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BLACK HISTORY MONTH VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2  
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# CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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Written by Martin Jernigan (they/ them)

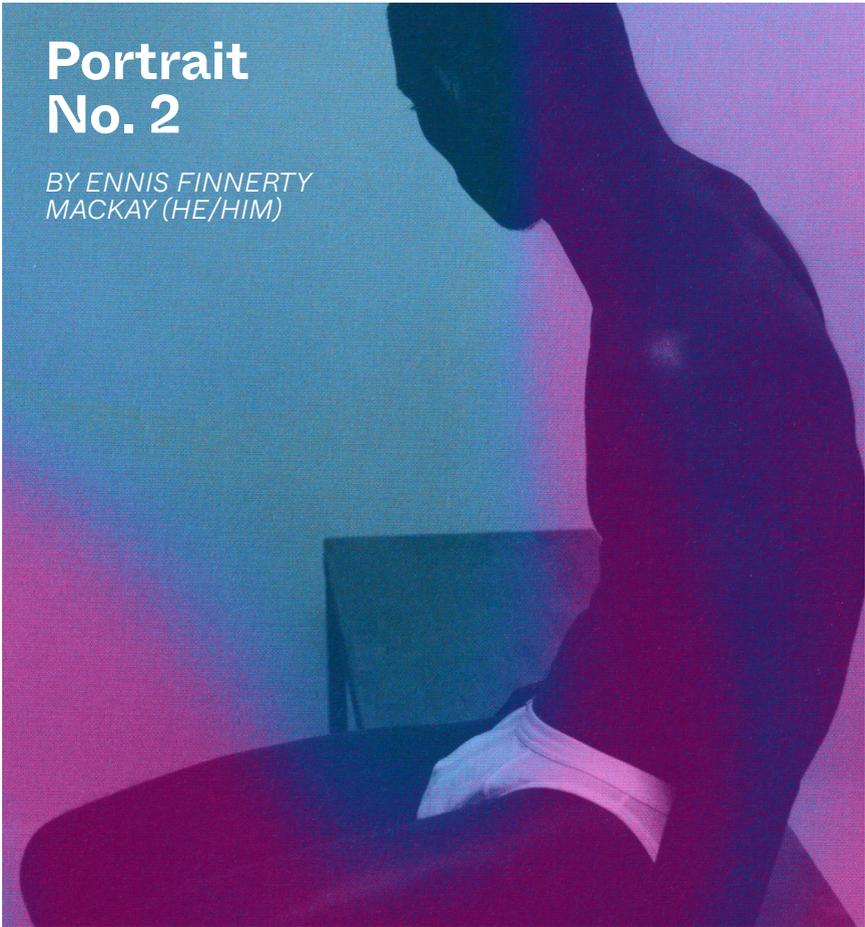
This edition of *The Gay Saint* highlights Black History Month and Queerness across cultures. In collaboration with BAME Students' Network, Afro-Caribbean Society, and Inklight we had an open call for submissions to give voice to the black queer community here on campus. Joined alongside our new writing team that delved into topics related to Black History Month and queerness across cultures, this edition provides a blank canvas for the black LGBTQ+ community to share their lives, stories and experiences, as well as all the hopes and fears associated with black queerness.

Highlighting both of these topics, this issue is a chance to educate, and to show the strengths of our LGBTQ+ community through our diversity of culture, background, experience and dreams. Here we bring together writers mapping their experience through poetry, stories and opinion pieces, alongside articles documenting black queer history, and why this history forms the building blocks of the modern day LGBTQ+ liberation movements. In this edition, you will find a wide range of non-fiction writing, exploring both personal experiences and historical connections of the Black and Queer liberation movements.

'What am I and can I be that?' explores the author's personal relationship to their identity, highlighting how being black and asexual has affected their life growing up in Britain. 'Interview on the realities of being black and queer' highlights the life of a black queer student on campus. It explores their experience being black, queer, from Kenya, and now a student at St Andrews. A full version of the interview can be found online at [SaintsLGBT.com](http://SaintsLGBT.com). Other writings you will find is "'When I Fight For My Freedom, I Must Fight Against Both Oppressions:' Simon Nkoli and Intersectional Liberation' which details Simon Nkoli's fight in South Africa both for black and queer liberation. Connecting Nkoli's activism with

# Portrait No. 2

BY ENNIS FINNERTY  
MACKAY (HE/HIM)



other fights for equal rights based on the intersectionality of multiple identities. 'How the Black Freedom Movement Inspired Gay Liberation' also looks at activism, highlighting how much of the Queer liberation movement in the US was directly inspired by the Civil Rights Movement. Showing how there is no queer liberation without black liberation. Rounding off this edition are articles looking at famous black

lesbian poet Audre Lorde, Lizzo's representation in the media, Tiktok and Pintrest's whitewashing, third-gender identities across cultures, a queer anthology of poetry, and the monthly horoscopes. We hope you enjoy this special collaboration edition of The Gay Saint. We are incredibly thankful for everyone that submitted to this edition and our team of writers and editors.

# What Am I and Can I Be That?

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## Written by Anonymous

The phrase ‘sexuality is a spectrum’ has never been so comforting to me as it has been these past eighteen months. Asexuality is something I’ve come to learn more about over the last year or so, through reading articles and books, watching media, and talking to a supportive friend, who is more clued-in on everything LGBTQ+ than I am on everything in life combined. When I read the baseline definition of asexuality and thought it might apply to me, I then became increasingly and unexpectedly overwhelmed when I found out just how many nuances there were on the spectrum — especially given how specific they were. Demisexual, cupiosexual, graysexual: the knowledge that there were enough people who felt the same way I did — that there could be an entire identity for it — was reassuring more than anything, and validating at the very least.

Having that sort of understanding made me think that, if nothing else, there was at least one aspect of my life that I could take my time to adjust to and come to terms with, rather than being forced into a box and labeled without any opposition. Something I haven’t been given the opportunity to do that with is my ethnicity.

I struggle to recall instances where I haven’t had to tick a box to declare my heritage: finding a job, registering with a doctor or dentist, applying for university. Everyone wants to know. As a mixed-race girl who has lived with her (white) father for the past seven years, it’s not particularly hard to lose or even struggle to discover aspects of your African identity when

you’re not really surrounded by those notions. Especially when you live in a predominantly white area and have predominantly white friends.

Something that suffered quite significantly as a result of this, laughably, was my hair. It wasn’t until we went into lockdown that I figured out how to treat it properly from watching YouTube videos. And, even then, getting certain things done required a two-hour train journey to London where there were multiple hairdressers who catered to Afro hair. It was small, superficial things like this — not quite understanding why I couldn’t do the same hairstyles as my white friends or why washing my hair required a step-by-step, hours-long routine — that made me begin to dislike my blackness: something that I am only now healing. Dislike is maybe too harsh of a word, but I did neglect this part of my existence for a long time and, even as an eighteen-year-old, I’m ashamed of that.

Lockdown was a blessing in that sense: giving me the time to educate myself on where I come from and who I am, understanding things greater than myself, and what it means to be black or mixed-race. When the Black Lives Matter movement had a surge in support over that same summer, however, it felt like a push-back on a small, unimportant, individual scale. Suddenly, these white friends of mine — who of course knew right from wrong (treating others equally and partaking in basic activism, yet had used the N-word on multiple occasions as thirteen-year-olds) — were wanting to get involved and help. They were suddenly asking me questions about what it meant to be black — and they were ones that I couldn’t (at the time and even still

now) answer. They were questions that I was attempting to unpack in my own time, and now, there was a pressure to be undoubtedly, ineffably certain of a response that wouldn't just provide me with the answers I was looking for, but also appease them.

Nevertheless, that summer passed and coverage and support dwindled, and I'm yet to hear anything more from them on issues that continually shape and plague the black community. Their activism and involvement is allowed to stop there — no one can force them to repost resources or read the news — but for

those who are not allowed that privilege, we are forced to continually stand and watch and shout into the void, hoping that someday, someone, somewhere will listen. And not just listen but understand.

As for being black and queer: those are two very big labels which, when placed together, I don't yet know the full weight of in any context. But with each of them comes the support of a community of people who all share the same knowledge that there are others who relate to their experiences, and that is something I am glad I can count on.

## Meet Me There

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### *Written by Uzo (they/them)*

where we can feel the soft breeze between our hands

*I could hold you*

we'd walk through portals made of glass

your body like silk and petals in my hands

*time would stop*

our hearts beating reverently

your breath on my lips

*I would kiss you*

the light of buttercups on your chin and in your eyes

*we would roll around*

the sweet dew of grass 'n' lilies

its scent lingering on our skin

*I don't think I could imagine another day without you*

# Interview on the realities of being black and queer

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**Interview of Leina (she/her) from Kenya, led by Kamilya Yerenchinova-Fisher (she/her)**

**Interviewer:**

If you didn't have to comply with any societal standards, how would you describe yourself?

**Leina:**

I feel like being gay, it's always a discovery. So currently where I'm at is bisexual, but then who knows? Maybe tomorrow it's something different, which is the best thing about the queer community. You can change, you're allowed to be whoever you want to be. It doesn't have to be a fixed thing. You can think however long or as little as you need to to know who you are. Whatever you feel like is right. There's no wrong answer when you are queer.

**Interviewer:**

When you think about your identity what do you feel comes to mind first? Is it your country or your race or your sexuality?

**Leina:**

I think Kenyan. I was having a discussion with a friend the other day and because I've been raised in a predominantly black area, being black was never a thing to me. I was just black. Then I moved to a predominantly white area and now that's such a big part of my identity. Moving to a predominantly white area, you're seen as a black person whereas in Kenya it's nothing because most people are black.

**Interviewer:**

So would you say people who are black and grew up in the UK probably have the thought of being black more often on the minds than people who grew up in Kenya, for example?

**Leina:**

That's just my opinion, but I definitely think so because they had to deal with all the issues that arise with being black in a predominantly white community.

**Interviewer:**

I think that links very interestingly with my next question. How do you think other people perceive you, here and in Kenya? What do you think is the first impression that you make?

**Leina:**

I have really bad social anxiety and I always try to fit in so people don't look at me and think that I'm standing out. Just lately, I've started to realise that it's okay, I can stand out. So, I would say people see me as a black girl. I remember the first time I came here (to St Andrews). I would only wear black hair colour to not stand out.

And now I do my hair in different colours and get all the compliments and try not to think: "Okay, everyone is noticing me and I feel really anxious". I think with time I'm learning to just be who I am and not care about what other people perceive me as, because what matters is what you perceive yourself as.

**Interviewer:**

What do you think helped you make this transition?

**Leina:**

I would say friends and therapy. Mostly therapy, because I think inherently, I felt like I'm meant to be a person who fits into a box. But then with therapy as you learn more about yourself you realise your worth is in just the way you are. You don't have to be the kind of person your parents want you to be, or the kind of person society wants you to be to be accepted. Because the way society is you will never be a person they accept. As much as you try to fit into all their standards, they will always find something else that is wrong with you. So, once you realise there's no way you'll fit in no matter how much you want to, you think "you know what, just fuck it, I'll be who I want to be".

**Interviewer:**

If we are talking about different identities, do you feel like being black and being queer – those two identities are somehow contradicting to each other? Or have you ever felt like they are or do they just sit comfortably within you?

**Leina:**

Within me – yes. Within society – no. Kenya is a very homophobic country. Gay marriage is not legalised, and most people don't want it to be legalised. So, I can't be openly queer in Kenya for many reasons. There's always that sense of wanting to be accepted, whether we want to admit it or not. You still want your family to be proud of you. So, as much as I would love to be perceived as queer back home in Kenya, I try and hide that part of myself just for the acceptance, which I know I don't need, but then I still feel like I need it because they're still family at the end of the day.

**Interviewer:**

Right. Switching to a more positive and cheerful topic, what has been the

best part about being black and queer?

**Leina:**

When you meet fellow black and queer people, seeing them thriving, hearing that they came out to their parents and thinking "wow, your black parents accepted you." It's so nice to see that not all black people are like that (homophobic). Black people are lovely. Being black doesn't mean you can't be queer. It's just some families, which is okay, because families aren't perfect.

I remember I went to a Pride parade with my friends and there were a number of people who brought their children, black people as well. It's so refreshing to see parents accepting and just being there for their children, giving out free hugs. It was such a beautiful day.

**Interviewer:**

Would you say, going to the Pride parade was your best queer experience?

**Leina:**

Definitely. It's the most openly queer I've felt – walking around with a pride flag, with pride stickers. I remember my friend, who I've been friends with since high school, and I cried so much, because something we didn't even dream of was happening.

We talked about it for so long and then we were doing it – being dressed up, being proud and having no one telling us that it is wrong. Everyone is so proud of you, and you just feel so accepted. It's such a contrast to having to hide who you are.

**Interviewer:**

If we go in the opposite direction, what would you say was the worst experience of being black and queer?

**Leina:**

I went to an all-girls high school, which was also pretty religious. If they suspected or if you were found doing anything even remotely queer, you would get suspended and if you get caught again, you get expelled. It's so crazy because if the same thing happened to a heterosexual couple, they would just be told not to do it again. But then for a girl kissing a girl or a boy kissing a boy, you get expelled and get all the hate from the rest of the school. So, it's not even just the older generation, you would feel the hate from your peers as well.

So, in high school, I don't think I came out to anyone except my very close friends. And my friends who were out at the time received so much hate. They would get stigmatised by the rest of the people. High school was just not a good place for any queer person who went to a religious school back in Kenya.

**Interviewer:**

Would you say that the teachers were actively looking for something like that?

**Leina:**

They were. Our principle would walk around at night, go to the dorms and say "Oh, if I see you sitting on another girl's bed, that's lesbian behaviour" That's crazy because straight girls have sleepovers and it's not even anything sexual. If you are found, they would tell us to come to their offices the next day and they would beat people up. It was just... It was not nice. So yeah, they would actively look, and they would shame you in public. During parades you would be called to the front, everyone would be told what you've done and then you would have to admit and swear that you are a changed person and will never do it again.

**Interviewer:**

What do you wish people back in Kenya, here in the UK, and specifically in St Andrews university's community would understand or knew about being black and queer?

**Leina:**

For Kenya? I would say because when I came out to certain people, their response was: "Oh, it's because you went abroad and became accepting of the West, and you brought it home. It's not who you are. If you stayed in Kenya, you would not be this person." So, to them, it doesn't work this way, I have always been queer. It's not something that switched on when I came to the West.

For St Andrews, I think everyone is very nice and St Andrews is very tolerant in my experience, so I don't think there's anything really that I would change. Just continue being allies and be kind to everyone.

For the UK, I think kindness. Just be kind. We are all people, and we are all in need of love and reassurance.

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## Friday 13 May 2022

**Written by Uzo (they/them)**

I am the eternally devoted lover  
Forever bound in time within the  
fabric of your skin. Laced in  
every breath. The mark upon flesh.  
I am the eternally devoted lover

## Be Yourself

### *Written by Uzo (they/them)*

They will tell you to be yourself.

However, let it be under the guise of heteronormativity with the validation of man & lacking originality in its state of yt supremacy.

Yet here you are Black without fear and Queer.

They will tell you to be yourself but so long as it isn't 'too much' and doesn't offend them.

Tell you 'But not too loud' threatened by the sound of your existence.

They will attempt to force you into a box

And at some point, or several  
you will be weakened  
you will try 'n' squeeze in.  
Try to be who they want you to be  
battling with yourself  
tearing at your soul  
eventually at war  
with everything that makes you, you.

you must be yourself my dear  
yourself is all you have  
breaking so called tradition  
turning it on its head  
making them uncomfortable.  
If that is what it takes, so be it.

Your power and your existence  
will always be uncomfortable  
for those who are  
unwilling to receive you  
afraid to see you.

you must be yourself.  
You must receive yourself.  
You must be without fear.

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## Pink Icing

### *Written by Uzo (they/them)*

*a moment of Intimacy*  
in a half-lit room

the steam of a freshly emptied sink  
fills the air  
open cupboards  
melting butter  
— they're up late.

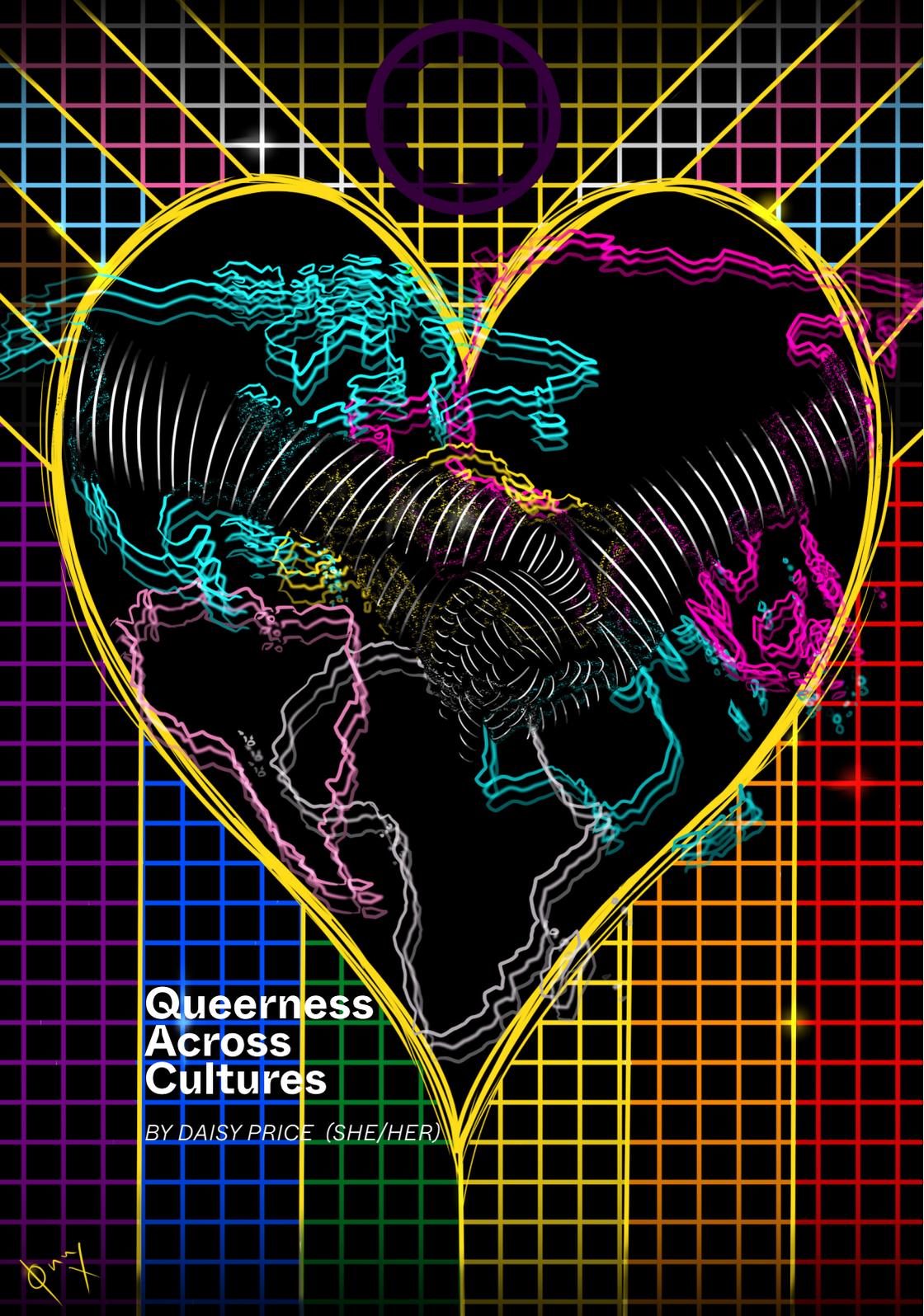
flour on my cheek

*she holds me*  
*vanilla on her lips*

my hands on her hip  
her laugh in my ear

recipes on torn pages stained with  
pink icing  
sugar dust in her hair  
pride in her eyes

& On the cake written  
*my love*



# Queerness Across Cultures

BY DAISY PRICE (SHE/HER)

Price

# Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the queerest one of them all?

Written by Dheiry Sonecha (he/him)

As novel as it might seem, the existence of the third gender, as a means for persons who felt unlike from others in society, has been a deep-rooted one. *Two-spirit* for the first nations of America, *sekhet* for the ancient Egyptians, *hijra* for the Indians, *wakashu* for the Japanese and so on, the differing names from diverse cultures only serve to give credence to the fact that as long as there has been the existence of civilisation, people like us who would not wish to be confined by what was commonplace have made an integral part of it. It is not merely out of rose-tinted glasses that we acclaim the ancients for their broader stance on gender and sexuality to much of modern history. Far from being persecuted, our differences have not been celebrated for what they are.

The androgynous *wakashu* of Edo period Japan were billed for long as the object of desire for both sexes in equal measure. Romanticist authors such as Taruho Inagaki, rather snobbishly claim, however, that only samurai are worthy of the yearning of *shudo* that would and could be aroused by the *wakashu*. There is little known of the *sekhet* of ancient Egypt, save fragmented pottery and steles which depict them as having been scribes, suggesting the boundless importance afforded to queer people as being the most erudite in society. In Sumer and Mesopotamia, Ninmah, goddess of all affection was known to be held in affection for the conception of the first hermaphrodites, as we would

name them, and for having charged Enki to find places of high esteem in society for them. Enki, thus, made them temple priests and kings' bodyguards. The *Vedas*, the holiest texts in Hinduism, have several allusions of the *tritiya prakriti* or third nature. Vatsyasana, the author of the *Kamasutra*, cites this 'as plenipotentiary evidence to transcribe in considerable detail about the hedonistic pleasures to be derived by the third-nature people.' Shiva, perhaps one of the most important deities in Hinduism, is mostly worshipped in his intersex form, i.e. the *shivalinga* – an amalgamation of male and female pudenda. Arjuna, one of the protagonists of the *Mahabharata*, the world's longest epic, distinguished the ultimate year of his exile as Brihanalla, the transgender dance instructor to the Princess Uttara, vowing to do justice by the *tritiya prakriti* as a courtesan and a warrior. The *two-spirit* people of the first nations in America were well respected until European colonisation. When a young person was discovered to show a 'two-spirited' nature, the tribe had cause for much revelry as the Earth Mother had blessed their body with two souls and thus the tribe had earned her favour. For much of the history of the Mediterranean empires, queer people served as proficient administrators, for they were presumed to be 'ruled by the mind, not by the sex', the latter of which was ascribed to rule the roost in cisgender persons. A narrow outlook by sundry standards, to generalise an entire section of the population in such fashion, but it does serve to prove that even in early western society the third gender always had a place of honour and respect, over ridicule and disdain, among their peers. Throughout all the many different cultures, queer people have thus been cherished with adulation and respect and though we lost our way in the middle a bit, we have slowly but surely come back round to our path of love again.

# *I Need You to Find a Way*

*Written by Uzo (they/them)* \_\_\_\_\_

I have come to realise  
that for the progression of the

each & every one of us  
must find a way.

I need you

to find a way

Black people,

to love yourself.

And not in a superficial manner  
that demands you live up to  
unrealistic expectations of

beauty

social class  
&  
wealth

I need you to love yourself as though the universe had put

only you  
on this earth  
to care for it.

I need you to love your skin

the vessel of

your soul

the body that which mother

**Cont.** \_\_\_\_\_

nature birth

in thunderstorms and hail  
in the heat of the harmattan  
in the cool of spring

I need you to find a way  
I need you to find a way  
I need you to find a way

That is my plea

& My cry

That every black person loves themselves so much so that they are liberated from  
bondage.

And after liberation

may you continue.

Never fleeting

without ceasing.

May you continue to free yourself.

May you love yourselves.

# Considering Audre Lorde's Poetry - Specifically 'The Black Unicorn'

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**Written by Taryn Patterson (she/her)**

Audre Lorde's poetry bleeds through the pages and into your heart. She writes of love, life, death, and everything in between in a way that will shock your system and will stay with you as though seared directly into you.

I picked up Audre Lorde's *The Black Unicorn* knowing very little about the author or her work. The frontmatter of the Penguin Modern Classics version of *The Black Unicorn* told me that Lorde 'was a writer, feminist and civil rights activist - or, as she famously put it, "Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet." Immediately, I knew that I wanted to write about how her work affected me, as I did not realise just how touching her work would be.

Audre Lorde was born in Harlem, New York and lived from 1932 to 1992. Her work, which includes poetry, essays, and novels, examines the inequalities of the world we live in. From first glance at her writing, you immediately can sense that she is angry. Her anger bleeds into her poetry so much so that you can almost feel the punches she is throwing at the world. The phrase 'the pen is mightier than the sword' has never felt so visceral within someone's work. But anger is not the only emotion present in her work - it's filled with sorrow and love. She writes about humanity.

*Harriet there was always somebody calling us crazy*

*or mean or stuck-up or evil or black  
or black  
and we were  
nappy girls quick as cuttlefish  
scurrying for cover  
trying to speak trying to speak  
trying to speak  
the pain in eachother's mouths*

- Harriet

*Harriet* was one of the first poems in the collection that I read over and over. It describes two girls who tried to stick together, and speak to one another, but were forced to learn 'that respect meant keeping our distance in silence'. To learn that it was expected of them, as young black women, to keep quiet and keep their heads down. They were two girls who lost their connection because they were forced to silence the warriors within themselves.

This piece stunningly demonstrates Lorde's accomplishments as a writer. Through this poem, she is telling the readers how she was expected to keep quiet but chooses not to. Her poetry and voice are loud as she speaks the truth into a world that was not, and is still not, friendly to those pointing out injustices.

In an interview, Lorde states that "objection to my work is not about obscenity ... or even about sex. It is about revolution and change." Lorde fought and wrote for revolution and change in any way she could conceive of it.

*you create me against your thighs  
hilly with images  
moving throughout our word  
countries  
my body  
writes into your flesh  
the poem  
you make of me.*

– Recreation

*I dream of a place between your  
breasts  
to build my house like a haven*

– Woman

*Recreation* is a poem about the speaker (presumably Lorde but truly could be any woman) recreating herself and her body via her lover's body. This poem is the first in the collection that stood out to me as unarguably queer – where some of her others showed love between women, *Recreation* is undeniably a lesbian love ode that does not cover from the desire to love, to be loved, and to make love to a woman.

*Woman* follows *Recreation* immediately in the collection and paints a picture of Lesbianism through the imagery of nature and home. In this poem, the speaker portrays her lover as the place where she will feel most at home, where she can settle and relax and be surrounded and protected.

Her lover represents the world around her, and all she wants is to settle into her. It harkens to two main parts of human desire: the desire to be at home and the desire to be loved. She rejoices that she can have both of these desires through the woman she loves.

The final poem I will mention in this short dive into Audre Lorde's poetry is her most well known poem, *Power*.

*The difference between poetry and  
rhetoric  
is being  
ready to kill  
yourself  
instead of your children.*

–Power

*Power* is an elegy for Clifford Glover, a 10-year-old African American boy who was shot by a white cop in Queens, New York in 1973. This cop was later acquitted by a white-majority jury with one black female judge. *Power*, then, is a poem of mourning that is filled with rage. When Lorde learned of the acquittal, she explained that "A kind of fury rose up in me; the sky turned red. I felt so sick. I felt as if I would drive this car into a wall, into the next person I saw." And so she pulled over and poured her fury into her work, a sentiment that is extraordinarily evident. *Power* invoked every emotion in me that I believe Lorde intended it to. It is a poem that, although written almost 50 years ago, remains horrifyingly relevant.

I hope that this short insight into Audre Lorde and her poetry convinces you to go and read some of her work. Her poetry is accessible for free online, or you can buy collections of her poetry at just about any book store around. Audre Lorde was an author, activist, lesbian, and one of the most important and influential poets I have come across. Her work deserves to be taught alongside the many 20th century poets students are forced to study. I hope that through this article, I will force you to read her work.

# How the Black Freedom Movement Inspired Gay Liberation



**Written by Brigid Rawdon (she/her)**

The American Black Freedom Movement began in the mid-1950s and lasted into the late 1960s. During these two decades, the movement held many now-famous protests: the Greensboro sit-ins, Montgomery Bus Boycotts, and the March on Washington. It was a political movement that sought to end racial discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement. Alongside that, it is important to recognise how the success of these political actions had a significant influence on the early Gay Liberation Movement.

## **Sit-ins**

One of the well-known protests that took place during the civil rights movement was the Greensboro sit-ins. Due to the segregation policies of the time, African Americans were often refused service in specific public spaces. Four young Black students – Ezell Blair, Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond – from North Carolina chose to respond to these segregation policies through a nonviolent protest. On 1 February 1960, ‘The Greensboro Four’ went into the dining area of a Woolworths store, sat at the ‘Whites Only’ lunch counter, and refused to leave. Even though it was the restaurant’s white patrons that were verbally abusive towards the protestors, it was the Black students who were arrested for “disturbing the peace.” Despite the arrest and racist abuse that the protestors endured,

news of this sit-in spread across the United States and it became the catalyst for similar protests. By July 1960, the success of the sit-ins had forced Woolworths to change its segregation policies. Five years later, a group of LGBTQ+ teenagers were denied service at Dewey’s restaurant in Philadelphia due to a policy that discriminated against “homosexuals and persons wearing non-conformist clothing.” The policy, put in place across multiple US states, required people to wear three articles of clothing that were considered appropriate for the gender they were assigned at birth. Eventually, due to their non-compliance with the policy, the teenagers were arrested. Directly inspired by Greensboro sit-ins, the group continued to come back to the restaurant, refusing to bow down to homophobia and transphobia. After multiple days of protest - and pressure from local LGBTQ+ activist groups - Dewey’s agreed to put an end to their discriminatory policy. This was a victory that could not have been won without the inspiration of the Black activists in Greensboro.

## **Black is Beautiful vs. Gay is Good**

While it is unknown who first coined the term ‘Black is Beautiful’, Black activists have been using this statement since the 1960s. Created in response to Eurocentric standards of beauty, ‘Black is Beautiful’ aimed to celebrate natural Black beauty at a time when African American features were deemed inherently unattractive. Frank Kameny, a gay rights activist, fought tirelessly during the mid-to-late 1900s for gay people’s right to

serve openly as members of the United States government. At this time, homosexuals were seen as unacceptable, morally corrupt, and unfit to work for the government. Kameny advocated for gay people's right to serve as federal employees without the fear of losing their jobs. When crafting a slogan to promote his activism, he looked to the Black Freedom Movement and their "Black is Beautiful" statement. His chosen slogan, 'Gay is Good,' conveyed that being gay is not morally wrong and that being true to oneself is morally right. Similar to 'Black is Beautiful,' his message expressed that how we were born is nothing to be ashamed of – our authentic selves should be celebrated.

### ***Marches on Washington***

The March on Washington was the protest that was attended by over 200,000 people and made famous by Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech. The purpose of the March on Washington was to motivate lawmakers to pass the Civil

Rights Act which, at the time of the march, was being stalled in Congress. This law would prohibit racial discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex or national origin in hiring and encourage the full integration of schools. This would be a crucial step towards making it easier for Black Americans to find jobs and housing. In 1993, LGBTQ+ activists organised the third March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. This march was attended by over 800,000 people and was directly inspired by the success of the first March on Washington. Activists demanded the passage of a bill to end discrimination based on sexual orientation and an increase in funding for AIDS research and treatment. This march, along with many other protests in the Gay Liberation Movement would not have been possible without the pioneering work of Black activists.

### ***Sources:***

NBC; World Queer Story.com; History.com

## ***2014 Grunge, Coquette and Gatekeeping: How Tiktok and Pinterest are White-Washing Aesthetics***

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***Written by Cass Gemmell (she/they/he)***

We've all been there, aimlessly doom-scrolling Tiktok after a shower, trying to convince ourselves to leave our warm towel and get ready for the day, but... just one more video. Inevitably, one video turns into two, turns into five, twenty-five, and now you've missed the bus, but one thing you have learned; is how inexplicably

white all these new aesthetics are. You can scroll for multiple hours down any aesthetic tag, e.g coquette, cottagecore, coastal granddaughter, grunge fairy, alt, bimbo core, VSCO, the list goes on; but all you would mostly find, are white creators. On Pinterest especially, it is abundantly clear that these aesthetics are being gatekept from people of colour as most Pinterest boards for these aesthetics are stuffed to the brim with what is classed as the 'social

norm.' The 'social norm' for these trends being: thin, rich, white girls. Lost of these aesthetics have already come under criticism for encouraging racism, eating disorders and fatphobia, especially coquette and Y2K.

The 'coquette' aesthetic is largely known for featuring soft colours, designer brands and being 'hyper-feminine'. It originated within the 'nymphet' aesthetic, inspired by Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, a controversial 1955 book about a grown man falling in love with a twelve year old girl. This obsession with the book and movie, which came out in 1997, came from Tumblr, an app that has largely disappeared from most of the general population's memory, but had most of 2014's teenagers in a chokehold. And this is where the problems began.

Back in 2014, teenagers were scrambling for somewhere to express themselves, being slightly too young for Facebook and MySpace, and too old for Club Penguin, Tumblr hit its peak. The rise of the 'grunge' aesthetic began, and even in 2014, it was already overrun with white creators. The 'grunge' aesthetic, which is still very popular today, was originated in Seattle, Washington in the 1980s, when grunge-pop music came into the mainstream music industry. Commonly known for oversized flannels, ripped jeans, band tees and combat boots, the grunge aesthetic took Tumblr by storm.

And it all started with Bam Bam.

Bam Bam were a grunge-punk band formed in 1983, with Tina Bell at their helm. They played for eight years before Bell left, but for those eight years they dominated the Seattle underground punk scene. In one of these clubs, Bell suffered a racial attack from hecklers in the crowd, but according to the bassist, Scotty

Ledgerwood, she just swung the mic around her head and smashed the guy in the face with it, and proceeded to play one of the best shows of the band's career. Tina Bell is considered to be the 'godmother' of grunge, inspiring legendary bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam, who would later become pinnacles in the grunge aesthetic we now know today. The reason I bring all of this up is because I think it's shocking that the grunge aesthetic of the modern day is so full of white teens when the entire genre of music itself was spearheaded by a Black woman from Seattle.

The same thing has happened in other genres, Elvis stole his most iconic moves from Black stars like Chuck Berry, Janis Joplin had most of her songs written by Big Mama Thornton, Otis Blackwell, Lorraine Ellison, etc. Before Tumblr or Tiktok or Pinterest, before aesthetic debates and hashtags, people of colour were already being forced into the background of genres and cultures they started.

Nothing has changed. Grunge is full of white teens who worship Effy Stonem and Courtney Love, coquette is full of white girls who are unknowingly encouraging eating disorders and unhealthy relationships with large age-gaps, cottagecore came under fire for stealing *Strawberry Blonde* by Mitski and changing the meaning from a woman of colour's experience dating a white man to being about frogs and cows. In these aesthetics, it feels like there is no space for Black creators, because most of these aesthetics have been stolen from them and warped into something to fit what is seen as the default.

There needs to be a change in our online spaces to include everyone, not just what society views as the norm.

# Harry and Lizzo: More Than Friends, What!?

**Written by Logan Sibbald  
(he/him)**

While attending a West End Show in 2013, Harry Styles was photographed next to a mysterious blonde (rumoured to be Victoria's Secret model, Cara Delevingne). The gasoline trail was set, the dating rumour fire was reignited, and the media was ready to gulp down its fumes. Despite Harry outright denying the rumour a few days later, the media continued to wildly speculate on Delevingne and Styles' 'new flame.' This media protocol is not unheard of for the singer. It is triggered any time that Harry Styles, if only for a moment, is in the same one-thousand-mile radius as a lithe blonde — such as Camille Rowe, Nadine Leopold, or his current girlfriend Olivia Wilde.

Flashforward to the 2020 Brit Awards, where Harry openly held hands with and hugged Black, plus-size, triple-Grammy winner Lizzo. However, this time, the tabloids were quick to douse the coals: the word 'friendship' was plastered over any coverage of the two. Instead of reaching for the matches, the media frantically fumbled for the fire blanket. Fans quickly picked up on the duo's dynamic, both, positively and negatively. After the Fillmore Miami Beach concert, where the two shared the stage, hordes of people attacked the curvy and confident singer. Many fans on Twitter even tried to cancel Lizzo for 'over-sexualising' Harry during the performance - this level of criticism is ludicrous and unparalleled with any of Styles' previous partners. Lizzo doesn't fit the conventional cookie-cutter shape, or colour, of the popstar's girlfriend, so the only

plausible explanation for their bond is 'friendship'; right? I smell racism. The fatphobia reeks.

Several weeks ago, Lizzo won an Emmy for her Amazon Prime series *Lizzo's Watch Out for the Big Grrrls*. In her red, ruffled ballgown, she delivered an emotional acceptance speech. She said, "When I was a little girl, all I wanted to see was me in the media – someone fat like me, Black like me, beautiful like me." Her face glowing with positivity, she continued: "if I could go back and tell little Lizzo something, I'd be like, 'You're going to see that person, but b\*\*\*h, it's going to have to be you.'" It was clear from her acceptance speech that night that she had fulfilled a childhood fantasy — and she couldn't contain her pride. Lizzo has previously stated that social media has been a vital tool for spreading her positive message. According to her, she 'could've been erased' if it weren't for the wide-reaching capabilities of Instagram and TikTok.

Unfortunately, her social media has also become a regular hunting ground for racists and fatphobic tyrants. Last August, Lizzo received a torrent of abuse after the release of her *Rumours* music video: an upbeat retaliation to online haters who spend their time tearing women down. It seems that the press and social media enjoy swarming round successful women, particularly, plus-size Black women, and faulting their success. However, it is a much larger problem than the internet getting a kick out of bringing women down: with only 2.4% of the senior executives in the music industry being Black women, it is apparent that a racial bias is not only



# Storme & Bayard

BY ELYSE EDWARDS  
(SHE/THEY)



# Angela Davis on Queerness

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**Written by Anna Pilgrim (she/her)**

## **Who is Angela Davis?**

Dr Angela Davis is a social justice activist, philosopher, scholar, author and former member of the Black Panthers and SNCC. Her work and activism centres around intersectional feminism, prison abolition, black rights, and anticapitalism. She currently lives openly as a lesbian with her partner, fellow colleague and author Gina Dent.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, she grew up near 'Dynamite Hill,' an area of Birmingham named after the high volume of house bombings by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) targeted at black people who moved into this white neighbourhood. Her parents were both part of the NAACP, membership of which was legally banned by Alabama State authorities. She was affected greatly by the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in September 1963, a terrorist attack by the KKK which took the lives of Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Carol Denise McNair, neighbours, students, close childhood and family friends of the Davis family.

Returning from her studies abroad, in which she earned a PhD in Philosophy from Humboldt University, she became involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an organisation which orchestrated the Greensboro sit-ins and Freedom Rides, two key civil rights protests in 1960s America, and became an affiliate, although not actual member, of the Black Panthers.

As a leader for SNCC in California, the FBI and authorities singled out Davis as dangerous, due to her educational, political and peaceful means of bringing about change. After she was hired by UCLA, the FBI sent in a series of letters with the aim of getting her fired, citing her radical politics and communism in an attempt to undermine her, and Ronald Reagan publicly asked UCLA to fire her. Eventually she was fired in June 1970, for using 'rhetoric' they disagreed with, after she called the police 'pigs'.

In August 1970, she was put on the FBI's Top 10 Most Wanted Fugitives list, and was publicly pursued for 'murder, kidnapping and conspiracy', even though she was only to be arrested for her alleged involvement in an attack on a courthouse, in which her weapons were used, for which she was later found 'not guilty'. Her capture and imprisonment in October 1970 sparked a 'Free Angela Davis' movement, which attracted the support of James Baldwin, John Lennon and Davis' fellow inmates. After the trial, she was propelled into fame, visiting Cuba, the Soviet Union and East Germany to give speeches and receive awards.

In 1981 she published her influential *Women, Race and Class*, an intersectional, Marxist feminist analysis of gender, race, and class. Its 13 essays criticise the whiteness of the feminist movement, analyses the interlinking of capitalism with race and gender, discusses abortion rights and eugenics, and spotlights the historic female experiences of enslaved African-Americans.

Between 1991 and 2008 she taught as a professor of history of consciousness and feminist studies at UC Santa Cruz, before retiring.

This is a very short introduction to the immense amount of work with Dr Angela Davis has done. I recommend reading *Women, Race and Class* (1981), and listening to the *Black History for White People* podcasts on Angela Davis, which look at her life more in depth, from her black activism as a young Girl Scout, to her role in SNCC, the awareness raised for the Soledad Brothers; to why the FBI deemed her such a threat.

### ***What is her own 'queer' history?***

During her imprisonment in the early 1970s, she found herself within a distinct lesbian subculture – although one she was not involved in. Davis explained that, while others were in the processes of 'hooking up' and forming surrogate families, Davis put her energy into politics, organising against the jail administration. She did, however, say that her time spent within this queer culture had 'a great impact':

During her activism, she was always supportive of the Gay Liberation Movement, but did not identify as 'queer' and didn't involve herself in queer relationships. Her relationship to the gay community at this time was, in her words, only political. She was however critical, as she is about black movements, of those that only focus on assimilation, and not radical change.

She has always been a close supporter of trans movements, learning a lot from the movement about institutional gendering and gender violence as structural problem. She told LGBTQ+ about her awareness was expanded by

involvement with trans people, especially through discussions with trans people in prisons. In the podcast, she expresses her admiration for the *Transgender Gender-Variant and Intersex Justice Project* (TGJIP), headed by Miss Major Griffin-Gracy from 2005, having a 'profound impact' upon Davis' thinking.

### ***What does she think about her own queerness?***

Despite coming out as a lesbian to *Out* magazine in 1997, Dr Angela Davis' own queerness often flies under the radar. There's a reason for this. In July 2022, she told LGBTQ+ in she thinks less in notions of individual identity, but more about the struggles of collectives, such as the black struggle, which has involved a much larger heterogeneous community to progress. As such, she doesn't spotlight her individual identity as a lesbian black woman.

### ***What does she do today?***

While she is retired, she has recently written a book with her partner, Gina Dent, titled *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (2022) with co-authors Beth Richie and Erica Meiners. It highlights injustice in prison systems, and argues that feminism requires thinking about abolition to be anti-racist.

### ***Sources:***

EPGN; History.com; Arthurashe.ucla; Newsroom; Wikipedia; NYT; Harpersbazaar; Apple Podcast.

# ***‘When I Fight For My Freedom, I Must Fight Against Both Oppressions:’ Simon Nkoli and Intersectional Liberation***

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***Written by Jay Martin (they/ them)***

When one considers the term trailblazer, or history-maker, or simply, revolutionary, it becomes difficult to define what these words actually mean. What does it mean to alter the spatio-temporal existence of history itself? How can an individual’s actions and thoughts better the material existence of everyday life for a community of people? When we consider these terms, and the questions which arise from them, I feel there is no better example to look to than Simon Tseko Nkoli.

Simon Nkoli joined the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) in 1983, however, he soon realised that black people were severely underrepresented by the association. This was affirmed by GASA’s constant holding of events in white-only buildings, their statement that they were a ‘non-political’ organisation and therefore did not want to take a stance on apartheid, and, for Nkoli, their complete silence and lack of support following his arrest in 1984. He wrote a letter a year before his release, where he said, ‘I am not interested in GASA at all. In fact, I am no longer a member of GASA - or I shall not be a member of GASA again.’

Following his release from prison, Nkoli continued to develop the queer radical movement in South Africa, forming the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand

(GLOW). GLOW was responsible for setting up the first Pride march in South African history, organising forums for women and femme-identifying members of the community, running HIV/AIDS and safe sex workshops, amplifying queer voices and pushing queer matters into the new national constitution, as well as fighting against homophobia within the African National Convention (ANC) and other anti-apartheid organisations.

Nkoli met with Nelson Mandela in 1994 and urged him to include an anti-discrimination policy in the bill of rights of the new South African Constitution, and to repeal the sodomy law which made homosexual relations illegal. Mandela took note of both of these points, and the Constitution ushered in a new era for gay people in South Africa.

Nkoli’s experiences with GASA exemplify a point regarding the discriminatory policies that plagued gay rights movements and queer communities throughout the twentieth century. In 1987, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionality’. She defined it as, ‘the way in which power systems interlock with one another, and how those who are members of multiple minority identity groups feel the overwhelming disadvantages of this interconnectedness of power.’

A few years prior, James Baldwin and Audre Lorde began to outline the key tenets of the theory, with Lorde’s idea

of the 'mythic norm' and Baldwin's analysis of the roots of identity based oppression. For Lorde, anyone who existed outside of the mythic norm became inherently 'othered'; and the mythic norm sought dominance even within minority groups. She analysed the way in which the lesbian community didn't accept her because she was black, and the way in which the black community didn't accept her because she was a lesbian.

This creation of 'othered' identities is a process carried out by the oppressor to ensure that there is always someone to oppress. Baldwin asserted, 'White people invented black people to give white people identity... Straight cats invented faggots so they can sleep with them without becoming faggots themselves: Intra-cultural and intra-community hierarchies begin to take shape, such as the racism of GASA and the homophobia of the ANC. Nkoli fought vehemently against both and expressed and emphasised the essential nature of this intersectional analysis within liberation movements.

The idea that a radical liberation movement must tackle all forms of oppression and hierarchy at once was key to Nkoli's philosophy and his teachings, and can be seen in the continued work of his students, such as Bev Ditsie. This key teaching is something which the community as a whole must continue to learn from and implement today.

Liberation cannot come through assimilation, it cannot possibly be achieved by movements and organisations which continue to institute their own hierarchies. Liberation must come on all fronts, for all people, by any means necessary.

Nkoli paved the way for a movement which continues to fight on in South Africa.

The enemy attempts to hide itself beneath liberal rhetoric and faux acceptance. However, as Bev Ditsie acknowledges, the enemy is still clear.

The enemy is not just racist or homophobic or sexist or transphobic or capitalist, the enemy is racist AND homophobic AND sexist AND transphobic AND capitalist. The need for the kind of intersectional politics which figures such as Lorde, Baldwin and Nkoli called for is more pressing than ever before. Our movements and organisations have history and literature to learn from, and learn they must.

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THE GAYS  
TAKING  
SAIN

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