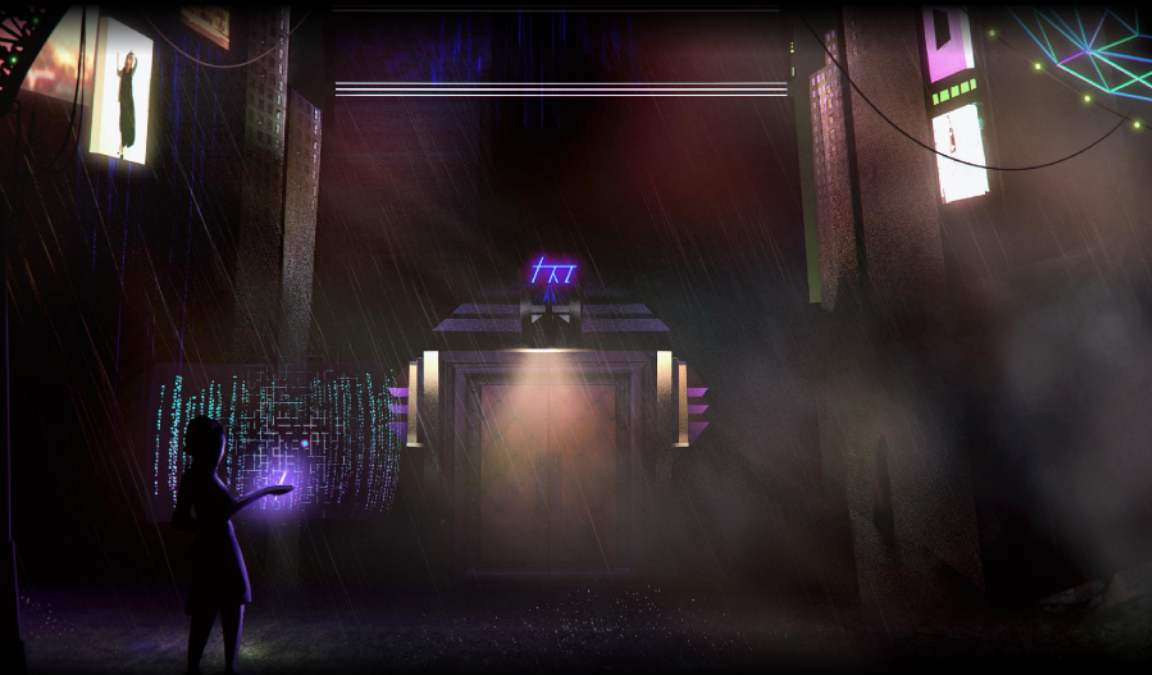# QUEER PRIVACY

Essays from the Margins of Society

Compiled by
Sarah Jamie Lewis

Queer Privacy

Essays From The Margins Of Society

Sarah Jamie Lewis

This book is for sale at http://leanpub.com/queerprivacy

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To everyone who has been forced to hide who they are from the world.

Contents

Acknowledgements & Credits

About This Book

In this book I present to you a collection of essays written by and about people who intersect with Queerness.

While there is a trend in modern media to use queerness to just refer to non-heterosexual sexualities, it is important to state that Queer as used in this book is inclusive of those who are non-cisgender[2] including transgender[3], intersex[4], non-binary[5] and and/or two-spirit[6] people.

I am not here to define queerness[7], the entire word to me is a rejection of classifications and categorizations, but for the purposes of this book queerness refers to being or being-seen-as non-cisgender and/or a non-heterosexual.

Even this definition has problems, but what is important is that the stories told in this book are read, reflected upon and acted upon, to make the world a little better.

When I was compiling this book and talking with the authors I found each and every one of their perspectives fascinating, real and educational. I can promise you that many of the scenarios you

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[2]Cisgender Person: A person whose gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth.

[3]Transgender Person: A person whose gender identity conflicts with their assigned sex at birth.

[4]Intersex Person: A person whose biology does not align with society's traditional definition of sex.

[5]Non-Binary Person: A person whose gender identity does not fit within the traditional binary (e.g. man or woman) classification of gender. An umbrella term which includes those who don't identify as any gender.

[6]Two Spirit is a modern term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe certain spiritual people – gay, lesbian, bisexual and gender-variant individuals – in their communities.

[7]Many of the authors throughout this book refer to the queer community with their own terms and acronyms e.g. LGBT, LGBTI, LGBTQ etc. For the most part I have chosen to retain these to reflect the diversity of terms within the community but they can and should be read as inclusive of all queer identities.

encounter in this book will be new to you, they may shock you. I hope, however, you will stay to listen, understand and then apply the lessons we can learn from these stories to your own activism, development or life.

You will encounter stories of domestic violence, societal oppression, unsupportive families, bigotry and suicide. Sadly these elements cannot be decoupled from the lessons or from the tales, they are essential to the wider lessons of this book.

Thank you for reading.

About The Authors

It may come as no surprise that while some of the essays in this book are associated with a "real" identity, more are associated with pseudonyms.

While compiling this book, author privacy was a big concern, many of the stories in this book deal with family abuse, violence, harassment and many authors were worried that revealing their identity could result in repercussions.

The stories written under pseudonyms are no less real or consequential than any other. In many cases they are the most powerful examples of the challenges that the queer community faces when it comes to privacy.

As such I would ask that any biases you have about anonymity and truth be put aside, as I present to you the contributors to this book in their own words:

- **Ada Collins** was raised in the New York area. They received a degree from an Ivy League institution, where they greatly enjoyed the old trees and communal crossword-puzzle solving around the breakfast table. They care for their two young children and adore biographies.
- **Kath Rella** is a 33-year-old bisexual woman from Greater Manchester, United Kingdom. Currently a full-time carer, Kath has qualifications in politics and law, sociology, criminology and recently in creative writing. She is an avid film fan, preferring the darker, non-mainstream side of cinema. In recent years, Kath has taken up creative writing. Her short film script, 'Embrace It' was a finalist in the 2016 edition of Follow, and she is currently working on a dark fantasy novel, Ashes of the Forgotten.

- **Audrey Howard** is a graphic designer and sometimes-writer. When she's not working, she likes finding new local places to eat, reading historical romance novels and marathoning shows on Netflix. Audrey lives in the USA with her partner and their two cats.

- **Avi Zajac** loves rabbits, cheesecake, and cute things like prime numbers, triangles, half diamond lock picks. A queer and trans/nonbinary nomadic hacker Avi likes to chase after telephone wires and ride on the Metro's 7000-series trains.

- **Morgan Potts** is an angry anarchist queer who writes about gender and violence. He's a part-time sex worker and a full-time sad trans boy. He co-runs a queer boxing group and a support group for men (trans, cis, and intersex) and non-binary survivors of sexual violence. He likes plants, sci-fi, and anti-zionist Yiddish singing.

- **Violet Hargrave** has spent the last three years combating internet- based bigotry and abuse, working with numerous non-profits, activists, sociologists, and non-profit organiza-tions, in addition to her own extensive investigations into the organization and recruitment efforts of numerous hate groups. She always writes under a pseudonym.

- **Norman Shamas** is an activist and educator whose work focuses on human-centered information/digital security and privacy.

Who Should Read This Book?

As a queer privacy researcher, who at other times has been a software engineer and a security engineer I think that everyone in all of these areas should read this book.

Queer People: This book contains some of our stories, some will feel familiar others might seem alien, but they are all part of our shared marginalization and it is important that we understand the challenges we face, as well as the challenges of others.

Software Engineers / Security Engineers: We need to build better tools, we need to build better community engagement. We can't do either until we understand the challenges they face. This book is one attempt at building a bridge between the communities to foster collaboration and empowerment.

Everyone Else: The stories and essays presented in this book are about people, who live on this planet with you. People who face challenges that you might never have thought about. The first step in making this world more fair, more equal and more free is understanding each other.

What Is Queer Privacy? *by Sarah Jamie Lewis*

Nothing About Us, Without Us.

Privacy is the right to consent.

Privacy is the right to withdraw consent, to only provide information to the people you want to provide it to, when you want to provide it.

The modern debate around privacy has been focused on its contention with security, and framed to be about terrorism and criminality.

Lost in this debate are the very real day to day battles that we all face. Employees searching for new jobs without telling their boss, teenagers hiding partners from their parents, choosing what information to reveal on a dating profile; the list of times we actively choose what to reveal about ourselves is practically endless.

Those scenarios take on more serious tones when we discuss marginalized populations: people of color, native indigenous peoples, queer communities, sufferers and survivors of domestic violence as well as disabled people, undocumented immigrants and others who dwell outside of the typical presented "norm".

While every population intersects with every other, these are not distinct groups but part of the overlapping spectrum of humanity, I want to focus on a particular intersection, those who intersect with queerness.

Human sexuality and gender is complex and complicated and in many parts of the world non-normative behavior is heavily stigmatized and actively oppressed.

Those who are queer still date, they still love, they still live, but many do so under constant fear, doubt, dread, anger and sadness.

I believe that the privacy and security community can build tools to make the lives of those who intersect with queerness better.

I also believe that to do that we need to understand those lives. We need to understand exactly what queer privacy is.

And finally I believe that this movement must be driven and must involve those within the queer community. Nothing about us, without us.

Many modern companies and organizations promote software to keep you and your data private. These tools are awesome and the world is a better place because they exist.

However, these tools are not perfect. Reading any study about how queer communities use these tools you will quickly discover a pattern, they don't.

Much of the modern rhetoric around these tools is focused on state surveillance. Queer communities often wish to hide things from some of their family and friends, while also being able to share parts of their life with others.

Making friends, dating, escaping abusive situations, accessing healthcare, exploring themselves and others, finding jobs, engaging in safe sex work are all aspects of queer lives underserved by the modern privacy community.

Many people within the security community reject the need to focus on threat models centered around domestic violence or online dating. They choose to see these as "non-technical", "not-infosec" or simply "not-interesting".

Because of this we have been forced to adapt less secure tools to our own threat models and, as illustrated by this book, with limited success.

This is a status quo which cannot continue. If the goal of technology, and by extension securing technology is to make the world a better place, then we must also make sure to better the lives of queer communities as well as other marginalized peoples.

Queer Privacy, therefore, is about understanding the challenges and abuses of power impacting queer lives. Queer Privacy is about educating a new generation of activists to see these threat models as legitimate and worthy of research and respect. Queer Privacy is about building tools to destabilize and destroy the status quo which, at best, ignores and, at worst, out right oppresses people whose only crime is trying to live in world that believes their sexuality and/or gender identity is illegitimate.

This is Queer Privacy.