

Kirstin Cronn-Mills

The online home of writer Kirstin Cronn-Mills

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Transgender Lives: backstory and new resources

Posted on [August 1, 2014](#) by [kirstincm](#)



My friend Alex reading *TRANSGENER LIVES*, and proving you really can see yourself in the cover.

Here's the publisher's blurb for our (this book is a village!) new book *Transgender Lives: Complex Stories, Complex Voices*, out in September 2014:

Meet Katie, Hayden, Dean, Brooke, David, Julia, and Natasha. Each is transgender, and in this book, they share their personal stories. Through their narratives, you'll get to know and love each person for their humor, intelligence, perseverance, and passion. You'll learn how they each came to better understand, accept, and express their gender identities, and you'll follow them through the sorrows and successes of their personal journeys.

Transgender Lives helps you understand what it means to be transgender in America while learning more about transgender history, the broad spectrum of transgender identities, and the transition process. You'll explore the challenges transgender Americans face, including discrimination, prejudice, bullying and violence, unequal access to medical care, and limited legal protections. For transgender readers, these stories offer support and encouragement. *Transgender Lives* is a space for trans* voices to be heard and to express the complexities of gender while focusing on what it means to be human.

Here's the backstory.

In May 2012, I was contacted by my editor at Twenty-First Century books—would I like to write a book for high school libraries about trans* individuals in America? I'd been recommended to her because of *Beautiful Music*, and the trans* authors she'd asked were unavailable. *Sure*, I said. *Why not?* And then I thought: *Oh lord. What have I done?* Once again, just like with *Beautiful Music*, I was plunged into immense, intense work. So much research, so much information to gather, process and summarize, plus I needed to find people for the interviews. Lucky for me, I knew some individuals who were willing to be part of the book. But not everyone I asked was comfortable being in a book.

There were lots of things to think about, of course—what to include, how to be thorough, how to be respectful, how to check my own privilege as a cisgender woman. I was blessed to find two different individuals who are trans* (who facilitate workshops and develop LGBTQ curricula for their day jobs) who were willing to provide expert reads to help with facts, voice and details. Because of the individuals who agreed to be in the book, we didn't have a lot of people of color to include, but we did have age, background, and regional diversity. In the drafting phase, we had lots of information and seven extensive interviews (with family voices, too) to sort through. I did a lot of agonizing. I knew I'd encounter critics no matter what I did or didn't do, so I kept my goal simple: to create a useful book that didn't provide false information.

Then, of course, we had to jam it all into 72 pages! That was the hardest thing. There wasn't space to explain all the terms I listed as synonyms for genderqueer, for example, and so the question arose: simplify, or include them and let the reader do the research? I decided (a philosophy I hold in my classroom as well) it's better to have some inkling about many ideas than to have just one idea. I decided to trust the reader to further advance their knowledge.

This book is intended to be a solid introduction to a group of individuals who deserve respect, and deserve to be known and accepted for who they are. This book is for students (and adults) who need some general info, who need to understand that individuals who are trans* have been a part of human culture since someone thought to call us “human culture.” It's a book for librarians to pull out when someone says, “I need to know about being trans*,” for whatever reason they need to know it. It's a bridge-builder. It's a way to bring the all-too-brief words (#\$(* page limits!) of seven generous and kind individuals to a larger audience that needs to hear from them. If someone reads *Transgender Lives* and learns something, hopefully they'll go on to read more in-depth narratives from trans* individuals. That's a win-win for everyone.

Of course there are a few new books that didn't get included in the resources section of *Transgender Lives*, and you need to know about them, because they're very exciting. I can't wait to read them myself! Click the link for more, but I've included parts of their blurbs here.

[Rethinking Normal](#), **Katie Rain Hill (Simon and Schuster, September 2014):** “In this first-person account, Katie reflects on her pain-filled childhood and the events leading up to the life-changing decision to undergo gender reassignment as a teenager. She reveals the unique challenges she faced while unlearning how to be a boy and shares what it was like to navigate the dating world and experience heartbreak for the first time in a body that matched her gender identity. Told in an unwaveringly honest voice, *Rethinking Normal* is a coming-of-age story about transcending physical appearances and redefining the parameters of “normalcy” to embody one's true self.”

[Some Assembly Required](#), **Arin Andrews (Simon and Schuster, September 2014):** “In this revolutionary memoir, Arin details the journey that led him to make the life-transforming decision to undergo gender reassignment as a high school junior. In his captivatingly witty, honest voice, Arin reveals the challenges he faced as a girl, the humiliation and anger he felt after getting kicked out of his private school, and all the changes—both mental and physical—he experienced once his transition began. Arin also writes about the thrill of meeting and dating a young transgender woman named Katie Hill...and the heartache that followed after they broke up.

[Trans Bodies, Trans Selves](#), **edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth (Oxford University Press, June 2014):** “Trans Bodies, Trans Selves is a revolutionary resource—a comprehensive, reader-friendly guide for transgender people, with each chapter written by transgender or genderqueer authors. Inspired by *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the classic and powerful compendium written for and by women, Trans Bodies, Trans Selves is widely accessible to the transgender population, providing authoritative information in an inclusive and respectful way and representing the collective knowledge base of dozens of influential experts. Each chapter takes the reader through an important transgender issue, such as race, religion, employment, medical and surgical transition, mental health topics, relationships, sexuality, parenthood, arts and culture, and many more. ”

I also want to mention [Topside Press](#), since they publish books exclusively by trans-identified authors (their official statement: “Topside Press, founded in 2011, is a new independent press with the intent of publishing authentic transgender narratives”). The two books I've read from them, the novel [Nevada](#) (Imogen Binnie) and [The Collection](#) (a collection of short stories), are remarkable. Because the books are edgy and intended for grown-ups, I didn't include them in the back matter for *Transgender Lives*, but I'd encourage you to check them out.

To learn, to grow, to support: those are our jobs as human beings. These new books will help you with all three. Enjoy!

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Beautiful Music for Ugly Children



Yay for Gabe and John!

BEAUTIFUL MUSIC FOR UGLY CHILDREN is wandering freely in the world, and it's so exciting! I love watching what happens when a book is in the wild—you just don't know where it will go.

If you are unfamiliar with Gabe's world and need a basic synopsis of the book, here you go:

Gabe Williams is a guy with big summer plans. He's got a job as a radio DJ, following in the

footsteps of his mentor, and he wants to move far away after graduation. He's also hoping his best friend Paige will fall in love with him—she's smart, she's hot, and she tolerates his music habit. He couldn't ask for more. His only problem? The rest of the world has known him as Elizabeth for the last eighteen years.

BEAUTIFUL MUSIC FOR UGLY CHILDREN is the story of how Gabe learns to be a guy so he can leave Elizabeth behind. Some good things happen in the course of his summer—Gabe graduates, gets asked out, and gets loved by the fans of his show. But he also gets outed and threatened, and he must defend himself against violence that's rooted in fear. In essence, Gabe's journey to find himself is the same one we all take. His is just electrified, amplified, and broadcast into the night.

And the most amazing thing has happened: BEAUTIFUL MUSIC won the 2014 Stonewall Award from the American Library Association! It's an award given to books "of exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender experience." I had no idea BMUC was still eligible, but evidently their award period runs from October of 2012 (when it was released) to September of 2013. Who knew? I was astonished to receive the phone call—what a huge, huge honor. I am humbled. BMUC is also the winner of a 2014 IPPY Award (Independent Publisher Book Award)—a silver medal in their Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Trans Fiction category.

BMUC also received some generous honors last year from the ALA. In January 2013 it was named a [Top Ten pick for the 2013 Rainbow List](#), and it was also placed on the [2013 Best Fiction for Young Adults list](#). So exciting! The announcements were also wonderful, unexpected surprises. Being loved on by librarians is pretty awesome. In June 2013 it also received a [silver medal in ForeWord Review's Book of the Year Awards for YA fiction](#)! These awards are for books from small and independent presses, so yay for Flux! It was also honored as a [Lambda Literary Award finalist in the Children's/Young Adult category](#). That nomination was HUGE to me, too. Huge.

One other surprise happened the same week the ALA awards lists came out: BEAUTIFUL MUSIC was featured in an article about YA fiction in [The Advocate](#), one of the largest LGBT magazines out there. And they used my purple hair photo! It feels really good to be acknowledged by them. A student showed me the article, and I squealed when I saw it. Not gonna lie.

Here's a link to the [Publisher's Weekly review](#) as well as the [Kirkus review](#). You can buy it at [IndieBound](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), or other fine establishments.

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About



photo by Chelsea Kocina at Chelsea Morning Photography

Here's a formal-ish bio:

According to geographers, the American West begins at the 100th longitudinal meridian. Thanks to the fact that this meridian is the main street of her hometown in Nebraska, Kirstin Cronn-Mills grew up six blocks east of the West. According to her mother, she learned to read when she was three—and she hasn't stopped since.

Kirstin is a self-proclaimed word nerd. Her grandmother and her father passed on their love

of language to her, and that love became a love affair when she started writing poems in sixth grade. She still writes poems, but now she focuses on young adult novels.

In 1992 Kirstin moved from Nebraska to southern Minnesota, where she lives now. She writes a lot, reads as much as she can, teaches at a two-year college (she won the Minnesota State College Student Association 2009 Instructor of the Year award), and goofs around with her son, Shae, and her husband, Dan. Her first young adult novel, *The Sky Always Hears Me and the Hills Don't Mind* (Flux, 2009), was a 2010 finalist for the Minnesota Book Award for Young People's Literature. Her second novel, *Beautiful Music For Ugly Children* (Flux/Llewellyn, 2012), won ALA's Stonewall Award in 2014 as well as an IPPY silver medal for Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Trans Fiction. BMUC was also placed on ALA's 2013 Rainbow List (as a Top Ten Pick) as well as their 2013 Best Fiction for Young Adults list.

She has also published nonfiction books for middle and high school libraries: *Collapse! The Science of Structural Engineering Failures* (Compass Point Books, 2009) and *Transgender Lives: Complex Stories, Complex Voices* (Twenty-First Century Books/Lerner, 2014).

Some less formal things:

–I love this picture of me with purple hair and an Elvis sneer. Love it a lot. It makes me look like I'm a fun person, which is 75% true. The other 25% of me is a writhing mass of insecurity.

–I am really good at hyperbole and exaggeration, and I talk like a teenager way more than I should. ZOMG!

–I don't eat chocolate. I used to. Yes, I miss it.

–I love lemon water, with bubbles or without.

–Football (the American version *and* soccer) is my favorite sport to watch, though in American football, college ball is my favorite (Go Big Red!) because the pros tend to annoy me. Favorite pro team: Green Bay, because their fan spirit is the closest to the Huskers.

–Related to that, I have managed my kid's soccer (football) team, and I love being a soccer mom. I love being a mom, period.

–I love to play outside, winter or summer. I love to play in the snow!

–If I don't listen to music for a few days, I get droopy. : (Music is like blood or water—I need it in my veins. What kind of music? Almost any kind. My list of favorites would take up this whole page.

–I have four tattoos, two of which you can see on any given day.



Visit me on [FaceBook](#)

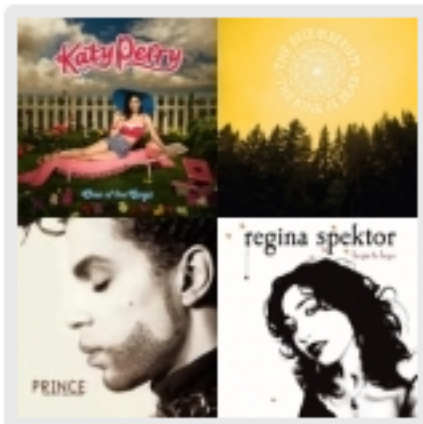
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BEAUTIFUL MUSIC FOR UGLY CHILDREN pl...

Listed on 31st May, 2012 by **Kirstin Cronn-Mills**

Genre: **Compilation**

Total Tracks: 156

Duration: 17 hours, 28 minutes



Play Now

total plays

0,000,053

Listen to this playlist for FREE on Spotify!

Playlist Description:

This playlist includes the songs and artists mentioned in the YA novel BEAUTIFUL MUSIC FOR UGLY CHILDREN (October 2012, Flux).

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1. That's All Right

Elvis Presley

BEAUTIFUL MUSIC playlist



- | | |
|--|------|
| ▶ 1. That's All Right
Elvis Presley | 1:56 |
| ▶ 2. Grace Kelly
MIKA | 3:08 |
| ▶ 3. American Idiot
Green Day | 2:56 |
| ▶ 4. In the Summertime (Re-Recorded)
Mungo Jerry | 3:33 |
| ▶ 5. You Know My Name (Look Up the Number)
The Coverbeats | 4:20 |
| ▶ 6. Da Ya Think I'm Sexy? (Remastered Album Version)
Rod Stewart | 5:29 |
| ▶ 7. Best Love Song
T-Pain, Chris Brown | 3:16 |
| ▶ 8. Try A Little Tenderness
Otis Redding | 3:21 |
| ▶ 9. Ain't Too Proud To Beg
The Temptations | 2:32 |
| ▶ 10. Mama Tried
Merle Haggard | 2:11 |
| ▶ 11. Tight Fittin' Jeans
Conway Twitty | 2:50 |
| ▶ 12. Hurt
Johnny Cash | 3:37 |
| ▶ 13. God Save The Queen
Sex Pistols | 3:20 |
| ▶ 14. Another Tricky Day
The Who | 4:57 |
| ▶ 15. Emotional Rescue - 2009 Re-Mastered Digital Version
The Rolling Stones | 5:39 |
| ▶ 16. How Soon Is Now? (2008 Remastered Version)
The Smiths | 6:47 |