

Just Ignacio

I.

I ran into a queer friend I had not seen for awhile on the train the other day. Our short but powerful interaction took me by surprise. It propelled me to think about a slew of issues that have been plaguing my mind for quite some time now. This and other interactions that day, along with my confusing thoughts and internal battles have brought me to talk about my gender expression.

Person:

“Hey how are you? (They hug me and sit down next to me on the train). It’s been awhile. (They look over at me and look deeply). Damn you looking type butch!” (They say, with an approving smile on their face).

Me:

“Actually, (I say as I take a deep breath), not butch. I’m transitioning”...(and before I could say another word)...

Person:

“Wait a minute, wait a minute, (they say as they shake their head in disbelief), I can’t talk about this right now.”

Me:

“(Surprised to hear this person saying these words), Well you just asked me how I was and...”

Person:

“Nah, that’s too much right now. It’s like telling me you got cancer or your pregnant or something. It’s too much to get into right now.”

...And just like that, my identity was invisible. They changed the subject. I, in shock, just flowed with their vibe and when they got off the train a couple of stops later, I could not help but sink deep into analysis mode. Wanting eagerly to make sense of this interaction and others earlier that day.

II.

I told everyone at once. I kind of just blurted it out. I didn’t know how else to say it. It was one of our bi-monthly board meetings and we all sat at a large table facing one another. I was speaking on behalf of my committee, which was discussing new board recruitments.

“How many trans-identified people are currently on the board?” (someone asked). This was it. This was my time to let everyone know. “Hmm, well, I currently ID as trans, and as a matter of fact, I would like all of you to call me Ignacio....(I exhale and look around the table)...and there is one other person. So two, two trans people are currently on board....”

And I kept on talking, as if I had not said anything of importance at all. I was too nervous to stop but as my mouth kept speaking of board recruitment priorities; my eyes witnessed my comrades' thirsty expressions. They wanted more. As my friends, they deserved a conversation. I quickly composed myself and apologized for my vomit-ous announcement and ensured all that I would send out a more detailed "coming-out" e-mail and encouraged one-on-one discussions. Thirsty faces became visibly quenched and the meeting moved on. At the end of the meeting, I got wonderful hugs, congratulations and encouragement but one thing was unsettling.

III.

"What are you going by, he or she?" I say both. I say both but with some hesitance. What am I? Who am I? I have always "played" with gender. I have always expressed "both" sides of me and all that in between. "Both" seems so either-or to me, and so when I was thinking desperately on what word would best describe me, I knew that bi-gender would not cut it. I knew I was entering into a more conscious state of my gender, or yet another aspect of my gender. I say both because at this point in time, I don't know any other way to describe "the-all-that-in-between". I say both because I am comfortable with being a "female entity" or what ever that means and being of "male entity". I say call me both but both is not what I seem to get.

IV.

My unsettling feelings came about as I realized very quickly that by giving people "options" to call me he or she; or call me Ingri or Ignacio, people refer to me as one. The one option chosen is usually she. I have come to the conclusion that it gives some people an out. It gives them room for error. If I go by both, then what do they need to think about? How is their perception of gender being challenged? I don't mean to say that my gender identity is based on pushing the boundaries of gender but my very existence and personal identification should in fact provoke some thought. When I say I go by both, that is exactly what I mean. I don't mean that you can choose the one you feel comfortable with, or the one that you see me as but both interchangeably; both interchangeably, at least for now. For me and for so many others, gender expression, gender, identification and or gender attribution is fluid. I am conflicted when I say that I am in transition because I don't know if it is so. Am I transitioning? What am I transitioning to? Am I in a constant state of transitioning? This might be confusing to some but it is an awakening for me. I am on a wonderful journey and I hope it never ends.

For now, I am a queer, trans-multi-gendered being that goes by he and she interchangeably. Whether I present as female or male I am Ignacio, just Ignacio.