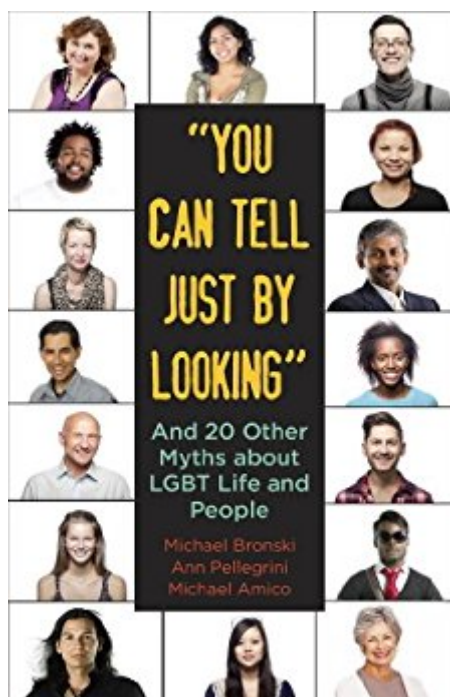


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# "You Can Tell Just By Looking": And 20 Other Myths About LGBT Life And People (Queer Ideas/Queer Action)



## Synopsis

2014 Lambda Literary Award Finalist: LGBT Nonfiction  
Breaks down the most commonly held misconceptions about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their lives. In *You Can Tell Just by Looking* and *20 Other Myths About LGBT Life and People*, three scholars and activists come together to unpack enduring, popular, and deeply held myths about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, culture, and life in America. Myths, such as "All Religions Condemn Homosexuality" and "Transgender People Are Mentally Ill," have been used to justify discrimination and oppression of LGBT people. Others, such as "Homosexuals Are Born That Way," have been embraced by LGBT communities and their allies. In discussing and dispelling these myths—including gay-positive ones—the authors challenge readers to question their own beliefs and to grapple with the complexities of what it means to be queer in the broadest social, political, and cultural sense. From the Trade Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"You Can Tell Just By Looking And 20 Other Myths About LGBT Life and People," a collaboration

between Michael Bronski, Ann Pellegrini, and Michael Amico, is a brave attempt to dispel the many myths about the people labeled with the title acronym (which I'm sure most people recognize as shorthand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender). This is a brave book because some of the myths are ones perpetuated by the LGBT community itself, and many gays do not take kindly to anyone who strays from the script. "Homosexuals Are Born That Way" is popular among gays as a way to suggest that sexual orientation is like race or gender, something that one does not choose and, therefore, not a valid reason to discriminate. Pity the person, like actress Cynthia Nixon of *Sex and the City*, who publicly proclaimed that her sexuality was a choice. Some others are popular as a defense mechanism ("Most Homophobes Are Repressed Homosexulas") to conveniently label opponents in the battle for LGBT equality. Other myths explored and debunked concern religion ("All Religions Condemn Homosexuality"), gaydar ("You Can Tell Who's Gay Just by Looking"), transgender people ("All Transgender People Have Sex-Reassignment Surgery," "Transgender People Are Mentally Ill," and "Transgender People Are Gay"), race ("People of Color Are More Homophobic Than White People"), and the media ("Positive Visibility in the Media Increases Tolerance and Acceptance of LGBT People"). Simply put, people are not simple, and neither is sexuality. Brian W. Fairbanks

To look at the cover of "You Can Tell Just By Looking" by Michael Bronski, Ann Pellegrini and Michael Amico with its Brady Bunch boxes with smiling faces of all varieties of gender and ethnicity, you might expect the book to be a light-hearted piece of fluff or a parody of the "20 Other Myths about LGBT Life And People." You would be mistaken. The authors of this book are very serious in their discussions of the 21 commonly known and apparently false, or at best misleading, myths about GLBT individuals and the real parameters of their lives. For that I commend them and yet there seems to be a paucity of footnotes. The authors do a very good job of laying out their case as to the falsity of the myths but it seems to be more of a case of their logical thought progressions as opposed to a serious presentation of external research to bolster their premise. Sort of a "this is what we believe and our truth is so obviously accurate we don't need facts to prove our points because their truth should be obvious to all of you." What they seem to refer to most frequently is what they have already written or chapters yet to come. I found this book a difficult read. The authors' surety of their own arguments left me no room to think for myself and for the most part there was nothing significantly new that I learned. As it was, several times during my reading I ran into the thought "Who is the market for this book?" It's too dogmatic for the LGBT community and those who believe in the myths, for the most part, are disinclined to have their myths busted. "You

Can Tell Just By Looking And 20 Other Myths About LGBT Life and People" may be to some people's taste but did nothing for me.

This humorless manifesto misses the mark. The cover and title suggest a more light hearted look at common misperceptions that would serve to till some common ground. Instead it is a tired regurgitation of political correctness. It is not a discussion. The authors present their positions and perceptions as indisputable fact. Those who don't fall lock step with their viewpoints are haters, bigots and fools. This could have triggered an important discussion. But a "my way or the highway approach" is never conducive to growth or education. There is no point in discussion when differing opinions are deemed stupid and reactionary. Still there are valid points and food for thought. The concept of "corrective" rape is not just an LGBT issue but one that reflects the treatment and precarious position of women in all different parts of the world. The balance between individual's sexual freedom, punitive governmental action and impact on freedom of religion and speech bears greater examination. But their discussion of HIV testing is troubling. The authors are technically correct that testing in and of itself does not prevent the spread, it does provide awareness so the individual can take measures to protect the self and others. The authors sidestep the question of personal responsibility, bemoaning the fact that people lie about their status because in the case of "sex workers" (prostitutes) it may cost them clients and in others, might trigger rejection. Well, duh. I don't know anyone, straight or gay, who views getting tested or having a negative test as being a substitute for safe sex. I was disappointed in this book. It's dry delivery and one sided perspective does little to dispel the myths they highlight or stimulate discussion.

Amazing how well this book addresses issues that I have had for several years now...frustrated with much of the negative publicity I have had 'shoved down my throat," this book is an easy read and one I would recommend to anyone having trouble with LBGT negative publicity - pass it on to family and friends and continue with positive awareness of what loved ones have had to put up with. Easy to comprehend...a good read for anyone questioning these issues. Love should be unconditional...and expected by each of us.

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