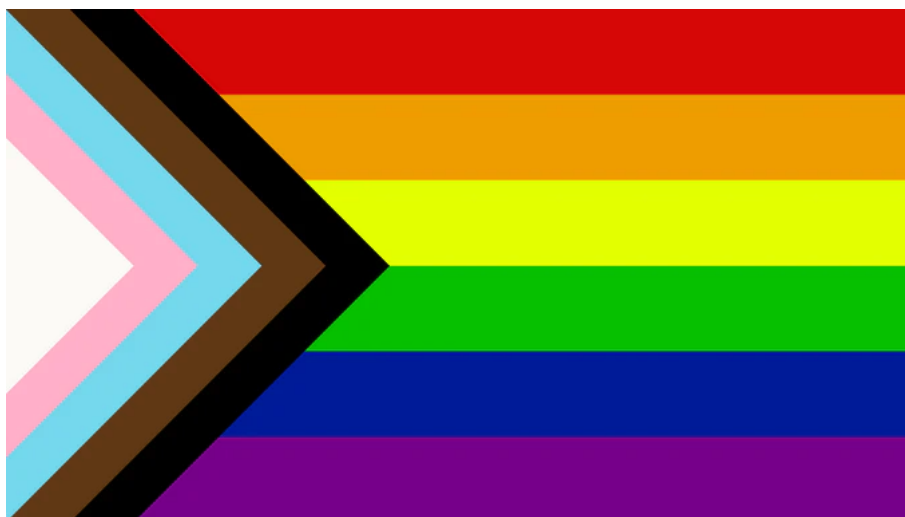


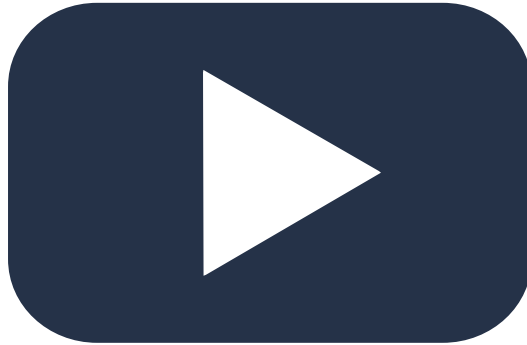
Queercore

THE QUEER PUNK MOVEMENT AND THEIR ZINES





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Please follow the steps to complete the zone:

- 1) Watch the video
- 2) Read through the booklet contents
- 3) Answer the discussion questions as a group

Content warning

Sexual and gender-based discrimination, violence, homophobia, nudity, swearing

In Toronto during the 1980s, two artists in their 20s, G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce, invented a **queer** punk movement called **queercore** (originally called 'homocore').

Jones and LaBruce could not find a space that accepted both their **punk** beliefs and 2SLGBTQIA+ identities.

They built the world they were searching for by pretending that they were at the heart of a queer punk movement in Toronto. They wrote about queercore culture in their **fanzine**, *J.D.s*.

Queercore allowed the queer community to challenge mainstream society via do-it-yourself (D.I.Y.) art, film, and music. It was a punk approach to queer politics.

G.B. Jones (pictured above) performing in her queer punk girl band, Fifth Column. Bruce LaBruce (pictured below) was also part of a queer punk band, Zuzu's Petals.



Image Courtesy of JD Doyle, Queer Music Heritage



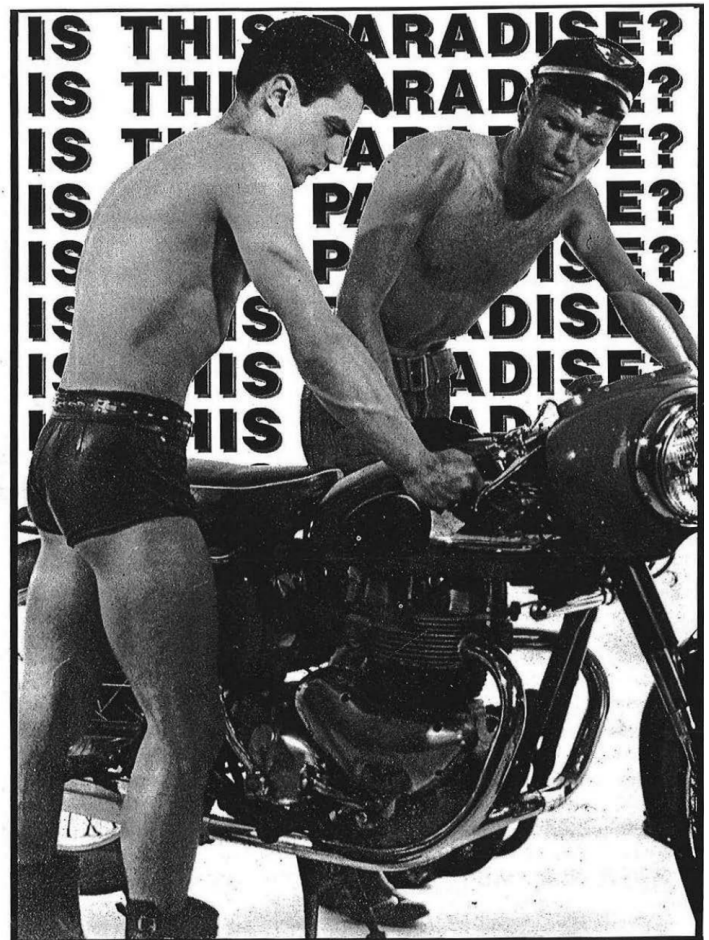


The movement grew into an international phenomenon. During the 1990s-2000s there were queercore conventions in cities such as London, Berlin, Amsterdam, Sydney, and San Francisco.

Queer punk has changed since the 1980s but is still popular today with new artists and communities across Canada.

Queercore was certainly not the large-scale movement that LaBruce and Jones claimed, but the world believed them.

Queer punks around the world read *J.D.s* and started to produce their own fanzines, art, film, and music under the queercore name.



The 'Queer' in Queercore

During the **Liberation era** of the 1980s, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community across North America was campaigning for rights and freedoms. Part of their activism was the reclamation of the word 'queer' that had historically been used as a derogatory insult.

Jones and LaBruce liked the way that queer embraced difference and opposed **homonormativity**. Gay and lesbian organizations of the time replicated **sexual and gender norms** and prioritized the **cisgender**, white community and their wants, such as the legalization of gay marriage. Queer groups were challenging this homonormativity by advocating for the inclusion of **transgender** and **racialized** folks and their needs, such as safe health care.

The 'Core' in Queercore

Punk emerged as a subculture in New York and London during the 1970s and was characterized by outrage, indelicacy, and brashness portrayed in music and art. Punk was designed to question mainstream society and prided itself on **anarchism** and **radicalism**.

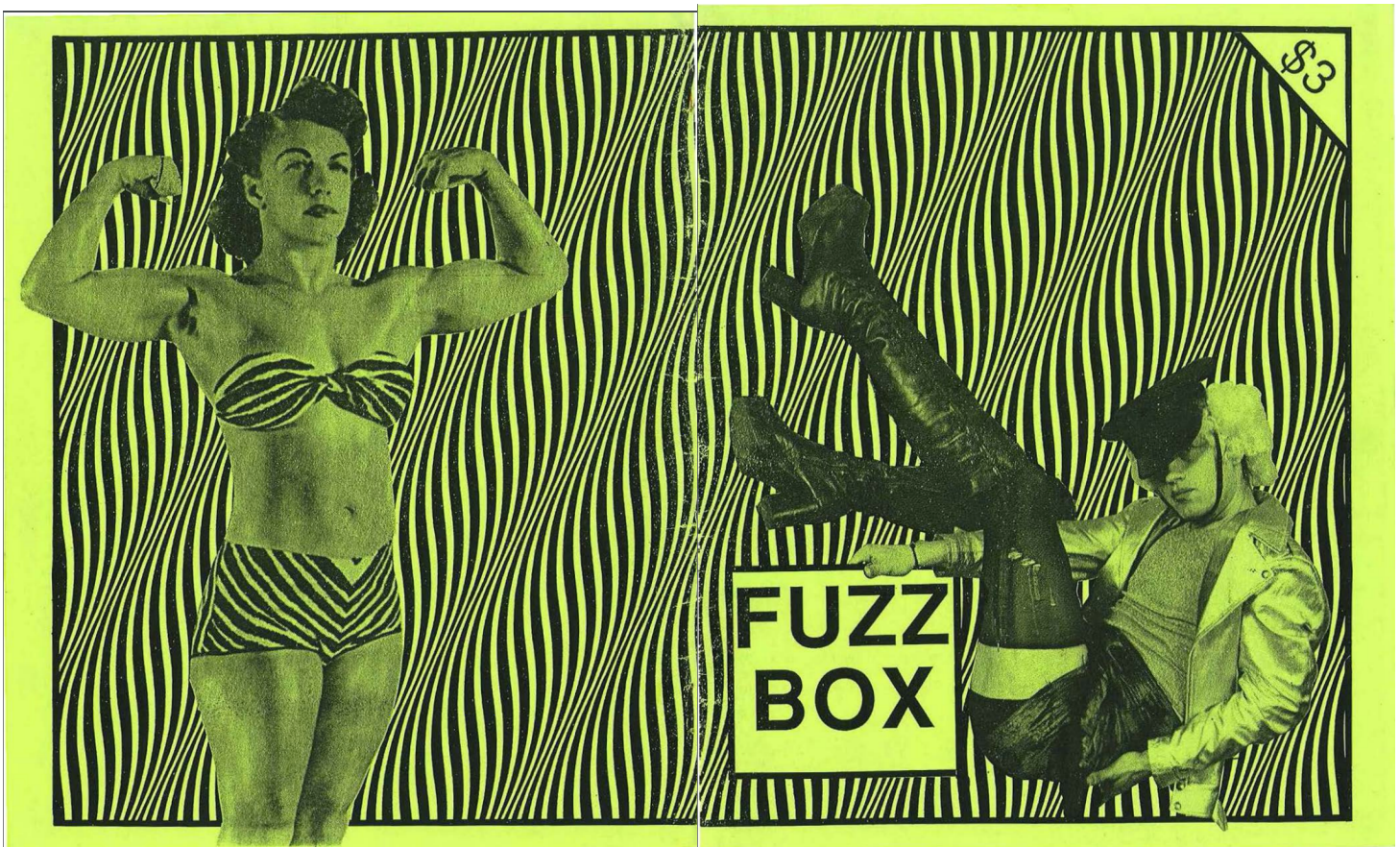
While the early punk scene had been open to people of all sexual orientations, by the 1980s it had evolved to become homophobic and sexist. 2SLGBTQIA+ punk performers were often heckled onstage or faced violence from macho punks.

LaBruce and Jones borrowed punk's radicalism when creating queercore: the 'core' in queercore stood for hardcore punk. They also emphasized how the word 'punk' was a synonym for 'passive homosexual' and male prostitute. Much like the word queer, they were reclaiming a word used as an insult.

Zines

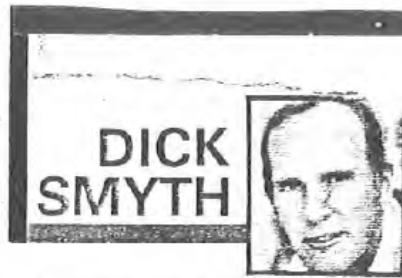
Fanzines—more commonly known as 'zines'—were one of the main forms of art used to spread queercore's ideas. Zines were usually small, cut-and-pasted booklets full of drawings and images designed to be passed from person to person. They were sold for a couple of dollars at events and shows or mailed to readers in an envelope.

Zines allow for a closer relationship between the creator and the audience. They often feature personal anecdotes, doodles, and spelling mistakes. Their do-it-yourself, unprofessional, and homemade style means that anyone can create zines about a political or personal topic and spread their message. Zines are still a popular way for 2SLGBTQIA+, feminist, and other activist groups to share their beliefs and work.



A part from moral considerations, I resent the co-opting of the word "gay" by homosexuals. It was a perfectly wonderful English word describing happy emotions or bright decorations. It's not clear how the word became a synonym for sodomy. I resent the appropriation of "gay," especially when the people it describes are not gay.

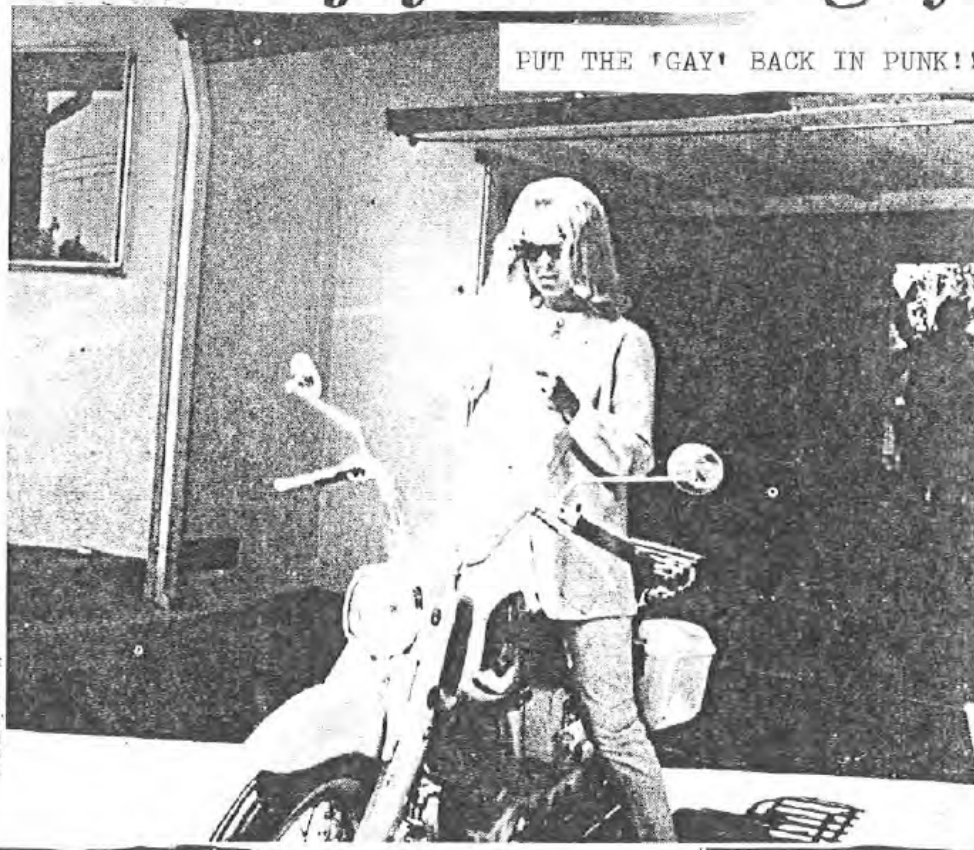
Could I turn on my microphone some morning and announce to the world that "I feel gay"? Imagine the sniggers if I sent out invitations to a "gay party" at my home. Words are like trees; beautiful, complex, useful, living things to be admired, occasionally trimmed but never vandalized. As an experiment, I tried to avoid using "gay" in its perverted meaning for a week but I failed. The gays win!



BEFORE HE DICKS YOU

Put the joy back in 'gay'

PUT THE 'GAY' BACK IN PUNK!!



© Harry Langton

In this page of *J.D.s*, LaBruce and Jones have clipped a newspaper article about the word 'gay.' By adding a joke, a provocative statement, a new image, and even just using the article in their zine, they were fighting back against negative stereotypes and homophobia.

Radicalism

In the punk tradition, queercore relied on radicalism in their art and politics. They were part of a new kind of activism that refused to gloss over difference, and instead emphasized the non-normative aspects of their community.

This new confrontational activism is reflected in the lyrics of a queercore band that became a popular slogan of the time:

"Not gay as in happy, but queer as in f*ck you!"

In the page of Montreal queercore zine, QT, pictured right, they have reproduced a document from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) that mentions their zine and J.D.s as explicit and illegal material.

The Q1 Collective chances upon a disturbing new
our connections remain anonymous - this just makes us want to
rebel!



CANADIAN SECURITY
INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

SERVICE CANADIEN DU
RENSEIGNEMENT DE SÉCURITÉ

March 1991

Memo To: Investigating Officers, Obscenity Publications
Re: Distribution and Publication of Sexually Explicit
Material

It has come to the attention of this office that a recent illegal publication known as QT contravenes current government regulations and legislation of sexually explicit material. The magazine, produced in Montreal, is similar in nature and context to J.D.s, which is produced in Toronto. The address provided to Canada Post for the post office box does not exist, and the name provided is most certainly an alias. Copies have not been deposited in either the Quebec provincial or federal publication depositories, indicating that the individuals responsible for this publication wish to remain anonymous.

A preliminary verification indicates that no print store in the greater Montreal area admits to having published the magazine, although one print store manager revealed that, because of its explicit contents, he refused to publish the material when it was presented to him. Unfortunately, this manager is unable to provide specifics as to the physical make-up of the person presenting QT, other than the fact that she was "mannish and had awfully weird hair".

Your investigative efforts in reference to QT shall be two-fold: firstly, to locate the exact address of publication, as well as the print shop responsible for reproducing the magazine's contents; secondly, to determine the names and addresses of those involved in the magazine's production and distribution.

I need not remind you at this time that it is not only illegal to produce and distribute such material in contravention to current legislation, it is also illegal to be in possession of said document.

Should you require further information about QT, please refer to the records department file # 3-007688-9825-8.

Yours sincerely,

Chief
Obscenity Publications

HEY GANG! GET QT BEFORE CSIS GETS YOU!

...they were queer rebels... and they were anonymous (so far)...

OBSCENE / PERVERTED / FILTHY / OBSCENE / PERVERTED / FILTHY / OBSCENE / PERVERTED / FILTHY

LANGUAGE

Queercore reclaimed phrases, images, and words used to insult queer people and punks. They deliberately used this imagery and language as a way to make fun of the people trying to silence them.

NUDITY & SEX

Queercore zines and art incorporated graphic images of nudity and sex, often in a humorous or joking context. This was how they confronted stigma and supported **sexual liberation** politics that believed in open and accepting discourse about sexuality and sexual orientation.

IMAGINED VIOLENCE

Imagined violence was one of the more controversial methods used by queercore to advance their politics. Queercore sometimes used themes of violence as a way to draw attention to their cause, even if they did not use violence in reality. They believed that the threat of violence gave them power over their oppressors.



Queer Nation/Pink Panthers was a queer activist group in the United States that became well-known for their use of "imagined violence" in their political slogan, "Bash Back!" In this slogan, they were threatening that queer people, if targeted, would fight back.

Glossary of terms



Queer is an umbrella term for a social/intellectual/political movement that seeks to encompass a broad range of sexual identities, behaviours, and expressions. It has also been reclaimed as a personal identity for some, after its historical use as a homophobic and transphobic slur. However, not all individuals are comfortable with the reclamation of the word, and it should not be used to describe someone without their consent. It is sometimes used as a catch-all for the rainbow community, and may or may not be seen to include trans people.

Punk is an artistic and musical subculture that emerged in the 1970s in London and New York as backlash to the musical styles of disco and progressive rock. Punk art and music is often characterized by its indelicacy, riotous style, and shock value. Punk is meant to represent the imperfect and the disorderly and often did so through the use of D.I.Y. artistic production that incorporated everyday objects as art, such as the safety pin which has become part of mainstream fashion aesthetics. The word 'punk' was also used widely to mean male prostitute, passive homosexual, or young delinquent.

Fanzines (or 'zines') are self-published and self-made booklets reminiscent of magazines. They have a homemade and unpolished style that is meant to attract diverse audiences, as well as allow anyone to make a zine. Often, zines' contents are political in nature and include personal encounters with and interpretations of marginalization. They can also be instructional, purely aesthetic, or personal. They are produced and sold at a low cost and meant to be shared and reproduced widely.

Liberation Era was a time period in North American history when various social groups were campaigning for political and social rights and freedoms. Activists in this time believed in liberation, or the act of freeing human potential that has been hindered by society's values and organization. Some prominent communities campaigning in this era were the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, women, and racialized folks.

Homonormativity is the social pressure to assimilate into heteronormative society that privileges heterosexuality, and to become the ideal of the "mainstream gay" or "respectable queer." It is also the approach of broadening heteronormative institutions very slightly to integrate some 2SLGBTQIA+ people, instead of fundamentally challenging those institutions, thus upholding heteronormative social structures such as nuclear families, the gender binary, and gender roles.

Sexual and gender norms are understandings, codes of behaviour, and common practices that are ingrained in people according to a given society. These usually involve assumptions that can be limiting or detrimental to someone's freedom and identity, such as dress codes based on gender, presumed heterosexuality and cisnormativity, and restrictions on sexuality and sexual expression.

Cisgender is a term used to describe people for whom their gender identity and assigned sex match, and who fit the societal expectations surrounding their birth-assigned sex. It is the opposite of transgender.

Glossary of terms

Transgender is a term used to describe a person who identifies either fully or in part with a gender other than the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex—often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities and expressions. Transgender people, like cisgender people, can claim any identity in relation to their sexual/romantic orientation.

Racialized refers to anyone whose real or perceived race, ethnicity, or culture falls outside of white Euro-centric norms, and experiences direct or indirect oppression as a result.

Anarchism is a political ideology or set of beliefs that views the state as a source of oppression and advocates for a communal and cooperative society, as opposed to society organized by the government. Anarchists usually rely upon direct action techniques for politics including demonstrations, civil disobedience, street performance, and strikes. Many anarchists oppose violence including participation in war, however, some anarchists have used violence or threatened its use for their political goals. Socialist anarchists also believe in the destruction of the capitalist system and free-market economy in favour of socialism.

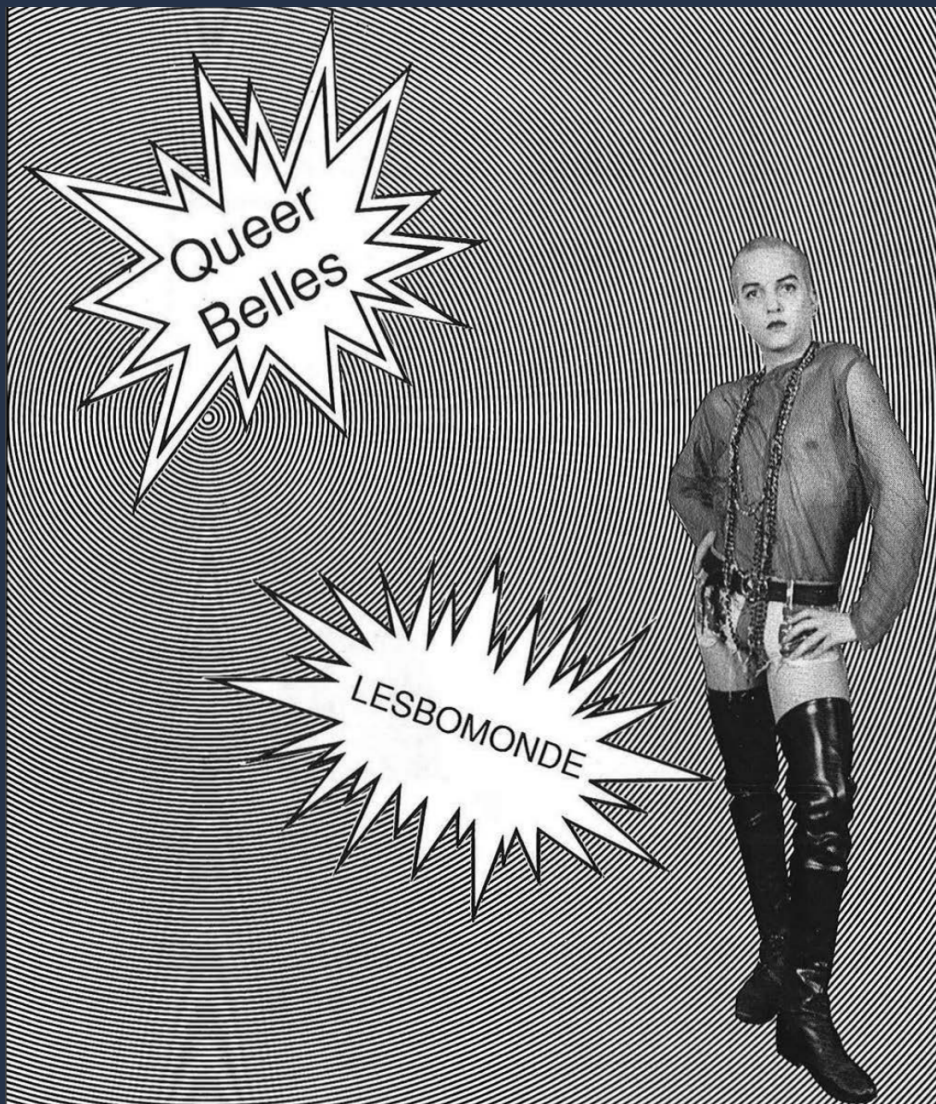
Radicalism is a political ideology that believes in the complete restructure or reform of society and politics to eliminate the dominance of one group at the expense of another. Radicals may exist across political campaigns and groups. For example, radical feminists seek the complete transformation of social values, institutions, and personal relationships in order to eliminate male dominance.

Sexual Liberation was a goal of feminist movements during the Liberation era and still today. Sexual liberation challenges dominant codes of behaviour and values that limit acceptance of sexuality and sexual orientation.

Imagined Violence is a concept created by theorist, Jack Halberstam, to represent an imagined violence inflicted upon people in positions of privilege and power as a way to disrupt the logic of popularly represented violence and power. Halberstam argues that by imagining violence, marginalized individuals can use fantasy to create a productive fear in their oppressors. Imagined violence may be part of confrontational activist techniques by using rage and resistance to fight back, as opposed to peaceful activism which never condones violence, real or imagined. Halberstam offers multiple examples of imagined violence, including Queer Nation's slogan "Bash Back!" discussed earlier in this document.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Take a closer look at some of the zine pages. What messages do you think the creators are trying to communicate and how do they do it?
- 2) How has the meaning and usage of the word queer changed over time? Where and how do you see 'queer' being used now?
- 3) Discuss the differences between queercore and mainstream 2SLGBTQIA+ activist groups. How do their approaches differ? Is there one right kind of activism?



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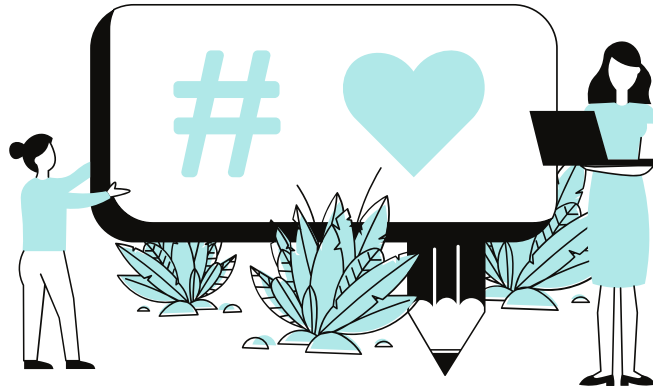
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