You are holding Voices that have been gathered together. These newly bound Voices call for change, for a different world. Change starts with an idea born of loneliness - something is missing so we dream of creating it, something is broken so we think of ways to fix it. Bringing an idea into the world is very difficult and we do not recommend that you do it alone. What you are holding is not only an object of beauty, it is a tool that can connect us to each other and is therefore something greater than ourselves. We hope that you will cherish, share and engage with it. Change starts with a chime and happens when we leave the loneliness To Gather Together. ADAM ELI
I am a twenty something singer songwriter. I used to be in a girl band called Orchid. These innocent words sound like the beginning of a story about a lively girl who performs and loves to make people dance and sing. During this sentence my story becomes a tale of exile, rules and regulations once I mention that I am from Iran. Ever since the Revolution in 1979, females are forbidden to sing solo. Iran enforces these rules through the Morality Police and a Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. They are so harsh and cruel that I have to wonder why does my country fear its women so deeply? Fortunately, I come from a liberal and free-thinking household but even they couldn’t save me. Our society caught up with me when I turned seven. I was given the choice of wearing a Hijab or being banned from school. By nine years old, my gender felt like it was some sort of damning fact — it seemed to become the justification for a lifelong arsenal of restricted freedoms. My gender robbed me of the chance to be a child. I could no longer run around or ride my bike, make friends with boys — even those in my close family — and of course I couldn’t
dress the way I wanted. Their uniform of decency left no room for my personality. Because I was a girl, I could no longer dance, let alone sing. Since the price of being a girl was so high, my liberal family decided to turn me into a boy! I was free again. With my hair cut short, I started dressing like my brothers and became one of them. For a time it worked great until nature betrayed me. My body started changing and my breasts became impossible to hide. I felt trapped and depressed until I hit bottom and decided it was time to own the situation. Along with my friends, I started acquiring an appreciation for freedom. The more threatened freedom was, the more precious and valued it became. Asserting our little victories over the constant threat of oppression was scary and I was arrested many times. The Morality Police detained me for a strand of hair escaping from my Hijab, for sitting next to a boy, for celebrating a football victory and for attending a student party. All of this happened even before I made it clear to anyone that my calling was to become a singer. When I told my family that I wanted to go to the University of Tehran and study music performance my liberal mother, who had built her own business, said “Gola, we just don’t have female singers in this country.” At 18, I joined Orchid, the first Iranian all-female band. Our concerts were closely guarded by the Morality Police. We could perform but only for women. Our female audience would have to sit still on their chairs never allowing their bodies to be transported by the music. I knew that I had to leave and I knew that leaving meant I could never come back. Exile meant pain, fear, leaving my family, friends and everything I knew but I bought a one way ticket to London because singing is who I am and need to be. At first I was living on £10 per week doing odd jobs and playing music whenever possible. It was a difficult time and I felt incredibly alone. I often heard a voice in my head questioning my decision but the voice silenced as soon as I began performing. I had made the right choice. Being in London opened doors and helped me find what I had lost back in Iran: myself. My spirit was coming back to life. The feeling of liberation went beyond just wearing whatever clothes I liked and being able to do, say or think whatever thoughts came to mind. It felt as though someone had opened a door to the rest of my life and I knew that I could never go back. Last year my career gained momentum when I collaborated with high profile Iranian singer Tohi and again when I adapted a song and performed with Israeli artist Idan Raichel. This year I decided that I had a message— not only to women back home but to women all over the world. And so, I have begun to learn how to write English songs. I wrote my debut English language single ‘The Line’ which talks about the frustration I often feel with the slow pace of change. Will change ever happen? Can it ever come? In July 2018 an Iranian influencer named Maedeh Hojabri was arrested and forced to publicly apologize after posting a video of herself dancing alone in her bedroom. This affirmed to me that the same fear of women I experienced is still present today. But even if the regime and the men in power haven’t changed much, I do believe that we, women, are moving forward in an unstoppable way. We are getting stronger, from Saudi Arabia to Iran, we are finding our voice and we are tired of whispering and hiding. We are individuals and deserve respect. This is what my songs are about. Right before I left Iran, I made one last attempt to remain in my country while pursuing my dream. I tried to get a permit from the Regime to record a CD and was told “we don’t want Celine Dion in Iran.” It made me smile, as I wondered how on earth this man knew who Celine Dion was? Her music was supposed to be banned! So I left. I want to influence a younger generation so that one day these absurd rules will be in the past. Women will not remain voiceless, subdued and managed by other people’s fears. Music makes us part of the human race and should never be used to tear us apart.
My friend Edouard is lighthearted, brilliant and kind. He is a queer French writer who got famous at a young age after writing about his very violent childhood. He has said so many things to me, but this always stuck out.

“There were so many times where I would say to the people what happened, and I would tell them, but I think to put this guy in jail is not the right thing to do. I hate him; I am scared of him. I don’t want to see him again in my life. It destroyed a part of me, him raping me. But I knew after I pressed charges the justice system would take my story in order to create violence on someone else by putting them in prison. I don’t understand that. I don’t want to use the violence that happened to me to create more violence in the world. And other people would tell me, “Yes, he has to go to jail. He has to go to jail. He has to go to jail.” So they were deciding for me. I know how difficult it is to speak out about this type of violence. It comes with another type of violence that you have to face of people not believing you, people mocking you. Primo Levi is a writer who survived the Shoah [Holocaust], survived Auschwitz and wrote about his experience in the concentration camps. In one of his essays, he is describing the letters he received after publishing this book about the Shoah. He says that a lot of people tell him, “You are not judgmental enough with the Nazis. You are not tough enough with the Nazis.” And all these people, they didn’t go to the concentration camp, and they are lecturing him about the way he should deal with it. They say, “You should be more tough!” And he was the one who was there. I am not comparing my experience to the Holocaust. It is a completely different level, of course less violent. It’s not the same thing but I can relate to him. People were lecturing me about the way I had to deal with myself and with my own story’ E.L.
I. I do what I always do after someone leaves me, and I tidy my room. / If I get new bed sheets and throw away some clothes then maybe I can have agency over departure. / Going through old photographs I see eight year old me in a floaty red dress. / So many things feel similar, yet the smile feels foreign. // I try to remember all the things I could be before I met gender. / Reminisce a time where polished nails did not feel like a march. / Before pitch in voice became policed, bordered lines around raises in tone. / Think about the moment I became too old to swirl and too mature to be free. // I do not remember the age when I suddenly became aware of rules. / All I know is that eight year old me was seen as curious, not deviant. / Playful, not a problem. / And I wonder why we become the role of gatekeeper, to bodies that never asked to be kept? // I do what I always do after breakups and put things in boxes. / Try to create order out of a chaos that is particular to heartbreak. / I hang up a red dress that looks similar to the one eight year old me once worked. / & I wonder when ‘putting things in boxes’ became our way of coping.

II. They keep telling us that we are new. / They say that we are the trend on twitter, / the highlight in the story, / the latest post in Gender. / They say we are the future. / They say that as if we are not already present. / They say that as if we have not been history. / They will try to make you ask for existence. / They may try to erase you. / They continue to not believe you. / But they do not realise how long you have already been besides them. / They as in the plural, / as in the many, / as in too much to handle. / They as in the expansive, / as in the survival, / as in always here. / They as in the, / you cannot erase something that has been so strong.
ACROSS
1 Different than gender
2 Teacher Crenshaw who created the term “intersectionality”
4 Activist Chen who led a labor strike in New York City’s Chinatown
7 Black and sometimes Jewish hairstyle
11 Sexist term for women who have casual sex
12 Word describing a beautiful body type that we’ve been conditioned to think is negative
15 “Human greatness does not __ in wealth or power, but in character and goodness” - Anne Frank
17 System that holds back people as they get older
21 Birth country of leading LGBT rights activist Masha Gessen
22 Book by Angie Thomas, “The ___ U Give”
25 Theorist who said “the master’s tools cannot dismantle the master’s house”
27 Someone who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth
29 Graduate school admissions test
30 U.S. state that elected the first openly bisexual senator
32 Capitalism sound, followed by “ching!”
33 No ____, ands or buts
34 Very normal self-pleasure activity
37 Nickelodeon cartoon featuring loud alien male protagonist
39 U tryna smash?
40 Color belonging to Republican party in the U.S.
43 Acronym used to describe the epidemic of violence against indigenous women
44 Old dating term for men attempting to date women
45 Author hooks who said “feminism is for everybody”
46 Released during menstruation
47 Body hair often attributed to feminists
49 Yes, all
51 Apologetic word, frequently used by women
54 For example
55 Person born with variations in their sex chromosomes
56 Director of Selma and the documentary 13th
57 Sometimes its hard to say
58 Horrible thing that white people did, creating the foundation for systemic racism in the United States
60 Item of clothing feminists are known to burn
61 Present

DOWN
1 Color of the letter “A” worn by Hester Prynne for cheating
3 Megyn Kelly said this used to not be a big deal
5 The most bangin’ badass there is
6 Cute nickname for non-binary folks
8 “I hate men who are afraid ___ women’s strength.” - Anaïs Nin
10 Someone who is sexually attracted to people regardless of gender
11 A pronoun often used by femmes
13 Gender-neutral pronoun
14 Genital sometimes called “Pussy”
16 Alexandria Ocasio- __________
18 Black lives do this
20 #MeToo Founder
23 Amplify marginalized voices by letting others speak
24 Systems that oppress disabled people
26 Prison abolition activist Angela
27 Monarch of 21 across
28 What sex work is
29 Trail that cannot be determined by looking at someone
30 Type of weapon often used in mass shootings
31 If you don’t know, do this
35 Gay liberation activist known for her work at the Stonewall Riots
36 Type of feminism that ignores the unique concerns of marginalized groups
37 Number of people who should be penalized for their identity
38 Nickname for the liberal party in the U.S.
39 It doesn’t mean your life wasn’t hard
41 “___-dong, the witch is dead”
42 “___ lives matter” (Refrain used to center whiteness and divert attention from the realities of racism & systemic violence)
44 “All the ___ in me are tired.” (Poem by Nayyirah Waheed)
45 Some women have these
46 To ____ is human
48 First Q in LGBTQQIA+
50 Male versions of this are fragile
51 “___-mel” (Cry from a damsel in distress)
52 “If you’re under him, you’re not getting ____ him” (Dua Lipa lyric)
53 Diamond in the rough
54 For example
55 Person born with variations in their sex chromosomes
56 Director of Selma and the documentary 13th
57 Sometimes it’s hard to say
58 Horrible thing that white people did, creating the foundation for systemic racism in the United States
60 Item of clothing feminists are known to burn
61 Present
“THERE ARE YEARS THAT ASK QUESTIONS AND YEARS THAT ANSWER”
ZORA NEALE HURSTON, THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD
My name is Hanne Gaby, I’m 31 and I use she/ her/ they/ them / pronouns. I am from a tiny village in the West Flemish countryside called Kooigem. I moved to NYC when I was 17 and live in Brooklyn now with my husband and puppy. Most people know me as being the first supermodel to come out as intersex. Also I got swag.

I wish people knew more about me though. I wish they knew that I kept my intersex identity to myself for so long because I found out the truth about my body around the same time I was discovered for modeling. It took a while to process it all. I am very happy I took the step to speak up about my intersex experience. I mean talking about my own genitals is probably the most intimate thing ever. So I’d like to keep some privacy over some other things. I am happy to share my doodles with you, maybe that’s something I want to show more.

Everyday I am working to #EndIntersexSurgery on infants and children. 1.7% of people are born intersex. Many of us are subject to irreversible and non consensual surgeries. These surgeries are done to make our beautiful bodies fit into the gender binary. The surgeries have horrible side effects (trauma, loss of sensitivity, gender dysphoria, incontinence, early menopause, osteoporosis, lifelong hormones, ptsd, infertility, the list goes on). My goal is to end these surgeries while also making it more socially acceptable to talk about intersex and gender issues in general. I do this because I’m an intersex genital mutilation survivor. That means I have lifelong consequences and complications. My family and I were lied to and made to feel ashamed of my body by the medical community and don’t want this to happen for further generations.
JOIN ME
If you want to take action, donate to and follow intersex advocacy groups like @intersexjusticeproject and @interact_adv. Also please be mindful of us, there are as many intersex folks as there are redheads and identical twins, we all probably know someone, but for most of us it's not easy to speak about it and sometimes the person might not even know themselves.

MY MESSAGE
If I could tell everyone in the world one thing it would be that being intersex can be very special and I wouldn't want to change it for anything. Being intersex is wonderful, it is society and the medical community that make it hard for intersex folks to be themselves. They want to erase us. Only society, and mostly the medical community, have made it hard for intersex folks to be themselves. They are constantly and literally trying to erase us.
END INTERSEX SURGERY
GLOBAL GENDER EQUALITY
Global gender equality is when everyone has the same rights and opportunities no matter what gender expression they might have. To bring the world closer to gender equality you can do so many things. Like be more inclusive when you are of greeting a big crowd. Don’t say “Hey Guys” try saying hello. It can be as simple as that. Also if you see something, say something. If you see someone getting treated unfairly speak up. Demand gender neutral bathrooms. Use someone’s preferred pronouns (mistakes can happen don’t feel bad, just keep practicing you will get used to it). Respect and love trans women. ALSO learn about Marsha P Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Andreja Pejic just to name a few...
A young girl of sixteen who does not even notice the weight of the arms she bears – indeed her whole upbringing seems to have prepared her for this, so strong and resolute is she! And her enemies go fleeing before her, not one of them can stand up to her. She does all this in full view of everyone, and drives her enemies out of France, recapturing castles and towns. Never did anyone see greater strength, even in hundreds or thousands of men! And she is the supreme captain of our brave and able men. Neither Hector nor Achilles had such strength!

Christine de Pizan, Le Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc, 1429
Joan of Arc is a French heroine who helped lead France to victory in The Hundred Years’ War. At nineteen years old she was captured and burned at the stake. Painter @ryan__driscoll says “She is a symbol to be carried close to the hearts of any person that identifies as a woman or femme and any person that carries the fight for equality no matter if it ends in glory or fire”. The quote on the previous page is from the poem Le Ditié de Jeanne d’Arc by Christine de Pizan. The poem is unique because it was written during Joan of Arc’s lifetime on July 31st 1429. The poem is significant as a historical document because it captures the joy and optimism Joan of Arc brought to the war torn French people. It is also an example of the enduring beauty and power that happens when women are given space to lead, create and support each other.
ALOK
BEYOND GENDER TOWARD FREEDOM
There Are No Such Thing as Trans Issues — There Are Just Issues That Cis People Have With Us.

It has been another merciless year for transgender and gender non-conforming people. Every day we experience a new incursion on the fabric of our humanity. In the United States in 2018 alone there have been 22 murders of members of our community. Globally, there have been almost 400 reported murders. This is a conservative estimate because when transgender people (and especially Black trans people and trans people of color) are attacked we are often misrecognized and incorrectly gendered. This is a global crisis of epic proportions which rarely even makes the news.

Alongside this relentless physical violence there has been an intense policy backlash against our communities. A leaked memo from the Trump Administration in October 2018 suggested that the government could seek to narrowly define sex and sex-based discrimination specifically to exclude trans, gender non-conforming, and intersex people. The US Department of Justice recently stated that trans people are not protected from employment discrimination.

AT ALL LEVELS TRANS PEOPLE ARE UNDER ATTACK.

In response to this wave of discrimination, many people of diverse genders and nationalities have joined a global call for solidarity. Vigils, protests, publications have all firmly declared:

#WEWONTBEERASED!

While I am encouraged by this outcry of support for trans people, I am still worried that we aren’t getting at the root cause of transphobic violence. I worry that in our efforts to resist transphobia, we might actually be reproducing it. It’s like when our allies say that they support their “Transgender Brothers and Sisters!” (despite the fact that many of us are neither men, nor women).

Until we actually challenge the gender binary, violence against transgender people will persist.

When trans people are acknowledged, we are only regarded as something to be talked about, rarely people to be listened to. Trans people get reduced to rhetoric, symbols, ideas — not experienced in our full personhood. When you listen to what so many of us are saying we are actually saying that we don’t need to be empowered, we need a society which arbitrarily assigns gendered meaning to everyone and everything to be disempowered. In other words: the issues we go through are not organic, they are imposed. There are no such thing as transgender issues, there are issues that people have with themselves that they take out on us.

At NYC Beautycon Convention a few months ago I made the following statement:

“I think trans people are leading the way for everyone, once again. I think we have been taught to fear the very things that have the potential to set us free. And so when we see trans people living freely saying, “I don’t care about society’s norms, I don’t care about gender norms, I just want to be me!”, people are threatened by that because they’ve had to repress their own true selves. For me: the history of the LGBTQ community is we’re not just doing this for ourselves, we’re doing this for everybody.”

I was trying to express how the real crisis is not transgender people, but rather it’s a crisis of masculinity and femininity more generally — one in which people are so attached to gender norms that they cannot function when they observe people living outside
of them. This is a fragile and insecure attachment. The fact that something so simple as someone else wearing a dress or cutting their hair short when you don’t think they’re supposed to can elicit such extreme violence shows just how farcical this gendered system is: in this worldview femininity cannot coexist with masculinity and vice versa.

Despite the fact that transgender people have and continue to lead a different approach to gender – one in which femininity and masculinity exist harmoniously, one in which gender has the ability to transform and transcend, one in which people have worth beyond their conformity – we are demonized and dismissed.

We have to push the conversation forward. We don’t just need transgender rights, we need a new way of approaching gender to begin with. Transgender people are not the problem — a society which genders people without their consent and requires them to be “men” or “women” is the problem. Transgender people are not the problem — ideas which pretend that “masculinity” and “femininity” are distinct and oppositional are the problem.

Transgender issues, then, aren’t a minority issue. They are about all of us. Transgender people have known this — now it’s just time for everyone else to catch up.

Bio: Alok Vaid-Menon is a gender non-conforming writer and performance artist whose poetic challenge to the gender binary has been internationally renowned. Learn more at www.alokvmenon.com
I met Maya Angelou when I was ten. Which is to say, I met her before I knew her. I knew enough to know she was a person of import. That she mattered. That she had commanded a cavernous gothic church with her masterful verse; her deep laugh the only echo heard for an hour, while the people sat in awe. “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” had been shoved into my hand mere seconds before it was our turn at her signing table. I don’t remember what she said, but I remember exactly how she felt. Warm. Elevated but familiar. Like she could dine with royalty but still make a pot of collard greens my Aunts would approve. My back straightened when she spoke. She never knew my name, but I wanted to make her proud. This is the power of the feminine: that all in one breath, she conveys expectation, great hope, poetry and hard-fought wisdom. And few are as powerful as Mother Maya. She was a surrogate mother to Oprah and read
poetry for presidents. Her ascension to American royalty reminds us that our temptation to socialize women into perfection risks us losing our greatest, most imperfect heroines. A woman, who spent five years of her youth in deliberate silence, fearing the power of her own tongue, after her uncles beat the man who raped her, is not seen as likely to win a Grammy for her spoken word. A teenage mother and high school dropout is not supposed to have fifty honorary degrees. A black woman, who had experimented with drugs and engaged in sex work before she made it to the theater should not, by society’s standards and judgmental taboos, have won the Presidential Medal of Freedom. I dare not imagine the immense loss to us all if Mother Maya had followed society’s rules for the ladylike. We owe to her the debt she paid by sacrificing her pride for our good, our learning, our saving. I am forever grateful she did not hide her mess, and instead liberated us with her truth. Knowing the depths of her story gave us a window to watch her fold her pain into her power and dance to the heights of her triumph. Maya’s perfect imperfection was a blessing on the soul of the rest of us imperfect women, finally free to march our own routes. Women around the world are forced into discomfiting contortions every day. Policy, societal norms and social practices push us into lesser versions of ourselves, closer to perfection, but further from liberation. A free woman is a flawed woman, unafraid of her dirt because it is there that she grows. A free woman knows her worthiness is not measured in her perfection; it is not qualified by her usefulness to the systems that would have her hide who she is. When I met Maya, I met myself. Standing there, a ten year old girl in braids and plastic beads, under the shadow of her mighty frame, Mother Maya gave me permission to be free. Let her show you the way.
CONTRIBUTE TO OUR SECOND ISSUE!
If you want to be in our second issue of the zine send us a contribution. That can be a piece of writing, a drawing, a comic, a painting, a poem, anything and everything!
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