exultation - all produced because of who they're with.

A powerful baseline echoed through the concrete, the heartbeat for the kaleidoscopic creature that danced over cracked paving tiles. The crowd was moving in a confused synchronisation, together and separate all at once. Footfall after footfall was a display of the euphoria that simmered in the air.

Beads stained in every colour, both warm shades and cool tones, adorned necks of every colour and size; for once, everyone was equal when covered in beautiful strings of their pride. Pulsing and dancing, jumping up from their throats before pounding into their collarbone, the vivid colours tainting the unblemished skin. Neighbouring pearls of vivid colours- all joined together in a chain- were displayed across skin.

Pristine. Colourful. Flying high with the people's pride. Gay, bisexual, transgender, and a cacophony of other flags stood above the crowd, waving down at the people below, editing the sky in a picture of bold lines of colour. A reflection of the proud, with their heads held high.

Silver. Glistening flecks dancing across a midnight sky. Like a hole in the sky, letting in the precious light, the moon hung above humankind. He never screamed or shouted; he only whispered.

And there is a girl sitting secluded at the back of the bus, going home. And she's scrubbing vibrant paint off her cheeks - a last hope at avoiding more gorgon stares from other passengers. And there is a boy, standing at the end of a train carriage, going home. And he's hiding his rainbow flag - a last hope of dodging homophobic slurs from drunk travellers. And they both realise that the hardest thing to do in this world is to live in it.

Black and blue were sewn into the skin in their cheek, painting it in violent shades; a cutting reflection of the attack they faced when they had tried to walk home. Tracks of tears created cracks in rainbow paints, providing the gaps needed to peer at the nauseating shades that echoed over their face. Like brands, some are created by the people they trusted the most. Their bruises, their tears, their cries of pain - all inflicted because of who they are.



Feet pounding across pavements caked in filth and grime. Step after step after step. Every footfall took them closer to the sanctuary of their home, but no amount of running would cause their shadows to give up the chase. Brandishing bottles and vicious words, both of which sliced their skin with malice intent.

Strings of beads around their necks now felt like a noose around their neck when slurs are punched into their faces. Pulled and yanked, snapping from their throats before plummeting to the ground, the vivid colours getting tainted by the bronze dirt. Bruises - all round, neighbouring pearls of deep blue, all joined together in a chain - were displayed across skin, the only physical evidence of a sick form of abuse.

Ripped. Stained. Sodden with thrown alcohol. Tattered flags lay dead at the feet of their executioner. Fraying threads, dyed in once striking hues, drift in the breeze, now nothing but dulled tones. A reflection of the remains of the once proud, now only delicate shards in the dirt.

How weak they must think our pride is, for they think their hate can batter it into submission.

Angela Wade

IDENTITY, POLITICS AND THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Celebrate minority politicians or focus on policy substance?

It is hardly new to bring up the divisiveness of our political debate, the last few years have seen hateful rhetoric brought right to the fore of our national discourse and the situation replicated right across the developed world. Just recently, the language used in Parliament has been harshly condemned yet the PM ignores calls to restrain the use of military terms that many are worried could incite violence.

The othering of the opposition and the refusal to debate honestly with the other side, in favour of generating rabble-rousing viral clips, amplifies this divide. It is the unwillingness of political actors to see beyond their bubble, to listen to anyone not on their team that stifles discussion.

The 'team' aspect is particularly insightful in that it provides a deeper lens into the malaise affecting current thinking; it leads to expectations that you, of course, will defend your team just as vehemently as I defend mine. Those on the right expect those on the left to defend anyone vaguely liberal, Piers Morgan's clash with Ash Sarkar, a left-wing commentator, over Obama, someone seen as being 'on the left' when his policies were moderate and reasonably centrist, being a media-worthy example.

This clan mentality and loss of nuance in presentations of political belief is not only an issue in the obvious way, making opinion into a purely binary exercise, but also in expecting us to defend our political 'allies' even when we disagree with them or abhor their personal behaviour.

In his recent book, James O'Brien details a conversation he had with a caller accusing him of being "on the same side as Sadiq Khan and Brendan Cox". Whether this simply meant opposition to white supremacists is unclear but it was telling that, having spent the last few minutes defending Trump's worst behaviour, he expects O'Brien to do the same in regards to all actions by the London Mayor.

The conflation this exercise brings about is most telling on social issues, when the PM calls climate change protesters left-wing, or the likelihood of Brexit supporters to be on the right. This has, of course, become a self-fulfilling prophecy in most areas of public life.

It is this same clan mentality that leads those on the left, occasionally including myself, to have a certain smugness about them. Of course we have more female supporters, gay supporters, BAME supporters, we're righteous social democrats who look after minorities. Many people, I suspect, are secretly happy with this situation, it's merely another opportunity to castigate the other side, even though it would be better for everyone if it were equally accepted for minorities to be conservative.



Looking at LGBTQ+ politicians through this lens, while it is true that they do tend to coalesce on the left of politics, it is important to remember that they are no more monolithic a group than any other.

The problems of identity politics may have us reject describing any politician as a minority, in case it causes further division, leads us to assign them a category without looking at them as an individual and then, by extension, assume their support for policies of figures within that group. Being LGBTQ+ is by no means a test as to how good a politician is. I happen to quite like Mhairi Black, for instance, but not Pete Buttigieg, incidentally, someone who has a stated disregard for specifics. Talking about politicians' backgrounds instead of policy details undermines the purpose of politics and, from the liberal point of view, risks alienating the sections of society left behind by the policies of austerity.

There are many issues with this position. For many people, being LGBTQ+, in the same way others see their black identity, is a central part of who they are and thus forms a central part of their political development. For others in those minority groups it is important to recognise and celebrate them, to recognise the struggle for visibility and to provide role models for those who may want to run for public office.

Perhaps there is a need to balance these two positions, identity shaping our character against identity defining politicians more than their policies?

I do get the sense that this article has been falling into a similar trap, setting up the argument that these views are in opposition, rather than completely compatible. One of the things I remembered from listening to Guy Verhofstadt was a speech on identity. That, "you can be proud of your national or regional identity and, at the same time, of your European identity"

The same principle could easily be applied in the case of identity politics, that we reject categorising politicians simply by whether they are female or LGBTQ+ while recognising the importance of those elements for some in shaping them as individuals and in shaping the lives of others who see them as role models. It may seem, to those of us who consider a person's identity to be of little relevance when choosing who to vote for, that these are distractions, that Sadiq Khan being a Muslim is already normal, when it really isn't. So, despite my initial leanings, I am by no means advocating that anyone stop using identity labels. Reading more female authors or having more LGBTQ+ politicians is a good and frankly necessary thing that should be encouraged, as long as we remember that they are authors and politicians as well and hopefully first.



Jack Jillings

LIFE IN COLOUR

Imagine a dark world, forever cast in shadow, where only one person can see in colour. Only one can see the truth; blessed to see the world as it is, and yet to be mercilessly tortured for it. People used to be individuals, until they were told they couldn't be different - that it was shameful. That it was wrong. They forgot; they forgot how to be different, until everyone saw the world the exact same way: black, white and grey, and they believed that there was nothing else.

They lost their individuality, they lost themselves, and their world drained of colour. Their lives became dull and grey, and their world followed.

In the woods just outside her school, all Quinn could see was the gnarled tree roots, clawing at the ground, courtesy of the light that fought its way through the trees above. Shame coursed through her veins as she approached her fellow students.

The normal ones.

Self-consciously, her hand twitched towards her sunglasses, making sure they were still in place. They were the thing that screamed her difference, her abnormality, to the world. With them, she was just like everybody else - the world only expressed itself to her in black, white and grey. Forced to wear them, they were nothing but a symbol of her shame, of her curse. They wanted her to be like everybody else, but that was the one thing she could never do.

"Here comes the freak," the words struck her like a knife. All she heard was insults. Freak. Monster. You don't belong here. The abuse bore its way deep into her soul, worming its way into her brain, until she believed them. She believed that she was a freak, that she didn't belong. This hurt her more than anything else. All Quinn wanted was to be accepted, to be loved; to be accepted for who she was, not for who they thought she should be.

She hurried away; for everyone else, this bleak world was only expressed in black, white and grey, but for Quinn, and only Quinn, it was teeming with colour. They knew this, and they tortured her for it, because she was different, because she could see things they couldn't even comprehend. All around her, people's lives unfolded before their eyes in grey: lonely, dull grey. If only she could see inside their hearts, see the jealousy that lay coiled up within like a snake, waiting to strike with venom sharpened by hatred.

Once again, Quinn sat alone, simply and observer of the world around her. Isolated and ignored. As she stared out across the sky, her sunglasses darkened her vision, making her like them. As the sun glared down, she felt tiny drops of water speckle her skin.

Perfect.

Stubbornly, Quinn sat through the rain, even as it poured, and the others ran for shelter. Her hair plastered her face and hung limply around her, but even this discomfort was better than being with them. In the sudden downpour, as if the sky cried in sympathy for her plight, she wished that for once she could be accepted; that for once she could be loved. That for once she wouldn't be ashamed.

Gradually, the rain slowed to a halt, and the rest of the students slowly emerged from cover. A streak of grey marred the otherwise clear sky. Sighing, Quinn removed her glasses to wipe away the tiny beads of water that dotted them, and gasped as she looked up. Stretched for across the sky, fading into the empty blue, was a glorious spectrum of colour.

A rainbow.

A pure, perfect rainbow. Quinn blinked as she stared at this thing so foreign to her, this thing that she had only read about, and a tiny tear rolled down her cheek. A shy voice sounded from behind her, and Quinn spun around, immediately on the defensive, anticipating the mockery to come. "Can you see what's up there?" the little boy asked, pointing to the sky. Quinn nodded, waiting for the torment to ensue, but today was different...

"What is it?" was all he said, casting his eyes to the floor. Quinn's heart melted as she gazed down at him, pitying the dull life he must lead, yet knowing there was nothing she could do. Quinn hesitated, unsure she could even begin to describe the beauty of the rainbow, but the boy misunderstood her silence "What is it called? It's beautiful..." Quinn gaped at him in shock "You... you can see it too?" was all she said. The boy nodded, and Quinn knew that she was no longer alone.

"That is a rainbow." Quinn simply stated, but the boy repeated it in a voice filled with awe as he gazed at this phenomenon. As he stared at the delicate yet vibrant stripe that bled into the electric blue of the sky, his eyes welled up with tears, and Quinn left him alone with his thoughts.

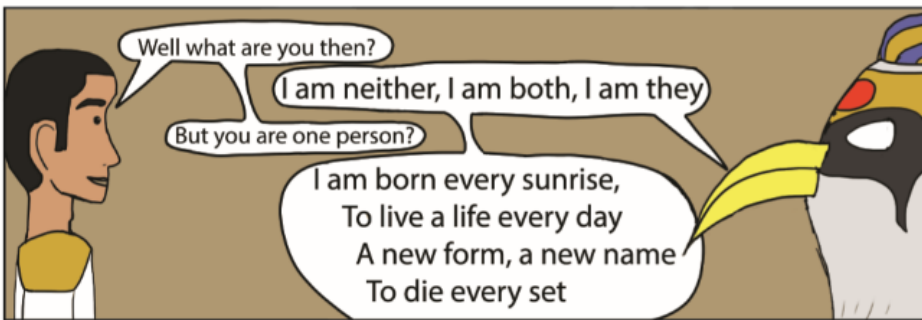
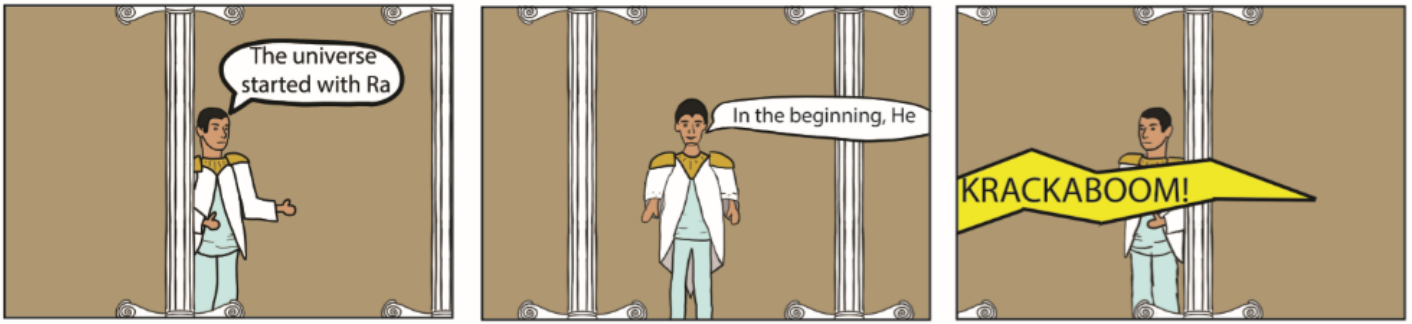
Shafts of sunlight shone through the delicate branches, filtering through the leaves: brown, green yellow and red, all came together in a glorious mosaic. Fluffy green moss coated each tree root like a blanket, flowers waved in the gentle breeze and tiny toadstools, speckled with white spots, gathered in clusters around the base of the trees. Quinn breathed, finally letting go of all the hurt and pain and the lies - the lies that said she was inferior. That swore she didn't belong. There was a whole world that she could share- a world full of light, glowing with intensity. A world of colour. As Quinn meandered through the forest, she knew that she was not alone, and that she never would be again.

Quinn walked away, finally content, finally proud of her gift.

Catherine Goldie



Gods of Pronouns



The problem is your use of your own language.

I am everywhere. Everyone.
And I still have to deal with the ignorance of people like you.t



Seriously, humans created this language.
A word exists and even if it didn't. Make one.
Did you already have the word pixel before the TV in the 20th century? No so you made it!



LILI ELBE A TRANSGENDER PIONEER

Lili Elbe and her spouse, Gerda Wegener, are now remembered fondly as LGBTQ+ pioneers, but at the time in conservative pre-war Denmark and in Weimar Germany they were a contentious sensation that raised a media frenzy which would see their marriage annulled by a Danish court. The development of gender reassignment surgery hinged on the braveness of transgender women such as Lili Elbe who were willing to refine the practice and live as the opposite sex in a prudish, conservative society.

In Weimar Germany and France, devastated by the First World War, a sizable LGBTQ+ community developed during the period of relative economic prosperity brought about between 1923 and 1929 - the "roaring twenties." German magazines such as *Die Freundin* ("The Girlfriend") and *Der Eigene* ("The Unique") encouraged Germans questioning their sexuality to embrace homosexual lifestyles and break out of the closet. The spread of the LGBTQ+ movement in Germany wasn't just limited to literature, with a number of LGBTQ+ films such as Christa Winsloe's "Mädchen in Uniform" (Girls in Uniform) and Richard Oswald's "Anders als die Andern" (Different from the Others) pioneering LGBTQ+ cinema. In Paris, the city renowned worldwide for its ever enduring beauty had been, since the late nineteenth century, very tolerant and was very much the global LGBTQ+ hub.

The LGBTQ+ community that was blossoming wasn't just limited to Germany and Paris, either. A plethora of LGBTQ+ movements then sprung up in other European countries and even over the pond, with the LGBTQ+ community of New York being tolerated, albeit hardly understood. Less tolerance could be found in Britain, but even that was being eroded by the winds of change, especially after the book "The Well of Loneliness" by Radclyffe Hall almost single-handedly birthed the British LGBTQ+ scene.

These list of places includes Denmark, the setting for much of our story.

Lili Elbe was born Einar Wegener in Vejle, a bustling market town in Denmark, on the 28th of December 1882. Her year of birth is often erroneously stated as 1886, and it is often speculated that she was intersex, however this cannot be confirmed. Gerda Wegener (née Gottlieb) was four years her junior, the daughter of a deeply conservative vicar in the rural Danish village of Hammelev. The couple met while both studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and they were married in 1904. Between 1904 and 1912, they travelled Europe, mingling with high society and exhibiting their work in important displays all around the continent.



Elbe first started dressing in women's clothing after filling in as a model for Gottlieb while filling in her absent model, the coveted Danish ballet dancer Ulla Poulsen. This experience was the catalyst for Elbe transitioning to and living her life openly as female. In 1912, they settled down in lively Paris by 1912, just before the outbreak of World War One. Here, Elbe could openly live as a woman and Gottlieb could openly live as a lesbian. Gottlieb became remarkably famous in Parisian artist circles for her paintings of beautiful women with haunting eyes clad in fashionable chic attire, the public being shocked to learn that the model who inspired Gottlieb's work was in fact assigned male at birth. That model, of course, was Lili Elbe. Starting in the early 1920s, Lili would present herself openly as a woman, entertaining house guests and frequenting Parisian carnivals in her chic modelling fashions.

Lili Elbe finally received gender reassignment surgery in 1930, travelling to Germany to receive four extremely experimental surgeries under the watch of Germany's finest sexologists and surgeons. This was extremely risky and complicated considering the experimental nature of the procedure and the fact that this was before the pre-antibiotic age.

The first surgery was carried out by the renowned Doctor Ludwig Levy-Lenz and the elderly sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld. This surgery was a success, and the remaining three were carried out by Doctor Kurt Warnekros, a senior sexologist and pioneer of gender reassignment surgery. By this point, her story was widely circulated in Denmark and Germany, the latter of which being increasingly radicalised by Hitler and his National Socialist mob. In Danish law at the time, marriage between two women was prohibited, and a Danish court annulled their marriage in October 1930. Lili however managed to legally change her name, receiving a passport under her new name. She also left painting behind, considering it a part of Einar's identity.

Lili would present herself openly as a woman, entertaining house guests and frequenting Parisian carnivals in her chic modelling fashions.

In 1931, Elbe underwent a vaginoplasty procedure, being the second person in the world to have done so. However, after this, it became infected. On the 13th of September 1931, she succumbed to this infection and passed away in Dresden, aged only 48. The May 1933 book burning at the Institute for Sexual Research by Nazi students and the firebombing of Dresden in 1945 by the RAF have left gaps in Lili's story that we will sadly never be able to resolve.

Gerda was devastated by Lili's passing, marrying again only to have it fall through by 1936. Devastated by reliance on alcohol, she moved back to Denmark, hosting her last exhibition in 1939. By this point, her art was of a style less popular and had fallen out of favour. She survived after this by creating a meagre income through selling postcards and lived in relative obscurity until she passed on July the 28th 1940, shortly after the Nazis invaded Denmark. Only a small obituary was published in the local paper.

The story of Lili and Gerda are, to say the least, inspirational. The bravery they exhibited by openly living as transgender and lesbian (respectively) in a prudish society openly hostile to them deserves nothing less boundless respect. A film, *The Danish Girl*, was made in 2015, loosely based off their lives and the LGBTQ+ film festival MIX Copenhagen awards four "Lili" awards named after Elbe.

Joe Walters

UNRECOGNISED: 4 FEMALE SCIENTISTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD

SALLY RIDE (MAY 26, 1951 - JULY 23, 2012)

On June 18, 1983, Sally Ride became the first American woman in space as she left the Kennedy Space Centre in a space shuttle headed into orbit, where she spent 147 hours launching and retrieving satellites with an RMS robotic arm - the first time such technology had been used for such a purpose. Having achieved a PhD in astrophysics from Stanford University, Ride was an incredibly gifted student, and applied for her first mission while still studying. Only sixteen months after returning from her first mission, she left Earth again on another mission, spending a further 197 hours in space. Following a fatal disaster during the launch of a shuttle, which resulted in the tragic deaths of seven astronauts, including four of Ride's teammates, she was one of thirteen people chosen to investigate the event. Space missions ceased for three years after the tragedy, during which time Ride became the first Director of the Office of Exploration, planning future missions for NASA. After retirement, Ride founded and joined many organisations aiming to get more children, especially girls, into physics - Space.com, Sally Ride Science and EarthKAM to name a few. She also co-authored seven children's science books. Following a 17-month battle with pancreatic cancer, Ride passed away on July 23 2012, and came out as a lesbian in her obituary.



SOFIA KOVALEVSKAYA (15 JAN 1850 - 10 FEB 1891)

At a young age, Kovalevskaya became fascinated with mathematics after listening to her uncle's frequent discussions on the subject. Although she didn't understand what he described, she found maths intriguing, explaining in her autobiography that she developed a reverence for it, viewing it as an "exalted and mysterious science which opens up to its initiates a new world of wonders, inaccessible to ordinary mortals." She soon began to neglect her other studies in favour of mathematics, to the extent that her father banned it from her lessons, and she could only learn maths from a borrowed copy of Bourdeu's Algebra, which she read at night in secret. A year later, after discovering Kovalevskaya's innate talent and love for maths, her new tutor tried to convince her father to allow her to study it privately, which he eventually permitted a few years later. However, despite her father's apparent acceptance of his daughter's love for mathematics, he would not allow her to attend university. With no other options, but determined to study mathematics at any cost, Kovalevskaya entered a marriage of convenience with a young paleontologist, granting her freedom of her father's control, and moved to Germany, only to discover that the university she wanted to attend wouldn't admit women. Kovalevskaya was nevertheless undeterred, and after much effort, the university allowed her to unofficially attend lectures with the lecturers' consent, where she proceeded to instantly gain the favour of lecturers with her talent.

A few years later, she moved to Berlin to study with Karl Weierstrass, one of her professors' teachers, but the senate denied her access to the university course, ignoring the implorations of Weierstrass and his colleagues. Fortunately, Weierstrass instead tutored her privately for the following four years, by the end of which she had written three papers - one on partial differential equations, one on abelian integrals and a final one on Saturn's rings. Her work on



partial differential equations, the theorem now named after her, was remarkable and earned her a doctorate from Göttingen University, although she was still barred from an academic position at the university despite her strong recommendations from Weierstrass, predominantly due to her gender. The highest teaching position she was offered was teaching elementary classes to girls, and the anger and resentment she harboured from the unfair rejection led to a six-year period in which she undertook no more research. Eventually, 10 years after gaining her doctorate, she was finally granted an unpaid teaching position in Stockholm, and after 5 years became the third woman to ever gain a chair at a European university. Throughout the rest of her life, Kovalevskaya won multiple awards, including the prestigious Prix Bordin, before she sadly died of influenza and pneumonia at the peak of her career.

SAU LAN WU:

As a young researcher, Wu set herself a goal: to make at least three major scientific discoveries. Now, after 59 years, she has achieved her aspiration, and is still looking for more. She is currently employed as an experimentalist at CERN, where she was a group leader of the ATLAS team who famously discovered the Higgs-Boson particle in 2012. Her first discovery was in 1974, when she was an integral part of one of the two teams that first observed the J/psi particle in what became known as the November Revolution. This huge discovery led to the establishment of the Standard Model of particle physics. Only a few years later, she performed many of the calculations and analysis crucial to determining the existence of gluons. Her 2012 discovery of the Higgs-Boson particle provided the final part of the Standard Model, and she now seeks to discover new particles that can transcend the Standard Model, and progress physics even further. However, as a Chinese woman in a heavily male-dominated field, Wu's journey hasn't been an easy one. Born in Hong Kong during WW2, she, her younger brother and her mother were abandoned by her father and lived in abject poverty, sleeping on her own behind a rice shop. Although her mother was illiterate, she encouraged Wu to seek education and to become independent of men, and so Wu decided to move to the US for her higher studies. With only 40 dollars to her name, she applied to 50 universities, but only four responded, and three of those responses were a rejection. Even after gaining a scholarship at Vassar College, her gender still caused a lot of problems, and forced her to make difficult decisions; fearing that it would lose her the grant and tenure that she had been working so hard to earn, she felt she had no choice but to give up her hopes of having children, and she has discussed in interviews that many departments throughout her career have 'actively fought against women'. As a graduate at Harvard University, she was the only woman in her cohort, and was barred from the study sessions which took place in the male dormitories. Although she is glad to see change in the treatment of women in physics, she still feels at a disadvantage as an already established scientist, explaining that most of the support for women in physics is aimed towards women starting out in the field rather than those already a part of it. Despite the barriers that she has faced, and still faces to this day, she continues to carry out fascinating and vital research, searching for her fourth big discovery.

TIERA GUINN FLETCHER

At only 24 years old, Guinn Fletcher is already involved in some of the most exciting projects at NASA. Having graduated from MIT in 2017 with a GPA of 5.0 (a perfect score, as well as extra credit), she is one of the lead engineers and designers working on NASA's Space Launch System - a project aiming to send humans to Mars. At the age of 11, she decided she wanted to become an Aerospace Engineer, and spent the next 13 years pursuing her goal. She attended a high school an hour from her home in order to study the subjects that would help her follow her dream career, and cites the film *Hidden Figures* as a huge inspiration for her as a black female engineer. She hopes to see more diversity in her field, which she points out as an issue, saying "you should see black women as rocket propulsion engineers, as rocket structural and analysis and design engineers. You should see more women in CEO positions.". Before attending university, she earned an internship at NASA, and proceeded to participate in research throughout her undergraduate study, including internships at Boeing, where she later worked. As a Systems Engineering Intern at Boeing, she had the opportunity to design and test Boeing products with other professionals. The following year, aged only 22, she first began to work on the Space Launch System as a design engineer and stress analyst intern, where she assisted in designing and analysing parts of the rockets. Currently, she works at Boeing as a Structural Analysis Engineer, and is the youngest member on her team at NASA working on the Space Launch System. Aside from her involvement in groundbreaking engineering, Guinn/Fletcher has also won multiple awards, including the Albert G. Hill prize in her final year at MIT, an award dedicated to academically excelling students who have improved the campus environment for minorities. She also won the Most Promising Engineer in Industry Award at the 2019 Black Engineer of the Year Awards. Above all, she believes that you have to chase your dream, advising girls who want to follow in her footsteps that they 'can't let anyone get in the way of it, no matter how tough it may be', and hopes to create an organisation to provide support to low-income students to help them to pursue their dreams like she pursued hers.

Lucy Wootton

BOY-CRAZY

She is beautiful, you think, with her short hair and bright eyes. When she laughs, it is as if the whole world is laughing with her. She is only beautiful, of course, in the way that all girls are beautiful. (Except, perhaps, for you. Maybe that is your punishment for feeling this way.) Although you'd never say it aloud, you think that girls are much prettier than boys. You can only assume that you will grow out of this. Everyone tells you that soon you will be "boy-crazy", and you have no reason to doubt them. Why would they lie?

She tells a joke, and it isn't anything special. You snort with laughter anyway, because for some reason everything she does is twice as clever as anyone else. You cover your mouth, instantly mortified, but she giggles and calls you cute. No one has ever called you cute before. You have yet to go "boy-crazy", though surely it can't be long now. She is still beautiful.



A friend holds her phone up and tells you both to smile. She does one better, hooking an arm around your shoulders and pulling you close until her side is pressed against yours and the peace sign she makes brushes your cheek. She grins, and something inside you stutters to a stop. It may have been your heart that stopped, in fact, although it has clearly restarted itself now. And it seems to be beating twice as fast, as if to make up for those few seconds of lost time, because your pulse is roaring in your ears and you barely hear your friend telling you to say cheese! The moment you register the click of the camera you shrug her arm off like it burns. You utter a shrill, painfully transparent excuse about needing the bathroom, and flee the scene. In front of the mirror, you stare at your reflection and lightly press your fingers to the spot on your face when her fingers brushed. And then, inexplicably, you feel as if you have done something wrong, something dirty, so you turn on the cold tap and scrub your skin until every trace of her is gone.

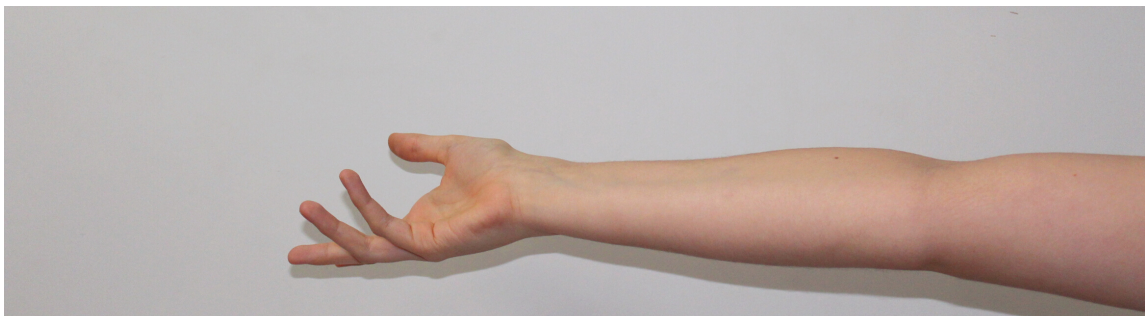
You sit cross-legged on her bedroom floor and try not to stare. She is sat opposite you and she gently cradles your hand in hers as she paints your nails with careful, precise strokes. Her touch is feather-light, and your hand seems to fit so nicely in hers it's as if they were made to hold each other. The end of her tongue pokes out between parted lips as she squints at your nails, and absently you wonder what it would be like if you learnt forwards, closing the space between you to kiss her, just once. You freeze. You turn the thought over your mind and examine it. And then you decide that you didn't think any of that, not really, because ... because you can't. Because she is a girl, and so are you, and that is not how girls think. Is it? (You still have not found yourself "boy-crazy". You do not want to consider the implications of this.)

She appears on your doorstep one afternoon, worrying at her lip – don't stare, don't stare, don't stare – and you cannot imagine what is wrong. She won't look you in the eyes as she fiddles with her sleeve and confesses, and time slows to a standstill. Three small words, and yet they carry so much meaning. Meaning you haven't thought about, haven't allowed yourself to think about. You register dimly that you ought to respond, but there seems to be a sign somewhere between your brain and mouth telling you to GO NO FURTHER. Her face starts to shift from nervous to somewhere between uncomfortable and downright miserable. She rushes out an apology, telling you she shouldn't have come, she shouldn't have told you; she just thought that maybe there was a chance you felt the same way – what? That last part sticks in your mind like a dirty CD skipping over the same line, and you consider it. And then you realise, suddenly, that maybe she wasn't wrong. But it's too late, she's already leaving. She's halfway down the road before you realise what you ought to do.

You've spent every waking moment overthinking everything. Really, you deserve this one moment to act on instinct.

Your feet start running down the road with no input from your brain, chasing after her in the way you've always been too terrified to do. She turns round and you grab her by the arms, acutely aware that you are standing at a crossroads. One road leads to where you thought you had to go; one road leads to where your heart belongs. You know you can only make this decision once. There is so much that you want, that you need to say to her, but the words still aren't there. And so you do the next best thing.

Kissing her is clumsy, and maybe a little bit awkward, because neither of you really know what you're doing. You've never kissed anyone before, and neither has she, so it's an experiment of sorts. But it's also a little magical, and definitely makes something warm and happy bloom in your ribcage. You still have yet to go "boy-crazy". You are starting to think you never will. And you are starting to think that that is okay. After all, you've found something else to be crazy for.



Years later, you will drive your son to his first pride parade. He bought his first binder last month and chose a new name to go with it, and you have never been more proud. He will be teary, and maybe a little bit overwhelmed, and you will place a hand on his shoulder and smile to tell him that it's okay. You know what that feels like. And when your wife smiles at you in the same way she always has and pulls you close, heedless of the crowd all around you, you will kiss her back.

She is beautiful. And so are you.

Lia Searle

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