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Authors

Armada-Moreira, Adam
Cizauskas, Carrie
Fleury, Gabriela
[et al.](#)

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Memoirs of an Ex-Pile of Goo

Iris D. Young (he/him)

Dept. of Bioengineering and Therapeutic Sciences, UCSF

To borrow a phrase from “Detransition, Baby,” I was a Trump-era trans,* — I started hormones the day before the 2016 election.- For some related and some unrelated reasons, and seeing as 90% of the things that have ever gone wrong in my life happened in those first couple years, and I found out how I operate under extreme stress. At one point I stopped feeling hungry for a week, and then spent another several months perpetually nauseous; another time I couldn’t be jolted out of dissociation long enough to hold a conversation. I suddenly lived in a different world than those among that of my coworkers who had never experienced housing insecurity, never been unable to access healthcare, never had to read up on laws before traveling, never been called evil, predatory, or sick by supreme court judges or elected officials. (I did, it turns out, have colleagues who suffered each of these injustices, but I didn't know it at the time.) I tried not to show it, but I was barely holding together.

I’m thriving now because I’ve had mentors who gave me time and understanding but never lowered their expectations for what I was capable of. This is what I want for everyone. Transition is ultimately one of the most rewarding things most of us will ever get to do — rebuilding your life from the ground up gives you a rare chance to reassess what matters. I’m hoping future generations have less rubble to pick through, less rebuilding to do, but for the foreseeable future this transformation is messy. I resonated embarrassingly strongly with something Jennifer Wright shared: “People talk about caterpillars becoming a butterflies as though they just go into a cocoon, slap on wings, and are good to go. Caterpillars have to dissolve into a disgusting pile of goo to become butterflies. So if you’re a mess wrapped up in blankets right now, keep going.”I read on Twitter about caterpillars becoming butterflies by way of dissolving into "disgusting pile[s] of goo" (although I did give myself credit for being a pile of goo with a doctorate). To stick with the analogy perhaps further than it was built to stretch: mentors and supervisors, you’ll be much happier with the end result if you protect that cocoon and wait it out.

*NB: trans, like queer, is not a noun unless you’re a trans person reclaiming it as such.