

# Queer Oppression

## A Workers Solidarity Movement Position Paper

### Workers Solidarity Movement

October 2011

1. 1. The WSM opposes all oppression of, and discrimination against LGBTQ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people; referred to simply as 'queer people' in the rest of this document).
  2. Homophobia and Transphobia divide the working class against itself and also serve the ruling class as a mechanism of enforcing rigid gender roles on people of all sexualities. If anyone steps outside their prescribed gender role, especially as a child, the first weapon used against them is to label them queer. It is used against heterosexual as well as queer people.
  3. These gender norms do not flow from nature, but rather are a product of the gendered division of labour which developed as part of the emergence of capitalism. The 'male labourer', the 'housewife' and the nuclear family are social constructs which solidified according to the demands of capital.
2. Anarchists believe that true liberation for queers will only come about with the abolition of capitalism and creation of a society that gives everyone real control over their lives. This does not mean, however, that the fight is put off until then. Queers are entitled to full support in their struggle for equality.
  1. The WSM recognises the right of queer people to organise autonomously. LGBT organisations and social spaces help queers to become confident and out, and to take full part in mixed-sexuality organisations such as trade unions, community groups, campaigns and political organisations.
  2. It has often been useful for queer women to organise separately from men because of sexism and from heterosexual women because of homophobia. Bisexuals have faced discrimination from lesbian and gay people and organisations as well as homophobia from heterosexuals. Trans people have had to fight to be included in queer organisations and in anti-discrimination laws. Queer people can judge for themselves when they need separate and autonomous organisations and what forms these will take.
4. The WSM recognises that the overwhelming majority of queer people have to work for a living, or survive on benefits and are an integral part of the working class.

5. The WSM supports the celebration of Pride with marches, parades and cultural events, as a challenge to homophobia and transphobia, and commemoration of the Stonewall riots. We oppose the incursion of corporations and LGBT police and military organisations into Pride celebrations, which merely serves to promote consumerism and ‘pinkwash’ reactionary agendas.
  1. In the context of existing social structures, the WSM believes that LGBT people should have exactly the same partnership and shared custody rights as heterosexuals including the right to civil marriage. To this end, the organisation is opposed to civil partnership as inadequate. The organisation sees civil partnership as another example of institutional discriminatory legislation.
  2. However, we see the expansion of civil marriage to include same-sex couples as ultimately insufficient as a goal for the queer or anarchist movements. We recognise the historical origins of marriage in patriarchy and sexual repression. Moreover we see the existence of an institutionalised normative form of relationship as inherently exclusionary to those whose sexuality doesn’t fit with that standard, and instead call for a society which is inclusive of all forms of free and consensual sexual expression.
7. Transgender people should be entitled to change their birth certificates and other documents to reflect their actual gender. Trans people’s choices about their own bodies is to be defended in the same way as women’s right to choose. Trans people’s access to medical treatments such gender-realignment surgeries and HRT should not be dependent on their economic circumstances, but should be available as a right.
  1. We support physical self-defence by queer people against ‘queer bashers’ and the police where necessary. We also commit to a zero-tolerance by all anarchists of homophobic and transphobic violent attacks in a similar way to anarchist zero tolerance of racist attacks. An injury to one is an injury to all and it should not just be up to queer people to resist queer-bashings.
  2. We are sceptical of anti-hatecrime laws, which are often used as a substitute for changing attitudes, end up giving more punitive powers to the police and prison system, and can be used by the state to obfuscate institutionalised discrimination. Much anti-queer violence is suffered at the hands of the police and in prisons. We call instead for community-level action to confront homophobic and transphobic attitudes and develop safe spaces for queers.
9. Until sexual health provision reflects the needs of lesbian and bi women, specific lesbian health provision need to be established. Current cuts in and newly conservative and moralistic approaches to gay and bi men’s health services need to be resisted. Free condom distribution should instead be extended to everyone.
10. In Ireland, the Catholic Church has sweeping exemptions from equality legislation. It controls most schools and hospitals. The Catholic hierarchy is poisonously and openly homophobic and this means that queer teachers, nurses and doctors are vulnerable and must be defended through the trade unions. The Church’s exceptions from equality legislation, and their control over hospitals and schools, should be abolished.

11. We reject the appropriation of queer struggles by conservative and reactionary ideologies. Specifically we oppose 'homonationalist' ideas, which characterise certain ethnic, racial, religious and social groups (in particular Muslims) as being intransigently and inherently opposed to queer liberation in order to 'pinkwash' imperialist wars and exclusionary and racist immigration policies. (In particular, Israeli military action against Palestine and Lebanon is often justified by commentators in terms of defending the only pro-gay State in the region against Muslim homophobes.) We reject the mischaracterisation of working-class and poor people as particularly homophobic in order to foster class hatred.
12. We recognise that queer immigrants and refugees are particularly victimised both by the state and by racists and homophobes. Deportations of queers need to be resisted. While legally those in danger because of their LGBT identity in other countries are entitled to refugee status, in practice it is very difficult for them to prove this to an institutionally acceptable standard. We regard this as a form of institutional racialised homophobia and as part of a wider effort by the political establishment to delegitimize refugee status.

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Workers Solidarity Movement position paper on Queer Liberation as re-written at the October 2011 National Conference. *This position paper sits under the Sex, Gender, and Sexuality paper and does not repeat that material here.*

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