

What does queer mean?

Queer has been used as... :

- an umbrella term for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community.
- a political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking by recognizing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid.
- a simple label to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires. For example, a person who is attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer.

Isn't *queer* an insult?

For many years, the term *queer* has been used as an insult to refer to anyone who is seen outside of society's heterosexual and/or gender "norms" as strange. In response, many LGBT people of earlier generations do not feel comfortable identifying with *queer*. In recent years, *queer* has been reclaimed, most commonly, by younger members of the LGBT community.

What are some of the obstacles faced by people who identify as queer?

Queer people face the same obstacles as any group that does not conform to society's gender/sex expectations or to society's standards for what is "normal" sexual behavior. Like people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, they may have to go through a "coming out" process to family and friends, risking rejection or lack of understanding. There are also many incidences where queer people are treated with suspicion, harassed in public spaces, and/or face physical violence.

How can I be respectful of queer people?

- Educate yourself further about queer people and issues important to queer communities.
- It is important to avoid making assumptions about the sexual orientation of others.
- Seek awareness of your sexual orientation and the things you may have always taken for granted about it, particularly if you've always considered yours to be "the norm" (See GenEq's *Heterosexuality Questionnaire*).
- Respect the confidentiality of queer people. Seek consent with an individual before revealing their sexual orientation to others - you could be "outing" them to a person or community does not know that they are queer.

Where can I find more information?

- Most libraries have extensive sections dedicated to LGBTQ communities, histories, and issues. Annamarie Jagose's *Queer Theory: An Introduction* is a good book to begin with when studying queer theory. Authors such as Kate Bornstein (*My Gender Workbook*) and Leslie Feinberg (*Transgender Warrior: Making History From Joan of Arc to RuPaul*) write about transgender history and gender issues.
- Search out your local LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer) center and inquire about what they are working on regarding transgender or LGBTQ issues in your area, ask them questions, and use their resources.

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Programs and Services

Gender Equity Resource Center
202 Cesar Chavez
<http://geneq.berkeley.edu>

Pacific Center (Berkeley)
(510) 548-8283
2712 Telegraph Avenue
www.pacificcenter.org

Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC)
A resource center for LGBTIQ youth
www.lyric.org
(415) 703-6150

Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory
Edited by Michael Warner

Queer Crips: Disabled Gay Men and Their Stories
Edited by Bob Guter and John R. Killackey

Deaf Gay and Lesbian Center

www.dcara.org (look for the *DGLC* link)

Queer Cultural Center

www.queerculturalcenter.org

San Francisco LGBT Center

(415) 865-5555
1800 Market Street
www.sfcenter.org

QueerTheory.org

Visual and textual resource on queer culture, queer theory, queer studies, gender studies, and related fields.
www.queertheory.org

Female Masculinity

By Judith Halberstam

Exile and Pride

By Eli Clare

Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics

By José Esteban Muñoz