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## Dethroning Romance

### Angela Chen Archives the Evolution of Asexuality

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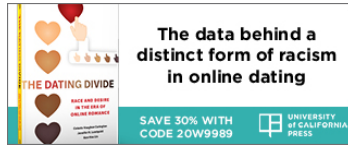


Angela Chen, author of *Ace: What Asexuality Reveals About Desire, Identity, and the Meaning of Sex* (Photo credit: Sylvie Rosokoff)

Science and tech journalist Angela Chen is asexual. So am I. Asexuality, or, generally speaking, the lack of sexual attraction, [isn't a new orientation](#), but the internet has made it significantly easier for people to learn about the identity's nuances and meet like-minded friends and partners. In her new book [Ace: What Asexuality Reveals About Desire, Society, and the Meaning of Sex](#), Chen—a friend of mine who I've come to know through asexual (or ace) circles—explores the identity not only in the context of how we develop our sense of self, but also in the context of our relationships with other people. This nonfiction, journalistic book isn't just for the ace community—allosexual people (non-aces) can also benefit from considering a life that doesn't prioritize sex and romance above all else.

Throughout the work, blurbed by *Bitch* editor-in-chief Evette Dionne, Chen interviews asexual and aromantic people of all stripes to construct a vivid portrait of how the identity intersects with others, including those based on race, gender, and disability. "I think more people are looking at the more negative sides of sex, [like] the way[s] sex has become so entwined with power structures and [how it] can be harmful," Chen said. "Since the [#MeToo movement](#), there's been a shift [in how] we're thinking about it." In *Ace*, which was conceived before the Harvey Weinstein news broke in October 2017, she addresses this shift by teasing apart feminism from sex positivity, giving aces permission to focus on their own pleasure (sexual or not), not on their politics. *Bitch* spoke to Chen

about the challenges of writing a book meant to reach both aces and allos, dethroning marriage and romance as the sole relationship ideals, and the evolution of her own identity.



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**As you were writing *Ace*, was it tough trying to appeal to both asexual and allosexual audiences?**

Absolutely. There's always a balance [to strike when] writing for aces; it means telling stories that are new to aces—not just telling them what they already know and have already read on websites and discussed on forums. At the same time, I have to [consider that] the general level of understanding around asexuality (beyond the definition) is very [narrow]. There [were] questions of how [to] make it interesting for aces and allos alike, how [to] make sure there's enough new information that aces will find it valuable, [and also how to include accessible] discussion for allos who [are new to] the conversation.

**Given ace stereotypes, did you feel pressure to not sound prudish, uptight, or boring as you explained a lot of nuanced terminology?**

Yes. How much of that is [because of the] stereotypes and how much of that is [my own] neuroticism? It's hard to separate. Because I know aces who don't feel that pressure; I know aces who say, "I'm aware of those stereotypes, but I don't feel the need to prove them [wrong]." Throughout the book, I try to be very fair-minded. I try to always be compassionate and say, "I'm not anti-sex. We're fine if you love sex, and we're fine if you love explicit content. We just want the narrative to be more balanced." But there are times that I'm like, Do I have to be fair? Could I be more radical in what I said? I do feel that tension, and some of that is personal. But some of it is definitely because of these stereotypes and [not wanting people to assume] this is going to be a book about hating people who love sex, which is not the case.