



## A Message from OPEIU Local 8's Race, Equity & Social Justice Committee

### What is a Gender Pronoun?

A **gender pronoun** is a third-person pronoun that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about them. For example: If Pat's pronouns are she/her/hers, you would say "Pat raised *her* fist. *She* was showing solidarity."

### What are some commonly used pronouns?

I, you, she, her, he, him, they, them, theirs, and it. Some people may ask that you use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them (e.g. they, them, ze, hir). And some people opt not to use pronouns at all, using their name as a pronoun instead.

### Why is it important to respect people's pronouns?

You can't always know what someone's pronoun is by looking at them.

Correctly using someone's pronoun is a way to show your respect for their gender identity.

When someone is referred to with the wrong pronoun, it can make them feel disrespected, invalidated, humiliated, alienated, and/or dysphoric.

It is a privilege not to have to worry about which pronoun someone is going to use for you based on how they perceive your gender. If you have this privilege, yet fail to respect someone else's gender identity, it is not only disrespectful and hurtful, but also oppressive.

If people's assumptions are correct, never having to name those assumptions begins to normalize the very process of making assumptions (which for others may be incorrect). Thus, sharing pronouns is a great way to disrupt the normalization and privilege of assumption.

The Union is committed to promoting an equitable and inclusive environment for intersex, transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer and gender-nonconforming people.

### Basic Do's and Don'ts:

Do not ever refer to a person as "it" or "he-she" (unless they specifically ask you to). These are offensive slurs used against trans and gender-nonconforming individuals.

Share your own pronouns if you are comfortable doing so, but remember, if someone doesn't want to share theirs, that's okay too. Much like sexual orientation, a person's gender identity can be a very personal and private thing.

Know that language evolves over time as do societal norms and expectations. Also, accept that "they" can in fact be used in the singular.

### What can the Union do to help normalize space for people to share their pronouns?

Share info on pronouns on our website and social media.

Work toward updating our contracts to neutralize the use of pronouns (replace he/she with they/them or employee/employees).

Incorporate sharing pronouns into meeting introductions. For example: "Hi, my name is Yoshi and I go by he/him/his pronouns" or "I'm Sam and I use they/them pronouns."

Encourage members to identify their pronoun on name tags used at union meetings.

Ask union staff to include their pronouns in their email signature, if they are comfortable doing so.

SUBJECT PRONOUN	OBJECT PRONOUN	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN	REFLEXIVE PRONOUN
_____ is a union member.	I support _____.	That is _____ contract. -or- That contract is _____.	That person is proud of _____.
She	her	her/hers	herself
He	him	his	himself
Ze*	hir	hir/hirs	hirsself
Ze*	zir	zir/zirs	zirsself
E or Ey	em	eir/eirs	eirsself or emself
Per	per	per/pers	Perself
Hu	hum	hus/hus	Humself
They (are)	them	their/theirs	Themselves
Name	Name	Name's/Name's	Name

\*Additional alternate spellings for "ze" are "zie," "sie," "xie," and "xe."

### Helpful definitions for words used in this document (taken from HRC.org). Please keep in mind that terms frequently change.

**Gender Identity:** One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Inclusive/Gender Neutral:** The idea that policies, language, and other social institutions avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender, in order to avoid discrimination arising from the impression that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than another.

**Gender-Nonconforming:** A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

**Genderqueer:** Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

**Intersex:** An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.

**Nonbinary:** An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.



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