

Dear



I was in the hospital on the night of 2 January 2019. I did not know it at that moment, but I unintentionally committed myself to a new year's resolution. That night, I was given a bracelet to identify me during my stay. I felt myself constantly staring at the 'F' on this bracelet. This bracelet did not correctly identify me. I was never identified correctly, not for a single one of those 24 years also on the bracelet. I didn't realise it at that moment, but my new year's resolution was not to have a twenty-fifth one like this. A month later, I came out as a non-binary transgender individual.

I told people who I felt safe around not to use her/she pronouns anymore, and to start calling me by they/them pronouns. The first week, I didn't hear a single they/them or she/her, I think I wasn't in any conversations that talked about me. The second week, I would get a few misgenderers and a lot of awkward reshuffling of grammar. By the third week, I think most people forgot and returned to addressing me with female pronouns.

Should I have reminded people? Should I have been actively correcting them? But then, I would be interrupting every single conversation while simultaneously outing myself to people who didn't know about my gender identity.

The fact is that language simply doesn't accommodate for me and most people – it is difficult to restructure language around one person. I have even received complaints that it is too hard to do and that I shouldn't get my hopes up. I know no one is trying to hurt me with their words but I really need people to do their part to chip away at the hyper-gendered society we live in. I need this effort to be made in order to exist.

Anonymous

Anonymous is a student at the AA.

A few weeks after coming out, my wallet was stolen. I filed a police report online and was pleased to find that they had the option: 'prefer not to say', which is the option closest to other. With most forms, I absolutely resent ticking the gender box. With this particular one, there was also an option to write your own title instead of the usual drop-down menu usually found in online forms. I wrote Mx, which is a gender-neutral title that was developed in the UK around the 1980s.

A couple of days later I got a reply from the Metropolitan police:

Update on your Metropolitan Police Crime Reference number – [REDACTED]

From: CMS@met.police.uk

Dear Unknown,

We are sorry to hear that you have been the victim of crime. An investigator from the Metropolitan Police has looked carefully at your case and we are sorry to say that, with the evidence and leads available, it is unlikely that it will be possible to identify those responsible. We have therefore closed this case.

I was disappointed, not for the missing wallet, as I knew, it was unlikely that they would be able to recover it, but for how they addressed me. I told them specifically how I didn't understand, even with an automated email generator, they could exchange 'Mx' with 'unknown'. I thought they had made a system to accommodate me, but it seemed that whatever I told them didn't mean a thing. I felt that I had misinterpreted the drop-down menu; 'Prefer not to say' actually suggested anonymity, not an 'other' gender.

Now that I have lost my wallet: I have lost almost all forms of identification. I will have to reapply for all these forms of identification again. I will have to present myself to someone and ask them to give me my identity again. Most likely I will be assigned female again and experience that moment in the hospital again and again and again. My twenty-fifth year isn't off to a great start.

Looking back, my whole life has been an endless cycle of proclamation and denial. As a child, I severely wanted to be a boy, but I never became one because I wasn't allowed to. I just didn't want to be a girl. I didn't know what else to be. As I got older, I accepted the fact that I didn't want to be a boy. I made myself as comfortable as I could being a girl because I knew there was no alternative. Later on, I felt as if I was nothing. I didn't trust my own feelings.

A few years ago, I started to try to 'come out'. I told people that I had learnt about something called gender dysphoria. I think I came out about 10 times across five years, sometimes multiple times to the same people. None of these attempts worked. No one knew what it was and how to react to it. I mean, I didn't even know what I was – I only found out what non-binary was about two years ago and that I am considered transgender about two months ago – I could only describe what I felt.

No one took it seriously and nothing changed. Can you imagine? I told people I am not a girl, and then they would address me as part of a collective group of ladies. I told people I am not a girl, and then they offered me lipstick before going to a club. I told people so many times, and then they would tell me off for not being lady-like. It is not even about semantics; I want to be viewed as who I am and for people to accept my identity.

'I'd prefer not to say.'

This is what I had been doing for 24 years.

And now I am saying it, it seems more like this: 'We would prefer you not to say, because we don't know how to respond otherwise.'

Why does it seem impossible to understand something so simple? I found that people would only listen when I had a panic attack or expressed my fear. It seemed they didn't understand my dysphoria until they saw it manifest itself in front of them. Perhaps they simply didn't get it because I always made it sound like it wasn't a big deal. Reflecting upon all these attempts to come out, I tried to tell people this casually in order to protect them from knowing how much I was suffering internally. I didn't want to burden people with my issues because I felt that navigating my gender dysphoria was solely my responsibility. I wasn't ready to admit that I was in pain those years. I didn't want to say I was suffering out loud because saying it out loud made it real. And if I kept quiet long enough, it might not be real. It might be imaginary. It might just go away. Since coming out, I have said so many things I would have never said out loud before. I didn't want them to be real but now that they are out, they are real, and I need to do something about it.

When I finally came out this year, many people told me I was brave. It wasn't on purpose. I was going to casually slide in 'I'm non-binary. It's not a big deal' but this time, something snapped. I just couldn't be that relaxed person anymore. I didn't choose to show my pain; it was too much pressure and it just came out. My biggest fear now is that this coming out attempt, which seems to have worked, for once, will be forgotten once again. I have never been so scared before but I have to be even braver now. I have no choice – I need to assert myself in order to socially transition. This the sole reason why I am writing this.

Currently, I am an unknown. I only know what feels wrong and not what feels right. I don't have the references. I don't know what to do to grow up. I don't feel that I have authority to assert my identity. I have never known what to do in regards to physical appearance and as a result I have never done anything my whole life; I was too scared to make the wrong decision. Since I came out, I mustered enough courage to align my physical appearance to match my identity. I didn't really know how to do this, but I continue to experiment to find a place that I am comfortable with. The difference it has made is enormous – I really did not foresee this. Looking at old pictures of myself, I find myself thinking:

'Who is that person?'

'They look so uncomfortable. Why did they wait so long?'

'Why does this person seem dead to me?'

I need help. Please do not let this new person die again. I need to know that my existence is not a political statement, fad or phase. I need to know that my suffering is real and not imaginary. I know I should not feel this way, but right now I feel so much guilt. I am the weird one, not you. I am the one who panics when fairly normal, mundane things happen. I am the one asking people to change the way they should speak. I have been told not to expect everyone to understand. I have been told to be patient and that things will be better in the future. But what is being done while I wait? What is being done to help people understand? What are we doing that allows me to exist outside of a liberal bubble? From my experience, even the liberal bubble is struggling to understand. These few months have been rough. I feel trapped. I do not know what to do. Right now, I don't feel the pride that everyone speaks of.

Please, I don't want to feel guilty anymore. I want to be living instead of surviving. Please, help me to be braver: I have never been so scared in my life. Please, end the 24 years of silence. I need to be recognised in order to move on.

If you know who I am, please respect my decision to remain anonymous.

Yours Sincerely,

A Current Unknown