

Calling All Queers

A guest writer talks "flashmobs," "kiss-ins," "genderfucks," – oh, my!

By Jon Tirpak

Culture wars concerning the LGBTIQ community are raging throughout our country. We should wage our own war on these cultural battlefields that will grab the attention of every public official and citizen. What happens now will shape our political realities. Our involvement and presence at the table is crucial. Queer organizing creates spaces, otherwise inaccessible, for all activists and organizers to fully articulate their demands for recognition and change.

It can be difficult, if not impossible, to organize around what University of Michigan Queer Studies professor David Halperin describes as, "by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant." On this notion of queerness, Halperin notes, "There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. [Queer] is an identity without an essence." If we are defined by our contrast to the norm, our exclusion, our queerness, how can we hope to achieve equality?

As an outgrowth of radical feminism and AIDS activism, queer organizing's most basic tenet is that all identities are completely socially constructed and that the formulation and performance of identities varies across cultures.


As a movement, we cover that entire array of socioeconomic levels, races, sexes, genders, faiths, abilities, gender identities and sexualities. No single label can define or contain all of us. This is the definitional difference between queer and LGBT. Within those four letters, there are gray spaces and people who are excluded. At its base, queer organizing acknowledges the individual differences among us and works to destabilize identities that are not stable to begin with, particularly sexual and gender identities.

LGBTIQ folks transgress the rigid gender boundaries established by sexist ideology. This transgression strikes at the roots of heteronormativity and heterosexism, which are rooted in the invisibility and the erasure of LGBTIQ folks, who are forced to live everyday in a political void. Queer organizing allows participants to be who they are and not simply representatives of their entire "classification." Queer presence, in and of itself, is activism. It actively challenges the heteronormative climate we feel every day, using the discourses of cultural politics - protests, kiss-ins, "flashmobs", "genderfucking", and much more.

Although queer organizing doesn't consume itself with the desire for legitimacy in the eyes of the masses, by default it supports the idea that visibility creates awareness and dialogue, which in turn facilitate change. By showing Carolina's campus that "we are here and we're queer," the political players involved in the discourse must acknowledge us. How many times do you see 50 same-gender couples holding hands or kissing in the Pit? These activities profoundly affect campus climate. With numbers that large, no one can say that we're not here.

Beyond the satisfaction of breaking through invisibility, queer organizing is fun. What LGBTIQ citizen won't feel a bit of wicked glee when the shocked proprietors of a restaurant on Franklin Street realize their place of business has been taken over by guerrilla queer forces, relaxing and enjoying themselves *as anyone else* has the right to do?

Carolina needs queer organizing. The GLBT-SA and the LGBTQ Office do great work. But there is a new student organization forming on UNC's campus – the Committee for a Queerer Carolina. CQC will use direct action organizing to bring queer voices to the discourse on campus and to maintain queer visibility and presence in a multitude of progressive causes. By being an active, visible and tangible presence on campus, we hope to facilitate policy change. All the LGBTIQ organizing on campus is directly related to CQC's goals. But CQC hopes to take part in direct action that is more in your face and shocking. CQC wants to work alongside other pre-existing organizations to build coalitions between the social, political and cultural movements on campus. Because we're here, and you know what? We're queer.

Come out of the dorms, apartments, communal houses – wherever you live. Wear leather gear, get pierced, sport a polo and a white hat, bring props (of all varieties), sag your pants, kiss your lover(s) publicly, make noise – whatever you want to do. Show people you are here and that you won't be invisible any longer. 

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