

**PROUD
COLORS**

**the zine
2011-2012**

PROUD COLORS*

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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 colonized 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 MISSION STATEMENT

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

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Twitter: [@proudcolors](https://twitter.com/proudcolors)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Member Profiles.....	5-10
Alps--Kylie White.....	12
Tell Me the Reality...--Martha Zamora.....	13
Awkward Things I Write to Get Off--Anon.....	14
Untitled--Kylie White.....	15
Fallon--Xavier Jarrett.....	16
Photos--Diana Valverde.....	18
Karimah's Manifesto--Karimah Rokins.....	19
I Was in El Salvador--Gerardo Romo.....	20
The Nine Engulfing Rings--Rae Johnson.....	21

KYLIE WHITE



School/Year: SEAS/2015
Preferred Gender Pronouns:
She/Her/Hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

"Everything.

It means being myself, and never being uncomfortable about that."

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Be open. It's with the risk.

What texture best describes you?

"Suede.

Sometimes smooth, sometimes rough..."

What has been the most influential mo-

ment in defining your identity?

Wow. I am still trying to define it. Changing environments and then questioning everything, I guess.

GERARDO ROMO



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

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors shows me every day the power of community. It is my community because I never feel more comfortable than when I'm with my fellow queer people of color, talking not only about the stuff that really bugs me, but also the stuff that makes me really happy. Proud Colors is my family where I don't have to worry about being accepted because I already am.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Don't be upset that you're upset. You just need find people that you can vibe with, and find

your community. And if you can't find a community, make one.

What has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?

Every time I learn some hidden history about my past--my people's past--I get a whole new understanding of my identities: what it means to be Queer, what it means to be Latino and a person of color.

KARIMAH ROKINS



School/Year: Barnard College/2012
Preferred Gender Pronouns:
She/Her/Hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors is a family to me and I feel like it's a place to vent in a really less contrived space about shit that we actually go to as opposed to dropping all of this intellectual theory (which we do drop and it's beautiful) but like just talking about our own experiences and building community through that.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?
COME TO PROUD COLORS

What texture best describes you?

I'm gonna stick with tapioca pearl.

What has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?

The most influential moment in defining my identity...probably came from just...I mean these last few years of just discovering what sexual fluidity means and discovering my own sexuality and my sensuality so I don't think there is one moment except college.

MARTHA ZAMORA



School/Year: Barnard College/2014

Preferred Gender Pronouns:

She/Her/Hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors is a place to chill, talk about my sexuality, and interact with great people.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Dress and be any way that makes you comfortable. You want people to respect you, respect others. Tolerance comes both ways so try to tolerate others intolerance.

What texture best describes you?

Leather because I'm sexy.

What has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?

Coming out to my family and defending my identity, even from them.

KIA WALTON



School/Year: Columbia College/2012
Preferred Gender Pronouns:
She/Her/Hers He/Him/His

what does Proud Colors mean to you?
Proud Colors means a fuckin' laugh every Tuesday, and Wednesday, and whenever we see each other.

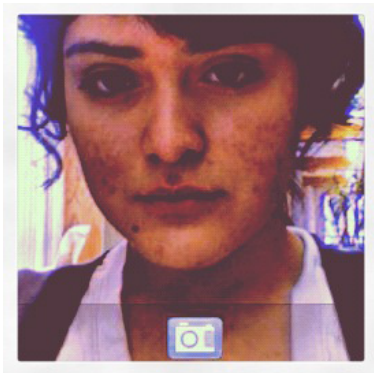
what advice would you give to incoming first-years?
Oh, goodness. Join Proud Colors! You gotta be OK with the fact that you're not OK. And be OK with reaching out to folks who are like you. It's alright.

what texture best describes you?

The inside of those cock sleeves at Babeland. With like the silicon kind of...the cock eggs.

what has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?
I think my mom. She always says "You're somone special. Yes you are." That helped me define every identity. Like, I fuckin' rock.

DIANA VALVERDE-PANIAGUA



School/Year: Columbia College/2015
Preferred Gender Pronouns:
She/Her/Hers

what does Proud Colors mean to you?
For me, Proud Colors has been a place where I can critically think about my identity; in particular, the way I conceive myself interacting with different subsets of society. This year has been about locating and re-positioning myself within a greater Hispanic identity; an LGBTQ identity; a female identity; a privileged educated, midde-upper class identity; and, perhaps most fundamentally, a human identity. But beyond the Proud Colors' thought-provoking intersectional approach, everyone in the group is so intelligent, thoughtful, kind, and hilarious; it's such a pleasure to be in a group with them.

what advice would you give to incoming first-years?
Allow yourself to be challenged. (Boring advice, but true.)

what texture best describes you?

The feeling of hairs two days to a week after they've been shaved.

RAE JOHNSON



School/Year: SEAS/2013
Preferred Gender Pronouns:
She/Her/Hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

It's a place where people come together and connect with one another on a deeper level than just small talk and generic interests. Also, these people just happened to be queer...and of color, so that helps with the conversations.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Not too many people here at Columbia are going to hate you JUST because you're gay. And the people who will are sorely outnumbered

and unimportant to your life.

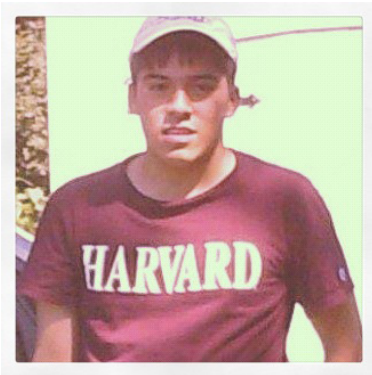
What texture best describes you?

Sandstone

What has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?

Freshman year of college

JOSH MORGAN



School/Year: Teachers College
Preferred Gender Pronouns:
He/Him/His

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Prouds colors seems to me to be a place to go to talk about sensitive issues that relate to the LBGT community here on campus.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

I am a first-year graduate student here so I am not sure how Columbia works as an undergraduate school, with different schedules and classes, etc. I would say in general for any student that leaving some time in your week/schedule to have some fun (a break) is a good and healthy thing to do. I do not think we do

this as much as we ought to.

What texture best describes you?

I am not a texture; I am a person. :) But I will try to answer: and I would say perhaps I am a soft texture because I would like to think of myself as a soft-personality type of guy; that is one who is easy to talk (soft personality), etc.

What has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?

I do not have a definable moment in terms of discovering my identity as a young male gay guy. I think it is a process as a whole and is usually the same for everyone, perhaps not or it varies. People have definitely helped.

XAVIER JARRETT



School/Year: Columbia College/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns: He/Him/His

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors, simply put, means family. Now I know that's the same stereotypical answer that most members of a group will give, but I feel as if there is no truer word. Even though we only meet once or twice a week as a group, our contact with each other extends far beyond that. There's rarely a day that I walk across campus and don't run into another member. I can always count on Elegance to stop whatever conversation that he's having to give me a quick wave and a hug; Gerardo never fails to say something to send me into a laughing fit; Kia and Karimah, during their various states after our bonding sessions, always leave me with the best memories for the following day; and Diana is like my constant other half. I interact with these people more than I ever imagined that I would, and I've grown to see them as the foundation

for my life here at Columbia. They are my family in several ways, and I love that I've found that on Columbia's campus.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Don't be so quick to judge or count something out. Survey as much shit as you can and attempt to find 1) something that you really enjoy doing, 2) something that gives you a break from the constant workload here at Columbia, and most importantly, 3) something that will help you grow as a person, whether that growth is emotionally, spiritually, or whatever kind of "-lly" that you can think of.

What texture best describes you?

That two-toned carpet that everyone seemed to play with as a kid. The one where if you rub it one way, one shade of the carpet's color shows through, and if you rub it the other way, a completely different shade of the color shows through. Often times, I feel as if I'm the same way--two completely different shades of the same person, so you never know who you're going to get.

What has been the most influential moment in defining your identity?

For sure, it would have to be when I decided to go to boarding school my junior year of high school. It was there that I met Andrew James Espenshade, my ex-roommate and best friend. Oddly enough, we were paired at random to be roommates without specifying on our applications that we were gay. Some god (maybe Beyoncé, haha) had to be looking down on us because Andrew and I wouldn't have talked otherwise. Anyway, Andrew really helped me with coming to terms with my femininity. His bravery and "fuck you" attitude were the things that I needed in my life to realize that I could be the same way, I could be someone who didn't need the constant approval of others. Without his presence in my life, I would have never stumbled into the world of drag; I would have never thought to shop for clothing that I liked without paying attention to the gendered tags on the items; I wouldn't have realized how much I can care for a close friend. In all honesty, each of these things would have eventually found their way into my life, but Andrew gave me the push to start exploring them early on in my life.

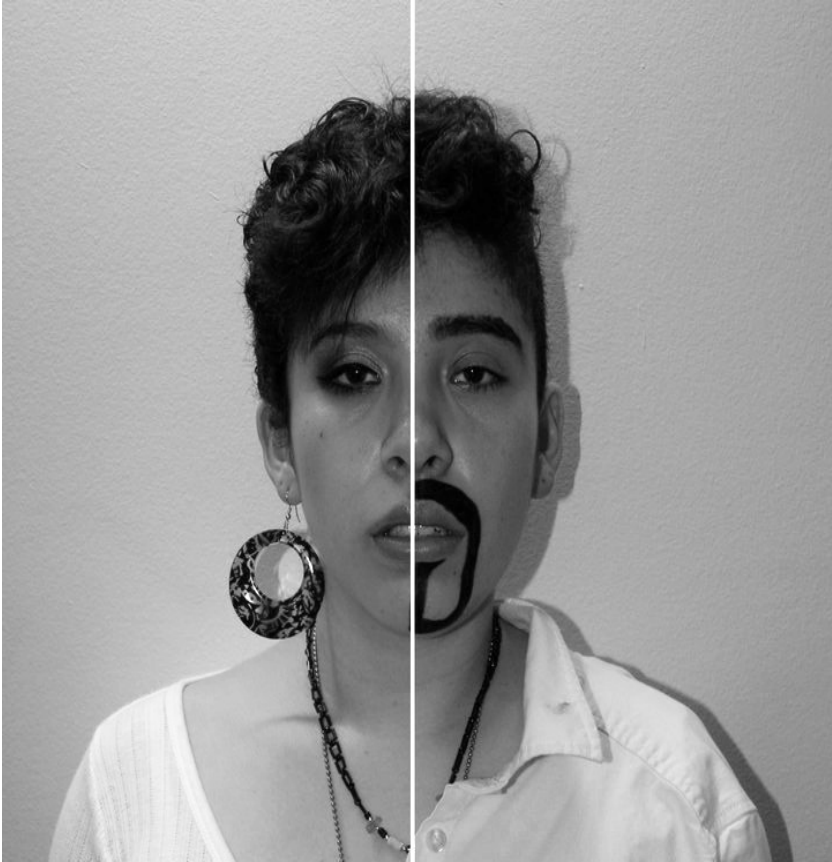
OUR CREATIONS

ALPS

KYLIE WHITE

There is a dewy trail left from the meeting of your chilled,
blanched fingers and my warm, dark skin--
stretching from the curve of my right shoulder,
over the peak of my soft breast,
into the valley of my stomach,
ending at my navel--
that reminds me of the Alps.

**TELL ME THE REALITY IS BETTER THAN THE DREAM
MARTHAZAMORA**



AWKWARD THINGS I WRITE TO GET OFF ANONYMOUS

I offer you pineapple and grin slyly as I make my way to the floor. You pick up a piece and slide it across my lips and into my mouth. I bite my lip as you lean into kiss me. My sticky hands caress the small of your back. We kiss passionately, our tongues tasting the sweet, tart juices of each other. I remove your jacket and push you onto the floor. I climb on top of you, kissing and biting your lower lip. Your soft moans beckon me to bite harder and elsewhere. I grind my hips against yours and tug at your shirt. You remove mine and kiss my breasts. You push me down, my bare back gently scraping against the rough grey carpet. My breath quickens as you use your tongue to explore my breasts and stomach.

"Fuck" I murmur and pull your hair to bring you closer to my face. We kiss as I unhook your bra. I position you on top of me and bite your lip as I push my hands down your pants.

"Fuck, keep going" you whisper as your start to ride your pussy against my hand. You're wet and soft and your increasingly rapid heart-beat makes me wetter.

"Wait. Lay down and take your pants off," I command. I watch you wriggle out of your jeans and brush your hands across the wet space between your legs. I climb on top of you and bite your collarbone...your breasts...your stomach. I slide my tongue across your wet slit. I feel your body tense as I deepen my strokes and play with your clit. Your hands grip my hair as I continue to lick and fuck your pussy. You scratch my neck and back and grind your pussy against my face.

"Fuck me. Just-Fuck-just keep going," you say. I put my finger inside of you and fingerfuck you hard while I keep eating your pussy. Your body tense. You shiver. You pull me close and taste your pussy in and around my mouth. You slide your hands up my skirt and plunge your hands into my wet pussy.

"Shit. That feels good. Fuck me harder," I whisper. You push me against the ground and hike my skirt up. You pull my panties down and begin to taste the wet pussy between my legs. I grip the floor as you fuck me harder with your tongue and fingers. My back arches and my nipples harden as you continue to fuck me. I can barely speak. I feel a warmth come over me, grab my hair and arch my back as I let the tingling sensation sweep over my body. I pull you close and pinch your forearm.

"I told you that you had nothing to worry about, newb."

UNTITLED 1

KYLIE WHITE

Last night I confessed a love. I spoke of the girl of my dreams. Of the boy of my dreams. How I had and lost one. And could never touch the other. And I vanquished my loneliness for one night by telling of it.

UNTITLED 2

KYLIE WHITE

Last night I walked barefoot across bricks that had been softened by the strokes of millions of soles. I dug my hands into the ground and pulled out sticks that smelled of pine, slugs, and bubble gum. I laid on my back and imagined a sky full of stars instead of smog. I danced like I was high on miracles in a paved garden. I loved.

**FALLON
XAVIER JARRETT**



SUMMER FESTIVAL 2008-TOKYO, JAPAN

DIANA VALVERDE



KARIMAH'S MANIFESTO

KARIMAH ROKINS

I will call myself Karimah
Unless otherwise noted
I don't give two fucks about my PGPs
But I understand their importance to some
so
She/Her/Hers
Or Diva/Diva's if you're wild
I will smile when I fucking please and not
because you request one
I will wear skintight jeans and tank tops that
expose the top most of my breasts
And skirts that expose the lace of my thigh-
highs
And dresses that stop above the knee
Below the knee
And to my ankle
And if anyone fucks with me in any of those
outfits
I will quickly combat them with a swift
tongue and slap to the fucking face
I will call myself Mercedes Belleview
Whenever the fuck I DECIDE that I'm oozing
sexuality
And my sensuality will not warrant your
nasty ass old man stares
And if you try to fuck with Mercedes Bel-
levue
Expect to meet a similar fate
And I will not lye
I will embrace the thick mass on my head
and between my legs and
If either intimidates you
Your fucking loss
I will not lie
And mask my face to have the appearance
of
flawless skin
And mask my clear markers of puberty by
shaving my legs
I will not sit by passively as my entire jour-
ney is erased
And replaced with a desire to be perfect
With perfect teeth, hair, eyes and skin
And a narrative that refuses to implicate the
entire kyarchy
In the experiences that have helped shape
who I am
I will remain active in the lives of all my
nieces and nephews because they are the
future

They are young, people of color who need
to recognize and desire to change
The fucked up world they live in
I will form a collective band of night run-
ners
Armed with mace, knuckle rings and an
overwhelming desire
To TAKE BACK ALL THE NIGHTS
To feel a night breeze
And hear crickets
And taste the sweet smells of the evening
Without fear
And I will empower all of the women in
my life
I will call out their weakness and label
them as strengths
I will refrain from using sexist, ableist,
homophobic and transphobic languages
and narratives
I will not accept my body as a commodity
I will not sit passively
I will fuck who I want that wants to fuck
me
I will integrate mutual enthusiasm into
every sexual encounter
I will prepare myself for nights
And follow the implicit rules of walking
while female bodied
Or any body that isn't cis-male, white, and
heterosexual
And in following these rules, I am not ac-
cepting this fate
I am merely trying to survive in this
FUCKED up society until I
And other #trashytwins can unite and fuck
up this entire system
I will embrace my anger and accept my
solidarity
I will not base my worth on any of the
following
- My grades
- My relations
- My sexual encounters
- My income
- My background
- My education
- My weight
I will be empowered. And rich in love,
desire, passion for equality.

I WAS IN EL SALVADOR

GERARDO ROMO

I had a dream that I was going to study abroad in El Salvador.

I was at a really relaxing party in a giant empty room when suddenly and quite dramatically, the police broke down the door. Everyone started running in circles, like headless chickens. They started shouting and threatened to shoot us with their machine guns. As everyone was scrambling, I ran through the doorway and into the hallway. I looked back and a small group of mestizo-looking policemen were chasing me.

I escaped the building and stumbled into the streets. I tried to run in zigzags, past moving cars, making sharp turns into alleys or whatever they do in movies. They were catching up, but I just kept running as fast as I could, hoping they wouldn't shoot me.

I ran into the subway and jumped into the first open car that I saw. Everyone just stared at me as I sat there trying to catch my breath. All I could think was: "Don't they know I'm one of them?" But convincing them I was one of them was futile; no matter how brown my skin was, I was still just a gay American from Columbia University. I finally calmed down as I looked through the window and saw the ocean we were riding over, reminding me of the water under the Brooklyn Bridge.

I got off at the first stop and found myself in an ironic solace: a water park filled with rich white American tourists. I ran past the little white children—laughing and playing in the water—to the first pay phones I found. They were really confusing looking, with high tech touch-screens and weird card sliders. I looked at a white woman call her family to try to figure out how to use these foreign contraptions, with the fear of the police hovering over my head. She finished her conversation and she showed me how to use the pay phones. I frantically called my mom and told her that the police were chasing me and that El Salvador really was as dangerous as she and my grandma kept warning me. I told her I regretted going there, that I was stupid for wanting to go there. Then I came to the sad realization that I was going to have to stay there until the semester ended.

Then I woke up.

I still don't really know what it means to be queer and Latino, or Mexican-Salvadorean-American. All I know is that none of these identities are conflicting or antithetical to each other because they all exist in harmony through me, no matter how machismo or homophobic Latin@s and non-Latin@s claim my people are.

THE NINE ENGULFING RINGS

RAE JOHNSON

Do not fall so quickly to the sea,
The sea will not wash away your fears.
It will not cleanse any of your thoughts,
Or even make better your stained wounds,
That are dirty from your impressions
And infected from your tragedies.
The sea is too fitly from others
Who have tried to wash away themselves.
The sea will not save your desperate soul,
Because the sea cannot save itself.
The salt will never make it better,
No matter how painful it might feel.
It's abundance of life's greatest need
Won't help satisfy any of yours.
Do not fall so quickly to the sea,
If you do you will fall from yourself.
Into a depth far greater than now,
And soon wash away all of your worth.
In a hope to make it all better,
You are really just making it worse.