

gsa workshop #3: (trans)gender

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note: the “alien anthropologist” was taken from the web site <http://www.chaparraltree.com/raq.html>

objectives:

- to familiarize people with some trans vocabulary, including:

transgendered

cross-dresser

transsexual

transvestite

tranny

pre-op

post-op

gender neutral pronouns:

she, hir, zie, zir

- to make people think about the gender binary system, to question it and also to understand the problems with breaking it down

- to make people think about “how does this apply to me?”

- to make people think about “how does this apply to the queer movement?”

materials needed:

- volunteer alien anthropologist, preferably in costume

icebreaker:

- human knot

name game:

- give your name and a brief story of at least one alter ego that you have or have had

ground rules:

- confidentiality: not that you can't talk about what goes on here (on the contrary, please do continue discussions outside of the workshop) but don't go around saying “so-and-so was at the workshop and said such-and-such”

- respect: there are probably a lot of us coming from different places; please respect each other. feel free to disagree with each other but please use “i” statements

- no stupid questions: on a similar note, there are no stupid questions here; you should feel free to ask everything. i realize this can sometimes be a risky position to take, but i think it's important. if you think a question is offensive, you should say so, but that doesn't mean that it was stupid. anyway, we'll see how this one works.

- any others?

activity:

- introduce the anthropologist from mars. “it's been stranded on Earth by a faulty starship drive and it wants us to explain gender to it.” let the discussion proceed for 15-20 minutes

- let's talk about some definitions:

sex:

kate thinks sex just an act: the only questions are how you'd like to do it and who you'd like to do it *with*
others (often biologists) think that sex describes physical/biological differences, like genitalia

gender is more complicated than we all thought it was

kate divides gender into the following

gender assignment: “what do the authorities say i am?”

gender role: “what does the culture think i should do in my life?”

gender identity: “what do i think i am?” often conflated with gender assignment

gender attribution

transgendered

transsexual

transvestite

cross-dresser

FTM

MTF

pre-op

post-op

- how does sexual reassignment surgery work?

- do the gendered/transgendered exercise if you have time

- have a discussion about:

- how does all this stuff apply to me?

- how does all this stuff apply to the queer movement?

- so now we've talked about the binary system and how it can be problematic. can we talk too about how breaking it down might be problematic as well?

follow up/wrap up/conclusion:

- go around and say something that you've learned or something that you've thought about or share a story