

Beyond Magenta

Susan Kuklin

Candlewick Press, 2014

Reviews

- School Library Journal:
 - Gr 9 Up — Extended interviews with six very different transgender, genderqueer, and intersex young adults allow these youth to tell their stories in their own words. Author-interviewer-photographer Kuklin interjects only briefly with questions or explanations, so that the voices of these youth-alternately proud and fearful, defiant and subdued, thoughtful and exuberant-shine through. While the interview subjects do occasionally ramble or become vague, the power of these 12-to-40-page interviews is that readers become immersed in these young adults' voices and experiences. The youth interviewed here do not uniformly share It Gets Better -style happy endings, but their strength is nonetheless inspirational as they face ongoing challenges with families, sexual and romantic relationships, bullies, schools, transitions, mental health, and more. The level of detail about their lives, and the diversity of their identities-including gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and geography-provide a powerful antidote to the isolation and stigma that some transgender youth experience. Photographs of four of the subjects, including some before-and-after transition pictures from childhood and adolescence, help tell their stories and bring their transitions to life. Extensive back matter includes an interview with the clinical director of a health program for LGBTQI youth, a glossary, and books, media, websites, and organizations of interest to transgender youth. While this book's format and subject matter are probably never going to attract a broad audience, there is much here that will resonate with and hearten the kids who need it and will foster understanding and support among those who live and work with transgender teens.—Sarah Stone, San Francisco Public Library
- Publishers Weekly:
 - /* Starred Review */ In a sorely needed resource for teens and, frankly, many adults, author/photographer Kuklin shares first-person narratives from six transgender teens, drawn from interviews she conducted and shaped with input from her subjects. The six “chapters” read like personal histories, with Kuklin interjecting occasional context and helping bridge jumps in time. Readers will gain a real understanding of gender as a spectrum and a societal construct, and of the challenges that even the most well-adjusted, well-supported transgender teens face, from mockery by peers and adults alike to feelings of isolation and discomfort in their own bodies. When readers meet New York City teenager Christina, she has gotten into a knock-down fight on the subway with two girls who were making fun of her; although Kuklin’s color and b&w portraits appear throughout, 19-year-old Mariah requests no photographs of her be used, confessing, “I’m not ready for people to see me.” While Kuklin’s subjects

are candid about the difficulties of coming out as transgender to family and friends and the patience that transitioning often requires, their honest, humorous, and painful remarks about their relationships with gender are often downright revelatory. “Because I’m perceived as male, I get male privileges. It weirds me out a little bit,” says Cameron, whose PGP (preferred gender pronoun) is the plural “they.” Nat, who also prefers “they,” is relieved when diagnosed as intersex. “It proved what I had been feeling all along. I was not only emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually both sexes; I was physically both sexes, too. This is who I am.” A q&a section, author notes, glossary, and print and online resources close out the book. But its chief value isn’t just in the stories it reveals but, in the way, Kuklin captures these teenagers not as idealized exemplars of what it “means” to be transgender but as full, complex, and imperfect human beings. As Kuklin writes, “My subjects’ willingness to brave bullying and condemnation in order to reveal their individual selves makes it impossible to be nothing less than awestruck.” She isn’t wrong. Ages 14–up. Agent: Brianne Johnson, Writers House. (Feb.) --Staff (Reviewed November 18, 2013)

- Kirkus:
 - /* Starred Review */ Kuklin (No Choirboy, 2008, etc.) brings her intimate, compassionate and respectful lens to the stories of six transgender young people. In verbal and, when the subjects have given permission, visual profiles, readers meet transgender teens with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. They hear from teens who identify fully as female or male, teens who identify as neither male nor female, and one teen who is intersex. Their stories are told largely in the teens' own words, with only a few italicized interpolations to clarify or contextualize a point or to describe a facial expression or inflection readers cannot see or hear. In photographs, readers see Nat, who attends a performing-arts high school in New York City and uses the personal gender pronouns them and they, carrying their violin on New York's High Line. Christina, who attends Fashion Institute of Technology, is pictured shopping for clothes, proudly displaying a school project and hugging her mother. Images of the young people before their transitions are often included but, appropriately, do not serve as focal points for their chapters. Similarly, sex and genitalia are discussed frankly but are rarely what matters most. The collective portrait that emerges from these narratives and pictures is diverse, complex and occasionally self-contradictory--as any true story should be. Informative, revealing, powerful and necessary. (author's note, glossary, resource list) (Nonfiction. 12 & up)

Awards

- [Booklist Editors' Choice - Books for Youth](#) - Older Readers Category, 2014
- [Flora Stieglitz Straus Award](#), 2015
- [Notable Books for a Global Society](#), 2015
- [Rainbow List](#), 2015

Lists

- [Novelist Plus Social Justice \(Teens\) booklist](#)
- [Booklist Top 10 LGBTQ](#), 2013-2015

Response to challenges

- [Canyons School District \(Sandy, UT\)](#)- October 2021: Originated from Administrator. School wanted individual complaints but no response from parents. RETAINED at the High School. RETAINED at MS at discretion of the staff.

“The challenge to *Beyond Magenta* was initially referred to a review committee. The committee evaluated *Beyond Magenta* and concluded that it should remain in the library. This is not surprising given the critical acclaim that it has received, including the 2014 Foreword INDIE for Young Adult Nonfiction, the 2015 Lambda Literary Award for LGBT Children’s/Young Adult Literature, and the 2015 Bank Street College of Education’s Flora Stieglitz Straus Award. The school board, however, overruled the recommendations of the review committee.”

- Virginia Beach City Public Schools (Virginia Beach, VA)- October 2021: Originated from Administrator
- Birdville Independent School District (TX)- October 2021
- Waller Independent School District (TX)- November 2021
- Klein Independent School District (TX)- November 2021
- Indian River County School District (FL)- November 2021
- North East Independent School District (TX)- December 2021
- Siloam Springs School District (AK)- January 2022
- Yorktown Central School District (NY)- January 2022
- Fredericksburg Independent School District (TX)- March 2022
- [Big Walnut Schools \(Delaware, OH\)](#)- October 2022: Challenged but on shelves
- [Conway Public Schools \(AK\)](#)- October 2022: BANNED
- [Escambia County Public Schools \(FL\)](#)- September 2022: Removed from Shelves - While Under Review
- [Old Rochester Regional School District \(MA\)](#)- October 2022: Challenged but on shelves
- [RSU 1 \(ME\)](#)- October 2022: RETAINED
- Humble ISD (TX)- October 2022: Challenged- Location unknown
- St. Johns County School District (FL): January 2023- Removed from shelves while under review
- [Penncrest \(PA\)](#)- December 2022: Removed from shelves while under review

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