

back cover

f-ace-ing silence  
( Issue 2 )

January, 2015

Thanks to the contributors for sharing their stories.

And thank you for reading them.

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front cover

**f-ace-ing silence**

Issue 2  
January, 2015

words by aces—  
silenced in asexual / ace spaces

**Content Warnings:**

Content warnings ( cw ) are a “heads up” about topics that some people find upsetting. If they seem like “overkill” to you, please respect that they’re for someone else. All writings in this zine address alienation and feeling / being silenced.

**Definitions:**

**asexual:** experiencing little or no sexual attraction and / or sexual desire for sexual contact with anyone

**ace:** abbreviation for “asexual”; can also include the whole complex asexual spectrum ( e.g., grey- & demi- sexual )

**aromantic:** experiencing little or no romantic attraction and / or romantic desire for romantic relationships

**aro:** abbreviation for “aromantic”; can also include the whole complex aromantic spectrum ( e.g., grey- & demi- romantic )

**allosexual ( or alloromantic ):** common ace term for people who are *not* on the asexual spectrum ( or aromantic spectrum )— an alternative to simply calling people “sexual” ( or “romantic” )<sup>1</sup>

**compulsory sexuality:** set of social attitudes, institutions and practices holding that a) *everyone should have or want to have sex* (of the “right” kind... or at all); b) empowerment equals having or wanting sex; and c) sex or sexual access can be “owed”

**amatonormativity:** the normative privileging / prioritising of romantic relationships above all other kinds of relationships— the social force treating romance as intrinsically superior to, or more intimate, important or “normal” than other kinds of relationships

<sup>1</sup> There are good reasons to avoid calling people “sexual” to refer to their non-aceness. However, I find the term “allosexual” politically problematic, and I prefer less common alternatives like “z-sexual”: <http://rotten-zucchini.tumblr.com/post/105421963160/some-reflections-on-sexual-and-allosexual-ace>

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## Introduction

The first issue of “f-ace-ing silence” happened sort of by accident. While I was searching for something else<sup>2</sup>, I stumbled onto *the silence* ( not fictional sci-fi creatures ): it was an experience I won’t forget.

I found aces in silence— aces f-ace-ing silence— alone. Their stories of silence needed an audience. They still do.

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Compiling this zine issue made it clear to me is that ace folks are going through similar struggles over and over again: every cohort’s trials and accomplishments are lost to the next.

Conversations about doing non-sexual romantic relationships in various ways, and valuing non-romantic relationships and aromantic people are not new in ace spaces. It’s disheartening that people working out these issues now don’t have things any easier than aces agonising over them years ago.

Some of us cleared space for ourselves but we didn’t build solid roads or leave behind maps. Some people can follow in our footsteps and forge their own routes with the tools / words we left behind. But many can’t access those tools— some because their ace community connections are *offline*. But also, the tools aren’t useful for everyone: some were crafted so as to be easy to use destructively... and often are— used against many of us.

We needed to do better— we still do ( this amorphously heterogenous “we” of ambivalent ace meta-community ). Some aces face silence now because we didn’t document our journeys in accessible ways. And there will be many others if we don’t start. But there’s more to the silence than that. Much of the silence lingers in *alienation from ace spaces*. Our own spaces reinscribe the marginalisation we face— for some especially.

We’re familiar with the alienation of *being ace alone* in non-ace worlds. That’s part of why we created ace spaces: to connect with each other across that void of silence and find ( and build ) community, together.

<sup>2</sup> I was trying to start a conversation about violence in queerplatonic relationships, with the zine “Rotten Zucchini”. That’s still a work in progress, but if the topic resonates with you, the zine and ongoing info are here: <http://rotten-zucchini.tumblr.com/rotten>

But realistically, ace “community” isn’t for all aces. Some ace people and experiences are still left out of the dominant ace narrative ( by chance and by design ). Some are left behind or minimised in the pursuit of ace “visibility” and “acceptance” ( e.g., via respectability politics that only benefit a privileged few ). Some are actively silenced in ace spaces, *by other aces*.

And some aces— e.g., ace PoC<sup>3</sup> and / or ace survivors of sexual violence<sup>4</sup> ( among others )— have already affirmed their exclusion clearly... and certainly don’t need me to point it out.

Silence isn’t just a thing that the non-ace world does to us. It’s also a thing we do to each other in various ways— and some of us a lot more than others. As broad structures of power and oppression play out in ace spaces ( as they do elsewhere ), some people bear their brunt. It’s not random.

This zine has stories of aces struggling because what they’re seeking in their own ace spaces just isn’t there ( yet? ). Some of them are also stories of deliberate silencing or systemic omission— the taboo link between asexuality and trauma ( and racism ), and the often hostile community politics surrounding sex-aversion. Others are stories of simple omission.

The stories of hostile silence benefit from being published in a zine ( as opposed to on a blog ). Zines are potentially safer spaces for words that risk provoking backlash— it’s hard to retaliate against a zine article— and a couple authors were able to share what they did here specifically because of that.

But at the same time, there are so many other stories that are still missing. And again it isn’t random *which* silence— *whose* stories— find space here, as in any given forum. The words in this zine are part of a much larger meta-narrative. ( And they might, or might not, resonate with your own silence. )

We need to pay attention to these vastly different stories, while recognising there are other stories too. These are all collective struggles, and nobody should have to face them alone.

— Omnes et Nihil

<sup>3</sup> <http://thingsthatmakeyouacey.tumblr.com/post/82945597477/it-kind-of-is-when-it-comes-to-the-community>

<sup>4</sup> <http://queenieofaces.tumblr.com/post/95906995048/here-goes-everything>

## Sebastian Grace

### **Bio:**

Sebastian is a genderfluid romantic asexual immigrant and transracial adoptee. She is of Chinese descent but grew up in England. Sebastian now resides in a large North-American city where she is a student and a writer.

### **“What’s r(ace) and RAD got to do with it? Musings of a transracially adopted asexual”**

*cw: childhood trauma and abuse*

When you meet me, I will not look at you. I will look at the space behind you, your hands, or your clothing - anywhere but your eyes. I remember that it is social convention to look people in the eye so I redirect my gaze, but I am too late; you have already noticed.

I am not being rude: I have reactive attachment disorder (RAD).

I was born sometime in late February or early March in the '90s, in a tiny Chinese village. I spent the first four months of my life in an orphanage, without meaningful human interaction and without adequate mental stimulation. When my parents adopted me, I was incapable of engaging with people.

I don't know how to react to touch and emotion. Among the characteristics of RAD are difficulties communicating emotionally, an aversion to touch, control issues, and a lack of conscience with the absence of guilt, remorse, or regret.

I could never figure out how to make friends in school and it wasn't for lack of trying. I found people with similar interests and hobbies, but in the end my emotional unavailability damaged my relationships with them.

When my relatives hug me, I have to consciously make myself hug them back. My facial expressions do not match what I feel, and my voice remains a steady monotone unless I remember to vary it. I hate being touched and I do not like being looked at directly. My parents tried to correct my behaviour, pointing out the instances where I did not make eye contact or when my physical responses were inappropriate.

Since I grew up believing that something was wrong with me, I believed the same when it came to my asexuality. In the heteronormative world of compulsory sexuality, it never occurred to me that, if I didn't like any form of physical interaction and sex especially, that there could be a word for that and that such a word could refer to a sexual orientation.

When I realised that I didn't like sex, which seemed to be the only way to validate a romantic relationship, I assumed that this was just another part of me that had to be corrected.

I made every mistake in the book. I thought I had to have sex to know for sure that I didn't like it, so I did. I tried again, under the assumption that I was doing it wrong, or that I hadn't found the right person. I experimented. I consented willingly multiple times with different people but eventually gave up. Once, I told a partner that I didn't care whether or not we had sex. We still had sex.

I started to avoid my romantic partners out of fear that we would have sex when we saw each other. I felt like I could not articulate that I loved them and found them attractive, but I didn't want to have sex. I couldn't tell them that I was not able to meet their expectations and sexual needs.

I could never bring myself to share personal problems with them either, even though they told me theirs. They cried and protested that they wanted to help me and I coldly refused to let them. I couldn't explain my feelings to them in a way that I deemed accurate or satisfactory, so I never even tried.

Asexual survivors of trauma and abuse, as well as aces with disabilities are consistently excluded from ace spaces because our existence defies the asexual ideal. The normative asexual community does not like us. We make asexuality too difficult to explain to the public. Representing us is too much work - we're too diverse - and it is easier for them to pretend we don't exist.

According to mainstream asexual educators who want to reassure the public, there is no need to worry: asexuals are just like you. Asexuals aren't abused, there's nothing wrong with asexuals, nothing causes asexuality, asexuals are "normal". Apparently we're just people who don't want to have sex.

Yet, many of us are not "normal". Discovering asexuality was pivotal for me and I immediately linked it with my RAD, but my own community told me that I couldn't claim the identity. The relationship between my experiences and my asexuality should not have a bearing on the legitimacy of my orientation.

I admit that I don't know the causes of asexuality or whether there can be a cause at all but for me, my history led me to the conclusion that I was asexual.

Not that I ever really felt that I could claim the label comfortably and fit in with the community. When I first learned of asexuality, I registered it as a white orientation- an identity that belonged to white people only. I didn't know any asexuals of colour or racialised aces and my own prejudices probably played into the assumption as well.

Visibility, especially when race and ethnicity are involved, is crucial to defining asexuality. When the voice of asexuality is white, when the photographs of asexuals at Pride are of white aces, when the people spreading information about asexuality are all white, aces of colour are left out.

Being an asexual of colour and an ace whose narrative does not fit the ideal mould is difficult. There is no space for us when all the dialogue is between white, neurotypical, untraumatised aces. Representation matters more than I can explain. When I was struggling to validate my asexuality, I looked everywhere for something, anything, that could be a sign that I was right.

I looked at the literature of asexuality and I looked at the media. There was no indication that people like me could be asexual or that they even existed.

The immense dislocation I felt, and continue to feel, from my personal relationships and from my family is actually magnified within the ace community. Sometimes, I believe that it is my failure to interact effectively with the community that means I can't participate in it, and it's difficult not to feel that way when the community tells me that I'm right - my other issues prevent me from actually being asexual.

The anti-trauma discourse in asexual spaces is violent. I know other aces are affected too, especially considering the statistics on violence and trauma experienced by racialised people and the notable dip in quality and frequency of the healthcare we receive. We are a visible minority within a marginalised group who are silenced and told to leave our own space.

I have never heard or read anything about asexuality and transracial adoption. There is of course, so much more to say. While my experience is unique, there are parts that will resonate with other transracially adopted aces. For me, being transracially adopted highlights the intersection of race and trauma. Our identities are disclaimed through the denial of our asexualities due to trauma and its lasting effects, as well as through systematic erasure of aces of colour.

It is hard to shout constantly into a vacuum. This is the first time I have written about these specific experiences with regard to my asexuality and I vow that it will not be the last. If the asexual community will not break the silence, I will. We are more than possibilities, potentials, or speculations; we are actualities. Our narratives are important- they will pave the way for other asexuals from other marginalised communities to a space that should have been ours all along.

Cinderella

**Bio:**

I am East Indian, 32 years of age, I identify as a female heteroromantic asexual. After I got diagnosed with a chronic illness I lost my sex drive and my desire for sex. Luckily for me I didn't have to face this new reality alone. I found a local Asexual group that meets once a month. The group is very inclusive. I have never felt excluded because I have a disability or because of whom I am. I found a supportive, friendly bunch of people my age.

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Sex is overrated!! As someone who is transitioning from being sexual to asexual you can take my word for it. It's not at all what Hollywood portrays it to be. That is why not having sex is not that hard! I find men attractive but can't picture myself sleeping with them.

I have the desires for partnership of a sexual women and am looking for my place in this new world. Sexual men desire me and make me feel beautiful. That makes me happy but I have to turn them down, sometimes against my own desires. I long for partnership with an asexual man but asexual men don't desire me and don't make me feel beautiful.

When I hang out with asexual folks I feel like it belong, but not completely, because the individuals there are happy single and would never dream of pairing up. I am changing and learning every day, adapting to this new way of life and redefining myself.

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People from my local Ace meetup are very inclusive but I feel excluded because I am not a typical Ace. I'm not really Ace but sex is compromised due to my chronic illness. I feel like I am an outsider that doesn't belong and that is hard to understand. I find men attractive and so I long for partnership with one. From my experience with my local Ace meetup this makes me unique.

I am sure there are other Ace women and men who feel the same way. I have met other Aces that longed for partnership but, unlike me, they were gay. I think there are also a few hetero romantic women but I have not interacted with them. My local Ace meetup has only recently grown. For a while I kept to myself and did not share what I was feeling with others from the group.

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**“Relationships”**

The takeaway message I got from the 2014 Asexuality conference in Toronto was that there are other relationships, that are not the standard romantic relationship, that is so common in society, that matter just as much.

Everyone in my life seems to have a romantic partner or are striving to get one. That is the culture I come from, that is the norm. Since I have been a teenager I have dreamt of meeting the right man, of finding MY romantic partner. My definition of a romantic partner is someone to love, to share my life with, someone with who to share victories and defeats, joy and sorrow. My pain should be their pain and vice versa.

I didn't choose my family and they didn't choose me. They are stuck with me, and I with them. What is nice about friends is that you get to chose them. Friends can become family with the right cultivating. Friends can love you and care about you deeply too. Friends are the family you get to chose.

A lot of things can stem from friendship. Deep character change can only be done through deep friendship and in my opinion your partner must be your best friend before all things.

I just trained with Women Speak Out for 12 weeks. It was an intensive course on public speaking to make social change. Women Speak Out is under Working for Change, an alternative business that hires psychiatric survivors. I trained with 12 resilient and inspiring women with whom I created a strong bond. I recently had dinner with some of the girls. I felt supported and I thought how wonderful cause I didn't have to have sex with anyone to form a strong bond.

I use to be so caught up on finding a romantic partner that almost everything I did was to find my him. In 2011 I started going to asexual meetups with the hope of finding my asexual significant other.

When I saw him nowhere in sight I stopped going, until I sent an email to one of the members who was very supportive of me and my disappointment. I saw how supportive zhe was and I started going to meetups again with open eyes this time. I was no longer in the suffocating cube I had created for myself.

Individuals who organize meetups will always keep me in mind when they do so. They are supportive and try to include you as much as possible. They will try to pick an accessible venue if they can. They take the time to make sure I am ok and don't feel excluded because of my disability.

Maybe I don't need that romantic partner. Maybe the friendships in my life should be cultivated and valued just as much. I don't want to confuse loneliness with my desire for a romantic partner. There are other remedies to loneliness. The problem is really with my narrow frame of mind.

Maybe I am giving the romantic partner relationship too much importance. It's not the end of the world if you don't have a partner. Maybe I don't really know what it means to have a partner. What am I really looking for? Do I really know what I'm looking for? It's probably not a bed of roses like I imagine it to be

I use to think, if only I had the right man I would be happier and I was only hurting myself because I didn't. Would I be happier if I had a romantic partner or is it an ideal I have created for myself as a result of society's conditioning? I have to rise above all the conditioning that limits me. There is no fulfilment unless I am willing to let go of my conviction that I need to find the right man to be happy.

I don't need to depend on someone else for my happiness. I have to stop being the slave of my ideals. Being a slave to my ideals only creates self created unnecessary unhappiness.

True love, to me, is unconditional. I know it is rare. I know true love between two individuals exists and I sometimes see it around me. I wish I was an aromantic asexual, but I'm not. However, my aromantic friend told me that being aromantic doesn't solve anything. I want a man who will like me for who I am. Someone that inspires me and who admires me.

Sex is not a big deal to me. It's so overrated. I want maybe an open relationship, with a man that finds me attractive or a relationship with an asexual man that also finds me attractive. I really don't fit any box but do believe I will find my place on earth.... some day!!!

In my inexperienced frame of mind I have decided that I will not give up on looking for true love. I don't know if people who are not those who created you can love you unconditionally. Maybe a significant other doesn't love you unconditionally but gets close to it.

I will keep looking. I don't know if I will ever find him, but if I can find people as inclusive as the folks I met at my local ace meetup, and as wonderful as the women I trained with in Women Speak Out, then maybe I will. In the meantime I will cultivate my relationships, nurture them and value them highly with the amazing people around me.

## the tetrad systematrix

### **Bio:**

we are an aroace schizophrenic multiple system of 20 beings in one 24-year-old white autistic physically disabled body. we like cats very much and one of us is one.

### “disabled aroace multiple representation, and other improbabilities”

*cw: sexual abuse, sexual coercion, survivor shaming, disablism*

we don't track the #asexual tag on tumblr. we're asexual ( though some might question our use of the word ) and aromantic ( though we often feel like a big faker ), and we basically live on tumblr. our disabilities ( or rather the world's refusal to accommodate them ) make it impossible to go outside 99% of the time, and an internet connection is the only way we maintain contact with the rest of the world.

but we don't track the tag.

when we read what we're going to call Mainstream Ace Discourse, we're faced with the reminder that to the majority of aces - or at least those whose posts get the most notes and whose voices are the loudest - we personally simply don't exist, or we only exist tacked on to seem Ally-ish.

the most popular online ace spaces have proven themselves again and again to be unwelcoming and downright dangerous for anyone who isn't white, thin, fairly middle-class, enabled, cis and ( preferably hetero- ) romantic.

as a physically disabled, schizophrenic autistic multiple system of trauma survivor nonbinary aroace dykes, we feel the alienation of “mainstream” ace discourse like a slap in the face - and we can only imagine how much worse that would be if we weren't white, since ace spaces tend especially to reproduce all the same oppressions people of colour face elsewhere in white supremacist society[\*].

the messages we see most often are that asexuality doesn't have to come from trauma, that it's totally okay to have sex if you're asexual, that aromanticism and sex repulsion are totally separate things from asexuality and that you should never assume an asexual person doesn't want to have sex with you.

there are some truths among the harmful words, but we have to wonder why these are the ones most loudly spoken and why they come packed with so much dangerous sexual-amatonormativity.

no, not all asexuality comes from trauma. but making that the first bullet point in your pamphlet or ace awareness post shoves asexual trauma survivors / victims under the bus and fails to show how the continued insistence that aces can't be or usually aren't trauma survivors continues to traumatize us and invalidate our aceness.

we are exhausted by reminders that it's okay to do things that everyone tells you to do to be Normal, as if we didn't already know, as if we hadn't been told our whole life that having sex as compromise was a-okay and that no one should assume we don't want to have sex with them and that it's as simple as placidly agreeing to do something to make your partner happy no matter what you want and emptying one's mind of the selfish desire for bodily autonomy.

as if we didn't already know that the perfect image of an asexual is a romantic one who Still Wants a Relationship and for whom “relationship” of course means “romantic relationship” and who is Normal just without the sexual attraction part.

so it seems pointless to us to have ace-friendly spaces that still try to shove compulsory sexuality down ones throat even if the compulsory sexual *desire* part is left out, and act like sex-repulsed trauma survivor asexuals are somehow ruining it for everybody else by questioning compulsory sexuality in ace spaces

we've seen actual asexual people go so far as to write enthusiastic cheerful articles on how to seduce an asexual - of course rushing to assure us that they don't mean "seduce," oh no, they just mean waiting for an opportunity and taking it... which is of course exempt from the possibility of coercion, because Positivity and Consent... or something?

there's also the popular idea that anyone can enjoy sex whether or not they experience desire or attraction, without acknowledging those of us for whom sexual contact has always been physically painful and emotionally scarring because we never got the choice to say no.

of course this sex-positive asexual discourse generally fails to recognize that it's a violation to sexualize *anyone* without their consent, and that it's a problem to view absolutely everybody as a potential sexual object and consent as a series of polite formalities to be rushed through so you can say later you did nothing wrong.

and although in recent years we have excitedly watched a small community of physically disabled / traumatized / autistic / multiple aces coalesce on tumblr, we still see hardly any representation of disabled aces in mainstream ace or disability discourse. mainstream ace discourse tends to forget about those of us too disabled to participate in capitalism, since it tends to be fairly overwhelmingly liberal, and popular disability discourse re: queerness tends to forget we exist most of the time.

popular disability justice writing tends to resist the desexualization of disabled bodies by insisting that we are all Sexual Beings, even the disabled ones, and that it's basically unthinkable that ace could be a sexual orientation of its own *and* empowering to claim as ( often hypersexualized! ) disabled beings.

so what we have here, in our personal experience, is a big old tangle of mainstream ace discourse ignoring the experiences of trauma survivors, which allows us to get further traumatized in the name of sex positivity, which in turn makes us more disabled and unable to access ace discourse, and when we're inevitably bounced out of ace spaces into disabled ones they bounce us right back out.

and that's ( part of ) why we don't track the #asexual tag.

#### Footnote:

[\*] there are a lot of important discussions happening right now about aceness and racism and how white aces reproduce white supremacy in our communities - this is not a silencing experience we can personally speak about, but is very much worth spending time to learn about and work against. folks have taken the time to write about their trauma and it's imperative for us white aces to listen to & amplify the voices of aces of colour.

Laura

**Bio:**

I'm a 41 year old cis woman who lives in the United States and I am a white convert to Islam. I'm sex-averse, non-libidoist, celibate, aromantic, and asexual. I've known about my absence of sexual and romantic attraction since my late teens but didn't have any labels beyond "not interested" until I discovered the concept of asexuality at age 31. My experiences with asexual communities have been entirely online and primarily on Tumblr and on blogs that share audience with Tumblr.

**"Asexual community politics and sex aversion"**

*cw: non-specific mentions of sexual violence, corrective rape, and medical invalidation of asexuality. Discussion of epistemic violence against sex-averse asexuals.*

If the original question was, "Can I do a particular thing?" "Well, when you try to do that, here are some of the things society might do back", I think our discourses would immediately become a lot more political. And whether or not identity questions ( "Am I an X?" ) can be rephrased as doing questions ( "Can I do Y?" ) might be a good litmus test of the political reality around identities. Because not all ways-of-being ( active ) are politically identical.

-Lisa Millbank[1]

Are all ways of being asexual politically identical? Does society push back more strongly or in different ways against different types of asexual experience?

I believe that the key purpose for which the asexual community should be organized is to support asexuals in finding how they can best lead livable lives as people who do not experience sexual attraction.

Many factors can make a livable life hard to find for a given asexual individual; some of these factors are systemic, institutional, or structural within a particular society and thus require organized efforts to dismantle them.

It is very often the case that factors which do not seem directly related to sexual orientation nonetheless intersect with asexuality in such a way that an asexual member of a marginalized group experiences bias against that group in a different manner than allosexual members of the same group do.

An example I have experienced in my own life is bias against Muslim women who wear hijab ( a headscarf and modest dress ). When a non-Muslim white woman said to me, "Are you one of those people that killed our people?" ( referring to the 9 / 11 terrorist attacks ), I doubt that she was thinking about my sexuality!

And yet the association of Islam with terrorism is part of a larger *desexualization*[2] of visibly Muslim women that I sometimes find a relief as a sex-averse asexual even as I bemoan the thinking behind it.

I thus see Islamophobia as an *asexual issue*. Similarly, bias against people of color, women, people who are poor or economically marginalized, people with disabilities, and people with LGBT identities - all of these are asexual issues because asexuals belong to all of these groups and are affected by these biases.

Where the asexual community is not able to be effective in addressing these issues directly ( for instance, due to its small size, invisibility, or lack of structural power ), I believe that it should seek to form coalitions with other groups that may be better placed to take action.

I also believe that the asexual community must work to structure itself so that it does not reproduce these same systems of bias within itself. This is a task which requires conscious effort as otherwise any sub-group within a society will tend to reproduce the dynamics of the larger society.

I believe that the asexual community should ultimately become anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-ableist, anti-cissexist, anti-heterosexist, and anti every other system of oppressions that we humans have devised.

At the same time, the asexual community is uniquely placed to address those systemic factors - those ways in which societal systems push back and make it hard to lead a livable life - which primarily affect asexuals or which tend to affect asexuals in a significantly different manner than they affect allosexuals.

In particular, I am thinking of compulsory sexuality, sex normativity, amatonormativity, and allonormativity.

These ideologies are closely interlocking and together establish a societal norm to experience sexual attraction ( allonormativity ), to be led by it to engage in sexual activity ( compulsory sexuality ), and to enjoy that activity and to seek it out ( sex normativity ), preferably in ( heteronormative ) romantic / sexual relationships ( amatonormativity ).

As asexual activists often love to assert, asexuals may share a lack of experiencing sexual attraction but differ on almost every other aspect of sexuality - when we include the whole asexual spectrum, with gray-asexuals and demisexuals, we even include variation in the experience of sexual attraction.

Aces may be sexually inactive or active; they may be sex-averse, sex-indifferent, sex-favorable ( I follow the definition[3] of sex favorability as liking sex, seeking it out and wanting it in relationships ) or anywhere in between these positions; they may be alloromantic, gray-aromantic, or aromantic, or reject the concept of romantic orientation entirely.

Because aces differ so much, the ideologies of compulsory sexuality, sex normativity, amatonormativity, and even allonormativity will tend to operate differently upon different types of aces. I believe that these different operations lead to different political placements for various aces (which are further modified by other intersecting identities, as discussed above ).

Specifically, I believe that having society push back on you for being non-normative in multiple ways in regard to sex is a more difficult position than when it primarily pushes back at you for a single non-normative characteristic.

An example is being pushed back at for your lack of sexual activity *and* for your sex aversion *and* for your lack of interest in romantic / sexual relationships or your non-normative experience of them *and* for your lack of sexual attraction.

This is a different experience than when society pushes back at you hardest for your lack of sexual attraction but pushes back much less so, or not at all, in other areas because of your sexual activity, sex favorability, or alloromanticism.

When I said the above on a popular asexual blog, one sentence in a post[4] primarily about other topics, I got more pushback, primarily from sex-favorable aces, than I have received for anything else I've ever written.

The pile-on escalated to the point that the comments section eventually became an unsafe space for me and for several other sex-averse aces, and it left a survivor of sexual violence triggered for several days - and that's just what I know about from people who contacted me privately. Others whom I do not know about may have been harmed as well.

In a post meant to open discussion about specific challenges faced by many sex-averse aces, the conversation was re-centered again and again on sex-favorable aces. When sex-averse aces, including survivors, brought up issues such as medical invalidation and corrective rape, these were ignored or minimized and their specific connection to sex aversion invalidated.

We felt *silenced* by what happened. Actively, violently silenced. Even today, several months later, I am hesitant to post about this topic again to blogs where I usually write and decided to submit it to the *f-ace-ing silence* zine instead.

Why did this epistemic violence occur? I believe it is because the online asexual community has significantly reproduced within itself sex normativity.

Sex normativity is inherent in the structure of our surrounding society and, as I noted above, such structural biases will tend to reproduce themselves in sub-groups unless these groups take conscious action to dismantle the biases. I thus believe that the asexual community needs to consciously structure itself to resist sex normativity.

How can we do this? First, sex-averse aces should not be made to feel that we are the community's "dirty secret"[5] or that we need to engage in "sex cheerleading"[6] each time that we discuss our sex aversion.

Recognizing that sex-positive discourse tends to exclude and marginalize sex-averse aces and opening up discussion of alternative viewpoints[7] would also go a long way toward making asexual groups safer spaces for sex-averse aces.

Above all, *listen* to sex-averse aces. Listen when we tell you that we have no place else to go. Listen when we tell you that the ways certain issues are framed are harmful to us. Recognize that we are being pushed down by society in a different way than you are and that we need extra support to lead livable lives because of our placement.

Recognize that "some do, some don't" rhetoric about asexuals and sex often not only obscures the actual demographics[8] of the asexual community but also our different political placements.

And realize that the question of political placements is not about the validity of anyone's identity but about how our society is structured.

## Footnotes

[1] <http://radtransfem.tumblr.com/post/93491018837/vague-ramblings-about-tumblr-authorisation-of-identity>

[2] <http://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/2014/08/04/hijab-as-leave-me-alone-im-not-interested/>

[3] <http://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/2014/07/25/reflections-on-the-use-and-boundaries-of-sex-favourable-asexual-as-a-term/>

[4] <http://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/2014/08/21/asexual-communities-identity-and-the-question-of-unassailability/>

[5] <http://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/2014/06/22/i-am-not-your-dirty-secret/>

[6] <http://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/2013/12/03/i-am-not-your-sex-cheerleader/>

[7] <http://asexualagenda.wordpress.com/2014/07/21/when-the-answer-is-always-no-sex-aversion-and-my-sex-negative-feminism/>

[8] <http://ace-muslim.tumblr.com/post/65198535942/so-its-ace-awareness-week-which-is-200-necessary-and>

## Anonymous

### Bio:

I am Canadian, caucasian, twenty two, transgender ( pre-transition FtM, to be specific ), and far more aromantic than asexual. A writer, reader, gamer, cook, and incurable lover of the grotesque.'

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Being aromantic, I've always felt as though it is far less accepted than asexuality. It disappoints a lot of aces who see you as their chance for that One True Relationship, and it's erased by the party line of "we're just like the rest of you, minus sexual attraction!

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I tap my fingers against the mouse in anticipation, watching as introductions and menus flash across my screen. It isn't the first time I've introduced someone to the game in question, and as always, I look forward to playing the occasionally mischievous mentor.

The evening proceeds well. We're a team, in success and catastrophic failure. It's heady, it's exciting, and I almost miss the point at which they begin to flirt.

When my awareness does catch up to what is going on, it feels like a familiar stone dropping into my stomach. This was a person I met in an asexual space, their romantic orientation undefined, and I'd almost dared to hope.

Weeks later, one of our conversations turns to the subject of romantic orientations. Their tone becomes hesitant and dubious as the question is voiced - "You aren't aromantic, are you?"

My answer is reluctant, and the time that we spend together begins to dwindle. Soon, we no longer speak.

I'm wandering through a game of my own with AVEN chat open in another window. Joking and chatting with a stranger in that peculiar late-night giddiness, where silliness abounds and everything seems like an appropriate topic.

Then comes the lament on their part - "How come everyone I'm interested in is aromantic?"

I say so little about it at the time, but in the wake of their disappointed statement, I can feel my value in the conversation lessening. It is a dismissal, however roundabout, of that which I CAN offer to another person.

I meet someone who is explicitly aromantic, and at first, things seem to go so well. We have our differences, but most of them are easily surmounted or accepted. Months pass, and gradually, they dominate the time that I once set aside for myself.

Finally, I've had more than enough, and I try to tell them so. I explain my fear - that they styled it as a platonic engagement from the start, yet they're trying to create something exclusive and utterly subversive of my boundaries. Something that is an unwanted romantic relationship in everything but its labels.

Their response is dismissal followed by furious offence, and very soon, we cease to speak to each other entirely.

Encounters such as these seem to deliver a clear message - that what I can give in a relationship is not enough, even for an asexual. That I am less, a disappointment, because of the connections that I won't sustain. Asexuals often lament the physical intimacy that allosexuals may try to demand of them, yet so easily, some turn around and demand another sort of intimacy from their fellows.

There are many things that I can be to others, that I want to be. The support when they are down. The virtual gun at their side. The other writer who gleefully assists in hashing out story ideas long after all parties involved should have been in bed.

Not the one and only, not the other half. Not the 'significant other', a term I loathe for how it implies that other relationships are, by definition, insignificant.

What I want is fun, meaningful, yet always respectful of the boundaries and proclivities of its participants. Something that does not begrudge them their associations with other people, or the time and space they must take for themselves in order to be emotionally healthy.

Unfortunately, even among people who DO identify as aromantic, it seems as though that dynamic can be difficult to find. We've all seen the cultural expectation expressed and retold, in media, in our own interpersonal dealings and those of others.

The idea that a sufficiently close relationship, even one that is not explicitly romantic or exclusive, should have no such borders or limits. That if a person closes off a part of themselves, it has to be for a negative reason.

In truth, those borders and limits can be incredibly beneficial, for individuals and relationships both. They provide a clear sense of who you are, what you like, what is yours, and what you will tolerate in regards to those things. When properly discussed in any sort of relationship, they can lend a depth of understanding and trust that would otherwise be impossible.

You know what will make the other party most happy and comfortable, and they know the same for you. Disagreements can be handled more easily, and are less likely to occur in the first place when it is clear where the lines are drawn.

Perhaps in some relationships, establishing these boundaries will be as simple as asking the other person not to discuss a subject that makes you uneasy, or requesting that they refrain from contacting you during a block of time that is explicitly set aside for solitude.

When it involves something as major as a form that the relationship can never take, however, communicating and RESPECTING these limits becomes all the more vital.

Acting as if a person is broken for maintaining such borders, or as if they're withholding something to which you have a right, is only going to drive them away from you and whatever company the two of you could have shared.

Imagine inviting someone into your home for a cup of tea, a video game, whatever you might enjoy doing with another person. Imagine if they responded to your hospitality by kicking off their shoes and immediately crossing the room to one of its closed doors, tugging against its stubborn handle. Throwing their weight against it, announcing its locked state to you as though it was some sort of problem to be fixed.

Dumbstruck, you try to explain to them that it's meant to be locked - that the room's contents aren't for them. They're quick to take offence at that, kicking the base of the door and insisting that every room of your house ought to be open to them.

That is how it feels when someone finds one door of my heart open, admitting them in friendship, and assumes that they'll naturally be able to proceed into its other chambers.

I try to tell them that no offence is meant, that no one else is allowed through those doors, and suddenly I'm a villain. I've been misusing their affections, or leading them on. I'm afraid, cruel, or don't realize my own desires.

Eventually, I pull back. I stop opening myself to others in hope, even in asexual spaces, where people should best understand how it feels to be pressed for a relationship in which they can't or won't engage. I stop allowing people into my 'home', and when they knock on its door unbidden, I cringe to think of what it might mean.

So what is it that I'm trying to say through anecdotes and metaphors?

That I'm not lesser. I'm not afraid, standoffish, or unsure of my own mind. That it hurts to be devalued, and to face the breach of trust that comes when someone tries to sidestep my boundaries in the guise of friendship.

I know for a fact that I'm not the only one who has pulled back from AVEN on account of these experiences. That bias is there, that sense of quiet erasure and devaluing. All I ask you to do is think the next time you're speaking with an aromantic person, especially one of an introverted bent. They may not be your lover, your sweetie, your 'one and only', but there is so much else that they can bring to a relationship.

## Omnes et Nihil

### Bio:

I'm a 30-year-old queer asexual non-binary freak of the ( sort-of- Jewish ) white person variety, and enough of a hard-hitting feminist to get regularly called a bitch. I'm in the *really* dark grey zone of the aromantic spectrum to the point of being aroace. I don't do the romance / dating thing and I really never have. I hail from a large Canadian city where I spend a lot of time alone with the cat who claims me as her person.

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This piece is about my experiences in high school— more than a decade ago. I endured a lot of harassment as a teen related to my aroaceness, and much of that played out in ways that were specific to me also being a *fat girl*. It feels a little strange to be writing about that now, since that's no longer my experience: I'm neither fat, nor a girl ( or woman ).

I never tried to change either of those things— they changed on their own. ( The body changes were largely related to chronic health issues: my fatter teen body was stronger, healthier and much more natural for me than the unremarkably thin-ish version I occupy now ).

I don't know how my high school experience might have been different if I hadn't have ( still ) been occupying "girl" space or if I hadn't have been fat ( or if I'd have been ashamed of my body and / or trying to make myself smaller— I wasn't ). I'm sure my peers still would have targeted me as aroace. But they probably would have done it differently. And no doubt they also would have done it differently if I wasn't white.

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## “High School, Harassment & other Hindrances of an Aroace”

*cw: discussion of bullying ( including severe threats ), sexual harassment, homophobia, fatphobia, ciscentrism; mention of sexual coercion, masturbation and semen*

There’s a story of aces in high school who didn’t know about asexuality. It’s a story of feeling out of place, alone, of not understanding what other people are experiencing, of not “getting it”. It’s a story of feeling left out, and of trying to fit in and never quite getting there. It’s a story of feeling broken.

I never felt broken for being asexual.

I didn’t know asexuality was a thing when I was in high school. Having access to that information and language would have helped me make more sense out of myself and the world. But I never felt broken for being asexual.

And I never tried to fit in either. I was so far off the mark that it wouldn’t have helped— I had nothing to gain from trying, no benefit to complying. Trying to fit in is only an option for people who are close enough to “normal” that there’s at least some possibility it will work. I never had that.

I didn’t feel broken and people didn’t treat me like I was broken. They treated me like I had no right to exist.

Where are the stories in aces spaces from people who were nowhere near “normal” in high school? Feeling broken sucks. It’s important to talk about it. But it’s not the only thing that sucks.

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I was a multidimensional, consummate freak. I experienced my asexuality as just another aspect of my freakishness. But it was also central to my high school experience and to how my peers treated me. I was harassed a lot in high school. And it was ace-specific.

I was the socially awkward, loner kid. I was the fat kid with the big breasts. I didn’t have celebrity crushes, hadn’t seen whatever movie, didn’t know that song and didn’t care to.

I was the smart kid who used too many big words that nobody understood.

I was the weird kid who did strange things, like scrawling song lyrics on empty classroom blackboards, and sometimes went for days without speaking.

When I did say stuff, I had too many opinions, was too political, too philosophical, too abstract— especially for a girl. When I said stuff, I wasn’t talking about boys.

It mattered that I was a girl, even though I never did “girl” right. I was a gender-nonconforming queer kid— but I didn’t even do that right. I was never a tomboy, defiantly femme or visibly genderqueer. I was just an odd-looking, odd-acting misfit.

I got the typical “dyke” harassment. But I got a lot of other stuff too.

Adults call it bullying. But that’s a misleading.

So much of the “bullying” high school girls endure is actually sexual harassment. For girls who seem to want sex with boys, it’s *because* they want sex with boys. For girls who don’t ( or who aren’t eager enough to please or to follow commands ) it’s *because* they don’t or aren’t eager enough. Slut-shaming, lesbo-shaming, prude-shaming. Sometimes all together. Often all together.

And it’s always worse for girls whose bodies and self-presentations aren’t what they’re supposed to be— in my case, as an improperly gendered fat girl.

It went further than that though. I didn’t know asexuality was a thing, and they didn’t know asexuality was a thing. But they all knew there was *something* going on with that.

I dressed in the least sexual way possible ( which isn’t hard for a fat girl ) and was the only girl in school whose kilt actually did come to down to my knee.

I didn’t flirt. I didn’t make sexual jokes, let alone understand them. I didn’t comment on who was “cute” or “hot”. I was never into New Kids, JTT or Leo DiCaprio.

Nobody ever asked me out on a date *and I was good with that*. ( And I certainly never tried to initiate anything date-like. )

I was a stone-cold aroace robot, at least as far as they saw me.[1] So that’s how they approached me.

So much of their harassment turned so explicitly sexual. Mostly rumours and stories about me...

- stripping naked in front of people and doing various sexually aggressive things;
- working at a strip club ( or as a street sex worker ) for men, while also being a lesbian
- having lots of unrequited love for girls, boys and teachers that I allegedly dealt with via non-consensual sexually aggressive exhibitionism
- masturbating all the time even in class ( and putting my hand on my knee apparently constituted “masturbation” when I did it– I still don’t understand how )

So much of this harassment was bound up in heterosexist misogyny and fat-phobia, because a fat girl’s desires are always inappropriate and funny. If I wasn’t showing any sexual or romantic desires ( especially none toward boys ), it must have been because there were just too many.

Some of these people also had other more intense ways of harassing me, without having to reveal who they were. Naked barbie dolls bound together, hanging on my locker, with death threats and letters telling me I should kill myself.

When you don’t know who the threats are coming from, it could be anyone. You stay away from everybody. That’s a really effective strategy for isolating someone– not that I wasn’t isolated enough already.

Sometimes they did confront me directly. And when they did, it was everything together.

My favourite was them asking me how many calories were in tablespoon of sperm. ( In the mythology they’d constructed around me, I was fat because I performed so many blow-jobs– without condoms– and swallowed so much seminal fluid... but don’t forget that I was also a dyke. )

There’s just so much going on with that. Heterosexism, misogyny, fatphobia, hypersexualisation, slut-shaming...

Practically, it was an aggressive sexually-focused question deliberately designed to make me– *the prude*– uncomfortable.

It was a science question designed to thwart me, *the science geek*, presuming I wouldn’t know the answer *because* I was a prude ( and if I did know, it was because I was a slut ).

I often considered trying to dig up the calorie count, so I’d have something to tell them when they asked me again– they always did ask me again.[2]

But back in 2000, things like that weren’t so easy to find online. And I also knew that if I gave them a number, that would somehow prove that I was indeed doing what they said I was doing... and they’d probably just come at me with something worse.

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All that harassment I endured in high school really was about my aroaceness.

I was always a freak but in middle school, they mostly just thought of me as odd and ignored me. I’d have to actually *do* or *say* something weird for people to get on my case.

These were things that basically showed how “not normal” I was overall. Things like counting shoelaces ( sort of dissociation-related ); earnestly answering rhetorical questions or interpreting people’s comments too literally; overshooting the socially acceptable number of words permitted for obscure scientific trivia; or failing to meet the tween girl minimum daily requirement of self-abasement, etc. But they were things I had to do / say.

As long as I kept my mouth shut, I was okay. And sometimes people even enjoyed my quirkiness.

Things started getting worse around ages 12-13... and went downhill in from there. High school was not fun, and there was no way out. It wasn’t about what I did or said anymore.

That shift was timed for puberty. But it wasn’t about how bodies change. It was about the other stuff. Sexuality was starting to be a *thing* for them. And it just wasn’t part of my experience.

They wouldn’t have harassed me the way they did if I’d have been cooing along with them, talking about crushes and romantic feelings. They wouldn’t have targeted my asexuality to

the extend they did— sexually harassed me to that degree— if I'd have been expressing romantic feelings and attractions. If I'd have ever been into the early-teen movie group “dates” ( the ones that simply required sitting beside your “date” among a group of peers, without any touching or kissing ).

They wouldn't have latched onto my asexuality if I'd have at least been doing “romantic” right ( or at all ). Or if I'd ever even tried it.

That's not to say that romantically inclined aces don't face problems. But they're not the *same* problems overall, and they don't work the same ways.[3]

And enough of my peers were interested in “hooking up” but not dating... and they didn't get harassed for it. So I don't think my aromanticism would have been a problem the way it was if I hadn't also been asexual.

My aromanticism led people to torment me for being asexual because people couldn't separate these two aspects of me. My aromanticism defined my experience of being asexual in high school. ( It still defines my experience of being ace. )

My aromanticism is part of my asexuality. My asexuality and my aromanticism cannot be separated and my experience bears that out.

I'm not just ace and aro, or aro and ace. I'm aroace. And that matters.

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There seems to be increasing emphasis in ace spaces on separating aromanticism from asexuality... in the name of aromantic visibility.

Some of that is in response to aro-erasing ace visibility efforts emphasising how we're “just like everybody else!”

But at least some of that pressure is coming from the emerging not-specifically-ace ( which is sometimes the specifically non-ace ) aromantic community and its emphasis on distancing aromanticism from asexuality.

Here's the problem: asexuality and aromanticism aren't parallel. Aromanticism is not about asexuality, but asexuality is a little bit about aromanticism.

( Aromantic and other ) ace folks created the language of romantic orientation and aromanticism, from an ace / aro intersection that was squarely under the asexual umbrella. The not-specifically-ace aromantic community would not exist without those tools.

It's not that non-asexual aromantic people didn't exist before that, but the language didn't exist for them to find each other, to build community along those lines.

For as long as there was an “asexual umbrella”, the aromanticism of aroaces has always belonged under it and been rightly represented by it for those of us who experience it that way. That doesn't stop, change or become invalid because a separate aromantic community emerged.

The ace umbrella isn't the only place where aromanticism belongs. But it is one place where aromanticism belongs. And taking aromanticism away from asexuality does not promote aromantic visibility.

For those of us who experience our aromanticism and asexuality together, forcibly separating aromanticism from asexuality erases our experiences, erases us.

We get in the way of the oversimplified stories a lot of people want to tell about aromanticism and asexuality— about parallel and independent romantic and sexual orientations.

There's a reason the ace community has a much higher proportion of aromantic folks than the non-ace majority. And there's also a reason why descriptors like WTFromantic are so popular ( but ones like WTFsexual are much less so... and are more likely to be used to mean something else that's not ace-related ).

Taking the aromanticism that has always been in asexuality *out of asexuality* is silencing a lot of conversations.

I was severely harassed for being aroace. And that adolescent “bullying” left a lot of damage. It's been years— nearly half my life— and I can still see its effects on how I interact with people ( or don't ), especially in my *personal* life.

I didn't feel broken for being asexual. But in some ways, the way they treated me for being aroace actually kind of did *make me broken*.

**Footnotes:**

[1] I am not actually a robot.

[2] I looked it up while writing this. Estimates range from 5 to 25 calories per teaspoon of semen ( depending on the sperm count ), which would translate to 15 to 75 calories per tablespoon. And one tablespoon of semen represents between about 3 and 7 unprotected blow-jobs performed on semen-producing people— typically, but not necessarily, men.

[3] Non-aro aces are more likely to date. And with dating comes sexual coercion and violence... in a rape culture context of compulsory sexuality. That violence is systemically supported, but it plays out one-on-one. You know where the threat is coming from, *who* is going to do the thing. It's not like everyone-and-anyone is against you.

Non-aro aces are presumably still subject to regular sexual harassment— especially girls ( trans, cis, otherwise ), non-binary youth and gender non-conforming boys. And that harassment is never okay.

poetry

## E.M. Eccher

**Bio:**

H.M. Eccher is a 19-year old married hetero-romantic asexual Caucasian female from the midwestern United States. Her subjects most commonly include experiences in her own life or stories she has heard from others. She has recently found solace in the asexual community at the AVEN.

Both “Used” and “Secrets of the Assault” were written in 2013.

## “Used”

I am a piece  
of faded lined paper  
whose borders grow only dimmer  
whose edges drift slowly away  
in waiting  
for a strong, sharp pen to make its mark.  
Unable to see the whispering lines, he asks where he might  
tread,  
and I answer in riddles.  
Frustrated, he asks, “here?”  
“Sure,” I reply, wanting only to be somehow useful, “why not?”  
A soft sound like a butterfly’s scream escapes as my lines fight  
for what is theirs  
and are forgotten; I tell myself it is  
beautiful. After all,  
what do I know?  
I am but a piece  
of faded lined paper.

**“Secrets of the Assault”**

Today I felt something bold, liberating  
something strong and free that had my hands shaking  
something I'd feared would someday overtake me  
and, without thinking, I embraced it.

And I tried to hold on to this freedom; at last  
energy had sprung up, and not from the past  
but the future, oh the many roles I could cast  
and oh the many forms I could take.

It's hard to believe after all of this time  
that now that I'm here, I've got something to hide  
I have brand-new secrets I could bury inside  
and the decision is solely my own.

And I was SO MATURE on the funeral pyres  
of all my emotions and all my desires  
because adults like it if you can walk through the fires  
without ever feeling a thing.

"It's O.K. to be weak," but they secretly wish  
that, for once, their comfort wouldn't be missed,  
that they could run along and my strength would replenish  
from an alternative source.

So I chose myself and I went it alone  
and I tried not to ask for help from my own  
family and friends, and now what I know  
is I cannot feel a thing.

I suppose I could be happy or I could be sad,  
but I couldn't be romantic and I couldn't be mad  
I couldn't fall in love because "that selfish lad"  
would hurt me and leave me in tears.

And oh I'm protected and oh I'm so safe  
but these ropes 'round my wrists are beginning to chafe  
I see something worth trying, worth my tears, worth the chase,  
and finally they start to let go.

Maybe if I'd seen a little more pain,  
a little more sorrow, a little less gain  
fewer days of sunshine and a little more rain,  
then I would have been prepared.

But maybe if the outside saw the hope from above  
that gives me my light and makes me feel loved  
it would remove the armor and gloves  
and join hands and stand strong for peace.

And I guess the emotion I felt today  
is gone now, burned out, fluttered away  
because sensibility is the rule I obey  
and maybe that's fine, after all.

## Ongoing Call for Submission: f-ace-ing silence

As aces, we're often silenced in our non-ace communities. **But we're also silenced even in ace spaces—surrounded by other aces: that's what this zine is about.**

Feeling silenced doesn't necessarily mean having been *actively* silenced ( although it could ).

It's also about feeling like you can't talk about some part of your experience, or like there isn't room to talk about it ( yet? ). And sometimes it means feeling alienated or alone because nobody is talking ( yet? ) about some part of your experience.

- **What asexuality-related thing do *you* feel *silenced* or *alienated* about in asexual / ace communities?**
- **Is there some asexuality-related part of your experience that nobody seems to be talking about ( yet? ) in ace spaces?**
- **And what do you have to say about it?**

Words, images... anything that can be printed on regular letter-sized ( 8.5"x11" ) printer paper— and contributions can be anonymous if that's what you prefer.

This is an *ongoing call for submissions*. Find updated information about the next issue of "f-ace-ing silence" here: <http://rotten-zucchini.tumblr.com/callout>

Please e-mail contributions, questions, comments... to: [rotten.zucchini@gmail.com](mailto:rotten.zucchini@gmail.com)

### An editorial note:

I included every submission I received. These are the stories of the contributors, in their own words. As the zine's editor, I provided feedback on drafts— asked for clarification— and pointed out where I thought pieces could be stronger. But changes, if any, were up to the contributors: there were no ultimatums.

These words belong to their authors. I don't necessarily understand them or agree with them.

( That's not really the point. )

They matter to me *because* they are the words that these people wanted to write.

It's a diverse silence we face,  
and we do that each in our own ways.

— Omnes et Nihil

### Formatting for Readability:

When formatting this zine, I did my best to make it as easy as possible to read— especially for people with various different reading difficulties:

- the paragraphs are as short as possible— unusually short— with obvious paragraph breaks
- there are spaces before and after punctuation marks like ( parentheses ) and / slashes /
- the font ( Trebuchet ) is one of the fonts that people with dyslexia apparently find easier to read ( according to the British Dyslexia Association: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/further-information/dyslexia-style-guide.html> )