

# LGBTQ+ History of Delaware: We Have Always Been Here

## Glossary of Terms

The following terms and phrases appear throughout or are relevant to stories included in the “LGBTQ+ History of Delaware: We Have Always Been Here” project, which is supported by the Delaware Department of State and the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. This is not a complete list of terms, but was compiled as an additional resource to help readers navigate stories about Delaware’s queer people, places, and objects of importance.

As with many marginalized and minority communities, language plays an important role. Certain words and phrases can hold different meanings and interpretations based on how and by whom they are used. It is always best to ask individuals how they prefer to be addressed, and ask questions when in doubt. Please refer to the project’s additional list of resources to learn more.

**AIDS** /“aydz”/: An acronym for **acquired immunodeficiency syndrome**, which is the most severe stage of HIV (Stage 3).

- People with AIDS have badly damaged immune systems. They are susceptible to an increasing number of severe illnesses, called opportunistic infections (OIs).
- People receive an AIDS diagnosis when they develop certain OIs, or when their CD4 cell count drops below 200 cells per milliliter of blood.<sup>3</sup>

**Ally** /“AL-eye”/: A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).<sup>2</sup>

**Androgyny** /“an-jrah-jun-ee”/: A gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity. As an adjective (**androgynous**), the term is occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy, generally in the form “androgyne.”<sup>5</sup>

**Aromantic** /“ay-ro-man-tic”/: An adjective describing someone who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/behavior. Aromanticism exists on a continuum from people who experience no romantic attraction or have any desire for romantic activities, to those who experience low levels, or romantic attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels. Sometimes abbreviated to “aro” (pronounced like “arrow”).<sup>5</sup>

**Asexual** /“ay-sek-shoo-uhl”/: An adjective describing someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions.

Many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels. Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”<sup>5</sup>

**Biracial** /"bai-ray-shl"/: Of, relating to, or involving members of two races.<sup>6</sup>

**Biromantic** /"bai-row-man-tuhk"/: Noting or relating to a person who is romantically attracted to people of more than one gender, sometimes understood to include attraction to one's own gender and at least one other gender.<sup>15</sup>

**Bisexual** (Bi, Bi+) /"bai-sek-shoo-uhl"/: An adjective used to describe a person who has the potential to be physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree. The bi in bisexual refers to genders the same as and different from one's own gender.<sup>1</sup>

**Boston Marriage** /"baa-stn" "meh-ruhj"/: A long-term, loving relationship between two women.<sup>6</sup>

**Cisgender** /"sis-jen-dr"/: When someone's personal identity and gender expression correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth. The word can also be shortened to “cis,” as in “cis female” or “cis male.”<sup>7</sup>

**Civil Union** /"si-vl" "yoon-unh"/: Historically used in the United States to describe state-based relationship recognition for same-sex couples that offered some or all of the state rights, protections, and responsibilities of marriage, but none of the federal rights.<sup>1</sup>

**Closeted** /"klaa-zuh-tuhd"/: An adjective describing an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one's safety, peer or family rejection, or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. (See **coming out**.)<sup>5</sup>

**Coming Out** /"kuh-muhng" "aut"/: The process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one's own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself); or, as a verb, the process by which one shares one's sexuality or gender identity with others.<sup>5</sup>

**Conversion Therapy** /"kuhn-vur-zhn" "teh-ruh-pee"/: The use of any various methods (such as [aversive](#) stimulation or religious counseling) in an attempt to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual or to change a person's [gender identity](#) to correspond to the sex the person has or was identified as having at birth. *NOTE: Conversion therapy is generally regarded as having no scientific basis and as being both ineffective and harmful.*<sup>6</sup>

**Cross Dressing (or Cross Dresser)** /"kraas" "dreh-suhng"/: Wearing the clothing styles of another gender/sex.<sup>5</sup>

**Discrimination** /"duh-skri-muh-nay-shn"/: Favoring one group over another in thoughts and actions (both conscious and unconscious biases). It's the unjust treatment of people based on differing identities.<sup>7</sup>

**Diversity** /"duh-vur-suh-tee"/: Socially, it refers to the wide range of identities and broadly includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.<sup>12</sup>

**Domestic Partnership** /"duh-meh-stuhk" "paart-nr-shuhp"/: The civil or legal recognition of a committed relationship between two people that sometimes includes limited legal protections.<sup>1</sup>

**Drag** /"dræg"/: A form of entertainment in which performers caricature or challenge gender stereotypes (as by dressing in clothing that is stereotypical of another gender, by using exaggeratedly gendered mannerisms, or by combining elements of stereotypically male and female dress) and often wear elaborate or outrageous costumes.<sup>6</sup>

**Equality** /"ee-kwaa-luh-tee"/: The quality or state of being [equal](#), which means, in part, being of the same quality, nature, or status.<sup>6</sup>

**Equity** /"eh-kwuh-tee"/: The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is necessary to provide equal opportunities to all groups.<sup>12</sup>

**Feminism** /"feh-muh-ni-zm"/: The belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests.<sup>6</sup>

**Gay** /"geɪ"/: To solely (or primarily) be attracted to some members of the same gender. The term can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women. It can also be used as an umbrella term to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who is not straight.<sup>5</sup>

**Gender** /"jen-dr"/: The social construction or performance of one's role in a society based on the dominant culture's creation of what is masculine and feminine. A person's gender is not defined by their sex.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender-Affirming Care** /"jen-dr"-uh-fur-muhng" "kair"/: Gender-affirming care encompasses a range of social, psychological, behavioral, and medical interventions "designed to support and affirm an individual's gender identity" when it conflicts with the gender they were assigned at birth.<sup>14</sup>

**Gender Dysphoria** /"jen-dr" "duh-sfaw-ree-uh"/: Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender Expression** /"jen-dr" "uhk-spreh-shn"/: The external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics, or voice, which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being masculine or feminine.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender Identity** /"jen-dr" "ai-den-tuh-tee"/: The internal perception of one's gender and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Often conflated with biological sex or sex assigned at birth.<sup>5</sup>

**Gender Non-Conforming** /"jen-dr" "nɑ:n-" "kuhn-for-muhng"/: A gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (such as a masculine woman or feminine man); or, a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as "GNC."<sup>5</sup>

**Gender Normative** (also **gender norms** or **gender straight**) /"jen-dr" "nor-muh-tiv"/: A descriptor for someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society's gender-based expectations.<sup>5</sup>

**Heteronormativity** /"het-er-uh-nawr-muh-tiv-ity"/: The assumption—in individuals and/or in institutions—that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. This leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities, for example, like the response of asking for a woman's husband's name when learning that a woman is married. Heteronormativity also leads people to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.<sup>5</sup>

**Heterosexual (Straight)** /"heh-tr-uh-sek-shuh-wi"/: An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to people of a sex different than their own.<sup>1</sup>

**HIV** /"ay"+"chy"+"vee"/: An abbreviation for the human immunodeficiency virus, which is a virus that attacks the body's immune system. If HIV is not treated, it can lead to AIDS.

- There is currently no effective cure. Once people get HIV, they have it for life. But with proper medical care, HIV can be controlled. People with HIV who get effective HIV treatment can live long, healthy lives and protect their partners.<sup>3</sup>

**Homophobia** /"how-muh-fow-bee-uh"/: An umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that a person may have toward LGBTQ+ people. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ+. The adjective form, **homophobic** is used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people.<sup>5</sup>

**Homosexual** /"how-muh-sek-shoo-uhl"/: This term can be used as an adjective or a noun to describe a person who is primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender.

Historically, homosexual was sometimes used disparagingly as a medical diagnosis but it has been reclaimed and used often by many in the community.<sup>5</sup>

**Inclusion** /"uhn-kloo-zhn"/: The act of creating an environment in which any individual or group will be welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces and respects differences.<sup>12</sup>

**Intersex** /"in-tr-seks"/: Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of differences among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.<sup>2</sup>

- Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.<sup>5</sup>

**Intersectionality** /"ɪntəˌsɛkʃəˈnæləti"/: The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects.<sup>10</sup>

**Kink Community** /"kingk" "kuh-myoo-nuh-tee"/: A community that has branches in the LGBTQ+ community based around kink, which is a term that covers BDSM (bondage and discipline, domination and submission), sadomasochism, kinky sex, dominance and submission, role play, sex games, fantasy, fetish, and other erotic expressions.<sup>13</sup>

**LGBTQ+** /"el-gee-bee-tee-kew" "pluhs"/: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community.<sup>2</sup>

**Lesbian** /"lez-bee-uhn"/: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.<sup>2</sup>

**Non-binary** /"na:n-" "bai-neh-ree"/: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer, or gender-fluid.<sup>2</sup>

**Microaggressions** /"mai-krow-uh-greh-shnz"/: Types of everyday discrimination that are typically subtle—or even well-intentioned in some cases—and are most often experienced by

people of color, LGBTQ+ people, women, religious minorities, people with disabilities, and people of marginalized groups. In contrast to outright assaults and hate crimes, microaggressions are typically more covert or innocuous in nature.<sup>11</sup>

**Pagan** /"pay-guhn"/: A person who practices a contemporary form of [paganism](#) or a follower of a polytheistic religion <sup>6</sup>

**Pansexual** /"pan-sek-shoo-uhl"/: A descriptor for someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.<sup>2</sup>

**Prejudice** /"preh-juh-duhs"/: A preconceived judgment or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment and can be rooted in stereotypes, that denies the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized.<sup>12</sup>

**Privilege** /"pri-vuh-luhj"/: The benefits, advantages, and power given due to the social identities shared with the dominant culture. Privileges are granted and favored by institutions and social norms that were created by the dominant culture in power.<sup>7</sup>

**Progressive** /"pruh-greh-suhv"/: Making use of or being interested in new ideas, findings, or opportunities.<sup>6</sup>

**Pronouns** /"prow-nownz"/: The third-person [personal pronouns](#) (such as *he/him*, *she/her*, and *they/them*) that a person goes by.<sup>6</sup>

**Queer** /"kweer"/: A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or people who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many facets of the LGBTQ+ movement.<sup>2</sup>

**Questioning** /"kwes-chuh-nuhng"/: A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>2</sup>

**Racism** /"ray-suh-zm"/: A belief that [race](#) is a fundamental [determinant](#) of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race, and/or the [systemic](#) oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.<sup>6</sup>

**Sapphic** /"sa-fuhk"/: An umbrella term that unites lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and many other communities. It's also connected to the acronym WLW (woman-loving woman), but sapphic does include non-binary people and also is used to describe a relationship between two women. Sapphic also refers to anything related to the Greek poet Sappho, who wrote about her attraction to "lesbians" from the island of Lesbos.<sup>8</sup>

**Segregation** /"seh-gruh-gay-shn"/: The separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to society, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means.<sup>6</sup>

**Sex** /"seks"/: The physical traits a person is born with or that develop that people typically think of as "sex characteristics."<sup>4</sup>

**Sexual Orientation** /"sek-shoo-uhl" "aw-ree-en-tay-shn"/: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. (Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity).<sup>2</sup>

**Sexuality** /"sek-shoo-a-luh-tee"/: The quality or state of being [sexual](#), or the expression of sexual receptivity or interest, especially when excessive.<sup>6</sup>

**Sexism** /"sek-si-zm"/: A type of prejudice or discrimination based on sex, especially in the form of discrimination against women; also the behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex.<sup>6</sup>

**Sodomy** /"saa-duh-mee"/: An antiquated phrase describing anal or oral copulation with another person, especially with a member of the same sex. Historically, the term has been used in reference to culturally stigmatized sex acts.<sup>6</sup>

**Sodomy Laws** /"saa-duh-mee" "laaz"/: Historically used to selectively persecute gay people, state laws often referred to as "sodomy laws" were ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). "Sodomy" should never be used to describe relationships or sexual orientation.<sup>1</sup>

**Stereotype** /"steh-ree-ow-tipe"/: A common, oversimplified, and/or distorted view of a person, thing, group, etc. that is not based on any fact.<sup>7</sup>

**Transgender** /"tranz-jen-dr"/: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.<sup>2</sup>

**Transitioning** /"tran-zi-shuh-nuhng"/: A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns; medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries; and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes.<sup>2</sup>

**Two-Spirit** /"too"-spee-ruht"/: An adjective used by some Indigenous and First Nations people as an umbrella term to describe people who are not straight and/or cisgender. Many Indigenous communities have specific words in their language to describe these experiences, but some do not. This term should not be used to describe people who are not Indigenous. Only use it for an Indigenous person if they use it to describe themselves.<sup>1</sup>

**Wiccan** /"wik-ehn"/: Followers of the largest, modern pagan, or neo-pagan, religion. These followers typically identify as witches and draw inspiration largely from the pre-Christian religions of Europe.<sup>9</sup>

#### Sources:

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