Happy Pride! The Youth Advisory Board from Outlet and the San Mateo Pride Center seeks to address the needs of young queer people through programming, support, outreach, and community engagement. We value input and contributions from the community which inspired us to create this Zine about Queer Joy. We are aware that most things we see in the media regarding Queer Culture don’t cast it in the best light. To address this issue, we’ve decided to put it upon ourselves and the queer folks of the Bay Area to spread joy in the Queer community! In an effort to further emulate the Homosexual Agenda celebrate Queerness we created our own space for The Gays to relate to and celebrate one another while still understanding individuality within the community. This past year has been hard so this zine will hopefully be an Outlet for happiness and stress. Please submit more work for this Zine as it is open and ongoing!
“What is Queer joy?”
By Avi Noah Reddy (they/them)

Is it a sense of physical gender euphoria?
The feeling of wearing a binder for the first time?
The first time you see your reflection staring back with it feeling right?
The first shot of HRT?

Or perhaps it’s social gender euphoria?
The feeling of hearing the right name for the first time, the right pronouns?
Wearing a dress in public?
A suit in public?

Maybe it’s representation.
Seeing a lesbian couple on TV, watching your favorite musicians and actors come out.
Feeling seen.

Scratch that, maybe it’s being with your partner?
Holding hands, dancing, hugging, kissing, laughing.
Feeling safe in their arms.

No, that’s not what it is. None of this is.
Queer joy is you.
It is me.
It is every single Queer person living in their truth,
Making these things happen.

So, spread it, because the world could always use more rainbows.

Running on Queer Time by Marilyn-Rose Calosing Fernando

“These are the things that bring me joy in 2021”

Text:
(Upper right corner) Marilyn Queer Joy 2021is Birkenstocks, houseplants, handwriting in black ink in notebooks, my pinup tattoo, my unwavering devotion for Dolly Parton + GRACE Jones, coldbrew coffee, my “very melty makeout” Spotify playlist, Karaoke<3

(Bottom Center) Susan, T, Tallulah, Gen, Brittny, Jocelyn, Antonio, My sister, Red Bandanas, Green Bandanas, The Stud, the prints I get to see everyday
Part One:
they reached out for another's soul
grabbing onto it like a child clinging to their blanket
hoping it could save them
but they couldn't hold on forever
gone.
running out of air
running out of time.
like a worn-out boot, i sat and sulked in my own pain.
that's what constant dysphoria and self-hatred felt like.
even when you have eternity to be alive.
what was i to do?
so empty and cold inside
water dripping down my throat like a broken faucet
and i find that
i can't even breathe anymore
but it's okay.
i'll be okay
how am i?
i'm fine, just fine.
these are the lies i tell myself over and over
to try and mask the pain i feel
these are the lies that
EVERYONE TELLS ME
because it makes others feel better about themselves.
helps them go to sleep at night,
thinking, i helped someone today. i think i made a breakthrough
even though they have no control over others.
even though they can’t even control themselves.
i lay in my bed
not motionless, yet not tossing and turning
i am an outlier
from the norms of society
trying to escape
people keep trying to hold them back
but am i destined for something more
or something less?
i do not know.
i sit
and stand
and lay
and it feels like a marathon in my mind is taking place
first one to the finish line wins
as i try to sleep
but sleeping isn’t for those who feel guilty
even when they did nothing wrong
i fear i am a monster
that there is a monster inside of me
i try to think about anything else
who cares?
it all comes back anyway.
i create wars.
inside my head, and especially in the heads of those around me.
i think it might make me feel special.
it doesn’t.
i end up just feeling even worse than before
i start to fall through
the sheets and sheets of thin ice

Underneath me
darkness and stars and colors of scarlet and ivy.
the ice shatters like glass
it is cold, but i can barely feel anything at this point.
not since i was nine.
i inhale sharply
and fall.
and fall
and fall
into nothing
and nothing
and nothing.
and then i wake up
go have breakfast
go hang out with people that are more invested in their phones than
the person they’re with
go to school
go to work
go to lunch
do most of what i’m told to do
and pretend like nothing happened.
pretend i am standing still
standing up
just
to fall back down.

Part Two:
“How did meeting your friends help you, Noah?”
Where to start?
Meeting my friends,
Well it saved me
From myself,
From my pain.
Meeting people who were like me
Quirky and Queer
Just like me

I used to feel like I was frozen
But now, I am on fire
Thriving
Burning
Running
I am safe.

They mean so much to me but it doesn’t hurt anymore
I used to get too attached to people who didn’t care
But I know what safety is,
I know what a real friend is.
They taught me how to be myself again.
I can never repay them, and I know that.
But I can still try.

Living doesn’t feel like a burden anymore.
I’m starting to feel like it’s what I want,
Like it’s not something I have to tend to,
I am safe.

I know what Queer joy is to me.
The journey
Of self discovery
Is difficult
And yet fulfilling

To discover yourself
It's a process so unique to you
It's your own journey to find yourself
And no one should ever take that away

People always seem to talk about the joy of expressing yourself
Yet the first step is to discover yourself
And that comes with its own joy
The joy of understanding

It's not always clear-cut
Sometimes it's just "This is what I'm not"
But that still brings joy
That still brings truth

Your truth
It can change and that's not bad
Saying your age at one point is still the truth,
even though you will get older and your age will change

The path
Of self discovery
Can be filled with terrifying waters
And yet,
There is a joy in jumping in puddles

Untitled by Anonymous (he/him)
Tending to Our Garden:

We received a number of submissions from anonymous artists who wanted to share photos of nature. One of these artists commented: “I feel the most whole and the most happy when I’m surrounded by plants. So here is a little piece of my whole-ness”
I spent a long time hating my body, like a lot of people do. I hated its curves, its softness, its femininity. It has taken a long time to appreciate my body and all that it is.

I'm starting to experience body dysphoria for the first time in my life. It's a really scary and strange experience to live in a body that doesn't align with who I am. After talking to someone about my struggles with body dysphoria, they told me, "you deserve a body that's yours." It was the first time someone had validated me like that and it's a nice memory to think about.
A GIFT OF LOVE
by Tatiana Lyulkin (she/her)

Falling in love
Is learning the language
Of the heart,
It’s not a destination-
It’s a never ending journey
Into the unknown,
A journey of discovery
Meant for two.

Listen
To the music of the night,
When the darkness
Is your best friend
And two loving hearts
Are beating as one,
Savor the moments
Of pure joy,
The promise of a new day
When your heart is
Full of hope
And you’re no longer alone.

Falling in love
Is watching the rainbow
In the sky unfurl
Like a flag
After the rain,

It’s walking barefoot
Along the shore,
Stealing kisses
In the car going home.

Love
Is a precious gift
Meant for two,
It’s a candle
Burning in the dark,
Giving you purpose,
Keeping you safe,
Keeping you strong.

Untitled by Laurel Ashcom
SUN AND MOON by Iz Bernhard (LonelySheepling)
Thank you for taking the time to read and submit to our small celebration of Queer Joy. This zine would not have been possible without our wonderful community’s willingness to live authentically and the hard work of the Youth Advisory Board members. If you didn’t get a chance to submit and are moved to do so, we invite you to use the QR code below. If you would like to be a part of creating projects like this please scan and fill out the application link to the 2021-2022 Youth Advisory Board Cohort. We hope that you continue to celebrate Queer Joy all year round!

To apply to our 2021-2022 cohort:

To submit a piece: