



Gay,
Lesbian,
Bisexual,
Transgender,
Ally Programs Office

WHAT YOU CAN DO: GENDER FREEDOM IDEA KIT

The Transgender Commission has declared Wednesday, April 14, 2010 to be University of Minnesota "Gender Freedom Day". We hope it is a day where we can openly consider and celebrate the ways in which we all benefit from expanding the possibilities of how we can express our femininity, our masculinity, and our ways of being and being gendered that transcend those concepts.

We hope that you will encourage the communities/groups where you live and work to ask questions, have discussions, hold activities, or do whatever you feel moved to do for the day, including considering ways in which gender and gender liberation connect with the mission or vision of your discipline or work. Some simple examples are below:

* **Create a space for public comment and reflection:** At the top of a piece of posterboard, write "Envisioning Gender Freedom" and post it in a common area -- allow people to write on it throughout the day/week/month. Sample question to write on the posterboard:

"What would it be like if you felt completely free to express yourself, your body and your gender without any consequences, restraints or limits? How would the world change along with this freedom?"

* **Examine curricula:** What genders or gender experiences are reflected in your classroom curricula? Encourage instructors/facilitators to look at how gender is reflected and whose stories are being told in their classroom lessons or meeting agendas today, this week, and/or this semester.

* **Celebrate your history:** Find examples of gender diversity, gender bending, gender-role defying that aren't usually highlighted in the history of your work or discipline.

* **Take Kate Bornstein's Gender Aptitude Test:** http://bit.ly/gender_aptitude_test

* **Examine unit policies:** Think about the policies, practices, procedures and norms in your area, and look at them through the lens of gender. Ask WHY questions about how you, your department, your unit, your peer group does things. Ask these questions about curricula, how classes are conducted and organized, about how our fields of study themselves are conceptualized. If the best answers you can come up with are "That's just the way we've always done it", "Everyone is comfortable with how we do it", or "We've never really thought about it," consider what is behind those answers, and consider more creative or inclusive alternatives.

* **Pose a question about gender that is relevant to your discipline or work:** Have a brown bag discussion, or integrate discussion about gender into a departmental seminar, colloquium, or staff meeting. Discuss how your discipline/work area intersects with gender, and what this means for your students, staff, research, and discipline.

Discussion Examples:

- How can you transform your practice to better serve clients/patients whose lives and experiences do not fit into conventional notions of gender?
- Consider examples of characters in the literature you study that defy gender assumptions or expectations. If there aren't many, find them.
- How are young people socialized around gender? How does this affect their academic performance, career paths, interests?
- Discuss why aren't there more women/men/openly transgender people in your discipline.
- Do you believe there is a hardwiring of talents based on sex/gender? If there is not, what would that mean to our work?
- How can classrooms be transformed to better support the learning and development of students who do not fit conventional notions of gender?

* **Book Group:** Choose a book or essay that members of your group can read and discuss together. A few examples:

- Gloria Anzaldúa, *La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness*
- Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw and My Gender Workbook*
- Leslie Feinberg, *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink and Blue*
- Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*
- José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*
- Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*
- Susan Stryker, *The Transgender Studies Reader*
- Lee Edelman, *The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive*
- Judith Butler, *Imitation and Gender Insubordination*

* **Forms:** How is gender listed on your admissions/student services forms? If "Female/Male" are the only options, you are undoubtedly leaving some people and gender experiences out. Discuss expanding those options; discuss why you track gender at all.

* **Restroom Access:** Do you have unisex or gender-neutral restrooms near your offices or events? If not, discuss how to make it happen (consult with the Transgender Commission).

Thank you!

If you do any of these examples, or come up with something else, let us know how it goes at TransCom@umn.edu (or better yet, send us pictures and stories)!

More information about Gender Freedom Day and all our events at:

<http://www.glbta.umn.edu/trans>