

# MEDIA REFERENCE GUIDE

STYLEBOOK SUPPLEMENT ON LESBIAN, GAY,  
BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER TERMINOLOGY  
IN THE PHILIPPINES



RAINBOW RIGHTS  
PHILIPPINES

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U.S. EMBASSY



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## DISCLAIMER

This media reference guide is a result of dialogues and desktop research conducted by *Outrage Magazine* and Rainbow Rights Project Inc., with external contributions. It is meant to be an advocacy guide and does not claim to be a comprehensive and accurate manual. The views and interpretations do not necessarily reflect those of the US Embassy, Manila, and the Fund for Global Human Rights.

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## FOREWORD

It can be argued that among the most affected by biases of media practitioners are members of minority sectors, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, which is not always given fair coverage by media outlets.

The power of the media cannot be stressed enough, with various forms of media often aiding in the construction of accepted realities. Perceptions of issues/concerns are greatly affected by how they are represented, and since it is often the media that provides to the people the representations of issues/concerns, their effect is truly immense.

However, the media has its limits - for instance, many media outlets are tied to commercial interests. Due to these limitations, representations seen in the media may not always be fair. In a 2013 report on the status of press freedom in the Philippines, media watchdog Freedom House stated:

"The Philippine media scene is characterized by large, elite, and often family-owned conglomerates with interests in media and other large sectors of the economy. The elite who own media often use them to further their business or political interests. While the private press includes hundreds of newspaper titles, television ownership is more concentrated, with the two largest broadcast networks (ABS-CBN and GMA-7) controlled by wealthy families who own other media and non-media holdings and whose major TV networks dominate audience share and advertising... Often criticized for lacking journalistic ethics, media outlets tend to reflect the political or economic orientations of their owners and patrons. The practice of using bribes or strategic 'favors' to elicit positive coverage is widespread but also openly debated and challenged by

journalist ethics trainings conducted by media groups and reform advocates. News reports are often rooted in sensationalism and innuendo in order to boost circulation. The nature of advertising and the prevalence in radio broadcasting of 'block timing'—buying airtime for political or partisan purposes—contribute to sensational reporting and violence against its practitioners."

It can be argued that among the most affected by biases of media practitioners are members of minority sectors, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, which is not always given fair coverage by media outlets.

It is because of this that the "Media Reference Guide: Stylebook Supplement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Terminology in the Philippines" was developed. It is intended to complement the prose stylebooks of local individual publications, as well as existing stylebooks that may have influenced them (e.g. Associated Press stylebook).

Particularly, this is an attempt to ensure inclusive coverage of LGBT people by:

1. Providing guidance in upholding the dignity of LGBT people;
2. Introducing language that can be aptly used when addressing the LGBT community in media programming;
3. Serving as a guide in the development of policies and instructional materials in schools of journalism and communication; and
4. Standardizing strategies to increase LGBT voices - thus visibility - in the media.

*“Media Reference Guide: Stylebook Supplement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Terminology in the Philippines”* may be used as a guide in promoting a better and fairer perspective of LGBT in media by:

1. Government offices that involve media (e.g. Film Academy of the Philippines, Film Development Council of the Philippines, Philippine Information Agency, Presidential Communications Operations Office, National Telecommunications Commission, Movie and Television Review and Classification Board, Optical Media Board, Philippine Broadcast Services, and spokespersons/speechwriters of government agencies and/or officials);
2. Commission on Higher Education and Development (CHED) in its capacity to supervise schools of journalism and communication;
3. National media federations and associations (e.g.

Philippine Press Institute, Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, Center for Community Journalism and Development, National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas, AdBoard, National Press Club, National Press Club, Philippine Movement for Press Freedom, Kapisanan ng mga Manggawa sa Media sa Pilipinas, Press Foundation of Asia, Photojournalists Guild of the Philippines, Bukluran ng mga Mamamahayag sa Sariling Wika);

4. Schools of journalism and communication; and
5. Gender and media educators (e.g. Philippine Association of Communication Educators, Women's Studies Association of the Philippines).

This stylebook was developed following focus group discussions (FGDs) with LGBT community leaders in: Quezon City in Metro Manila; Davao City; Angeles City; San Fernando in La Union; Zamboanga City; Dipolog City; Ipi in Zamboanga del Sur; Cebu City; and Baguio City.

This stylebook has three key parts, namely: a guide in developing stories that are sensitive to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression; LGBT-related terminology in media programming; and a guide when covering the transgender community, including - among others, transgender-specific terminology, and transgender names, pronoun usage and descriptions.

Inasmuch as this stylebook intends to be comprehensive, its content has limitations.

1. The stylebook only includes English and Filipino terms, as well as colloquial terms related to the LGBT community that are already being used by the media (and whether or not these should be used or not). This is because the Philippines has over 180 individual languages, with 41 of these languages institutional (SIL International Publications, n.d.), and including all LGBT-related terms from all these languages will be next to impossible.
2. The stylebook also includes inputs from LGBT community leaders who participated in FGDs, particularly on the applicability of the LGBT-related terms used by the media in the venues of the FGDs.

In the end, *“Media Reference Guide: Stylebook Supplement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Terminology in the Philippines”* recognizes the pivotal role of media as shaper of public opinion. But it also highlights the importance of upholding standards and ethics in media programming, particularly in ensuring that a minority sector - i.e. LGBT community - is given fair representation.

The stylebook will be continually updated and the latest version will always be available at [outragemag.com](http://outragemag.com) and [www.rainbowrights.org](http://www.rainbowrights.org).

## INTRODUCTION

A balance needs to be struck between the media's freedom to decide on its content/s, and fair and accurate representation of these content/s, in this case - and particularly - of LGBT people.

In the dissemination of information, various forms of media serve as gatekeepers - that is, they “determine what content and what information in this content will make it to the public”. Because of their role as gatekeepers, they set the public agenda or the salience of issues. Inadvertently, the media ends up serving as a “socializing agent by constructing reality and then disseminating this reality to the mass public” (Pollock, 1996).

A good example of this can be found in the use of language, with the media not only establishing new words (e.g., Internet), but even extending meanings of existing words (e.g., surfing, as in surfing the Net) (Pollock, 1996).

Already, the current generation learns about social issues from characters and scenes depicted in media (Chung, 2007). Problems arise when representations seen in the media are fallacious, and so “they are likely to develop false assumptions and prejudiced attitudes” (Chung, 2007).

This is problematic for LGBT people, particularly when “frequent media consumption lead viewers to cultivate beliefs about homosexuality that coincide with those portrayed media” (Calzo and Ward, 2009). This may be because “media representation of LGBT is only one-dimensional: the character possesses only one personality type - often not substantial even - and it stays that way until the end... Most, if not all, portrayals of gays in television and film continue to perpetuate stereotypes as promiscuous, unstable in handling relationships and ridiculous”. What is perpetuated is “a negative stereotyping of homosexuals based on their lifestyle and disposition” (Tagudina, 2012).

It cannot be stressed enough that a balance needs to be struck between the media's freedom to decide on its content/s, and fair and accurate representation of these content/s, in this case - and particularly - of LGBT people.

### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of the press - often encapsulated in the freedom of expression - is contained in international law. Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), for one, states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) solidified the recognition of freedom of expression though a treaty ratified by over 150 States, including the Philippines.

The environment for media freedom in the Philippines is said to have remained largely stable since the return of democracy in the country in 1986 with the rise to power of former President Corazon C. Aquino who toppled strongman Ferdinand E. Marcos. Freedom of

the press and expression that was largely curtailed under Martial Law was included in the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

Section 4, Article III of the Constitution specifically states:

"No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances."

The Philippine press continues to rank relatively well among countries rated by international media monitoring bodies. From 2002 to 2005, for instance, Freedom House ranked the Philippine press as "free" (Braid, 2014).

There have been instances when the lives of journalists were put in danger. For instance, in 2009, 34 journalists were killed in the line of duty in the infamous Maguindanao massacre, which was called as the "single deadliest event for journalists" by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2009). The country is said to be "one of the most dangerous places for journalists"<sup>1</sup> with "dozens of unresolved murder cases registered over the past decade"<sup>2</sup> (Katigbak, 2015).

Nonetheless, Freedom House still noted that "government censorship does not typically affect... material. Both the private

media and the country's many publicly owned television and radio stations address numerous controversial topics, including alleged election fraud, ongoing counterinsurgency campaigns, and high-level corruption cases" (Freedom House, 2012).

The Philippine media is - by and large - left to its own devices in decisions concerning its programming and/or content. As Freedom House (2013) noted, "despite continued inertia in dealing with the ongoing issue of impunity in cases of violence against journalists, as well as the introduction of potentially restrictive internet legislation.... there are no restrictive licensing requirements for newspapers or journalists, and few legal limitations such as privacy or obscenity laws."

#### LIMITS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

It is worth highlighting that while the 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, the Supreme Court already repeatedly stated that "freedom of expression is not absolute, and the right can be subject to some regulations of the State in order that it may not be injurious to the equal right of others" (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013).

As early as 1969, for instance, in *Gonzales vs. Commission on Elections (COMELEC)*, the Supreme

**"No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances."**

Section 4, Article III ,  
Philippine Constitution

<sup>1</sup> Freedom House's "Freedom of the Press 2015" ranked the Philippines 86th in its rankings on global press freedom among 199 countries and territories.

<sup>2</sup> The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranked the country as the third worst in the world on its 2014 impunity index, with dozens of unresolved murder cases registered over the past decade.

Court (SC) held:

"From the language of the specific constitutional provision, it would appear that the right is not susceptible of any limitation. No law may be passed abridging the freedom of speech and of the press. The realities of life in a complex society preclude however, a literal interpretation. Freedom of expression is not an absolute. It would be too much to insist that at all times and under all circumstances it should remain unfettered and unrestrained. There are other societal values that press for recognition."

The SC reiterated in subsequent rulings that "freedom of expression, as with the other freedoms encased in the Bill of Rights, is, however, not absolute"<sup>3</sup>, and that "(t)he freedom to express ones sentiments and belief does not grant one the license to vilify in public the honor and integrity of another"<sup>4</sup>.

Interestingly - and arguably apt in media coverage of LGBT people - the SC also stated that "freedom of speech and of the press means something more than the right to approve existing political beliefs or economic arrangements, to lend support to official measures, and to take refuge in the existing climate of opinion on any matter of public consequence. When atrophied, the right becomes meaningless. The right belongs as

well - if not more to those who question, who do not conform, who differ. The ideas that may be expressed under this freedom are confined not only to those that are conventional or acceptable to the majority. To be truly meaningful, freedom of speech and of the press should allow and even encourage the articulation of the unorthodox view, though it be hostile to or derided by others; or though such view induces a condition of unrest, creates dissatisfaction with conditions as they are, or even stirs people to anger<sup>5</sup>."

LGBT people, who continue to be minorities, therefore deserve similar fair treatment by the media.

#### LGBT PORTRAYAL IN THE MEDIA

However, in practice, the way media provides coverage to LGBT people remains problematic.

On the one hand, LGBT people continue to be under-represented in various forms of media. GLAAD (2015), for instance, noted that in

Hollywood-produced media - many of them reaching the Philippines - LGBT characters continue to be sparse.

Specifically, of the 881 regular characters expected to appear on broadcast primetime programming this 2016, only 35 (or 4%) were identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual; there were an additional 35 recurring LGB

characters. On cable, the number of regular LGBT characters counted increased from 64 to 84, while recurring characters increased from 41 to 58. Meanwhile, no transgender characters were counted on primetime broadcast programming, while only three recurring trans characters were counted on cable (2%).

While there remain few local studies looking at LGBT representation in Philippine media, it can still be argued that LGBT issues have been getting more attention in recent years. For instance, there have been *telenovelas*/TV shows with stories revolving around LGBT characters, including *My Husband's Lover*, *The Rich Man's Daughter*, *Beautiful Boxer* and *Destiny Rose*. Episodes in TV series - from *Wagas to Maalaala Mo Kaya* - also have LGBT-specific narratives. The demise of transgender woman Jennifer Laude in the hands of U.S Marine Lance Cpl. Joseph Scott Pemberton also compelled the media to deal with some facets of transgender-related issues in the Philippines.

However - and on the other hand - even when LGBT people are given media coverage, "archaic and unrealistic LGBT characters pervade mass media" (LGBT Finance Limited, n.d.).

In GLAAD's report, for instance, bisexual representations rose on both broadcast and cable (from

<sup>3</sup> For instance, in *Lagunsad v. Soto vda. De Gonzales* (No. L-32066), August 6, 1979, the SC stated that freedom of expression "may be regulated to some extent to serve important public interests, some forms of speech not being protected. As has been held, the limits of the freedom of expression are reached when the expression touches upon matters of essentially private concern".

<sup>4</sup> In *Lucas v. Royo* (G.R. No. 136185), October 30, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> In *Gonzales v. COMELEC* (G.R. No. L-27833), April 18, 1969.

10 to 18), though “unfortunately, many of these characters still fall into dangerous stereotypes about bisexual people” (GLAAD, 2015).

Often, the characters are “built for a single purpose and are often driven by the plot, rather than driving the plot themselves; to this end, LGBT characters are often consigned to the status of supporting character, at best, to a heterosexual lead. Such characters often represent predictable tropes that fall into stifling, thoughtless categories” (LGBT Finance Limited, n.d.).

LGBT portrayal is said to be limited to “over-used tropes” (LGBT Finance Limited, n.d.), including comedic relief, over-sexualized decoration, and/or deviant/ non-“normal” (LGBT Finance Limited, n.d.). Also, LGBT-related content often automatically receive R rating regardless of content; if not, this is shown only after-hours, past primetime<sup>6</sup>.

LGBT portrayal in the Philippine media is not too different, with stereotypes still perpetuated to the detriment of LGBT people. In *Being LGBT in Asia: The Philippines Country Report*, Michael David C. Tan (2014) - writing for UNDP and USAID - cited instances when

representations of LGBT people can be questioned. In 2004, for instance, after an entertainment program provided media coverage on the wedding ceremony of two women, the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) - the regulatory agency responsible for reviewing and classifying TV programs and motion pictures shown in the country - released a memorandum that warned against the positive depictions of same-sex relationships (Human Rights Watch, 2004).<sup>7</sup>

Tagudina (2012) added:

“The queer community in the Philippines has many faces, but the one most used frequently seen is the parlor gay stereotype. Dressed in the most flamboyant clothes, with the color palette of every bright color there is, while adorned with plastic jewels and glass beads, as they walk off the world with pride and ardor - the very reason why they are the façade of the LGBT community. The parlor gay is a staple in almost every comedy show, characterized by his fluent gay lingo, with moves that borders graceful and seductive... Usually, parlor gay stereotypes are the most ridiculed because they are

<sup>6</sup> According to LGBT Finance Limited (n.d.), to put this in perspective, “movies featuring rape, torture, drugs, and other traumatic experiences also receive R ratings. While it’s easy to agree with severe ratings for gratuitous violence, the shared ratings between gore-fests and touching LGBT films begs the question of what is ‘adult’ about the second category.”

<sup>7</sup> In May 2004, a memorandum sent by former MTRCB chairperson Marissa LaGuardia to producers of television shows stated that “lesbian and homosexual relationships are an abnormality of human nature. To show such kind of abnormality/aberration on prime-time TV programs gives the impression that the network is encouraging lesbian and homosexual relationships.”

represented as overly made up, or exaggeratedly made to act out-of-this-world gayness.”

Misgendering also remains common. In 2012, *Mabuhay*, Philippine Airlines’ (PAL) monthly inflight magazine, seemingly ridiculed the decision to allow transwomen to compete in the Miss Universe beauty pageant (UNDP and USAID, 2014).<sup>8</sup> In 2013, when transwoman Mimi Juarez was given an acting award during the 9th Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Cinema, she was considered under the male category (i.e. Best Actor). She was also repeatedly addressed using

the male pronoun “he” in media reports. More recently, in the local media’s coverage of the death of transwoman Jennifer Laude, most media outlets opted to use her legal name (i.e. Jeffrey), instead of the name Laude used to identify herself as when she was still alive (i.e. Jennifer).

Truly, even while “fictional LGBT characters have become more common in movies, TV, and more as the LGBT community has gained wider visibility... perceptions of LGBT characters in mass media still has a long way to go” (LGBT Finance Limited, n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> In the June 2012 issue of *Mabuhay*, a short article noting the decision of Miss Universe to allow transwomen to compete in the pageant was entitled “MISS... TER UNIVERSE?”. This was brought to the attention of Eastgate Publishing Corporation, publisher of *Mabuhay*, which stated that it never intended to make fun or mock transgender people.

## DEVELOPING SOGIE SENSITIVE STORIES

Giving issues an LGBT-specific lens ensures that members of the LGBT community are given fair and accurate media representation.

Below are some questions that can help make a story fair to LGBT people:

### **Who created this story/narrative/text? What is its purpose?**

Media practitioners should be critical in identifying the ideological position of the source/s of a story. For instance, a material produced by a religious organization on marriage equality will be very different from a material that will be produced by an organization that is supportive of equal rights for LGBT people.

### **Whose voices and interests are being represented? Whose are absent?**

Fair representation means inclusion of voices that may not have been included in the original material source. This is to ensure that the story/stories remain objective by providing those being discussed the opportunity to voice their side/s.

### **How varied are the voices in this story? Where are the LGBT people in it?**

Related to the above, and particularly when the stories revolve around LGBT issues, media practitioners should be wary that LGBT perspectives are represented independently. This is to ensure that the interpretation of a given text is done with the proper context. This also ensures that the different impacts of events and processes for LGBT and non-LGBT people are stressed.

### **How are the LGBT people portrayed? Does the portrayal reinforce stereotypes? What do the images and narratives being deployed say about LGBT people?**

Do the narratives describe an entire subgroup of people, or are they only describing a single individual? Is an interviewee positioned as an exemplification of his/her subgroup, and if so, what is being implied about the group he/she belongs to?

### **What roles do LGBT people have in the story, and how do these factors shape the issue and story?**

Do the LGBT people only exist in the narrative/s to boost the position of the non-LGBT people, or do they have meaningful reason for existence?

Often, LGBT people - if included in narratives at all - are not given as much exposure as non-LGBT people, so that their lived experiences remain under-represented. As such, media practitioners should at least attempt to give equal media exposure to ensure that LGBT people do not continue being represented only as inconsequential characters.

### **What are the power relationships between LGBT and non-LGBT people, and how do these roles and power relationships further explain the issue being addressed?**

Representations of LGBT people should go beyond one of the most pervasive tropes - i.e. that of being a comedic sidekick to a non-LGBT person.

### **If the representations in question use humor, are LGBT people in on the joke or are they the joke?**

There is a difference between making jokes that are inclusive versus poking fun at the expense of "other" people, such as members of the LGBT community.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Selecting appropriate terminology to refer to individuals or groups of people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) is challenging. This is because language - *per se* - is not necessarily the only concern, since those who use them also need to be aware of contexts.

It can be argued that the use of SOGIE-related terminology is even more challenging in countries like the Philippines, which has a big number of languages, not to mention dialects. SIL International Publications (n.d.) counted 186 individual languages listed in the Philippines; of these, 182 are living, while only four are extinct. Of the living languages, 41 are institutional (that is, used and sustained by social institutions). Terms used, therefore, may differ because of cultural settings and the norms about SOGIE in these settings.

Fortunately, particularly for media observers, despite the number of languages and dialects in the Philippines, only two official national languages were designated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, i.e. Filipino and English. These are also the languages more often used by mainstream media, particularly those based in metropolitan areas.

Because of the prevalent use of Filipino and English, this stylebook - the "Media Reference Guide: Stylebook Supplement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Terminology in the Philippines" - mainly focuses on SOGIE-related terms from the two official national languages of the Philippines.

Nonetheless, some SOGIE-related words from other Philippine

languages and dialects that are now also being used by mainstream media in the Philippines are also included. These include SOGIE-related colloquial terms (e.g. gay lingo) that the Philippine media also use.

### **SOGIE-RELATED TERMINOLOGY USED BY ASSOCIATED PRESS (AP) AND NEW YORK TIMES**

Since the Constitution protects the right of expression and of the press, media outlets can publish without fear of government interference. There is also no organization existing in the Philippines to certify journalists, and no single organization existing to monitor and/or penalize unethical behavior/s. This makes it difficult to impose a uniform standard of ethics for all media practitioners in the country.

Not surprisingly, most media outlets have their own guidelines that dictate their content and/or programming styles. Unfortunately, these guidelines do not necessarily deal with issues related to SOGIE. Instead, various journalistic codes of ethics uphold fairness in treatment by the media.

Article 22 of the Broadcast Code of the Philippines of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), for one, states:

"A person's race, religion, color, ethnic, gender and physical or mental disability shall not be used in a way that could embarrass, denigrate or ridicule him."

Meanwhile, Article VII of the Philippine Journalist's Code of Ethics - prepared by the Philippine Press Institute in 1988 - states: "I shall not in any manner ridicule, cast aspersions on, or degrade any person by reason of sex, creed, religious belief, political conviction, cultural and ethnic origin."

Overseas, the stylebooks of both the Associated Press (AP) and the New York Times (NYT) have SOGIE-

related content. For instance, both stylebooks inhibit the use of the term "homosexual", which - because of its clinical history and pejorative connotations - is often used by anti-gay people to suggest that lesbians and gay men are somehow diseased or psychologically and emotionally disordered. AP and NYT also have instituted rules against the use of terminology such as "sexual preference" and "gay lifestyle."

The following are SOGIE-related editorial guidelines from AP and NYT as they appear in their respective style guides.

**Most media outlets have their own guidelines that dictate their content and/or programming styles. Unfortunately, these guidelines do not necessarily deal with issues related to SOGIE.**

#### ASSOCIATED PRESS (2013)

**gay** Used to describe men and women attracted to the same sex, though lesbian is the more common term for women. Preferred over homosexual except in clinical contexts or references to sexual activity. Include sexual orientation only when it is pertinent to a story, and avoid references to "sexual preference" or to a gay or alternative "lifestyle."

**lesbian** See *gay*.

**husband, wife** Regardless of sexual orientation, husband or wife is acceptable in all references to individuals in any legally recognized marriage.

**transgender** Use the pronoun preferred by the individuals who have acquired the physical characteristics of the opposite sex or present themselves in a way that does not correspond with their sex at birth. If that preference is not expressed, use the pronoun consistent with the way the individuals live publicly. See *transsexual*.

**transexual** A person who changes gender by undergoing surgical procedures. See *transgender*.

#### NEW YORK TIMES (2013)

**bisexual** Do not use the slang shorthand bi.

**homosexuality** See *bisexual; gay; lesbian; sexual orientation*.

**gay (adj.)** is preferred to homosexual in most references. Generally confine homosexual in specific references to sexual activity or clinical orientation. Gay may refer to homosexual men or more generally to homosexual men and women. In specific references to women, lesbian is preferred. When the distinction is useful, write gay men and lesbians. Do not use gay as a singular noun. As a noun, the plural gays is acceptable, but avoid the singular gay. Also see *sexual orientation*.

**gay rights** Advocates for gay issues are concerned that the term may invite resentment by implying "special rights" that are denied other citizens; the advocates prefer phrases like equal rights or civil rights for gay people. But the shorter phrase is in wide use and often indispensable for confined headlines. When it occurs, define the issues precisely.

**homosexuality** See *bisexual; gay; lesbian; sexual orientation*.

**lesbian (adj. and n.)** Lowercase except in the names of organizations. Lesbian women is redundant. See *sexual orientation*.

**L.G.B.T.** Except in quotations and organization names, seek alternatives to this cumbersome abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. (Take care, however, not to inadvertently exclude relevant information; for example, if antidiscrimination legislation specifically applies to bisexual and transgender people, avoid suggesting that it only affects gay people.) If the abbreviation is necessary as a first reference, deftly explain it at some point. Note that some groups use G.L.B.T. instead. Do not use other, less familiar variations that include additional categories.

**same-sex marriage, gay marriage**

Both terms are acceptable, though the former is sometimes preferred to make clear that the expression covers both gay men and lesbians. Normally use wife or husband for people who are legally married. (Spouse is also accurate for either partner in any legal marriage, but do not use it simply to avoid husband and wife for same-sex couples.)

**sex changes**

See *transgender*.

**sexual orientation**

Never sexual preference, which carries the disputed implication that sexuality is a matter of choice. Cite a person's sexual orientation only when it is pertinent and its pertinence is clear to the reader. Also see *bisexual; gay; lesbian; straight*.

sexual preference.

Use sexual orientation instead.

straight.

meaning heterosexual, is classed as slang by some dictionaries and standard by others. Avoid any use that conveys an in-group flavor. But use the term freely (adj. only) in phrases drawing a contrast with gay: The film attracted gay and straight audiences alike.

transgender (adj.).

is an overall term for people whose current identity differs from their sex at birth, whether or not they have changed their biological characteristics. Cite a person's transgender status only when it is pertinent and its pertinence is clear to the reader. Unless a former name is newsworthy or pertinent, use the name and pronouns (he, his, she, her, hers) preferred by the transgender person. If no preference is known, use the pronouns consistent with the way the subject lives publicly.

Transgender is generally preferable to the older transsexual. Do not use the offensive slang tranny.

transvestite.

is outdated and often viewed as offensive. Use cross-dresser instead to describe someone of either sex who sometimes dresses in clothing associated with the opposite sex. Note that cross-dressing does not necessarily indicate that someone is gay or transgender.

#### DEFINITIONS OF BASIC TERMS

Particularly for the Philippines, the following are the recommended terminology to be used by media when dealing with programming and/or content concerning and/or involving LGBT people:

#### ENGLISH TERMS

Asexual

A person with no sexual feelings or desires.

Bisexual

One of the three main classifications of sexual orientation, along with heterosexuality and homosexuality, this refers to a person who has sexual and/or romantic attraction to both women and men. A bisexual identity does not necessarily equate to equal sexual attraction to both sexes. For instance, a man who is married to a woman may still self-identify as bisexual.

Cisgender

Describes people who are not transgender. "Cis-" is a Latin prefix meaning "on the same side as"; it is the antonym of "trans-".

Closeted

Often used as a state - i.e. being "in the closet" - to describe the situation of a person who keeps his or her sexual orientation or gender identity hidden from some or all people. The local term is *kloseta*, often used to talk derisively about people suspected of being LGBT though they have not publicly self-identified as such.

Coming out

A process of self-acceptance and/or the decision to reveal one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others. LGBT people first "come out" to themselves, and while they may choose to reveal their identity to others, publicly sharing one's identity may or may not be part of coming out. See *out, outing*.

Gay

A man who is sexually and romantically attracted to other men.

In many parts of the world, the word is synonymous to "homosexual" and is used to refer to both gay men and lesbians (such as when referring to "same-sex wedding" as "gay wedding"). This is not necessarily wrong, though it is preferable to use "lesbian" to refer to women with same-sex attraction. See *lesbian*.

Gay lifestyle

The term often used by anti-gay extremists to disparage lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lives. Just as there is no one "straight lifestyle", there is also no one lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender lifestyle. This is a term to be avoided.

Gender

The social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female - i.e. what a society considers "masculine" and "feminine" conduct.

This is different from a person's sex, as determined by his or her biology. One's sex does not always correspond with a person's gender, so the terms "sex" and "gender" are not interchangeable.

Gender Identity

A person's internal sense of being either male or female, both, or something other than male or female. A person's gender identity does not necessarily correspond to the biological sex assigned at birth. For instance, for transgender people, their gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Compared to gender expression (see below), gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression

The external manifestations of gender, usually expressed through the name used by a person, pronouns use when referring to a person, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice and mannerisms.

It is society that dictates whether these manifestations are masculine or feminine. These manifestations also change over time and vary by culture - e.g. men used to wear high heels in the past, men put on make-up in rock concerts, and even nowadays, outside of Western cultures, men's clothing still includes skirts/skirt-like garments.

Many transgender people take steps to align their gender expression with their gender identity, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth.

In the Philippines, many continue to think that gay and bi men are effeminate, and lesbian and bi women are masculine. However, lesbian, gay and bisexual people varied in their ways of dressing, their mannerisms and lifestyles. While the stereotypes persist about the effeminate man or masculine woman, it is worth stressing that there may be gay people who reflect these characteristics, the majority of lesbians, gay and bi men do not conform to these stereotypes. Also, many effeminate men and masculine women are straight.

<b>Gender role</b>	Society's concept of how men and women should act and/or behave based on socially constructed norms or standards.
<b>Gender non-conforming or Gender variant</b>	People who behave and appear in ways that do not fully conform to social expectations based on one's assigned sex. Since "gender non-conforming" has a negative connotation, "gender variant" is preferred.
<b>Hermaphrodite</b>	An old term used to describe a person with ambiguous genitalia. Because the term implies that a person is both fully male and fully female, which is a physiologic impossibility, it is considered scientifically inaccurate and clinically problematic. So as not to mislead, it is recommended for this to be avoided. See <i>intersex</i> .
<b>Homosexual</b>	Sexual orientation of a person whose primary sexual and romantic attractions are toward people of the same sex. The use of the term (both as an adjective and noun) is somewhat dated, except in medical and other formal contexts. The term also carries a negative connotation largely because homosexuality was listed in "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)" until 1986. As such, "gay" and "lesbian" are recommended for use. See <i>gay, lesbian</i> .
<b>Intersex</b>	The general term used to refer to a person born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. This is the preferred term over hermaphrodite (see above). Though being intersex is often discussed as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy does not always show up at birth. There are intersex persons who do not find out they have intersex anatomy until they reach puberty <sup>9</sup> , or even after death and are autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (even themselves) ever knowing.
<b>LGBT</b>	The acronyms for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Along with heterosexual, these describe people's sexual orientation (i.e. lesbian, gay and bisexual) and gender identity (transgender). It is now used as an inclusive term for groups and identities also considered as "sexual and gender minorities."

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the Supreme Court of the Philippines sided with Jeff Cagandahan to change his name and gender identifier (from female to male). While Cagandahan was registered as female at birth, while growing up, she developed secondary male characteristics and was diagnosed to have congenital adrenal hyperplasia, a condition where afflicted persons possess both male and female characteristics.

<b>Lesbian</b>	The sexual orientation of a woman whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is toward other women. The local term is <i>lesbiyana</i> .
<b>Men who have sex with men (MSM)</b>	Men who have sexual relations with persons of the same sex, but may or may not identify themselves as gay or bisexual. They may or may not also have sexual relationships with women. The term was coined to study the spread of disease among men who have sex with men regardless of their identity. As such, this refers to behavior and not identity. This is often used in research studies without considering issues of self-identification. The female equivalent is "women who have sex with women." See <i>gender identity, WSW</i> .
<b>Out</b>	A person who openly self-identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender in his or her personal, public, and/or professional life. For example: Charice Pempengco is an out lesbian singer. See <i>coming out, outing</i> (below).
<b>Outing</b>	When people are forced to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, it is called "outing" or being "outed". Outing a person in the absence of a compelling justification (e.g. public interest) is a violation of his or her right to privacy, and should be avoided. See <i>coming out, out</i> (above).
<b>Queer</b>	The term loosely refers to all the non-heterosexual groups listed here (LGBT). While the term originally had derogatory connotations, it is now being reclaimed by many in the LGBT community and use it to highlight that gender and sexual orientation are fluid and should not be rigidly categorized.
<b>Sex</b>	The classification of people as male or female, usually given at birth when a doctor or attending medical professional assigns a sex usually solely based on the appearance of the external anatomy. This is what is written on the birth certificate and other documents with gender markers.
<b>Sexual and gender minorities</b>	A more inclusive term that includes all persons with non-conforming sexualities and gender identities, including lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, gender non-conforming people, men who have sex with men (MSM), and women who have sex with women (WSW).

## Sexual orientation

The term used to describe a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. This is typically broken into identity categories, including: gay and lesbian (those attracted to the same sex), heterosexual (those attracted to the opposite sex), and bisexual (those attracted to both sexes). One's sexual orientation does not necessarily affect one's gender expression. For example, just because Boy Abunda is an out gay man, meaning he is attracted to other gay men, it does not mean that he desires to be like a woman or act in ways women are expected to act. This replaces "sexual preference", which implies that LGBT people can choose not to be LGBT. This is often used by anti-LGBT extremists to argue that LGBT people should not be respected unless they change. See *gender expression, gender role*.

## Transgender (also, "trans")

An umbrella term used to describe individuals whose gender identity differs from their sex at birth. For instance, if a doctor proclaims that a baby is male based on the child's anatomy, and that baby grows up and identifies as a woman, then that person is transgender. A transgender person may or may not adopt gender expression that is aligned with his or her gender identity. For instance, a transgender woman may not express herself in a feminine manner, and a transgender man may not express himself in a masculine manner. A transgender person may have any sexual orientation, so a transgender person may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is exclusively attracted to men will identify as a straight woman. Trans is the shorthand for transgender. See the succeeding section: *COVERING THE TRANS COMMUNITY*.

## Women who have sex with women (WSW)

Women who have sexual relations with persons of the same sex, but may or may not identify themselves as lesbian or bisexual. They may or may not also have sexual relationships with men. The term refers to behavior and not identity. This is often used in research studies without considering issues of self-identification. The male equivalent is "men who have sex with men." See *gender identity, MSM*.

## FILIPINO/LOCAL TERMS

### *Agi*

In the Hiligaynon language (often referred to as Ilonggo, a language spoken in the Western Visayas and Negros Island Region of the Philippines), this is the term used to refer to gender non-conforming men. Although it is used interchangeably with gay, *agi* is actually often used as a derogatory term refer to effeminate men or men whose gender expression is not aligned with social expectation. Use the term only when a person uses it to identify himself. See *bakla, bayot, beki*. Also see *gay*.

### *Bading*

A term used to generally refer to gay men, though also to effeminate men or men whose gender expression is not aligned with social expectation. Use the term only when a person uses it to identify himself. See *agi, bakla, bayot, beki*. Also see *gay*.

### *Bakla*

In Filipino, *bakla* generally refers to gay men. However, the term is often used as a derogatory term refer to effeminate men or men whose gender expression is not aligned with social expectation. Use the term only when a person uses it to identify himself. The term is also used to describe a weak or cowardly person. As such, this is derogatory. See *agi, bayot, beki*. Also see *gay*.

### *Bantut*

Similar to "bakla", "bayot" and "agi", this term mainly used in Southern Philippines refers to effeminate gay men and trans women. It is often as a slur and should be avoided unless a person uses it to identify himself. See *agi, bakla, bayot, beki*. Also see *gay*.

### *Bayot/Oyot*

The term used to refer to gender non-conforming men in Cebuano (also referred to as Bisaya, Binisaya or Visayan, a language spoken mostly in Central Visayas and Mindanao). Although it is used interchangeably with gay, *bayot* is actually often used as a derogatory term refer to effeminate men or men whose gender expression is not aligned with social expectation. Use the term only when a person uses it to identify himself, and not to describe a person. The term is also used to describe a weak or cowardly person. As such, this is derogatory. **Acceptable:** *Gikulata siya kay bayot daw siya* (He was bashed because they assumed he's gay). **Not acceptable:** *Sige'g tabi kay bayot man* (He gossips because he's gay). See *agi, bakla, beki*. Also see *gay*.

**Bayuton/  
Bayoton**

Meaning “acting like a gay man”, the term is used to ridicule effeminate men because their gender expression is not aligned with social expectation. The term presupposes that all gay men only act a specific way, and is therefore erroneous.

See *agi, bakla, bayot*.  
Also see *gay, trans*.

**Beki/Beks**

A colloquial term derived from *bakla*. This is a relatively new term, and is often used to refer to cisgender gay men. This term is not interchangeable with *trans*. Use the term only when a person uses it to identify himself. See *agi, bakla, bayot*.  
Also see *gay, trans*.

**Binabae/  
Binabaye/  
Nag-binabae**

Meaning “like a woman (i.e. *babae*)”, the term is used by some members of the trans community. However, its use can be offensive because: 1) being trans woman is not just an “act”; and 2) this term is also being used to demean effeminate men or men whose gender expression is not aligned with socially constructed norms for men (e.g. those who cross dress). Use only when a person uses this to identify herself. See *agi, bakla, bayot, beki, transpinay*.  
Also see *gay, trans*.

**Butch**

A lesbian whose gender expression is masculine; opposite of *femme* (below). It is worth stressing that these are not the only gender expressions of lesbians, and assuming that a lesbian should only be one or the other is erroneous.

**Femme**

A lesbian whose gender expression is feminine; opposite of *butch* (above).

**Ilogen**

A colloquial term used to refer to men who have sex with men (MSM). This is actually derogatory by implying that MSM debase themselves by having sex with members of the LGBT community to get something in return (e.g. cash). See *men who have sex with men*.

**Kloseta**

The term used for people “in the closet” or those who keep their sexual orientation or gender identity hidden from some or all people. It is often used in a derisive manner when discussing people suspected of being LGBT though they have not publicly self-identified as such.

**Ladlad**

A dated term used to refer to being out as LGBT. However, there are times when the term is used to force people to come out of the closet, and often as an attempt to belittle them. For example, “*Kaya tsismoso kasi hindi ladlad* (He gossips because he is not out)”, which insinuates that gossiping is inherent among gay men. See *agi, bakla, bayot*.  
Also see *gay*.

**Lalakihan/  
Lakin-on**

Meaning “like a man (i.e. *lalaki*)”, the term is used by some members of the trans community. However, its use can be offensive because: 1) being trans man is not just an “act”; and 2) this term is also being used to demean masculine women or women whose gender expression is not aligned with socially constructed norms for women (e.g. those who are tomboyish). Use only when a person uses this to identify herself. See *binabae/binabaye, tomboy, transpinoy*.  
Also see *trans*.

**Lesbiyana**

The sexual orientation of a woman whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is toward other women. See *tomboy*.  
Also see *lesbian*.

**Mahuyang**

Used particularly when referring to gay men or transgender women, this is a Visayan word that describes weakness. Because the word is demeaning, it should be avoided. See *agi, bakla, bayot*.  
Also see *gay*.

**Pa-girl**

Refers to gay men whose gender expression is feminine (i.e. like a girl). This is often used to denigrate men who do not exhibit socially constructed masculine gender expressions. See *agi, bakla, bayot*.  
Also see *gay*.

**Pamhinta**

As a play on the Filipino word paminta (black pepper), this is a colloquial term referring to gay men whose gender expression is masculine (i.e. “like a man”). This is often used to segregate those who act according to socially constructed masculine gender expressions versus those who don’t, with the former considered more acceptable than the latter. See *agi, bakla, bayot*.  
Also see *gay*.

**Parlorista**

An older term used to refer to mostly gay men and trans women who work in beauty parlors (thus the name). However, because this is often used to ridicule those who are effeminate, this term should be avoided.

**Silahis**

An older term used to refer to cisgender men who have sex with other men. Since these men do not necessarily self-identify as homosexual or bisexual, the term has evolved as a derogatory term used to refer to those who are not out or open about their assumed sexual orientation or gender identity. See *coming out, bisexual, MSM*.

## Sirena

The Filipino word for "mermaid", this is also used to refer to effeminate gay men and transgender women. The term is pejorative because of the insinuation that - by being LGBT - a person then becomes "half human, half non-human". See *agi, bakla, bayot, beki*. Also see *gay*.

## Third sex

An old term referring to members of the LGBT community, who are said to only come third after the first sex (i.e. man) and second sex (i.e. woman). The term is actually offensive not only to LGBT people but even to women because of the assumption of the superiority of heterosexual men. See *LGBT*.

## Tomboy

Refers to a girl who exhibits characteristics or behaviors considered typical of a boy. While there are times when the term is used as an identity (for instance, Charice Pempengco came out as a *tomboy*), the term actually refers to gender expression and not sexual orientation. Therefore, unless a person uses the term to identify herself, it is to be avoided. A variation of this term is *tibo*. See *lesbiyana*.

## Transpinay

Used to refer to transgender women in the Philippines, this was coined by the Society of Transsexual Women of the Philippines (STRAP), a local transgender organization. For transgender males, the equivalent is *transpinay*. Since the term was coined in Metro Manila, it is not necessarily accepted in other parts of the country. As such, it is best to ask how a person wants to be identified. See the succeeding section: *COVERING THE TRANS COMMUNITY*.

## Tunay na babae

When an individual whose sexual orientation or gender identity does not conform with the majority (in this case, the heterosexual population or people whose physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to the opposite sex), they are erroneously considered as "incomplete" or "fake versions" of the sex they belong to. There are times when a lesbian in the Philippines is referred to as *di tunay na babae* (in English, "not a real woman") because of the assumption that a "real" woman can only be attracted to a man, and should only act and/or behave based on socially constructed norms or standards for women (for instance, wear a skirt). Because it ignores the diverse sexual orientations or gender identities, this is false and is discriminatory. See *tomboy, tunay na lalaki* (below). Also see *lesbian, Terms to avoid*.

## Tunay na lalaki

There are times when a gay man in the Philippines is referred to as *di tunay na lalaki* (in English, "not a real man") because of the assumption that a "real" man can only be attracted to a woman, and should only act and/or behave based on socially constructed norms or standards for men. As with *tunay na babae*, because it ignores the diverse sexual orientations or gender identities, this is false and is discriminatory. See *agi, bakla, bayot, tunay na babae* (above). Also see *gay, Terms to avoid*.

In the 1970s, both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Meanwhile, the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) released a statement on the non-discrimination of LGBT people in 2011.

## TERMS TO AVOID

Offensive: homosexual  
Preferred: gay, gay man, lesbian

The word "homosexual" has a clinical history, and is therefore used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered. In the 1970s, both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder. Meanwhile, the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) released a statement on the non-discrimination of LGBT people in 2011.

The PAP stated:

"LGBT Filipinos often confront social pressures to hide, suppress or even attempt to change their identities and expressions as conditions for their social acceptance and enjoyment of rights... This anti-LGBT prejudice and discrimination tend to be based on a rhetoric of moral condemnation and are fueled by ignorance or unfounded beliefs associating these gender expressions and sexual orientations with psychopathology or maladjustment. However, decades of scientific research have led mental health professional organizations worldwide to conclude that lesbian, gay and bisexual orientations are normal variants of human sexuality" (PAP, 2011).

Meanwhile, the Associated Press, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* restrict the use of the term "homosexual" (See AP, NYT).

Avoid using "homosexual" except in direct quotes. Instead, use "gay" or "lesbian" to describe people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Offensive: gay lifestyle  
Preferred: gay lives, gay and lesbian lives

The phrase "gay lifestyle" assumes that there is a single lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle. However, lesbians, gay men and bisexuals live diverse lives. The term is often used to slander lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals by suggesting that their orientation is a choice and can or should be "cured" (See AP, NYT).

Offensive: sexual preference  
Preferred: sexual orientation

The term suggests that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice and can or should be "cured." Use, instead, sexual orientation, the accurate description of an individual's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex (See AP, NYT).

Offensive: tunay na lalaki/tunay na babae  
Preferred: man, woman or gay/gay man, lesbian

By suggesting that only heterosexual people are *tunay* (real), these terms are not only erroneous but are discriminatory and demeaning. As such, these are to be avoided.

Offensive: *alaga ng bakla/tomboy*

Preferred: use terms also used for heterosexual people in relationships, e.g. *kasintahan, asawa*; otherwise, use “partner” Even if same-sex romantic relationships are still not legally recognized in the Philippines, these relationships are formed with consent. As such, referring to one as “*alaga ng bakla/tomboy*” suggests that this person was forced into that relationship. This demeans LGBT relationships and must be avoided. It also insinuates that the relationship was formed only for convenience (e.g. transactional). Use the terms being used when addressing heterosexual people in romantic relationships (for instance, *kasintahan and asawa*); otherwise, a more neutral term is “partner”.

Offensive (when used on gay men): *binabae/binabaye, bakla, bayot, agi* and similar derogatory words

Preferred: gay, gay man

While there are times when a gay man personally uses one of these words to identify his sexual orientation, these are often used as derogatory terms to refer to effeminate men. Use should be limited to self-identification, or when someone who said it is quoted.

Offensive: terms that effeminate gay men, or masculinize lesbians

Preferred: terms related to sexual orientation

The sexual orientation (e.g. gay, lesbian) of a person does not necessarily have anything to do with his or her gender expression (i.e. masculine or feminine). As such, terms used should reflect sexual orientation and not gender expression.

Not acceptable: *Kumikendeng kasi bakla* (He sways when he walks because he's gay).

Acceptable: *Kumikendeng siya* (He sways).

Offensive: *tomboy, tibo*

Preferred: lesbian, *lesbiyana*

While there are times when a lesbian personally uses one of these words to identify her sexual orientation, these are often used as derogatory terms to refer to those who present themselves in a masculine manner. Use only when a person self-identified as such, or when quoting a person who used the term.

Offensive: epithets such as fag, faggot, dyke, homo

Similar to other epithets that target other groups, these terms should not be used unless in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. It is preferred for reporters to say: “The person used a derogatory term to refer to LGBT people.”

Offensive: deviant, disordered, dysfunctional, diseased, perverted, destructive, home-wrecker, *mang-aagaw, ahas, may topak, may sira* and similar descriptions

The notion that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a psychological disorder was discredited by both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association, which declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in the 1970s. The Psychological Association of the Philippines backed this by releasing a statement in 2011 on the non-discrimination of LGBT people.

When these terms are used, it is often to portray LGBT people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Use of these words should therefore be avoided; if at all, only use only when quoted directly.

Offensive: associating LGBT people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest These claims insinuate that LGBT people pose a threat to society, to families and to children in particular. However, being LGBT is not indicative of any tendency toward pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest. These should therefore be avoided; if at all, only use only when quoted directly.

## COVERING THE TRANS COMMUNITY

**The difficulties encountered by transgender people are compounded by the manner of reporting on them, since these often fail to respect their gender identity. Using correct terminology is the first step in the development of more respectful stories about transgender people.**

Transgender people are among the most marginalized in society, with many facing impediments in legal recognition, and in accessing education, employment, healthcare services, and public and private spaces and services. It is estimated that transgender people are four times more likely to live in poverty; and 90 percent report experience harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job. Also, over 40 percent (41%) attempt suicide, compared to 1.6% of the general population (GLAAD, 2014c).

Worse, most transgender people can not seek redress as victims of the discrimination they encounter because of trans illiterate - if not outright transphobic - systems.

In the Philippines, it is not uncommon to watch/hear/read from news sources about discrimination encountered by transgender people, including dismissal from employment and denial of entry into private establishments, all because of one's gender expression.

Unfortunately, the Philippines currently has no national law that protects LGBT people against discrimination, and only a handful of jurisdictions have anti-discrimination ordinances in place that include sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression among its protected categories. These include: Angeles City, Pampanga; Antipolo City; Bacolod City; Candon City, Ilocos

Sur; Cebu City; Dagupan City; Davao City; Quezon City; Vigan City; Mandaue City; Puerto Princesa City; Municipality of San Julian, Eastern Samar; Province of Agusan del Norte; and Province of Cavite.

The difficulties encountered by transgender people are compounded by the manner of reporting on them, since these often fail to respect their gender identity. Using correct terminology is the first step in the development of more respectful stories about transgender people.

This section of the “*Media Reference Guide: Stylebook Supplement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Terminology in the Philippines*” tackles transgender-specific concerns and provides definitions of basic terms, Filipino/local terms and a list of terms to be avoided when developing transgender-related stories.

**It is estimated that transgender people are four times more likely to live in poverty; and 90 percent report experience harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job. Also, over 40 percent (41%) attempt suicide, compared to 1.6% of the general population.**

- GLAAD

### TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC CONCERNs

The following illustrations are based on the case of Jennifer Laude, who was classified as male at birth, but who lived as a woman at the time of her demise. Media coverage of the death of Laude highlighted the ongoing confusion of Philippine media when telling transgender stories.

#### Use of the word "transgender"

A person who was classified as male at birth but live as a woman is a transgender woman. A person who was classified as female at birth but live as a man is a transgender man.

Note that the word "transgender" is used as an adjective, and should therefore be followed by what is being described (for instance, a person). The word "transgender" should not be used as a noun or turned into an adverb.

**Incorrect:** "Jennifer Laude was a transgendered woman."

**Correct:** "Jennifer Laude was a transgender woman."

The shorthand for "transgender" is "trans"; and it has become acceptable to use the words "transwoman" and "transman" as shorthand for "transgender woman" and "transgender man", respectively.

If there is a need to clarify what "transgender" means, explain by using "assigned/designated male or female at birth" (see below).

**Avoid use of "...pinanganak na lalaki/babae, was born a man/woman"**  
When a person is born, it is the doctor/attending medical practitioner who decides one's sex based on a cursory look at the external anatomy. In the case of a transgender person, biology is not the basis of gender. The preferred terms include "assigned male at birth"/"assigned female at birth" or "designated male at birth"/"designated female at birth".

**Incorrect:** The body of Jennifer Laude, who was born a man, was found in an inn in Olongapo City.

**Correct:** The body of Jennifer Laude, who was assigned male at birth, was found in an inn in Olongapo City.

#### Transgender names

A transgender person's chosen name should be considered as the real name, whether it was legally changed or not. In fact, many people already choose names for themselves, and the media use these names without mentioning their legal names (e.g. PNoy/Noynoy Aquino, Dolphy, Bella Flores, Ramon Revilla Sr., Fernando Poe Jr., Joey de Leon, Gloria Romero, Nora Aunor, Madonna, Lady Gaga). While the law currently prohibits transgender people from obtaining their desired identification in the Philippines, they should be afforded the same respect. When writing about a transgender person's chosen name, avoid saying "na kilala rin bilang (who also goes by the name of)", "na tinatawag ang sarili bilang (who calls himself/herself as)", "na ang pangalan sa gabi ay (roughly: whose other persona's name is)", or other such phrases that cast doubt on the transgender person's identity.

Do not put a person's chosen name in quotes. Again, treat the name with respect, as you would treat any other person's name.

**Incorrect:** Jeffrey Laude, who used the name Jennifer, was 26.

**Incorrect:** Jeffrey "Jennifer" Laude was 26.

**Correct:** Jennifer Laude was 26.

In case you do not know a transgender person's chosen name, clearly identify the source for the name you are using.

**Correct:** The victim, identified by the police as Jeffrey Laude, was found in an inn in Olongapo City.

#### Gender and Pronouns

When possible, ask transgender people which pronoun they would like you to use. If it is not possible to ask a transgender person the preferred gender pronoun, use the pronoun that is consistent with the person's appearance and gender expression.

According to the AP Stylebook, reporters should "use the pronoun preferred by the individuals who have acquired the physical characteristics of the opposite sex or present themselves in a way that does not correspond with their sex at birth. If that preference is not expressed, use the pronoun consistent with the way the individuals live publicly (see AP, NYT)."

When not sure of a person's gender, a journalist may also use the singular "they".

#### If a source uses incorrect names or pronouns

There may be times when the source of the story uses incorrect names or pronouns. Paraphrase when possible, or only use quotes with the correct information. If it is unavoidable to include the incorrect names or pronouns, include only as direct quotes so that these are properly attributed as coming from someone aside from the reporter.

#### Do not emphasize medical issues

Just as it is wrong to ask heterosexual, or gay men and lesbians about their genitals, it is also inappropriate to ask transgender people about their genitals or other surgeries they may have had.

#### When bringing in experts

The experts on transgender issues are the transgender people themselves. If in need of a medical or psychological perspective on transgender issues, consider transgender doctors and psychologists who can speak with authority. Also, make sure not to characterize being transgender as a mental disorder - both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association do not consider simply being transgender as a "mental disorder."

#### Provide context

Your audience will be best served if they are provided with the information about the plight of transgender people, considering that members of the transgender community are among the most marginalized in our society.

**The experts on transgender issues are the transgender people themselves. If in need of a medical or psychological perspective on transgender issues, consider transgender doctors and psychologists who can speak with authority.**

## TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY

Cisgender	As mentioned earlier, this describes people who are not transgender. “ <i>Cis-</i> ” is a Latin prefix meaning “on the same side as”; it is the antonym of “ <i>trans-</i> .”
Cross-dresser	Replacing the term “ <i>transvestite</i> ”, the term is used to refer to a person who presents himself/herself using items (e.g. clothes, accessories) culturally associated with the opposite sex. For instance, a heterosexual man who occasionally wears clothes, accessories and makeup associated with women is a cross-dresser. This man does not intend to permanently change his sex or live full-time as woman. Instead, cross-dressing is a form of gender expression. This is also not necessarily done for entertainment purposes (see <i>drag</i> ). Note that transgender women are not cross-dressers or drag queens.
Drag	The act of putting on clothes of the opposite sex for the purpose of entertainment. <i>Drag queens</i> are men, typically gay men, who dress like women for the purpose of entertainment. Women who dress up as men to entertain are referred to as <i>drag kings</i> .
FTM (Female-to-male)	Abbreviation used by a transgender person who was assigned female at birth but now identifies and lives as a man. Surgical interventions are not necessary for persons to identify as transgender, so journalists should avoid discussing the same. See <i>gender confirmation surgery, sex reassignment surgery</i> .
Gender confirmation surgery	Refers to surgical interventions supervised by medical professionals that align a transgender person's gender identity with his or her physicality. The term is preferred by some because the surgical interventions are seen as therapeutic tools to enable transgender people to be comfortable with their gendered self. It is worth noting that medical interventions are only part of a person's transition process. Avoid the phrases “ <i>sex change operation</i> ” and “ <i>sex transplant</i> ”. Also, do not refer to someone as being “ <i>pre-op</i> ” or “ <i>post-op</i> ” since not everyone choose to, or can afford to undergo these procedures. Journalists should similarly avoid overstressing the role of surgeries in the transition process. See <i>sex reassignment surgery, transition</i> .
Gender Identity Disorder (GID)	Outdated. See <i>gender dysphoria</i> .
Gender dysphoria	In the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) released by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2013, “ <i>Gender Identity Disorder</i> ” was replaced with “ <i>Gender Dysphoria</i> ”, a term used to refer to people who feel strongly that they are not the gender they physically appear to be. APA similarly changed the criteria for diagnosis, with both psychiatric and medical authorities recommending individualized medical treatment through hormones and/or surgeries to treat gender dysphoria.

Gender non-forming or Gender variant	People who behave and appear in ways that do not fully conform to social expectations based on one's assigned sex. The term is not synonymous with being transgender and should only be used if someone self-identifies as gender non-conforming. Since “ <i>gender non-conforming</i> ” has a negative connotation, “ <i>gender variant</i> ” is preferred.
MTF (Male-to-female)	Abbreviation used by a transgender person who was assigned male at birth but now identifies and lives as a woman. Surgical interventions are not necessary for persons to identify as transgender, so journalists should avoid discussing the same. See <i>gender confirmation surgery, sex reassignment surgery</i> .
Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)	More medical term referring to surgical interventions supervised by medical professionals to align a transgender person's gender identity with his or her physicality. Again, medical interventions are only part of a person's transition process. Avoid “ <i>sex change operation</i> ” and “ <i>sex transplant</i> ”. Also, do not refer to someone as being “ <i>pre-op</i> ” or “ <i>post-op</i> ” since not everyone choose to, or can afford to undergo these procedures. Journalists should avoid overstressing the role of surgeries in the transition process. See <i>gender confirmation surgery, transition</i> .
Trans	Used as shorthand to mean transgender or transsexual. Caution is advised when used as it may not be understood. If used, explain the term's meaning in the context of the story.
Transgender	An umbrella term used to describe individuals whose gender identity does not match their sex. For instance, if a doctor proclaims that a baby is male based on the child's anatomy, and that baby grows up and identifies as a woman, then that person is transgender. A transgender person may or may not adopt gender expression that is aligned with his or her gender identity. For instance, a transgender woman may not express herself in a feminine manner, and a transgender man may not express himself in a masculine manner. A transgender person may have any sexual orientation, so a transgender person may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example, a person who transitions from male to female and is exclusively attracted to men will identify as a straight woman. There are transgender people who take hormones to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. However, not all transgender people can or will take those steps. It is worth stressing that a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical procedures. <i>Trans</i> is the shorthand for transgender.
Transgender man	A person who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. Some may also use FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male. Some may prefer to simply be called men. It is recommended to ask which term an individual prefers. Short form: <i>trans man</i> .

**Transgender woman**

A person who was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. Some may also use MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female. Some may prefer to simply be called women. It is recommended to ask which term an individual prefers. Short form: *trans woman*.

**Transition**

The process that a transgender person undergoes to alter his or her birth sex. This is not a single procedure, but is a complex process that takes place over a period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following: coming out to one's family and friends; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and one or more types of surgery.

The transition process varies from person to person. Avoid the phrase "sex change."

**Transphobia**

Feeling of antagonism against transgender people, usually based on negative stereotypes.

**Transsexual**

Originating in the medical and psychological communities, this is an older term that refers to a person who experiences a mismatch of the body and the brain and sometimes undergoes medical treatment (e.g. hormone therapy, sexual reassignment surgery) to change physical sex to match gender identity. Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term.

It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. Transsexual is used as an adjective, e.g. transsexual woman, transsexual man.

**FILIPINO/LOCAL TRANSGENDER-SPECIFIC TERMS**

***Binabae/  
Binabayel/  
Nag-binabae***

Meaning "like a woman (i.e. *babae*)", the term is used by some members of the trans community. However, its use can be offensive because: 1) being trans woman is not just an "act"; and 2) this term is also being used to demean effeminate men or men whose gender expression is not aligned with socially constructed norms for men (e.g. those who cross dress). Use only when a person uses this to self-identify. Other terms that may be used include *transgender woman*, *trans woman* or *transpinay*.

***Operada***

A derogatory term used to refer to transgender people who underwent medical interventions to permanently change their bodies, particularly sex reassignment surgery (SRS). When used to identify transgender people, this is a specious term because transitioning may or may not include medical interventions.

***Pa-girl/  
Pa-babae***

Literally, this means "acting like a girl". This is somewhat similar to *binabae/binabayel/nag-binabae*. Often used to refer to members of the LGBT community whose gender expression is feminine, this insinuates that: 1) there is something bad with being a woman, and 2) that being a woman is but an act. Avoid using this; use, instead, "*transgender woman*", "*trans woman*" or "*transpinay*".

***TG***

Used as a shorthand for "transgender". So as not to confuse your audience, avoid using this; use, instead, "*transgender man*", "*transpinay*", "*transgender woman*" or "*transpinay*".

***Transpinay***

A local term used to refer to transgender women in the Philippines. This was coined by the Society of Transsexual Women of the Philippines (STRAP), a local transgender organization. For transgender males, the equivalent is *transpinoy*. Since the term was coined in Metro Manila, it is not necessarily accepted in other parts of the country. As such, it is best to ask how a person wants to be identified.

***Transpinoy***

Used to refer to transgender men in the Philippines. See *transpinay*.

## REFERENCES

### TERMS TO AVOID

The word “transgender” should be used as an adjective, and not as a noun.

- Incorrect: Jennifer was a transgender.
- Incorrect: Transgenders joined the rally.
- Correct: Jennifer was a transgender woman.
- Correct: Transgender activists joined the rally.

The word “transgender” should never have the suffix “-ed” attached to it. This is because being transgender is an identity, in the same vein as being lesbian, gay or bisexual. We do not say “Ricky Reyes and Allan K are ‘gayed’” or “Monique Wilson is ‘lesbianed’.” In the same way, we do not say that “BB Gandanghari is ‘transgendered’.”

When referring to the transition process of a transgender person, do not use “sex change”, “pre-operative/pre-op”, “post-operative/post-op” or “operada”. These terms suggest that a transgender person needs to undergo medical procedures in order to transition. The preferred term to use is “transition”.

If in need of addressing issues before a transgender person underwent a transition process, do not use “biological male”, “biological female”, “pinanganak na lalaki (born male)” or “pinanganak na babae (born female)”. As mentioned, a person’s sex is assigned at birth often solely based on external anatomy. As such, it is recommended to use “assigned male at birth” or “assigned female at birth”.

Do not use terms that imply that transgender people “deceived” others because of their gender identity - e.g. “tinago ang tunay na pagkatao”, “nagkunwari” or “pinagtakpan”. By suggesting that transgender people who live according to their gender identity are lying, these terms are insulting.

Do not use epithets such as tranny, she-male, he/she, half/half, it or ladyboy.

Similar to other epithets that target other groups, these terms should not be used unless in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. If used at all, it is preferred for reporters to say: “The person used a derogatory term to refer to LGBT people.”

There are some transgender people who may use some of these terms to describe themselves. However, some of these terms - e.g. “she-male” and “ladyboy” - are used to refer to trans women who may also be involved in still illegal sex work. As such, reporters should ask how a transgender person self-identifies, and use the term provided.

**The power of the media cannot be stressed enough, with various forms of media often aiding in the construction of accepted realities. Perceptions of issues/concerns are greatly affected by how they are represented, and since it is often the media that provides to the people the representations of issues/concerns, their effect is truly immense.**

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## ABOUT US

Established in April 2007, *Outrage Magazine* is the only publication for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in the Philippines. Aside from reporting on LGBT-related issues, however, *Outrage Magazine* has diversified its services starting in 2010. Among others, it also gives trainings/workshops on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) and HIV 101; conducts research on LGBT-related topics; and hosts LGBT-related events, such as the Bahaghari Media Awards, which gives recognition to media people for their support to the LGBT community in the Philippines.

Rainbow Rights, a non-profit and non-partisan non-government organization has significantly contributed to the promotion and visibility of LGBT human rights in the Philippines, and has established working partnerships on legal and policy issues with a range of government agencies, private sector groups, and civil society organizations. Its work has helped engender a broader institutional and societal understanding of the need for proper legal protections for LGBT people. Rainbow Rights is a 2014 Felipa de Souza Award Honoree. Its latest publications include: *Kwentong Bebot: Lived Experiences of Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgender Women in the Philippines* (2014); *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Access to Justice Through Anti-Discrimination Ordinances* (2015); *Diversity in the Workplace: A Handbook on Building LGBT-Inclusive Workplaces in the Philippines* (2015); and the *Media Leaflet on SOGIE*.

Since the Republic of the Philippines gained its independence in 1946, the United States government has been represented in the Philippines by the US Embassy in Manila. The Embassy exercises many different functions in its official representation to the Philippine government. These include political, administrative, economic, public diplomacy, and consular affairs managed under the Ambassador by counselors from the Department of State. The grant to Rainbow Rights was part of the US Secretary of State's Global Equity Fund through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor small grants program to advance the human rights of LGBT persons.

Since 2003, the Fund for Global Human Rights has been helping move human rights forward by providing resources and tools to the people and organizations on the ground who have potential to generate positive change. It has awarded over \$60 million in grants to more than 400 on-the-ground human rights groups.

