

Queer Manifesto

Who are we?

We are every group of friends who will never be represented on TV because it's "not realistic" to have that many gay people, or multiple people of colour, or multiple disabled people, or the most "unrealistic" of all – a gay, disabled, person of colour.

Except that I am both queer and disabled. Most of my friends are at least one of those things – most are more than one. We are every combination of marginalizations and privileges. Even amongst those of us who identify as queer, we are not singular – we are bisexual trans women, we are aromantic homosexual cis people, we are demisexual nonbinary transmascs. And we are all queer. We are all multiply 'other'. We exist, as a testament to the infinite breadth and variety of human existence. We are beautiful.

What is Queer?

Queer is the solidarity between me, a bisexual woman, and my cousin, an asexual panromantic trans man. Queer is my "token Straight" cousin who is perceived as gay more often than any of us because she fits every stereotype of a butch lesbian you can think of.

Queer is love so big that it does not fit into the bounds of monogamy, that it transcends geography, that it disregards labels and definition. Queer is networks of lovers and friends and found families that create communities and abundant support.

Queer is two generations of my family with an open door and food and a bed and love for anyone who might need it. Queer is siblings and aunts and uncles who have no blood relation, and children growing up with no comprehension of why that would matter.

Queer is a life built from choices made to serve our genuine desires and needs, not societal expectations. Queer is radical acceptance and love for ourselves and those around us, and the celebration of all the variation that exists within that.

Queer is not just identity, it is not just a specific experience of oppression. Queer is not gatekeeping and division. Queer is not a rebellion on a pendulum, concerned with fighting one structure by pushing the opposite.

Queer is an ideology, a shared experience of constantly asking “What if? Does this serve us? What could we be?”. Queer is radical acceptance and solidarity. Queer is a revolution of demolition and reconceptualization.

Queer has very little to do with who I love, and everything to do with how I love – that is to say: expansively, passionately, openly, and fiercely.

What are we fighting for?

For liberation. For freedom to exist in all our infinite variety. For the right to love and live and engage with the world as our most authentic selves.

But the structures that limit us do not do so in a vacuum, nor do we exist in one.

If I am fighting for queer rights, I am also fighting for the rights of my queer Black and Brown and Indigenous comrades in arms. I am fighting for the rights of the disabled queers, the poor queers, the mentally ill queers.

If I am fighting for the right to exist authentically, free from gendered expectations, I am also fighting for the right of my straight, white, cis male lovers and friends to exist without those expectations. I am fighting for their right to be emotional and vulnerable and weak, because the structures that oppress me are the same ones that oppress them, and those are the same structures that teach them that to harm me is to protect and empower themselves.

I have no desire to fight against oppression only on one front, because there is no singular front, and I have no desire to be accepted into a structure that puts conditions on my existence. I have no desire to be included in a structure that excludes the people I love, or even the people I don't.

To achieve liberation for all queer people, we must achieve liberation for all people.

This is not a new idea.

It has been said before time and again, in different combinations of words with hundreds of different voices. It is Audre Lorde saying “in liberation ... there can be no hierarchy of oppressions”. It is Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality. It is even Pastor Martin Niemoller saying “first they came for the socialists... the trade unionists... the Jews, and I did not speak

out – because I was not a socialist... a trade unionist... a Jew. Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me”.

It has been shown before, time and again, in hundreds of actions by hundreds of people, in big and small ways. It is the lesbians caring for gay men dying of AIDS when everyone else was afraid to come close. It is the leather community protecting their queer friends at Pride. It is white people holding the front line of a Black Lives Matter protest because they are less likely to be brutalized by police, less easily portrayed as angry and dangerous by the media. It is standing behind my friend, a trans woman of color, while she demands the equal treatment she is owed by the academic institution. It is my hand on her shoulder when her voice breaks.

We stand on the shoulders of our forebears, all the past radical queers who rose up and demanded better, not just for themselves but for those who stood beside them.

I do not want to spend my life fighting for one accommodation, one right, one concession at a time. I will cheer with the rest of my people when we win the right to marriage, to exist openly, to do what we want with our bodies. I will fight viciously when those rights are challenged, when they say we cannot speak our truth in schools or support our children.

But that is not the battle I want to pick. I want to dismantle the structure that upholds each and every one of those inequalities, from the right for queer people to exist authentically, to the rights of people of colour to exist without fear of systemic harm, to the rights of people with disabilities to access all spaces and opportunities, to the obscene wealth gap that leaves the majority in poverty while a select few destroy the environment to feed their own egos. I want the powers that be to quake in fear and feel the structures of oppression they have built crumble while we, the ever growing collective of ‘others’ they themselves created through their endless attempts to control and divide, show what we can be when we celebrate and encourage the breadth of our existence.

They seek to divide us because they are afraid of what we could be when we stand together. Let’s show them just how right they are.

Let’s build something beautiful.