

2015.05.22

Dear Halmoni, Halabuji, and Unnee,

I want to tell you something that's really important to me, but also incredibly difficult for me to say to you. But, because I respect and love you, I have to be honest with you. I'm terrified of disappointing you or causing you any sort of discomfort. You've probably wondered a million times why I dress like a boy. Why I cut my hair again recently. Why I am not girly at all. I am transgender. This means that even though I was born female, I identify as male. (I'm not sure how much knowledge you have about transgender people or what it means to be transgender, so I have some articles for you.)

It's taken me a while to come to terms with my identity and who I am as a person. In a world that tells you who you're supposed to be and what you're supposed to be and what you're supposed to do, it's extremely difficult to chart a course that deviates from the well-known path. But I've lived in anxiety and fear of myself for so long. And finally being able to declare "this is who I am; this is me, I'm done hiding," has been such a liberating process.

I've always been boyish. I never liked pink, all my friends were boys, I didn't like dresses or girly things... And I'm sure you've noticed that. But my boyishness was never and is not a phase. It is who I am. In high school, I lost myself. I tried really hard to fit in with the crowd and be the beautiful woman I thought I was supposed to be. I dressed up, went to prom with a boy, wore makeup... I thought if I was beautiful, wore the right clothes and sat the right way, I would feel better about myself. I thought that the rising sense of horror in my body and my persona would decrease. But being girly and wearing dresses only brought me closer to suicide. I hated myself and who I had become because it felt so discordant with who I felt I was inside.

This year, I've taken steps to align myself again. I cut my hair and that alone made me feel drastically more like myself. I got a double mastectomy to remove my breasts and masculinize my chest. And I am going to start hormone therapy soon. This is all part of medically transitioning (physically altering my body) to male.

I know that this is all a lot of information at once. It's overwhelming. It's new. It's confusing. It's scary. It took me almost 19 years to figure all of this out and be able to talk about it out loud, so please take your time. I'm not asking you to understand everything I've said. I'm not asking you to change how you treat me or how you interact with me. And I'm not asking you to tell your friends or your church. (Although it's fine if you do.) I just needed to tell you. I want you to know who I truly am and I want you to be up to date with big things that are happening in my life. And this is a big change.

In terms of swimming, I will still swim for Harvard. But, I'm going to swim for the men's team, not the women's team. Harvard has been amazingly supportive and helpful through this process of transition. They accept me for who I am and have taken huge steps to accommodate me and make sure I am comfortable and happy. And that's what all of this comes down to. Happiness. When I was wearing dresses and pretending I was a girl, I was living my life for someone else. I was living to fulfill some role in society I thought I had to fill. And now, I'm living my life for me – I'm not trying to be someone I'm not and I'm not trying to fulfill someone else's view of who I am supposed to be.

That said, I want you to know I'm not a different person. I'm still Schuyler, Miwon, Pookie. I'm still goofy, hard-working, and caring. I am every bit the Schuyler you knew before you read this letter. I am just more open and honest with you.

I love you, always.

Schuyler