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Questions

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Questions

Nancy Roman

Throughout my life, my gender identity has always been questioned and challenged. Whether it's because I don't fall within the social constructs of Mexican women beauty standards, or to my sexuality being questioned due to my sense of style/appearance.

I am the youngest of five children. When my parents found out they were having their fifth child they were torn as to what they wished I would be when I was born (e.g. "male" or "female"). My dad was ecstatic that there was going to be another baby at home –he always wanted more boys than girls in order to have more patriarchal say within the house. Due to this my identity was forced and predetermined. Our family ended up being made up of three girls and two boys.

When my dad found out that I was a "female," he made a choice. He chose to raise me as a "boy" by dressing me as one, giving me "boy" haircuts, etc. My parents were constantly asked if I was a "boy," which led to my mom putting me in dresses, pink colors, etc. to show that I was "female." My gender identity would alternate between "male" and "female" throughout my life. So when it came time to being able to choose my own clothes and dress myself. I had to make a decision...I chose to dress "masculine" because it was what I felt the most comfortable in. Because of said label I was instantly and often seen as lesbian.

Later in life (in college) would I realize that my sexuality is pansexual and that I am genderqueer. This automatically "made" appearance and sexuality one in the same; when in reality it only intersects with my other identities. My oldest sister was the very feminine one in the house, which led to her questioning my identity. She always asked me the same questions that everybody else did (e.g. why I dressed "masculine", Why I wasn't "feminine", etc.) as well as additional questions about why I didn't straighten/curl my hair and why I didn't take better care of my skin, etc.

This summer, the day before I was leaving to come back to school, my sisters, niece, and I decided to have a girl's day together. One of the things we did was go to lunch. At this lunch my oldest sister decided to nitpick and point out what was "wrong" with me (i.e. that my eyebrows needed to be waxed, that I needed a new hair style, dress differently, take better care of my skin, etc.). After telling me what was "wrong" with me she preceded and asked, "How do you expect to get a man looking like that?" I then proceeded to say, "I don't and besides if someone is going to love me they are going to love me for whom I am - exactly the way I am." By saying this, my sister instantly followed up with, "Are you a lesbian? If you are then it's okay." When asked this question I didn't know what to think. I was in shock and in utter disbelief because I couldn't believe that I was just cornered by my own sister about my sexuality, and that she assumed that because of my appearance I was a lesbian. I didn't know what to say because I knew if I said yes it would lead to questions as well as a Pandora's Box being opened at home. While this was happening, my other sister tried to jump in and defend me. She said, "I was a tomboy once in my life and I still got a man, so I know she can get a man too...plus I eventually grew out of my tomboy phase and became more feminine." I appreciated that my sister tried to save the conversation and come to my defense, but at this point in time it no longer applied to me because I know who I am. Instead of saying that I was straight, for my own safety, I said no. Because I said no I've had to try and pass. Although I do identify as pansexual, I don't see "sex/gender" as something that stops me from dating a person. I fall for someone's heart not parts.

Throughout my life I've been questioned about who I am, but I've never let that determine my life, how I choose to live it, and the way I am. I'm proud of who I am and I won't ever change that for anybody who feels uncomfortable about it.