

**Transbareall Halloween Party workshop  
Writing for the 10 year anniversary book!**

TBA is turning ten next year! We want to mark the occasion by creating a book of art and writing that reflects some of what TBA is all about, and, as it is all about our community, that means we need you. We are welcoming submissions of original writing and art on the theme of **TBA and gender** (perhaps what TBA means to you), or on **gender** alone, and we actively encourage not only those of you who regularly write or create art, but also those who might need a little encouragement.

The workshop plan below will guide you step by step towards a piece of life writing with a creative approach.

You can write in any form you wish (poetry, prose fiction, life writing non-fiction) and, if your submission is accepted, you will have the chance to work with an editor to polish your piece for publication in the book.

**Submission eligibility:**

- Following the TBA age limit, you must be 18 years or older by the submissions deadline
- You do not have to have attended a TBA retreat or party before
- You do not have to live in the UK

**Submission guidelines:**

- Please submit your work to [meandmygender submissions@gmail.com](mailto:meandmygender submissions@gmail.com)
- Attach your piece as a fully compatible Word or .txt document
- You **must** include the following in your email:
  - o the name you want your piece published under
  - o your gender
  - o your ethnicity
  - o if you consider yourself to have a disability (no need to state what it is)
  - o your age on the submissions deadline
- Deadline for submissions is **11.59pm Sunday January 6<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**For writing:**

- 2000 word limit for prose (fiction and non-fiction)
- 80 line limit for poems (including stanza breaks), with maximum 60 characters per line (including spaces)
- submit your piece as a Word doc, or .txt file if .doc is not possible

**For visual art:**

- Submit your piece as a high resolution jpeg
- If text is incorporated into your piece, please ensure that it is legible at A5 size

**FAQ:**

- You can submit more than one piece of writing or art or both, and, if selected, our editors will choose their favourite piece for the book
- Submission does not guarantee that your piece will be included
- All submissions will be notified of our selection decision within eight weeks of the deadline. Please be patient – we are volunteers!
- if you want your piece attributed to ‘anonymous’ then please state this clearly in your covering email
- All accepted submissions will undergo an editorial process with our editors and designer
- All submissions must be free from publishing restrictions for the next two years. If your piece is currently published or under consideration elsewhere, please contact us to discuss.
- As we are an unfunded volunteer-run organisation, unfortunately we cannot offer a fee for accepted submissions; however, all contributors will receive a copy of the finished book!

## Writing Workshop - TBA 10 year anniversary book

*“So many are shocked when they learn about the intersections of race, sexuality and gender. Part of this is because there is little to no positive representation in the media and often much misrepresentation across our intersecting identities. This is why we must create our own media. Creativity is not just a ‘fun’ past time, it is a way of saying ‘I exist’ and ‘I feel’ and ‘I think’ and ‘here’s an expression of my true self, not the misconceptions and stereotypes about gender, sexuality and race.’ And it is fun, it can be part of your resting, if you can switch off and have no expectation of what you create and know that your work is valid because you made it. You made it, at this moment in time when the tide is moving so actively against us. Resting is resistance, creating content and sharing is resistance and existing loudly is resistance.”*

- Emerciana Desouza, in QTIPOCALYPSE zine, issue 1 (QTIPOC Notts)

As Emerciana says above, I started writing when I realised I had things to say but I didn’t get to read about those things as much as I wanted to. I remember reading ‘Bastard out of Carolina’ by Dorothy Alison, about a girl growing up in a working class family in the southern US state. Like Maya Angelou’s ‘I know why the caged bird sings’, she wrote about surviving a tough childhood, and she wrote it without any melodrama or pity. It made me realise that proper writing wasn’t just written by people with three university degrees and a publishing deal.

The TBA 10 year anniversary book will focus on experiences of **TBA and gender**, as well as **gender** alone. In order to explore these themes, I’ve got some exercises to start you off.

Please try making a promise to yourself that you will -just write- now, and not judge what comes out. You can edit later. First, you write. Anything.

**Tip 1:** use your own words. You don’t need to try to sound like someone else. Write in the way that you talk.

**Tip 2:** write everything down for your first draft, even the bits you’re not sure about. Then read it. Think about it. Let it sit for a little bit. You can’t edit a blank page, so get those words down even if they’re not quite what you want in the end. You are going to write this step by step, and you will get there in the end.

Also, if you feel nervous about what you are starting to write, that’s ok. Please go with it and trust your instinct. You don’t need to show

it to anyone if you decide later that you don't want to, but you can't make that decision if you don't write it down. Some of the best and most necessary writing I've done made me feel nervous at first.

**Tip 3:** use the theme of TBA and gender as a jumping off point but don't feel constrained by it or as if you have to write about gender directly. You are bigger than your gender and what you write will have many elements of you woven through it. Sometimes the best way to write about something big like gender is to come at it sideways rather than straight on.

## **STEP ONE: what do you want to write about?**

### **Make a list of what makes you feel:**

inspired	hopeful	fired up and strong
curious	angry	peaceful

### **Make a list of a time you:**

had to be strong  
changed your mind  
overcame something big that was stopping you before  
made friends with someone you didn't expect  
fought to make something better  
felt lost  
achieved something you had to work hard for

### **What is one thing you know about being trans or non-binary that I wouldn't be able to find out about on the internet?**

Now look at the lists you have here – a whole load of big experiences. Do any of them connect to each other?

The biggest challenge in life writing is deciding what to write and what to leave out. It's impossible to write your entire life, even if you published a series of autobiographies. Zoom in and decide which one you want to focus on for this. Which story from your life do you want to share? Think about the themes of the book.

**Things to help you decide:**

- is there an important object or strong image in this story? That can be a good anchor for your story that will help your readers see your world at that moment and come with you into your story, especially when you are otherwise dealing with less tangible things like emotions.
- does this story contain some kind of change? Change is what makes stories interesting to people who don't know you. The exact moment of change, and the things that made you resist it, then how you made the change.
- which one do you feel most pulled towards – which one do you instantly have ideas for, and want to tell? Go with your gut.

**STEP TWO: write your story!**

Write everything down as you remember it. Don't worry about spelling or punctuation – you can fix that later if you need to. It doesn't matter right now. It also doesn't have to be in order. You can fix that later too.

Read over your first draft.

Now close your eyes, and in your mind go back to that time. Imagine being in that time and place again. How does your body feel when you imagine that time? Your heartbeat, your hands, your breathing? How do your feet feel on the ground? What would that past version of you say to these questions:

- do you know where you are?
- what does the air feel like on your skin, in your nose?
- what can you hear?
- what is the feeling in your chest or in your stomach or somewhere else in your body right now?

Write down those answers. You can include these details in your story, so that your readers will feel what you felt.

You can now work with your first draft to shape it into what you want to say.

- is there anything important missing right now? Where should it go? Put it in there.

- where is this place? You don't need to name streets etc if you don't want to, but include details about the environment so your reader can imagine it – see below for ways to do this
- is it clear who you are in this story? You can include details to let the reader know who you are, things like your age, how you are feeling at that moment – brave, nervous, excited, bored?
- look at your answers to all the questions above, including the ones where you had your eyes shut, and see where they can fit – weave them into the story

**Tip 4:** you can rewrite your draft on a new piece of paper at this point, putting all the new things in, or you can cut it up with scissors and move sections around or insert the new things – whichever way you want

**Some other things to think about when writing your story:**

- where exactly does it take place? If you include some physical details of your place (maybe the feel of the ground under your feet, the smell of the rain that's just stopped, the click of keyboards in the office etc) it will help the readers come with you
- who is involved? Who are the most important people in this story, the ones who have to be in it? You don't have to write every detail in – this is YOUR story and you tell it in the way that you want to. That means you can leave out bits that aren't necessary or important to the story. If you write in every detail no matter how off to the side it is, it can make the main point of your story weaker as it crowds the view. Decide what is absolutely necessary and focus on that. This goes for people but also side events that aren't necessary, details that aren't significant like maybe the bus journey there (unless something important happens on the bus journey)

**Tip 5:** read your story out loud. This will help you hear if there are any bits missing, or bits that don't need to be there.

**Tip 6:** once you've typed up your piece, change the font each time you reread it for editing. It helps you see it with a fresher focus.