April 2012

True Love Knows No Form

Alison Butler
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos/vol2012/iss2/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethos by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Seeded in the heart of the Midwest, Iowa State University prides itself on being diverse. Most assume this means students’ races or ethnicities, not knowing it also expands to relationship structures. For two Iowa State students in particular, challenging the views of what a relationship should be is a daily occurrence.

And I was like, baby, baby, baby, oh! Like, baby, baby, baby, no! Like baby, baby, baby! I thought you’d always be mine, mine, mine, belts out Petey Peterson, second year master student in the Educational Leadership and Policies program at Iowa State, to a bus full of LGBTQIA+ members. Petey had promised to sing along to Petey’s look alike’s hit, Baby by Justin Bieber, if the club filled the 36-passenger bus. When passenger number 36, Kaylee Jeske, boarded the bus, Petey knew Petey had to sing. What Petey didn’t know was that Kaylee would become the love of Petey’s life.

Petey identifies as gender queer, which means Petey doesn’t identify as either a woman or a man; nor does Petey’s gender expression clearly fit into feminine or masculine. Senior year of high school, Petey came out as a lesbian. For the past five years, Petey has not gone by assigned pronouns such as he or she, his or her, but rather they, them, or their. “I’m just Petey. That’s what I am. That’s what fits me.”

Kaylee identifies as female and queer or lesbian. Kaylee attended Iowa State her freshman year, but last year transferred to Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls, Iowa, where she studies general education and is undecided on a major.

When Kaylee met Petey she was immediately offended. Justin Bieber’s self-proclaimed number one fan; she even has Bieber’s lyrics tattooed on her body. Kaylee thought Petey was mocking her main man. Even with all the animosity, she admits she thought Petey was cute. Rude, but cute.

The name, “Petey” comes from Petey’s legal name, Christine Peterson. It started out as a nickname in high school softball, and eventually, the name just stuck.

“I fully love the fact I have a vagina, I’m perfectly comfortable with having female sex characteristics.”
— Petey
“All of my family still calls me Christine,” Petey explains. “It’s a family name, and I don’t want to disrespect my family, so for now, I’m okay with it.” Petey’s gender identity is something that Petey is still working on, too. “Maybe once I figure out who I am, I will address it with my parents. We’ll get there,” Petey says hopefully.

Physically, though, Petey is right where Petey wants to be. “I fully love the fact I have a vagina, I’m perfectly comfortable with having female sex characteristics.” Because Petey is small chested, Petey doesn’t feel the need to wear a binder, a very tight constricting shirt used to suppress the breasts. Instead, Petey can just wear a sports bra. “Whatever made me just knew that’s how I would be more comfortable,” Petey laughs.

Kaylee, on the other hand, is like night to Petey’s day. Kaylee stands a head taller than Petey. Half African American and half Caucasian, Kaylee’s dark hair and skin and piercing green eyes contrast with Petey’s short blonde hair, blue eyes and Caucasian skin. Petey dresses very androgynously, while Kaylee loves wearing dresses, the highest of heels and playing up her hair and makeup. Seeing the two of them together tends to come as a surprise to some people in Ames, Iowa.

This stark difference in appearance has led to some controversy for the couple. As they were walking home from an Iowa State football game, two men decided to butt in. “What the hell is that? You’re together? You could do so much better, honey! Let me show you what a real man is,” remembers Kaylee.

“That really frustrates me, that’s the comment I receive the most: ‘Well, you just haven’t been with a real man yet,’ or ‘Let me show you what a real man is. I can change your mind.’” says Kaylee, frustrated.

Petey agrees that this happens a lot, Kaylee being hit on. “So me it’s a compliment,” laughs Petey. “I am out of my league dating here.” The only time it gets frustrating for Petey is when it’s straight men, like the ones from the football game. “They are disrespecting her and me, I just want to defend her,” says Petey.

When Kaylee told her mom she was dating Petey and explained who Petey was and what Petey looked like, her mom said, “If you like girls that look like boys, why not just date a boy?” That initial misunderstanding was the only obstacle Kaylee encountered with her mom, however, and it didn’t last long. Kaylee says her mom is now much more understanding of her relationship with Petey, and her friends have been supportive, too. “No one questioned me or made comments,” Kaylee says, smiling. “I was very lucky.”

Kaylee left Iowa State after her freshman year because she didn’t feel that she belonged in more ways than one. Both of her parents attended Iowa State, so at first, it was the most natural option. Now attending a smaller liberal arts school, Kaylee feels much more comfortable there. She believes many people at Iowa State are all about gay marriage and gay rights, and while that is very important to her, she feels there is more to life. “For me, even though I love who I love, there are more things to worry about than a slip of paper. I would rather look into education or health care; it doesn’t have to be all about the gays to me.”

Their individual differences aside, this couple makes being in a relationship look easy. When Petey graduates from Iowa State in May, the couple plans to move wherever Petey gets a job. Hoping to find a job in higher education, Petey would love to work in a private university in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Kaylee will enroll in a college there and finish her education.

With their future plans in motion, these frequent pinkie promisers took the common corny ritual to the next level. Both Kaylee and Petey tattooed the word “promise” on the outside of their pinkies. “I know it’s corny, but it’s our little thing,” says Petey. With marriage in both of their minds, the couple intends to keep that promise.

“Let me show you a real man...”

“That really frustrates me, that’s the comment I receive the most: ‘Well, you just haven’t been with a real man yet,’ or ‘Let me show you what a real man is. I can change your mind.’”

— Kaylee