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**SAVAGE LOVE** **IDENTITY CARDS**  
BY DAN SAVAGE



*I am a 40-year-old woman; I came out when I was 16. When I was 17, I met M and we dated for eight years. M was a horrible human being—emotionally and occasionally physically abusive. M still sends me the occasional (creepy) e-mail, wishing me a happy birthday or giving me updates on people I don't really recall. I don't respond. A few years back, I got an e-mail saying that M was now "Mike." I think it's important to use the pronouns people want you to use for them. But Mike wasn't Mike when he was in my life. Changing his pronoun when describing him feels like I'm changing my identity—my first real long-term relationship was with someone I thought was a woman. Mike caused a lot of damage in my life—does he get to fuck up (or complicate) my identity, too? It's not like the subject of Mike comes up daily. When it does, I feel like a liar if I use "she," using "he" makes me feel like I'm lying about myself, and stopping to explain everything derails the conversation. And it's not like I'm being a great trans ally when a conversation gets sidelined by something like: "Well, random coworker whose only trans reference is Caitlyn Jenner, my ex is trans and he's a psychopath."*

Mike's Hard Lemonade

Block Mike's number, block his e-mail address, block him on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Periscope, Kik, FuckStick, WhatsApp, CumDump, etc., etc., etc., ad infinitum.

And stop talking about Mike—don't discuss him with random coworkers, casual acquaintances, or friends. If you absolutely, positively must discuss him with someone—a true intimate with a right to your relationship history, who needs to be sensitive to the abuse you suffered—you can be a good ally to other trans people (not your abusive trans ex) by carefully using nouns and descriptors in place of your asshole ex's preferred pronouns. So instead of "I met him when I was still a teenager," you say, "I met the abusive piece of shit when I was still a teenager." Instead of "It took me eight long years to get away from him," you say, "It took me eight long years to get away from that asshole psychopath."

What I'm gonna say next will get me slammed on Twitter (heavens), MHL, but I've learned not to read my @s, so here we go...

If using male pronouns when referring to your ex is gonna complicate your life—really complicate it—if the "transitioned later" part is likely to get dropped during a game of interoffice telephone, if the qualifier about your ex having identified as a woman while you were together is likely to get dropped too, and if either of those drops could lead coworkers or casual acquaintances to assume something about you that isn't true, i.e., that you're into dudes and therefore gettable by dudes, and if that erroneous assumption could result in your having to deflect awkward and/or unpleasant advances from confused males, or if having your status as a Gold Star Lesbian questioned could induce orientational dysphoria... I don't see the nontheoretical harm in you—and only you—misgendering Mike on the rare occasion when a convo about him can't be avoided. You don't live near him, no one you know knows him, and the misgendering is unlikely to get back to him. The adage "no harm, no foul" applies here.

But it would be simpler, easier, and ally-ier if you sidestepped the issue by not speaking to anyone about your asshole ex ever again.

*I am a fortysomething bi woman happily married to a newly transitioned 50ish trans woman. I have a history of putting myself about a bit (safely) before our relationship, but we have been monogamous since we met (except for a disastrous threesome). My wife hasn't put herself about and has slept with only myself and one other to whom she was also married—and that threesome. She understands that I have a high libido and mostly she doesn't. Our sex life is loving and good mostly, but I do want more. There have been discussions on opening up our relationship—but essentially I want to and she is resistant. I want to do this with transparency and with men (mostly), but I don't feel this is realistic emotionally for her given some conflict we've had over this issue. Is cheating the only answer here?*

Never Overly Terrified

I can see how it might be emotionally tricky for a recently transitioned trans woman—that would be your wife—to cheerfully sign off on her second wife sleeping with men (mostly) and with transparency (ethically). But if you absolutely, positively can't commit to sleeping with only her for the rest of your life, NOT, and you can't get her permission to sleep with others... then, yes, there's cheating. There's also fantasy, masturbation, repression, sublimation, self-sacrifice—and divorce.

*I'm a queer woman. When I entered my 30s, I realized that I was more queer/bi than I had previously allowed myself to be, and I started exploring my attraction to cis heterosexual men. Five years later, and I'm in an incredible GGG relationship with a cis het male. He's everything I have ever wanted in a partner: sexy, funny, feminist, and smart. We have full disclosure about sexuality and kinks, no complaints there. What I do have trouble with is navigating his family and friends, twin social circles composed of heterosexuals who fall into stereotypical gender roles. I spent my teens and 20s fully submersed in queer/trans circles with like-minded feminist hippies who are not hung up on the gender binary. My partner's friends are fundamentally good people, but they see nothing wrong with "old fashioned" misogyny. I am often interrupted, talked over, and "mansplained" by my partner's male friends. And while I am a pretty friendly person, I can't get a foot in the door with the women in his friend circle. My notions on feminism and equality are way too out there, so I tend to keep to myself in a corner during parties in order to avoid starting an argument. How do I navigate this weird heterosexual world that I don't understand? I've tried to explain my feelings to my partner, but I think he has a hard time relating, as he is a heterosexual cis male and was raised as one. How do I keep from losing my cool when someone starts to mansplain to me? I may be in a heterosexual romantic partnership, but I am still a queer lady at heart.*

Bi Lefty Encounters Cis Hets

Some people "fall into stereotypical gender roles" because that's who they are, BLECH, and what you perceive as the thoughtless embrace of the gender binary can in some cases be an authentic expression of gender identity. That doesn't excuse misogyny and mansplaining, of course, but not everyone who embraces seemingly stereotypical gender roles is a dupe who needs a good talking to from the new queer girlfriend of an old straight friend.

That said, if going to parties with your cis het boyfriend's gender-normative friends makes you miserable... don't go to those parties. Or if you must go, drag along a leftist-hippie-queer friend who can sit in the corner with you and marvel at the mansplaining manmuggles and their clueless lady friends who aren't interested in your thoughts on feminism and equality.

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