

An aerial photograph of a coastline at sunset or sunrise. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the upper center of the frame, casting a long, shimmering path of light across the water. The coastline is visible in the lower half, with a harbor area containing several boats. The sky is a gradient of light colors, and the water reflects the sun's light.

# ASEXUAL

Asexuality and Race  
Volume 1, Issue 4

Winter 2018



**LEAD EDITOR**

Michael Paramo

**LAYOUT EDITOR**

Michael Paramo

# ON ASEXUALITY AND RACE

---

## ISSUE THEME

When an examination on the intersections of asexuality and race was announced as the upcoming theme of *The Asexual*, a minor, yet adverse, reaction to the direction of the issue ensued. One of the central purposes of this journal has always been to exist as a space that amplifies the voices of those who are the most marginalized and invisibilized within the ace community and beyond. In congruence with this objective, a message on the significance of prioritizing the voices of ace people of color and decentering the whiteness of ace spaces was explicitly asserted upon this issue's announcement. This prompted a minority of responses questioning whether this was a valid stance, amidst a larger reaction of support.

*The Asexual* maintains the priority of centering ace narratives, perspectives, and activism universally, but especially those voices that so often go unheard. Regarding asexuality and race, as well as ethnicity, a recent community census conducted by the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) concluded that an overwhelming majority of ace people identify as both white and non-Latinx. While this data, garnered through an online survey of thousands of ace people, does not provide a comprehensive perspective on the issue, it indicates the connections between whiteness and asexuality. Although there are numerous reasons why this may be the case, none of any validity should assert that there is simply a lack of ace people of color.

Overall, this issue broadly undertakes an examination of the many intersections of asexuality and race. It has adopted a diversified approach to addressing this theme, incorporating a range of writing and art, from personal narratives by ace people of color, perspectives by professionals and academics in the field of asexual awareness and activism, to projects and platforms that challenge exclusionary and problematic representations in media. The forthcoming pieces in this issue may additionally explore and connect with related themes of asexuality and ethnicity as well as transnational asexualities. *The Asexual* hopes for this issue to function as a necessary collection that propels these unobserved themes forward.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>EL ACE</b> JULIE MEJIA	<b>5</b>
<b><i>INDIAN ACES: AWARENESS AND ACTIVISM IN INDIA</i></b> DR. PRAGATI SINGH	<b>7</b>
<b>WELL</b> ASHLEY KLECZKA	<b>11</b>
<b>QUEEN OF ACES</b> MANDY	<b>12</b>
<b><i>I DON'T GIVE A FUCK</i></b> VICTORIA KEE	<b>20</b>
<b>RACING ACE: ASEXUALITY, RACE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE</b> LAUREN BARBOUR, ELYSE JONES, AND ALINA OSBORN	<b>23</b>
<b>LA VIRGEN</b> KAMY MARTINEZ	<b>25</b>
<b>EXAMINING THE WHITENESS OF THE ACE COMMUNITY</b> MICHAEL PARAMO	<b>27</b>
<b><i>FINDING ME</i></b> NEMO SIQUEIROS	<b>30</b>
<b>I AM ASEXUAL</b> JULIE MEJIA	<b>33</b>
<b>THOUGHTS, MUSINGS, AND LIFE.</b> BELLA	<b>35</b>

**VERBALIZING ATTRACTION**

**36**

DEEPA PRASAD

**ROSE GARDEN**

**39**

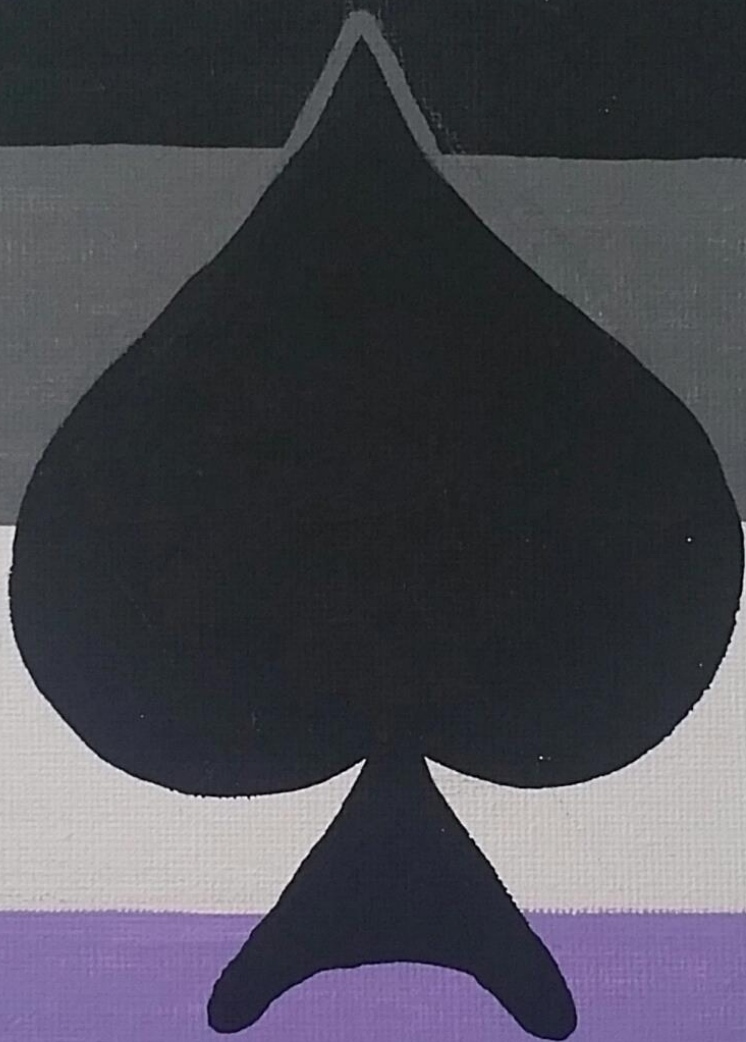
JULIE MEJIA

**FREE TOY INCLUDED**

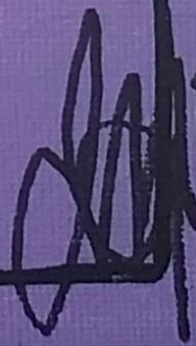
**41**

SYDNEY KHOO

17



el ace



# EL ACE

---

BY **JULIE MEJIA**

Acrylic paint on a canvas

6 inches by 4 inches

Growing up Latinx, I struggled to find representation, even within queer Latinx communities. Asexuality is often looked over, if not completely ignored. This piece is my attempt to shine some much-needed light to the queer Latinx community.

**Julie Mejia** is an undergraduate at UCLA with a major in Sociology and a minor in LGBT studies. Julie grew up in Pasadena in a Colombian-American household. They/them pronouns.

# INDIAN ACES: AWARENESS AND ACTIVISM IN INDIA

---

MICHAEL PARAMO INTERVIEWS DR. PRAGATI SINGH

Dr. Pragati Singh is a medical doctor by qualification and has worked as a public health professional in the fields of maternal, child, and reproductive health in India. Apart from this, she also holds an interest in specific fields, such as mental health, sexual health, and sexual mental health. In her personal time, she founded *Indian Aces*, a collective for asexual folk in India, in 2014, in the form of a social media page. She has been working pro-bono for the asexual community in India since. Today, the collective possesses a presence in both online and offline spaces, including multiple cities in India, as well as a few outside, such as in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

From her experience and learnings garnered through working within the ace community, she has developed her own unique model on sexuality which she teaches during workshops and training sessions. Pragati Singh is also an independent researcher. Her research study on asexuality was selected for the World Association of Sexual Health congress held in Prague in 2017, where it was presented in both the poster as well as oral presentation formats. Her findings were also published in the prestigious *Journal of Sexual Medicine* by Elsevier. Pragati Singh joins *The Asexual* for an interview on her advocacy and perspectives on asexuality.

**MP:** What originally led you to become an advocate for ace people in India and Indian ace people abroad?

**Dr. PS:** Honestly, I had no idea I'd be doing what I'm doing today when I started. When I first started looking online, I remember thinking there just HAD to be some community in India. I was surprised to find out there was just nothing. Absolutely nothing. I then waited for a while, assuming someone would come up with something. Again, nothing. In the meanwhile, I'd come across many Indian folk looking for fellow ace Indians all over the global community platforms. At one point, I just went, "WTH, I'll do it." So, I started with a modest Facebook page. That's



all I knew I could do. It lay redundant for a long while, where in I would occasionally post something, and then I forgot about it altogether. Then, someone texted into the page. I realized how important it was that I continue and don't stop. It ushered me back into action again in early 2016. And there's been no looking back since. Simply put, people needed it, no one else was doing it, and I knew I could do it. Today, I can also say I really like doing it. Back then, I didn't know.

**MP:** How has your experience in the public health fields of maternal, child and reproductive health, as well as your background as a medical doctor by qualification, influenced and supported your work?

**Dr. PS:** In all my academic and professional experience, there's been little to no discourse regarding sexuality, even though I've studied medicine and worked in reproductive health. This is pretty much the norm here. Sexuality just isn't in the forefront yet. We still have mothers and neonates dying from sepsis, diarrhea, and hemorrhage. Sexual health just isn't a priority. In fact, whatever understanding I have of sexuality today, is honestly in SPITE of my medical education. That being said, I feel like my qualification helps add credibility to the cases I make. Such as, me saying that hormonal imbalance does have an effect on libido or that certain medications do affect arousal, probably doesn't sound as far-fetched to my audience as it would if I were not a doctor.

**MP:** What is the *Indian Aces* and what is the story behind its creation?

**Dr. PS:** Today we are a self/non-funded, award-winning collective for asexual folk (or those on the spectrum) from or in India (or the Indian subcontinent). Started in 2014 and relaunched in early 2016, the community has grown by leaps and bounds. It serves as an online community platform, generating awareness, and receiving new members into their secret group on Facebook. Members also participate and represent in various LGBTQIA+ events and platforms that have so far been devoid of representation from the asexual community in India. We organize meetups for community members all over the country and have been able to do a few internationally too. We conduct independent

research on the subject, and conduct workshops for professionals and allies and aces to understand sexuality and asexuality.

**MP:** How is asexuality in the Indian, or larger South Asian context, uniquely challenging?

**Dr. PS:** I'll speak mostly for the Indian subcontinent, though there are many similarities in all South-Asian cultures. Sexuality is a hugely taboo topic in India. This is not limited to personal spaces, but even academic and professional spaces. Additionally, the many other problems of third-world countries take precedence over sexuality-related issues, which are largely considered unimportant or at least non-critical. Never mind the fact that we have the world's largest youth population. Never mind the fact that sexual harassment and abuse is rampant in our nation. Never mind that marital rape is not considered rape as such in Indian law. To top all of this, there is no real sex-ed in our educational institutes, and the pressure to get married, by age 25 for women and age 30 for men, is huge in our culture. All of this basically means that for someone who's asexual in India, their adolescence would be a period of great confusion, owing to the lack of awareness and agency available right now. Their youth may probably be marred with unhealthy, broken relationships, with multiple failed attempts at having a "normal" youth experience. Then possibly getting married to an increasingly resentful partner, or worse, an abusive one.

**MP:** You have been leading workshops and talks on asexuality recently, such as an "Asexuality 101" workshop in New Delhi and a presentation at the World Association for Sexual Health in Prague. What have you found most inspiring about all of the important work you are doing?

**Dr. PS:** The best part of all of what I do, hands down, is the fact that people need it. It is evident to me that I mustn't stop, because people are constantly writing in to me asking for help, guidance, and a sense of belonging to a community. I constantly receive messages of appreciation and gratitude from people who felt alone and out of place for the longest time. There's nothing else that could motivate me the way that that does.

**MP:** From October 22nd to October 28th, you held several events for Asexuality Awareness Week. What are some particular challenges you have faced amplifying asexuality?

**Dr. PS:** In India, there is/was no real awareness on the subject of asexuality for the longest time. Somehow, in the past year or so, it has suddenly become a topic of great interest. This might sound like a great thing, but it's actually quite counterproductive because a lot of the information that's being peddled out is actually misinformation. They're feeding into all the myths about asexuality that I've worked so hard to erase for so long. It seems like media houses are all in a hurry to cover this "trendy" subject and are causing harm to the cause in return.

**MP:** What are your aspirations for the future of *Indian Aces*?

**Dr. PS:** I want the collective to become more widespread and community-led. While I'd always want to spearhead it, I wish more members would take it up as passionately as I do and take it up in whichever capacity they can. I've also been sitting on a matchmaking tool for the longest time, but again, it's hard to do everything alone, especially in the lack of funds.

**MP:** Thank you so much for your time, your advocacy, as well as for offering your perspectives on *Indian Aces* and asexuality for this issue.

Website: [www.IndianAces.info](http://www.IndianAces.info)

Facebook: [www.fb.com/IndianAces](http://www.fb.com/IndianAces)

Twitter: @IndianAces\_

Email: [IndianAcesFTW@gmail.com](mailto:IndianAcesFTW@gmail.com)

# WELL

---

BY **ASHLEY KLECZKA**

Each state that knew my name  
held it in its mouth only moments before spitting it out.  
A multitude of times removed from a sense of belonging  
that I keep searching for in the well of family history

Three steps down, and six feet under  
I find the seeds of what could have been  
Planted in soil that died long ago -  
So I keep digging  
And find nothing but dead ends

I mourn for the roots of mine that died before reaching water  
Too much of one thing and too little of another to be considered 'same'  
Learning shame in the darkness of forgetting.

Each state that knew my name  
Never knew that it didn't belong to me, but the bitterness remains  
An identity washed clean of heritage in stolen water  
I'll keep searching, but the roots will stop with me

**Ashley Kleczka's "Well"** represents the poet's longing for a connection with their grandfather who passed away before they could know him. Having been raised in a nomadic lifestyle and with the knowledge that the surname they carried wasn't of any relation (due to familial complications) - it left the poet feeling like their heritage was stolen from them despite how hard their grandfather fought to make the journey from Veracruz to California.

# QUEEN OF ACES

---

BY **MANDY**

It started when I was thirteen.

Or, well, I guess you could say that the incidents could no longer be ignored after that point.

Before that, there was climbing up trees, riding bicycles and scraping knees; which gradually turned into “Them vs. Me” when dares to see who could reach the highest branches of a tree morphed into dares surrounding talking to boys. They would giggle and flip their hair, on the sidelines of the football pitch. I grew bored of watching the boys have all the fun, and fell into books.

Falling into books eventually turned into a full-blown argument where I was told I was too cold, uncaring, and a freak for wanting to spend more time buried in fiction than chasing after boys or gossiping about boys, or talking about boys, or... you get the idea.

They’d always been fake friends, though – more friends due to ease of access, as we all lived on the same street, than anything else. So, I shrugged off their accusations, shrugged off the months of lying to my face and behind my back, and dove even deeper into books.

The books I was reading then didn’t feature romantically inclined heroines, pining for the surly bad boy; they were still innocently gripping and sweeping adventures that I could lose myself in completely.

Thirteen changed things, though.

It usually does – first official teen year. First period. First tangible signs of hormones. First... boyfriend?

I gave it a try.

Physically, I was developing the way everyone said I should, and with that development, came societal expectations.

Thirteen came with sly glances from adults whenever I was near boys, less than subtle smiles and prodding remarks. And with it, the notion that everyone felt nervous to the point of nausea before a first date filtered into my consciousness.

It was normal to agree to a date with a guy and then feel so queasy you cancelled three times before actually going on the date.

Perfectly normal.

Expected, even.

Eventually, I forced myself past the nausea and stuck to it.

My very first boyfriend arranged for a group outing to the cinema, so the parental units wouldn't know it was a date. He held my hand, we split the popcorn and drinks prices from our pocket money.

He broke up with me the next week at school.

All those nerves, all that worrying, and for what?

"You didn't even care that I was there," he said, shrugging. "You were more interested in talking to your friends."

I pretended to be devastated.

My friends took up arms against him and his supposed slight to me, but I couldn't be angry. I couldn't even be sad. All I felt was the overwhelming relief that I wouldn't have to feel that terrified again.

After all, John had been right: he'd put his arm around me in the cinema, and I hadn't noticed until the movie was over, too busy exchanging whispered observations about the movie with Luana who was seated on my other side.

I shrugged it off. Who needed boy drama when there were books to read and school to study for anyway?

\*

When I was fourteen, enough time had gone by. I couldn't hide behind the cinema disaster anymore.

I was expected to *want* to date, and no amount of trying to reference the cinema fiasco would get the questions about crushes and hot boys to stop.

I developed what, in hindsight, was probably a bond borne out of desperation with a guy I'd met online. And more than likely entirely fake, too. In retrospect, he was the ideal first crush for me: older, so he ticked the bad boy box; lived an ocean away, so no risk of ever having to meet him in person, or, god forbid, go on a date with him.

I lied through my teeth about him, and the entire situation. He was a good friend, who took me under his wing in a bustling online community. To my school friends, he was my dangerous older boyfriend from Norway who sent me pretty necklaces I'd really just gotten on sale off Amazon to sell the lie.

I was so desperate to fit in, to not be different or weird, a fake boyfriend was preferable. It made my friends swoon and sigh at how thoughtful or romantic he was, and also made sure I was left alone about crushes in real life – I was off the market.

Eventually real life interfered, and I was losing track of all the lies I had been telling, so I fake broke up with him, and that was that for another full year.

\*

Fifteen was when it all spiraled out of control, like a freight train hurtling towards a brick wall without brakes.

And all I could do was watch in silent horror as my friends' well-meaning meddling turned my life into a drama-infested mess.

The books I read changed too. They told of heart-stopping romance and swoon-worthy boys with dark hair and light-colored eyes.

So when asked about my crush, I adjusted accordingly.

I thought long and hard about it and then finally decided on the tallest boy in the class, Brian. Brian was blonde, so not quite the perfect image of the swoon-worthy boy from fiction, but he did have green eyes. All my friends nodded along, quite happy to accept that as fact.

"Of course. Then, if you went out, you could still wear heels."

It was said like it was a foregone conclusion that if I'd had a crush on a shorter boy, heels would not be an option. Like I needed to be careful about hurting a fragile male ego if I dared to be taller than my date.

Still, that had been why I'd picked Brian, so I answered enthusiastically.

"He's so your type!"

Was he?

"It's his eyes isn't it? So dreamy."

Sure...

Truth was, Brian was actually a decent guy. But, after I singled him out as my supposed crush, it felt weird to even talk to him. I was always hyper-aware that someone could have said something to him and things could get awkward fast. It spiraled out of proportion. And because I always told them they weren't allowed to try to set us up, the entire situation eventually boiled down to storms of giggles whenever we were around each other.

And then, confusingly, a completely different boy, Luis, asked me out, and, in a panic, I said yes.

There was a brief repeat of the awkward cinema scene, only without any friends around to buffer, his arm around me and his face that seemed to inch closer and closer just made the whole situation awkward. I ended up running out of that cinema room in a near panic attack and never spoke to Luis again. Another friendship ruined.

So when Paul kissed me – really kissed me – on sports day, I was confused. It had come out of nowhere.

For me, it had, anyway. My friends were quick to prove otherwise.

"No, he held the door open for you last week!"

"He asked for help with those dance steps."

"He asked about the book you were reading."

My confusion grew, as I realized that yes, he had done all those things, but somehow, for some reason, I had assumed he was just being friendly.

"Yeah well, we always thought he was gay and Pamela was his beard, so thanks for proving us wrong!"

They dissolved into giggles and I followed along, all while trying to grasp the situation I'd somehow landed myself in.

I never did manage to understand it.

Still, it got my friends off my back about Brian. And Luis. Now all they wanted to talk about was Paul.

Was he a good kisser?

He must have been, because so-and-so had reported we'd made out for very long. I couldn't remember. The entire event was just one long span of surprise, followed by thoughts of how weird it felt to have someone



else's tongue in my mouth, followed by the pervasive thought of "this is awkward." Where are the fireworks I was promised, and what the hell do I do about my teeth?

I answered all their questions the way they expected me to, and that was that.

A few weeks later, Paul broke up with me for his ex, and I could once again stop talking about it and return to hiding behind the "too hurt to mention it" façade.

\*

I suppose some kind of clue should have started rattling around by that point.

It didn't. Not even an inkling. I thought, you know, I was doing everything I was expected to do. I was going out there, was kissing boys – albeit reluctantly – and not telling my parents about it. I was following the "Adolescent Handbook," just like all the books and movies said I should.

And if I didn't quite enjoy it all as much as everyone else around me seemed to, I chalked it up to me being what adults liked to call "exceptionally mature for your age." I guess it was some sort of defense mechanism that never allowed me to look at the differences too closely, because of what they might reveal.

So I just kept on keeping on.

At sixteen, I discovered that learning to ballroom dance with a boy was one of the single most awkward situations I could ever imagine myself in.

That one I blame on the 2005 version of *Pride & Prejudice*, actually. Dancing to create intimacy? Cue me silently panicking in the background.

But I soldiered through and learnt all the steps needed to be part of the court for my friend's quinceañera. Even though she put us all in huge, bright pink, poufy dresses. And little tiaras. Yes, there are pictures. No, no one will ever see them ever again.

And then I got the hell out of dodge.

\*

I love dancing. Have since a young age, so it didn't take long for me to fall in love with the idea of clubbing.

Most times, it was me and my friends on the dance floor, having fun and drinking too much.

Until one day when clubbing became less about dancing for the fun of it, and more about my friends finding people to go home with.

That was when I found out that clubbing involved being groped and fondled by men, and having their erections pressed into you in a not-at-all-subtle invitation for more.

I stopped going to clubs after that.

\*

I know what you're thinking: compulsive heteronormativity is a bitch, someone give this girl a girlfriend!

Yeah.

Ironically, my family actually started questioning my apparent heterosexuality before it ever occurred to me to do so.

Starting at around age 18, my family have questioned me at least twice a year. And if they're not asking, they're happily informing me about the Greek island of Lesbos, and how it's full of lesbians.

I kid you not.

It's probably my own fault, for not giving a firm "no" the first time I was asked, rather hesitantly, if the reason I never had a boyfriend was because I was interested in girls. I hadn't come across any other information out there, so, at the time, my response was to shrug and reason that that were the case. I was pretty sure I'd know by then, right? It seemed like the kind of stuff that would be hard to miss.

They accepted the answer then and let it drop, but ultimately, they took the question and ran with it.

But they're well-meaning in their meddling, and at least they're happy to accept me not being straight. Which was good to know once I figured some other stuff out.

But more on that later.

\*

As it turns out, I did eventually get the chance to explore that avenue of thought. Even with me actively trying to avoid situations where such things might surprise me, and having friends who are happy to leave me be, life generally just... is what it is for me.

And what life is, often, is highly sexual – for most people, anyway. Or at least, that’s my understanding of it.

And even after years of knowing this, that fact can still sometimes take me by surprise.

Which was how I ended up, at age twenty-one, awkwardly seated for two hours in a stunning girl’s living room as she plied me with drinks, and only then realizing that she probably expected the night to end very differently than what I’d been imagining.

I’ll rewind.

I stopped going to clubs at eighteen, due to the aforementioned inappropriate dancing. So I found myself a dance studio and discovered the joy of dancing again. For three years, that was uneventful and wonderful. The class was mostly girls, and after three years of seeing each other twice a week, casual friendships were formed.

Enough that I didn’t think to question Ellie’s invitation to have a *Harry Potter* marathon at her house one weekend.

I know, I know.

In my defense, I had done that before with a friend during high school. It took us a whopping twelve hours, with little more than breaks for food between movies. We also napped for most of *Half-Blood Prince* because we were both in agreement that it was a terrible adaptation, and by that time, naps were needed. And also, it wasn’t on Netflix, so the idea that this was somehow code for “Netflix and chill” didn’t even enter my brain. Because, why the hell would it? My brain just isn’t wired like that. Besides, I take my Harry Potter marathons very seriously, thank you very much.

Anyway, so I’m there, fresh glass of wine in hand and Harry has just landed himself in Knockturn Alley, when she pulls that classic arm-over-the-shoulder move that my first boyfriend had tried all those years ago in a dark cinema.

Something clicked for me then, as I stared at my wine, wondering how it was that I had managed to fuck it up so badly and be just that oblivious. I guess you could say that I am always more comfortable around women. Maybe that's because that is the way I am romantically inclined, so I'm less likely to try to run screaming for the hills. Or maybe it's just that I feel safer, like a fellow woman is less likely to force me into something I don't want. Probably it's a mixture of both.

Either way, I'm always less on guard around women – and that includes being less aware of any undertones that might be sexual. Especially when I feel attracted to them anyway; it makes me more likely to forget that the way I feel attraction is very different from how most people do. So, that one is kind of my fault, in that way.

Still, everything comes full circle, I guess.

Wine, a befuddled Harry on screen, a very interesting and very cute woman next to me, and an increasingly uneasy me watching Harry muddle his way through Borgin & Burkes as I try to figure out a way to extract myself from this situation I managed to, quite by mistake, land myself in.

To her credit, Ellie didn't look confused when I pulled away, but instead gamely paused Harry's reunion with the Weasley family to hear me out. For one terrifying moment, I thought I might have misread the situation and she had not, in fact, been coming on to me.

Thankfully, I was saved from that mortifying scenario. And Ellie, beautiful, kind Ellie, heard me out. She asked some questions. And then poured us some more wine, hit play on the movie and cuddled with me for the next six films.

And as I settled into the feeling of her arms around me, it occurred to me that sometimes, letting your guard down and forgetting differences can be a great thing.

**Mandy** grew up in Brazil, but has spent most of her adult life in London. An out and proud gay ace, she likes to read and write about people like her getting a happy ending. Writing about homoromantic asexual characters is a newfound love of hers, and she is enjoying the chance to bring to life characters that see the world through the same lens as her. You can follow Mandy on twitter at @mandyrosask.

# I DON'T GIVE A FUCK

BY VICTORIA KEE

*I Don't Give a Fuck* is a new web series that focuses on the perspectives of Maya and Jasmine, two friends who fall on very opposite ends of the spectrum of sexual orientation. The reason I'm creating this series is to address the serious lack of accurate, relatable, and open representation of asexuality in media, and especially for people of color. In general, there's also still just a huge question mark that floats over the topic of asexuality, which demands the spread of awareness in response.

Firstly, Maya is an asexual who is straightforward and sassy. However, since she has to deal with the persistent societal pressures to date and be sexually active, she finds it increasingly difficult to be comfortable in her own skin. At times, it seems that she can only be herself in online spaces or with her friends, but, when she's not busy building up her online social presence, she's working as an intern for a small production house.



KHIANA SIZEMORE  
AS  
MAYA



Jasmine is an incredibly strong independent woman who – quite literally – “don’t need no man.” She’s an aromantic sex-positive pansexual who is a programmer by day and a writer by night. Not the type for commitment, she’s a woman who boldly embraces the freedom to express her own sexuality whenever and with whomever she pleases – carrying herself with confidence and allure, often against criticism from her family and the unwelcome opinions of men.

Although the two women have different perspectives and experiences in life, they often depend on and support one another as they face their individual challenges of being queer women of color in their 20s. So, this series is here to continue that dialogue and to help people understand what asexuality is, how we view the world, and to understand that each person's experience as an asexual (or someone sitting on the spectrum) varies from one person to the next. As for Jasmine, who is hypersexual, she's a woman who's challenging the stigmas against open expression of female sexuality. The two girls have very different perspectives on life but can relate in how society and their traditional-minded ethnic communities ostracize them for being who they are. Beyond sexuality, though, *IDGAF* focuses on the journey and growth of these two women as they break cultural traditions and expectations, challenge ideals of body image, and more.

While *IDGAF* is a series that ultimately celebrates inclusion and diversity, the primary reason it's being created is to give exposure to an incredibly underrepresented orientation, which is asexuality. There is a large need for people like myself who identify as someone on the asexual spectrum to be able to see their narratives represented. While the existence of Todd, an openly asexual character on *Bojack Horseman*, is a good start for representation, we need to ensure our representation is intersectional by putting more stories told from the perspectives of people of color, women, and/or gender non-conforming individuals. The series will provide that diverse experience, while also creating a discussion around the meanings of intimacy and attraction.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/idgafwebseries/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/idgafwebseries/>

Instagram: [instagram.com/idgafwebseries/](https://www.instagram.com/idgafwebseries/)

Tumblr: [idgafwebseries.tumblr.com](https://www.tumblr.com/idgafwebseries)

**Victoria Kee**, who commonly goes by the name "Vic," is a 25-year old filmmaker based in Virginia. She recently began to identify as demi-sexual last year, and has since fused elements of sexual identify into the subject of her documentary work, which often also consist of themes surrounding black identity, family, and the mundanities of everyday life. Instagram: @soeulcinema, Tumblr: kodacchromes, Twitter: @Victoria\_kee

# RACING ACE: ASEXUALITY, RACE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

---

BY LAUREN BARBOUR, ELYSE JONES, AND ALINA OSBORN

**Conference:** *Creating Change 2018*

**Panel Presented:** Friday, January 26th from 4:45 to 6:15pm

**Session Title:** Racing Ace: Asexuality, Race, and Social Justice

**Session Topic:** Racial Justice: Knowledge

## **Presenters:**

Lauren Barbour: Demisexual, bisexual, and half Japanese. She/her.

Elyse Jones: Asexual, queer, and white. She/her.

Alina Osborn: Asexual, queer, and half Filipino. She/her.

All three presenters are students from The College of New Jersey.

## **Description of Session/Presentation in Conference Booklet:**

This workshop will help attendees become familiar with and improve existing knowledge of compulsory sexuality versus non-sexuality and asexuality. Session leaders will discuss how conceptions of race affect the aforementioned sexual identities and practices. We will discuss the role asexual identity movements can play in addressing the racialized (a)sexualization of communities. Participants will practice their advocacy for LGBTQI\* communities to be aware and inclusive of the racialized beliefs shaping discourses on asexuality, sex positivity, and compulsory sexuality. Attendees will be able to ask questions and receive practical advice for helping others understand asexuality as it intersects with race.

## **Purpose:**

This interactive workshop will help attendees become familiar with and improve their existing knowledge of compulsory sexuality versus non-sexuality (or the absence of sexual desire) and asexuality (the experience of little to no sexual desire) and how these sexual identities and practices are affected by beliefs about race. This workshop will also look at the role asexual identity movements might play in addressing the (a)sexualization of communities. Participants will have the opportunity



to apply knowledge gained in the workshop on compulsory sexuality, non-sexuality, and asexuality by working to develop talking points that are aware and inclusive of these narratives. Groups are encouraged to reflect on their own lived experiences wherever possible to help participants ensure their existing advocacy efforts for LGBTQI\* communities are aware and inclusive of the racialized beliefs shaping discourses on asexuality, sex positivity, and compulsory sexuality. Throughout the session, attendees will have a chance to ask questions and receive practical advice and tools for helping others understand asexuality as it intersects with race.

**Objectives:**

- Understand (a)sexuality as an intersectional identity that is shaped by race
- Learn concrete strategies to talk about (a)sexuality in ways that are cognizant of the involuntary (a)sexualization of racial communities
- Understand that an asexual movement must address the nuances of racialized sexuality before being able to argue for an identity-based asexuality

**Summary:**

After the three presenters introduced themselves and defined some of the key terms of the presentation, Lauren Barbour detailed the history of hypersexualized and asexualized racial communities throughout history. Then, Elyse Jones discussed modern asexual history and identity of the past 20 years, detailing how racial stereotypes and the existing whiteness of the asexual community are two factors that contribute to the ace community remaining white. Afterwards, Alina Osborn discussed the present and future of asexual activism and how steps can be taken to dismantle the overwhelming whiteness of the asexual community. The three presenters concluded by facilitating a discussion about inclusivity, allowing the audience to take away information to use in their own activism.



# LA VIRGEN

---

BY **KAMY MARTINEZ**

Digital Art

Illustrator Program

4950 x 6000 pixels

La Virgen is a digital piece I wanted to play around with in Illustrator and push for a more minimalistic style. I wanted to create the image of La Virgen that's more of my style and that I could wear on a shirt. I also wanted to challenge myself on using simple patterns and shapes that I often see in my culture.

**Kamy Martinez** is a Chicax digital artist who has lived in California for most of her life. She studied art in multiple universities and now teaches in an art program for people with developmental disabilities and in a university during the fall. Her artwork focuses mainly on cute characters, but she has a large range of styles. She has two cats: Kiki and Chispa. Twitter: @kamycatt

# EXAMINING THE WHITENESS OF THE ACE COMMUNITY

---

BY **MICHAEL PARAMO**

As reported in a 2014 survey by the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) of over 10,000 ace people, 77.3% of the community identified as white and "NonHispanic," 5.2% as white and "Hispanic," 3.9% as Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.5% as Black or African American, 0.5% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 6.8% as Mixed Race, and 3.8% as "other" or simply did not respond to the question. Despite the problematic categorizations utilized in this community report (which referenced the United States census), it concludes that the ace community is highly white racially and "NonHispanic" or Latinx ethnically. Although ace visibility is changing, whiteness still dominates the community. This may be partially attributed to the fact that "asexuality," as a contemporary identity category, originated within selective and highly white online spaces, such as email lists and blogs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, at the inception of the internet's ascension into widespread usage. As a term, "asexuality" has remained relatively elusive and esoteric, yet to be adopted within public education or by mainstream media outlets on a widespread scale.

There is therefore an intrinsic level of privilege required to even be able to self-identify as "asexual" or "ace." Those who do not possess access or awareness of these online spaces, or an internet connection in general, are far less likely to access asexuality, may largely be unable to self-identify as asexual, and will subsequently not be understood as asexual or ace in the community as a result. Exposure to these terms of "asexual" and "ace" offline can be difficult due to their relative absence in mainstream or public discourse. As such, the asexual identity may continue to be predominately afforded to white people, both due to their privilege regarding accessibility as well as the fact that, once gaining access, or possessing preexisting access (in reference to the white creators of these online spaces where asexuality as a contemporary identity originated), they may be more likely to disseminate knowledge of the identity and term within bubbles that are dominated by others like themselves.

In this sense, whiteness can become self-containing. Those who identify as asexual today may continue to perceive, whether consciously or not, asexuality as an identity predominately for white people tomorrow. This cyclical perception may continue to loop as new ace people gain access to the identity of asexuality. A looping effect may hold the consequence of ensuring that white aces, who are newly realizing their ace identity, feel more accepted in ace spaces in comparison to people of color. On the other hand, ace people of color may automatically feel excluded or invisibilized within the community and may be less likely to engage and participate in activities that concern the ace community as a result, such as the very AVEN survey that frames this article. While the results of the ace community census may appear to support the conclusion that less ace people of color exist, this fundamentally is not the case. Rather, they are less likely to self-identify as ace due to accessibility as well as the whiteness of the ace community and its relational issue of self-containment.

At the same time, visibility is also important. Representation can be powerful and often makes people feel validated in their own existence or identity. This is especially true for those of us who are only acknowledged in a very limited capacity or within selective spaces, such as ace people of color. However, existing asexuality representation, as important as it is, largely perpetuates the whiteness of the ace community. While asexuality representation within mainstream outlets has only just begun to ascend, ace people of color are largely absent from this growing trend, thus embedding within general audiences who are exposed to these representations, whether consciously or not, that whiteness and asexuality are largely entwined. Simultaneously, ace people of color, who may already not feel included within the ace community, are not seeing themselves being represented in the limited amount of asexuality representation present, and thus may also internalize ideas of asexuality as a primarily white identity.

On the most apparent of levels, it is evident that whiteness in ace spaces should be examined and dismantled so that the ace identity and community may become more accessible and inclusive to ace people of color. There are multiple solutions that can address this problem, of which the most useful is simply centering and amplifying the voices of ace people of color more actively and prominently. This can operate as

a mechanism to deconstruct the perception of the ace community as predominately white and allow for ace people of color to feel more included within ace spaces. Other solutions include continued awareness of the asexual identity, particularly within offline spaces (media representation is important), so that the identity begins to enter the lexicon and consciousness of the public rather than solely remaining a predominately online self-identity within mostly white spaces, of which it originated nearly two decades ago.

**Michael Paramo** is a gay aromantic asexual Latinx demiguy and graduate student who founded *The Asexual* in October 2016. They have presented their original research at several national academic conferences, including the National Women's Studies Association and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. They have been featured for their work on asexuality by *Buzzfeed LGBT*, *Anomalous Press*, and *The Cake*.

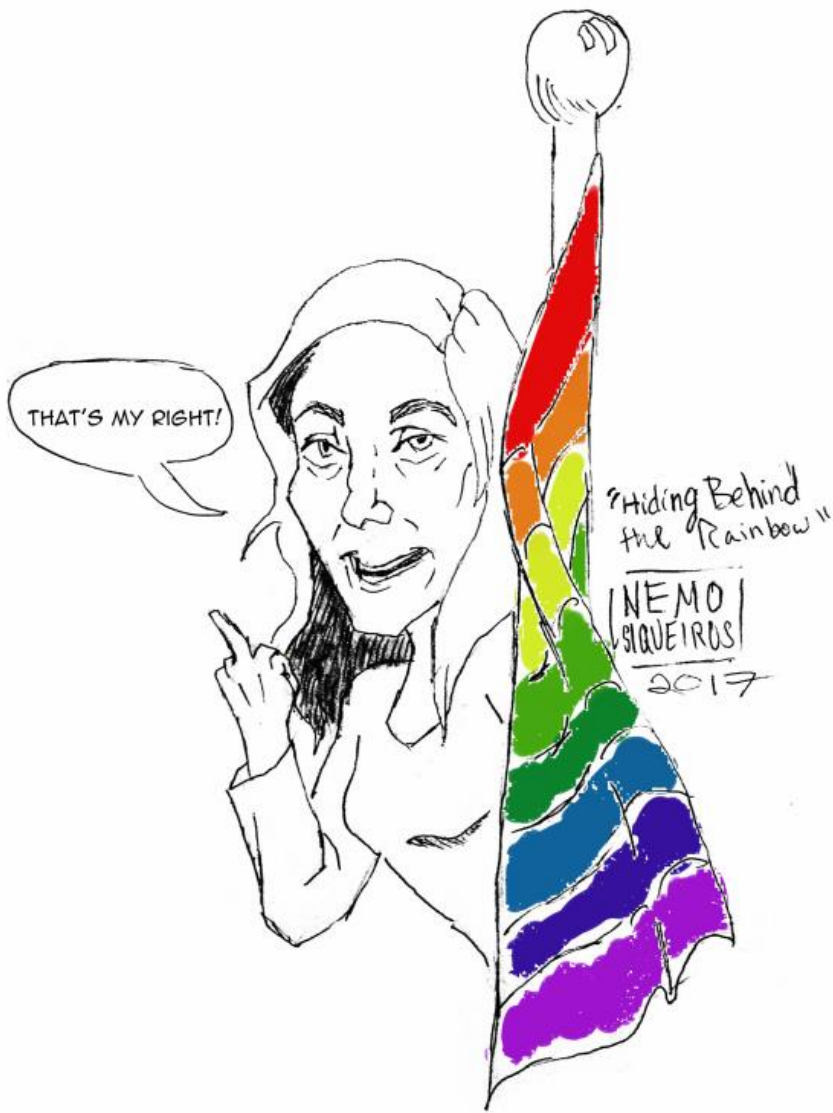
# FINDING ME

---

BY NEMO SIQUEIROS

*Finding Me* was a program I started back in August of 2016 at KPPP-LP Fargo-Moorhead 88.1 FM Radio, which is actually run out of the home I live in. After graduating from Minnesota State University in Moorhead, I wanted to be a voice for queer people of color in the community amongst the majority of queer white voices that drowned everyone else out. However, in this conservative community, queer voices themselves are overpowered by whiteness, as queer discussion doesn't address intersectionality enough. This fits within the mission that the *People's Press Project* has asserted to give marginalized voices a platform. On this program, I focus on local community voices and new unheard voices on topics that the community won't touch or talk about due to concerns of politeness. This program is for their voices, their art, whether they are musicians or visual artists, their hopes, their fears, and even their questions and my answers from my perspective. People these days are under the assumption that their gender and sexuality are static or that they somehow can't change. But, on *Finding Me*, you will always be finding me, your host Nemo Siqueiros, to help find you.

On December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 5 P.M., I aired a show entitled "Hiding Behind the Rainbow" that addressed the central problem of defining sexual assault with studio guests Cindy and Duke Gomez-Schempp, station managers and operators of the station, and allies. In this show, I specifically discussed Kevin Spacey's actions of *hiding behind the rainbow* after his assault of a minor surfaced in the media. Spacey's "apology" was terrible, especially in the gaslighting exhibited via his "I don't remember it that way" or "sorry you felt that way" narrative while also revealing his gay identity as a distraction from his actions. I firmly assert that rape, assault, and pedophilia does not belong in the queer community. Many people experience assault and don't even realize it. Also, rates of sexual assault in the LGBT community, regarding statistics of gay men, bisexual men, lesbian women, and bisexual women are higher in comparison to heterosexual men and women. Even though the body may respond, this doesn't mean that there was consent. Verbal and clear-headed consent is necessary. Women assaulting women, even



if they're cis, and without a penetration of the cis male sex, are still rapists or assaulters. On "Hiding Behind the Rainbow," I therefore ended by addressing the important question: what is consent? To briefly answer, body language and words are crucial. If you're drunk or the other person is inebriated/unconscious, or, in other words, not 100% *there* or is silent, there is no consent. It stands to reason that if both people are intoxicated, that both people don't make the right choices or read the correct social cues. Just as drunk drivers are held accountable for injuring or killing another driver.

"Hiding Behind the Rainbow" aired weekly as a rerun at 5 P.M. every subsequent Wednesday until my following program with new



content was released on the first Wednesday of the next month. Regarding the illustrated cartoon accompanying *Finding Me*, as well as the title of the show itself, Chelsea Lyons Kent is a figure running in progressive circles, is a felon in Florida, and was a Bernie delegate in Hawaii when she flipped the bird to the camera. She condoned sleeping with both men and women as well as assaulting them without their consent as being her "right." Whether she's bisexual or pansexual is moot, assault and rape are not okay. I compare this concept with Kevin Spacey and his assault of a minor, who came out as gay in his "apology." I juxtapose these two as using the LGBT community to hide behind concepts of queerness as being "weird" or "taboo," which is inherently homophobic and transphobic and throws the community under the bus to reignite the false myths that LGBT folks are "perverse" and will "harm children." These are myths we've been trying to run from since the beginning of the first brick thrown by trans women of color at Stonewall.

Radio Facebook & Twitter: [facebook.com/nemopotatoes](https://facebook.com/nemopotatoes) & [twitter.com/nemopotatoes](https://twitter.com/NemoPotatoes) (@NemoPotatoes)

Art Twitter: [twitter.com/anem0nefish/](https://twitter.com/anem0nefish/) (@aNEM0nefish)

Art Tumblr: [art-nemonefish.tumblr.com/](https://art-nemonefish.tumblr.com/) (@art-nemonefish)

Radio Page: [kpppfm.com/finding-me](https://kpppfm.com/finding-me)

Support *Finding Me* via the "Donate" and "Underwriting" tabs.

Ko-Fi: [ko-fi.com/anemonefish](https://ko-fi.com/anemonefish)

Bio Page and more: [nemo-siqueiros.carrd.co](https://nemo-siqueiros.carrd.co)

**Nemo Siqueiros** busted out of the closet to the general public in 2011 because of his involvement in his high school play, *The Laramie Project*. His castmates at Fargo South High had invited the Westboro Baptist Church to his community to boost ticket sales. He exposed homophobia despite his school doing little to prevent the harassment that followed for his whistleblowing. He graduated and majored in University Studies with focuses in Art and Anthropology at Minnesota State University Moorhead. There, he found his gender identity, his pronouns he/they, his identity under asexuality as demisexual, and defined his own brand of masculinity. Throughout high school, he published editorial cartoons at the *High Plains Reader* which helped practice his passion in cartooning and art. He now applies his skills at KPPP-LP 88.1 Radio in Fargo-Moorhead, creating the first LGBT-focused/intersectional program in the Red River valley, *Finding Me*.

# I AM ASEXUAL

---

BY **JULIE MEJIA**

I am asexual

Generally speaking, this means I don't experience sexual attraction

I see the feminine body and I feel nothing

I see the masculine body and I feel nothing

Now when I see the body of androgyny, a spark of interest ignites inside of me

But this is not attraction

This is excitement

Excitement in representation

This is because I see myself in that body

In a body that abides by no rules

In a body that encompasses everything and nothing all at the same time

This is because I am agender as well

But that's a story for another poem

I am asexual

But don't get me wrong, I can appreciate beauty

Physical beauty

But I don't crave it, I don't hunger for it

The way the stereotypical 12-year-old boy hungers for the swimsuit models in the magazines

I don't feel that

The way a closeted queer person sees their first same-sex celebrity crush on the screen of their television and realizes who they really are

I never had that

I didn't like anyone

I tried to feel something

I tried

I tried

I tried to look at them with the eyes of desire

But I felt nothing

Not attraction

Nothing

It just wasn't me  
I am asexual  
But my definition  
My experiences  
My words are my own  
Don't take them as gospel  
They're far from it  
I am asexual  
And for me it means I don't find people to be physically attractive  
For me it means I don't crave sex or physical intimacy  
For me it means that if I'm with my partner I will kiss them  
I will hold them  
I will show them the highest level of intimacy that I can  
But it's not rooted in physical attraction  
It's not rooted in how sexy I think they look in that tight skirt  
It's not because that new button-up shirt is getting me all hot and  
bothered  
It's not because they are so damn thick that I can't contain myself  
It's because that's how I show them I care  
That's how I show them love  
I'm asexual  
And I can be affectionate  
I can have sex  
...if I want to  
...or I could not  
Whatever I do that's my business

---

**Julie Mejia** is an undergraduate at UCLA with a major in Sociology and a minor in LGBT studies. Julie grew up in Pasadena in a Colombian-American household. They/them pronouns.

# THOUGHTS, MUSINGS, AND LIFE.

BY BELLA



**Bella** is a 20-year-old Mexican law student who is interested in various issues, from human rights, to fashion, makeup, music, languages, and tv series. She loves writing and sharing her thoughts with others, as well as engaging in debates and conversations of topics she's passionate about. Website: <https://isaleala.wixsite.com/itslabellastyle>

# VERBALIZING ATTRACTION

---

BY **DEEPA PRASAD**

They say, I've always loved in parts, and it has always confused me. Is it loving in parts if that's the only way you can love? If "parts" are all you will ever feel and have to offer?

Attraction isn't one single entity, although most people see it that way. There's aesthetic, sensual, romantic, and sexual attraction. It has been claimed that about one percent of the population falls on the asexual spectrum, and we only ever feel some of these types of attraction or perhaps none at all. For the rest of the world, it's all bundled together. If one type of attraction is missing, it's considered as something lesser.

You don't love like other people do. You aren't attracted to other people the same way your peers are. These words rattled around my head for years. It is true. I've only ever wanted an intellectual and emotional connection with my potential partners. The fact that they were sexual beings never crossed my mind. It was just something that never occurred to me. It was jarring. Was I supposed to think of them that way? How does one go about thinking of someone sexually, anyway?

The first boy I ever had a crush on was pretty. I liked his high cheekbones, his long lashes, and warm brown eyes. I liked the way he smiled, like he had some mischief at play. And that was it. That was the beginning and the end of my crush on him. He was pretty. I never found out more because I moved away.

I moved to a foreign land, my fourteen-year-old world turned upside down. We spoke the same language, but it didn't mean the same in our worlds. I grew, more than I could have ever imagined. I learnt new crafts I fell in love with. I soaked up the beauty of the new land and I still think that a part of me lives there.

The second time I liked someone, I fell for his brain. We shared our love for design and art. We traded secret words and secret smiles, only in the

way shy teenagers could. Intellectual love was all I could ever offer him. Perhaps it could have grown but that didn't matter. I moved away again.

I spent the next few years trying to fit into the culture I was born into. It didn't fit well, like when someone with slightly bigger feet stretches out your shoes. I gave up trying and let me just be me.

I didn't meet my third love until I was in my late teens. I loved him for his fearless attitude. We had little in common, but our ambitions held us together. We grew closer in the pursuit of our lofty dreams. But it wasn't enough. He found love in someone else, and suddenly, we weren't even friends anymore.

I did what was healthy and moved on. I focused my energy on things that gave me joy. I poured my soul into it. I poured it into my craft, my sport, and the people in my life, in hopes that it would wash away the bitter taste, and it worked.

My fourth love was by far the best. I loved him for all that he was. We shared almost everything, our deepest fears to our wildest dreams, and no judgement was ever between us. It was like slipping into your favorite old t-shirt after a long, hard day. Sadly, my love was too slow, and the moment had passed.

Discovering my asexuality was a three-year journey. A slow, three-year journey, littered with small "a-ha" moments. When I come out to people, they always ask, when did you know? The truth is that there was no single specific moment. It was this slow realization that I wasn't attracted to people in the same way. I thought about potential partners in a different way. Reflection helped understand how I was attracted to other people. My last two misunderstood romances helped me understand how my attraction is perceived.

It takes me time to realize if I'm attracted to somebody. Call it oblivious, call it indecisive, call it whatever you want but I am just not immediately attracted to people. I need more information about the person to actually be attracted to them. Even after that, I'd only seek out an

intellectual and emotional connection with them, which can be easily misconstrued as friendly. Now, I realize that I don't know what it is that indicates crossing that boundary unless I verbalize it. I know what it means to me. I can feel it in my bones. Those feelings are hard to verbalize. It sounds like I'm offering them friendship when it's much more than that. How do I explain that the "connection" they conceptualize as friendship represents a lot more to me? What does "more" mean to an asexual, anyway? I don't know. So, for now, I'm stuck between friend and friendlier.

---

**Deepa** is a grey-aromantic asexual. Born and raised in India, currently in Philadelphia. She's a UX Designer by day, an amateur wordsmith by night. Instagram: @leapingcows



2017



# ROSE GARDEN

---

BY **JULIE MEJIA**

Acrylic paint on a canvas  
6 inches by 4 inches

One of my first attempts at exploring the female body through art. The roses are meant to symbolize all the beautiful powers of vaginas, but most specifically, the female ejaculation.

**Julie Mejia** is an undergraduate at UCLA with a major in Sociology and a minor in LGBT studies. Julie grew up in Pasadena in a Colombian-American household. They/them pronouns.

# FREE TOY INCLUDED

---

BY SYDNEY KHOO

I've never eaten a Big Mac before.

My parents raised me Buddhist, and most Chinese Buddhists don't eat beef. As a child, whenever my mum took me to the McDonald's at Liverpool Westfields, she ordered a McChicken burger for herself, and a chicken nugget happy meal for me.

I never questioned whether there were other options to choose from.

...

Growing up as a second-generation Chinese Australian, I was constantly learning that *the norm* was actually just *my norm*.

When I'm four, I learn not all families eat rice at dinner. At eight, I figure out not everyone goes to Strathfield on Sundays for three hours of North Shore tutoring.

It's not until I'm ten I learn you don't *have* to learn a musical instrument – and that there are, incredibly, instruments other than piano and violin. And, of course, in my very own typical late-bloomer fashion, it's not until I get into high school that I learn you don't *have* to go to university.

Those things are optional. There are loads of people who don't do any of those things and live to tell the tale.

"Wait until university to date."

"Wait until marriage to have sex."

Turns out those are optional too.

...

I'm told the steps are as follows:

1. Find the right person
2. Fall in love
3. Get married
4. Live happily ever after

It's not that the right person is hard to find – I just don't get the point. Why do I need this 'right person'? What purpose do they serve?

It's like being told to bring a plus one to McDonald's for breakfast, except McDonald's is life and breakfast lasts *forever*.

I mean, I could, but do I really have to?

Are steps 1-3 mandatory, or are they optional?

...

I'm simultaneously a teenager and an adult when I discover the term *asexual*. The TV adaptation of Sherlock has just been released and social media is going wild with speculation over Sherlock's sexuality: Is he gay? Is he bi? Is he *ace*?

It's imperative to know. The fanfiction depends on it.

*Ace*, I learn, is short for *asexual*. It's 2010 when I google the definition. It's the same, today, as it was the day I read it:

Asexual: a person who does not experience sexual attraction

At the time, I think nothing of it. It has nothing to do with me. I experience sexual desire. I like orgasms. In fact, I *love* orgasms. Orgasms are the best invention since chicken nuggets.

...

It's not til later that I learn there's a difference between sexual desire and sexual attraction.

Sexual desire refers to the desire for sexual activity, whilst sexual attraction refers to the desire to engage in sexual activity with another person.

To put it in cruder terms:

Sexual desire = *I'm horny*.

Sexual attraction = *I'm horny for a person*.

Turns out, it's possible for asexuals to experience sexual desire. In fact, you don't even have to experience sexual attraction to have sex. It's common for asexuals to participate in sexual activity for any number of personal reasons, the same way heterosexual people might have sex for different reasons.

...

When I'm 16, I ask my mum The Question.

"Can you order me a dildo online?"

We're in the car. The only indication that she's heard my question is the car swerving slightly. I'd been planning this conversation

meticulously for months. She can't ignore me or walk away if we're in the car, and she can't yell at me if she has to focus on driving.

"Mum," I say. "Can you order me –"

"What for?" she interrupts.

I flounder. Does she want me to say it? "What do you *think*?"

"I wouldn't even know where to get one," she replies, hastily.

"I've emailed you the website," I say. "And I'll pay for it myself."

What can she say to that? I'm already not allowed to date or have sex. This is me, doing what I'm told.

"I picked one that's on sale," I sing-song. "50% off the recommended retail price. Free batteries included." If there's one way to win my mother over, it's bagging a bargain.

It must be convincing, because two weeks later, there's a brown box on my bed when I get home from school.

...

From my mid-teens to early twenties, I maintained the label *celibate*, namely because the terms *bisexual* and *pansexual* didn't feel quite right. Bisexuals experience sexual attraction to two or more genders. Pansexuals experience sexual attraction to all genders.

Wearing those labels felt like sleeping in a bed that wasn't mine. As comfortable as the mattress was, as clean as the sheets were, I woke up irritable – unrested.

In retrospect, it makes sense. After all, I don't feel sexual attraction to any gender, let alone two or more.

...

Demisexuals experience sexual attraction after forming an emotional bond with someone.

While it's technically possible I just haven't 'met the right person'; it's just as possible there is no right person because I don't experience sexual attraction, period.

It's hard to realise you don't feel something when you've never felt it.

It's like asking someone to give you a call if they see Birdie The Early Bird when they have no idea who that is.

...

My first long-term relationship is my last.

Surprisingly, sex has nothing to do with it.

It ends a little after one year but should have been ended much sooner. I hated it, being somebody's *other half*, like I'd been merged with another until we no longer resembled two individuals anymore. I was no longer my own autonomous being. It was unbearable.

If that weren't bad enough, after a lifetime of adhering to my parent's wishes, once I was free, I had to constantly consider this other person. If I wanted to bugger off to another country for two years, I'd have to ask them first. If I wanted to adopt a child, I'd have to ask them first.

I didn't wait 18 years to leave the nest, only to fly into someone else's birdcage.

...

There is an important difference between romantic attraction and sexual attraction. Unlike sexual attraction, which is the desire to have sex with other people, romantic attraction refers to the desire to be romantically involved with other people.

I'll give you an example: Grimace might be sexually attracted to all genders, but only romantically attracted to one. He might want to have sex with all genders, but only want to *date* other men.

Aromantics, or aros, are people who don't experience romantic attraction. Not all aromantics are asexual, and not all asexuals are aromantic, but there are people who are both.

You already know where this is going.

...

The day I come out to my parents, I'm living in London. I invite them to stay in the dingy flat I'm renting for two thirds of my paycheck, and take a week off work to take them site-seeing.

It doesn't go as well as I expected.

"Well..." my dad says, wiggling his moustache thoughtfully. "How do you know you don't like it if you've never tried it?"

"We're your parents; we worry about you," my mum coos, clasping her hands together. "We just don't want you to be lonely."

Suddenly, I'm a child all over again.

...

The liberation that comes with adulthood is not something I take for granted. The ability to come and go as I please, to eat what I like and do what I like – it makes me unbearably giddy when I stop to think about it.

Sometimes, after going to the gym, I drive to McDonald's and watch cartoons on my phone while eating a happy meal on my own. I post a selfie with the free toy to Twitter. It gets about five favs and only one of them will be from my mum or dad.

...

The problem with telling someone *maybe you'll like it after you try it* is you're essentially saying, "I know you better than you know yourself," which is highly unlikely.

My parents will protest this. It was probably true when I was a child, but is definitely not true now.

How can I be so sure?

Ask either of them to write a list of my top ten favourite kinks.

...

There is no one, in this entire universe, who knows you better than you know yourself.

I wish someone had told me this in my early twenties. I wish someone had bought me an Oreo Mcflurry and an apple pie and told me, "You are the only one who has lived through what you've lived through, thought your thoughts, felt your feelings. You know yourself better than anybody else," then vanished in a flurry of wizard robes and pixie dust.

...

Instead at 22, a straight boy in a snapback waggles his eyebrows at me and says, "Maybe you haven't met the right dick."

And hey, maybe it's true. Maybe this guy I've just met knows me better than I know myself.

I mean, I've spent a good portion of my life thinking I'd hate having a bird crap on my face, but maybe I haven't met the right bird.

What the hell do I know?

...

It isn't as simple as preferences. It's not as simple as, *how do you know you don't like strawberry-milkshakes if you've never tried them,*

because having sex when you don't want to is different to trying new foods. After all, how do straight people know they're straight if they've never had sex with someone of the same gender?

I propose to you, a different question:

*How do you know you wouldn't enjoy having sex with Ronald McDonald if you've never tried it?*

Before you protest, yes, there *are* some people who would *love* to have sex with Ronald McDonald. Some people would consider that an honour. That majestic clown face smiling slyly at you. Lips red as freshly-squirted tomato sauce. Sizzling kisses, hot from the grill, pressed against your neck. Smell of special sauce stimulating your senses.

Some people are really into that, and that's fine. But for some people, like me, having sex with Ronald McDonald isn't all that appealing.

Have I tried it? No.

Am I sure I wouldn't like it? Yes.

...

"You're really missing out."

I get told this a lot, and, unfortunately, not always in regard to eating beef.

In fairness, it could very well be true.

Maybe I am missing out, by not dating or doing-the-do. Maybe I've deprived myself by not having sex with Ronald McDonald. Maybe Ronald McDonald is the most incredible lay *ever* and all the nausea and discomfort I feel when other people touch me will vanish when I'm held against his sunshine yellow jumpsuit. Maybe Ronald McDonald is 'the right person' he would add a whole new level of happiness to my life that I can't achieve any other way.

Maybe in an alternate universe where I bang Ronald McDonald, lick sweaty white paint off his cheek and fist my hands in his curly red hair, I experience an emotional and sexual awakening that the gods would envy.

Maybe down the track, we get married, and have beautiful half-clown children, and keep a weekly sex schedule to work around soccer games and clown-teacher meetings, or whatever normal people do.

I think I'm okay though, not living that life.

...

"Are you ever disappointed?"

I ask my parents this every few months. As happy as I am, that insecurity is still there, lurking at the back of my mind like the Hamburglar ready to steal my chicken burger even as I'm sinking my teeth into it.

Sometimes it's over Skype or Facebook messenger, but sometimes, in a rare burst of courage, I'll ask them in person, conscious of their matching wedding bands, and the way they naturally gravitate towards each other, like it's more normal to be together than be apart.

"Disappointed about what?" dad asks.

"That I didn't become a doctor or a lawyer," I clarify. "That I'm not married with 2.5 kids, a Lassie dog, and a Volvo."

"No," mum says. "Those people are boring anyway."

"Yeah," dad agrees. "Why is everyone in a rush to settle down? You're still young. All of that can come later."

"And if it doesn't?" I ask.

"We're proud of you," mum says. "Even if you never listen to us."

"And who knows," dad adds. "The right person might come along when you least expect it."

...

It's 2017 and I'm at my local McDonald's. I've still never had sex, or a Big Mac.

The cashier calls out '*chicken nugget happy meal, apple pie and medium diet coke*'. When I go to reach for the tray, another hand brushes mine.

I've never met someone with the exact same order as me.

The moment our eyes meet, it's like every other person in the world disappears.

Just kidding.

McDonald's have automated self-service stations now and no one ends up with the same order number.

Plus, I don't make eye contact with strangers if I can help it.

...



Every week, I set aside a day where I get dressed up real nice, and take myself out. Sometimes I'll watch a bad horror movie at the cinema and go to McDonald's after, scroll through my Twitter feed, send a couple of messages to friends. If the internet is asleep, I'll listen to music and read fanfiction.

Later, after I get home, I'll spread myself out on my bed, and thank myself for the perfect date, in the best way I know how.

At least twice.

---

**sydney khoo** is a non-binary and queer writer, born in new south wales, australia to malaysian-chinese parents. though typically located crying in starbucks or tweeting in mcdonalds, they can occasionally be found posting creative essays and short stories online. follow them on twitter @sydneykerosene.

*The Asexual* relies on support through donations of \$1 or more via Patreon to fund this journal and website for ace writers, artists, and creators. Without this support, *The Asexual* would not be possible.

## **MAJOR SUPPORTERS**

(Pledging \$5 or more every month)

DAVID ALLEN	KATIEC
DAMIANNE ABEL	CHRISTIAN
MADDIE ASKEW,	DYLAN MORRIS
COURTNEY DOBSON	P4 CREATIONS
GEOFFREY PAYNE	MARY BIELENBERG
JULIE ROZEN	SEAWEED/NOX
SAMANTHA L	ALEX STABLER
ALEXANDRA BOWERS-MASON	SAM PACHICO

For a full list of *The Asexual's* many supporters as well as more information on supporting this journal and website, visit [TheAsexual.com/Donate](https://TheAsexual.com/Donate)



All works in *The Asexual* are created by writers, artists, and creators who identify under the ace umbrella. Owner retains copyright of work upon publication, but agrees to give *The Asexual* first serial/electronic rights and print rights as well as electronic and print archival rights. Owner also agrees that if the work is published subsequently, either online or in print, credit to *The Asexual* is provided. For more information visit [TheAsexual.com](http://TheAsexual.com). Cover photography by Michael Paramo.