

Using People's Pronouns is Important!

- Using the correct pronouns is a way of treating people as real, human people.
- Using the wrong pronouns says that you do not respect people enough to try to accept their genders.
- So much anti-trans violence works by stripping away trans people's humanity (sometimes by calling us "it").
- Part of reclaiming our humanity is choosing language that reflects our genders (even if others don't always use it).
- Trans people & those questioning their gender have to live with constant attacks & messages saying that they & their genders are wrong (& they therefore "deserve" violence, etc).
- Using the wrong pronouns for a trans person can really hurt because it is yet another small piece of a larger attack that never ends.

What about the pronoun "it"?

- A few trans people resist being dehumanised by choosing the pronoun "it". The idea is to reclaim "it" from those using it against them, and hold it as a mirror to deflect the dehumanisation.
- Some cis people pretend to identify as objects & use the pronouns "it" as a way to attack trans identities. Since they will still be recognised as human, calling them "it" hides its power, strengthening its force to dehumanise others. This can be really harmful. Trans people aren't pretending!
- It matters why someone is using "it"!

Definitions

Cisgender people's genders simply match the genders they were assigned at birth. (e.g., someone said "it's a girl!" and they grew up to be a girl/woman).

Transgender people's genders are different from the genders they were assigned at birth. Trans people are extremely diverse & may be girls/women or boys/men, or they may also be non-binary people, people without a gender, people with fluctuating gender, etc.). Not everyone under this umbrella is comfortable identifying as trans.

Non-binary people's genders do not fit neatly into the two-gender system of women & men (i.e., "everyone else"). Some non-binary genders are culturally specific.

Okay with any pronouns?

A lot of cis folks say they are okay with any pronouns (or don't care) but then get upset if anyone regularly starts using pronouns that don't match their genders.

This is very different from trans folks who choose any/all pronouns because they delight in the gender queering & ambiguity from mixing pronouns. And different from trans folks who avoid pronouns because none work.

Did you know?

Throughout history, people all over the world have had many different genders. This rigid system of exactly 2 genders mapped on to 2 "types" of bodies is a rare exception! (Even if it seems "normal" in this colonial society.)



Why Using the Right Pronouns Matters

Exploring the Pronoun "it"



**QUEER & TRANS COMMUNITY
ACTION, SUPPORT, & EDUCATION**

<http://www.qtcase.com/>

Treating People as Human is Important!

Denying that certain groups of people are “really human” has been part of the way that people and governments have justified colonial genocide of Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island and the residential school system, Black slavery, and other genocides.

This has also been part of how people have justified the eugenic violence of killing people with particular disabilities and forcibly sterilising others, and painful and dangerous medical experiments performed on groups of Black people and others without their knowledge or consent.

While these things are no longer “officially” done in Canada anymore, Indigenous women continue to be sterilised against their will when giving birth, Black and Indigenous people continue to be targeted for police violence and are massively over-represented in the prison system, elders and people living with chronic and disabling health issues are being denied adequate medical care and housing, often leading to their deaths.

Calling People “It” as an Act of Violence

One way that people label someone as “not really human” is by calling that person “it” (i.e., the same pronoun used for inanimate objects and non-human animals). While non-human life deserves respect too, the way we show respect to humans is different from the way we show respect toward other life.

These days, people who do not look easy to classify as “women” or “men” are often called “it” as a way to justify abuse & violence, or deny basic needs. This is often worst for those also dehumanised by racism or ableism.

Who is Called “It” Against Their Will?

Many intersex individuals and individuals with differences of sex development are forced into genital surgeries that leave them in pain & unable to function properly. Often parents are convinced to allow these surgeries on babies or children to avoid their child being an “it”.

People whose bodies or gender expressions do not neatly fit into the categories of what people understand to be “women” or “men” face high risks of harassment, physical & sexual violence (both from strangers and people in their lives). They also face being called “it” as part of this harassment and violence.

The impact of calling someone “it” really depends on what they experience in the rest of their life. For a cis person who is generally used to being treated like a real human person, being called “it” every now and then probably won't hurt very much on its own.

But for someone who is used to having their humanity denied regularly at every turn, being called “it” is yet another small piece of a much larger attack that never lets up and never stops. It can be extremely hurtful & do a lot of damage.

Who asks to be called “it”?

Some (though few) trans people choose to use the pronoun “it” as a way of resisting against the violence of constantly being treated as “not really human” and called “it” anyway. The idea is reclaim “it”, and hold it like a mirror to deflect the dehumanisation.

This is very different from when cis people (who don't experience this violence) “joke” about identifying as objects and ask to be called “it” as a way to criticise & mock trans people. That is very hurtful because they're not the same! And trans people are not pretending!

“I identify as an attack helicopter & my pronoun is 'it'”

This references an internet post: someone claimed to identify as an attack helicopter & accused friends of being “heliophobic” if they do not call the author by the helicopter's model name/number, or let the author kill people. This became an online meme—people claiming to identify as attack helicopters (or other inanimate objects) as a way of ridiculing & attacking transgender or non-binary people.

This meme is transphobic. It works by implying that trans people asking to be called by their chosen names or to use their gender-appropriate bathroom is somehow similar to the meme's author asking to kill people! But they're completely different! There's no comparison.

Someone using a bathroom that matches their gender does not hurt anyone! But it is necessary to be safe & comfortable. This is especially true for trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people who face high risks of harassment or assault in any public washrooms, and even higher risks in washrooms whose assigned genders do not match theirs.

Pretending to be or identify as an inanimate object is one way that people can imply that they do not believe that trans people's genders are as valid as cis people's genders without even having to say that. It can be very hurtful when cisgender people claim to identify as inanimate objects (when they really don't!).

Point of Privilege...

Being able to make jokes ridiculing other people's realities in ways that can hurt them but can't hurt you is evidence of your privilege.