

Sociologists for Trans Justice October 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to the S4TJ October 2024 Newsletter developed by Miller Finkelstein, Angela LaScala-Gruenewald, Iris De Lis, and Rosalind Kichler.

Featured in this issue are media related to the experience of being trans during Halloween, information on the #TransJusticeSyllabus, and opportunities within the public understanding committee!

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Halloween can be a joyful and validating occasion for gender-expansive individuals; however, it also carries a historical significance tied to the suffering of many people.



Reflections on Transgender Identities: The Dual Nature of Halloween

As Halloween approaches, it offers a unique opportunity to reflect on transgender identities. While this holiday creates a space where individuals can express their gender freely and creatively, it's essential to acknowledge that Halloween is not universally affirming. This celebration can often be transphobic in its practices, with Halloween stores selling costumes that belittle gender identities and a culture that sometimes reduces trans expressions to mere dressing up for entertainment.

We encourage sociologists to engage in critical discussions about Halloween as a platform for trans justice, using their expertise to illuminate both the vibrant expressions of gender diversity and the challenges faced. It's important to acknowledge that this holiday can be detrimental to many marginalized communities, as costumes frequently reinforce harmful stereotypes.

Let's amplify the voices of trans individuals while also being mindful of Halloween's complexities, recognizing it as an occasion that presents both gender-affirming opportunities and significant social critiques in academia and beyond. As Leslie Feinberg once inspirationally stated, "Halloween! Finally, I'd found the answer to why I did not face arrest for "cross-dressing" that one day of the year. I could never have guessed as a young butch in the bars that I was safe from police arrest on October 31 because peasants held onto a transgender tradition throughout centuries of repression. It seemed incredible to me that centuries of draconian laws and sheer terror couldn't suppress these trans customs" (Feinberg, 1996, pp. 79-80).

By navigating these layers, we can celebrate while also advocating for a more inclusive and respectful observance of Halloween.

Harm Reduction with Halloween Costumes:

Halloween provides a unique opportunity for individuals to experiment with gender expression, particularly for some trans folks who might want to dress in a way that reflects their identity. However, there are important considerations to keep in mind when selecting a costume. Cisgender individuals should not simply dress up as another gender as a “costume” for Halloween. That is not doing drag. Drag is an art that’s intent is not to imitate stereotypes. It’s essential to reflect on whether your costume perpetuates stereotypes, if it’s meant to be humorous at the expense of oppressed communities, and whether you’re familiar with drag culture and its history.

For cis-gender individuals, it’s crucial to approach dressing in drag with caution and respect. Engaging with LGBTQ+ individuals, especially drag performers, can provide valuable insights. Listening to their perspectives on costumes and stereotypes can help create a more inclusive atmosphere and avoid harmful representations. Parents can also use Halloween as a teaching moment, discussing gender roles and the importance of allowing children to express themselves freely through their costumes.

While Halloween can be a fun time for exploration, adults should be mindful of the impact of their costume choices. Halloween is not affirming for a lot of trans folks, and generally has been manipulated in violent ways against Black and Brown people, poor people, incarcerated folks, indigenous people, etc. as people’s lives becomes people’s costumes. Utilizing intersectionality as a framework, dressing up as characters across gender boundaries is acceptable, provided it is done respectfully and without derogatory humor. Always be aware of others’ pronouns and identities and prioritize a respectful and fun Halloween experience for everyone involved.

Information was developed with assistance from this link: <https://whatsonqueerbc.com/woq-bc-stories/costumes-gender-halloween>

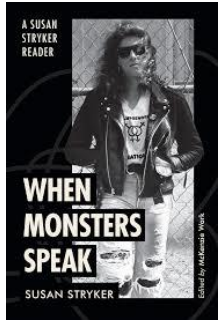
Media Pertaining to Trans Identity and Halloween

Book: When Monsters Speak: A Susan Stryker Reader

Chapter: My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix

Author: Susan Stryker (she/they)

Published: 2023



This chapter tells the story of a performance piece about Frankenstein's monster and transgender experiences. It's full of interesting theories and ideas, and it's based on the author's own experiences. It also explores the power of words and how they can be reclaimed, even words that have been used as weapons. You'll learn about the origin of the word "monster" and how transgender individuals can reclaim it. As Stryker mentions "If this is your path [being trans], as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in this monstrous benediction: May you discover the enlivening power of darkness within yourself. May it nourish your rage. May your rage inform your actions, and your actions transform you as you struggle to transform your world" (Stryker, 2024, Chapter 19, pg 254).

Memoir: None of the Above Reflections on Life Beyond the Binary

Author: Travis Alabanza (they/them)

Published: 2023



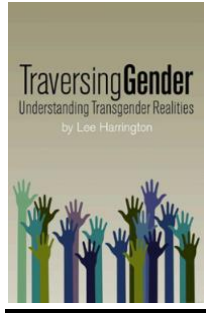
None of the Above: Reflections on Life Beyond the Binary by Travis Alabanza, with a is a powerful exploration of gender and identity. Through seven impactful phrases, Alabanza critiques fixed notions of gender, drawing from their experiences as a racialized queer person. With humor and insight, this book challenges societal norms and invites readers to envision more inclusive futures. In the second chapter, titled "None of the Above" Alabanza includes that "Halloween is often joked about as a safe time to experiment with gender nonconformity, much like the cross-dressing people do as they attend The Rocky Horror Picture Show, because everyone participating agrees that they will be going home and taking their costumes off. As if the scariest thing we could be is not conforming to our assigned genders. Yet if that gender nonconformity sits within permanence, it creates danger. If that gender nonconformity becomes coupled with an internal confession of who we are, then the pressures of legibility, and who is considered "real" in that confession, become present" (Alabanza, Chapter 2).

Media Pertaining to Trans Identity and Halloween

Book: *Traversing Gender: Understanding Transgender Realities*

Author: Lee Harrington (he/him)

Published: 2016



Chapter one, “*Sex, Gender, and Orientation*,” offers readers opportunities to learn more about gendered behaviors, gender expression, perceived gender, legal gender, gender identity, orientation, and sexual behavior. Similarly, the second chapter “*Diversity of Transgender Journeys*” displays the wide array of experiences that trans people experience, highlighting two-spirit experience of native and indigenous people of the Americas. One crucial section to look over is the section in chapter 2 titled Drag and Cross dressing. Harrington mentions that “The act of crossdressing is done for a wide variety of reasons. It might be a Halloween costume or a dare from friends. Crossdressing can made a political statement, or disguise someone’s birth gender for safety reasons. People crossdress as an opportunity to explore gender paradigms, or to consider their self identity.” (Harrington, 2016, chapter 2). Whether this is your first time reading about the gender expansive experience, or you’re an expert, this book offers readers crucial understanding on trans gender topics such as challenges and communities (including a subsection on oppression awareness: race, disability, and class) and how to be a trans ally!

Book: *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul*.

Author: Leslie Feinberg (ze/hir)

Published: 1996



In *Transgender Warriors*, Leslie Feinberg combines autobiography and transgender history to explore the origins of transgender identities and oppression. Feinberg not only documents numerous and varied transgender identities across space and time, but demonstrates that, in the past, these identities were sacred and revered. Using a Marxist analysis, ze argues that trans oppression originates with wealth accumulation and is spread globally through colonization and the advancement of a capitalist world system. However, Feinberg does not view transgender people as passive recipients of oppression; rather, ze documents multiple historical cases of rebellion led by transgender and gender-nonconforming people. Feinberg ends the book with a “Portrait Gallery” of contemporary transgender warriors. Written in accessible, direct language and conveying a strong message of solidarity, *Transgender Warriors* is an enjoyable, informative, and ultimately, hopeful, study of transgender lives across history.

Scary Trans Halloween Movies to Watch, like ASAP.

Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)

A classic that celebrates self-expression and challenges gender norms through Frank-N-Furter, embodying fluidity and defiance, while resonating with LGBTQ+ themes of liberation.

I Saw The TV Glow 2024

Schoenbrun's (they/them) film presents a haunting exploration of the trans experience through the bond between two people and a childhood TV show. For Schoenbrun, the connections between their transitions and horror films are strikingly clear.

Pick a costume that transcend transphobia!

An Inclusive Guide to Halloween Costumes for Trans and Gender-Nonconforming Folk

By a transgender woman (who absolutely slays at Halloween every year, BTW).

BY COREY RAE ✨

OCTOBER 29, 2019 6:00 PM

THE BLOG [TRANS WOMEN OF LULU](#) [TRANSWOMEN](#) [HALLOWEEN](#)

How to Dress as a Trans Person for Halloween

Trans bodies are not costumes. Our identities are not masks we can take on and off freely. Whether we express this outwardly or only on the inside, it does not change the people we've always known we are.

By Florida Dame, Contributor

Links:

<https://stylecaster.com/entertainment/culture/1057832/halloween-costume-ideas-transgender/>

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-to-dress-as-a-trans-p_b_8382010

Reflection Questions:

Have you seeing the “Gay Halloween” trend / memes circulating?

1. Have any of these costumes invoked queer/trans joy?
2. What about this trend is uplifting / harmful for transgender individuals?
3. How can you participate in ensuring Halloween as an affirming holiday for trans people?

Spooktacular Activity!

P A P K D E K T M R P B U K B T I H U W B M V C B E V H V I
K K B A Q L C A Y R N J M E N F J V F T U T W N Y U T H J I
T I V H C F T T T D H I D I X G X G W A Z Y B E F A Z W J F
H V L J E Q T B F I Z Q W K Y E K D V M O N S T E R P J M Z
L J E Z X Y D A G Q I X S Q D N G B I W C M C I E S N U Y B
O M B H G Q W U G M U R G E N D E R E X P R E S S I O N W A
T D U S H S B L R W Y M Z K D E C H I C K Z X C M G Y M G Z
R H T O N O F L J S T J P G J R N F M B O O K H R L E M X N
A Q C J F L A M B O Y A N T L A E W D V W J N A L O B R E Z
N J H C I P R M A L B A J Y X F O E Y G R T U L H K Q M B Y
S E C Y D N W B O G L W E T B F P Y S R P G I L J Y U F V A
D Q R M D W W W W S O T H B I R F P J O J D O J L S F R K
A X F Z U V W T O G Q Q R V S R O E H D D G E W S Z B N Z G
Y X E O G F L I V T A Y U K P M N O O J M X N E S N M U E D
O G C Q D L I X D B R J T U P I O I R V J A T E F J R V H S
F Q B A E P D Q S W V K R I O N U Y I M S C I N A R Z E W W
V G M B A S U T E I N E Y U J G N W A V Q M T H J E O A Z R
I F D N D U G R Q G G Q H Z Y H S A J B B T Y G F U I M C A
S H K L N J I A I N S J G S O O M K J A E J E Z B H N C C G
I M F K A H B N I L W G E N F L V J E C E R I H E X F F M F
B S X R M C L S L E M Z N C M I P I L U N Y V M F W B K P Q
I C V H E M E G Q E C Y D P N D M Q D V P J L D K O W C V U
L X K T S X P E G Y T L E D A A W T H M U H D I Q N F V W E
I Q U J X S I N M H O L R N G Y T E C T H X O Y A U T D U E
T Y S J C J C D Y H P U F U N U O L C M E A O R P Q X I F R
Y Y V K N B V E S O M V L B K O F E J F U L L W I I X G F J
H S Y A T Q P R X M H N U O Q U B K K Q O Q D J H A K K C O
H K R G J Z U G C C F P I H W H N E N O N B I N A R Y V O Y
Q Z P Q Z R M L K V R M D Z T B C N V L U T Z B C K C X I Q
X Q R Z T W N S Y Q R L H M E L V K B V Y K X I U B D X D W

Find these hidden words / phrases:

1. Halloween
2. Gender affirming holiday
3. Transgender
4. Nonbinary
5. Queer joy
6. Butch
7. Gender expression
8. Euphoria
9. Dysphoria
10. Identity
11. Neo pronouns
12. Flamboyant
13. Trans day of visibility
14. Monster
15. Gender fluid
16. Deadname

Trans Justice Syllabus

The #TransJusticeSyllabus is an open-access syllabus offering public education regarding trans, nonbinary, and intersex issues in sociology, academia, and society at large. This syllabus provides suggested readings framed by a central theme regarding trans justice.

In society today, we are presented with a paradox of sorts: on one hand, there have been significant social and Political advances regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. Yet, on the other hand, with increasing visibility And progress, there is also a simultaneous and almost inevitable increase in the backlash targeting the most vulnerable segments of the LGBTQ population – trans and non-binary people, and particularly trans and nonbinary communities of color.

In 2020, at least 44 trans people in the U.S. lost their lives to fatal violence, the majority of whom were Black transgender women including Monika Diamond, Nina Pop, Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, and Riah Milton. Additionally, trans people experience social, economic, and political marginalization due to the lack of legal representation, violence in public spaces, barriers to gender-affirming healthcare, legal name and gender changes, as well as other seemingly neutral administrative systems that force people into narrow binary categories of gender in order to get their basic needs met. It is clear that racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and cissexism intersect in ways that shorten the lives of trans people.

The #TransJusticeSyllabus focuses on learning at the intersection of transness, Blackness, and Indigeneity. If you’re looking for a comprehensive list of trans studies topics for teaching, check out the Trans Studies Bibliography. If you are looking for a focused reading list on #BlackTransLivesMatter or #ProtectTransYouth please check out these more targeted readers. The Trans Justice Syllabus and the Trans Studies Bibliography are both living documents.

Please visit <https://s4tj.com/transjusticesyllabus/>.

Should you want to contribute to the syllabus or have any questions, please contact sociologistsfortransjustice@gmail.com.

Stay in Touch

Are you interested in assisting the Public Understanding Committee?

Scan this QR for and fill out our google forms to get involved

(link: <https://forms.gle/XKiS3YrZmDDYQGWeA>)



Thank you for reading the October 2024 S4TJ Newsletter!

If you are interested in making writing contributions to the Sociologists for Trans Justice Blog or have information you would like included in future newsletters (new publications, job opportunities, upcoming events, or any other related announcements), please contact

sociologistsfortransjustice@gmail.com.

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