Queer Fungi

Why Mushrooms are Gay

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Introduction

Welcome!

If you picked this up because you saw the brightly colored cover and assumed it was an ID booklet, you may need to look elsewhere. If, however, you are here because you identify as one of the LGBTQ+, and/or love mushrooms as well, this may end up being just your kind of thing.

This booklet, or zine, is intended to spark interest and curiosity on the topic at hand. It is a project I took on personally as an LGBTQ+ person who loves mushrooms.

That being said, anyone is welcome to read this, and while this project itself is small, I hope it can inspire bigger ones with more potential in the long run.

Max
Gender as a Fungal Construct

While it may seem generally accepted to come up with one of two gender identities when inquiring after a pet or a child, this falls very short in the mushroom kingdom. As a whole, mushrooms have over 20,000 gender/sexes, with one in particular standing out. *Schizophyllum commune* has 23,000 sexual identities, so you will likely never come across all of them, and if you thought asking a person their preferred pronoun was hard, you'd be entirely out of luck among these guys.

Author's note: Asking pronouns isn't hard, by the way.
Ignorance and Intolerance breed Toxicity

It is common knowledge that people fear what they do not understand, and are given to harmful reactions as a result. With mushrooms, this can be stereotyping them as pan poisons, despite some potentially holding cures to disease, or seeing them as drugs, the bad kind. Some mushrooms can signify death in trees, or unhealthy soil, some can clean up oil spills.
In the LGBT community, it can be harder to escape abusive relationships or abuse in general, because a system built on ignorance has less resources for these people.

All in all, ignorance is only harmful, and both communities could benefit from a more positive outlook. Did I mention quite a few mushrooms are asexual? LGBT Q².
From the 1950s, secret clubs, gay pride parades, LGBT+ have found their way through the cracks of an unaccepting society for a long time. Community is very important here, and likewise in fungi.

The largest living organism in the world, in fact, is literally underground as a honey mushroom grown under a tree in the Blue Mountains of Oregon. Close to home, yet rarely considered, fungi are responsible for decomposing matter so plants may grow, supplying food to wildlife, and communicating our messages of microbes below ground with each other. They are able to warn others, and use information through their mycelium, much as LGBT people develop secret codes, and trusted secret clubs, to survive.
Diversity

From thousands of species to none, with every color of the rainbow on display, I truly think that mushrooms can be—no, already are—a queer/LGBT icon.

They are beautiful and deadly, strong and fragile, they endure through unity and togetherness and embody success despite their multitude of diverse natures and ways of being.

In short, mushrooms are a neat place to look for inspiration regarding the LGBTQ+ community and humanity's future as a whole.
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