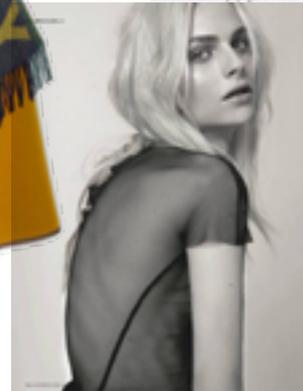
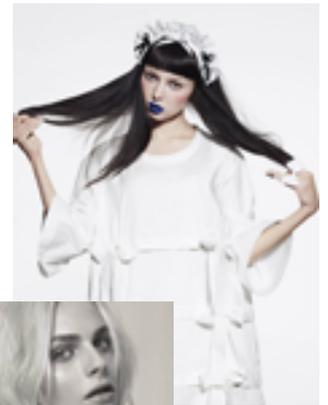


# HAS FASHION & POP CULTURE TRULY EMBRACED GENDER EQUALITY?

## the T I P P I N G P O I N T



Black diamond bracelet by COMEX  
Looks from GUCCI AW15, and J.W.  
ANDERSON SS15.  
SELFRIDGES, the London luxury  
retailer, will open a gender-neutral  
pop up department on March 1st.  
Look from ACNE STUDIOS AW15.  
CRAIG GREEN SS15 catwalk look.  
ANDREJA PEJIC in L'Officiel.

WORDS DANIEL SCHEFFLER

### THE GLAAD TRANSGENDERREFERENCE GUIDE

**SEX** – The classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. (This is what is written on the birth certificate.) However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** – Describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is attracted solely to men would identify as a straight woman.

**GENDER IDENTITY** – One's internal, deeply held sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

**GENDERQUEER** – A term used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman. They may define their gender as falling somewhere in between man and woman, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as genderqueer.

**GENDER EXPRESSION** – External manifestations of gender, expressed through one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics. Society identifies these cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression align with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

**TRANSGENDER** – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms - including transgender. Some of those terms are defined below. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual. Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.

**GENDER NONCONFORMING** – A term used to describe some people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Please note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming. Many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional -- that fact alone does not make them transgender. Many transgender men and women have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Simply being transgender does not make someone gender non-conforming. The term is not a synonym for transgender or transsexual and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming.

THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY is finally getting its rightful moment in history – but not enough is getting done. Pop culture, our lens on the world, carefully curates politics, marriage equality and social issues and is showing us more is needed.

Madonna has of course carried the torch for LGBT matters in the cultural sphere for a few decades – but the momentum has now overtaken even the Queen herself. It was Chaz Bono (child of Sonny and Cher) that shared his transition in a documentary “Becoming Chaz” on Oprah Network back in 2011. B’ut now not only has the American President Barack Obama mentioned the T in LGBT in his State of the Union Address earlier this year but also mainstream television, politicians and even fashion stores are joining in the progression. And join they should.

It did seem like Laverne Cox, the biggest star to come out of Netflix’s hit *Orange Is The New Black*, pulled the Transgender trigger with her *Time* magazine cover and so the word came out of the darkness and into the light. But the rest of cul-

ture were ever-ready to escort: Golden Globes were earned by the Amazon series *Transparent*, singer Laura Jane Grace revealed her decision to transition in an exclusive with *Rolling Stone* magazine, musical television show *Glee* included a transgender character, author Janet Mock in her memoir *Redefining Realness* stayed on the *New York Times* Best Seller List and the transgender love story *Boy Meets Girl* opened at cinemas internationally to rave reviews.

But the movement is growing in the fashion world too. A gender-neutral pop-up department in London retailer Selfridges (“Agender”); transgender model Andreja Pejic funding a Kickstarter campaign for a documentary on her career; the New York department store Barney’s showcasing a Spring campaign with 17 transgender models; fashion brand Gucci debuting girls on the menswear runways; Brooklyn fashion designer Alexis Bittar’s campaigns featuring transgender models, and Swedish locavore favorite Acne presenting football scarves emblazoned with Gender Equality. We were at some point still saying fashion leads the trends, so more can be expected from the creative community

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*It's not gender for me, it's just clothing. I feel that in a modern culture, if it's about gender then it's a very dated concept*

J.W. ANDERSON, fashion designer

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*Everything doesn't have to be sports and anger.*

CRAIG GREEN, fashion designer

to bring the right kind of exposure to the transgender communities across the globe.

The very hopeful Susan Stryker, in her book *Transgender History*, explains why society as a whole have been slow to accept the term transgender: “Because most people have great difficulty recognizing the humanity of another person if they cannot (first) recognize that person’s gender; the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness.” Liz Margolies, founder and executive director of the National LGBT Cancer Network, believes the movement is too slow and “more momentum is necessary in the space.” But as with most things in life, time is needed for the full transition to be made – just a few years ago the words gay or lesbian wasn’t uttered enough. For now the wheel has turned and the transgender communities of the world canvass for support – waiting for more heroes to stand up with the right intentions.

And so we look to the twice-famous Bruce Jenner, known for his Kardashian connection and Olympic Gold in the 70s, who may just be the newest front man for the transgender community in the U.S. Although Jenner is yet to officially announce his transition the upcoming expose of her life on Diane Sawyer’s wildly popular ABC News show will bring warranted attention to the community.

But the highbrow also needs someone to look to. Enter writer/activist Jennifer Finney Boylan who reveals in her book, *Stuck In The Middle With You* that “womanhood - like manhood - is a strangely flexible term.” Through her memoir she talks about how parenting in any gender is the real gift and so has spurred on research papers, debating articles in *The New Yorker* and has entered the dinner conversations of the world’s cognoscenti. People like Jenner and Finney Boylan brings humanity to the term and thus allows the masses (high and low brow) to recognize something they in fact hold in common. One of the intentions of author Leslie Feinberg, a writer and activist, who in 1993 wrote a novel called *Stone Butch Blues*, giving light to gender complexity and “how it affects us all.”

But all of this does not come without its challenges and vulnerability. The real lives of the transgender community can be toilsome – as the Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), acts of crime and multiple suicides indicate. Scout, the Director of LGBT Health Link, explains: “Can you imagine living in a population where every time three of you get together at least one has felt so horrible about who they are that they tried to kill themselves? We are a community living with an unbearable burden of self-loathing, taught to us by our family, our neighborhood, too often even our lovers.” According to Scout he will only be happy once he doesn’t have to carry any fear for the transgender youth that he encounters daily.

The movement is of course naturally becoming globally relevant and with greater exposure and gender positive reporting from the world’s media outlets the bigotry present might just evaporate. The progress is reaching all corners currently: Thailand were set to recognize a “third gender” in its new constitution, the U.K. will include LGBT in their education curriculum going forward, Germany won’t force parents to assign a gender to their new born, Poland has a transgender presidential hopeful and India elected their first transgender Member of Parliament.

And so the tipping point will be reached and transgender could become just another of those household words that has no stigma, no negative connotations and possibly the least amount of prejudice possible – one can of course always be hopeful.