



# “Let Me Get This Straight”

When identity politics  
becomes identity language

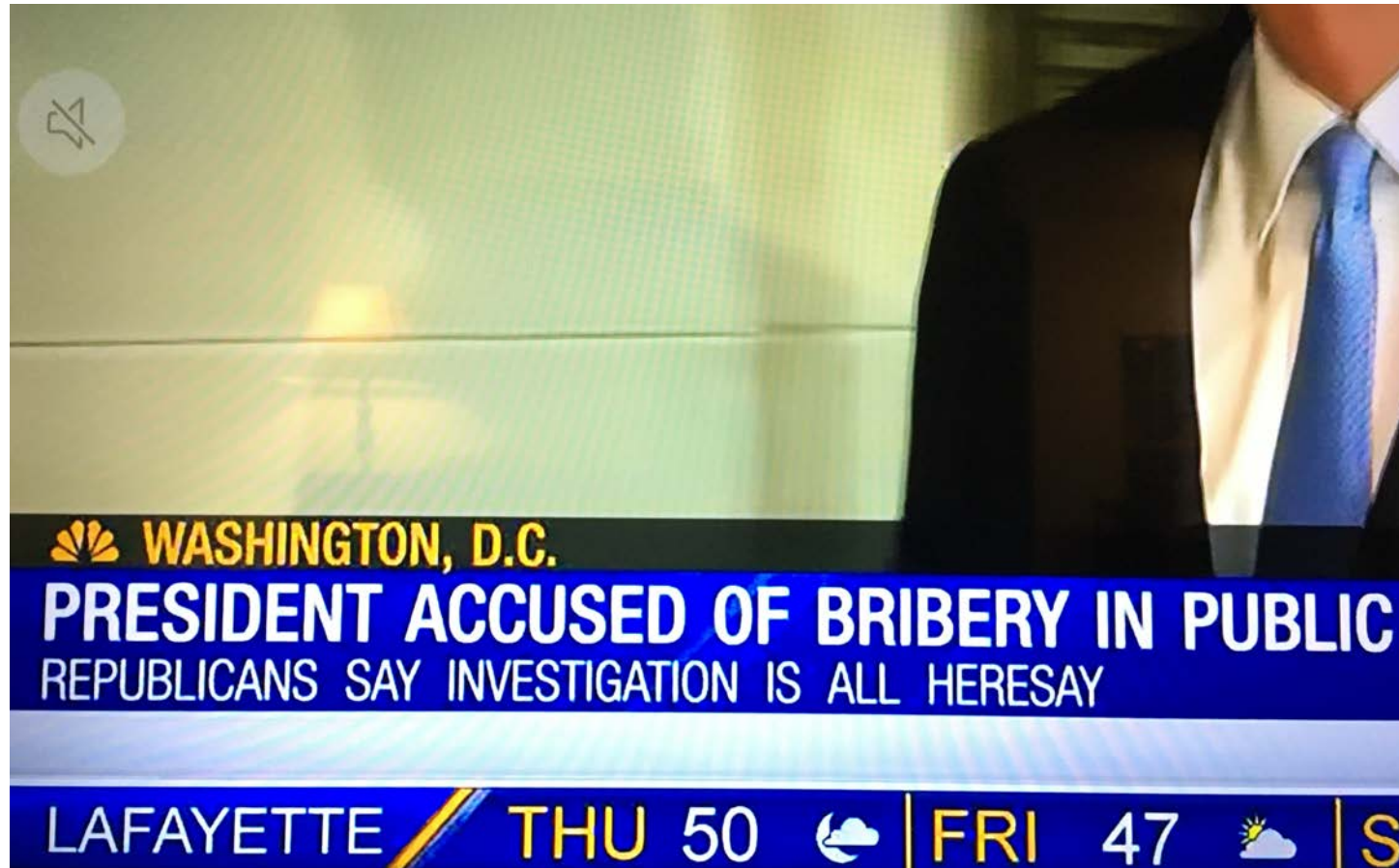
MICHAEL DEAS, ABC, SCMP

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LUNCHEON - 22 JANUARY 2020





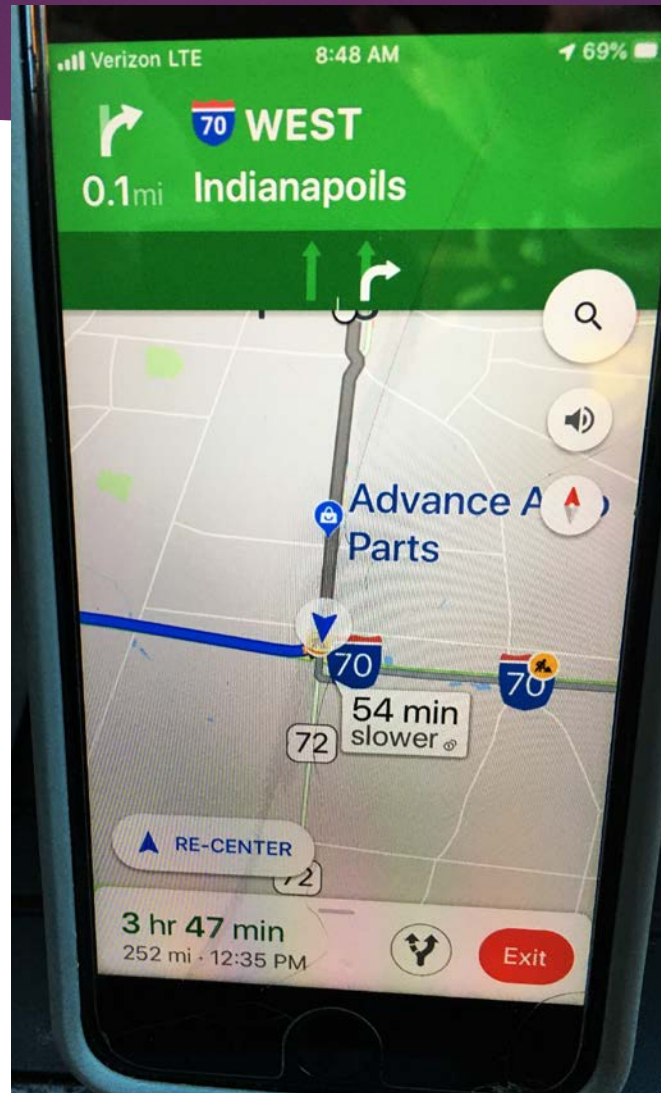
# The opposite of "theresay"?



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# A.I. does not stand for "always infallible"



# If you have to apologize in bold...

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Thursday, November 14, 2019



**We are truly sorry**, and we continue to offer our deepest sympathies to the families and friends who lost loved ones in the accidents of Lion Air 610 and Ethiopian Airlines 302. The memory of these tragedies will continue to drive us to do everything we can to make our airplanes safer.

**A progress report  
on the 737 MAX,  
on Boeing, on safety.**



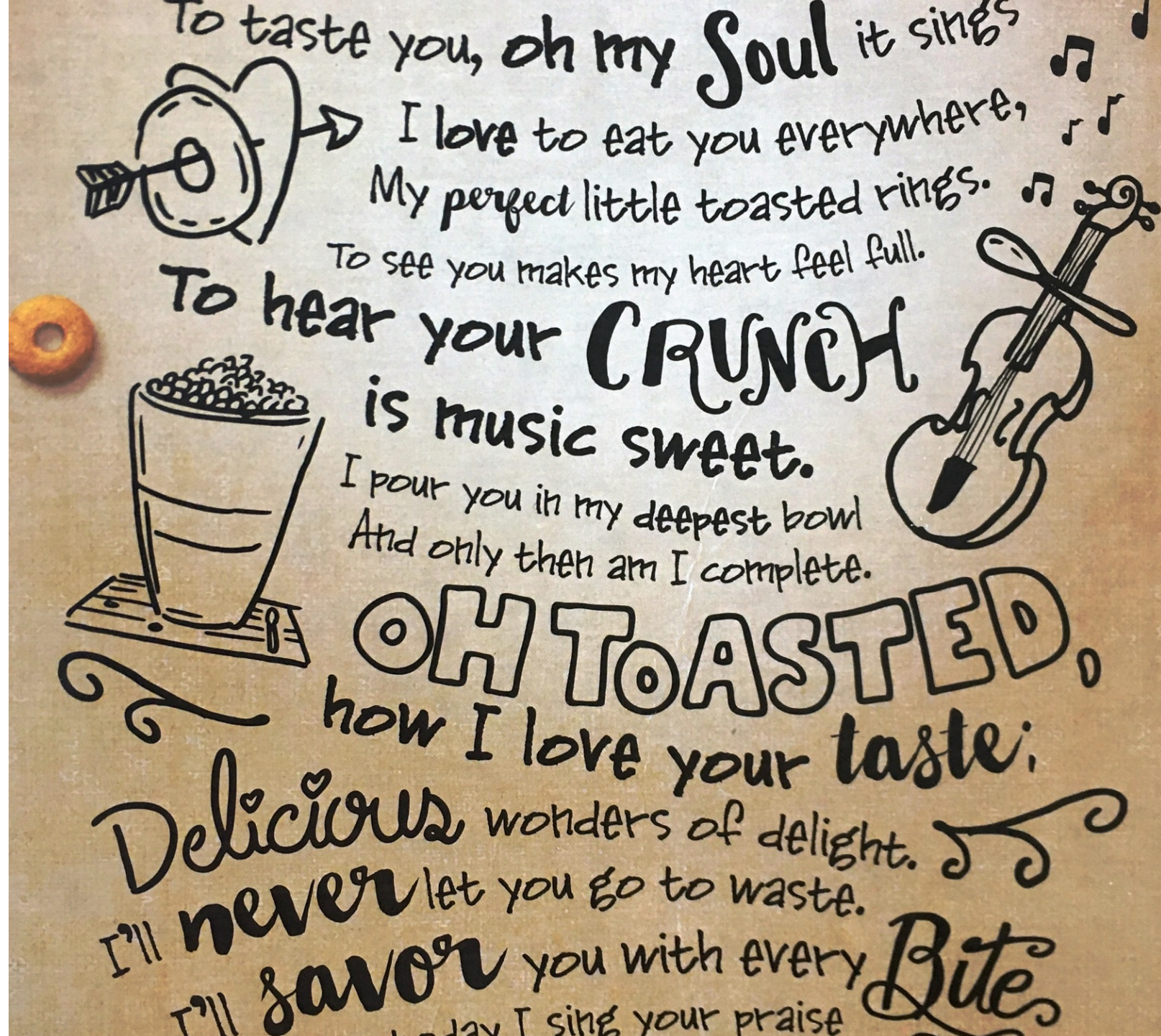
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But first, a word from our sponsor...







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# Caveat and disclaimer

- ▶ Our discussion today is based the **Associated Press Stylebook 2020**: emphasis on
  - ▶ *language*, not civil liberties
  - ▶ *policy*, not politics
  - ▶ *morphology*, not morality
- ▶ “No judgement zone”—even toward reactions that may surprise you
- ▶ We may differ—that’s part of diversity
- ▶ What’s right, not who’s right
- ▶ And most important of all:





Let's talk about everyone's favorite workplace topic...

**SEX!**  
GENDER





# Think you know the difference?

## SEX

- ▶ Biological characteristics a person is *born* with
- ▶ Essentially binary – you can say “opposite sex”
- ▶ Male, female

PLEASE CHECK ONE:

☐ M

☐ F

## GENDER

- ▶ Sociological category a person *identifies* with
- ▶ Deliberately nonbinary – you cannot say “opposite gender”
- ▶ Male, female, both, neither, other

PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

☐ M

☐ F

☐ O

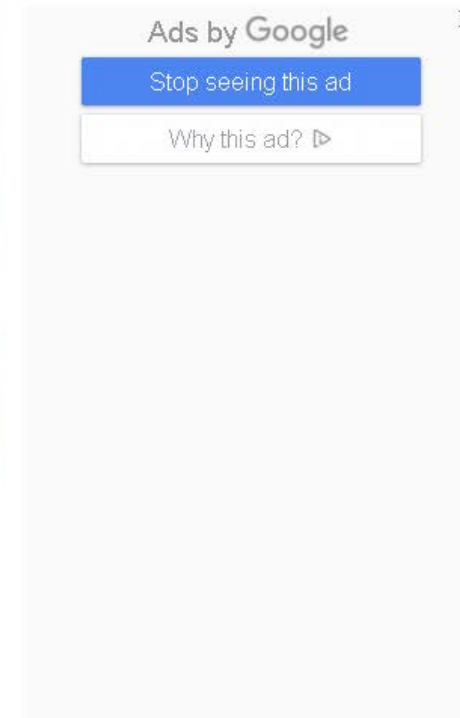
☐ X



# TIME Online, 15 June 2017

U.S. • OREGON

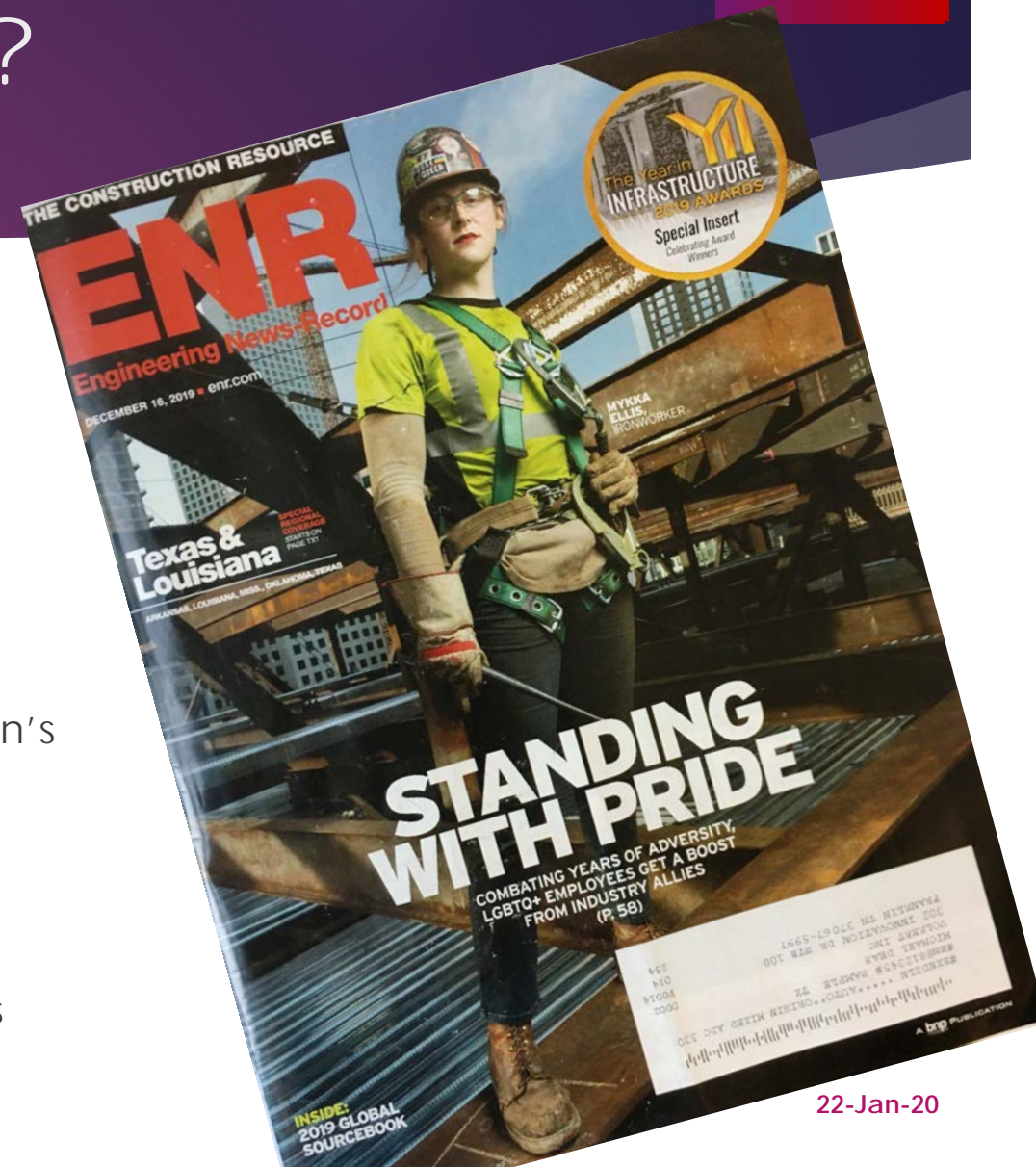
## M, F or X: Oregon Becomes First State to Allow Non-Binary Gender Marker on Drivers Licenses





# What's the phenomenon?

- ▶ BIOLOGICAL/MEDICAL
  - ▶ Sex reassignment / realignment
  - ▶ No longer use "sex change"
- ▶ SOCIOLOGICAL/CULTURAL
  - ▶ Gender affirmation / confirmation
  - ▶ Driven by gender dysphoria / incongruence, i.e. a person's perceived mismatch between sex and gender
- ▶ LEGAL/ECONOMIC/LINGUISTIC
  - ▶ Expanding scope of diversity and inclusion
  - ▶ Demanding new words and new definitions of old words



# What's the history?

- ▶ Not "modernity" – sexual diversity as old as humankind
- ▶ Shift in Western thought regarding "identity"
  - ▶ 1600s – My identity comes from what I DO
    - ▶ *"We come from a long line of blacksmiths"*
  - ▶ 1800s – My identity comes from what I ACHIEVE
    - ▶ *"Anyone can be president"*
  - ▶ 2000s – My identity comes from what I FEEL
    - ▶ *"Be your authentic self"*







“In the United States, 11 million adults identify as LGBTQ+... 9.8 million LGBTQ+ adults are part of the U.S. work force.”

NATALIE TOMKO, CATALYST MAGAZINE, VOL 1. ISSUE 2 – 2019

*As communicators, we'd better understand  
WHAT we're talking about  
and WHO we're talking to.*





# New definitions

Let's start with  
the basics:

The community  
abbreviation

**L**ESBIAN  
**G**AY  
**B**ISEXUAL  
**T**RANSGENDER  
**Q**UEER  
+  
**I**NTERSEX  
**A**SEXUAL



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22-Jan-20



# LESBIAN & GAY

## CURRENT TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ **Lesbian** – female sex or gender attracted to female sex or gender
- ▶ **Gay**
  - ▶ Male sex or gender attracted to male sex or gender
  - ▶ Broadly: same-sex attraction (male or female)
  - ▶ No gender incongruence – these identities are sexual orientation

## OUTDATED TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ “Homosexual” - never as noun
  - ▶ However: *homosexuality* as umbrella term
- ▶ “Sexual preference” (choice)
- ▶ “Alternative lifestyle” (choice)
- ▶ “A gay” or “the gays” (objectifying)
- ▶ “Effeminate” (for a man)
- ▶ “Butch” (for a woman)



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# BISEXUAL & ASEXUAL

## CURRENT TERMINOLOGY

### ▶ **Bisexual**

- ▶ Either sex attracted to either sex
- ▶ *Bi* is acceptable
- ▶ Not the same as *bigender* (later)

### ▶ **Asexual**

- ▶ May identify as “neither”
- ▶ No attraction to either sex
- ▶ Not the same as *agender* (later)

## INCORRECT TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ *Bisexual* ≠ *intersex*
- ▶ *Asexual* ≠ “celibate”

# TRANSGENDER

## CURRENT TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ Persons whose gender (identity) does not match sex (birth)
- ▶ Does NOT mean sex reassignment has taken place
- ▶ *Trans* acceptable (can also imply “in transition”)
- ▶ NOT same as *homo-/heterosexual* (see *queer*)
- ▶ Transgender man = identifies as a man (regardless of sex)

## OUTDATED TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ “Tranny”
- ▶ “Transsexual” – implies reassignment or realignment
- ▶ NOT the same as *cross-dresser* or *drag performer* (see later)



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# QUEER

- ▶ Q used to mean "Questioning," now *Queer*
- ▶ Term popularized by Netflix series; no longer derisive (except in context as a slur)
- ▶ Broadly referring to "not heterosexual" and "not cisgender" (later)
- ▶ Still retains a pejorative sense in literature\*
  - ▶ Worthless, counterfeit (money)
  - ▶ Questionable, suspicious (activity)
  - ▶ Eccentric, unconventional (manners)
  - ▶ Obsessive or mildly insane (behavior)



\*SOURCE: Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2020

# INTERSEX

## CURRENT TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ Possessing genitalia/chromosomes of both male and female
- ▶ Attraction may be either, both, neither sex
- ▶ Gender identification usually male or female but could be genderfluid (later)

## OUTDATED TERMINOLOGY

- ▶ “Hermaphrodite”



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# What's the "+" for?



- ▶ Intersex and Asexual (not usually appearing in the LGBTQ abbreviation)
  - ▶ LGBTQ+ = LGBTQIA
- ▶ The A sometimes referred to as "ally" (not a protected class)

- ▶ More terms under "+"
  - ▶ **Two-spirited** (often signaled as "2+")
  - ▶ **Bigender** – person who identifies as a combination of genders
  - ▶ **Agender/Genderless** – person who identifies as no gender at all (already used in AI voices)
  - ▶ **Gender-nonconforming** (also **genderqueer**)
    - ▶ Behavior not according to typical gender expectations
    - ▶ not synonymous with *transgender*
    - ▶ Same as *nonbinary*
  - ▶ **Genderfluid** – expressing nonfixed gender; fluctuates over time



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# New words, new meanings

- ▶ **Cisgender** – persons who are not transgender
  - ▶ ≠ *heterosexual* (refers to orientation)
  - ▶ ≠ “normal” (implied abnormality)
- ▶ **Deadname** – previous name of a transgender person prior to transition
- ▶ **Stonewall**
  - ▶ Reference to **Stonewall Inn**, gay tavern in Greenwich Village (Manhattan), scene of uprising by the gay community in New York on 28 June 1969 in response to a police raid; catalyst of the LGBTQ+ rights movement
  - ▶ Nickname of Confederate General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, who resisted enemy forces “like a stone wall”
  - ▶ (v., lowercase) To obstruct a process or procedure



# New usage

- ▶ **Fiancé/husband** and **fiancée/wife** – the first always a man and the second always a woman planning to enter or already in a legal marriage
  - ▶ Gay – “I now pronounce you husband and husband”
  - ▶ Lesbian – “I now pronounce you wife and wife”
  - ▶ Transgender – depending on identity
- ▶ **Pride** – when capitalized, referring to events or organizations for LGBTQ+ communities
  - ▶ When lowercased, must be used with a modifier to denote LGBTQ+ association: *gay pride*
- ▶ **Transition** – the process a transgender person undergoes to match gender identity
  - ▶ May or may not involve reassignment/realignment



# Ones you thought you knew

- ▶ **Closet(ed) (v.)** – a person's willing choice not to disclose gender identity or sexual orientation
- ▶ **Outed (v.)** – to disclose gender identity or sexual orientation of another against their will
- ▶ **Straight** – cisgender and heterosexual, opposite of *queer*
- ▶ **Cross-dresser** – person who wears clothing associated with a different gender
  - ▶ Replaces "transvestite"
  - ▶ May be part of transition (identity issue in earnest)
- ▶ **Drag performer / queen / king** – entertainers dressing and acting in a different gender
  - ▶ Queen – gay (man) costumed as woman; king – lesbian (woman) costumed as man
  - ▶ Not typically an gender identity issue, but can be therapeutic
  - ▶ Also called *impersonator*





# And finally... the pronouns

- ▶ *They/them/their* acceptable as a singular (gender-neutral) pronoun, but rewording better
  - ▶ Taylor said *they* need a new car.
  - ▶ Blaine felt that the event excluded *them*.
  - ▶ The employee, fearing for *their* safety, was hesitant to report the incident.
  - ▶ Dana did not make *themselves* available for comment.
- ▶ AP does not recognize gender-neutral pronouns "xe," "ze," "shim," or "thon"
- ▶ Preferred Gender Pronouns: third-person placed after the name (Mike Deas, he/him/his)
- ▶ Mr., Ms., Mx.
  - ▶ Mx. used by the person wishing not to identify
  - ▶ Mrs. all but abandoned; Miss only for underage girls identifying as females

**You heard it  
here first,  
folks!**

# Where could all this lead?

## GENDER NEUTRALITY

- ▶ Neutrality → homogeneity
- ▶ No distinction
- ▶ Nondifferentiation
- ▶ Defeats diversity!



## GENDER EQUALITY!

- ▶ Equality → parity, equity
- ▶ No favoritism
- ▶ Nondiscrimination
- ▶ Promotes diversity

*All the strides made by women in workplace to shatter glass ceilings can falter if language and policy erase any distinction between male and female; make sure you really mean “diversity” and “inclusion”*

# What's a communicator to do?

- ▶ Match sensitivity with sensibility
  - ▶ Policies and language have to help the business function
- ▶ Balance corporate accommodation with employee cooperation
  - ▶ Not everything insensitive is "hate"
- ▶ Build a fairness culture based on opportunity and achievement, not identity
  - ▶ Educate employees on the value of playing to strengths
- ▶ Have the courageous conversation with Legal & HR, and set communication standards
  - ▶ A style guide is *not* such a bad idea
- ▶ Be true to your corporate culture
  - ▶ "Thou canst not then be false to anyone"





# Let's Grow By Tackling Questions+!

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