

JUNE NEWSLETTER

PRIDE MONTH

Office of Equity & Inclusion

This Month's Issue:
Pride Month
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Happy Pride!

The “Q” in LGBTQ+

By Tori from the Office of E&I

Despite it being right there in the acronym, recently there’s been some debate over whether using the term “queer” is offensive. It’s believed the first use of the word “queer” in relation to one’s identity occurred during Oscar Wilde’s trial in which he was imprisoned for his homosexuality. Within the following twenty years, the term became a slur for anyone under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. However, nowadays, many of us embrace the term and use it as shorthand for our nuanced intersecting identities.

How did that happen?

In the late 1980s, during the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, activist groups began reclaiming the word as a form of resistance to the era’s harsh anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Protest chants like “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!” solidified reclamation efforts.





The “Q” in LGBTQ+ cont... So why the debate?

Many of us who came of age after the word “queer” was reclaimed as a positive identity have never experienced it as a derogatory slur. For instance, I was born in 1979. When I was growing up here in the PNW, it was a lot more common for me to hear people use the word “gay” as a slur directed at me or as a way to connote distaste for something. Because of these negative experiences, I feel a lot more comfortable using the word “queer” to express my identity. As someone who is non-binary and pan, I especially love how inclusive the term is because, unlike “gay” or “lesbian,” it isn’t attached to a specific gender or sexuality. But I also understand that many people from older generations still have a complicated history with the term.



The Bottom Line

How we choose to describe ourselves is deeply personal. Some of us might be embracing reclamation of the word “queer” while some of us might still find it triggering. So if you want to play it safe, don’t use “queer” to describe someone else unless you know that’s how they openly identify.



Juneteenth

Juneteenth marks the day that Major General Gordon Granger issued an order on June 19th, 1865 that proclaimed that all enslaved African American people would be freed in the state of Texas. Juneteenth is a combination of the words June and the "teenth" part of nineteenth. It officially became a federal holiday on June 17th, 2021. While President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, 1863, it did not actually free all enslaved people. General Granger's presence in Texas was what gave the final push to end slavery in the state. It wasn't until the ratification of the 13th amendment that slavery was abolished nationwide. Even though it wasn't until 2021 that this day became a national holiday, Juneteenth as a holiday gained more widespread popularity in the 1960's. Texas became the first state to officially recognize the holiday in the 1980s. (Nix, 2023)



Dragon Boat Festival

Dragon Boat Festival is a traditional festival in Chinese culture. It occurs on the fifth day of the fifth month in Chinese calendar. It is a festival to get rid of misfortune but it is also known as a commemoration day for poet Qu Yuan who died by drowning in the Miluo River. During the holiday, people will eat a traditional sticky rice dumpling called Zongzi and hold dragon boat races. They also have many traditions to driving away bad luck, like cleaning and making sure poisonous pests stay away. (Taiwan Today, 1967)

A red square stamp with white Chinese characters '端午' (Duanwu).