

SHE / THEY * Zeala Shamash * April 1 2021 *****
Hey ♡ I just want to share some thoughts / feelings
I'm having about ~ PERSONAL IDENTITY & POLITICS...
(as we know, the personal is political and idpol only goes so far—)
I started going by "she/they" this year when "she/her" started to
feel untrue, because my femininity is authentic, but it is
absolutely, essentially, inextricably QUEER. Queerness
transcends gender norms and names by being indefinable.
The ineffability of my own queer identity terrifies me
because it is beyond my control. Queerness terrifies society
because it is beyond the control of the colonial, white supremacist
CIS HETERO PATRIARCHAL, capitalist powers that be.
Queerness is radical because it inherently resists these
systems of oppression by being ♡ FREE LOVE & and
free expression. "they" as a personal pronoun
moves from the individual to the collective.
Before I identified as queer, I identified as a lesbian.
I knew I liked and wanted to love girls, but
I wasn't certain the label fit me, because I sometimes
wanted to explore relationships with men and people of
different genders. I have often wondered whether
my lesbian identity was a way of protecting myself
from men, whom I have feared because of trauma (Daddy issues)
from family dysfunction and sexual violence I have
experienced. I have wondered whether I might someday
be cured of my trauma, and, consequently, my homosexuality.
This idea makes me feel deeply sad because I love
being gay and wouldn't want to change if I could
because I love loving girls and nb/q+ cuties! I recognize
this conversion-therapy thinking as internalized homophobia
considering lesbianism as a psychological illness in
the tradition of Freud (canceled) and our own dear
Simone de Beauvoir. This is problematic, obviously.
Political lesbianism is rad, but, in my experience, more
reactionary than liberating, though I forever love the term
LAVENDER MENACE. (also the movement has some herstory
*and I still love
being/identifying
as a lesbian, I
even as I remain
uncertain.

of trans-exclusion :)) This brings me to our Institute, named for the author of the second-wave feminist text The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir, home to two distinct departments, the more traditional {Women's Studies} and the more ~contemporary~ ~~sexuality~~ sexuality studies. Personally I take women's studies, and this has been my comfort zone. I grew up in post Riot - girl power, and was raised by 2nd wave feminists - my mom actually met her best friend in a women's studies class at Concordia in the 90s, writing a paper on Mary Wollstonecraft. I have felt grateful that the program was not simply renamed "gender studies," believing it important to honour the tradition of women's rights/women's liberation/women's revolution activists who made our space possible and finding it relevant to maintain a space in which women, specifically, are centered, studied, and empowered. I see women's studies as an older, focused stream in the WATERS of ongoing struggle for liberation, which sexuality studies transcends, a wider wave in the united cause. Still, following discussions we have had about this in WSSSA meetings, and having confronted more transphobia in the world and in myself this past year of reckoning, I question whether it might actually be most appropriate* in future, to call ourselves something LIKE the [Institute for gender, sexuality, and feminist studies], because IDENTITY POLITICS GOES ONLY SO FAR, and this present wave of intersectional feminist revolution is and must necessarily be about the dissolution of binaries, and our space MUST be ^{FUNDAMENTALLY} inclusive of trans women and trans, nonbinary, 2spirit and gender queer people, whose LIVES matter. Thank you for being your full self here together with us. Love ♡

*AND I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE