

Darby



Unity /'yoʊnədə/

1. The state of being united or joined
2. The state of forming a complete whole

Everything that we say a man can do, or a woman should be, it's a perception, based on societal norms. Rich men used to wear wigs and makeup in another era, you know? So, why should I be boxed into who you think I should be, because of what's between my legs?

I don't care for gender binaries. I'm neither male nor female. Others would say gender-fluid, or gender-queer. If there was a "Q" box, I would definitely be checking that, instead of "M" or "F." I can do male-gender-normalized things and female. I don't have to be "he" or "she." I'm just me – Darby.

A lot of people think that you've got to pick one or the other – male or female – or that your gender is determined by your fertility – impregnated or impregnator. There are even trans-people who look at me and are just like, "You've gotta be trans-woman or man. Choose." That's why I say existence is resistance.

Having more than two genders is nothing new. It is a human practice, seen all over the planet.

And there is a spectrum of intersex who cannot be biologically categorized as male or female, too. If these things make you uncomfortable then please research them. You can literally Google them if you don't know. Just please approach it with an open mind.

In the last few years, a group of my gender-queer friends with Latin American roots has started to embrace the label "Muxxéxe" instead of male or female, or queer. It comes from muxe, a third gender in Oaxaca, Mexico. We didn't want to appropriate the term directly because we do not necessarily connect with that tradition. But the idea of combining heritage and queer identity was attractive. So we've created our own Muxxéxe community of Brown, gender-queer individuals.

Being queer in America has for so long been a White, cisgender man's story. Most people can't even think of a person of color who is gay. Maybe they'll say RuPaul. Okay, but that's all we get? Or, Ricky Martin, but he has no interest in representing us. So, we've had to foster gender-queer communities of color, like Muxxéxes. I've also coined the phrase and have been pushing for "positivity pride," which is inclusive of all people of color, of all genders.

I do a lot for the LGBTQ community. I work with men who have sex with men, and trans-women, in my job as an HIV counselor. I also coordinate an annual event called Royalty on the Roof, where trans- and non-cisgender performers can come and share their stories and show off



"Havok incorporated a little bit of everything I love and connected it to music in this work of art, which means so much to me, since we connected through music and art. I met Havok by going to the monthly drag king shows at The Menagerie in Riverside, and a friendship grew by us working together for Royalty on the Roof, an annual celebration of trans lives and success stories."



Day-of-the-Dead-themed painting of the lead singer of Blondie. Crafted and given to Darby by Havok Von Doom.

what they do. It's always beautiful, especially for youth, to be able to see that we can lead our lives like anybody else. It fosters a lot of strength for the community.

Sometimes the mental and emotional labor of educating people is exhausting. I'm constantly serving as a bridge for those who come to me and say, "Oh, we need the LGBT community involved in this project" – like I'm some kind of LGBT whisperer. I get that you want to make sure that you're reaching out to everybody. But, if you are really interested in having us involved, why aren't you making more connections yourself? You need to go beyond me. Because I'm not here to be your token homo.

I'm not here to be your token Latino, either. I actually have issues with terms like "Hispanic" and "Latino." Those are just more labels made to box us in. The shared heritage of Hispanic and Latino people is what came out of Spanish colonization, and I don't really connect with that as part of my identity. If what connects us, really, is being Spanish speakers, then lets just call ourselves Hispanohablantes.

Because of RuPaul's Drag Race, these days every other person you meet in the LGBT community is in drag. It's a beautiful thing, in a way. There used to be

a lot more animosity toward the queens, and being non-cisgender. There's still a lot of sexism – drag kings aren't getting the jobs. And, because I am male-passing, I do notice a discomfort and confusion, sometimes even within the queer community, when I wear lipstick or find other ways to express my femininity.

There are some people that I have had to cut out of my life because of their "just get over it" mentality. I cannot "just get over it." The fact that I am where I am in life is because other people didn't get over it. You know? And we need to stop sitting on the shoulders of those giants. It's time to stand up and unite, start calling out the -isms for what they are, find pride in our Brown blood, and do a better job of fostering care.