

Gender inclusivity recommendations for literary festivals and events

By Rae White

The following is a list of suggestions for events staff to help increase gender inclusivity at literary festivals and events, including: managing registration and the event space, and use of language.

REGISTRATION

- ❖ Include many **gender options on festival ticket registration** and other forms (e.g. feedback forms). Don't just include male and female, but also include non-binary, genderqueer, gender diverse, agender, gender fluid, I'd prefer not to say, etc. and encourage people to 'select all that apply', as some people will use more than one term for their gender.
- ❖ The same goes for **titles on forms** - make sure there are gender neutral options available, like 'Mx', 'Dr' and 'None/Other'.
- ❖ You should also ask yourself **why you're gathering data** on gender and title, and if it's necessary information to collect for the particular event/s you're running.

LANGUAGE

- ❖ Include **pronouns on lanyards** for artists, staff, volunteers etc. or a space on the lanyard for people to write their pronouns if they wish.
- ❖ For online events, encourage people to include their **pronouns in their Zoom name**.
 - NOTE, this should not be compulsory - not all trans folks are 'out' or can list their pronouns safely.
 - Cis people displaying their pronouns normalises pronoun transparency and creates less assumptions around pronouns (e.g. the idea that 'pronouns are just a trans thing'.)
- ❖ Aim to include multiple **transgender and gender diverse speakers** in your events. Diverse panels/readings makes for rich and inclusive events.
- ❖ Use **gender neutral language** when hosting events, e.g. instead of 'ladies and gentlemen', use greetings like 'Welcome everyone/folks/writers/poets' etc.

- **Brief artists and those hosting events on inclusive language**, so they have the tools to deliver inclusive sessions. Consider including a document/email for them to read that covers gender-neutral language options and recommendations.
- Hosts/chairs should **introduce themselves and their pronouns**, and encourage artists/panelists to do the same.
- When taking questions during panels from the audience, for example, make sure to **keep language gender neutral**. Rather than 'I will paraphrase his question' or 'hand the mic to the man in the blue jumper', perhaps say 'I will paraphrase the question' or 'hand the mic to the person in the blue jumper.'
- ❖ Avoid using 'sir' or 'madam' unless you know how the person likes to be referred to.
- ❖ Avoid the collective 'guys' when referring to a group of people. Alternatively use 'folks', 'people', 'everyone', and 'you all' etc.
- ❖ If you accidentally **misgender someone or make a mistake**, don't panic. It's okay to make mistakes. Simply, **apologise, correct yourself and move on**. (Repeatedly saying how sorry you are and how awful you feel, makes the situation about you, instead of the person you have misgendered.)

SPACE

- ❖ **Gender neutral bathrooms.** Choose an event space with gender neutral bathrooms, or bathrooms that allow alternate signage to be placed.
 - Recommended signage includes both pictures and text for ease of understanding – such as an image of a toilet and urinal with words like 'gender neutral toilet', 'all gender bathroom' or 'inclusive restroom'.
 - Gender neutral bathrooms ensure the comfort and safety of transgender and gender diverse people, as well as people of all genders.
- ❖ Consider **additional venue signage**. Additional signage could be placed around the venue with messages that encourage inclusive language, or that help create a safe space. For example, 'You are welcome' and 'All sexualities, genders, identities, expressions and cultures are welcome here.'

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