



The Intersectionality Guide

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Please think before you print



CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- What Is Intersectionality?
- How To Use This Guide
- The Golden Rules

2. How We Speak (and Write)

- Colloquial Terms
- Abbreviations & Acronyms
- Spelling & Accents
- Swear Words
- Time
- Content Warnings
- Microaggressions

3. Who We Are

- Feminist Language
- Pronouns
- LGBTQ+ Identities

4. Where We Come From

- Geography
- Race, Ethnicity & Nationality
- Cultural Appropriation & Blackface

5. What We Believe

- Religion
- Celebration & Ceremony

6. How We Live

- Society
- Mind & Body
- Family
- Science
- Music

7. Mistakes

- Listening
- Apologising
- Making It Right

8. Conclusion



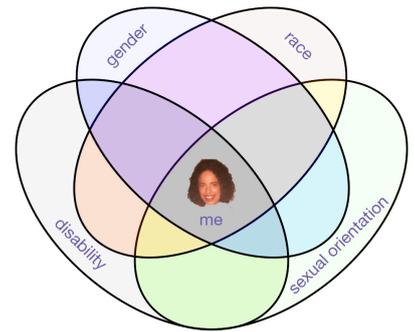
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that broadens the agenda of feminism by exploring how aspects of our social and political identities (gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) combine to create unique modes of discrimination.

At shesaid.so, we aim to be intersectional both in spirit and practice. We understand that within society, different levels of privilege are available to different people and, by embracing intersectional language, we hope to at the very least create awareness and, ideally, facilitate equal opportunity for all.

Intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression: their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and other identity markers. Intersectionality recognises that identities do not exist independently of each other, and that each informs the others, often creating a complex convergence of oppression. For example: women in general earn less than men and Black people in general earn less than non-Black people, however Black women earn less than non-Black women and Black men. They are entitled to their own category of identity.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Please note that the shesaid.so Intersectionality Guide is not designed to restrict you, nor to be used in place of a dictionary, an encyclopaedia or common sense.

THE GOLDEN RULES (FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BE MORE INTERSECTIONAL)

1. Make a concerted effort to use gender-neutral terms and language
2. Provide warnings when content might be distressing, and offer descriptive image captions
3. Be sensitive to other people's perspectives and experiences
4. Avoid ethnocentrism (ie the evaluation of other cultures by the standards and values of your own)
5. Ask wherever and whenever possible if you're not sure how best to describe someone



HOW WE SPEAK (AND WRITE)

COLLOQUIAL TERMS

Sometimes, there are certain colloquial terms that are difficult for some people to immediately understand. Try to avoid these where there is alternative wording available, or explain/define the term briefly if not.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

If an abbreviation or acronym is to be used, put it in parentheses at first mention: so Music Managers' Forum (MMF), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Remember that an international readership will not necessarily be aware of even well-known UK or US abbreviations, so spell them out, eg Music of Black Origin awards (MOBO awards), or briefly describe them, eg the civil rights organisation the NAACP. Remember this is just a guide and some abbreviations and acronyms (eg gif, RSVP, laser) may not need explanations. Use your instincts.

SPELLING AND ACCENTS

Note that there are many ways to spell some names using the Roman alphabet and where an individual has clearly adopted a particular spelling of their own name, you should respect that. Make sure you know which name (if any) is the surname. If you're not sure, when possible, please ask!

Names, in whatever language, should be given appropriate accents or diacritics where known. Los años dorados means the golden years. Los anos dorados means the golden anuses. Accents matter!

Both American and British English spellings and versions are acceptable, as well as spellings from other parts of the Anglophone world. If you're torn between synonymous words, use the most universally understood.

SWEARWORDS

Swearwords (except racial slurs) can be written out in full but exercise caution and note your readership. In general, do not use asterisks to mute offensive language.

TIME & DATE

Be conscious of the different date formats used worldwide (dd/mm/yyyy or mm/dd/yyyy) and write out dates in full if necessary to avoid ambiguity.

Please consider when mentioning a time that time zone might also be relevant, eg I had lunch at 1pm in Paris, let's discuss on the phone at 4pm CET. Ideally, you would convert depending on your audience, eg the video conference is at 7am EST which is 12 midday UTC and 9pm in Korea.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Always include a warning when something you are about to say is potentially distressing. Briefly describe the nature of the content (eg what I'm about to say could be considered upsetting for those who have been



affected by alcoholism). Potential triggers include depictions of violence, rape, drug misuse, eating disorders, suicide and self-harm. If you're not sure, please err on the side of caution and provide a warning.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are everyday comments and questions that can be hurtful or stigmatising to marginalised people. They're subtle and the person committing the microaggression may have no idea that their comments are harmful. Often they are meant as a compliment. Examples include you don't sound Black, you don't look trans; these imply that being Black/trans is a negative thing and that all people want to be perceived as white/cisgender. Microaggressions also describe inappropriate behaviour such as touching a Black person's hair.



WHO WE ARE

FEMINIST LANGUAGE

Feminism is an ideology and a movement that aims to define, establish and achieve political, economic, personal and social equality for every gender.

Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's sex. Gender is a social construct and a social identity.

Please refrain from using gendered language when addressing people of unknown gender; for example, shesaid.so comprises women and non-binary people who may not appreciate being described as ladies or girls. A simple and inclusive everyone or folks is perfect. If you're feeling particularly affectionate, a gender-neutral term such as friends is fine, eg hey friends!

The term womxn is fine if you think it adds value or includes otherwise marginalised individuals. However, please note that we consider all women (including trans women) to be women with an E. Non-binary people are neither women nor womxn. Please be clear about whom you are talking.

Use the words actor, comedian and artist for people of all genders; do not use actress, comedienne or artiste except when in the name of an award, eg the Oscar for best actress. Try to avoid using gendered words to describe women artists (songstress, chanteuse, etc) unless you can honestly say you would use the male equivalent in the same context (Lana Del Rey is a chanteuse, but is Bon Iver a chanteur?).

Describe adult female humans as women (if they identify as such), not girls; ask yourself if you'd describe men as boys in the same context.

Steer away from gendered statements and generalisations such as boys will be boys, man up! and man power. Humankind, not mankind.

Cabin crew, not air hostesses. Homemakers, not housewives. School meals supervisors, not dinner ladies. Firefighters, not firemen. Police officers, not policemen. Postal workers, not postmen. Refuse collectors, not bin men. The list goes on...

Avoid use of the terms: spinster, career woman, career girl, call girl, etc.

Women, although they may be marginalised, generally do not constitute a minority.

PRONOUNS

When you are introducing yourself, please try to relay your pronouns (and, if possible, include them in your email signature). Pronouns include but are not limited to she/her, he/him, they/them and ze/zir.

Try to use correct pronouns always. Do not assume the pronouns of the person you are speaking to. Some individuals may alternate between different pronouns whereas others use no pronouns at all. If you're not sure which pronouns you should use, it is perfectly acceptable to ask.

Do not refer to sets of pronouns as male or female.



Never refer to a person as it or he-she. These are offensive slurs used against trans, intersex, non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals.

Avoid using combinations such as he or she, he/she or (s)he as alternatives to the singular they because such constructions imply an exclusively binary nature of gender and exclude individuals who do not use these pronouns.

When using the singular they, use a plural verb form, eg Sam Smith is going to celebrate Pride by themselves, they are going to have fun. The reflexive pronoun themselves can also be used.

QUEER IDENTITIES

LGBTQ+
Lesbian
Gay
Bisexual
Transgender
Queer

+ Intersex, Asexual, Questioning, Pansexual, Gender nonconforming, Genderfluid, Non-binary, Androgynous, Polysexual, Androsexual, Autosexual, Demisexual, Gynosexual, Homoflexible, Heteroflexible, Omnisexual, Skoliosexual, Bicurious, etc

There are many variations on the abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other identities. It is not normally necessary to spell them out, but discretion is advised.

Although it has since been reclaimed, due to its historical use as a derogatory term the word queer is not necessarily embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ+ community. Be conscious of this.

It is not appropriate to describe individuals as LGBTQ+. Be specific, eg trans women and transfeminine people face transmisogyny (not LGBTQ+ people face transmisogyny), I am bisexual (not I am LGBTQ+).

The term LGB is used to describe lesbian, gay and bisexual people and attempts to exclude trans individuals from the queer community. Do not use.

Gender is a spectrum with many permutations; avoid using binary language. For example, say people of all genders, not people of both genders, and different gender, not opposite gender.

The terms transsexual and transvestite are considered dated; trans(gender) is considered the correct term for someone whose gender identity does not align with that which they were assigned at birth. Only use other terms if an individual self-identifies.

Avoid saying someone is biologically male or female. Use the terms assigned male at birth (AMAB) or assigned female at birth (AFAB).

Non-binary people experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as outside of the male-female gender binary. Many other words for identities outside the traditional categories of man and woman may be used, such as genderfluid, genderqueer, polygender, bigender, demigender, or agender. These identities, while similar, are not necessarily interchangeable or synonymous. Not all non-binary individuals identify as transgender; avoid using catch-all terminology.

Cisgender or cis is used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with that which they were assigned at birth. This is used when comparing the trans experience with that of the non-trans population. Do not use the words normal or real to describe cisgender people. Avoid trans-exclusionary language.

While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, crossdressing typically refers to cis people who occasionally wear clothes, makeup and accessories culturally associated with another gender. This



activity is a form of expression, and not done for entertainment purposes. Do not describe trans people as crossdressers.

Drag refers to dressing or acting in an exaggerated style associated with a particular gender, typically through costume and performance. It is not synonymous with transgenderism or crossdressing.

Gender nonconforming refers to people whose gender expression is different from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. Please note that not all gender nonconforming people identify as transgender; many people have gender expressions that are not entirely conventional – that fact alone does not make them transgender. A lot of trans people are also not gender nonconforming.

Intersex is an umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosomal pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female. Avoid the outdated and derogatory term hermaphrodite. While some people can have an intersex condition and also identify as transgender, the two are separate and should not be conflated.

Do not say sex change. Most transgender people prefer gender confirmation or gender affirmation to describe sexual reassignment surgery. Surgery can be a part of a gender transition but is not necessary. Not all transgender people choose to have surgery or have access to surgery; say non-op rather than pre-op. Transition is not a synonym for surgery, and can cover anything from coming out, to a name change or change in appearance, to medical interventions such as hormone therapy.

To misgender someone means to use the wrong name, pronouns, or form of address for a person's gender. Whether misgendering happens as an innocent mistake or a malicious attempt to invalidate a person, it is deeply hurtful and can even put a person's safety at risk if they are outed as transgender in an environment that is not tolerant.

Deadnaming (ie mentioning the birth name of a trans person) should be avoided unless it is specifically relevant to the story you are telling. For instance, when discussing ANOHNI, it might be helpful to mention that she used to be known as Antony in Antony & the Johnsons. However, when discussing her historic accomplishments, there is no need to misgender her: she won the Mercury Music Prize in 2005.

For many transgender people, being able to pass as the gender with which they align is important for their sense of wellbeing, and passing privilege can allow a person to move safely through environments where being perceived as transgender is a danger. However, the term can be considered problematic because it implies that being perceived as cisgender is the ultimate goal for transgender and non-binary people. Passing can imply that a person has to convince others of their gender, rather than being able to simply express their true self.

Mx. is a gender-neutral honorific used by some transgender and non-binary people (and allies) who do not want to use Mr. or Ms.

Gender identity is separate from sexual or romantic orientation and trans people can identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, etc.

The term homosexuality has been associated with negative stereotypes and pathology and reduces people's identities to their sexual behaviour. The Associated Press, The New York Times and The Washington Post restrict use of the word to direct quotes. Try to use specific descriptors instead when these are known, except in clinical contexts or references to sexual activity.



As a rule, try to avoid labelling behaviour as LGBTQ+ (eg gay sex, lesbian lovers) unless you would call the same behaviour straight if engaged in by two people of different genders. In most cases, your readers, viewers or listeners will be able to discern gender and/or orientation through your depictions of their relationships and your use of pronouns.

Do not use offensive words: tranny, sodomite, fag, faggot, homo, dyke, etc.

The words gay and queer should not be used as nouns to describe people, ie not queers, but queer people, etc.

There is no single lesbian, gay or bisexual lifestyle. Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. References to lifestyle are used to denigrate lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and suggest that orientation is a choice and therefore can and should be cured.

Two spirit is an umbrella term traditionally used within Native American communities to recognise individuals who possess qualities or fulfil roles of both feminine and masculine genders. This term should not be appropriated to describe people who are not First Nations/Native American/Indigenous members.

A person who identifies as demisexual (gray-aseexual or gray-A) feels sexually attracted only within the context of a strong emotional connection and a person who identifies as asexual does not experience sexual attraction or has little interest in sexual behaviour. Note that many asexual people desire and have romantic relationships.

When using the acronym QT, please clarify what it stands for, eg is the venue QT (queer/trans) friendly?

Sexual and gender orientations are not preferences; do not refer to them as such.



WHERE WE COME FROM

GEOGRAPHY

When speaking to an international audience, avoid describing something such as the weather, or discussing local politics, without stating where you actually are.

When scheduling video and telephone conferences, please take into consideration that people may be in different time zones.

Use local currency, with conversion only if necessary and you know your audience to be primarily from one currency zone.

Generally, we should use the metric system for weights and measures but apply common sense. If you're enjoying a pint of British lager, you don't have to convert this to litres, obviously (0.568, if you're interested). Use degrees celsius to report temperature.

Do not assume everyone lives in London or LA: write Hackney, east London; say Downtown Los Angeles, not just Downtown.

Always try to use current nomenclature: Eswatini (not Swaziland), Suriname (not Dutch Guiana), Mumbai (not Bombay), Ho Chi Minh City (not Saigon), etc. You do not have to give the former name.

Britain and the United Kingdom are one and the same. Great Britain refers only to England, Wales and Scotland. Take care not to use Great Britain if you want to include Northern Ireland. The term British Isles is best avoided as it includes Great Britain, Ireland and adjacent islands. A less contentious alternative might be Britain and Ireland.

Scandinavia comprises Denmark, Norway and Sweden; with the addition of Finland and Iceland, they constitute the Nordic countries.

America refers to the entire western hemisphere and does not apply solely to the United States. North America and south America together are often referred to as the Americas. When referring to the United States of America, use United States, US, USA or the States.

Central America comprises Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

The West Indies is a group of islands in the Caribbean Sea that comprises the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, the Leeward Islands and Windward Islands, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago. They acquired that name because European explorers erroneously thought they had sailed to India.

Africa is a continent made up of more than 50 countries and is approximately three times larger than Europe. When writing about people be sure to locate them precisely. Avoid simply saying they are African or from Africa.

Do not confuse Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, French Guiana, Guinea-Bissau, Papua New Guinea and Guyana.



Do not confuse Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with the Republic of the Congo aka Congo-Brazzaville.

Do not describe the refugee camp in and around Calais as the Jungle.

Just say Delhi unless specifically referring to the small area of the city that is New Delhi.

Do not use the definite article when talking about Ukraine, Sudan, Lebanon, Central African Republic (CAR), Ivory Coast, etc. When in doubt, drop the the. Exceptions include the Gambia, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands.

Jerusalem should not be referred to as the capital of Israel and is not generally recognised as such.

The State of Palestine is a sovereign state composed of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

East Asia or south-east Asia, not the far east.

Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, not southern Ireland.

Try not to use the terms developing countries or third world. If you absolutely must, the former is preferred.

WEIRD can be used to describe western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic countries but please spell out for your audience. Feminism has been criticised in the past for not acknowledging WEIRD privilege. Transnational intersectionality seeks to address these limitations by drawing from theories that emphasise how colonialist legacies and capitalist globalisation have shaped and continue to shape the social, economic and political oppression of people across the globe.

RACE, ETHNICITY & NATIONALITY

Race is a social construct and is not universal; it refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant. Ethnicity refers to shared characteristics such as culture, language, ancestry, practices and beliefs.

Never say ethnic when you mean ethnic minority. Ethnic relates to groups of people and does not imply a minority status. The term ethnic culture is meaningless (and a tautology) and no one looks more ethnic than anyone else.

Do not use African American to describe Black people who are not American. Jay Z and Beyoncé are African American. Rihanna and Sampha are not. Rihanna is African Caribbean, not Afro Caribbean. They are all Black.

Capitalise the B in Black. Whether we capitalise the W in white is currently under discussion.

When describing non-white groups in general, use Black, Asian & minority ethnic (BAME) or person(s)/people of colour (POC). There are unique exceptions to every rule of course; be sensitive and do not deny anyone their racial identity. To describe the female minority ethnic experience, use woman/women of colour (WOC) or BAME women. Often it is not necessary to spell out these acronyms, but please consider your audience.

In some contexts, using the terms POC or BAME is inappropriate, and some people feel like they're problematic. You can in these situations refer to people as being of marginalised ethnicity and/or race.



When using less well-known acronyms, eg BPOC (Black person(s)/people of colour) or BIPOC (Black and Indigenous person(s)/people of colour), please spell out for your audience.

BAME groups are not homogeneous. Do not refer to BAME culture, for instance.

When describing individuals, ask them how they would like to be described (eg I am a brown biracial woman). Ideally, terms such as POC or BAME should only be used in the aggregate.

Do not use the offensive term coloured to describe POC unless referring to official names, historical events or in quotes. In some countries, coloured denotes those of mixed racial ancestry.

The use of the term caucasian as an alternative to white or white European is discouraged because it originated as a way of classifying white people as a race to be favourably compared with other races.

Many terms exist for people of various multiracial backgrounds, including biracial, mixed race, multiethnic and polyethnic. Avoid using the term half or other problematic terminology.

Do not use hyphens when describing people of dual origin, ethnicity or religion, eg Japanese American (not Japanese-American), Jewish British (not Jewish-British).

Do not conflate Blackness with other minority identities. If you want to describe Black people exclusively, do not say POC. Misogynoir is experienced by Black women, Stormzy set up a scholarship for Black Cambridge students, etc.

The words black and white should not be used as nouns to describe people, ie not Blacks but Black people, etc.

Never use the term Black-on-Black violence.

There is no simple definition of an Arab. Be aware that not all individuals from the 22 countries that comprise the Arab League identify as Arab (eg Kurds, Berbers).

When writing about people of Middle Eastern and north African (MENA) descent, state the nation of origin if possible.

As a rule: Arabic describes the language and Arab describes the history, tradition and culture of the Arab people.

Note: Iran is not an Arab country. The majority of Iranian people are Persian and the language is Farsi.

In some usage, Asian refers to Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and others. In the United States, such ethnic groups would be known as south Asians, while Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and others are described as east Asians. Take care when describing something as Asian and try to be more specific.

The word Desi is a Sanskrit word meaning from the country. It refers to a person of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi birth or descent who has left and implies shared values or bonds.

Latinx is a useful gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina. Note that the term hispanic encompasses the entire Spanish speaking world including Spain and excluding Brazil. Latinx is used to describe people whose origin is in Latin America.



Chicano/a is a term used to describe people with Mexican origins. Chicano refers to men and Chicana to women.

Some institutions have started using the terms Chican@ and Latin@ as terms that offer both masculine and feminine versions simultaneously, eg Chican@-Latin@ Studies at the University of San Francisco.

New Zealanders or New Zealand people is preferable to Kiwis (and Indigenous New Zealanders are Māori). People from Somalia are Somalis, not Somalians. People from Turkmenistan are Turkmen, not to be confused with Turkomans, a formerly nomadic minority now based in Iraq who speak Turkmen.

Hawaiian refers to those of Polynesian descent, do not use to simply describe people who live in Hawaii.

Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islander People, not Aborigines. Native Americans, not Red Indians. Inuit or other more specific terms, not Eskimos. With regard to Indigenous people in Canada, try to be specific as to an individual's First Nations, Inuit or Métis heritage.

In general, refer to an Indigenous group as a people or nation rather than as a tribe.

Try to avoid using language that could be considered offensive to Native Americans (or any underrepresented culture, for that matter). Examples include: pow wow, spirit animal, climbing the totem pole, too many chiefs and not enough Indians, going off the reservation. Regardless of context, the word squaw is highly offensive.

The Romany diaspora is an ethnic group with many sub groups. Romany Gypsies are recognised as a ethnic group in the UK, as are Irish Travellers, and are protected under the Equality Act. Do not confuse Romany Gypsies with Irish Travellers or use the word gypsy as a slur, or adjective to describe people or lifestyles that are not Romany.

The term oriental is vague and possibly offensive. In art, it may include countries such as China and Japan but exclude Turkey. In rugs, it may mean India and China and include Turkey. In food, it may mean China or Japan, but not India, Vietnam or the Philippines. Do not use.

Orientalism refers to a generally patronising and damaging attitude towards eastern societies and cultures. It is a form of ethnocentrism.

Please consider language: words such as uppity and sassy are not acceptable when used to describe POC.

When someone remarks that a POC is articulate, it can imply that this is surprising behaviour. This can be insulting even if that was not the intention. This is an example of a microaggression.

Do not use the word primitive to describe contemporary cultures or people.

Never use the word exotic to describe human beings, it fetishises otherness.

Avoid written usage of the N word and never spell it out in full (except in song lyrics): eg she called him the N word, they sang Niggas in Paris. If you are not Black, refrain from saying the N word out loud, including when quoting or rapping/singing.

Avoid phrases such as chink in one's armour and words such as niggardly that — despite their original non-racial etymology — sound like racial slurs.

Avoid terms such as skin-coloured - skin is not a specific colour! See also: nude.



Language that essentialises or reifies race is strongly discouraged and is generally considered inappropriate. For example, phrases such as the Black race and the white race portray human groups monolithically and often perpetuate stereotypes.

Do not use the term reverse racism. Racism is a system of oppression and while members of ethnic minorities may be prejudiced against members of a dominant culture, they lack the political and economic power to actively oppress them and are therefore not practicing racism. Of course, for every rule like this, there's always someone who comes up with unique scenario in which it does not apply. Try not to be that person.

We support the #BlackLivesMatter movement and refrain from using the slogan #AllLivesMatter as it reflects a view of racial dismissal, ignorance and denial.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION & BLACKFACE

Cultural appropriation is the adoption and often monetisation of elements of one culture by members of another culture and is usually used to describe a situation whereby members of a dominant culture appropriate from disadvantaged minority cultures.

Examples include jewellery and fashion (including tattoos) featuring imagery from another culture's history or religion without regard to original significance. Critics of the practice contend that divorcing iconography from its context or treating it as kitsch risks offending minorities who venerate and wish to preserve their traditions.

Cultural appropriation is not just visual: language can also be appropriated. Unless you are African American, try to avoid using African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to make your point.

Cultural collaboration can lead to respectful sharing and fusion. However, the line between organic fusion and cultural appropriation is thin and barbed with institutionalised oppression. Tread carefully.

Blackface is a term originally used to describe the practice of non-Black performers blacking up with stage make-up to represent a caricature of a Black person. Its meaning has since expanded to include all forms of costume and doesn't always involve make-up (eg Sacha Baron Cohen's portrayal of Ali G). Blackface is defined as a racist phenomenon, whether or not the offender intends it to be.

Technology has allowed new ways to perform blackface: a few years ago, a controversy emerged over a Bob Marley filter on Snapchat that let users superimpose dark skin and dreadlocks over their own faces.

There are variations on blackface in which a person imitates a person of minority ethnic origin who is not Black (obvious examples include Mickey Rooney in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and the character of Apu in *The Simpsons*, voiced by a white actor).

Blackfishing is a relatively new word used to describe the phenomenon of white influencers portraying themselves as Black or ethnically ambiguous online using make-up, fashion and technology.

Please be sensitive to and aware of these issues. Simple things to avoid include using dark-skinned emojis if you are white and wearing or promoting Native American headdresses as fashion accessories (many festivals have in fact banned them).



WHAT WE BELIEVE

RELIGION

At shesaid.so we recommend avoiding any malicious commentary re. one's choice of religion, whether direct or implied. In general, you should refrain from instigating religious debate.

Capitalise God in reference to all monotheistic religions, however you can use lowercase personal pronouns (him, he and his). Many Christians consider God to be beyond gender, so be sensitive and avoid gender-defining pronouns when appropriate. Orthodox Jews write G-d to avert the sin of erasing or defacing God's name. We should respect this practice by using G-d in quotes of relevant written material.

Antisemitism is all one word.

Use Jew for men and women.

Do not trivialise the Holocaust by comparing others things to it. Do not describe someone as a Nazi unless they are an actual Nazi. The word femininazi is not acceptable, for various (hopefully obvious) reasons.

Do not confuse Islam the religion with Islamism the extremist ideology. Same applies with jihadi vs jihadist.

A hijab is a headscarf worn by some women who are Muslims; it also describes the practice of dressing modestly. Niqabs are veils that cover all of the face except the eyes. A burqa is an all-enveloping outer garment with a net-covered opening for sight.

Anti-Islam or anti-Muslim, rather than Islamophobic.

Do not use the word voodoo to describe fictional sorcery or metaphorical trickery. To describe the religion, use relevant spelling where possible: Vodou in Haiti, Vodum in Brazil, Vodú in Cuba, Vodun in west Africa, Vudú in Dominica, etc.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has asked not to be referred to as the Mormon Church and objects to its adherents being referred to as Mormons.

Hindi is the language; Hindu describes those who practice the religion Hinduism.

Do not assume that everyone understands or is familiar with horoscopic astrology. Note that it is generally regarded as pseudoscientific. Do not dismiss or discriminate against anyone because of their zodiac sign.

CELEBRATION & CEREMONY

Please refrain from continually referring to western holidays when communicating with a diverse audience. Not everyone recognises the Gregorian calendar. Bear in mind that Thanksgiving is only celebrated in north America.

Aim to use non-religious and non-denominational language where possible: eg festive greetings or happy holidays, rather than merry Christmas.

Write Christmas out in full (avoid Xmas) wherever possible.



Lunar new year is preferable to Chinese new year.

Alcohol is an intersectional issue: many people do not drink for reasons relating to health, culture, religion or maternity (if they're pregnant or breastfeeding). Do not assume that everyone celebrates with a drink and be mindful not to extol alcohol consumption.



HOW WE LIVE

SOCIETY

Social class is an often-overlooked factor when considering intersectional identities. Please consider that not everyone has the same economic background or level of education.

Avoid using broad, pejorative and generalising terms to discuss socioeconomic status. Negative connotations are associated with terms such as the homeless or the poor. Instead, use specific, people-first language, eg people experiencing homelessness, people whose income falls below the poverty line.

Note that a lot homeless people do not sleep rough. Many stay in insecure accommodation such as squats or with relatives and friends.

Low-paid workers, not unskilled workers.

Terms such as economically marginalised and economically exploited should be used rather than underprivileged.

Less well educated is preferable to uneducated or poorly educated but try and be more specific when describing individuals, eg a person without formal qualifications.

Do not use the word chav (or any other words used to derogatorily describe working class people).

Do not use pejorative language to describe welfare recipients (eg benefits scroungers).

Do not use elderly to describe someone under the age of 75. The term older person is generally preferred.

The term sex worker is preferable to prostitute. Do not stigmatise sex work. Sex work is legitimate work.

Note there is no such thing as a child sex worker; they are underage victims of abuse.

There are three crucial differences between human trafficking and human smuggling: smuggling is always international, generally with the consent of the smuggled individual and is limited to a single financial transaction; trafficking does not have to be international, is performed without the informed consent of the trafficked individual and uses threat, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploitation.

The term victim is used for those in a dangerous situation or at risk of danger. The term survivor is used for people who have experienced danger in the past. Language matters. If possible, ask the person you're describing which they prefer. Some people dislike both terms.

An asylum seeker is someone seeking humanitarian protection or refugee status. Refugees are people who have fled their home countries in fear for their lives. To describe someone who has been denied refuge, use person who has been refused asylum, not failed asylum seeker. To describe an individual residing in a country for which they lack the correct visa, use undocumented migrant, not illegal immigrant. **NO HUMAN BEING IS ILLEGAL.**

Avoid use of the word expat; emigrant is more accurate.



MIND & BODY

The term neurodiversity refers to variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense. It is a controversial umbrella term that includes autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia. A lot of neurodiverse individuals do not consider themselves disabled.

Note autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder, not an illness.

Hans Asperger was a eugenicist who sent children to Nazi camps and described the disorder that takes his name as a psychopathy. For this reason, some people choose not to use the term.

Use people-first language whenever possible to avoid defining people by their disabilities, eg a person with quadriplegia, rather than a quadriplegic.

Learning disabilities, rather than learning difficulties.

Do not say mentally retarded. The terms developmentally disabled or intellectually disabled are preferred.

The term disabled is preferred to terms handicapped, impaired or invalid.

Accessible parking, not handicapped parking.

Do not say confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair-bound; use the term wheelchair user.

Use the terms non-disabled or abled rather than able-bodied to describe someone who does not identify as having a disability.

Labels such as high functioning and low functioning are both problematic and ineffective in describing the nuances of an individual's experience with disability; instead, specify the individual's strengths and weaknesses.

People with epilepsy have seizures, not fits.

Never use hare lip: say cleft lip or cleft palate.

Conjoined twins, not Siamese twins.

The terms hard of hearing or partial hearing loss are used to describe people who have mild to moderate hearing loss that may or may not be corrected with amplification. Ask someone if they'd prefer to be described as deaf or hard of hearing.

Deafness with a capital D refers to Deaf culture and community; deaf describes the audiological condition.

The term sign language is lowercase but capitalise American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language (BSL), etc. Someone who communicates in sign language is a signer, eg an ASL signer.

Deafness is not always considered an impairment or disability. Be sensitive of this.



Provide descriptive captions for images where possible so that visually impaired and blind people can understand what you're trying to communicate.

Avoid using the word battle when referring to diseases, especially cancer. Do not describe patients, especially Aids patients, as victims.

Respect people's choices about how they identify themselves, eg someone with Alzheimer's disease v someone with dementia. Do not use the term senile dementia.

In the context of health and disability, avoid using terms: cripple, loony, mad, crazy, psycho, schizo, etc. As with other diverse groups, insiders in disability culture may use these terms with one another; it is not appropriate for an outsider (ie a non-disabled person) to use these terms.

Do not use bipolar, catatonic, schizophrenic, etc as adjectives except when describing people with formally diagnosed medical conditions (the weather, for instance, is not bipolar).

Do not use obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) to describe someone who obsesses over certain things but has not been formally diagnosed as having OCD.

Do not speculate regarding another person's mental health or illness.

Avoid using the word shrink in reference to a mental health professional except in a quote.

Do not say vagina (internal organ) when you mean vulva (female genitals). The two words are not interchangeable.

Female genital mutilation, never female circumcision.

Do not use negative language (eg junkies) to describe those who struggle with alcohol or drug misuse disorders.

HIV is a virus, not a disease; do not call HIV the Aids virus or an HIV test an Aids test. Do not confuse a diagnosis of HIV with a diagnosis of Aids.

The virus is officially called Sars-CoV-2 and this causes the disease Covid-19. Currently, using coronavirus to describe either is fine however be aware that other viruses including some strains of the common cold are also coronaviruses.

Practise body-positivity always. The word fat is currently in the process of being reclaimed, however please use with caution. Don't assume that everyone wants to lose weight or change their bodies. Avoid phrases such as real women.

Use the term little person or person with short stature rather than midget or vertically challenged. Use dwarfism only if referring to the medical condition (and then, say person with dwarfism rather than dwarf).

Someone who has died by suicide has killed themselves; they have not committed anything. Suicide survivors have attempted suicide and survived, do not describe them as unsuccessful.

Exercise caution when referring to the methods and context of a suicide and avoid giving details.



FAMILY

Use pro-choice, not pro-abortion; use anti-abortion, not pro-life.

Individuals who do not have children are childfree, not childless.

Do not use the terms natural or normal birth. Do not shame women who (don't) breastfeed.

Mention that someone is adopted only when germane. Do not refer to biological parents as real parents in the context of adoption. A person places a child for adoption, they do not give the child up for adoption.

Be mindful of terminology: birth parent and biological parent are not necessarily interchangeable.

Avoid using the words access or custody when discussing the care of children; contact and residence are preferable.

Avoid describing someone as the son/daughter of... especially if you only reference their father.

Do not present women primarily as the wife/girlfriend of someone else. Amal Alamuddin is a successful human rights lawyer who has represented governments and extremely high profile individuals; her marriage to George Clooney is not the first thing people should know about her.

Only describe someone as a mother if it is relevant to what you're saying.

Use equal marriage or same-sex marriage (or just marriage), rather than gay marriage.

Legal marriage is only one form of committed relationship. Marital status is sometimes not a reliable indicator of cohabitation (eg married couples may be separated), sexual activity or sexual orientation.

Normally use wife or husband for people who are legally married. Spouse is also accurate for either partner in any legal marriage, which you should use to describe non-binary people.

Do not refer to children born outside of marriage as illegitimate.

Avoid using the term maiden name.

SCIENCE

The term climate change does not accurately reflect the severity of the current situation; use instead climate emergency, climate crisis, climate apocalypse, etc. Global heating is preferable to global warming.

Someone who doesn't believe in the climate crisis is a climate science denier, not a sceptic.

Do not describe the theories of anti-vaxxers, creationists, etc as scientifically valid or present them without offering counterarguments.

MUSIC

Do not use the word urban to describe Black genres unless absolutely necessary (eg when critiquing the urban categories at award ceremonies).



Black music includes spirituals, hip-hop, house, samba, reggae, techno, r&b, funk, dancehall, soul, blues, jazz, reggaeton, dubstep, drum and bass, jungle, ska and the list goes on. Understand that the term Black music is often too broad and vague to be considered a useful descriptor and risks ignoring the true roots of various different ethnic groups and their specific musical traditions.

Avoid using the term world music to describe music made outside the European/American hegemon. Instead use an appropriate genre descriptor such as pop, jazz, metal, rap, dance, etc.

Hot club jazz is preferable to gypsy jazz unless the music in question is made by someone of Romany descent (such as Django Reinhardt).

Afrobeat and Afrobeats are distinct music genres which often get mixed up. The former was pioneered by Fela Kuti in the 1960s and is a mix of west African musical styles, such as fuji music and highlife, with American funk and jazz; the latter is an umbrella term for 21st century west African pop music, combining Ghanaian and Nigerian pop music with north American and European rap influences.

Music genres are not usually capitalised but there are exceptions, especially when the genre name includes a geographical reference: soca, folk, punk, r&b, K-pop, Detroit techno, Europop, Motown, etc.



MISTAKES

LISTENING

We all make mistakes and sometimes we unintentionally say or do hurtful things. Unfortunately, it's common to avoid listening to those we've hurt, as it provokes uncomfortable feelings of guilt and shame. Stay in your discomfort and be willing to listen, because this is how you can grow. Seek to understand and empathise with the lived experiences of marginalised people.

You can never understand what you need to understand about intersectionality if you only listen to people like yourself.

APOLOGISING

If someone says that something you've done is problematic, don't justify your behaviour or defend your intentions (please no I love gay people! I'm a diversity champion! — now is not the time). It isn't helpful to the people who have been hurt and shifts the focus away from them and onto your personal feelings of guilt, shame or defensiveness. Intention is not impact. The best apology is one that doesn't make excuses or invalidate the other person's feelings.

Take responsibility for your privilege.

Say sorry that you did something wrong, not sorry if you did something wrong.

If you have to make a public apology, state succinctly and exactly what you did wrong (eg I wore Blackface, not I honoured a musical hero; I said the N word, not I was singing along to Fugees).

Don't place the onus on offended parties to get over our faux pas; earn their forgiveness.

If you commit a microaggression by accident (such as misgendering someone), apologise swiftly without making an excessive show out of the mistake or your guilt, which can create even more discomfort for the victim.

MAKING IT RIGHT

Treat every mistake as a learning experience. The most authentic apology is meaningless if there is no commitment to change or if the behaviour is repeated consistently in the future. Show you care by doing better next time.

Try for less harm in the future. Be thoughtful, but don't be so careful that you don't take any risks (that's just self-preservation). Ask questions. Be prepared to be wrong. Be willing to learn.



SUMMARY

Be respectful, be sensitive, be intersectional. None of the suggestions outlined in this guide are meant to be proscriptive. We welcome your feedback and look forward to developing our guide collaboratively with shesaid.so members and affiliates. If you have any questions or suggestions for improvement please do not hesitate to get in touch.

This guide was originally written by Yasmine Lajoie for the shesaid.so network in 2020, and was modified for general use for Women In Music BC. Any feedback or proposed changes are welcome to be shared with womeninmusicbc@gmail.com, and we acknowledge that there may be imperfections as the state of compassionate intersectionality and our understanding of it is in a constant state of growth.