

The

Who's



What's

& Why's



of



Drag

RAINBOW PRIDE YOUTH ALLIANCE

RPYA IS A GRASSROOTS CALIFORNIA NON-PROFIT 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION THAT WAS FOUNDED IN 2001. WE PROVIDE SUPPORT SERVICES TO LGBTQ+ YOUTH, AS WELL AS THEIR PARENTS AND CARETAKERS, INCLUDING WORKSHOPS, ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS, AND LINKAGE TO RESOURCES.

RAINBOW PRIDE YOUTH ALLIANCE

DESIGNED BY EFREN CASTRO

“INTRODUCTION” & “IMPACT OF DRAG” PIECES

WRITTEN BY EFREN CASTRO

QUESTIONS DEVELOPED BY ZEFFERIN LLAMAS, EFREN CASTRO, PICI DENNON, & DR. JOHN PAUL



INTRODUCTION

THIS PROJECT CAME IN RESPONSE TO ALL THE ANTI-DRAG HATE THAT WAS BEING SPREAD AROUND EARLIER THIS YEAR. THOUGH IT HAS NEVER BEEN AN EASY TIME TO BE A DRAG PERFORMER, THIS YEAR HAS BEEN A PARTICULARLY HARD YEAR DUE TO DAMAGING RHETORIC BEING SPREAD BY MISINFORMED OR STRAIGHT UP HATEFUL PEOPLE. THIS ZINE WAS CREATED FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO LEARN ABOUT THE ART FORM FROM THE VOICES THAT HAVE BUILT IT IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. WE WERE ABLE TO ENLIST THE HELP OF THE PEOPLE'S QUEEN JAZMYN SYMONE-ECHELON, THE QUEEN OF THE PARTY MAYHEM MILLER, AND THE KICK-ASS BEARDED BLACK ACTIVIST QUEEN AMBER ST. JAMES. THEY HAVE EACH TAKEN TIME OUT THEIR BUSY SCHEDULES TO SIT DOWN WITH US AND HAVE A CHAT ABOUT THE WHO'S, THE WHAT'S AND THE WHY'S OF DRAG! THEIR ENTIRE CONVERSATION COULDN'T FIT IN A MEASLY 16-PAGES, HOWEVER. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO READ MORE ABOUT WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY, CHECK OUT JAZMYN'S AND AMBER'S FULL INTERVIEW ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL AND A CONTINUATION OF MAYHEM'S ON OUR BLOG.

WHICH
PRONOUNS

SHOULD PEOPLE USE WITH A QUEEN?



“ **A** ”

LL I CAN DO IS RESPECT THEIR WISH AND IF I SAY IT WRONG, DON'T GET OFFENDED BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW...I DON'T THINK TO LEAD WITH, "MY NAME IS SUCH AND SUCH, WHAT ARE YOUR PRONOUNS?"...THAT'S WHY I STOPPED SAYING GIRL, I JUST SAY "HEY HUN!"OR "HI BABY!"... AND THEN WE'LL INTRODUCE OURSELVES AND THEN THEY'LL GO AROUND BY SAYING WHAT THEIR PRONOUN IS AND THEN I'LL GO WITH THAT BECAUSE I CAN'T DO ANYTHING BUT RESPECT HOW SOMEONE WANTS TO BE TREATED OR HOW SOMEONE WANTS TO IDENTIFY... BECAUSE [GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE] JUST WANTED TO BE REGULAR PEOPLE. WE DIDN'T WANT TO BE CALLED THE F-WORD... WE JUST WANTED TO BE PEOPLE!"

-JAZMYN SYMONE-ECHELON

“ **W** ”

HICHEVER THE PERSON PREFERS!

-MAYHEM MILLER

“ **N** ”

EVER FEAR TO ASK THE QUESTION BECAUSE 9 TIMES OUT OF 10, THAT PERFORMER IS GOING TO BE MORE EXCITED THAT YOU ASKED THAN THAT YOU MIS-PRONOUN-ED OR MISGENDERED [THEM] AND JUST MADE AN ASSUMPTION... WE SEE ALOT OF TRANS FOLKS THAT ARE ENGAGED IN DRAG. THIS IDEA OF PRONOUNS... SHIFTS THE CONVERSATIONS FROM MORE THAN JUST "OH, IT'S A MAN IN A DRESS AND WHEN THEY'RE NOT THEY'RE 'HE/HIM' AND WHEN THEY ARE THEY'RE 'SHE/HER'". SOMETIMES IT'S ALOT MORE COMPLICATED.

-AMBER ST. JAMES



WHY

DRAG?





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VER THE YEARS, IT HAS MEANT SO MUCH MORE TO ME BECAUSE IT HAS HELPED ME BECOME THE PERSON THAT I AM ALREADY AND IT REALLY HAS OPENED NOT ONLY MY EYES BUT PEOPLE IN MY FAMILY'S, IT HAS OPENED THEIR EYES TO THIS LIFESTYLE AND THIS THING THAT STARTED OFF AS A HOBBY THAT BECAME A FULL BLOWN CAREER... SOME OF THEM I NEVER THOUGHT THEY'D ATTEND A GAY CLUB OR A DRAG SHOW... I KNOW PERSONALLY IT REALLY DOES BRIDGE THE GAP OF WHAT THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND OF THE LIFESTYLE... REALLY YOU DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND ANYTHING, YOU JUST HAVE TO ENJOY THE PERSON THAT'S DOING IT, THAT'S ENTERTAINING YOU."

-JAZMYN SYMONE-ECHOLON



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I

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MEAN... WHY NOT DRAG? LOL
-MAYHEM MILLER



“D

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RAG HAS BEEN THIS SITE WHERE I WAS ABLE TO DO ALOT OF IDENTITY DISSOLVEMENT AND FIGURE OUT WHO I WAS, KIND OF THIS SAFE PLAYGROUND TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WORKED FOR ME AND WHAT DIDN'T , WHAT I LIKED, WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE, WHAT I WAS LIKE. "OOO GIRL, WE'RE JUST NEVER GONNA DO THAT AGAIN", WITHOUT FEELING ALL OF THIS PRESSURE OF LIKE, "OH YOU HAVE TO FIGURE IT OUT IMMEDIATELY, YOU NEED TO HAVE A LABEL, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND YOURSELF", NO! IT ALLOWED ME THIS SPACE TO REALLY DO SOME OF THIS MESSY WORK OF... "OK! MAYBE I LOOKED BUSTED THAT DAY, BUT THAT'S OKAY!"

-AMBER ST. JAMES



WHY ARE DRAG SPACES SO
SACRED?





IF YOU'RE COMING IN THERE, ALREADY EXPECTING TO HAVE A BAD TIME, YOU'RE PROBABLY GONNA HAVE A BAD TIME, YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN? ALL WE'RE DOING, WE'RE JUST DOING A JOB LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE IS DOING A JOB. OUR JOB IS TO ENTERTAIN. OUR JOB IS TO MAKE PEOPLE LAUGH AND MAKE PEOPLE SMILE. IF YOU DON'T COME IN THERE ALREADY WITH THAT MIND STATE, YOU'RE NOT GONNA GET THE FULL EXPERIENCE OF WHAT AN ACTUAL DRAG BAR CAN REALLY MEAN TO PEOPLE.

-JAZMYN SYMONE-ECHELON



DRAG SPACE ARE BEYOND SACRED. DRAG HAS PROVIDED AN ESCAPE FOR ARTISTS TO FULLY EXPLORE THEMSELVES, EXPAND CREATIVITY AND CHALLENGE GENDER NORMS. DRAG HAS ALWAYS BEEN A WAY FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE BOLDLY AND BRIGHTER THAN COULD EVER COULD IN THE "NORMAL WORLD". DRAG GIVES INDIVIDUALS THE ABILITY TO CREATE MAGIC AND EMPOWER THOSE WHO MAY HAVE FELT SLIGHTED OR UNSEEN BY SOCIETY. DRAG ALSO PROVIDES A COMMUNITY FOR NON DRAG PERFORMERS. MANY ON WATCHERS WHO SUPPORT FROM THE SEATS OR ONLINE FIND THE WORLD OF DRAG A PLACE OF COMFORT AND ENTERTAINMENT.

-MAYHEM MILLER



FOR ME, A LOT OF TIMES IN MY DRAG PERFORMANCE, NOT ONLY AM I MAKING A SOCIAL STATEMENT, BUT I'M ALSO WORKING THROUGH MY OWN EMOTIONS OF LIKE, I AM A BLACK QUEER PERSON EXISTING IN A COUNTRY THAT FUCKING HATES ME WITH LAWS THAT ARE TRYING TO KILL ME, RIGHT? SO, SOMETIMES I'M GIVING MY MOST RAW AND AUTHENTIC AND VULNERABLE SELF IN THE MIDDLE OF A PERFORMNACE. SO WHAT DOES THAT THEN FEEL LIKE WHEN SOMEONE THEN COMES UP TO TELL ME, "OH, THAT WAS CUTE BUT LIKE, I REALLY WISH THAT YOU WOULD'VE JUST DONE A BRITNEY SPEARS NUMBER. OH, HOW COME YOUR GARMENT WASN'T MORE SPARKLY." LIKE, THAT REALLY WASN'T THE POINT.

-AMBER ST. JAMES





**WHAT CAN DRAG
ACHIEVE?**



I KNOW WHAT IT HAS DONE FOR ME... WE BRING THE JOY. WE'RE LIKE THE BEYONCE'S AND THE TAYLOR SWIFT'S AND THE JANET JACKSON'S AND THE DRAG KINGS. WE'RE THOSE KIND OF CELEBRITIES TO THESE PEOPLE OR WE'RE PROBABLY THE CLOSEST THING THEY'LL GET TO THAT CELEBRITY... WE'RE A HUGE HUGE PART OF THE COLLECTIVE BECAUSE EVERYBODY GOES TO A DRAG SHOW: GAY, LESBIANS, NON-BINARIES. THEY ALL COMMUNE AT THE SAME PLACE.

-JAZMYN SYMONE-EHELON

I BELIEVE DRAG HAS ALREADY DONE THAT. WE HAVE FOUGHT AND TAUGHT FOR DECADES AND HAVE HELPED BRING VIABILITY AND CHANGE JUST BY BEING WHO WE ARE LOUDLY AND BOLDLY.

-MAYHEM MILLER

D RAG HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE MINDS, HEARTS, AND FUTURES. RIGHT, AND I FEEL LIKE, NOW MORE THAN EVER (WHICH I KNOW WE HEAR ALL THE TIME). TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOREVER. WE NEED THAT. WE NEED THIS WORLD TO CHANGE AND DRAG CAN BE A CATALYST TO BRING ABOUT THAT.

-AMBER ST. JAMES





HOW DO YOU HANDLE

CRITICISM?



I FEEL LIKE IT'S A WASTE OF TIME AND MENTAL CAPACITY FOR PEOPLE TO COME AND PROTEST SOMETHING THAT IS NOT HURTING ANYBODY. DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN? WE'RE NOT HURTING ANYBODY AND IF WE ARE, WE AREN'T HURTING YOU ON PURPOSE. IF WE'RE HURTING YOU, THAT'S BECAUSE YOU CAME HERE WITH THE INTENT TO BE HURT. YOU CAME HERE WITH THE INTENT TO BE ANGRY. YOU DIDN'T COME HERE TO HAVE FUN AND CELEBRATE WITH US... I KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON AND THANKFULLY I HAVE NOT COME INTO PERSONAL VIEW OF IPROTESTORSI BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW HOW I WOULD ACTUALLY REACT... IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE IDRAGI ON TV, DON'T TURN TO MTV. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THESE THINGS. WE AREN'T FORCING IT DOWN YOUR THROAT.

-JAZMYN SYMONE-ECHELON



I DON'T DEAL WITH IT. IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM TO CARE WHAT STRANGER THINK OF ME. I KNOW WHO I AM AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS AT THE END OF THE DAY. WASTING TIME TRYING PLEASE EVERYONE IS EXACTLY THAT...A WASTE OF TIME BECAUSE YOU WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH. DO ENOUGH. OR SAY ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE. I FOCUS ON JUST BEING THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF AND DO WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY. IF PEOPLE CAN VIBE WITH ME AT MY FREQUENCY, GREAT! IF NOT, YOU'RE WELCOME TO CHANGE THE CHANNEL.

-MAYHEM MILLER



When asked, How do you take care of yourself?



ONE, I TRY TO INSTITUTE A LOT MORE NAPS. AS A BLACK QUEER PERSON EXISTING IN THE WORLD, IT IS CONSTANTLY A STATE OF RAGE BUT ALSO CONSTANTLY A STATE OF TRYING TO FIND THOSE MOMENTS OF JOY, RIGHT, AND EVEN SOME GIANT LIKE, "OH MY GOD, I JUST WON A MILLION DOLLARS!" RIGHT, JUST ACKNOWLEDGE LIKE, "OH MY GOD, I HAD 5 MINUTES TODAY WHERE I JUST GOT TO SIT IN THE SUN AND JUST BE WITH MYSELF AND HAVE PEACE, RIGHT, I THINK BEING ABLE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT REST COMES IN MANY WAYS... AND TRYING TO HONOR THAT AND NOT TRYING TO BELITTLE THAT.

-AMBER ST. JAMES



THE IMPACT OF DRAG ON POP CULTURE HAS NEVER BEEN MORE PREVELANT THAN IT IS TODAY. THANKS TO POPULAR TV SHOWS LIKE RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE, THE BOULET BROTHER'S DRAGULA, AND CAMP WANAKIKI, THE ARTFORM HAS TAKEN CENTER STAGE IN THE QUEER LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF MODERN TIMES.

ONE PRIME EXAMPLE FROM EARLIER THIS YEAR WAS DRAG RACE'S SEASON 16 CONTESTANT POPPY'S BIG SHOWING AT THE OSCARS. HER LORD OF THE RINGS-INSPIRED LOOK WENT MEGA VIRAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND CAUGHT THE ATTENTION

OF MAJOR PUBLICATIONS SUCH AS CNN, BUISNESS INSIDER, AND ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT! FOR A QUEEN THAT WENT HOME FAR TOO SOON IN THE DRAG COMPETITION SHOW, SHE SURE MADE A HUGE SPLASH! WITHIN THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTH'S, WE HAVE SEEN THE RISE OF THE MIDWESTERN QUEER POP PRINCESS CHAPPELL ROAN. HER CAREER SKYROCKETED AFTER HER COACHELLA PERFORMANCE IN WHICH SHE QUOTED DRAG RACE WINNER AND DRAG LEGEND SASHA COLBY WHEN SHE SAID "I AM YOUR FAVORITE ARTIST'S FAVORITE ARTIST".



THIS SOUND CIRCULATED TIKTOK FOR WEEKS AND HAS HELPED IN SPREADING HER NAME! SHE HAS CREDITED DRAG PERFORMERS FOR BEING A MAJOR INSPIRATION FOR HER AESTHETIC. SHE HAS EVEN HIRES LOCAL DRAG PERFORMERS FROM EACH CITY SHE VISITS TO OPEN FOR HER IN CELEBRATION OF THE ARTFORM. DRAG HAS NOT ONLY INFLUENCED MODERN DAY POP CULTURE. IN THE LATE 90'S DIVINE SERVED AS AN INSPIRATION FOR DISNEY IN CREATING URSULA, THE VILLAN FROM "THE LITTLE MERMAID"
THOUGH THE ART FORM HAS PEAKS AND

VALLEYS IN IT'S PREVALENCE IN POP CULTURE. IT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS ALWAYS HAD AN IRON GRIP IN THE MEDIA THAT WE CONSUME. MANY PEOPLE CLAIM THAT DRAG IS TRYING TO FORCE ITSELF DOWN PEOPLE'S THROATS WHEN THAT IS NOT TRUE AT ALL. DRAG, LIKE ANY ART FORM, PERMEATES THE MEDIA WE CONSUME BECAUSE IT INFLUENTIAL. DRAG ISN'T SOMETHING THAT JUST BECAME POPULAR, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN HERE AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO LIVE ON IN MANY DIFFERENT FORMS!



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