

# **W**ocabulary

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**The Latino/Latina Roundtable Project**

of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry

**[www.clgs.org](http://www.clgs.org)**

IV.

**Other organizations:**

**PFLAG** – Parents, Families, & Friends of Lesbians and Gays, [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

**CLGS** – Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry,  
[www.clgs.org](http://www.clgs.org)

**WPATH** -World Professional Association for Transgender Health,  
[www.wpath.org](http://www.wpath.org)

V.

**AIDS/HIV-Related service organizations:**

**GMHC** – [www.gmhc.org](http://www.gmhc.org)

**The Wall-Las Memorias Project** (AIDS Monument),  
[www.thewalllasmemorias.org](http://www.thewalllasmemorias.org)

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THIS VOCABULARY'S SOURCES FOR DEFINITIONS, SYMBOLS, ETC., WERE:

Latin@ Services / Servicios Latinos at the LGBTQ Community Center of San Diego

GLAAD. Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

PFLAG. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

WPATH. World Professional Association for Transgender Health  
and / y

Faith, Family, Equality: The Latino/a Roundtable, of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS)

There are many serious sociological, cultural, medical and psychological studies, conducted by universities and research centers, that substantiate the definitions and explanations given in this booklet. If you want to read the results of these studies, please contact any of the organizations listed above, or the Latino/a Roundtable of the CLGS.

or “prefers” to be heterosexual or to be bisexual, gay or lesbian. “Preference” implies that homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality are chosen rather than being (as in fact sexual orientation is) a crucial aspect of one’s identity. The expression “sexual preference” is frequently used to suggest that because being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice then that choice can and should be “cured.” “Sexual orientation” is the accurate description of an individual’s enduring physical and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex, and it is an expression inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and “straight” men and women.

### **LIFESTYLE:**

There is no single lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle. Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are diverse in the ways they individually lead their lives. The phrase “gay lifestyle” is used to denigrate lesbians and gay men, suggesting that their orientation is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured.”

### **ORGANIZATIONS**

(some among those present in many cities)

I.

#### **Faith-based organizations:**

**Dignity** (Roman Catholic), [www.dignityusa.org](http://www.dignityusa.org)

**Integrity** (Episcopal), [www.integrityusa.org](http://www.integrityusa.org)

**Lutherans Concerned** (Luterana / ELCA), [www.lcna.org](http://www.lcna.org)

**Metropolitan Community Church** (MCC), [www.mccchurch.org](http://www.mccchurch.org)

**LGBT & SGL ministries** (United Church of Christ), <http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/>

II.

#### **National political, legal organizations:**

**GLADD** – Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

**HRC** – Human Rights Campaign, [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

**NGLTF** – National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, [www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)

**Lambda Legal**, [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)

III.

#### **Centers that serve the LGBTQ community:**

**National directory of LGBTQ Centers**

[www.lgbtcenters.org/Centers/find-a-center.aspx](http://www.lgbtcenters.org/Centers/find-a-center.aspx)

**In Chicago – The Center on Halstead**, [www.centeronhalsted.org](http://www.centeronhalsted.org)

**In/en Los Angeles** – Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center, [www.lagaycenter.org](http://www.lagaycenter.org)  
or [www.laglc.org](http://www.laglc.org)

**In/en New York City – The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center**, [www.gaycener.org](http://www.gaycener.org)

**In/en San Diego – The San Diego LGBT Community Center**,  
[www.thecentersd.org](http://www.thecentersd.org)



## THE BI-PRIDE FLAG

Flag was designed specifically with bisexual people in mind. The three-color flag (pink, blue and purple) symbolizes attraction to both sexes.



## LAMBDA

The Greek letter "lambda" was selected as a symbol by the Gay Activists Alliance of New York in 1970. It was declared the international symbol for LGBTQ rights by the International Gay Rights Congress in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1974.

## PROBLEMATIC WORDS

There are words employed by some people, in everyday speech, that are offensive and hurtful to the LGBTQ community. The intentions of those using these words are not the only issue, because all of these words are offensive and hurtful no matter where or when they are employed. So... don't use them at all, and try to teach others not to use them either.

### OFFENSIVE TERMS USED TO REFER TO GAY OR BISEXUAL MEN:

maricón, puto, joto, pájaro, pato, puñal, mujercito, mariposa, marica, mariquita, mayate, bugarrón, faggot, etc.

### OFFENSIVE TERMS USED TO REFER TO LESBIANS OR BISEXUAL WOMEN:

pata, maricon, tortillera, marimacha, machorrón, dyke, etc.

### ALSO AVOID USING THE FOLLOWING WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS; AND LEARN WHY:

#### HOMOSEXUAL:

Please use "gay" or "lesbian" to refer to people attracted to members of their same sex. Because of the clinical history of the word "homosexual," it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically or emotionally disordered. These notions ("diseased" or "disordered") were discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please also avoid using "homosexual" simply to avoid repeated use of the word "gay." (GLADD)

#### SEXUAL PREFERENCE:

A term once used to refer to "sexual orientation." "Sexual preference" is outdated and no longer in use because anyone's sexual orientation is no longer considered to be the result of one's conscious choice. No one chooses

they self-identify as truly theirs. For many people, this involves learning how to live socially in “the other” gender role; for others this means finding a gender role and expression that is most comfortable for them. Transition may or may not include feminization or masculinization of the body through hormones or surgical procedures. The nature and duration of transition is variable and individual.

**TRANSEXUAL:** A person who—after feeling intense long-term discomfort at the incongruence between their true gender identity and the sex of the body with which her/she was born (and to which a gender was assigned)—decides to change her/his body as well as adopt the gender behavior that truly reflect her/his real gender identity. This decision may result in cross-living, in hormone therapy, in surgery, or in other bodily feminization or masculinization procedures that typically accompany a permanent change in gender role.

**TRANSEVESTITE (Cross-dresser):** Wearing clothing and adopting a gender role presentation that, in a given culture, is more typical of the other sex. A transvestite is not necessarily gay men or lesbian women—there are heterosexual and bisexual transvestites too.

## **LGBTQ COMMUNITY SYMBOLS**



### **RAINBOW FLAG**

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue and Purple – the six-stripe rainbow flag represents the diversity and idealism of the LGBTQ Community. The flag was first used at the 1978 “Pride Parade” in San Francisco.



### **PINK AND BLACK TRIANGLES**

The origin of these symbols dates back to Nazi Germany. Gay men condemned to the concentration camps were forced to wear a pink triangle, point down, much like Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David. Lesbians, prostitutes and other women labeled “deviant” by the Nazi regime were likewise required to wear a black triangle. By these symbols the camp guards knew who should receive specially cruel treatment. In the 1970s, gay and lesbian liberation groups reclaimed these symbols as a source of remembrance and pride.



### **TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY FLAG**

The pattern is such that no matter which way you fly it, it is always correct. Because it is mirror image of our lives.

their physical appearance to match their gender identity. There are many different issues that may lead a person to decide whether to have or not the surgeries-- examples of these issues are: expense, physical health, age, access to medical care and information, etc.. There are also many difficulties that can occur with these surgeries, which will factor into each individual's decision-making process. Below are other terms related to surgery:

**NON-OP:** Individuals who have not had, and may not desire to have, gender reassignment surgery, or who may or may not do hormone therapy. For many individuals, self-identification and self-expression through cross-living or other methods of gender expression are enough.

**PRE-OP or PRE-OPERATIVE:** Transsexual individuals who have not had gender reassignment surgery, but who desire it and are seeking it as best option. They may or may not cross-live full time and may or may not take hormone therapy. They may also seek surgery to change secondary sex characteristics.

**POST-OP or POST-OPERATIVE:** Transsexual individuals who have had gender reassignment surgery, or other surgeries to change secondary sex characteristics.

**"TOP" SURGERY:** Surgery "above the waist," usually for breast augmentation (in the case of Male-to-Female persons) and for breast reduction or removal for Female-to-Male persons.

**SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY:** Surgery to change primary and/or secondary sex characteristics. It is performed in order to affirm a person's gender identity. Sex reassignment surgery can be an important part of a medically necessary treatment to alleviate or eliminate gender dysphoria.

**PASSING:** It is said of a person who presents him/herself in another gender, which they live full-time, but not the gender to which they were assigned at birth.

**PRESENTATION:** The totality of one's appearance, including clothing and manner of dressing, and one's voice, behavior, etc.

**TRANSPHOBIA:** The often extreme and irrational fear of transgender persons-- a fear fed not by fact but by suppositions and stereotypes that judge transgender individuals as "dangerous" or "harmful." It is unjustified fear towards those who are perceived as breaking or blurring culturally established gender roles. This irrational fear is often communicated through negative, violent or hurtful attitudes, expressions or actions against those perceived as transgender. See *also* **PHOBIA**.

**TRANSITION:** Period of time during which individuals change from the gender role associated with their sex assigned at birth to the gender role with which

are considered in order to assign sex. For most people, gender identity and expression are consistent with their sex assigned at birth; for transsexual, transgender, and "gender non-conforming" individuals, gender identity or expression differ from their sex assigned at birth. *Para español ver SEXO.*

**SEX ASSIGNMENT:** The declaration (by doctors and by civil authorities) regarding which is your sex, based on what your external genitalia look like at your birth. Thereafter you are supposed to grow up, live and express yourself within a certain gender role that your culture associates with the sex assigned to you at birth. *Para español ver ASIGNACIÓN DE SEXO.*

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Permanent emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. "Straight" individuals experience these feelings primarily for persons of the opposite sex. Gay or lesbian individuals experience these feelings primarily for persons of the same sex. Bisexual individuals experience these feelings for people of both sexes. "Sexual orientation," in other words, is the sum of sexual feelings, erotic thoughts, fantasies and/or desired behaviors with respect to another. This term should be used rather than the outdated, offensive and factually wrong expression "sexual preference"-- because no one chooses her/his sexual orientation. *Para español ver ORIENTACIÓN SEXUAL.*

## T

**TRANSGENDER:** This term refers to the person who recognizes that her/his true gender identity does not match the sex and gender assigned to him/her at birth. Transgender persons may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally or surgically, to match their true gender identity. While all transsexuals may be said to be transgendered, the reverse is not always true. "Transgender" is also used in reference to the diverse group of individuals who cross or transcend culturally defined categories of gender. *Para español ver TRANSGÉNERO.* Below are some related terms:

**FEMALE-TO-MALE (FTM/F2M) or MALE-TO-FEMALE (MTF/M2F):** Expressions used to describe the direction of change from an individual's assigned gender at birth to their true gender identity. This may occur through behavioral or bodily changes (sometimes with the help of hormones or surgery).

**NON-SURGICAL OPTIONS:** Cross-living is a non-surgical option. It implies cross-dressing full-time, and living as the gender with which a person truly self-identifies. Hormone therapy is another non-surgical option.

**HORMONE THERAPY:** Administration of hormones to affect the development of the secondary sex characteristics. A physician should always supervise hormone therapy.

**SURGERY:** Transgender persons may choose to have surgery in order for

## L

**LESBIAN:** The preferred term for women whose primary romantic and physical attraction is to other women. Lesbians have suffered from a double invisibility—as women and as gay people. Their invisibility is manifested in the fact that “gay” has become almost solely associated with men in popular discourse. “Lesbian” is a common and acceptable word referring to women who accept that they are attracted to other women. *Para español ver LESBIANA.*

**LGBTQ:** These initials, originally used in English, are now commonly employed in Spanish and other western languages. Each initial stands for a word you can easily find defined in this Vocabulary. In order, the words are: **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer.** The joint use of these initials is a practical way of referring to this vast community that represents, at least, 10% of humanity.

## P

**PHOBIA:** Any extreme or irrational fear of something, someone or a group based on a perceived characteristic. With regard to LGBT persons, it is the irrational fear or hate of LGBT persons – **homophobia** (root of all violence against LGBT persons); lesbians – **lesbophobia**; bisexuals – **biphobia**; transgender – **transphobia**. This phobia can be internalized. *Para español ver FOBIA.*

**PRIDE:** Umbrella term for pride in being an LGBTQ person, or family member or friend. A term also associated with numerous yearly parades celebrating LGBTQ persons, their families and their achievements. *Para español ver ORGULLO.*

## Q

**QUEER:** In the past it was an offensive way to identify someone who was LGBTQ or aligned her/himself with the LGBTQ community. It is now a term taken back in a positive way, for self-identification and affirmation. Some value the term for its defiance, others like it because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and even others find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid sex and/or gender identities. Many within the LGBTQ community, however, continue to dislike the term and find it offensive—that’s why it’s best to avoid the word unless referring to someone who freely self-identifies as “queer.” *Para español ver QUEER.*

## S

**SEX:** Sex is assigned at birth as male or female, usually based on the appearance of the external genitalia. When the external genitalia are ambiguous, other components of sex (internal genitalia, chromosomal and hormonal sex)

in clearly male or female gender roles, some people present themselves in an alternative gender role such as "transgender". We should not, however, think that all persons tend to incorporate both masculine and feminine characteristics in their gender expressions, in varying ways and to varying degrees.

**GENDER IDENTITY:** This is an individual's self-perception as being a man, a woman, or "gender non-conforming." For transgender and gender non-conforming people, the sex assigned at birth and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match. Gender identity is a person's intrinsic sense of being male, or female, or an alternative gender.

**"GENDER NON-CONFORMING":** A person who either by nature or by personal conviction does not conform to the gender-based expectations of her/his society. "Non-conforming" is an expression used to describe individuals whose gender identity, role or expression differs from what is normative for their assigned sex in any given culture and historical period.

## H

**HATE CRIME:** Any assault on a person, family or property in which there is evidence of significant prejudice based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity. The states (and many cities and counties) have their own specific definitions of what constitutes hate crimes and what proof might be required by the courts. *Para español ver CRIMEN DE ODIO.*

**HETEROSEXISM:** The institutional and societal reinforcement of heterosexuality as the only valid or permitted sexual orientation. It's frequent for heterosexism to imply indifference or disdain towards lesbian women and gay men. *Para español ver HÉTEROSEXISMO.*

**HETEROSEXUALITY:** Physical and affective attraction to persons of the opposite sex.

**HOMOPHOBIA:** The fear, hatred or intolerance towards LGBTQ persons. It is the root of anti-gay violence. Sometimes it is a symptom of repressed homosexuality in the homophobic individual. *See also PHOBIA in English. Para español ver HOMOFOBIA.*

**HOMOSEXUAL:** (*see also "Problematic Words"*) An outdated term used to refer to individuals who feel a physical; or emotional attraction for others of their same sex. Today it is considered a derogatory and offensive term by many LGBTQ people. That's why it's better to replace it with "gay" or "lesbian" to refer to people who are attracted to individuals of the same sex.

**HOMOSEXUALITY:** The physical and emotional attraction towards those of the same sex.

important to remember and respect that not everyone is in the same place when it comes to being “out.” It is also important to remember and respect the difficult process of LGBTQ people when they must decide the level of disclosure of this information to other persons.

**IN THE CLOSET:** It is said of LGBTQ persons who are not disclosing (“coming out”) their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**OUTING (SOMEONE):** To reveal in public the sexual orientation of another person who is still “in the closet.” Most in the LGBTQ community oppose “outing,” because “coming out” should be a personal and free decision—other people’s specific circumstances have to be respected.

## G

**GAY:** The preferred term to refer to men whose primary affective and physical attraction is to members of their own gender. The term is also used more widely to refer to people whose affective and/or physical attraction are toward people of their same sex (e.g., “gay people”). Please, avoid identifying gay people as “homosexuals.”

**GENDER:** Social classification of being male/man or female/woman. In Spanish, “gender” and “sex” are interchangeable terms. In English, however, they are less so. “Sex” refers to the body’s anatomy, and “gender” to the personal, cultural and psychological characteristics associated with a “sex.” Below are other terms related to “gender”: (*para español ver GÉNERO*)

**ASSIGNED GENDER:** The announcement by doctors (“it’s a boy!” “it’s a girl!”) based on what your physical anatomy looks like. Based on this, you are supposed to grow up, to be and behave within a certain set of gender roles.

**GENDER DYSPHORIA:** Distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person’s gender identity and that person’s sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics). *Gender dysphoria* is an intense, continuous discomfort resulting from a person’s conviction that the gender assigned to him/her at birth is inappropriate or incorrect (in her/his case), and therefore so too are the resulting gender role expectations. A person needs to be diagnosed as having “gender dysphoria” before the start of hormone therapy or surgery—but not all in the transgender community recognize the need for, or fairness of, this diagnose.

**GENDER EXPRESSION OR ROLE:** It is said of a person’s way of showing their gender identity to others through means such as behavior, dress or manner. Gender expression or gender role is the sum of characteristics of personality, appearance, and behavior that, in any given culture and in a historical period, are designated as “masculine” or “feminine” (that is, more typical of the male or of the female social role). While most individuals present themselves socially

**3.** This Vocabulary is not exhaustive—it is only a beginning. There are a number of resources on the internet and in the centers that serve the LGBTQ community throughout the country—you can search for them. Remember always to educate yourself and look for information to understand, accept and affirm LGBTQ persons and families.

**4.** This Vocabulary has three parts. The first part one consists of definitions of important words and expressions, listed in alphabetical order— but terms or expressions derived from the important words are listed under these only (for example: CLOSET is listed alphabetically under the letter “C” because it is an important term, but the expression IN THE CLOSET is only listed under CLOSET and not alphabetically under the letter “I”). The second part of the Vocabulary lists and defines words and expressions that we urge you not to use, because they can be hurtful or offensive. And the third part is an explanation of the main symbols employed in and by the LGBTQ community.

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## B

**BISEXUAL:** A person who is emotionally, romantically or physically attracted to both genders/sexes. To identify as bisexual a person does not need to have sexual experiences with both men and women (at the same time or not), nor do they need to have had any sexual experience at all.

**BULLYING:** Intimidation and persecution of LGBTQ persons, or of those perceived as LGBT or as weak. This intimidation can be verbal, physical or electronic (via internet), and can have as a consequence the suicide of the victim. There is growing national concern over the bullying of children and young persons in schools. *Para español ver ACOSO.*

## C

**CLOSET:** Refers to the emotional space in which a person is when acknowledging and accepting her/his own sexual orientation or gender identity. Related expressions are:

**COMING OUT (OF THE CLOSET):** For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, to “come out of the closet” is the long (and sometimes difficult) process of self-acceptance. This process continues throughout one’s entire life. People acknowledge and accept their LGBT identity first to themselves, and then (later) may reveal it to others. “Coming out” can also apply to process through which the family and friends of LGBT persons also go. There are many different degrees of being “out”—some may be out to friends only, some may be out publicly, and some LGBTQ people may be out only to themselves. It’s

# VOCABULARY

Dear reader,

The *Latin@ Faith, Family and Equality Roundtable* is pleased to present to you this LGBTQ<sup>1</sup> Vocabulary. We hope that it will help you develop a common and positive language to understand, accept and affirm LGBTQ persons in families, communities and churches.

Language is a powerful tool, and it is important that we all gain access to power through information and education. Language is also a powerful way to hurt and demean people and communities. Therefore, it is important to know and understand the proper *and* improper use of language and the meaning of words, so we may employ them with respect in reference to LGBTQ persons and communities.

The Latin@/ community understands the power and diversity of language, and can often express itself in three languages, depending on context: Spanish, English and Spanglish. The Latin@/Hispanic community also understands how language has been used against the Latin@/Hispanic community, and can, therefore stand in solidarity with LGBTQ persons and families when words and expressions are used against them. We have a responsibility to value our family and friends who are LGBTQ, just as LGBTQ persons have to stand in solidarity with the Latin@/Hispanic community.

Using the power of language positively will lead Latin@s/Hispanics and LGBTQ persons and families to have a deeper grounding in faith and family, as well as contribute to greater equality and justice for all marginalized communities.

## **BEFORE YOU CONTINUE READING: Four explanations about this Vocabulary...**

**1.** What does "@" mean? Since the Spanish language (more than English) is uses gendered<sup>2</sup> words, the "@" is a way of including both the masculine and feminine endings to words. So "Latin@" means Latino **and** Latina. In the same way, "Hispan@s" means Hispano**s** **and** Hispano**s**.

**2.** This Vocabulary is bilingual because the experience of Latin@s is bilingual. The language and experience of LGBTQ persons and families are also bilingual. What this means, in practical terms (for this Vocabulary), is that words and expressions are translated to convey how they are used in either language. We have tried to remain attentive to the more common word usages among Latino@s, given the internal diversity and the diversity of origins of the national Latin@ community.

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<sup>1</sup> See the meaning of this set of initials in this Vocabulary.

<sup>2</sup> See the meaning of the word "gender" in this Vocabulary.