

Allyship: Being Straight But Queer

Throughout my academic studies, specifically in my Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies classes, I have noticed that people who identify as white, cisgender, and heterosexual are hesitant to participate in queer spaces due to their privilege. It is important for those with privilege to be conscious of not speaking over marginalized people and contribute to amplifying unheard voices. However, the focus on particular identities limits what we imagine queer to be. I think there is true opportunity here. I, myself, am a white, female, heterosexual settler with a privileged upbringing and life situation. Despite feeling drawn to the community, I constantly think to myself, “do I belong in queer spaces?” I think the answer is yes. I may not be queer in the realms of my sexuality or gender, but that does not mean I do not *think* queerly. I believe in the principles of queering heteropatriarchal society and norms. I believe in rejecting compulsory heterosexuality and leveling the playing field for queer/marginalized peoples and voices. What we need a lot more of in this world is for people to realize their privilege and queer their thinking - not reproduce dominant narratives of heteropatriarchy. This is a call to all the white, heterosexual, privileged people (like me) to be authentic allies and create space for queer thinkers, whoever that may be. Use your privilege as a tool to the advantage of the queer community and queer thinkers alike. Do not reproduce and perpetuate the structures of settler colonialism and heteronormativity but instead, make space to unlearn them.

The ongoing work of unlearning is vital. It may be a challenging task, but I think it is all about the baby steps. YOU can help, no matter who you are. Allyship is important, use your privilege to lift others up. Be the person who creates space for marginalized voices. Be an ally. By

practicing self awareness, it is possible to share space equitably - you can have valuable contributions as a queer thinker. Be an ally. Voice your opinions and use your voice to challenge the assumptions that society has set upon you as a white heterosexual settler. Share in carrying the burden by being an ally. Yes, you may be a white heterosexual settler, but you can surround yourself with queer relationships. You can educate those who are ignorant to their privilege and possibly queer their thinking, even if just for a moment. Be an ally, educate those around you and lift up those who surround you.

Do I belong in queer spaces? The answer is yes, I do. I may not be queer in the realms of my sexuality or gender but I do think and act queerly. Yes, I am straight but I am also queer. And I am an ally.