



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

### EP40 - ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

BEFORE WE START I JUST WANTED TO THANK EVERYONE WHO VOTED FOR THEIR FAVORITE EPISODE ART! I'M IN THE PROCESS OF TALLYING VOTES AND FIGURING OUT A PLAN WITH JEREMY, AND THE GOAL IS THAT MERCH WILL BE AVAILABLE AT SOME POINT THIS FALL. I'LL BE SURE TO KEEP YOU ALL UPDATED.

I ALSO WANT TO WARN LISTENERS THAT, ALTHOUGH NOT GRAPHIC, THIS EPISODE DOES MENTION SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOES HAVE SOME EXPLICIT LANGUAGE, AND VIOLENCE. IF THAT'S SOMETHING YOU DO NOT WANT TO LISTEN TO, OR IF YOU'RE WITH SOMEONE ELSE WHO MIGHT NOT WANT TO HEAR IT, NOW MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME TO TURN OFF THIS EPISODE.

THANKS FOR LISTENING.

PIPER KERMAN PUBLISHED *ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK: MY YEAR IN A WOMEN'S PRISON* IN 2010. IT TELLS THE STORY OF HOW MONEY LAUNDERING AND DRUG TRAFFICKING GOT HER TIME BEHIND BARS. AND, AS I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE, THE BOOK WAS ADAPTED INTO A NETFLIX TV SHOW IN 2013.

THE ADAPTATION WAS CREATED BY JENJI KOHAN, A WHITE WOMAN WHO HAS SAID QUOTE, "IN A LOT OF WAYS PIPER WAS MY TROJAN HORSE. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GO INTO A NETWORK AND SELL A SHOW ON REALLY FASCINATING TALES OF BLACK WOMEN, AND LATINA WOMEN AND OLD WOMEN AND CRIMINALS. BUT IF YOU TAKE THIS WHITE GIRL, THIS SORT OF FISH OUT OF WATER, AND YOU FOLLOW HER IN, YOU CAN THEN EXPAND YOUR WORLD AND TELL ALL OF THOSE OTHER STORIES. BUT IT'S A HARD SELL TO JUST GO IN AND TRY TO SELL THOSE STORIES INITIALLY. THE GIRL NEXT DOOR, THE COOL BLONDE, IS A VERY EASY ACCESS POINT, AND IT'S RELATABLE FOR A LOT OF AUDIENCES AND A LOT OF NETWORKS LOOKING FOR A CERTAIN DEMOGRAPHIC. IT'S USEFUL."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://thefeministgriote.com/orange-is-not-the-new-black/>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

I LOVE THAT KOHAN HAS SAID THAT, AND YET I ALSO FEEL LIKE - FOR A LOT OF FANS, PIPER IS THE MOST UNLIKEABLE CHARACTER ON THE SHOW.

WELL EITHER WAY, THANK YOU JENJI KOHAN FOR ACKNOWLEDGING THAT NETWORKS FEEL THE NEED TO HAVE A WHITE PERSON IN ORDER TO TELL STORIES FROM PEOPLE OF COLOR.

I FEEL LIKE THAT QUOTE JUST FURTHER SHOWS THAT ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK IS SIMPLY ABOUT PIPER, A WHITE WOMAN, SERVING HER PRISON SENTENCE, MAKING ALL OF THE CHARACTERS ON ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK TOKEN CHARACTERS, AND NOTHING MORE.

AND WHILE THERE ARE UNFORTUNATELY SO MANY CHARACTERS I COULD FOCUS ON TODAY, SO MANY STEREOTYPES AND PROBLEMS THAT I COULD TALK ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK - WHO I WANT TO FOCUS ON TODAY IS SOPHIA BURSET, A BLACK TRANS WOMAN.

I'M MORGAN JAFFE AND THIS IS BURST YOUR BUBBLE

LET ME JUST TAKE A MOMENT TO SAY THAT EVEN THOUGH I AM CRITIQUING ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK RIGHT NOW, I'M GLAD IT EXISTS. I'M GLAD THAT SOPHIA BURSET IS A CHARACTER ON THE SHOW AND THAT LAVERNE COX IS PLAYING HER. I WILL HAPPILY ADMIT THAT I'M A FAN OF THE SHOW. THAT I ENJOY WATCHING IT. THAT I'M ALL CAUGHT UP. I JUST WISH THAT EVEN MORE TRANS CHARACTERS AND TRANS CHARACTERS OF COLOR WERE REPRESENTED IN MEDIA.

BUT THIS IS ALSO WHERE I STRUGGLE THE MOST - AND I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE SOPHIA'S JUST THERE AS A TOKEN CHARACTER - THAT'S SHE'S ONLY THERE FOR HER TRANS STORYLINE.

I ALSO WANT TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENS TO TRANS PEOPLE IN PRISONS, NOT JUST ON TV, AND TO KEEP THAT IN MIND AS THEY WATCH THE SHOW.



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

AND BEFORE I GET TOO FAR, LISTENER BEWARE -THERE WILL BE TV SPOILERS AHEAD. BUT BEFORE WE GET THERE, LET'S START WITH KERMAN'S BOOK.

IT'S IN KERMAN'S MEMOIR THAT WE FIRST MEET VANESSA ROBINSON, A TRANS WOMAN WHO SERVES AS THE INSPIRATION FOR SOPHIA.

BUT IT'S WEIRD HOW KERMAN WRITES ABOUT VANESSA. THE FIRST TIME KERMAN INTRODUCES READERS TO VANESSA, SHE WRITES THAT VANESSA IS "...SIX FEET, FOUR INCHES OF BLONDE, COFFEE-COLORED, BALLOON-BREADED ALMOST ALL-WOMAN..."<sup>2</sup> YOU'LL NOTE MY EMPHASIS ON "...ALMOST ALL WOMAN..."

IN OTHER INSTANCES, KERMAN DESCRIBES VANESSA AS A "DIVA" AND "DRAG QUEEN FUNNY."<sup>3</sup>

IF YOU ASK ME, IT SOUNDS LIKE KERMAN IS EQUATING TRANS WOMEN WITH DRAG QUEENS AND STEREOTYPES USUALLY RESERVED FOR GAY MEN, AND NOTHING MORE. THAT'S WHY KERMAN WROTE, "VANESSA REMINDED ME OF THE GAY MALES AND FRESHLY FEMALES I HAD KNOWN IN SAN FRANCISCO AND NEW YORK"<sup>4</sup>

HONESTLY, IT SOUNDS LIKE KERMAN DOESN'T SEE VANESSA AS A WOMAN AT ALL, AND SHE EVEN GOES AS FAR AS TO WRITE, "...IN THE HOT, CLOSE QUARTERS OF B DORM IN THE SUMMER, [VANESSA] SMELLED UNMISTAKABLY LIKE A SWEATY MAN"<sup>5</sup>

AND THE PROBLEMATIC LANGUAGE KERMAN USES ISN'T JUST IN THE MEMOIR.

---

<sup>2</sup> ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK: MY YEAR IN A WOMEN'S PRISON, PAGE 181

<sup>3</sup> ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK: MY YEAR IN A WOMEN'S PRISON, PAGE 183

<sup>4</sup> ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK: MY YEAR IN A WOMEN'S PRISON, PAGE 202

<sup>5</sup> ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK: MY YEAR IN A WOMEN'S PRISON, PAGE 183



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

IN AN INTERVIEW IN SMITH MAGAZINE, PIPER KERMAN TALKS ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS FOR HER MEMOIR, SAYING "...I SAT DOWN AND STARTED WRITING SOME OF THE STAND-ALONE NARRATIVES THAT ARE WITHIN THE BOOK - LIKE WHAT THE FIRST DAY WAS LIKE, OR ABOUT MY NEIGHBOR VANESSA, WHO'D BEEN A MAN AND WAS NOW A WOMAN."<sup>6</sup>

"WHO'D BEEN A MAN AND WAS NOW A WOMAN."<sup>7</sup>

LET'S USE THIS AS A TEACHABLE MOMENT, SHALL WE? IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT A TRANS PERSON - EVEN IF SAY YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THEM AS A BABY, BEFORE THEY TRANSITIONED, YOU STILL USE THE PRONOUNS THAT THEY CURRENTLY USE. IN VANESSA'S CASE, WHETHER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HER IN PRISON OR BEFORE HER TRANSITION, YOU'LL USE SHE. SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN A WOMAN. YOU WOULD NEVER WANT TO USE THE INCORRECT PRONOUN AND YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO USE THEIR DEADNAME.

ANOTHER TEACHABLE MOMENT: SOME TRANSGENDER PEOPLE - THOUGH NOT ALL - WILL CHANGE THEIR NAMES IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS, ALONG WITH PRONOUNS. BUT SOMETIMES A TRANS PERSON MAY BE CALLED THE WRONG NAME - THE OLD NAME THEY USED BEFORE THEY TRANSITIONED. MAYBE IT'S FROM A PARENT WHO DOESN'T APPROVE; MAYBE IT'S BY A FRIEND ACCIDENTALLY; MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T LEGALLY CHANGED THEIR NAME AND GENDER MARKER ON THEIR ID - AN EXPENSIVE PROCESS THAT NOT EVERYONE CAN AFFORD.

SO WHEN KERMAN DEADNAMES VANESSA IN THE BOOK, IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT VANESSA ROBINSON IS ACTUALLY A FAKE NAME AND SO IS HER DEADNAME. THE ACTION OF DEADNAMING VANESSA IS STILL INVALIDATING AND SHOWS THAT KERMAN DOESN'T RESPECT VANESSA, HER IDENTITY, AND HER TRANSITION.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.smithmag.net/memoirville/2010/04/06/interview-piper-kerman-author-of-orange-is-the-new-black-my-year-inside-a-womens-prison/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.smithmag.net/memoirville/2010/04/06/interview-piper-kerman-author-of-orange-is-the-new-black-my-year-inside-a-womens-prison/>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHERE YOU COULD SAY THAT KERMAN JUST DOESN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, BUT THAT'S NOT A VALID EXCUSE. IT SHOULDN'T BE ON TRANS PEOPLE TO EDUCATE THOSE THAT DO NOT IDENTIFY AS TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING. THERE'S THE LIBRARY. FIND A BOOK. THERE'S THE INTERNET. GO USE IT. FIND THOSE TEACHABLE MOMENTS.

HERE'S ONE, IF YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW: SEX AND GENDER ARE NOT THE SAME THING. AGAIN, SEX AND GENDER ARE NOT THE SAME THING.

HISTORICALLY SEX AND GENDER HAVE BEEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY, BUT THEY'RE TWO DISTINCT WORDS WITH DIFFERENT MEANINGS. SEX IS ABOUT BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES, MOST NOTABLY GENITALIA. GENDER, AND GENDER IDENTITY, ON THE OTHER HAND, REFERS TO PEOPLE'S SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED ROLES IN SOCIETY AND THEIR CONCEPT OF THEMSELVES.

SOMETIMES A PERSON'S SEX, OR THE SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH, DOES NOT LINEUP WITH THEIR GENDER IDENTITY. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, THESE PEOPLE MIGHT IDENTIFY AS TRANSGENDER. AND THIS IS JUST ONE TERM.

YOU'LL HEAR ME SAY TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING TODAY TO TRY AND SIMPLIFY THINGS, BUT MAYBE THAT'S UNFAIR.

SOMEONE MIGHT IDENTIFY AS NON-BINARY OR GENDERQUEER, AND NOT IDENTIFY AS A MAN OR A WOMAN, BUT SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. SEE, THINK OF GENDER AS A SPECTRUM. MAYBE THEY'RE MORE MASCULINE. MAYBE THEY'RE MORE FEMININE. MAYBE THEY'RE ANDROGYNOUS.

SOMEONE WHO IS NATIVE MIGHT IDENTIFY AS TWO SPIRIT, OR HAVING BOTH A MASCULINE AND A FEMININE SPIRIT, USED TO DESCRIBE THEIR SEXUAL, GENDER, AND/OR SPIRITUAL IDENTITY.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://lgbtqhealth.ca/community/two-spirit.php>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

AGAIN, THERE ARE A LOT OF TERMS. THESE ARE JUST A COUPLE. USE THE LIBRARY. USE THE INTERNET. BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT THAT CISGENDER PEOPLE, OR PEOPLE WHOSE GENDER IDENTITY CORRESPONDS WITH THEIR SEX, HAVE TO LEARN ABOUT THE TRANS COMMUNITY. YET IT'S A MOSTLY CISGENDER COMMUNITY THAT IS CREATING LAWS AND RULES FOR THE TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON CONFORMING COMMUNITY TO FOLLOW, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO PLACEMENT IN PRISONS.

LET'S TAKE A SECOND TO TALK ABOUT WHEN TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE ARE LOCKED AWAY. PRISONS AND JAILS GENERALLY SEPARATE PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED BY SEX, AND THEY DECIDE THAT BASED ON A PERSON'S GENITALIA OR ASSIGNED SEX AT BIRTH.<sup>9</sup> THEIR GENDER IDENTITY OR GENDER PRESENTATION ISN'T A FACTOR.<sup>10</sup>

IF VANESSA - OR SOPHIA - HADN'T BEEN POST OP - OR GONE THROUGH SURGERY - BOTH WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT INTO A MEN'S PRISON. AND I DON'T THINK PEOPLE REALIZE THAT WHEN WATCHING ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK.

AND HERE'S THE THING - NOT EVERYONE WHO IS TRANS WILL MEDICALLY TRANSITION. SOMETIMES IT'S BECAUSE SOMEONE CAN'T AFFORD TO, AND SOMETIMES A TRANS PERSON WILL NOT MEDICALLY TRANSITION BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO - BUT NOT WANTING TO UNDERGO SURGERY TO CHANGE ASPECTS OF YOUR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE DOESN'T MAKE SOMEONE ANY LESS TRANS. IF A TRANS WOMAN DOESN'T MEDICALLY TRANSITION, SHE'S STILL A WOMAN; AND IF A TRANS MAN DOESN'T MEDICALLY TRANSITION, WELL GUESS WHAT, HE'S STILL A MAN TOO.

TRANSITIONING ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT HORMONES AND SURGERY. SOMETIMES IT'S JUST ABOUT IDENTITY AND PRESENTATION. AND EVEN WITH PRESENTATION, YOU CAN IDENTIFY AS A TRANSMAN AND STILL BE INCREDIBLY FEMININE, OR YOU CAN IDENTIFY AS A TRANS WOMAN AND STILL BE VERY MASCULINE. THERE'S A

---

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1\\_copy.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1_copy.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1\\_copy.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1_copy.pdf)



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

LOT OF DIFFERENT FACTORS THAT CAN GO INTO IT. BUT NOT MEDICALLY TRANSITIONING CAN GET A TRANS PERSON PLACED INTO THE WRONG PRISON.

IN ONE SURVEY FROM LAMBDA LEGAL IN 2012, 33% OF THE PEOPLE THEY SURVEYED WHO WERE IN JAIL OR PRISON IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS IDENTIFIED AS TRANSGENDER, GENDERQUEER, GENDER-NONCONFORMING, TWO SPIRIT, OR MARKED THEIR GENDER IDENTITY AS "OTHER."<sup>11</sup>

OF THOSE SURVEYED, 60% OF THE TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS WHO HAD BEEN IN JAIL OR PRISON REPORTED BEING PLACED IN A SINGLE GENDER SECTION OF THAT JAIL OR PRISON THAT DID NOT MATCH THEIR GENDER IDENTITY.<sup>12</sup>

TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS WITH FEMININE IDENTITIES REPORTED BEING WRONGFULLY PLACED FAR MORE OFTEN THAN TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS WITH MASCULINE IDENTITIES.<sup>13</sup> IN FACT 70% OF TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS WITH FEMININE IDENTITIES REPORTED BEING WRONGFULLY PLACED AND 47% OF TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS WITH MASCULINE IDENTITIES REPORTED BEING WRONGFULLY PLACED.<sup>14</sup>

AND THIS IS WHY I STRUGGLE WITH ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK.

AGAIN, IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE SOPHIA BURSET AS A CHARACTER AND TO HAVE LAVERNE COX PORTRAYING HER. TO HAVE A STORY IN THE MEDIA ABOUT A BLACK TRANS WOMAN PLAYED BY A BLACK TRANS WOMAN. THAT THERE'S MORE VISIBILITY FOR TRANS PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY TRANS PEOPLE OF COLOR, IN THE MEDIA.

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

AFTER ALL, ACCORDING TO A JOINT STUDY BY THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY AND THE NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE, 21% OF ALL TRANS WOMEN HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES, AND THAT 21% JUMPS TO 47% FOR BLACK TRANS WOMEN.<sup>15</sup> THAT'S COMPARED TO A 5% INCARCERATION RATE AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION.<sup>16</sup>

BUT HERE'S THE THING. AGAIN, I LOVE THAT SOPHIA BURSET IS A CHARACTER. I LOVE THAT LAVERNE COX IS PLAYING HER AS A CHARACTER. BUT FOR SO MANY PEOPLE - AS I SAID, 70% OF TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS WITH FEMININE IDENTITIES<sup>17</sup> - REPORTED BEING WRONGFULLY PLACED.

IT'S ACCURATE, SOPHIA WOULD HAVE INTO LITCHFIELD BECAUSE SHE IS POST-OP - BECAUSE HER SEX, HER GENITALIA, MATCHES PEOPLE BELIEVE A WOMAN'S GENITALIA SHOULD BE. BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK ABOUT ALL THE TRANS WOMEN WHO ARE NOT POST-OP WHO HAVE BEEN WRONGFULLY PLACED IN A MEN'S PRISON. AND WHILE I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE A BLACK TRANS CHARACTER BEING PLAYED AS A BLACK TRANS WOMAN, I FEEL LIKE WE ONLY SEE SOPHIA AS A TRANS CHARACTER, AND NOTHING MORE.

CLIP: SOPHIA ASKING FOR HORMONES.

PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED LOSE A LOT OF THEIR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS WHILE THEY'RE IN PRISON

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, NO MATTER HOW HUMOROUS SCENES OF ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK CAN GET -

**CLIP:** RED TALKING ABOUT THE MAGIC CHICKEN

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.them.us/story/the-dire-realities-of-being-a-trans-woman-in-a-mens-prison>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/piusp01.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>





## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

I MEAN HOW MANY SHOWS INCLUDE MYTHS ABOUT A MAGIC CHICKEN - YOU CAN'T DENY THAT THE SHOW IS A SHOW ABOUT SERIOUS TOPICS.

AND IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ONE OF THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN PRISONS ARE THOSE WHO ARE TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING. AND THEY DO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ON THE SHOW.

A 2011 NATIONAL SURVEY BY THE NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE FOUND THAT 12% OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN IN JAILS OR PRISONS HAD BEEN DENIED ROUTINE HEALTH CARE.<sup>18</sup> IN THAT SURVEY, 17% OF TRANS PEOPLE HAD BEEN DENIED THEIR HORMONES, AND THAT NUMBER JUMPED UP TO 30% FOR BLACK TRANS PEOPLE.<sup>19</sup>

A 2015 SURVEY FROM BLACK & PINK, AN ORGANIZATION THAT SUPPORTS LGBTQ PEOPLE IMPACTED BY THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, CITES THAT 44% OF THE TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE THEY SURVEYED REPORTED BEING DENIED ACCESS TO HORMONES.<sup>20</sup> SO REMEMBER THAT WHEN YOU SEE SOPHIA BEING DENIED HER HORMONES TOO.

**CLIP:** SOPHIA BEING DENIED HER HORMONES.

AND IN THAT SURVEY FROM LAMBDA LEGAL, 66% OF THE TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS HAD EXPERIENCED VERBAL ASSAULT.<sup>21</sup> AND SO IT'S WE SEE SOPHIA GOING THROUGH VERBAL ASSAULT BOTH TO HER FACE

**CLIP:** SOPHIA BEING CALLED AN IT.

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.blackandpink.org/wp-content/uploads/Coming-Out-of-Concrete-Closets.-Black-and-Pink.-October-21-2015..pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

**CLIP:** SOPHIA BEING CALLED OUT FOR “LOSING” HER PENIS

**CLIP:** SOPHIA BEING CALLED A “MANDINGO” AND A “HE SHE”

AND THE VIEWER ALSO KNOWS SOPHIA IS BEING TALKED ABOUT NEGATIVELY BEHIND HER BACK - EVEN IF SHE DOESN'T.

**CLIP:** BEING CALLED A “HE SHE.”

**CLIP:** HER VAGINA BEING CALLED A “CYBORG PUSSY.”

AND IT DOESN'T STOP AT VERBAL ASSAULT - NOT FOR SOPHIA, AND NOT FOR TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED. THE LAMBDA LEGAL SURVEY ALSO FOUND THAT 22% OF TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS HAD EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL ASSAULT. THAT NUMBER CLIMBS TO 28% OF TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS OF COLOR AND TO 33% OF FEMININE TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING RESPONDENTS.<sup>22</sup> AND THAT'S WHY ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK SHOWS THAT TOO.

**CLIP:** SOPHIA BEING ATTACKED.

OR HOW SOPHIA, EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS THE ONE WAS ATTACKED, WAS ALSO THE ONE PUT INTO SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.

**CLIP:** SOPHIA BEING TAKEN TO THE SHU.

AS MANAGEMENT SAYS, “IT'S FOR HER OWN PROTECTION.” AND THAT'S REALLY WHAT HAPPENS. MANY PRISONS AND JAILS WILL PUT TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED IN LONG TERM SEGREGATION AND ISOLATION UNDER THE CLAIM THAT IT'S TO PROTECT THEM FROM VIOLENCE.<sup>23</sup> BUT PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED AND PLACED IN

---

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1\\_copy.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1_copy.pdf)



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

ADMINISTRATIVE SEGREGATION ARE OFTEN KEPT IN THEIR CELLS FOR NEARLY 24 HOURS A DAY<sup>24</sup> FOR MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS.<sup>25</sup>

THESE TRANS AND GENDER NONCONFORMING PEOPLE PLACED IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN EDUCATION, JOBS, AND OTHER PROGRAMMING,<sup>26</sup> NOT TO MENTION THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE FROM LONG TERM ISOLATION AND STIGMATIZATION.<sup>27</sup>

**CLIP:** SOPHIA IN THE SHU.

AND DON'T GET ME WRONG. IT'S IMPORTANT TO SHOW WHAT TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED GO THROUGH, BUT NOT IF WE DON'T FLESH THEM OUT AS FULLY DEVELOPED CHARACTERS. SOPHIA IS JUST ONE STORY IN THE PRISON SYSTEM, AND THERE ARE SO MANY STORIES OUT THERE. BUT SOPHIA IS ONLY SHOWN AS A TRANS CHARACTER, AND ALL OF HER STORY ARCS RELATE BACK TO IT.

AFTER ALL, THAT'S HOW SOPHIA ENDED UP IN PRISON. SHE STOLE CREDIT CARDS TO PAY FOR HER TRANSITION. SOPHIA COULD HAVE BEEN PUT INTO PRISON FOR ANOTHER REASON. IT DIDN'T HAVE TO BE SO INTERTWINED WITH HER TRANSITION. IT'S JUST ANOTHER WAY THAT SHE'S TOKENIZED.

AND DON'T GET ME WRONG - I UNDERSTAND THAT FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE THEY VERY WELL MIGHT END UP IN PRISON BECAUSE OF REASONS THEY CAN'T CONTROL - THEIR RACE OR GENDER OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION - BUT I FEEL LIKE ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK DOES TRY AND PUSH THE BOUNDARIES AND STEREOTYPES FOR WHY CERTAIN CHARACTERS ARE LOCKED UP. SO WHY NOT FOR SOPHIA TOO?

---

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1\\_copy.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1_copy.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://transequality.org/issues/police-jails-prisons>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1\\_copy.pdf](https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/121414-aclu-prea-kyrs-1_copy.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/protected-and-served/jails-and-prisons>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

THERE'S A CHARACTER NAMED SUZANNE. SHE HAS SOME MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, AND EVEN THOUGH A FULL GROWN ADULT, LEGITIMATELY JUST WANTED TO PLAY WITH A BOY SHE MET AT THE PLAYGROUND, BUT WHEN SHE BROUGHT HIM BACK TO HER HOUSE HE GOT SCARED, TRIED TO FLEE THROUGH A FIRE ESCAPE, SLIPPED, AND FELL.

**CLIP:** SUZANNE PLAYING WITH THE BOY AND HIM FALLING.

SUZANNE WAS CHARGED WITH KIDNAPPING AND INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER OF A MINOR.

THERE'S A CHARACTER NAMED PENNSATUCKY, WHO SHOT AN ABORTION CLINIC WORKER WHO MADE A COMMENT ABOUT HOW MANY ABORTIONS SHE HAD HAD.

**CLIP:** PENNSATUCKY SHOOTING THE ABORTION CLINIC WORKER.

SHE WAS CHARGED WITH SECOND DEGREE MURDER

OR THERE'S A CHARACTER WHO GOES BY RED WHO GOT INVOLVED WITH ORGANIZED CRIME THAT ALL STARTED WHEN SHE PUNCHED THE WIFE OF A MOB BOSS IN THE CHEST, PUNCTURING HER BREAST IMPLANT.

**CLIP:** RED PUNCHING THE WOMAN AND FIGHTING WITH HER HUSBAND.

RED AND HER HUSBAND HAD TO WORK FOR THE MOB TO PAY THAT OFF. IT'S A LITTLE BIT OF A RIDICULOUS WAY TO GET INVOLVED WITH ORGANIZED CRIME, BUT THE POINT IS THAT SHE HAS A BACKSTORY. CLEARLY, THESE STORIES ARE DEVELOPED AND FLESHED OUT AND GO BEYOND STEREOTYPES.

SUZANNE IS BLACK AND HAS MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS. HER CRIME COULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT. PENNSATUCKY COMES FROM A LOWER CLASS BACKGROUND AND HAS A DRUG PROBLEM. HER CRIME COULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT. RED IS A RUSSIAN IMMIGRANT WITH A THICK ACCENT. IF I'M DOING



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

THE STEREOTYPE ARGUMENT, WELL HER CRIME COULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME, BUT HOW SHE GOT INVOLVED WAS DIFFERENT.

LIKE WHEN I THINK OF THE CHARACTERS ON ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK, WHETHER THEY'RE QUEER OR LATINX OR OLD OR BLACK - NONE OF THEM REALLY ENDED UP IN PRISON FOR ANYTHING SO TIED TO THEIR IDENTITY AS SOPHIA DID.

THEY EVEN GIVE A LARGER BACKSTORY FOR JOHN BENNET - ONE OF THE C.O.'S WHO ALSO SERVED IN AFGHANISTAN. WE FIND OUT THAT HE HAS A PROSTHETIC LEG, AND I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT I INCORRECTLY ASSUMED THAT HIS LEG HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIM SERVING IN THE ARMY. BUT THEN VIEWERS FIND OUT THAT BENNETT ACTUALLY HAD TO HAVE HIS LEG AMPUTATED AFTER GETTING AN INFECTION IN A HOT TUB IN FLORIDA.

**CLIP:** BENNET TALKING ABOUT HIS LEG.

AND ALL OF THAT TIES BACK TO BENNET'S LARGER CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT - THAT HE'S IRRESPONSIBLE AND DOESN'T THINK THINGS THROUGH. BUT AGAIN, SOPHIA'S ENTIRE BACKSTORY IS THAT SHE'S TRANS. SHE DOESN'T GET THE SAME CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. SHE DOESN'T GET A TRUE BACKSTORY. THIS ISN'T TO SAY THAT ALL OF THE OTHER CHARACTERS AREN'T STILL STEREOTYPED OR TOKENIZED IN SOME WAY, BUT THAT ALL OF SOPHIA FEELS STEREOTYPED AND TOKENIZED IN SOME WAY.

AND WHY IS IT SOPHIA'S - AND BY EXTENSION, LAVERNE COX'S - JOB TO PUT IN THE EMOTIONAL LABOR AND EDUCATE PEOPLE THAT DO NOT IDENTIFY AS TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING ABOUT TRANS ISSUES?

AT ONE POINT, SOPHIA EVEN HAS TO EDUCATE WHO ARE INCARCERATED ABOUT THEIR OWN ANATOMY.

**CLIP:** SOPHIA EXPLAINING ANATOMY



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

AND IT'S MADE CLEAR TO AN AUDIENCE THAT SHE KNOWS ABOUT THIS BECAUSE SHE'S TRANS.

**CLIP:** SOPHIA TALKING ABOUT HOW SHE DESIGNED HER VULVA.

THAT'S WHY SHE'S SO KNOWLEDGEABLE - BECAUSE SHE'S TRANS. SOPHIA NEVER GETS TO JUST BE ANOTHER PERSON IN THE PRISON, AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK. THAT'S HOW SHE'S TOKENIZED.

AND LET'S BE HONEST - ALL OF THIS HAPPENS BECAUSE THERE ARE HARDLY ANY OTHER TRANS CHARACTERS - LET ALONG TRANS CHARACTERS OF COLOR - IN THE MEDIA. I KNOW PEOPLE LOVE TO MAKE THE ARGUMENT THAT, "WELL, AT LEAST HER CHARACTER'S ON THE SHOW," AND, "WELL, WE HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE." BUT I GUESS I'M ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO'S SICK OF HEARING THAT. WHO'S SICK OF WAITING.

SOPHIA DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ALL ENCOMPASSING OF WHAT TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED GO THROUGH. THAT'S NOT FAIR FOR HER AS A CHARACTER, LAVERNE COX, OR ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK ITSELF, ESPECIALLY WHEN I TRY TO THINK ABOUT OTHER RECURRING TRANS CHARACTERS IN THE MEDIA, LET ALONE TRANS CHARACTERS OF COLOR.

AS SEASON 6 OF ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK ENDS, SOPHIA GETS AN EARLY RELEASE, GETTING \$300,000 IN A DEAL. BUT THERE'S A CATCH. SOPHIA HAD TO SIGN A NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT, VOWING TO NEVER SHARE WITH ANYONE WHAT HAPPENED TO HER AT LITCHFIELD. THAT SHE WAS VERBALLY HARASSED. THAT OTHER INMATES ATTACKED HER. THAT SHE WAS LOCKED UP IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR 6 MONTHS.

IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS INS SEASON 7 FOR SOPHIA - AND I HOPE WE SEE IT. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS THE SHOW CAN HAVE HER STORY GO. I'M GOING TO ASSUME, THOUGH, THAT IF WE SEE HER AT ALL, IT'LL ONLY BE TO SHOW A TRANS STORYLINE, AND NOT JUST TO SHOW HER AS A PERSON OUTSIDE OF PRISON.



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

WE SEE SOPHIA LEAVE LITCHFIELD AND GO TO HER WIFE, BUT AGAIN THAT'S NOT ALWAYS THE CASE. MANY TRANS AND GENDER NONCONFORMING PEOPLE FACE DISCRIMINATION, EVEN AFTER THEY ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON AND STAYING IN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING.<sup>28</sup> TRANS WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED, REPORTING UNEMPLOYMENT AT TWICE THE RATE.<sup>29</sup> AND MORE THAN 4 IN 10 TRANSGENDER PEOPLE WHO ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ARE UNDEREMPLOYED<sup>30</sup> - NEARLY FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF UNDER \$10,000.<sup>31</sup>

TRANS WOMEN ARE ALSO FREQUENTLY TARGETED BY POLICE, WHO OFTEN INCORRECTLY ASSUME THEY ARE ENGAGING IN SEX WORK<sup>32</sup> EVEN WHEN WALKING DOWN THE STREET.<sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup> MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT'S LEARNED FROM THE MEDIA. LAVERNE COX HERSELF HAS SAID THAT SHE'S PLAYED A PROSTITUTE 7 TIMES.<sup>36</sup>

AGAIN, IT'S GREAT TO SEE PORTRAYALS OF TRANS CHARACTERS, ESPECIALLY BLACK TRANS CHARACTERS, BUT I ALSO WANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE NEED MORE. THAT, YES, WE NEED MORE STORIES ABOUT TRANS AND GENDER NON

---

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/article/trans-in-prison-faq>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-workers-at-greater-risk-for-unemployment-and-poverty>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-workers-at-greater-risk-for-unemployment-and-poverty>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-workers-at-greater-risk-for-unemployment-and-poverty>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.advocate.com/transgender/2015/11/12/black-trans-woman-meagan-taylor-sues-iowa-hotel-profiled-her-sex-worker>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.them.us/story/the-dire-realities-of-being-a-trans-woman-in-a-mens-prison>

<sup>34</sup> <https://thinkprogress.org/how-phoenix-convicted-a-transgender-woman-for-walking-down-the-street-1d8d8b15ea19/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.advocate.com/transgender/2015/11/12/black-trans-woman-meagan-taylor-sues-iowa-hotel-profiled-her-sex-worker>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=209843353>



## BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST

CONFORMING PEOPLE COMING OUT AND ACCEPTING THEMSELVES AND THEIR TRANSITIONS - IF THAT'S ULTIMATELY WHAT THEY WANT TO DO. BUT THAT WE ALSO NEED STORIES ABOUT TRANS AND GENDER NON CONFORMING PEOPLE JUST BEING PEOPLE, GOING TO SCHOOL OR WORK OR DOING ERRANDS OR BEING LOCKED UP IN PRISON OR GOING TO THE MOON OR BEING A MAD SCIENTIST OR RUNNING AN EMPIRE OR BEING A BUSINESS MOGUL OR BEING A SUPERSTAR - ESPECIALLY SINCE MANY CISGENDER PEOPLE MIGHT ONLY INTERACT WITH A TRANS OR GENDER NON CONFORMING PERSON MAY VERY WELL BE IN THE MEDIA.

BUT AGAIN: THAT'S THE PROBLEM - THERE AREN'T ENOUGH TRANS CHARACTERS IN THE MEDIA, SO WHEN THEY DO APPEAR THEY'RE TYPECAST: A PROSTITUTE.THE BUTT OF A JOKE. DEAD OR DYING.

WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TRANS CHARACTERS ON TV SHOWS OR IN THE MOVIES OR IN THE NEWS. IF WE DID, SOPHIA WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE ONE OF THE FEW REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK TRANS CHARACTERS. MAYBE THEN, HER STORY WOULDN'T HAVE TO BE ABOUT HER BEING TRANS, BUT HER JUST BEING A PERSON.

I'M MORGAN JAFFE AND THAT WAS BURST YOUR BUBBLE

AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU SO MUCH TO THE WONDERFUL JEREMY FERRIS, WHO DOES ALL OF THE EPISODE ART FOR THE SHOW. YOU CAN SEE ALL OF THE WORK HE HAS DONE OVER AT [BURSTYOURBUBBLEPODCAST.COM](http://BURSTYOURBUBBLEPODCAST.COM).

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE, CHECK OUT AND FINANCIALLY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS LIKE LAMBDA LEGAL, THE ACLU, AND BLACK & PINK, BUT THESE WERE JUST A FEW SOURCES FOR TODAY'S EPISODE, AND IN GENERAL, I ONLY PICK A COUPLE TO HIGHLIGHT AT THE END OF A SHOW.

GOING FORWARD, ALL EPISODES WILL BE FULLY TRANSCRIBED, FOOTNOTED, AND AVAILABLE TO YOU FROM OUR WEBSITE,





## **BURST YOUR BUBBLE PODCAST**

BURSTYOURBUBBLEPODCAST.COM. I'M IN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING ALL OF THE OLD EPISODES UP AS WELL, SO THANKS FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

ALSO THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO VOTED FOR THEIR FAVORITE EPISODE ART! MY FAVORITE PIECE OF FEEDBACK? THERE WAS A SPOT TO WRITE IN "ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANTED TO ADD?", AND ONE LISTENER WROTE QUOTE "SOMEHOW A PICTURE OF YOU AS LUCY HOLDING THE FOOTBALL TO CULTURE STANDARDS. YEAH IDK EITHER BUT THAT WOULD BE FRESH."

THANK YOU ANONYMOUS LISTENER, AND I'M NO ARTIST, BUT I REALLY WOULD LOVE TO SEE LISTENER INTERPRETATIONS OF THAT. SO IF YOU'RE LISTENING AND HAVE ANY TALENT AT ALL, PLEASE DO A DRAWING OF THAT AND PLEASE TAG THE PODCAST. I'D LOVE TO SEE IT.

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY, PLEASE SUBSCRIBE TO THE SHOW OR LEAVE A REVIEW, FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA, OR VISIT US AT BURSTYOURBUBBLEPODCAST.COM.

BURST YOUR BUBBLE IS RELEASED THE 2ND AND 4TH THURSDAY OF THE MONTH. THE NEXT EPISODE WILL BE RELEASED SEPTEMBER 27TH

THANKS SO MUCH FOR LISTENING, I'LL SEE YOU NEXT TIME, AND HAVE A GOOD ONE!