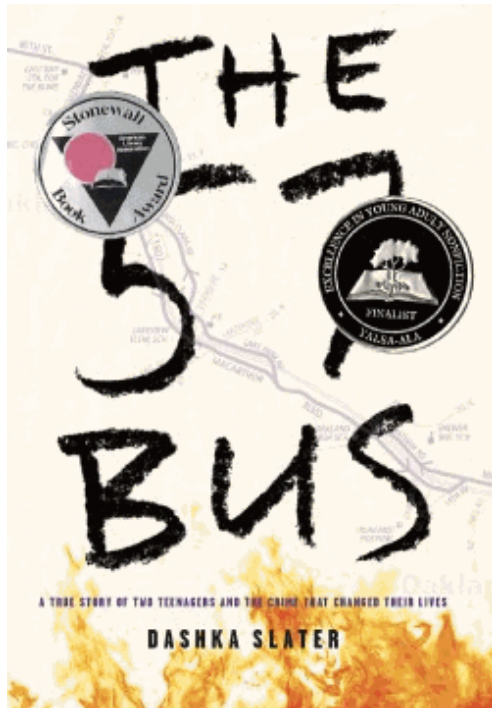


THE 57 BUS



Young Adult

By Dashka Slater

ISBN: 978-0374303235

OBJECTION RATING

3/5

Summary of Concerns:

The book is mainly about all the perceived genders, sexualities, and pronouns. Communism and socialism are spoken about positively in several instances as the main character loves Soviet Russia and socialism.

Page	Content
0	Author's note: The pronouns and names used for gender-nonconforming people were approved by the in people in question.
4	A senior at a small private high school, the teenager identifies as agender- neither male nor female.
6	Oakland is considered one of the most diverse cities in the country. It's Asian and Latino, black and white, African, Arab, Indian, Iranian, Native American, and Pacific Islander. No one group is a majority. It has more lesbian couples per capita than any city in the nation, and one of the largest proportions of gay- and lesbian-headed households.
7	In 2013, the year Sasha was burned, Oakland ranked seventh among American cities in income and inequality- just below New York.
13	PRONOUNS Even as a toddler, Sasha was interested in language.
14	Our language, English, works differently. We care a lot about gender, and English reflects that in its pronouns- she or he, her or him, hers or his. You might think this is just how languages work in the real world, but there are many languages on earth that are basically gender neutral, using the same word for he, she, and it, or not using pronouns at all.
15	English, on the other hand, poses a challenge for people like Sasha who don't see themselves as fitting into neat either/or categories like male or female. Sasha, like many gender-non-conforming people, wants to be referred to with the pronoun they. It might feel awkward at first, but you'll get used to it.
16	For their sixteenth birthday, Sasha asked for an accordion, a manual typewriter, a Soviet flag, and a new Rubik's Cube. They didn't know how to play the accordion, but they might have learned if they had received one, which they didn't. They didn't get the flag either, although Sasha and their friend Michael made a cardboard hammer and sickle not long afterward and hung it on Sasha's bedroom wall. At the time, they were obsessed with everything having to do with Russian and communism.
17	To that you could add communism, games, and web comic Homestruck, and live-action role-playing, or larping.
19	Sasha created a card called A Complete History of the Soviet Union as Told by a Humble Worker, Arranged to the Melody of Tetris, which was the name of a six-and-a-half-minute song by an obscure British comedy band called Pig with the Face of a Boy. Michael and Sasha were both obsessed with the song and sang it at every opportunity.
20	Back then, Shasha was called Luke and they were referred to as he.
24	One day Samantha told the therapist about a video she'd seen on YouTube. Two young women stood back-to-back performing a slam poem called "Hir," rotating to face the mic as they gave voice to a girl named Melissa and the boy inside her named James. Sometimes she wishes she could rip the skin off her back, Every moment of every day she feels trapped in the flesh of a stranger. Watching it, Samantha felt something chime inside her- a bell vibrating in

Page	Content
	<p>resonance. Before puberty, her physical body didn't seem to have that much to do with who she was. People used to mistake her for a boy, but she had felt proud to be a girl. But now being a girl was like being stuffed into a heavy, constricting costume. She could barely breathe in it. The rules of the universe were fixed: You look a certain way and so you have to act a certain way and people are going to treat you a certain way. There was no way to alter it.</p> <p>"I think I might be...transgender?" she whispered to her therapist the next week.</p> <p>"I don't think you know what transgender means," her therapist replied.</p> <p>The bell that had been chiming inside her fell silent. She's the expert, Samantha thought.</p>
26	"I'm transgender."
27	<p>Back in seventh grade, Andrew rarely spoke about gender with Sasha after that one conversation. He wouldn't tell his parents he was trans for another year. For a while he convinced himself that being a girl would be okay, that being trans was just too hard a life.</p>
28	<p>Even though he'd started high school as a boy, his trans status was a topic of constant rumor and gossip.</p>
29	<p>Now, as Sasha explained that they also were questioning their gender, Andrew felt a rush of relief, similar to the one he'd felt when he came out to Sasha.</p>
29	<p>They just knew. Whether or not the appearance of their body matched the gender in their mind, there was some core understanding: my identity is this. But Sasha didn't feel that. Didn't feel strongly This is what I am. Didn't feel strongly This is what I'm not. Other people seemed to have a file in their brain marked Gender.</p>
29	<p>The idea of not having a gender wasn't frightening to Sasha, but it wasn't a relief either.</p>
29	<p>"For me at least, genderqueer includes an aspect of questioning," Sasha explains. "The fact that I was questioning my gender meant that I was genderqueer." Still, Sasha kept probing. On Facebook, they posted a status update asking, What is your preferred pronoun?</p>
30	<p>Sasha explained that there were other choices besides he and she, choices like it, or they, or more recently invented gender-neutral pronouns like ne, ve, and ze or xe. Listening, it became clear to Karl that this was a topic Sasha had been thinking about a lot.</p> <p>Not long afterward, Sasha was talking with their parents about someone they'd met online who identified as genderqueer.</p> <p>"Are you genderqueer?" asked Debbie, Sasha's mother.</p> <p>"Yeah," Sasha said.</p> <p>That was the extent of the conversation. But that night, Sasha posted on Google+: Just came out as genderqueer to my parents. Basically, I don't identify as masculine or feminine.</p>
30	What did genderqueer even mean?
31	GENDERQUEER
31	I understand coming out as gay or even trans, but this is harder for me to understand."

Page	Content
32	<p>Sasha announced they were genderqueer, she asked for clarification. “Who are you attracted to? Do you have sexual feelings for men?”</p> <p>But that wasn’t the issue for Sasha. They weren’t all that interested in having sex with anyone, actually. And anyway, terms like homosexual or heterosexual made no sense if you didn’t identify as one gender or another.</p> <p>Most of us see gender and sexuality and romance as one big interconnected tangle of feelings- this is who I am, this is who I’m attracted to, this is who I love.</p>
32	<p>Gender was the word for what people felt about themselves, how they felt inside. Sexuality was the category for who you were physically attracted to.</p>
33	<p>Because language is evolving rapidly, and because different people have different preferences, always adopt the language individuals use about themselves, even if it differs from what’s here.</p>
34	<p>bigender/gender fluid- Sometimes identifies as male and sometimes as female.</p> <p>Cis/cisgender- The opposite of transgender; gender matches their birth sex.</p> <p>Gender questioning- Is unsure about where they belong on the gender spectrum.</p> <p>Genderqueer/nonbinary- Gender identity doesn’t fit neatly into male/female categories.</p> <p>Intersex- Born with sexual anatomy, organs, or chromosomes that don’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. Replaces the outdated and offensive term hermaphrodite.</p> <p>Trans/transgender- Feels their gender is different from their birth sex, whether or not they have physically changed their body or outward presentation. A transgender man is someone who currently identifies as male. A transgender woman is someone who currently identifies as female.</p>
34	<p>cupiosexual- Doesn’t feel sexual attraction, but is still interested in sex.</p> <p>Graysexual- Mostly doesn’t feel sexual attraction but does occasionally.</p>
35	<p>pansexual- Physically attracted to people across the gender spectrum.</p> <p>TERMS FOR ROMANTIC INCLINATION</p> <p>Aromatic- Not romantically attracted to anyone.</p> <p>Biromantic- Romantically attracted to both men and women.</p> <p>Cupioromantic- Doesn’t feel romantic attraction, but is still interested in romance.</p> <p>Heteroromantic- Romantically attracted to people of all the opposite gender.</p> <p>Homoromantic- Romantically attracted to people of the same gender.</p> <p>Panromantic- Romantically attracted to people across the gender spectrum</p> <p>Quoiromantic- Doesn’t understand the difference between romantic and platonic love.</p>
37	<p>Discovering the experience of genderqueer identity felt like discovering a secret room. All this time there had been just two rooms: male and female. Now it turned out there was another room- one that could be furnished however you wanted.</p>
38	<p>He remembers his thought process going like this: Okay, not male. Okay, not female. So, neither? Okay. “That was the process and it took ten seconds,” he says. “Then it was over.”</p> <p>“I just rolled with the fact that Sasha was agender,” Teah says.</p>

Page	Content
40	<p>But Sasha had surveyed the options- Men and Women- and walked back to the car. “There’s no bathroom for me,” they said, climbing into the backseat.</p>
41	<p>It was tough sometimes, watching Sasha navigate a world that didn’t even have a category for them.</p>
43	<p>Sasha had been identifying as agender for almost a year by now, but they still dressed the same as they always had- like a boy.</p>
46	<p>One leaned out the window, “Let me suck your prick.”</p>
47	<p>He didn’t bother ruminating on why he’d been singled out, why the men had assumed he was gay.</p>
48	<p>1. I’m Sasha and I identify as agender. 2. It’s important to respect people’s preferred pronouns. 3. I’m petitioning the White House to recognize nonbinary gender. Anyone can start a petition on the We the People website at Whitehouse.gov, requesting that the federal government address a problem or change a policy. If a petition gets enough signatures within a thirty-day window, the White House will issue an official response. Sasha’s petition reads as follows: Legal documents in the United States only recognize “male” and “female” as genders, leaving anyone who does not identify as one of these two genders with no option. Australia and New Zealand both allow an X in place of an M or an F on passports for this purpose, and the UK regnizes ‘Mx’ (pronounced “Mix”) as a gender-neutral title. This petition asks the Obama administration to legally recognize genders outside of the male-female binary, and provide on option for these genders on all legal documents and records.</p>
50	<p>As they boxed up books and folders and unpinned words from the wall, Sasha noticed a pair of clipboards parents used to sign out their kids at the end of the day. One clipboard was marked Girls. The other was marked Boys. “What about the kids who aren’t either one?” Sasha asked. “Which clipboard do they go on?”</p>
51	<p>Three years later, Karl’s classroom included a boy who sometimes liked to dress as a princess and a girl who talked about maybe being a boy someday.</p>
55	<p>Nemo identifies as gender fluid.</p>
56	<p>“To me gender fluid means I have the potential to be anything, any gender at any time,” Nemo explained. “I can be male, female, masculine, feminine, neither, both.” Like Sasha, Nemo uses they/them pronouns. Sasha and Nemo knew each other from the school’s Queer Club and had gone to see Les Miserables together the year before.</p>
56	<p>“And I’m asexual, so I don’t do sexual relationships,” Nemo says.</p>
56	<p>The fact that both of them identified as nonbinary wasn’t the reason they were together, it was just another thing they had in common.</p>
73	<p>“I don’t give a fuck about them flowers,” the guy said. He didn’t know who Lil’ Jerry was. Just some guy in a puffy jacket. “Why you got to be like that? Just respect her flowers.”</p>

Page	Content
	Now it was a challenge. "Fuck them flowers," the guy said. "I'ma come back and shoot this shit up."
77	Richard's mother, Jasmine was already four and a half months pregnant when her grandmother took her to the doctor to get checked. She was fourteen years old and had been dating a boy two years older. He was the one who figured out she was pregnant- she hadn't known enough to make sense of the changes happening to her body. It was too late for an abortion, but Jasmine figured she was prepared to raise a child.
109	Do u ever just get rly tired when u have a lot of shit to do and u just start crying for no reason
112	<p>"Whoa, nigga. You said, 'Hey!'" Jamal echoed. "Screamin' and shit."</p> <p>Lloyd leaned close and screeched in Jamal's ear. Richard laughed and slapped Lloyd's head.</p> <p>"Aw, nigga, you just broke my neck," Lloyd yelled. "Damn, pussy, bitch, fuck!"</p> <p>Richard brandished the lighter, pretending to light Lloyd's sleeve. He looked at Jamal.</p> <p>"Do it," Jamal urged.</p> <p>Lloyd danced between them, landing half on Jamal's lap.</p> <p>"Move, nigga! Get off me," Jamal grumbled.</p>
114	Sasha leaps up, slapping the flaming skirt. "Oh, fuck! Oh, fuck!"
115	"Oh, Lord. Fuck."
115	"Oh my God. Who would want to do some shit like that?"
116	<p>"That's fucked up. That's hella fucked up!"</p> <p>Then the driver walks down the aisle to the back of the bus and kicks the charred remnant of Sasha's skirt through the door.</p> <p>"Real stupid motherfuckers, man!" he bellows.</p>
143	"I'm homophobic," Richard said at last. "I don't like gay people."
145	<p>"My son considers himself agender," she said. "He likes to wear a skirt. It's his statement. That's how he feels comfortable dressing."</p> <p>It wasn't until later that she realized she'd gotten the pronouns wrong.</p>
188	Being agender simply means that the person doesn't feel they are "either a boy or a girl."
189	<p>But his presence was a statement in itself- I'm here, I'm queer, and I support my cousin.</p> <p>Inside the courtroom, reporters discussed the best terms to use when describing Sasha. Gender fluid? Genderqueer? Gender non-conforming? Agender?</p>
189	"I've met the minor and I can tell you he's not homophobic, not even remotely," he said.
197	Like, 'Oh yeah, he gay, he hecka gay, let's burn him.'
202	Conversation turned to a case that was in the news- Donald Williams Jr., an African American freshman at San Jose State University, had been relentlessly bullied by the white students he lived with in a four-bedroom dormitory suite. The white kids, also freshmen, had insisted on calling Williams "three-fifths," a reference to the clause in the in the original US Constitution that counted slaves

Page	Content
	<p>as three-fifths of a person when determining population for representation in Congress. They clamped a bike lock around his neck and claimed to have lost the key. They wrote Nigger on a whiteboard and draped a Confederate flag over a cardboard cutout of Elvis Presley in the suite's living room. They locked him in his room. And they claimed it was all just a series of good-natured pranks.</p> <p>In the end, three eighteen-year-old white students were expelled for what they did to Williams, and a seventeen-year-old was suspended. The three who were expelled were also charged in criminal court. The charge: misdemeanor battery with a hate-crime enhancement, which carried a maximum penalty of a year and a half in county jail. A jury eventually convicted all three of battery but acquitted one of the students of the hate-crime charge and deadlocked on the others.</p> <p>"Girl, they got misdemeanors," Regis said. "Nobody got charged with any felonies. Three white boys on one black boy."</p>
224	They carried a book about the history of American Socialism.
228	The government had acknowledged the existence of nonbinary gender.
229	She had made Sasha a ball gown as a gift, using fabric donated by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a San Francisco charity and street performance group that calls itself "a leading-edge Order of queer nuns."
239	<p>"You're the one who smacked my ass!"</p> <p>"I'm the one who smacked your ass!"</p>
249	<p>Seven of them, including a knit cap, a flat cap, a Russian ushanka hat, and a Chairman Mao hat with a red star at the forehead.</p> <p>A few key books came along as well: a vegan cookbook, the novel <i>Trains and Lovers</i> by Alexander McCall Smith, <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i> by Ursula K. Le Guin, a book about anarchism called <i>Black Flame</i>, and the novel <i>Orlando</i> by Virginia Woolf, about a poet who changes genders from male to female.</p>
267	"It was kind of fucked up that we were out there fighting and cutting school," she says.
285	"...We hope that there are programs in juvenile detention that can at least help Richard with this, and that he can become an ally who will stand up against the bullying and hatred of gay and trans people."
289	<p>They talked about revolution vs. reform and anarchism vs. socialism, and Andrew was struck, as he always had been, by the way Sasha carefully considered things instead of just echoing the opinions of other people.</p> <p>Andrew was eighteen now. His glasses were rimless at the bottom; his nose pierced at the septum. He identified as a gay man. Few people knew his trans status- he kept it on the down low.</p>
290	<p>He was happier now than he'd been before he transitioned, but he still yearned for something else, some place outside of gender.</p> <p>"Actually," he said, "I'm starting to identify a little bit as- I don't even know the word I want to use yet. I like androgynous. I like genderqueer."</p>