Gender & Sexuality

The following selections explore the complicated role that family plays in determining our identities, be they distant relatives remembered through history or the immediate families we live with each day.

“Sorry” – Ashley Birt, pg. 29
“I am Not Wrong: Wrong is Not My Name” – Elsa Eckenrode, pg. 63
“Wife” – Hannah Giesler, pg. 70
“Letters” – Leo Johnson, pg. 103
“The War on Terror” – Kat Mandeville, pg. 125
“Squint” – Claire Matway, pg. 131
“88” – Ryan Tuchin, pg. 186

Hannah Geisler’s “Wife” exposes and resists the constraints of gendered expectations for young women, while Kat Mandeville’s “The War on Terror” raises the possibility of finding strength in femininity. In “Squint,” Claire Matway recalls the first Christmas her family fully included her Uncle’s partner, despite their twenty-year relationship. Ryan Tuchin’s “88” reveals the threat that LGBTQ folks face when demanding political representation and rights. In “Sorry,” Ashley Birt traces her sometimes strained by loving relationship with her older sibling and examines the role her sibling’s sexual and gender identity plays in their relationship. In “Letters,” Leo Johnson reflects on his first crush, and what might have been. And finally, Elsa Eckenrose’s “I am Not Wrong: Wrong in Not My Name,” confronts other people’s perceptions of her gender and sexuality and finds strength in the very things people are trying to tell her are “wrong” about her.
**Questions for Group Discussion**

- What does it mean have a gender? What does it mean to be a “boy” or a “girl”, or a “woman” or a “man?”
- How does gender shape our sense of self? How does this knowledge affect our behavior?
- How do the authors and/or the people they describe in the selections understand their own genders and/or sexualities?
- How do the authors describe other people’s perceptions of them? How do they react to these perceptions?

**Writing Prompt**

Gender, sexuality, and identity are complex, interrelated issues. Our culture has many gender stereotypes that continue to limit and discriminate against those who do not fit those generalized assumptions. Has your sense of your own gender identity changed over the course of your life in terms of how you see yourself versus how others see you? Write about an occasion which forced you to examine your assumptions about gender in relation to your self-identity or that of others.