

allsorts youth project

Unboxing Our Identities



A resource for young people
who are LGBT+ and People
of Colour and/or Allies

**“Are you black? Or are you white?
Why do you look like that?
Why can’t you just look normal?”**

**“Are you a girl? Or are you a boy?
Why do you look like that?
Why can’t you just be normal?”**

**“Do you like girls? Or do you like boys?
Why do you look like that?
Why can’t you just be normal?”**

Why do we need this resource?

Historically, people of colour (POC) who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT+) have often been erased from queer narratives, marginalised, and faced racism in LGBT and queer spaces, despite having often fought at the front of queer liberation movement.

Subsequent to lifetimes of systematic oppression, those of us with LGBT+ and POC identities can often feel conflicted between different aspects of ourselves. It's easy to internalise the devaluation that has been placed upon us by society, and see ourselves as less than we truly are.



**No pride for some of us
without liberation for all of us**



Marsha P Johnson

In this resource we want to show that being POC doesn't mean you have to be any less LGBT+ and/or queer, and vice versa. Each label, or 'box', is only one part of who we are - in this resource we want to 'unbox our identities', and showcase the richness and beauty in each of our unique selves.

If you're a young person who identifies as LGBT+ and POC, then please join us on the journey. This one's for you. Please know, you are valid. You are loved.

In power and solidarity, Allsorts QTIPOC* inclusion.

*QTIPOC refers to people who are Queer, Trans, Intersex, People of Colour



I came to England at the age of 8 and we were the only family of Colour in the whole town. At school I had girl crushes and boy crushes – it was just normal for me.

As I grew up I never really felt comfortable with the kind of labels that were around at the time. I especially really did not like “bisexual” which always felt to me like it belonged in the “half-caste” box i.e in the bin or on a bonfire. But I respect people who have different feelings about words.

I used to just say I was “sexual” if people asked me. Now my own kids are teenagers and I love their fluid attitudes to gender and sexuality. It feels like we have way more ways to be comfortable in ourselves.

Non binary, Queer, Gender Queer – these are all words I feel really happy using to describe myself. But my very favourite is QTIPOC. How cute is that?



Who are we?

POC communities are not all the same. The term POC itself simplifies our complexity and diminishes our numbers. The fact is that we are defined and influenced by a number of identifying factors. We are different ethnicities, speak many languages, come from a variety of cultures, practice different religions and many of us are LGBT+. We piece together the separate pieces of our lives to make our own unique story.

Why are we bringing race into it?

Stonewall, the UK's leading charity for lesbian, gay, bi and trans equality, has released new research that shows...

51% of BAME LGBT+ people have experienced racism in LGBT+ spaces*

Individuals with intersecting identities are most vulnerable.

People who are trans, women, and POC are most likely to be victimised in society.*

*Stonewall, LGBT In Britain: Home & Communities Report, 2018



In white LGBTQ spaces I didn't feel like I could be fully myself as a mixed black bisexual femme, that I would need to leave my blackness at the door, and then in black mainstream spaces I would often hide my sexuality. It made me feel lonely, wondering 'can I be me?' and deep down I wondered if I was normal or even lovable.



What is Intersectionality?

Intersectionality is a term coined by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989.

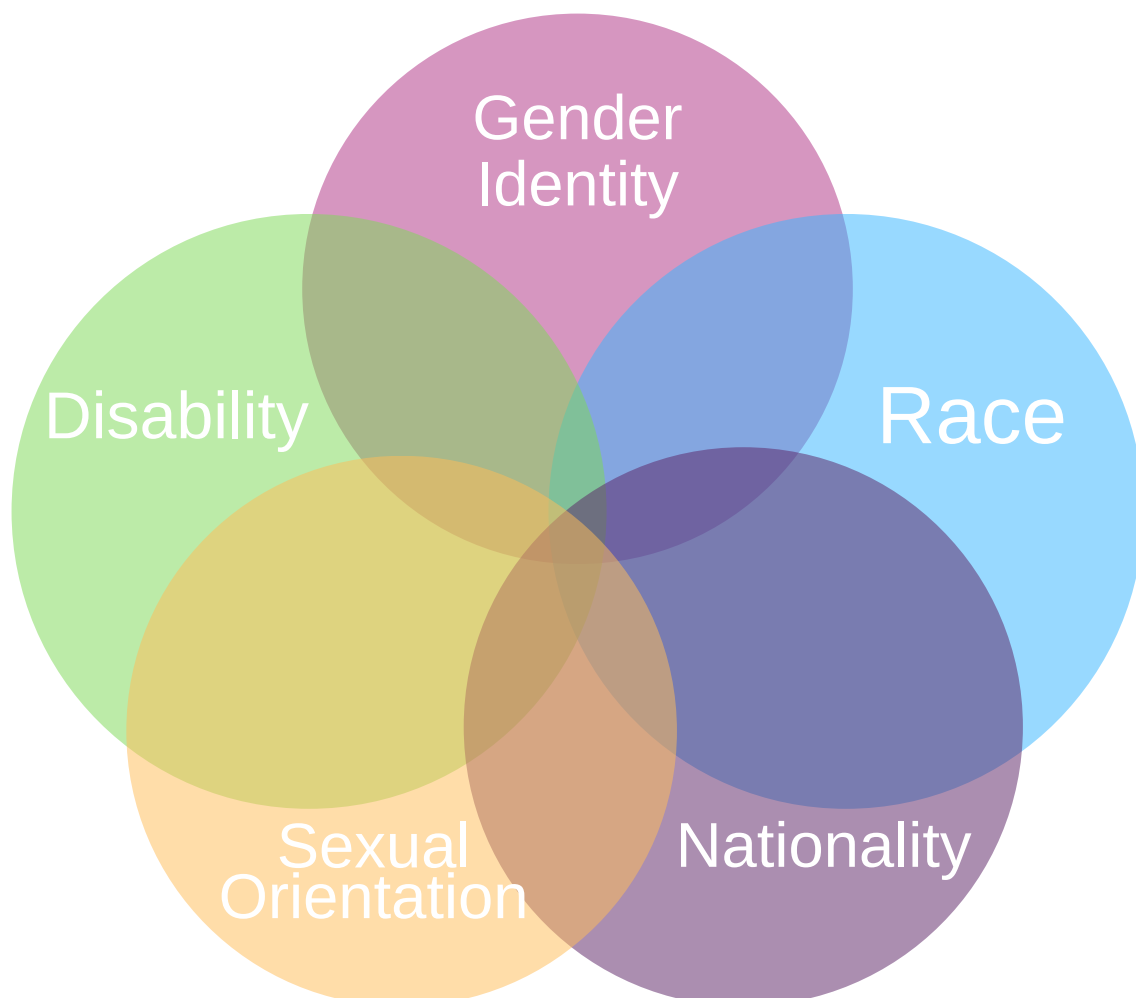
Intersectionality can relate to all aspects of a person's identity including race, social class, sexuality, whether you are cis or trans, ability and disability, age and other identities



Intersectionality is the understanding that multiple disadvantages and inequalities can compound to create barriers.



Kimberlé Crenshaw



All oppression is connected

It is important to understand that people's identities are not separate and always intersect.

A woman who is black, disabled and lesbian will face not only sexism, but discrimination in the form of racism, ableism and homophobia.

A trans man who is Asian and Muslim will need to navigate a world of transphobia, racism, and Islamophobia.

Intersectional thinking is appreciating individual oppressions do exist, but understand that they do change the experience of the individual when overlapped.



There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.



Audre Lorde



It's important to me to be a visible example of the existence of those intersections for other people who share them. I felt so alone, especially when my membership of one identity seemed to be at odds with my belonging to another, and especially when I had very little meaningful engagement with or connection to other Afro-Caribbean people, let alone queer people. Being a black circle adrift in a sea of white squares, and constantly having those identities questioned prevented me from being able to engage in and process them.



What is White Supremacy?

White supremacy is the racist belief that white people are superior to people from other races and should therefore dominate over them.

Many of us have heard of hate groups such as Neo-Nazis and the KKK (Ku Klux Klan). We may have learned about racist systems of segregation such as apartheid in South Africa, Jim Crow laws in the United States and the White Australia policy in Australia.

However, in the UK we tend to glorify the rise of the British Empire and often overlook the shameful aspects of our history. Particularly that inflicted on people of colour around the world. Britain's colonial past includes extensive use of slaves, stealing land from native people, the extermination of culture and genocide.

The Britain we know today is built on our colonial past and racism runs through the fabric of our society. British rule has also left its legacy in the form of homophobic laws that are still in place in many countries. Having a huge impact on those cultures and making it complicated for LGBT+ POC to come out and live authentically.

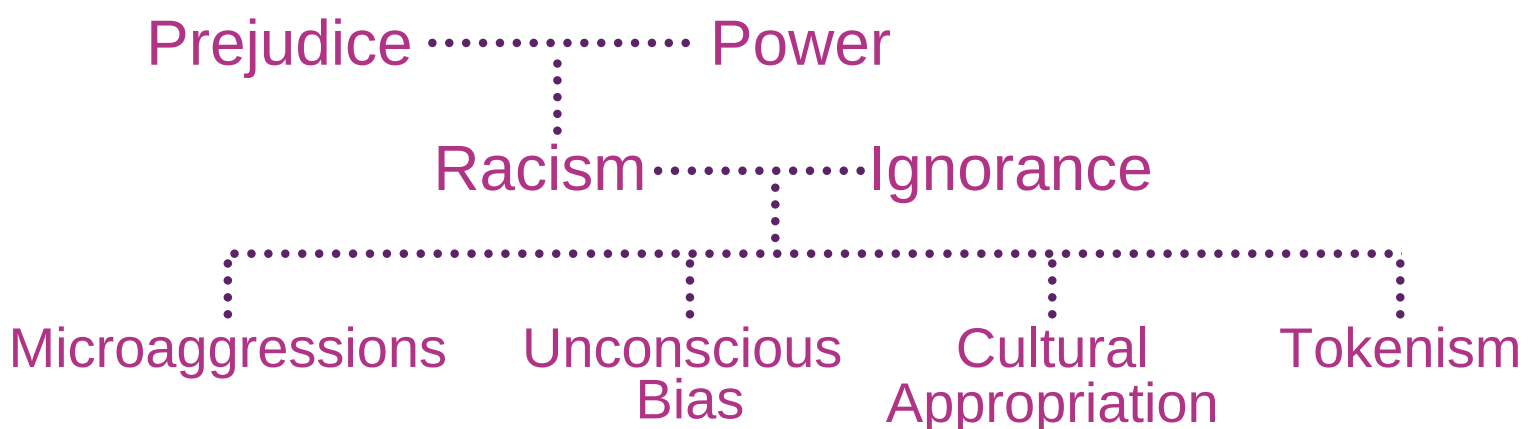
We may think that this was a long time ago, but the UK's first legislation to address racial discrimination wasn't until the 1960s.

The Race Relations Act 1965 banned racial discrimination in public places and made the promotion of hatred on the grounds of 'colour, race, or ethnic or national origins' an offence.

Over time there has been culture change in the UK in regards to racism. Decades ago, racism was more likely to be shown publicly. Racial slurs and physical violence against people of colour were tolerated in society.

Although actions like these are happening less and are now more frowned upon in society, racism is still alive and well. You could say it's evolved. A person who would never dream of using a racial slur still might engage in microaggressions or tokenism and not see their link to racism.

Consider that racism is created by prejudice and power. Microaggressions, unconscious bias, cultural appropriation and tokenism are created by racism and ignorance. The motivation is still the same even if the expression is different.*



*Tree and description inspired by Ted Talk - No. You Cannot Touch My Hair! | Mena Fombo



I've begun to decolonize my understandings of gender and sexuality, learning more about our histories – that we have always existed! I've also re-connected with my spirituality and I feel that my queerness is a part of my spiritual expression. In indigenous and pre-colonial cultures all around the world trans, gender non-conforming and queer folx have been considered sacred for millennia. We are loved and cherished and we are sacred.

We can be our full selves,
and it is glorious.



Microaggressions

Are 'everyday' slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostility based on someone's marginalised group membership.*

Microaggressions significantly affect the people they are targeting by reinforcing inequality in power and leaving people feeling alienated, shamed and invalid.

Examples include:

- Touching the hair or asking to touch the hair of a person of colour
- Asking a person where they are *REALLY* from
- Calling a person exotic
- Shortening or anglicising a person's name without permission, because you are unable to pronounce it
- Asking a person to translate a language on your assumption on where they are from
- Telling someone they are attractive for someone who is... (fill in ethnicity/race)
- Comparing someone's skin complexion to that of food. E.g. coffee or chocolate

* [Credit: racialequalitytools.org](https://www.racialequalitytools.org)

Unconscious bias (or implicit bias)

Showing preference or prejudice in favour of or against a person or group which usually leads unfairly to them being or rewarded or penalised.

Unconscious bias can lead to decisions that can have a serious impact on the lives of others. Particularly if the individuals making the decision are in a position of power.

Examples include:

- Individuals with Anglo sounding names being called for job interviews over those with diverse names of other origins.
- PoC students being directed away from certain courses, as it is assumed they are not capable.
- Medical patients only being screened for diseases or conditions associated with their ethnic background.
- Assuming a person will be good/not good at something because of their ethnic background (e.g. all black people are good at basketball).
- Assuming a person will only be interested in certain roles because of their ethnic background.

Cultural Appropriation

Theft and commodification of cultural elements for one's own use — often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture.*

Cultural appropriation can perpetuate racial stereotypes, allow privileged people to profit from oppressed people and play down historical oppression.

Examples include:

- Dressing up as individuals of marginalised culture, including painting your face. E.g. blackface, geisha or day of the dead.
- Wearing hairstyles and accessories not associated with your ethnic background or culture. e.g. dreadlocks, bindis, native american headdresses
- Serving food in your restaurant and calling it authentic when you are not from that culture.

* [Credit: racialequalitytools.org](http://racialequalitytools.org)

Tokenism

The practice of making only a symbolic effort by recruiting a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of equality within a workforce.

Tokenism gives those in power the appearance of being the champions of diversity, when they are really using POC as props.

Examples include:

- Only hiring POC for POC projects.
- Paid staff, roles of power are filled by white individuals and voluntary roles/services with POC.
- POC are used as the face or representation of the organisation but they have no power or authority.
- Celebrating black history only in black history month.
- Hiring one POC to be the voice of all non white communities



For me, the visible otherness of my skin is a beacon that attracts attention to the otherness of the rest of my identities.

I have found that when people think they can ask “but where are you from REALLY”, they also think they have permission to ask what genitals I have, and who I fancy.”



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Tips on How to be an Ally to the QTIPOC Communities

Check

Check your privilege. Acknowledge discomfort - It's a time to reflect and investigate... Checking our privilege is hard - especially for people who are already marginalised and discriminated against. It's not about saying that you've had an easy life, it's about recognising the struggles of other certain groups of people, and using your power to support them.

Listen

Listen to QTIPOC with openness and a willingness to feel uncomfortable about the realities of our own power and privilege. If you get 'called out' for not being as inclusive as you can be, consider it being 'called in' to examine your own bias - we all have biases, but we also have the ability to reflect on them, and learn from them.

Showcase

It's time to celebrate the importance of role models in all areas of life such as in our local community, in the media and government. It's important that, wherever possible, QTIPOC role models are given an appropriate platform and are meaningfully celebrated. Get tickets to those QTIPOC shows and events, and enjoy the insight into someone else's experience.

Education

It's important to be proactive. It isn't up to LGBT+ POC to educate you on their issues and experiences. There is an abundance of information available for those who are or are looking to become allies. Make the effort.

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(continued)

Don't Assume

Don't assume that by being in a marginalised group you automatically know what LGBT POC have experienced. Equally don't compare circumstances, oppression or hardship.

Support

Challenge racism. 'Lift as you climb' - When you raise your voice, raise the voices of those in the community who face additional marginalisation. Stand up for equality. Challenge your friends, family and other people around you on their racism. Do this even when a POC is not in the room.

Keep Trying

It's not going to happen overnight. Mistakes will be made. People will not jump in the air that you have now announced that you are an ally. What is important is that you do not give up.

 **If we desire a society without discrimination, then we must not discriminate against anyone in the process of building this society**

Bayard Rustin





When I was 11, I was one of the only PoC in my school. I remember being confronted by 3 young white people my own age. The ring-leader was making comments about my hair, and asked if my skin was brown because I had eaten too much chocolate or maybe I had fallen in the mud. The other two just laughed and said you can't say that.

At that moment it wasn't the person who was making the comments who I was angry at; it was the other two who didn't take the opportunity to stand up for me. Why didn't they? They could have made all the difference in the world.

That was the point that I realised how difficult my life would be if they knew I was queer. So if I was going to make my life easier I was going to have to hide something and I couldn't hide my colour.



Terminology

QTIPOC

Queer, trans, and intersex people of colour.

BAME

black, Asian, and/or minority ethnic

Race

A political construct created to concentrate power with white people and legitimise dominance over non-white people.*

Power

unequally distributed access and control over resources.*

Whiteness

a racialised social identity that is considered normative and grants those who possess it power and influence (socially, economically, politically).*

Prejudice

Unjustifiable, usually negative, attitudes towards a group of people.*

Privilege

Unearned social power granted by formal and informal institutions- typically invisible to those who have it.*

Intersectionality

a way to view the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and oppression.*

Microaggressions

‘Everyday’ slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostility based on someone’s marginalised group membership.*

Cultural appropriation

Theft and commodification of cultural elements for one’s own use — often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture.*

* Credits: racialequalitytools.org/ / Oxford English Dictionary

Terminology (Continued)

Oppression

The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group.*

Structural Racism

Encompasses the entire system of white domination throughout all aspects of society, including its history, politics, economics.*

Colonialism

Invasion of a people, taking over land and possessions. Benefits coloniser, at expense of colonised. Continue to impact power relations in most of the world today.*

Diaspora

A diaspora is a scattered population whose origin lies in involuntary mass dispersion from its indigenous territories.*

Anti Racism

The policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance, including internally.

Code Switching

Informal way to describe the ways people of colour and those from other marginalised groups often adjust their language, behaviour, and even appearance in order to navigate the world.

White Fragility

Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

White Passing

A person of colour or mixed heritage, but is mostly recognized as white, and receives the benefits of white privilege.

Colourism

Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

* Credits: racialequalitytools.org/ / Oxford English Dictionary



As a little brown trans boy growing up in a small isolated, very white town in the 1980's and 90's I lived in a creative, imaginative space. Being autistic (though undiagnosed at the time,) gender, race and sexual hierarchies and labels never made sense to me, so I turned inwards to my imagination.

I was lucky to be brought up in my family environment where there weren't stereotypes, but obviously in the wider community there certainly were. Sex education in school was very limited, and there was no information about being lesbian, gay, or bisexual and certainly no talk of being transgender. I didn't discover that trans men existed until I was in my twenties!

As an adult I'm proud to be a trans autistic man of colour. The trans community is small but we've always been there right at the forefront fighting for LGBT rights and we continue to do so.



Resources and References

Local groups (Brighton)

- QTIPOC Narratives (inc. mental health space)
- QTIPOC Brighton (closed group)
- Radical Rhizomes
- UKBP
- Imaan Muslim Pride
- Stonewall (online) - 'QTIPOC Organisations You Should Know About'

Guides

- Intersectionality (GIRES resource) [click here](#)
- LGBT POC Allies Network Resource Handbook (The Proud Trust Resource) [click here](#)

YouTube

- The Urgency of Intersectionality - Kimberlé Crenshaw [click here](#)
- Stonewall BAME voices - Stonewall [click here](#)
- Brown, trans, queer, Muslim and proud - Sabah Choudrey [click here](#)
- Transploitation: The Reality of Being a Black Trans Woman - Tschan Andrews [click here](#)
- No. You Cannot Touch My Hair! - Mena Fombo [click here](#)

Books

- LGBT+ POC Author & Book Recommendations [click here](#)
- Why I'm No Longer Talking (to White people) About Race - Reni Eddo-Lodge

References

- <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/cy/node/79901> [click here](#)
- <https://www.glaad.org> [click here](#)
- racialequalitytools.org [click here](#)



I kept searching for a place, and eventually I met and fell in love with a beautiful black lesbian woman and we had a small group of black queer friends.

As a group, we then decided to start up our own social space to build a community of queer, trans and intersex people of colour (QTIPOC).

It's been about seven years since we started the group and my life is rich and full of so many QTIPOC, or as I like to write it 'cutie poc'! Being with other cutie poc has let me see the beauty in my black queerness and the queerness of blackness.





**In diversity there is beauty
and there is strength**

Maya Angelou

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