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Glossary of LGBTQ Terms

Many of us refrain from talking about sexual orientation and gender expression identity because it feels taboo, or because they're afraid of saying the wrong thing. This glossary was written to help give everyone the words and meanings to help make conversations easier and more comfortable. If you do not understand the context in which a person is using one of these terms, it is always appropriate to ask. This is especially recommended when using terms that we have noted that can have a derogatory connotation.

Agender: A person who is internally ungendered or does not have a felt sense of gender identity.

Aggressive (Ag): A term used to describe a female-bodied and identified person who prefers presenting as masculine. This term is most commonly used in urban communities of color.

Ally: A person who supports and honors the diversity of sexual orientation, acts accordingly to challenge homophobic remarks and behaviors and explores and understands these forms of bias within him- or herself.

Androgynous: A person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman, presenting a gender either mixed or neutral.

Asexual: Person who is not sexually attracted to anyone or does not have a sexual orientation.

Bicurious: A curiosity about having sexual relations with a same gender/sex person.

Bigendered: A person whose gender identity is a combination of male/man and female/woman.

Biphobia: The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQI community, as well as in general society.

Bisexual: A person emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to both men and women, though not necessarily simultaneously; a bisexual person may not be equally attracted to both sexes, and the degree of attraction may vary as sexual identity develops over time.

Cisgender: describes someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their physical sex.

Cisgenderism: Assuming every person to be cisgender therefore marginalizing those who identify as trans* in some form. It is also believing cisgender people to be superior, and holding people to traditional expectations based on gender, or punishing or excluding those who don't conform to traditional gender expectations.

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates his or her sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Dyke: Derogatory term referring to a masculine lesbian. Sometimes adopted affirmatively by lesbians (not necessarily masculine ones) to refer to themselves. Avoid using this term unless an individual self-identifies as a Dyke.

Fag: Derogatory term referring to someone perceived as non-heteronormative. Avoid using this term.

Gay: A word describing a man or a woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to members of the same sex. Also used to refer to the LGBTQI community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

Gender Expression: External manifestation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through masculine, feminine or gender-variant behavior, clothing, haircut, voice or body characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex.

Gender Identity: One's personal sense of their gender. For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own sense of gender identity do not match.

Gender Identity Disorder: The medical diagnosis in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostics and Statistics Manual IV (DSM4) used to describe a person who experiences significant gender dysphoria (lack of identification with one's sex and/or gender assigned at birth). It is anticipated that the DSM5 (released in 2013) will replace this diagnosis with "gender dysphoria."

Genderism: The system of belief that there are only two genders (men and women) and that gender is inherently tied to one's sex assigned at birth. It holds cisgender

people as superior to transgender people, and punishes or excludes those who don't conform to society's expectations of gender.

Gender-Neutral/Gender-Inclusive: Inclusive language to describe relationships ("spouse" and "partner" instead of "husband/boyfriend" and "wife/girlfriend"), spaces (gender-neutral/inclusive restrooms are for use by all genders), pronouns ("they" and "ze" are gender neutral/inclusive pronouns) among other things.

Gender Non-Conforming: A person who doesn't conform to society's expectations of gender expression based on the gender binary, expectations of masculinity and femininity, or how they should identify their gender.

Gender Oppression: The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender (gender-typical people) and subordinate and disparage transgender or gender variant people. Also known as "genderism."

Genderqueer: A word people use to describe their own non-standard gender identity or expression or a gender variant person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Often includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system.

Gender Variant: A synonym for "gender diverse" and "gender non-conforming"; "gender diverse" and "gender non-conforming" are preferred to "gender variant" because variance implies a standard normativity of gender

Heteronormativity: The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

Heterosexism: Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non- heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation.

Heterosexual Privilege: Those benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual that are denied to gays and bisexuals. Also, the benefits gay people and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying gay people or bisexual identity.

Homophobia: The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who love and are sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Homosexual: Outdated (medical) term for sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to a sex other than your own. Commonly thought of as "attraction to the opposite sex" but since there are not only two sexes (see "Intersex" and "Transsexual"), this definition is inaccurate.

In the Closet: Refers to a gay man or lesbian, bisexual, transperson or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society.

Internalized Homophobia: Self-identification of societal stereotypes by an LGBT person, causing them to dislike and resent their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the Closet: Keeping one's sexual orientation and/or gender or sex identity a secret.

Intersex: A set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with "sex chromosomes," external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered "standard" for either male or female. The existence of intersexuals shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually and relationally attracted to other women.

LGBTQI: A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning and intersexed community.

Living Openly: A state in which LGBT people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.

MSM: Men who engage in same-sex behavior, but who may not necessarily self-identify as gay or bisexual.

Outing: Exposing someone's sexual orientation as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to others, without their permission; in essence "outing" them from the closet. Outing someone can have serious employment/economic/safety/religious repercussions in some situations.

Pangendered: A person whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender expressions.

Pansexual: A person who is sexually attracted to all or many gender expressions.

Queer: Often used interchangeably with "LGBT." Be mindful that the term may have negative or derogatory connotations for some people; however, many younger people are comfortable using it.

Rainbow Flag: The Rainbow Freedom Flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker to designate the great diversity of the LGBTIQ community. It has been recognized by the

International Flag Makers Association as the official flag of the LGBTIQ civil rights movement.

Same-Gender Loving: A term some prefer to use instead of “lesbian” or “gay” to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

Sex: A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Common terms are “male,” “female” and “intersex.”

Sex identity: The sex that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a sex.

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)/Sex Confirmation Surgery: A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s sex to match their sex identity.

Sexual Minority: Refers to members of sexual orientations or who engage in sexual activities that are not part of the mainstream. Also refers to members of sex groups that do not fall into the majority categories of male or female, such as intersexuals and transsexuals.

Sexual Orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, sexual and relational attraction to another person; may be a same-sex orientation, opposite-sex orientation or a bisexual orientation.

Sexual Preference: What a person likes or prefers to do sexually; a conscious recognition or choice not to be confused with sexual orientation.

She-Male: An *offensive term* used to refer to MTF trans individuals by the sex/porn industries to objectify, exoticize and eroticize the trans body.

Straight: Person who is attracted to a gender other than their own. Commonly thought of as “attraction to the opposite gender,” but since there are not only two genders (see transgender), this definition is inaccurate.

Tranny: A derogatory term used to refer to a trans-identified person. Sometimes a term reclaimed by trans* people for empowerment.

Transgender: Transgender (sometimes shortened to trans or TG) people are those whose psychological self (“gender identity”) differs from the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with. To understand this, one must understand the difference between biological sex, which is one’s body (genitals, chromosomes, ect.), and social gender, which refers to levels of masculinity and femininity. Often, society conflates sex and gender, viewing them as the same thing. But, gender and sex are not the same thing. Transgender people are those whose psychological self (“gender

identity") differs from the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with. For example, a female with a masculine gender identity or who identifies as a man. An umbrella term for transsexuals, cross-dressers (transvestites), transgenderists, gender queers, and people who identify as neither female nor male and/or as neither a man or as a woman. Transgender is not a sexual orientation; transgender people may have any sexual orientation. It is important to acknowledge that while some people may fit under this definition of transgender, they may not identify as such.

Transition: A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transgender people align their anatomy with their sex identity and/or their gender expression with their gender identity.

Transman: An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females; also referred to as "transguy(s)."

Transphobia: The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, people whose gender identity or gender expression do not conform to cultural gender norms.

Transsexual: A medical term describing people whose gender and sex do not line up, and who often seek medical treatment to bring their body and gender identity into alignment. Avoid using this term unless an individual self-identifies as transsexual.

Transvestite: Individuals who regularly or occasionally wear the clothing socially assigned to a gender not their own, but are usually comfortable with their anatomy and do not wish to change it (i.e. they are not transsexuals). Cross-dresser is the preferred term for men who enjoy or prefer women's clothing and social roles. Contrary to popular belief, the overwhelming majority of male cross-dressers identify as straight and often are married. Very few women call themselves cross-dressers.

Triangle: A symbol of remembrance. Gay men in the Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear the pink triangle as a designation of being homosexual. Women who did not conform to social roles, often believed to be lesbians, had to wear the black triangle. The triangles are worn today as symbols of freedom, reminding us to never forget.

Two-Spirit: American Indian/First Nations/Native American persons who have attributes of both men and women, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals (shamans). Their dress is usually mixture of men's and women's articles and they are seen as a separate or third gender. The term "two-spirit" is usually considered to specific to the Zuni tribe. Similar identity labels vary by tribe and include "one-spirit" and "wintke."

Ze: Gender neutral pronouns that can be used instead of he/she.

Zir: Gender neutral pronouns that can be used instead of his/her.

