



An Original EduGuide for

PROJECT CONTRAST

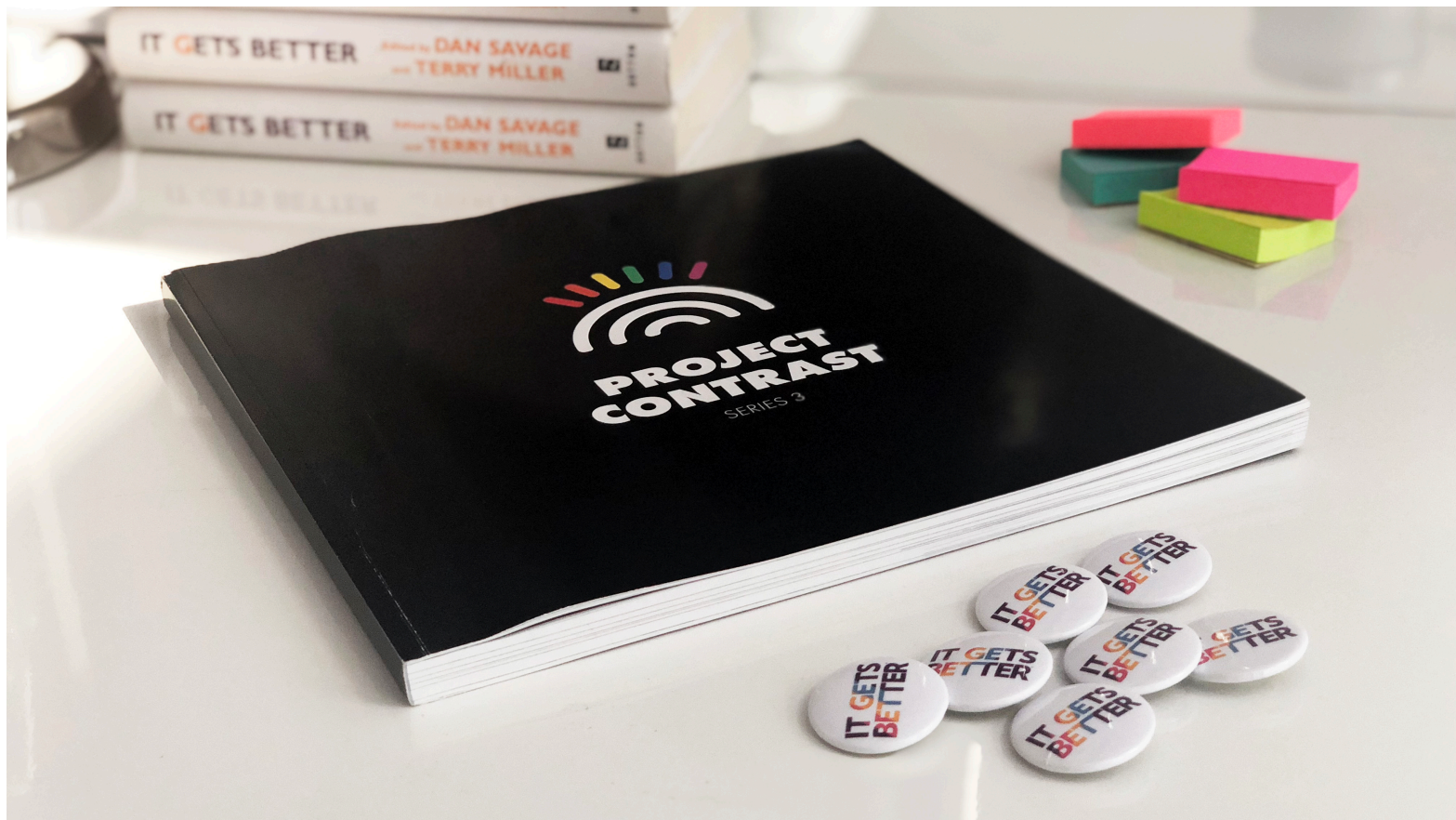
A STUNNING LOOK AT LGBTQ+ YOUTH

IT GETS
BETTER
PROJECT

ABOUT THE SERIES

PROJECT CONTRAST

Project Contrast (www.projectcontrast.org) is both a storytelling project and a nonprofit organization created to help highlight the voices of LGBTQ+ youth across the United States. So far, the organization has interviewed over 100 young people, each with their own vibrant and complex story. Through this process, *Project Contrast* has created a space for LGBTQ+ youth and allies to engage with one another's stories and to create a collective hope for their futures.



To explore the series, visit:

www.itgetsbetter.org/ProjectContrast

If you prefer a printed version, a coffee book collection of *Project Contrast* stories is also available for purchase at www.projectcontrast.org/book.

ABOUT THIS

READER'S GUIDE

This guide will walk you through a small portion of the Project Contrast online collection (individuals links are provided in the following sections) and ask you to think critically about the stories you read. Each story has been organized into a group that reflects just one of the many identities expressed by the storytellers themselves, with questions and activities to follow.

This guide is intended for young adults (YA) ages 14+ or those already in late middle or high school. You can follow this guide on your own, with your fellow GSA members, during family night, in a book club, or even in a classroom. The options are limitless.



Watch the video trailer for the series at <https://youtu.be/LKyeEBdQoq0>.

Identity Group #1:

LESBIAN & GAY WOMEN



Jasmine



Maya



Casey C.

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. Jasmine identifies as gay while Maya identifies as lesbian. With a small group, discuss why these women might identify differently. What were some of your conclusions?
2. How has homophobia affected these storytellers' ability to express themselves and their sexuality? How has sexism affected them?

Identity Group #2:

GAY MEN



Adam C.



Micah



Brigham S.

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. What gay role models did Adam mention in his story, and what impact did these role models make on him? Who are some of your own role models, and how have they impacted you?
2. Many of the stories featured in *Project Contrast* involve young people who felt like they needed to masquerade or act like someone other than themselves. What do you think influenced them to feel this way? How can we push back against such negative influences in our own lives?

Identity Group #3:

BISEXUAL & PANSEXUAL



Morgan



Isabella



Bekah

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. Based on the stories from this group and how the storytellers describe themselves, how do bisexuality and pansexuality differ? How do these differences impact each person's story?
2. Morgan said that “heteronormativity skewed my perspective on my sexuality.” How so? How does heteronormativity impact bisexual and pansexual people in general in our society today?

Identity Group #4:

TRANS & GENDERFLUID



Ronan



Ken



Seth R.

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. Coming out, whether to one's self or to others, is rarely straightforward. Like Ronan says, many individuals "put different labels on, trying to see what fits." Why do you think that is? How can we best support our friends and loved ones who are discovering themselves through this kind of process?
2. In today's world, many communities continue to assign genders to inanimate objects like clothing and toys. How might that help or harm people who are trans or genderfluid? How might that allow for or hinder self exploration?

Identity Group #5:

ASEXUAL



Riley



Melly



Asher

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

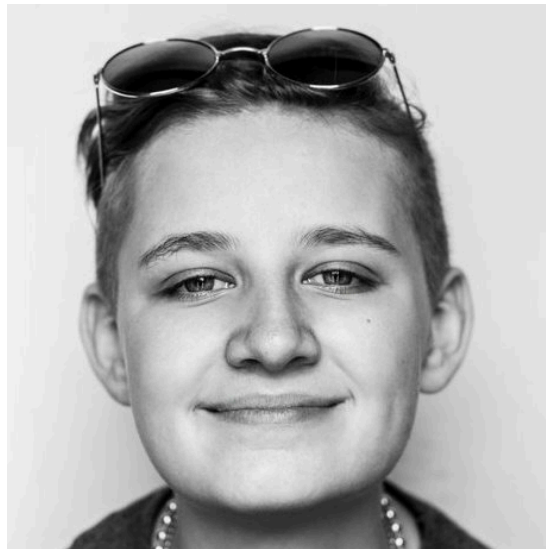
1. Identifying as asexual can mean different things for different people, and experiences in asexuality can vary. How do Riley, Melly, and Asher's stories compare and/or differ?
2. Sexuality and romanticism are distinct concepts, as are asexuality and aromanticism. How would you describe them? Do some research online to refine your definitions.

Identity Group #6:

NO LABELS



Julia S.



Nate



Valeria L.

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. Julia, Nate, and Valeria are just three of the individuals from *Project Contrast* who chose not to label their gender or sexuality. Why do you think that is? What are the pros and cons of labeling or “coming out” with a specific identity?
2. Imagine a world where labels for gender or sexuality didn’t exist. Describe what you think that world would look or how you think it would function. Is it a world you’d want to live in? Explain.

Identity Group #7:

PEOPLE OF COLOR



Tyra K.



Navaha



Yvoty L.

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. How do Trya, Navaha, and Yvoty's experiences compare? How do they differ? What kind of influence (if any) does race have on their experience with gender or sexuality?
2. *Intersectionality* is a term coined by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. It describes the unique experiences individuals with multiple identities face when different forms of discrimination (like racism, sexism, or homophobia) combine or overlap. For example, Black women and white women experience sexism differently because of racism.

How does the concept of intersectionality play out in these stories? Explain.

Identity Group #8:

DIFFERENTLY ABLED



Danielle K.



Tenneh F.



Jay S.

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. Danielle says that being deaf and using hearing aids made her worry about how others view her. What words of advice or support would you share with LGBTQ+ people like her?
2. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org/Find-Support/LGBTQ) reports that LGBTQ+ individuals are almost three times more likely to experience depression and anxiety than non-LGBTQ+ people. What do you think we can do in our communities to better support LGBTQ+ people like Jay who are experiencing these sorts of mental health conditions?

Identity Group #9:

LOCATION



Alaska



Colorado



New Mexico



South Dakota



Utah



Wyoming

To read their stories, click on the images above.

Questions

1. Pick any two stories from the *Project Contrast* collection, making sure each one is from a different state. How does location play a role in each of the stories you chose (if at all)? Consider how local institutions and influences might impact these experiences.
2. Consider where you live: how does diversity (or the lack thereof) impact the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in your community?

BONUS

ACTIVITIES

Watching is only half the fun! You can also choose one of the following activities to take your learning one step farther. Don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

- ★ **WRITE** – Peruse the entire *Project Contrast* online collection and find a story that you really connect with. Now write your own story as if you were the other storyteller's penpal. What would you say? What would you want your penpal to know about your journey? If interested, send your story to Project Contrast at www.projectcontrast.org/contact and ask them to deliver your story to your new penpal.
- ★ **BRAINSTORM** – First, pick two states currently featured in *Project Contrast*. Next, go to www.wikipedia.org and search for the article “LGBT Rights in the United States.” Then, read through the article and take notes on how protections and rights of LGBTQ+ people in those two states compare, paying particular note to how things might have improved over time. Lastly, write a short summary of your conclusions or record your reactions in a video and consider sharing it on social media with the hashtag #ItGetsBetter.

- ★ **SHARE** – Make an It Gets Better® video or write your own personal story. Tell the world who you are, why stories like those in *Project Contrast* matter to you, and what message of support you'd like to share with an LGBTQ+ young person having a tough time. Submit your video or written story to the It Gets Better Project's website at www.itgetsbetter.org/share-your-story.



ABOUT THE

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT

This guide was written by education staff at the [It Gets Better Project](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California (USA). With affiliates operating on 4 different continents, the It Gets Better Project boasts a truly global operation. Together, we use the power of story – told through online videos and written stories (like those in *Project Contrast*), social media, films, books, and more – to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe. So far, over 60,000 It Gets Better® videos have been shared.

YouTube:

www.youtube.com/itgetsbetter

Instagram:

www.instagram.com/itgetsbetter

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/itgetsbetterproject

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/ItGetsBetter>

Tumblr:

<http://itgetsbetterproject.tumblr.com>

The It Gets Better Project has also identified over 1,000 organizations in 30+ countries around the world offering support to LGBTQ+ youth. To find a resource near you, go to www.itgetsbetter.org/GetHelp.

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