

NATIONAL LESBIAN & GAY JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION

**STYLEBOOK SUPPLEMENT**

GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER TERMINOLOGY

**ACT UP:** The acronym for AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, an activist organization with independent chapters in various cities. ACT UP acceptable in first reference. See **AIDS**.

**AIDS:** Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a medical condition that compromises the human immune system, leaving the body defenseless against opportunistic infections. Some medical treatments can slow the rate at which the immune system is weakened. Do not use the term "full-blown AIDS." Individuals may be HIV-positive but not have AIDS. Avoid "AIDS sufferer" and "AIDS victim." Use "people with AIDS" or, if the context is medical, "AIDS patients." See **HIV**.

**bisexual:** As a noun, an individual who may be attracted to either sex. As an adjective, of or relating to sexual and affectional attraction to either sex. Does not presume non-monogamy.

**civil union:** The state of Vermont began this formal recognition of lesbian and gay relationships in July 2000. A civil union provides same-sex couples some rights available to married couples in areas such as state taxes, medical decisions and estate planning.

**closeted, in the closet:** Refers to a person who wishes to keep secret his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.

**coming out:** Short for "coming out of the closet." Accepting and letting others know of one's previously hidden sexual orientation or gender identity. See **closeted** and **outing**.

**commitment ceremony:** A formal, marriagelike gathering that recognizes the declaration of members of the same sex to each other. Same-sex marriages are not legally recognized in the United States. (In April 2001, The Netherlands became the first nation to offer legal marriage to same-sex couples who are citizens or legal residents.)

**cross-dresser:** Preferred term for person who wears clothing most often associated with members of the opposite sex. Not necessarily connected to sexual orientation.

**cruising:** Visiting places where opportunities exist to meet potential sex partners. Not exclusively a gay phenomenon.

**domestic partner:** Unmarried partners who live together. Domestic partners may be of opposite sexes or the same sex. They may register in some counties, municipalities and

states and receive some of the same benefits accorded married couples. The term is typically used in connection with legal and insurance matters. See **gay/lesbian relationships**.

**don't ask, don't tell:** Shorthand for "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue," the military policy on gay men, lesbians and bisexuals. Under the policy, instituted in 1993, the military is not to ask service members about their sexual orientation, service members are not to tell others about their orientation, and the military is not to pursue rumors about members' sexual orientation. The shorthand is acceptable in headlines, but in text the full phrase adds important balance.

**down low:** Term used by some bisexual men of color to refer to men who have sex with other men without the knowledge of their female partners. Sometimes abbreviated as DL. See **MSM**.

**drag:** Attire of the opposite sex.

**drag performers:** Entertainers who dress and act in styles typically associated with the opposite sex (drag queen for men, drag king for women). Not synonymous with transgender or cross-dressing.

**dyke:** Originally a pejorative term for a lesbian, it is now being reclaimed by some lesbians. Caution: still extremely offensive when used as an epithet.

**"ex-gay" (adj.):** The movement, mostly rooted in conservative religions, that aims to change the sexual attraction of individuals from same-sex to opposite-sex.

**fag, faggot:** Originally a pejorative term for a gay male, it is now being reclaimed by some gay men. Caution: still extremely offensive when used as an epithet.

**FTM:** Acronym for "female to male." A transgender person who, at birth or by determination of parents or doctors, has a biological identity of female but a gender identity of male. Those who have undergone surgery are sometimes described as "post-op FTMs" (for post-operative). See **gender identity** and **intersex**.

**gay:** An adjective that has largely replaced "homosexual" in referring to men who are sexually and affectionally attracted to other men. Avoid using as a singular noun. For women, "lesbian" is preferred. To include both, use "gay men and lesbians." In headlines where space is an issue, "gays" is acceptable to describe both.

**gay/lesbian relationships:** Gay, lesbian and bisexual people use various terms to describe their commitments. Ask the individual what term he or she prefers, if possible. If not, "partner" is generally acceptable.

**gender identity:** An individual's emotional and psychological sense of being male or female. Not necessarily the same as an individual's biological identity.

**heterosexism:** Presumption that heterosexuality is universal and/or superior to homosexuality. Also: prejudice, bias or discrimination based on such presumptions.

**HIV:** Human immunodeficiency virus. The virus that causes AIDS. "HIV virus" is redundant. "HIV-positive" means being infected with HIV but not necessarily having AIDS. AIDS doctors and researchers are using the term "HIV disease" more because there are other types of acquired immune deficiencies caused by toxins and rare but deadly diseases that are unrelated to what we now call AIDS. See **AIDS**.

**homo:** Pejorative term for homosexual. Avoid.

**homophobia:** Fear, hatred or dislike of homosexuality, gay men and lesbians.

**homosexual:** As a noun, a person who is attracted to members of the same sex. As an adjective, of or relating to sexual and affectional attraction to a member of the same sex. Use only if "heterosexual" would be used in parallel constructions, such as in medical contexts. For other usages, see **gay** and **lesbian**.

**intersex (adj.):** People born with some combination of male and female genitalia. Parents and physicians usually will determine the sex of the child, resulting in surgery or hormone treatment. Many intersex adults seek an end to this practice.

**lesbian:** Preferred term, both as a noun and as an adjective, for women who are sexually and affectionally attracted to other women. Some women prefer to be called "gay" rather than "lesbian"; when possible, ask the subject what term she prefers.

**LGBT:** Acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender."

**lifestyle:** An inaccurate term sometimes used to describe the lives of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people. Avoid.

**lover:** a gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual person's sexual partner. "Partner" is generally acceptable. See **gay/lesbian relationships**.

**MSM:** Acronym for "men who have sex with men." Term used usually in communities of color to describe men who secretly have sex with other men while maintaining relationships with women. Not synonymous with "bisexual." See **down low**.

**MTF:** Acronym for "male to female." A transgender person who, at birth or by determination of parents or doctors, has a biological identity of male but a gender identity of female. Those who have undergone surgery are sometimes described as "post-op MTFs" (for post-operative). See **gender identity** and **intersex**.

**openly gay/lesbian:** As a modifier, "openly" is usually not relevant; its use should be restricted to instances in which the public awareness of an individual's sexual orientation is germane. Examples: Harvey Milk was the first openly gay San Francisco supervisor. "Ellen" was the first sitcom to feature an openly lesbian lead character. "Openly" is preferred over "avowed," "admitted," "confessed" or "practicing."

**outing:** (from "out of the closet") Publicly revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of an individual who has chosen to keep that information private. Also a verb: The magazine outed the senator in a front-page story. See **coming out** and **closeted**.

**pink triangle:** Now a gay pride symbol, it was the symbol gay men were required to wear in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Lesbians sometimes also use a black triangle.

**Pride (Day and/or march):** Short for gay/lesbian pride, this term is commonly used to indicate the celebrations commemorating the Stonewall Inn riots June 28, 1969. Pride events typically take place in June. See **Stonewall**.

**queen:** Originally a pejorative term for an effeminate gay man. Still considered offensive when used as an epithet.

**queer:** Originally a pejorative term for gay, now being reclaimed by some gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people as a self-affirming umbrella term. Still extremely offensive when used as an epithet.

**rainbow flag:** A flag of six equal horizontal stripes (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet) signifying the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities.

**seroconversion:** Scientifically observable alteration of blood or other bodily fluids from HIV-negative to HIV-positive. The verb is "seroconvert." See **HIV**.

**seronegative:** Synonymous with HIV-negative. See **HIV**.

**seropositive:** Synonymous with HIV-positive. See **HIV**.

**safe sex, safer sex:** Sexual practices that minimize the possible transmission of HIV and other infectious agents.

**sexual orientation:** Innate sexual attraction. Use this term instead of "sexual preference." See **lifestyle**.

**sexual preference:** Avoid. See **sexual orientation**.

**sodomy:** Collective term for various sexual acts deemed illegal in some states. Not synonymous with homosexuality or gay sex. The legal definition of sodomy is different from state to state and can apply to sexual acts practiced by heterosexuals.

**special rights:** Politically charged term used by opponents of civil rights for gay people. Avoid. "Gay civil rights," "equal rights" or "gay rights" are alternatives.

**Stonewall:** The Stonewall Inn tavern in New York City's Greenwich Village was the site of several nights of raucous protests after a police raid on June 28, 1969. Although not the nation's first gay civil rights demonstration, Stonewall is now regarded as the birth of the modern gay civil rights movement.

**straight (adj.):** Heterosexual; a person whose sexual and affectional attraction is to someone of the opposite sex.

**transgender (adj):** An umbrella term that can include preoperative, postoperative or nonoperative transsexuals, female and male cross-dressers, drag queens or kings, female or male impersonators and intersex individuals. If an individual prefers to be called transsexual, drag queen or king, intersex, etc., use that term.

**transition:** The process by which one alters one's sex. This may include surgery, hormone therapy and changes of legal identity.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATIONS

**AIDS Action:** Lobbies for programs and research funding. (202) 530-8030; fax: (202) 530-8031; media@aidsaction.org; www.aidsaction.org; media contacts: Marsha Martin, executive director, Ext. 3044, or Eric Payne, govt. affairs and public policy, Ext. 3095.

**ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project:** Special division staffed by legal and civil rights experts working for equal treatment of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. 125 Broad St., New York, NY 10004; (212) 549-2627; fax: (212) 549-2650; www.aclu.org.

**ACT UP:** Chapter-based activist group. ACT UP/New York: 332 Bleecker St., Suite G5, New York, NY 10014; (212) 966-4873; actupny@panix.com;

ACT UP/Philadelphia: P.O. Box 22439 Land Title Station, Philadelphia, PA 19110-2439; (215) 731-1844; fax: (215) 731-1845;

**transsexual (n):** An individual who identifies himself or herself as a member of the opposite sex and who acquires the physical characteristics of the opposite sex. Individual can be of any sexual orientation. To determine accurate use of names or personal pronouns, use the name and sex of the individual at the time of the action.

**transvestite:** Avoid. See **cross-dresser**.

**ACT UP/Atlanta, AIDS Survival Project,** 159 Ralph McGill Blvd. Suite 500, Atlanta, GA 30308; kcasper@actupatlanta.org; (770) 432-2436.

**BiNet USA:** National bisexual organization. 1800 Market St., Suite 405, San Francisco, CA 94102; (415) 865-5628; BiNetUSA@aol.com; media contact: Veneita Porter, executive director, vlp@sirius.com.

**Cathedral of Hope:** Christian church based in Dallas, with primary outreach to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. (214) 351-1901 or (800) 501-HOPE; fax: (214) 351-6099; hope@cathedralofhope.com; www.cathedralofhope.com.

**Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE):** National organization supporting young people with LGBT parents. 3543 18th St. #1, San Francisco, CA 94110; (415) 861-5437; fax: (415) 255-8345;

colage@colage.org; www.colage.org; media contact: Felicia Park-Rogers, executive director.

**Dignity USA:** LGBT Catholics. 1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite #11, Washington, DC 20005-1894; (800) 877-8797 or (202) 861-0017; fax: (202) 429-9808; dignity@aol.com; www.dignityusa.org.

**Family Pride Coalition:** Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their families. (202) 331-5015; fax: (202) 331-0080; info@familypride.org; www.familypride.org; media contact: Corri Planck, communications director, (202) 331-3775, corri.plank@familypride.org.

**FTM International:** Educational organization serving female-to-male transgender people and transsexual men. (415) 553-5987; info@ftm-intl.org; www.ftm-intl.org.

**Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN):** Chapter-based group working to create safer schools. 121 W. 27th St., Suite 804, New York, NY 10001; (212) 727-0135; fax: (212) 727-0254; glsen@glsen.org; www.glsen.org.

**Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD):** Promotes fair, accurate and inclusive media coverage. (800) 429-6334; fax: (212) 807-1806; cell: (917) 239-0647; glaad@glaad.org; www.glaad.org; media contact: Cathy Renna, news media director, renna@glaad.org; after-hours cell for reporters on deadline, (917) 239-0783.

**Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA):** Represents health professionals and their patients. (415) 255-4547; fax: (415) 255-4784; info@glma.org; media contact, spokesman Ron Tierney, rtierney@glma.org, after hours home number for reporters on deadline, (415) 440-7913.

**Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund:** Works to elect gay and lesbian officials. (202) 842-8679; fax: (202) 289-3863; Victory@victoryfund.org; www.victoryfund.org.

**Gay Men's Health Crisis:** AIDS and HIV service provider. The Tisch Building, 119 W. 24 St., New York, NY 10011. GMHC Hotline: (800) 243-7692; in New York City: (212) 807-6655; hotline@gmhc.org. Press and media: Marty Algaze, (212) 367-1210; martina@gmhc.org; www.gmhc.org.

**Gay Men of African Descent:** 103 E. 125th St., Suite 503, New York, NY 10035; (212) 828-1697; www.gmad.org; media contact: Earl Plante, director of development, (212) 828-1697, Ext. 129; eplante@gmad.org.

**Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC):** National organization working to end discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes. 1743 Connecticut Ave. NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 462-6610; fax: (202) 462-6744; gpac@gpac.org; www.gpac.org.

**Human Rights Campaign (HRC):** Political action committee. (202) 628-4160; fax: (202) 347-5323; hrc@hrc.org; www.hrc.org; media contact: David Smith, communications director, (212) 216-1547; david.smith@hrc.org.

**Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies (IGLSS):** Independent think tank that addresses LGBT issues. P.O. Box 2603, Amherst, MA 01004-2603; (413) 577-0145; www.igls.org; media contact on deadline: (413) 549-1055.

**International Foundation for Gender Education:** Information provider and clearinghouse for referrals. IFGE, P.O. Box 540229, Waltham, MA 02454-0229; (781) 899-2212; fax: (781) 899-5703; info@ifge.org; www.ifge.org; media contact: Denise LeClaire.

**International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC):** (415) 255-8680; fax: (415) 255-8662; iglhrc@iglhrc.org; www.iglhrc.org; media contact: Sidney Levy, sidney@iglhrc.org; sidney@iglhrc.org.

**Intersex Society of North America:** (707) 636-0420; fax (707) 636-0419; info@isna.org; www.isna.org.

**Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (LLDEF):** (212) 809-8585; fax: (212) 809-0055; press-queries@lambdalegal.org; www.lambdalegal.org; media contact: Eric Ferrero, communications director.

**Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization (LLEGO):** (202) 408-5380; fax: (202) 408-8478; moq@llego.org; www.llego.org.

**Log Cabin Republicans:** Chapter-based. (202) 347-5306; fax: (202) 347-5224; press@lcr.org; www.lcr.org.

**Metropolitan Community Church:** Fellowship of Christian churches with special outreach to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. 8704 Santa Monica Blvd. Second Floor, West Hollywood CA 90069-4548; (310) 360-8640; fax: (310) 360-8680; info@MCCchurch.org; www.MCCchurch.org

**National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR):** Legal resource center. (415) 392-6257; fax: (415) 392-8442; info@nclrights.org; www.nclrights.org.

**National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF):** Civil rights. (202) 332-6483; fax: (202) 332-0207; ngltf@nglftf.org; www.nglftf.org.

**National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA):** Resource that works within the news industry; chapter-based. (202) 588-9888, ext. 11; fax: (202) 588-1818; info@nlgja.org; www.nlgja.org; media contact: Pamela Strother, executive director, pstrother@nlgja.org.

**National Stonewall Democrats:** Network of lesbian and gay Democrat clubs. P.O. Box 9330, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 625-1382; fax: (202) 625-1383; johnmarble@stonewalldemocrats.org; www.stonewalldemocrats.org.

**National Transgender Action Coalition:** Works for civil rights for all transgender, intersex and gender-variant people. 14252 Culver Drive, #904, Irvine, Calif. 92604-0326; info@ntac.org; www.ntac.org.

**New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-violence Project and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs:** Serves GLBT and HIV-positive victims of violence. The New York group is incubating the national coalition. 240 W. 35th St., Suite 200, New York, NY 10001; (212) 714-1184; fax: (212) 714-2627; webmaster@avp.org; www.avp.org.

**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG):** Provides support, education, advocacy through 460+ chapters. (202) 467-8180; fax: (202) 467-8194; info@pflag.org; www.pflag.org.

**Republican Unity Coalition:** A gay-straight alliance of Republican leaders. P.O. Box 19206, Washington, D.C. 20036-9206; www.republicanunity.com.

**Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE):** Social service and advocacy organization dedicated to LGBT senior citizens. 305 Seventh Ave., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10001; (212) 741-2247; fax: (212) 366-1947; sageusa@aol.com; www.sageusa.org.

**Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN):** Legal-aid and watchdog group. (202) 328-3244; fax: (202) 797-1635; sldn@sldn.org; www.sldn.org.

**Sexual Orientation Issues in the News (SOIN):** Resource center for journalism educators. Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California, 3502 Watt Way, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0281. Media contact: Roy Aarons, director of SOIN; raarons@aol.com; http://www.usc.edu/annenberg/soin.

**Survive AIDS:** Formerly known as ACT UP/Golden Gate. Media contacts: Jeff Getty: (510) 551-6644; Michael Lauro: (415) 431-0859.

**World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Jews: Keshet Ga'avah:** Chapter-based. P.O. Box 23379, Washington, DC 20026-3379; (202) 452-7424; fax: (215) 873-0108; info@glbtjews.org; www.glbtjews.org; media contact: Scott Gansl, president, (609) 396-1972.

#### NLGJA Supplement on the Web

For additional information on terminology and organizations: www.nlgja.org

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