

WHY QUEER THEORY

How Queer Theory expands feminist conceptions of
Freedom

THE PHOBIAS!!

- Homophobia:

An intolerance and discrimination against persons who are homosexual

- Transphobia

An intolerance and discrimination against persons who do not relate to gender in a way society and power structure dictates

Bonus section:

- Heterosexism

A way of navigating the world to the exclusion of queer individuals which assumes being straight is the norm and everything else is not the norm. It also operates on boxes of identity – assuming queer looks a particular way

HETEROSEXISM

I ASSUMED
YOU WERE STRAIGHT
- YOU NEVER CAME OUT
TO ME. PLUS, YOU
DON'T LOOK LIKE A
LESBIAN!

VS.

HOMOPHOBIA

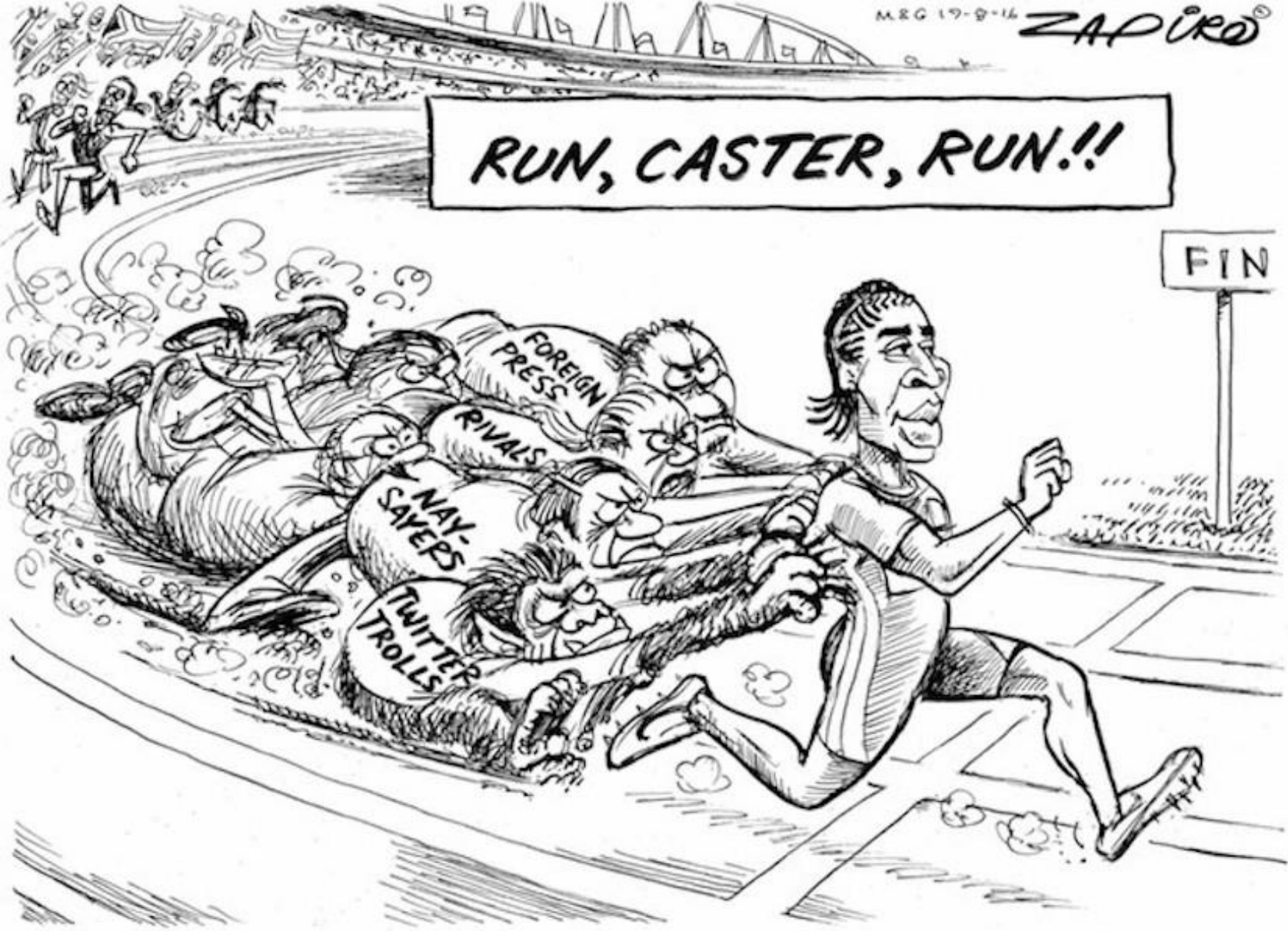
EWWW!
HOW CAN
YOU DO
THAT?



What is the LGBTQIA+?

- **L** - Lesbian, a cis-woman attracted to other women
- **G** – Gay, a cis-man attracted to other men
- **B** – Bisexual, someone who is attracted to both men and women (contested)
- **T** – Transgender, someone who identifies with a different gender to their biological sex
- **Q** – Queer, an umbrella term for those who practice sex and gender differently to the performative norm.
- **I** – Intersex, someone born with two or more biological sexes (around 3% of the human population is born intersex, as many as there are red headed persons)
- **A** – Asexual, someone who has no sexual attraction to any persons

RUN, CASTER, RUN!!



IT'S A...OH.
IT'S NOT QUITE
CLEAR, BUT WE
CAN FIX HIM.

LET'S WAIT
UNTIL THE CHILD
CAN CONSENT
AND KNOWS HOW
THEY IDENTIFY
WITH GENDER.



Gender as a spectrum

- Queer theory is able to expand on feminist conceptions of freedom by complicating and deepening conceptions around gender and freedom.
- By understanding the complexities of gender we are able to develop theories of freedom which are more inclusive and breaks the gender binary.



Gender Trouble

- What is a cis-person?

Person who identifies with the same gender as their biological sex assigned by medical professionals and institutions from birth.

- 'Cis' means same. 'Trans' means across.
- Where as cis refers to people whose gender is the same as their assigned biological sex, trans refers to people whose gender is different (or across) from their assigned biological sex.
- BUT THEN WHAT IS GNC/GENDER NON-CONFORMING
- Those whose gender expression does not conform to traditional gender identities or to the gender binary
- WHAT ARE GENDER NON-BINARY PERSONS!
- are persons who find no identity within binary gender boxes who exist outside the binary of traditional genders – not identifying as a man or woman.
- There are also other gender expressions such as agender – who are without gender BUT this is why queer theory asserts that gender is a spectrum and should never be assumed!



THE MALE
MUST BE THE
HUNTER!

THOSE
PENGUINS
MUST BE A
MALE AND A
FEMALE!

Breaking systems of cis-heteronormativity

- Queer theory identifies patriarchy as a system of domination but expands this understanding by identifying cis-heteronormativity as equally oppressive and systemic.
- Queer theory believes these systems limit access to freedoms and that as long as there is a normative vision of sex and gender society will be organized in an oppressive way.
- Queer theory challenges feminist perspectives of freedom to expand on gender roles and sexuality to create a new understanding which envisions a more inclusive world.

CONSTRUCTED GENDER

- Gender is believed to be constructed. This is what gender theory attempts to excavate.
- From birth society decides what gender someone is and what sexuality they might assume.
- Society and institutions also create gender roles which decide how one performs gender and the ways in which power relates to that gender
- Queer theory sees this normative behaviour/structures as oppressive. As oppressive as patriarchy and complicit to patriarchy.
- In order for patriarchy to exist, normative gender structures must be created



Normative sexualities

- The basis of homophobia is that persons do not practice 'normative' sexuality.
- Gayle Rubin believes that this is due to society not being sex positive.
- This is a belief that people are not free to perform sexuality in their own way.

GAYLE
RUBIN



1. SEXUAL ESSENTIALISM
2. SEX NEGATIVITY
3. THE EXCESSIVE IMPORTANCE PLACED ON SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR (COMPARED TO OTHER BEHAVIOURS LIKE OUR EATING HABITS, FOR EXAMPLE)
4. THE SEX HIERARCHY
5. THE DOMINO THEORY OF SEXUAL PERIL
6. THE LACK OF A CONCEPT OF BENIGN SEXUAL VARIATION

SEX
POSITIVE
VS SEX
NEGATIVE



Post-structural /ridding of the boxes/static categories

- **Existential freedom** – a freedom to exist outside of the categories build by society and not understood by society.
eg. Outside of a binary or identity.





IT ISN'T
DIFFERENCES THAT
SEPARATE FEMINISTS BUT
THEIR REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE
THOSE DIFFERENCES AND TO
EXAMINE THE DISTORTIONS
WHICH RESULT FROM
MISNAMING THEM AND
THEIR EFFECTS.

AUDRE LORDE



AIN'T
I A
WOMAN?

'Women' as an organizing category

- Perhaps the biggest contestation of feminist conceptions of freedom is the idea that it excludes queer identities and exclusively organizes around 'women' as understood in the gender binary identity.
- Queer theory expands on feminist conceptions of organizing by imploring it to be more inclusive of not only those who identify as queer but also those whose bodies are outside of what is considered normative.
- This is not unlike the lens offered to us by intersectionality – an inclusive way of organizing which considers that some experience intersections of oppression
- *This is a contested viewpoint however.*





STRATEGIC
ESSENTIALISM MIGHT
INVOLVE, FOR EXAMPLE,
REMAINING QUIET ABOUT
THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE
GROUP AS THEY FIGHT FOR
A COMMON GOAL, DESPITE
ENGAGING IN THOSE
DEBATES PRIVATELY.

GAYATRI
CHAKRAVORTY
SPIVAK

Feminism as exclusionary

- Sara Ahmed notes, “The idealization of movement, or transformation of movement into a fetish, depends on the exclusion of other who are already positioned as not free in the same way.”
- This reflects on how the women’s movement through the centring and fetishizing of women excludes oppressions of gender/race and ability





THE EITHER/
OR FIGHT IS A
PROBLEMATIC
VIEW OF FEMINISM
AND QUEER
THEORY.

PRODUCTIVE
TENSIONS AND
DIALOGUES IS A
MORE USEFUL WAY
OF SEEING IT.


WE'RE HERE
and
QUEER

I AM
NOT
EVEN



3 ways queer theory expands feminist conceptions of freedom

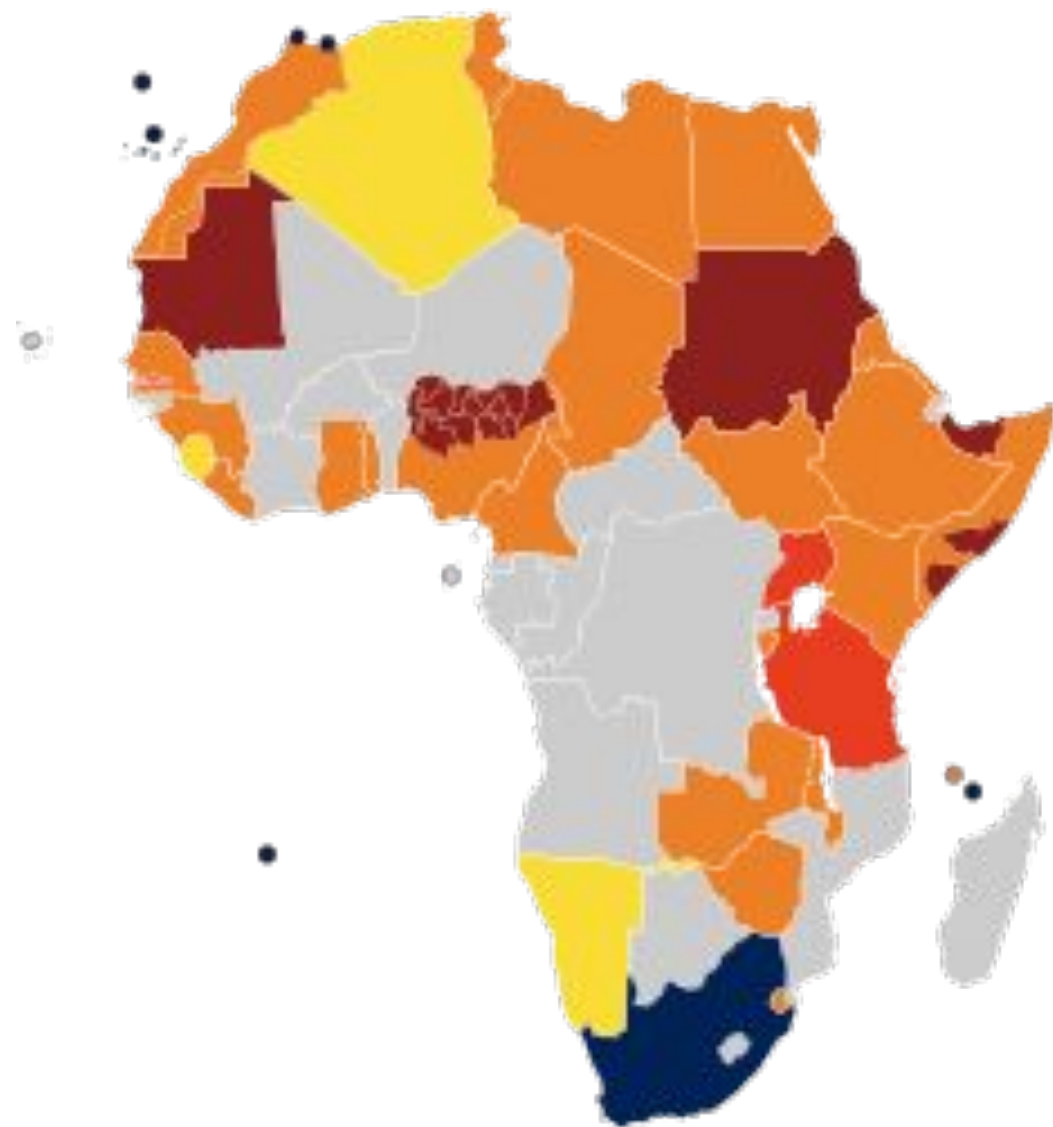
- It asks to break the gender binary
 - It seeks to disrupt systems of heteronormativity
- It questions woman as an organizing strategy



UNDERSTANDING
MARGINALITY AS PLACE
OF RESISTANCE, NOT DESPAIR,
IS CRUCIAL FOR OPPRESSED
PEOPLE. HOW DO WE HOLD PEOPLE
ACCOUNTABLE FOR WRONGDOING
AND REMAIN IN TOUCH WITH
THEIR HUMANITY ENOUGH TO
BELIEVE IN THEIR CAPACITY
TO BE TRANSFORMED?

bell hooks

- Today in some African countries – but also globally – anti-LGBT laws are being repealed.
- These laws are seen as remnants of the colonial era. As colonial governments worked to exclude LGBT persons and criminalize LGBT lifestyles.
- This is evident in contexts such as Botswana, Namibia and Uganda.
- In historical studies – it has been revealed that in the native African past many genders existed and gender was dictated by a binary.
- It is beneficial to the colonial, imperial and capitalist society to exclude queer persons and limit gender identity



But what is the legal framework today?

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition_of_same-sex_unions_in_Africa



TO QUOTE BARTHES,
WE NEED TO "REMAIN WITHIN
[NORMATIVE] CONSCIOUSNESS
AND...PROCEED TO DISMANTLE IT,
TO WEAKEN IT, TO BREAK IT DOWN
ON THE SPOT, AS WE WOULD DO
WITH A LUMP OF SUGAR BY
STEEPING IT IN WATER."

- LISA DUGGAN