

GENDER JUSTICE LEAGUE

CU BOULDER WOMEN & GENDER STUDIES

Volume 4, Issue 2

May 2013

The Gender Justice League is a Women and Gender Studies student organization. We are a small group of majors and minors committed to social justice not only in theory but in practice. Our goal is not only to spread awareness, but also to confront serious issues on campus and in the community.

This spring the GJL focused primarily on the issue of gender-based violence. We held a Conversation at the Cottage on the reauthorization of VAWA. We helped organize the 3rd annual Denim Days on CU Boulder's campus. With the help of the Office of Victims Assistance and Counseling and Psychological Services we held a Relationship Check-up, hosted presentations on "How to Help a Survivor" and "What is Gender Violence Anyways?" and organized the anti-violence, anti-victim blaming Denim Display at the Cottage.

But combating gender-based violence is not the only issues we're concerned with. In this issue you will find the many different causes our members are passionate about. Read about the importance of sex positivity and reproductive rights. Check out critical perspectives on Boy Scouts of America Policy and the marketing of "men's make-up." Learn About an important campus event, the TRANSforming Gender Symposium

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Gender Justice Leaguers Tessa, Sophia, and Cameron standing in front of the Denim Day display at the Cottage.

Denim Days all Day, Every Day: How to Combat Rape Culture 24/7-365 Sophia Surage

This year, the Gender Justice League sponsored the 3rd Annual Denim Days. Denim Days is a part of a transnational sexual violence prevention and education campaign that was inspired by a case in Italy. In the late 1990s, an 18 year old girl was raped by her 45 year old driving instructor, but his conviction was overturned when the Italian High Court decided that "because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them and by removing the jeans it was no longer rape but consensual sex." In protest, the women of the Italian Parliament responded by wearing jeans and the idea of Denim Days was born, spreading to address rape culture around the world. While events like Denim Days have been an important part raising awareness, fighting rape culture is a 24-7-365 job. *(continued page 2)*

Rape culture is not limited to certain societies. It is any culture that condones, celebrates, silences, and/or tolerates sexual violence. It coincides with misogynist, homophobic, and victim blaming attitudes. Combating rape culture requires confronting oppressive attitudes, deconstructing privilege, reimagining masculinity, and debunking rape myths. It requires shifting the narratives surrounding rape from those that focus on the behavior of the victim as causing or facilitating rape, to narratives that focus on the behavior of the person perpetuating rape. Finally, ending rape requires a multi-faceted and radically humanist approach that critically grapples with and promotes comprehensive sex education, sex positivity, sexual diversity, as well as emphasizing and prioritizing consent. Clearly, ending rape culture is a big job but here are some ways that anyone can take a stance against rape culture when it presents itself in some of its most common and predictable forms.

Expand your understanding of what constitutes sexual assault: A common rape myth is the idea that rape only happens between a woman and a strange man, in an isolated poorly lit area. In actuality, people who know the victim such as intimate partners, relatives, co-workers, friends, and other trusted acquaintances perpetrate the majority of sexual violence. Debunking this rape myth is important because it debunks arguments that women should stay in the house at night, be afraid to be in public and private spaces, and monitor their own behavior constantly to prevent rape. Another common rape myth is that only females experience sexual assault. Males experience sexual violence too, often in the form of child sexual assault but also by women and other men. Debunking this myth helps combat the silencing of male victims and helps frame sexual violence as a human rights issue rather than an issue that only pertains to women, which implies that women are solely responsible for fixing it. The myth that rape and sexual assault only occur between men and women also erases many rape experiences, including sexual violence experienced in queer same sex spaces. When rape is presented as only “legitimate” if it involves forceful penile-vaginal penetration, our society fails to acknowledge oral rape, anal rape, rape using a foreign object, and any rape or sexual violence that occurs in the absence of a penis.

Reject Rape as Entertainment. The sensationalization and problematic representations of rape in popular culture help perpetuates rape culture. If you are at the movie theatre and are confronted with a graphic, voyeuristic, sexualized, rape scene, you have options. Walk out of the theatre and speak with a manager. Let them know that films depicting rape (especially in sexualized and unnecessarily graphic ways) adds to the myths, misconceptions, and many problematic attitudes surrounding rape and a disregard for women’s humanity. Get your money back and/or switch movies. Or, if you are feeling particularly bold consider following up by writing a letter to the theatre about how movies

featuring graphic rape scenes are not acceptable entertainment and how the theatre may want to consider taking a stance against rape culture.

Stop Slut Shaming and Victim Blaming: In college settings and in certain social circles it may be common to hear people calling women “sluts” and also expressing demeaning attitudes towards women who engage in certain sexual activities. Slut shaming is a foot soldier for rape culture and can take on many different forms. Slut shaming is inextricable from victim blaming and involve attaching guilt, shame, and blame to people, particularly women for engaging in sex and sexual acts. These rape culture attitudes may be expressed through comments such as: “She’s asking for it” “She looks like a slut” “Women who do *that* are B’s and H’s” “She deserves it” “She’s asking for attention by dressing sexy”...etc. If you feel like you can voice your opinion on the matter try aligning yourself with the people who are being targeting by the slut shaming as a way of putting a face to the myth/stigma. Ex: “Really? Because I like that kind of sex” or “I don’t think anyone is a ‘slut’.” (This is a bold move but it could potentially make them reconsider how they are talking about sex and women.) Or, tell your friends straight up that talking about people in that way is more of a reflection of themselves than of others. Remind them that anyone can be a victim of sexual assault (including men, male-bodied individuals, sex workers, women who avoid all of the behaviors that are perceived to be “reckless” and children, etc.). Rape is not a result of failing to conduct oneself properly, but is the result of sexism, entitlement, and finally the decisions and actions made by the person who is perpetrating rape and sexual violence. Finally, no matter how drunk and/or naked someone is, they are not “asking for it”. Consent is not determined by clothing or someone’s lack of ability to give or deny verbal consent.

If you feel really uncomfortable or if the people you are with are completely unreceptive to your ideas and attempts to reconstruct the conversation, then it is okay to remove yourself from the situation. Sometimes making the point of disengaging can be impactful in letting others know that their words and actions are harmful and ignorant. Even if they don’t think about it more, at least you can spend your valuable time enjoying life and ending rape culture in more productive ways.

Although this brief article cannot begin to cover the many layers and interconnected social, political, and symbolic forces that shape rape culture, it hopefully can serve as a basic toolkit for beginning dialogues and confronting awkward, horrible, and uncomfortable, rape culture moments. Thus this article closes in gratitude for anyone’s willingness and bravery to take on rape culture, and also in hope that each little intention we make towards a new outlook on sexual violence takes us a little closer to fostering communities that properly address sexual violence and support survivors.

How to Help a Survivor

Tessa Williams

Victim-blaming is a serious problem and an enormous contributor to the perpetuation of rape culture. Unfortunately rape and sexual assault occur at an alarming rate, and is an issue that many people, and particularly college students, deal with. In these instances it is most likely that survivors seek the support of friends and family members. It is also vital to acknowledge that the way survivors are received when disclosing their experience to someone is a critical factor in influencing the course that their healing process takes. As a part of our Denim Days event series, the Gender Justice League included a session from the Office of Victims Assistance (OVA), called "How to Help a Friend", which discussed some of the ways that we may work to combat the victim-blaming component of rape culture by supporting our friends and loved-ones, should they be affected by sexual assault.

Knowing how to react when someone comes to you after experiencing an assault can be difficult. In working to help those who may serve as part of crucial support systems and networks for survivors, OVA has compiled a list of ways that we may support our friends and loved ones on their journey of healing, based on the experiences of people who have had similar experiences and the things they found to be most helpful. It is important to note, that you are not expected to be an expert and should always check in with yourself to determine which ways you are comfortable being involved. There are a variety of ways you can express your support for someone and even little things can make a big

RESOURCES

Office of Victims Assistance (OVA)

Location: Center for Community, Room S440

Telephone: 303-492-8855

Emergency Cell Phone: 303-818-0590

Hours: Monday-Friday 8-5

<http://cuvictimassistance.com/>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Location: Center for Community, Room S440

Telephone: 303-492-6766

Regular Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM - 5:30 PM

Walk-In Hours: Monday-Friday, 10 AM - 4 PM

<https://counseling.colorado.edu/>

difference. This list is not exhaustive but is a tool to help in the process of supporting and advocating for the agency and convalescence of a friend or loved one as they work to sort through what works best for them in their healing and recovery.

Supportive Responses:

- Check on the safety first. This includes the safety of the survivor as well as others who may be involved and yourself.
- Follow their lead
- Be an active, empathetic listener
- Explore options and choices
- Let them decide what is best for them
- Summarize what you hear
- Validate their feelings
- Call on resources and/or help them get connected with those resources
- Be clued in to non-verbal cues
- Believe in the possibility of healing
- Share options and resources
- Follow up
- Check in on boundaries

The following are some local resources that may be helpful to recommend to friends as options for seeking assistance. In addition to these, the Office of Victims Assistance is a great place to get more information on other organizations that could be helpful to provide someone with more choices and information or to provide you with support and advice on how to help someone who has survived sexual assault.

Moving to End Sexual Assault (MESA)

24-Hour Hotline: 303-443-7300

Administrative Office: 303-443-0400

Office: 2336 Canyon Blvd, Suite 103

Boulder, CO 80302

<http://www.movingtoendsexualassault.org/>

Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence (SPAN)

24-Hour Hotline: 303-444-2424

Telephone: 303-449-8623

<http://www.safehousealliance.org/>

Against Anti-Violence? The Reauthorization of VAWA

Cece Clarridge

If you're like me, then you might have been wondering why 22 senators did NOT vote yes for the Violence Against Women Act which managed to pass by a margin of 27 votes in February's Senate hearing. According to the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, domestic violence causes 3 deaths a day to women, and 1 in 4 women have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner. So passing a measure that protects women from violence seems like a no brainer, right? The Gender Justice League's first Conversation at the Cottage this semester sought to answer this question and many more as our panelists went into the gritty details of the newly revised Violence Against Women Act.

It turns out that some Senators were opposed to VAWA because it added new provisions that were deemed unacceptable by some congressman. In particular, opposition was raised against expanding protections to Native American women on tribal lands, to the LGBT community, and to "undocumented" migrant women. Below are some of the key provisions, questions, and thoughts that were discussed at length in the Conversation and the Media:

34% of Native American women will be raped in their lifetimes (this is twice the national average for non-Native women), and 39% will fall victim of domestic violence, and the rate of murder for Native women is ten times the national average (RAINN). Before the addition of the new provisions to VAWA, tribal courts lacked the jurisdiction to prosecute non-Native men — even when these men had committed crimes on tribal land — allowing them to sexually assault Native women with impunity. VAWA's new provisions give tribal courts jurisdiction over cases involving domestic violence, dating violence, and violations of protection orders — all within reservation boundaries (NCDSV).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT). New provisions to the bill include protections for LGBT victims from discrimination and give service providers new tools and access to resources to make their services more accessible to all victims (NCDSV). The main opposition to this provision focuses on leaving this portion out because it denies grant money to organizations that discriminate against LGBT victims of domestic violence.



Why are female immigrants uniquely vulnerable to exploitation? Rosie Hidalgo of the National Latino Network suggests that female immigrants are more likely to work in the informal labor market as domestic workers and caretakers, and are less able to assert their rights or to be protected under current law. The abusers of undocumented immigrants often exploit the victims' immigration status, leaving the victim afraid to seek services or report the abuse to law enforcement. As a result, victims often fear assisting with the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. The new provisions in VAWA enhance safety for victims and their children and provide an important tool for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute crimes.

The objection to these more inclusive provisions demonstrates that there is still a narrow understanding of who constitutes a sympathetic victim in cases of gender-based violence and that there is still a long way toward combating the attitudes that are within our society. Despite the opposition to VAWA these provisions passed, much to the satisfaction of the Gender Justice League. But while the reauthorization of VAWA is a major step forward, there is always work to be done toward social justice surrounding violence, so keep your eyes open for new legislation, and better yet, join the ranks of activists working toward change!

For more information about VAWA see:
<http://4vawa.org/pages/vawa-fact-sheets>

Politics, Pleasure and Positivity: Building Our Own Sexual Boundaries

Cassy Gonzalez

The end of April signals two occasions. One, the end of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, in which organizations and student groups plan various events, presentations, etc., spread anti-sexual assault and victim-blaming messages. The second is the Women's Resource Center's *Sexpressions* performance celebrating sex positivity at the end of this anti-sexual violence climate. It is important to remember that combating sexual violence also means starting discussions on healthy, desirable sexuality and those discussions can be fun, and even silly. The *Sexpressions* show was a lot of fun, particularly a piece of performance art put on by a MFA candidate, but one part of the evening in particular stuck with me. At one point in the show, the two main hosts asked members of the audience to volunteer in a question-and-answer section for prizes (one of which was a Bullet vibrator) and the question was particularly powerful: When do you feel sexiest?

That answer for me has two answers; when I am laughing and when I am reading a well-written and absorbing book. The logic behind both is the same: I am completely at peace with myself and the world in those moments and am receptive to all sensations, welcoming even. In those moments I am just "Cassy" without all the bullcrap and politics dictating my body in its various sexist, racist, heteronormative manifestations. What matters in those moments is making myself happy and enjoying sensations: the rumble of my chest as I laugh, the feel of the book pages on my fingers...and the satisfaction of the giant "Sigh" at the end of the book or exhausting laugh.

Unfortunately outside of those moments, the social policing of bodies and sexual desires pressures us all to conform or feel ashamed in some way of our physicality or sexual preferences. And the extreme "isms" that oppress our individual sexualities also breeds a sexual violence-friendly social landscape that we are expected to submit to and sometimes glorify. April is a month to say "No!" and rebel this environment, as well as with everyday courageous acts done by singular and group activists. One way we can all take part in this anti-violence work is discovering our own sex positivity and embracing it, celebrating it.

But to discover our sex positivity we must first dismantle the construction of all bodies—male, female, Black, White, Asian, Cisgender, Gender-

Queer, what have you—and unlearn all the lies and patriarchal notions of what is normatively considered "pleasure" and what sexual desires are supposed to *be* instead of what they *are*. Which I believe is whatever gives orgasms and arousal. It can be some BDSM play, so-called "Vanilla" play, or some self-indulgence, there is no "right" way to create and embrace our sexual selves. It is an individual experience, which is why it is difficult to do; it is stressful discovering ourselves and desires when we are constantly being degraded and policed by a larger and more public force.

But as this semester draws to its natural end and summer approaches, I hope all of us will be asked, "When do you feel sexiest?" And I hope the answer will be purely individualistic without the lies and domination (unless you are into that, in which case have fun!) the current socio-political landscape utilizes to constrain our sexuality. Sexuality—desire, arousal, attraction and the act itself—is often symbolically represented by fire; it needs just one spark and can become a hot and uncontrollable force once unleashed. And this burning, intense sensation needs to be experienced by us all. We deserve it. So go light your embers and let roar.

PRO CHOICE AND UNAPOLOGETIC

Meagie Maddock

Recently, Planned Parenthood Federation of America made the decision to drop the label "Pro-Choice." They did so in response to a survey that showed fewer people are identifying with the label. This is not to say more people are identifying as pro-life, but rather suggests that reproductive justice and freedom and the way Americans view abortion cannot be confined to merely a label.

Now, usually, I'm all for breaking binaries, but in this case, it is my opinion that you are either pro choice or you're not. The fact that people are moving away from the pro choice label is troublesome to me, even though there has not been an increase in people who identify as pro life. It worries me because it means that the anti choice movement has won an important battle in the War on Women: they have convinced most of America that being pro choice is a bad thing, even if they have failed to convince America that abortion should be illegal. What America needs to understand is that being pro choice doesn't necessarily mean you would get an abortion if faced with the decision, nor does it necessarily mean you think other people should get abortions when faced with un-

planned pregnancies. It means, simply, that you unapologetically support and advocate for any person's rights to: 1. determine what they do with their body; 2. access quality reproductive health care; and 3. access comprehensive sexual education. I'll say it again: either you're pro choice, or you're not.

The frustrated sigh inducing and all-too-often used phrase "I'm not a feminist, but..." is paralleled by the equally frustrating "I'm not pro choice, but..." phrase. Amanda Marcotte exposes the link between the two in an article on Slate:

Abortion rights are our culture's shorthand for attitudes about sexuality and women's roles, which Americans are ever conflicted about. When you mention abortion to people, it brings up an overload of fears and desires and expectations around sex and gender roles, and in that mish-mash, getting clear thinking about health care policy is hard to do.

The stigma that we-yes, even those of us who are staunchly pro choice-have against abortion was strategically, meticulously, and maliciously created by the anti choice movement. And when I say anti choice, I do not mean pro life. By anti choice, I mean the obnoxious people that stand outside your local Planned Parenthood with bloodied dolls and signs depicting mangled and gruesome babies, yelling things like "you will burn in hell for this" to anyone walking in the building. Anti choicers are the ones trying to pass Personhood amendments throughout the US, banning birth control and *in vitro* fertilization along the way. They promote abstinence only education, and mistakenly call emergency contraception the abortion/murder pill. *These* are the people who have convinced even those of us who are pro choice that abortion is inherently bad, and this is why I believe that now, more than ever, we need to embrace the pro choice label and defy the stigma created by the anti choice movement.

In the fight for reproductive justice, we must not shy away from indentifying as pro choice. This, in my eyes, would let the anti choice movement win the battle, while we're fighting like hell to win the war. If we let them convince America that being pro choice is inherently bad, it will make it that much easier for them to restrict access to reproductive healthcare for millions of people. Rather than rejecting the label, we should wholeheartedly and unapologetically embrace it while simultaneously fighting the stigmas and myths surrounding abortion that have seeped into our seemingly pro choice ideologies.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

Shannie Ebrahimian

When I first heard that the Boy Scouts of America executive committee submitted a proposal to end the ban on openly gay members, I became filled with a certain kind of joy; the kind where you believe our society is capable of progress. But then I kept reading, and my joy fled: the ban would remain in effect for openly gay leaders. The exclusion of gay leaders maintains the organization's traditionally discriminatory attitude towards homosexuals by perpetuating several problematic and intrinsically homophobic stereotypes.

The proposed policy would allow members of the Boy Scouts to "be gay" until they are legal adults. Upon reaching age eighteen, if an eagle scout wishes to participate as a leader, he is no longer allowed to openly express his sexuality. Locking gay leaders back in the closet perpetuates a homophobic posture towards the leadership capabilities of gay men and women. This type of heteronormative infrastructure can be very damaging for all participating children who are developing their world views and, more specifically, for young gay scouts who are essentially being told by an organization teaching leadership that their sexual orientation precludes them from becoming leaders.

Keeping in mind the history of pedophilia in the Boys Scouts, the policy also implies gay leaders are inherently dangerous towards the physical bodies of children. The organization feels they are protecting young boys from potential predators. In reality, those who identify as heterosexual have shown themselves to be perpetrators of child abuse as well. The decision makers of the Boy Scouts must establish a more inclusive and effective way of fostering an organization free of child abuse. At the end of the day, discriminatory policies such as this one against homosexuality are certainly not deterring abuse within organization.

The proposal, originally submitted on April 19, 2013, will be up for a vote by 1,400 members of the national council on May 20. The problematic nature of the proposal has sparked major debate in mainstream media and a myriad of arguments have been made both for and against the proposition. For example, an anti-gay scout leader, John Stemberger, interviewed on CNN, adamantly believes this policy will "destroy scouting," not only because there will be massive exodus of anti-gay families but mainly because a large amount of the chapters are sponsored by religious

organizations that continue to advocate homosexuality as a sin. Although ironically, not even ten days after the announcement, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church, endorsed the policy change. Because the Mormon Church sponsors more chapters than any other religious denomination, the Boy Scouts of America were extremely pleased with receiving their support. Notably, in regards to social change within conservative communities, this is arguably the Mormon Church's most compassionate and tolerant gesture towards the LGBTQ community to date.

The proposal mirrors the recent study conducted by the BSA on scouts' and leaders' opinions of the ban. It became obvious to the executive committee that many youths were in favor of removing the ban while adults maintained their support. Allowing gay scouts can ultimately be seen as a compromise to this generational battle.

Eventually, time may solve this issue. The young scouts of today will grow up, and hopefully keep their inclusive attitudes with them as they replace those currently in power. But for now, as a feminist with the idealistic goal of ending heteronormative standards in all institutions, the Boy Scout's incremental approach to social change still falls short of a qualified success for the national LGBTQ movement.

Masking Masculinity

Cameron Elder

In fear of smearing on a feminine facade, men resist the pervasive beauty marketing ploys, so as to not shroud their sense of masculinity. However, department stores and cosmetics companies are working to change this by presenting the products in stores in both segregated and gendered ways, hoping for men to still be attracted to grooming and cosmetic products. Perhaps then the man purchasing "tinted moisturizer" may be fooled into buying the beauty myth women are affected by, situating self-enhancement products as an imperative in order to entice potential partners.

Companies (like Macy's, CVS, or Ulta) have altered their stores in order to accommodate men and give us a section that is "masculine," resisting feminine naming, decoration, and overall feel. For example, Jezebel writer, Erin Gloria Ryan writes, "Stores are also working to welcome men (and their money) into the pink aisle by calling it something with the word "MAN" in it, decorating it like an old timey barber shop, and making everything look like it was hewn from a single log." Here, as Ryan satirically puts it,

men have found aesthetic enhancing products in sections designated for men, away from the women's as an independent product dissimilar to women's and made unique for the male sex. In this way, men can still capture masculinity, so pride does not also falter.

How does gender equality surrender to patriarchy in this scenario? Personally, I find gender equality to mean proving more similarities between the sexes, rather than dividing them, and designating one kind of product for one sex, and vice versa. The division still seems to essentialize each section for its appropriate consumers; therein, reaffirming the gender binary. America's capitalist society will do anything to sell a product; destigmatizing men's makeup lines by creating a cosmetic world that is separate, encapsulating rather than challenging patriarchy. "Men's makeup," should have a place in the same aisle as women's. C'mon... "tinted moisturizer"? Let's stop pretending and let the world know already...men wear makeup too, no matter what you want to call it.

Sales of "made-for-men" makeup lines continue to rise, as explained by Lauren Sherman, contributor to *Forbes* magazine. In 2006, \$4.8 million was spent on male grooming products in the U.S., a 7% increase over the year before and a 42% increase from 2001. Erin Gloria Ryan notes that since then, men's grooming products have risen to an estimated 2.2 billion annually, and are predicted to rise to 3.6 billion by 2016. From these statistics, it is evident that more men are embracing grooming products and slowly incorporating more (other than the bare essentials) into their daily regimens. With this, inherent sexism is evident for companies having made divisions and redefined the artistic practice of doing one's makeup as "masculine" and independent from women's. Enforced gender roles help to police this issue by maintaining a heterosexist and patriarchal vision for what man's "tinted moisturizers", "man powders", and bronzers ought to look like, be named, or be situated as within department stores. This effort proves how marketing companies have extended their reach to heterosexual men, clearing the stigma by making men who wear makeup less queer and or "feminine."

Should it matter who chooses to wear products that help present us in our best light? My answer is no. While, I recognize that there are plenty of people that do not wear makeup or feel that it is necessary, there are a number of us who like the way it looks on us, every day or on special occasion. An inclusive and more equitable cosmetic aisle would be a good start. Rather than men nagging women about spending too

much time getting ready, they could bond while getting ready together!

Transforming Gender

Ann Price

The TRANSforming Gender Symposium is an event on the CU campus that has been held annually since 2006. The symposium is hosted by the GLBTQ Resource Center and Women and Gender Studies, and covers current discussions surrounding activism and issues around transgender, gender-queer and intersex identities at both national and local levels. This year, the symposium covered a wide number of topics, and hosted keynote speakers Ryka Aoki, JAC Springer, and Eli Clare, who spoke both to their own experiences surrounding personal identity, and to their experiences in activism surrounding gender identity as a whole.

Eli Clare, a well-known queer theorist, talked about the intersections of queerness and disability, suggesting that current efforts to enact lasting change within existing systems are inherently flawed so long as the experiences of people with disabilities and other marginalized identities are not at the very center of activism. Clare suggested that trying to reform flawed systems was like living in a house on fire. He said that rather than trying to put out the flames with everyone still inside, it was important to “get everyone out of the house, and then *burn the house down*.” Clare also spoke to the importance of making one’s body home, and talked about experiences with shame as being both pivotal and a place of survival.

JAC Springer spoke to his personal experiences within the rapid shifts in understandings of gender, and to the terminology that often goes out of date in order to better reflect those changes. He also brought up the ways in which individuals who either hold identities that fit within this spectrum or who are trying to become a part of the community of activism focused around this sector of identity often find identity-based communities that center around current language inaccessible, as there is often such careful policing of language by those who are in the community in order to protect marginalized identities and legitimize them on an academic level. These careful constructions of language mean that those who are not invested in academia can have a difficult time accessing community and articulating their experiences—or

trying to communicate their experiences and also understand the experiences of others in order to build that community.

Ryka Aoki spoke to her experiences trying to bridge identity and queer activism with the importance of maintaining familial connections. She suggested that it was okay to put down the activism for a while in order to better connect with your family, and that family can understand you and provide support for you in a way that activist communities don’t necessarily cover, especially within other aspects of identity like nationality and other shared experience. She suggested that laughing at jokes you would ordinarily find offensive might be okay every once in a while, especially as they allow you to connect with your family, and that not constantly being on the defensive around your family doesn’t mean you are letting the queer community of activists down: rather, you are taking care of yourself, and maintaining other relationships, both of which she suggested are essential. Aoki also talked about her recently published book, which is created entirely by non-cis individuals, including cover art by a genderqueer person and a trans publisher.

Many other conversations happened, including panels on academic papers written by individuals from the Denver and Boulder area. The Office of Victim Assistance talked about their most recent work, including research on transgender survivors of sexual assault in Boulder and the accessibility of sexual assault services to those trans survivors. OVA also brought in someone from the Colorado Anti Violence Project and individuals involved in other advocacy groups to talk about local resources. The TRANSforming Gender Symposium also hosted caucuses for transgender and genderqueer people and partners of transgender people, as well as a discussion on allyship.

For more information on the TRANSforming Gender Symposium, please check out the GLBTQ Resource Center’s website at:
www.colorado.edu/GLBTQRC/

