As Queers of Color, we are forced to straddle a history of division. Historically speaking, the struggle for racial equality has been heterosexist in its vision, and the queer liberation movement has been predominantly Euro-centric in its scope. As people who struggle with our own questions of identity, we are also burdened by the need to find a tenuous balance between groups that have traditionally displayed open hostility towards each other, framing their struggles as entirely separate, completely independent missions.

We reject such a view. A historical perspective shows that the highly complex processes that constructed the identities of people of color as the villified Other also resulted in an often unspoken consequence: heterosexism. Men of color have been constructed as maniacal sexual perverts, women of color as exotic sexual objects, white women as passive sexual victims, and white men as virile sexual protectors.

While the creation of racialized gender stereotypes are obvious, what is not so obvious is the normalization of sexuality along lines of race and gender. From this normalization results compulsory heterosexuality, and its flip-side, homophobia. During the period of European imperialism that heralded the beginning of modern racism, the considerable number of institutions and cultural practices of same-sex sexual behavior in colonialized societies were destroyed by an imposed compulsory heterosexuality.

Clearly the roots of racism and heterosexism are not independent, but rather intimately connected. Any recognition of racism must necessarily recognize sexism and homophobia at the same time. Any liberation movement that does not do so denies the complexity of its oppression, and is doomed to failure in its struggle against the oppression as a result.

But current conventional wisdom insists that the struggles against various oppressions must not be combined. As a result, Queers of Color are often marginalized within groups that are already marginalized. We are forced to fight racism and homophobia in society at large, as well as racism within the queer community, and homophobia within communities of color. We must face a constant onslaught of multiple oppressions, coming from all directions at once. What is lacking, and blatantly so, is a safe space in the University community where Queers of Color are marginalized no further, and are free to discuss and address issues and concerns that are unique to our situation.

But at the same time, we also recognize the importance of linking oppressions. From our perspective, we see, on a day to day basis, the intersections of racism and homophobia, as well as their connections with sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination. We also recognize the importance of collective action and struggle, and are committed to such strategies in combating and destroying institutionalized racism and heterosexism, as well as other forms of oppression.

As a result, Queers of Color is committed to an organization that does not discriminate on any basis, especially race and sexual preference. We welcome anyone and everyone who is committed to addressing issues and concerns that affect many people, but Queers of Color in particular. We claim unity with all organizations that are committed to fighting racism and homophobia. And we look forward to the day when society is truly and totally egalitarian.

In the tradition of the Combahee River Collective, and in the footsteps of Queers of Color like James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga and Jewel Gomez, and Nick Deocampo, we rightfully claim our place.

- April 17, 1995

*Proud Colors was started as Queers of Color
Proud Colors is a group on Columbia University’s campus for and about people. The overall objective of Proud Colors is to implement a comprehensive action program to promote an understanding of the past, present, and future experiences, problems, and needs of queer and trans- students of color as well as the queer and trans- community of color as a whole. Proud Colors intends to develop effective methods of dealing with these problems. Further, we know that neither we, nor the peoples we aim to serve are simple, fixed entities of colors and desires. We believe that the notion of queer includes, but extends past gender expression and sexual orientation. We understand queerness as the call to respect and affirm the complex intersections of one’s ethnicities, gender expressions, religions, socioeconomic statuses and backgrounds, nationalities, abilities, and/or sexual orientations. It is in these critical points of collision that we situate ourselves and our activism, as it is in these intersections that we truly live: Queer and Proud.

-November 2, 2011

CONTACT US:
proudcolors@columbia.edu

FOLLOW US:
Tumblr: proudcolors.tumblr.com
Twitter: @proudcolors
Facebook: facebook.com/ProudColors

WEBSITE:
columbia.edu/cu/qoc
A SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR

PC Talks: A Critical Discussion About the HRC

Tuesday April 9 9pm
IRC 552 W. 114th St.

Come and join Proud Colors as we address the issues associated with the Human Rights Campaign. If you support the HRC, stand completely opposite it, or have not found enough information to make a decision yet and are looking to hear from your peers, stop by and make your opinions known.

PC Talks

Pizza Study Break

It’s Thursday, which means being a queer person of color on this campus without family.
Come laugh and have fun with Proud Colors.
December 31 7:00-8:30pm
Malcolm X Lounge (Hartley)

Proud Colors is an organization for queer/LGBTQ+ trans and gender非 binary people of color and our allies. We meet every Tuesday at 8pm in the IRC (552 W. 114th St.).

Allyship

How can we build a healthy allyship among our sisters and brothers? How do we address the trauma between the spaces? Are there ways to truly understand and support people of color, non-binary people, and every kind of diverse stance?
Join us as we create these questions.
Tuesday, April 23 at 6pm in the IRC

PROUD COLORS
FORGOTTEN FACES OF OUR TIME: QUEER BLACK VOICES IN HISTORY

As part of Black History Month, join Proud Colors as we remember the right history of queer and trans* Black folks.
Tuesday, Feb. 1 at 6pm in the IRC (552 W. 114th St.)

Sex and Dating

We all hear about and think about queer hook-up culture on campus, but what about dating? Does it happen? If so, where and who gets to be involved? Join Proud Colors to discuss how queer people of color engage in, or lack of, dating at a queer person of color.

Tuesday, February 12 at 6pm in the IRC

PROUD COLORS
WELCOME BACK!

Checking In

Tuesday, Jan. 30, 9pm in the IRC (552 W. 114th St.)

Proud Colors welcomes you back to campus and wants to know how you’re doing! Come join your favorite queer people of color as we prepare for the new semester.

PROUD COLORS
OPEN MIC
TUESDAY, MARCH 5
5PM IN THE IRC
552 W 114th St.

PROUD COLORS
BLACK QUEERS IN THE MEDIA

Tues., Feb. 6-9 PM in the IRC
552 W. 114th St.

As part of Black History Month, join Proud Colors as we discuss and analyze queer, LGBT, and/or same-gender loving Black people in contemporary media.

PRIDE COLORS

OPEN ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Tuesday, September 24 from 4-6pm

Come to the IRC Conference room (552 W. 114th St.) at 4pm this Tuesday (September 24) to meet some queer and allies with your favorite queer people of color.
Three out of five we will be holding all our discussions in one room. Thank you for making this happen. Help us make this happen by coming.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE YEAR

flyers by Gerardo Romo, except for (*) by Darkmatter
2012–2013 E-BOARD

left to right:
Kyle Chetan-Lutah Sebastian, Gerardo Romo, Inez Bell, Xavier Jarrett, Kylie White

WANT TO JOIN?

Come to our weekly board meetings -- open to all!
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What does Proud Colors mean to you?
A space where I can finally cut the bullshit.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
I don’t really have any advice for white first-years. To all my QPOC first-years: Find/Build your community with your people. Don’t waste time. And don’t listen to that “self-segregation” shit.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
Tamarind balls. Because they have a flavor that catches you off guard and strips down your senses. They force you to confront the reality, nay, the rawness of deliciousness. Tangy, Tantalizing, and Taking you by surprise.
School/Year: SEAS/2015
Preferred Gender Pronouns: He/Him/His

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors is a space that has allowed me to begin to unravel my sexuality, experiences, and history as a queer person of color. It has been a comfortable and welcoming space, since the moment I entered. More importantly, Proud Colors is a community. A community of wonderful people who are more than understanding. I feel accepted as an entire person, just as I am, and that makes all the difference.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
College is probably one of the few periods of your life when you are free to learn anything you want, free to explore your identities and passions, and free to stumble in the process. Take advantage of that freedom. Challenge yourself to go outside of your comfort zone. It is completely worth it.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
If my life were captured in candy, it would be a Tootsie Pop. I am the kind of person who tries to figure out how many licks it takes to get to the Tootsie Roll center. I prefer to take things at my own measured pace. When it comes to building relationships, new experiences, and life in general, I prefer the slow blossom to a sudden bloom.

School/Year: Columbia College/2013
Preferred Gender Pronouns: He/Him/His

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
The intersections of life are the most important places. Proud Colors is a way for me to understand the many intersections in my own life, and to grow comfortable with them.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
Change your major at least ten times. It doesn’t actually matter.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
Sourpatch kids
First it’s sour and then it’s sweet.
What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors is a space for personal growth and discovery. Whether we’re merely revisiting topics or discussions that we’ve had several times within the space or casually at JJ’s or talking about something completely new, the voices within Proud Colors continually challenge me to interrogate my beliefs and opinions. We hold each other accountable for our words and actions, and that accountability serves as a way of maintaining a safe space as well as being a learning moment, or rather unlearning moment in the context of oppressive behavior. Having this space exist as an open forum for discourse has taught me so much about myself and assisted me in reevaluating my identities and the ways that they operate within the various spaces that I inhabit.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
Don’t let the academic jargon or “radical” label scare you off. Entering into these spaces can often seem a little off-putting the first couple of times, but I feel like that was a lot of our experiences. Unlearning sucked up behavior, being critical of our own experiences, and problematizing the things that we believe, especially our attractions and desires, isn’t an easy process. Most of the people within these spaces have been exposed to ways of discussing these issues that have specific academic terminology associated with them or have come to understand the ways that privilege and power operate in an extremely different manner than a lot of the other students on Columbia and Barnard’s campuses. It took time and learning to get to that point, though. So, yeah, don’t let the first few meetings scare you off because the members are throwing around words that don’t seem to make sense or are attacking systems of power, which often seems like they’re attacking the people with that power instead. Stick around and see what they’re trying to get at first.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
A 3 Musketeers bar. I just want three men in my bed with me at all times. Plain and simple.
DAVID LUNA

School/Year: Columbia College/2015
Preferred Gender Pronouns: He/Him/His

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
The support is uplifting.
The laughter is rejuvenating.
And we’re all are sexy as fuck.
That’s all I know.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
1) Ditch the racist ass white people you’ll meet at this place
2) Join Proud Colors

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
CRUNCH

GERARDO ROMO

School/Year: Columbia College/2014
Preferred Gender Pronouns: He/Him/His

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors is where I have found my place at this school and in this city. It’s my healing ground where I’ve been able to understand myself better in a community of queer people of color. I’ve learned solidarity, love, and resistance.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
Only spend your time and energy on people and spaces that care about you. You’re too good to be wasting your energy and love on people who don’t reciprocate.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
Tajin ‘cause I’m kinda spicy and sweet and go good on everything.
What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors is first and foremost a place where I’ve met my first major group of QPOC friends at Columbia. It’s a space that expands beyond Tuesdays at 9pm in the IRC Conference room to the rest of my life. It forces me to think about race and sexuality in ways that I previously was either ignorant of or too hesitant to explore.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
DISCOVERING WHO YOU ARE IS A LIFE LONG PROCESS. ENJOY THE MESSY RIDE.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
Bagels, because they are filling and fulfilling and this is how I try to approach life.

School/Year: Barnard/2013
Preferred Gender Pronouns: She/Her/Hers or They/Them/Theirs

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors has been such a beautiful forum to meet the coolest, most brilliant and inspiring QPOC on campus.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
DISCOVERING WHO YOU ARE IS A LIFE LONG PROCESS. ENJOY THE MESSY RIDE.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
I guess Starbursts because when you eat them you can’t help but feel happy. I try and focus on the happy things in life. (That was an awful explanation.)
School/Year: SEAS/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her hers/hottie ova there

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors means a place where I can be silly, real, happy, sad, angry, forgiving, forgiven, sexy, insecure, all of it. And someone will get it, or will want to get it, and be able to share something that they might have in common.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
Find your place, but don’t try to replace your home. It is so necessary to find a place that makes you feel comfortable and accepted. That said, don’t expect too much. Things and people are bound to let you down. Its a learning curve, and with time, you will learn who to surround yourself with and those people will learn how to love you.

What candy/snack best describes you and/or your life and why?
Sour Gummyworms!!
When you first meet me I may be a little much, even a little EXTRA. But with time I get really sweet, and delicious(... to be around)... that part will last a long time.
OUR CREATIONS
Mourn the poplars hewn down by the storm. A small part of winter as an amateur chess composer, I lack talent but carry on listening to internet radio. Ebay anklets made of synthetic lapis lazuli. It was as if, in spring, her eyes were a particular blue when she looked out my car window. See, it’s not like the old days—a girl could call and hang up the phone when a known voice answers. Old e-mails, inhaled Camel Crush. Someone, apparently, was heartless. A fluorescent light drones quietly on at the laundromat in June where I scroll through pictures she took on my phone— a pineapple, a flag at half-mast, her hand holding a tangelo. The long absence of summer rain. The gift of being caught without an umbrella come August. Warm, thundered. But then again, she is fall; she is always more beautiful than I remember.
WICKED
XAVIER JARRETT - PHOTO BY SERGIO SAENZ
the • black • queer • maenad

n. 1. the — locating myself as an entity that is specific and distinct; a self that is related to others through socialization, lived experiences, and chosen spaces, yet still inevitably separated by the multitude of decisions that have resulted in this version of myself 2. black — abstracting myself from the monolithic “person of color” narrative; this is not to separate myself from other brown people, but to target some of the specific needs, desires, and wants that are explicitly linked to Black bodies and Black queer experiences; a promise to myself that i won’t forget my Blackness and attempt to reconnect with the part of myself that i repressed so thoroughly in an attempt to achieve a desired type of “gay” (i.e. queerness as whiteness); a reminder to love, and to make that love include affirmations of my Blackness 3. queer — i don’t want the legacy of a discriminatory and exclusionary “gay” community attached to my body; i must problematize and question the ways in which i understand my desires, attractions, and sexuality; a promise to myself that i will learn to better love and value my body outside of the brands and notions of masculinity that are rewarded and prioritized in our society; a commitment to being conscious of my partner’s intersectional identities and addressing their needs as well as my own 4. maenad — female worshipers of dionysus, god of chaotic frenzy, possession, hedonism, and madness; translated as “raving ones” or of relating to “madness”; a constant reminder to myself that it is perfectly acceptable to be incredibly mad at the shit around me; i don’t have to be complacent with the rampant femmephobia in my life, and i’m allowed to let that trouble me and make me feel; a promise to myself that i will try to find strength in my anger over this rather than tears that result from frustration; maenads are the fearless indestructible feminine warriors of dionysus, and i am too; he chose femininity as a vehicle of expression—a femininity that rips men apart and takes pleasure in the act along with embracing the reality of true sexual hunger.
I can feel memories of that confidence
I used to have,
before it was all crushed
by the tremendous weight of my anxiety.

Memories of feeling so liberated inside
I could look at you across the room—
a stranger then—
and decide that all I wanted that night
was to taste your full, racially ambiguous lips,

and find out who the hell
that cutie is in the corner
lookin’ all cholo femme
with his big ass smile,
directing me like a lighthouse
in that room full of
straight Chican@s.

Memories of *mariposas* fluttering inside me
a month later when you
were walking to my room to watch that movie and
I wasn’t worried if I was too ugly or naive
‘cause all I could think about was how cute you were
and how much I just wanted to feel you again.

That liberating echo turned into erupting volcanoes
when we kissed and you were so warm and soft—
much like your lips—
and it was like your fingers were melting into me
in warm explosions across my chest following the
trail of your hand.

I became a goddess that night,
born out of the ashes of the lava
pouring inside me through
your burning kisses.

I can feel memories of that confidence
I used to have
and it’s like I’m alive again.
TO MY SELF-PROCLAIMED STRAIGHT CHICAN@ FAMILY
GERARDO ROMO

Why do I have to prove to my self-proclaimed straight Chican@ family that homophobia exists? Why do I have to repeatedly open my wounds to you when you’re just going to silence me? Why must I force myself to get past my discomfort with self-proclaimed straight Latin@s when you’re just going to slather my wounds with your homophobic poison?

My mere existence should be enough to prove to you that being queer and being Chicano are inseparable—that homophobia bleeds through racism.

We cannot separate our communities because our communities—like our oppressions—are inextricably connected.
I cannot be silenced because, understand, you self-proclaimed straight Chican@s, my silence will be the death of me. The moment I become silent is the moment I stop living.

My wounds are bleeding again. Homophobia has carved a deep hole in me that I’ve been trying to close up for years. Your silencing is beating and tearing open the scars in me that take so much work to heal.

If you want to call me family, acknowledge that you’re uncomfortable with my queerness. That you don’t know what do with my “in-your-face” queerness. Acknowledge your discomfort and challenge it, self-proclaimed straight Chican@s. Challenge the thoughts and anger that run through your mind when you see a brown man loving another brown man, emotions you’ve internalized through all the centuries of colonialism our people have faced.

Challenge it and change it because you’re killing me.
After that day, when I take my heart from my chest and place it in my lap, Gently I will comfort it.

I say that the world will have beauty, And I will tell of what will come, I say that you will always have worth, And I will lie of what will be.

My heart aches at night when I lie in bed, But from being too full and not from being too empty, Gently I will comfort it.

It swells with thoughts of sitting with hands clasped in lap, Of sitting between cloudless blue robes, An infinity as clear as the sky.

And it dreams of the moment when I throw that cap, But then worries of what will happen after, Will it fall to the ground gently but firmly? Or will it remain above and refuse to come back?

My heart aches at night when I am in bed because its tubes are blocked with too many open dreams.

But do not interfere with the pain of a dreaming heart Let it suffer from dreams too big Rather than gift a reality in which The possibilities are too many And I am too small.
I watch you with my eyes closed. From images charred into my irises, by visions, and dreams, and encounters. Though I try to cast these scars aside the pleasure persists and the pain subsides, so I stare in humble hypnosis.

Last night I saw you, strolling beneath the summer rain. Body drenched with lights so faint dancing amid reds, greens, and gray of shades counterfeits should not attempt make. So I dare not recreate these days, only watch and wish these lights not fade.

I can feel you sometimes, walking barefoot on the dirty floors in my mind. Your soft strides let me know that you’re trying to unwind. I feel your stress in every step, as your heart beats in sync with mine.

When I try to open my eyes my mind resists and knows that it is wise, to stay in the dark the only place where you reside. What’s the point of seeing the sun if in the sun you die. So I stay behind these lies, and sink. This time your hair was jittery streaks of oranges and pinks, brilliant yet meek. As you rise from a sea of silver, you speak of all the things that make skeptics believe.

This must be what God dreams about.
THE SUN’S REPRIEVE
DAVID LUNA

Your shrill shrieks, monkey,
used to pierce through the shrines
built bleedingly with the
brined entrails of my own prayers

Rare were the times, monkey,
when I played my own love on the gramaphone
opting instead for the
honing of my don’t-let-go-of-this-heart
pleas

I beg you.
Please.
Don’t let go.

Away with the smoke, monkey,
went the beauty of those temples
and scattered when the dust settled
toward the simple
who gasped for any sheen, short or tall

All you had to do, monkey,
was cease to shriek and see
the supplication of the sun—
a call to whatever it is primates call god

But the star let go of its core, monkey,
and abolished the worship of those
carved bare by the whispers of the petrified forest

Rest assured, monkey,
that the shrieks that sought the company of the sun
no longer have the sting
to puncture even the vastest of clear blue skies.
IN PACKAGES OF STONE
KYLE CHETAN–LUTAH SEBASTIAN

In packages of stone and tufts of grease of connecting limbs moving in tireless ease. In bouts of glass and bowls of sand to the howling questions led by a forgotten hand. What regal thieves and smooth cut lies To screaming laughs and honey dew cries. For turpentine layers and flesh clad dreams do nothing, for my sickness itself, redeems. For all of your virtues and all of your vices these tales that you tell are pointless.
yes ma'am
i am woman
and when
i preach feminism
i preach equality
and i use language
to build spectrums like roots for trees
that shed their leaves like i’ve learned to
shed my internalized dichotomies
how are we still considered cultural anomalies
when
this
is
war
feminism is my battle cry
i wear ties to dismantle your patriarchy
i hold a vibrator against my clit like
i hold you to your bullshit
uhg
cry me a river of white guilt
to drown out your privilege
i am the angry black lesbian
who re-appropriated the word dick
so
yes ma’am
i am woman
hear me roar, bitch
and yeah,
in case you’re wondering
i reclaimed that shit
i am the verbal astheticist
annoyed with those who ignore hypervigilance
who are unaware of subway corner religion

i am learning that my loving
means fucking with the system
means bathing in resistance
means trial by error persistence

i am the verbal astheticist

and you are caught in subtle images
less like mona lisa
and more like
a roughly shaken polaroid

you are hot swig of gin on
a cold friday night

you are a
broken blade
of glass filtered
window pane light

you make my words scream bloody murder
and when i choke of the syllables between
your chin and your chest, you say
“babe, that’s not how we swallow love,
that’s not how a heart knows how to rest”

and i’ll use grammar like
lavender shea butter lotion
on dry skin

i’ll listen for syntax
like the last roaring moans
of the coldest night’s
warmest sins

i’ll play ping-pong with punctuation
as though the ball were a smirk
and our paddles were heart palpitations

see,
i am the verbal storm
and when i rain
i will not drizzle
i will pour

and up there,
i will harness lightning and still ask for more

i will wrestle angels until they give me a crown
and i will learn to love the ground
and i will learn to love you
like i learned to
walk, talk, cry and steal

i will learn to love you like a hotel room,
like a good poster
or like my favorite meal

you are the most well-constructed sentence

and i will write you out as big as john hancock
but this is my declaration of transcendence

signed
here lies the autobiography of
the verbal astheticist
annoyed with those who ignored hypervigilance
who were unaware of subway corner religion

here lies the verbal astheticist
who learned that her loving
meant everything when written
I wish I could do her justice  
I’m supposed to be the engineer, civil  
but she uses her hands like she was born working  
Rosie the riveter from the womb  
crafting castles of mortar and perfect diction

I am years behind  
and she puts me back into Freudian infancy  
every syllable caught up in my oral fixation  
before it can cross my lips

if it makes it, its bubblegum sticky  
holding together two sheets of paper for ten seconds  
the secret glue sticks I use to construct my Lego obelisk  
in her honor

To the woman who changes me:  
May your hands teach me to build something  
That will last.
CREDITS

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Ashley Ja’nae Gunter is a student at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, where she studies Art & Design Education. She graduates spring of 2013 and hopes to be both an artist and an educator in coming years so look out for her!

To see more of her work visit her tumblr: ashjanae.tumblr.com
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