

GIRL TALK

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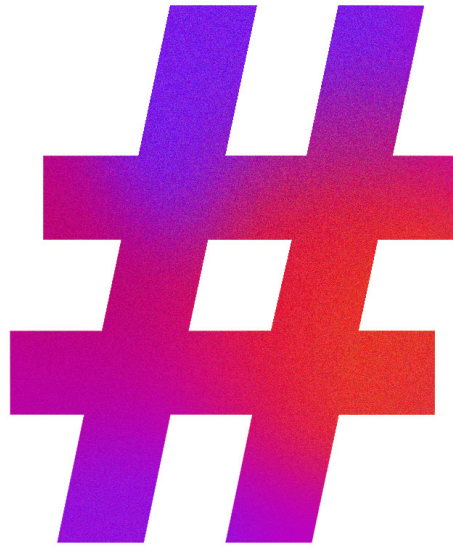
LETTERS *from the* EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled and so very proud to present our 13th issue. As we begin the new school year, and welcome so new writers, we wanted to share stories that were meaningful and impactful to us. This is why we didn't stick to one strict theme for this issue; we wanted to explore which ideas were drawn to us based on the world's climate as of late. We will be discussing themes related to social pressures, feminist activism, overcoming insecurity and more. In today's society, women have been receiving tons of backlash, whether it be about their image, views or actions. It's easy to feel like we're under attack. Here at The GirlTalk Magazine, we pride ourselves on being a proud group of young women, unafraid to voice our opinions and speak up for what we believe in. For this issue, we touch upon a variety of topics in order to show our audience the wide range of problems or observations we've encountered at some point in our lives. We hope some of these stories resonate with you, and that together, through reading and writing, we can all become more inclusive and supportive of one-another. To submit articles, feedback, thoughts and ideas, email us at thegirltalkmagazine@gmail.com, or feel free to contact us through our Instagram or Facebook.

We're starting the school year with a bang. We present: Issue 13.

Charlotte Kramon, Sierra Stern, and Sophie Friedberg



SEXUAL ASSUALT IS A THING, NOT JUST A HASHTAG

BY CHARLOTTE KRAMON

OAKWOOD
SECONDARY SCHOOL

It's hard to keep up with daily notifications of #MeToo-related scandals. Courts and laws that prioritize victims are the first steps to hold attackers accountable, but accountability continues through global recognition of their despicable behavior. Awareness-and dialogue-are the precedents to permanent change.

The cases I've summarized are not the only men who get away with sweeping through towns and cities, traumatizing victims and trailing behind anonymous physical and emotional scars. Mainstream media covers a minuscule fraction of sexual violence and rape. Mothers from rural states, little boys attending

church, middle-class women who try to carry on normally but the attack has instilled in them a fear of going to sleep...there is no uniform description for victims of sexual assault. Fame, privilege, wealth, gender, and race don't alter the magnitude of the tragedy of sexual assault and violence.

Keeping that in mind, here are cases you may have seen in the headlines but missed:

PLACIDO DOMINGO, AUGUST 2019:

Numerous women accused Placido Domingo, general director of the LA Opera since 2003, of pressuring them into sexual encounters. Domingo allegedly threatened their careers if and when they refused. When [investigations](#) began, music and opera companies immediately canceled his performances.

The well-renowned opera star supposedly forced his hand down a woman's skirt and tried to kiss on three others in the early 2000s. [Almost twenty women](#) accused Domingo of assault or uncomfortable advances, and backstage employees such as orchestra members told the Associated Press that they witnessed inappropriate behavior, too.

Domingo claims his advances were all consensual and without malicious intent, despite women remembering their "terror" when he made these advances. Some said their careers took a toll after refusing Domingo's advances, while others accepted late-night calls and invitations for drinks because they didn't want to jeopardize their careers. Retired mezzo-soprano Patricia Wulf remembers being too afraid to step forward about Domingo's behavior. "They're not going to fire him — they'll fire me," she told her colleague.

DANNY MESTERSON AND THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY, ONGOING:

In 2017, four women reported sexual assault allegations against actor Danny Masterson and member of the Church of Scientology to the LAPD. Two years later, women are suing both Masterson and the Church of Scientology for stalking and harassing them after reporting Masterson. The Church has stalked, photographed, harassed the women, hacked them online, and their young children have almost been attacked. The Church's legal team denied all allegations. Masterson

had been [dropped](#) from Netflix series "The Ranch." One of the women who came forward with allegations is Masterson's ex-girlfriend. "This is beyond ridiculous," Masterson claimed. "I'm not going to fight my ex-girlfriend in the media like she's been baiting me to do for more than two years. I will beat her in court—and look forward to it because the public will finally be able to learn the truth and see how I've been railroaded by this woman."

JEFFERY EPSTEIN AND NY LAW, AUGUST 2019:

In February, New York signed a law creating a one-year period for survivors to report sexual assault regardless of how long ago it happened. Hopefully, powerful men like Jeffery Epstein will finally be held accountable and survivors will see justice, as The New York Child Victims Act extends opportunities for survivors to come forward.

The law comes after Catholic priests were exposed for assaulting children and the billionaire Jeffery Epstein's scandal. (Epstein recently committed suicide. I'm sure you've heard the conspiracy theories.) 45 judges were assigned to the influx of suits that started on August 14. Just days after the one-year period started, [CNN reported](#) over 400 filed lawsuits.

R KELLY, ONGOING:

R Kelly was jailed in July following several indictments for decades of sex trafficking, child pornography, coercion, and illegal sexual activity with underage girls. Kelly failed to show up to the August hearing, but he is expected to appear at the Sept. 17 hearing. Kelly reportedly refused to leave his Chicago jail cell, but his lawyer claimed there were transportation issues. 40 counts leave Kelly with an estimated 500 years of jail time. Yet, he denies most of the allegations, some of which go back to the '90s. Why has it taken so long to hold R Kelly accountable for his actions? Because of an epidemic where victims are told their stories don't matter, especially when they're about powerful men. ✱

self-esteem

BY SOPHIE FRIEDBERG

PALISADES HIGH SCHOOL

Low self-esteem has forever been an issue among young women. We see Instagram influencers and Victoria's Secret models plastered on every social media site we visit, and it's clear society holds us to an unfair standard. Young women are taught that they must look a certain way to be treated a certain way, to be considered desirable. Traditionally, this feeling of self-consciousness would arise in high school, when teens would start to separate into social groups and compare themselves to their peers. This negative, competition-like atmosphere has traditionally appeared during high school... so why are we starting to see it so much earlier?

Over the years, social media has become dangerously prevalent in our day-to-day lives. Kids as young as nine years old are getting phones, and with that, they're getting on social media. It's not uncommon to see an elementary schooler on Instagram or Snapchat. This may seem harmless, but what they're viewing may not be. Studies have proven that social media can have devastating effects on the self-esteem of young girls, and the fact that kids are getting on these platforms at younger and younger ages only means that these devastating effects are starting earlier.

When women see busty, thin, flawless supermodels on their screens, they start to have a warped idea of beauty and how they see themselves. This mentality can come at any age but is especially damaging for younger girls. This is why it is so common to see young girls with body image issues and low self-confidence; they are holding themselves to an unfair standard of beauty that they have access to online. We need to recognize how impactful social media is in shifting how young girls view themselves. It isn't realistic to say the solution is 'no media', but the solution could be 'positive media'. Internet and technology usage is only becoming more accessible, and as a result, it is reaching a wider audience — predominantly those of younger and more impressionable ages. There is no quick fix to self-esteem issues, but recognition is key. The sooner the world becomes aware of the effects that social media has on teens and young girls, the sooner we can work to break the pattern. ✱

FEMINISM *and* YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

BY
SIERRA STERN

OAKWOOD
SECONDARY SCHOOL

I read a lot of young adult fiction, and I feel comfortable saying that because I'm totally secure in my intelligence. Affectionately shortened to YA, young adult fiction is a reflection of the ever-changing youth culture of our world. In recent years, there's been a shift in the genre

that favors inclusion. There have never been more books available for teenagers that place female, queer, and minority characters at the forefront, and the landscape of literature is expanding to be far more inclusive. That being said, the YA genre remains a breeding ground for harmful tropes and some of its very building blocks directly butt heads with fundamental feminist ideals. Is this a glorified book review? Maybe. Let's dive in.

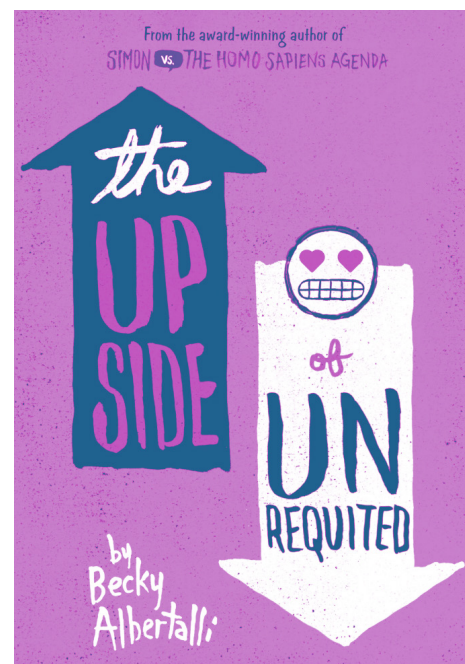
Personally, when I'm reading trashy YA fiction, I'm not looking for the perfect feminist manifesto. There are some times when teenage life just barely passes the Bechdel Test, and I don't think literature should dance around some of the

Writers have to balance realism with whatever social agenda they want to project, and any obvious imbalance will result in an end product that is either too preachy or too bleak to be enjoyed. But what constitutes balance? How can we tell when the scales are dipped too far to one side?

fundamental truths of human existence. Sometimes we say the wrong things. Sometimes we don't always do what's best for society, for women. Being a good feminist is hard, and being the perfect feminist is impossible. Writers have to balance realism with whatever social agenda they want to project, and any obvious imbalance will result in an end product that is either too preachy or too bleak to be enjoyed. But what constitutes balance? How can we tell when the scales are dipped too far to one side?

You may have seen the 2018 coming-of-age dramedy *Love, Simon*, a feel-good film adaptation to Becky Albertalli's book *Simon Vs. the Homo-sapien's Agenda*. Both the book and movie detail the coming-out journey of Simon Spier, a high school sophomore keeping up an email correspondence with "Blue", an anonymous classmate that he's come to fall in love with. Thanks to these works, Becky Albertalli, a former child psychologist, has become known as a pioneer in inclusive YA literature, but even she isn't exempt from falling into the pitfalls of political incorrectness.

Another of her books, *The Upside of Unrequited* follows Molly Peskin-Suso, a girl that's had dozens of crushes but can't bring herself to act on any of them. Albertalli uses her psychologist experience to craft an authentic and diverse family dynamic for the Peskin-Suso's. Molly and her twin Cass's parents are an interracial lesbian couple, but these



two descriptors don't come across in the story as mashed together to meet an unspoken diversity quota. They're just facts that form the fabric of Molly's life, affecting her in realistic and natural ways. Point Albertalli.

I didn't realize people had a problem with this book until I was browsing Goodreads (I have no excuse for this/I lead a boring life) and decided to look at the reviews for *TUoU*. It has 3.99 stars. A two-star review liked 750 times criticizes the novel for being another retelling of the same old story. They summarize it like this: "The protagonist - Molly - is a self-proclaimed "fat girl" who always has crushes but never dates and/or kisses guys because she fears rejection. The story arc follows her journey to gaining self-confidence, which here occurs when her latest crush reciprocates her feelings. Is this a good message? Because, honestly, it makes me cringe." I didn't really interpret the book this way. Molly doesn't think she's worthless

or ugly or undeserving of love. Her central question, rather, is “Why not me?” Even if Molly did think poorly of herself until she finds love (spoiler alert: she does), where’s the lie in that? It’s not a pretty reality, but self-worth is often tied to external validation. Molly even says, “But I spend a lot of time thinking about love and kissing and boyfriends and all the other stuff feminists aren’t supposed to care about. And I am a feminist.

But I don’t know. I’m seventeen, and I just want to know what it feels like to kiss someone.” By acknowledging that Molly’s voice, actions, and perspective are imperfect, I think *TUoU* can still be considered feminist, or at least not anti-feminist.

Modern fiction has progressed in leaps and bounds. Less and less present is the saturation of manic pixie dream girls (female characters who “exist solely in the fevered

imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures,” an archetype defined by film critic Nathan Rabin) and “everywomen” white protagonists.

If politics have a place in any form of entertainment, it’s books, and I think that authors will only become more adept at seamlessly weaving feminist ideas into literature. ✱

Social Media **AND** ACTIVISM

BY OLIVIA WEINER
OAKWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

Reposts and hashtags are all the rage when it comes to spreading news of injustice on social media, and can provide helpful information when it comes to making a difference. How to find a rally? Check Instagram. How to donate to a cause? Swipe up. Social awareness is always a good thing, but is it actually effective when it comes to creating change? Are we lulled into a sense of - “hey, I posted about it, so I did my part” - without ever actually having to step up and get our hands dirty? Posting a picture to your story can only accomplish so much, especially in high school when most of our followers are like-minded friends and family, who share many of the same concerns and beliefs. The big question is, with no physical action taken, is activism even activism, or is it simply sharing an opinion? Yes, sometimes people with a large following can spread the word, and getting as many eyes as possible on any given issue is a good thing. But online social awareness can also be mislead-

ing. I can remember the month where it seemed like everyone on Instagram was posting about @sudanmealproject and turning their profiles blue. The account promised one meal to a starving Sudan child for every person who reposted a photo about the project on their Instagram. They amassed hundreds of thousands of followers in the process. Just a couple of clicks and you - without ever leaving your house - could make a real difference in the world. It almost sounded too good to be true. And guess what? It was. In retrospect, it didn’t really add up. There was no website, no path to monetize and fundraise. Also, there is no way to track how many times a post is reposted. In the end, credible news sources from the BBC to CNN exposed the scam that was designed in order to gain followers. And so, the question becomes, is activism something that appears in the ether and floats into our feeds, allowing us to post hashtags and slogans and hyperlink? Or, is real activism about actually putting in the work and doing



more than just changing your profile picture? It’s undeniable that social media has given a voice to underrepresented groups and it can clearly raise awareness about a variety of causes that we might never hear about otherwise — I just wish more of social media activism was backed up by real, tangible action. Volunteer at a women’s shelter.

Donate to a local food bank. Cut back on the amount of meat you eat. Attend a local march or protest. And, hey, while you do it, hashtag and repost your heart away... but don’t forget that putting in the hard work is what true activism is all about. ✱

FEMINISM IS BECOMING A *Catch-All Term*

BY
JOANNA IM

HARVARD WESTLAKE SCHOOL

In today's society, ideas surrounding political and social activism have fortunately become more diverse and inclusive of various methods of understanding and fighting inequality. Politicians and governmental policies have even been stepping up, which can be seen in the rise of legislation regarding gender equality towards women as well as those in the LGBT+ community. While this is good and activists should advocate for these inclusive policies, there are

definitely examples of 'feminism' being to justify non-feminist policies, such as advocating a masculine form of military interventionism while merely hiring a couple of female generals or higher-ups in the process.

Even recently, policymakers have justified legislation as feminist by simply including women within their policy, rather than evaluating the effect that the policy may have for woman's liberation.

The best example of this is the Bush administration's co-option of feminist rhetoric in order to justify the war on terror; when speaking of the War in Afghanistan, Laura Bush often appealed to feminist sympathies by highlighting the gender inequality in Middle Eastern countries that are supported by terrorism.

While this seems feminist on the surface, this example of 'feminism' is problematic for a couple of reasons. First, many critics of the Bush Ad-



ministration believe that while the U.S. championed democracy and liberalism in the Middle East during the War on Terror, it was truly for the U.S.'s geopolitical benefit and does not truly improve conditions for gender minorities abroad.

In fact, military aid even elsewhere, such as in Latin American countries, is justified through the war on terror, but actually shuts down local grassroots, feminist movements in different countries.

In 1980, groups of Latin American women created a coalition in order to advocate for better labor conditions for women as well as community-based education.

During this time, according to Irene Campos Carr of Northeastern Illinois University, these Latin American countries and movements were "referred to as 'developing democracies' by the U.S. which sends massive military aid to be used against 'subversives.'"

All in all, when policymakers

use the image of suffering women abroad in order to justify their legislation and make themselves seem feminist and progressive, it actually hurts gender minorities, especially those abroad. Especially in the instance of the War on Terror, policymakers often used the feminist struggle in order to paint a threat construction, in which the U.S. and its citizens must pre-emptively fight countries abroad before they fight us.

However, this just feeds into a form of 'masculine war-making.' As University of Florida's associate professor of Political Science Laura Sjoberg describes, "states' survival and success have depended on the creation and maintenance of legitimating national identities; often these identities have depended on the manipulation of gendered representation. . . . Drawing on metaphors that evoke matrimonial and familial relations, the nation has been portrayed as both male and female..."

The sense of community implicit in these family metaphors is deeply gendered in ways that not only legitimate foreign policy practices but also reinforce inequalities between men and women."

Additionally, the fact that policies only evaluate body count and war as 'large impacts' push intimate violence (which often targets gender minorities) aside in discussions of conflict and war.

Overall, international policies that are justified through the images of suffering women is not really feminist at all – instead, it's ethical blackmail that deploys the inclusion of women in order to uphold gendered boundaries between various nations and uphold American hegemony and interventionism.

While we should be accepting of different forms of activism and feminism, we should still set standards – and not buy into the false notion that interventionist policies can somehow be 'feminist.' ✖

Dali Talks

Diversity and Anti-Bullying Education



BY
**MASON
MAXAM**

OAKWOOD
SECONDARY
SCHOOL

Dalia Rivera proudly created an anti-bullying and diversity education program. She speaks at many schools and spreads her teaching method to other educators. Dalia's goal is to change the way we talk about bullying. She believes parents and kids must be included in important discussions around bullying. In tandem with her program, she has created a blog to expand her audience called Dali Talks. Rivera used 4 steps to describe her method including

getting rid of stereotypes used for justification and learning about prevention methods. Her curriculum is very clear and extremely inclusive in a unique way. It raises important questions and encourages participation through games and other techniques. She also talks about our fear of people being different.

This fear gives bullies power as well as reinforcing unhealthy, and harmful stereotypes. Through addressing issues of cultural diversity, beauty standards, and more, Dali Rivera's curriculum provokes

thoughtfulness and kindness from those receiving the education.

Beyond that, there is even a section about how to talk to bullies which is a wonderful way to promote forgiveness. This is the kind of bullying program kids should be using in school. In my experience, bullying is described in a physical way, but really there is much more to it.

Through this program, people can learn that our differences are really what makes us stronger. Bullying has a lasting effect on people but if

we can start educating students at a young age we can remedy that problem. Dali's program also teaches kids lessons that will last them a lifetime.

Inclusion, acceptance, and love are values that will serve us right throughout the entirety of our adult lives. I highly recommend that educators and students of all ages look into this program as a way to check-in with yourself and your own values. Dali Rivera is truly a powerful woman who is using her voice to create tangible change in the lives of students everywhere. ✨

Fake It 'Til You Make It

BY
NADIA RIVERA



Self-esteem has been a problem for everyone at least once in their lives. It's not just you. It's not just me. Everyone deals with it. The real root of it is society. They tell us to look a certain way, eat these types of things, have a certain type of life. Honestly, I couldn't care less if you are a size 00 or a size XXXL. And here's a little secret: No one else does either.

Everyone has problems and insecurities. One statistic I learned from reading the [DaliTalks blog](#) is that body image issues start as early as **age eight!** The reason for this? Society. Even in Target commercials, you'll usually see girls and boys sport brand new backpacks and clothes, but some people can't have those types of things because of situations they can't control. I am just exiting a time in my life where I have felt horrible about myself. I would look in the mirror and see a million flaws. I'm not skinny enough, my hair isn't like everyone else's, etc. Now I'm able to look in the mirror and admire myself. It's all in your head.

RCLBeauty101, a YouTuber, once said in her video I AM UGLY, "If you wouldn't say it to yourself when you were little, then why would you say it to yourself now[?]"

The truth of it all is, no one cares about how you said "Here." in attendance, or what you're wearing or any of that. They're all too concerned about themselves and what people think of them. We're all worrying ourselves for no reason.

My advice? Meditation or therapy. I've been meditating to relax and it really brings me peace with myself. Focus on the good and not the bad. Be able to look in the mirror every day and say, "I am beautiful." even if you don't mean it. And even if you really don't mean it, say it every day until you do. You know what they say, "Fake it 'till you make it." ✨

IN HER SHOES

BY
MONIE CHOI

OAKWOOS SECONDARY SCHOOL

On July 20, 2019, Nadia Murad, a human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, met with President Trump to share her important story detailing the violence and dangers surrounding her home, the Yazidi lands. However, her plea for the President to help alleviate the violence caused by the Iraqis and Kurds fighting for control of Yazidi lands did not prompt the response all had hoped for. President Trump's drifting eye-contact, which caused Nadia to lean forward to gain the President's attention, was indicative of an air of dismissal. Nadia's plea seemed futile as even her heart wrenching story of the death of her parents and 6 siblings only earned from the President, "We're going to look, okay?"

Sadly, the dynamic observed between President Trump and Nadia Murad is common throughout the political sphere. Women who speak out and fiercely advocate are often the ones who are silenced the most. To fully empower survivors of international violence such as Nadia, we must be able to feel comfortable in being confronted with the overwhelming facts of such issues. We must learn to not only sympathize, but also empathize with such figures. Only through this, are we able to understand, to the best of our abilities, the true magnitude of injustice. ✱



THE FIRST INTERVIEW *with* 17-YEAR-OLD SHOW CREATOR,

Zelda Barnz

You may have heard of Zelda Barnz, also known as the teen behind what could be HBO's next *Euphoria*. Produced by Lena Dunham, *Generation* explores youth grappling with issues like identity and sexuality. As *Refinery29* notes, Zelda's work has appeared in *GirlTalk* since our very first issues. Now, for the very first time, the activist we know and love gets to share another side of herself: the show runner. Zelda got real with us, sharing her thoughts about everything from taking time off high school for the show to accusations of nepotism.

1 Tell us about yourself! When did you become passionate about writing and what inspired you to create *Generation*?

I've been a storyteller from the moment I could speak. My parents got this massive book when I was a toddler and they transcribed all my nonsense stories for me, before I could hold a pen. But I really started writing when I was around eight years old; in second grade, I hand wrote a 120 page "book" in a school notebook. It was about a dragon and her pet squirrel, it was absolutely terrible but I was convinced I would one day publish it.

I began working on *Generation* when I was 15. Originally it was a book idea, but I wound up pitching the idea to my dad, because I wanted help formatting a TV show. He was very supportive. He helped me create compelling arcs for each of my characters and together we shaped the plot into what it is now. *Generation* is the story of a group of teenagers, each at various points on the gender and sexuality spectrums. Some of our leads are cishet and some are closeted, while others are queer,



genderfluid, and out-and-proud. But ultimately this show is about more than just identity or sexuality - it's about the emotionally complex interpersonal connections that teenagers of every generation forge among themselves. Because people ages 12-19 have higher EQs than society gives us credit for.

2 How did the development process start?

I suppose it began when people encouraged me to pitch my idea. I figured that because I was only fifteen, no network would be interested in developing with me, and I would just have to wait until I had graduated college.

But living in LA worked to my advantage, and soon my little team discovered a production company that could be my idea's home. This was Lena Dunham's old company. I pitched conversationally first, to a few of her co-workers, and they thought she'd be interested. I met her for the first time the summer after my freshman year of high school.

She is such an incredibly warm and kind person, and she was so supportive of me. Her company helped us develop our pitch document and our story, and in October of that same year we pitched to HBO, where the pilot was bought and later transferred to HBO Max.

3 *Have any obstacles have come up related to your age and gender? Is it difficult to juggle school life, teenage life, and work life now that **Generation** is so far along in its journey?*

I've received immense support from the people around me, and I think my age has reminded many of my co-workers of their daughters or younger sisters. For now, people mostly seem very protective and supportive of me, though I know it won't be easy being a young woman in Hollywood. My gender hasn't been a disadvantage so far, I think the people I'm surrounded by genuinely want to see queer female creators in the industry. I haven't yet encountered any prejudice in the workplace.

It's been very difficult juggling all my priorities, because I care so much about all three of these things. I've had to drop the first trimester of my senior year because we're shooting in the fall. That's technically made life a lot easier, but I also can't stop thinking about how I won't get a "last first day" of high school. It's sad to not have that experience, but it's definitely made me take advantage of the time I'm getting to spend with my friends. Work has been absolutely amazing, going into the office every day and seeing this temporary family we've created - it's really incredible.

4 *There are plenty of shows about high school, but not about high school and the LGBTQ+ community. Why is it important to YOU specifically that a show like this exists?*

I came out as bisexual when I was fifteen, just before we began developing *Generation*, and I was lucky enough to be raised by LGBTQ+ parents. Growing up in a liberal environment like that can make you forget that homophobia exists, but people in LA still use gay as an insult and call out slurs. Some of my favorite people in the world have made horribly offensive jokes, not realizing the potential impact of their words. Around 60% of GenZ identifies somewhere on the sexuality or gender spectrums, and despite an abundance of queer characters on TV lately, we haven't seen a show that reflects that statistic. So I think *Generation* has the potential to show queer teenagers that they aren't alone and that they are valid.

5 *Do you feel as though there are any drawbacks to being a young writer? What have you learned about the industry of television and the profession of showrunning from the experience of creating **Generation**?*

There are certainly drawbacks. I would definitely say people treat me like a child. Which is fair, because I am a child. I literally can't even vote yet, so I understand the skepticism. It just makes me work harder and want to prove myself. And minors have different restrictions when it comes to work, so we've had to balance all that out.

I've learned so much, it's wild. I didn't realize how few shows actually get to the point of getting a pilot greenlit, let alone a series picked up. It's made me appreciate every show on air a little bit more, because every show takes so much effort to create. Showrunning is an extremely fulfilling job. We just recently made some of our first deals with actors, and we called them to say congratulations. Hearing how excited they were and listening to their voices made me so happy. But it can also be stressful, because everything moves so quickly, and I never ever remember to check my email (I am horribly disorganized, I'll be the death of our line producer. Sorry, Paul). Sometimes I won't read an email and then later in the day a crew member will be like "the van is waiting



for you outside!” and I just have to pretend to know where the van is going.

6 There’s been a history of young females in Hollywood being accused of nepotism and discredited for their hard work. There have been similar claims against you. How are you dealing with the negativity? How would you respond to those claims?

In terms of dealing with negativity, those claims haven’t upset me too much because they’re such uneducated accusations.

I don’t like accusing others of jealousy because I find it condescending, but I’ve come across many people (mostly cisgender men, if I’m being completely honest) who have struggled with the idea that I’ve actually accomplished something at such a young age.

It’s like they can’t be happy for me for more than two minutes without making the whole situation about themselves.

It seems that people think my relationship with Lena Dunham is the reason I’ve been successful, but I met her completely in the context

of developing a project with her. It’s true that my parents work in the industry, but their production company isn’t big enough for them to have just given me a job. There are owners of much larger and more significant production companies who have children, but those children don’t necessarily create shows. The TV process just isn’t that simple. Having connections is helpful, but they’ll only get you so far.

HBO is also incredibly selective, and they wouldn’t have bought my idea if they didn’t think I was entirely capable of working on a series. It doesn’t matter who you are or who you know, it’s just very difficult to get a show made. I worked insanely hard to get *Generation* to this point, and I’m proud of all my work. I go to every meeting, every casting session, I spent 5 weeks co-running a writer’s room.

I’m not comfortable speaking publically or talking on the phone, but I’ve had to walk into massive conference rooms and get on so many calls. And

I’ve been willing to do all of that if it means my show is getting made. I’m extremely committed to this pilot, so that people would think I was just thrown in the mix for publicity is surprising. I think accusations like these are completely discounting everything I’ve accomplished, and I’m tired of hearing people find any excuse to tear down successful women.

Saying I’m pretentious or accusing me of nepotism isn’t going to stop me from working, so I don’t see the point in taking time out of your day to make negative comments about a seventeen year old.



7 What advice do you have for other young people who want to write?

Be open to everything. New experi-

ences, particularly the ones outside your comfort zone, will improve your writing. If there’s something you’ve always wanted to try, just go for it.

I always thought of myself as a novel writer, but the idea I most wanted to pursue was in television, and at first I was nervous to put myself out there.

Pitching to a room of executives should have been scary, but it was the best moment of my life.

So put yourself out there! ✨