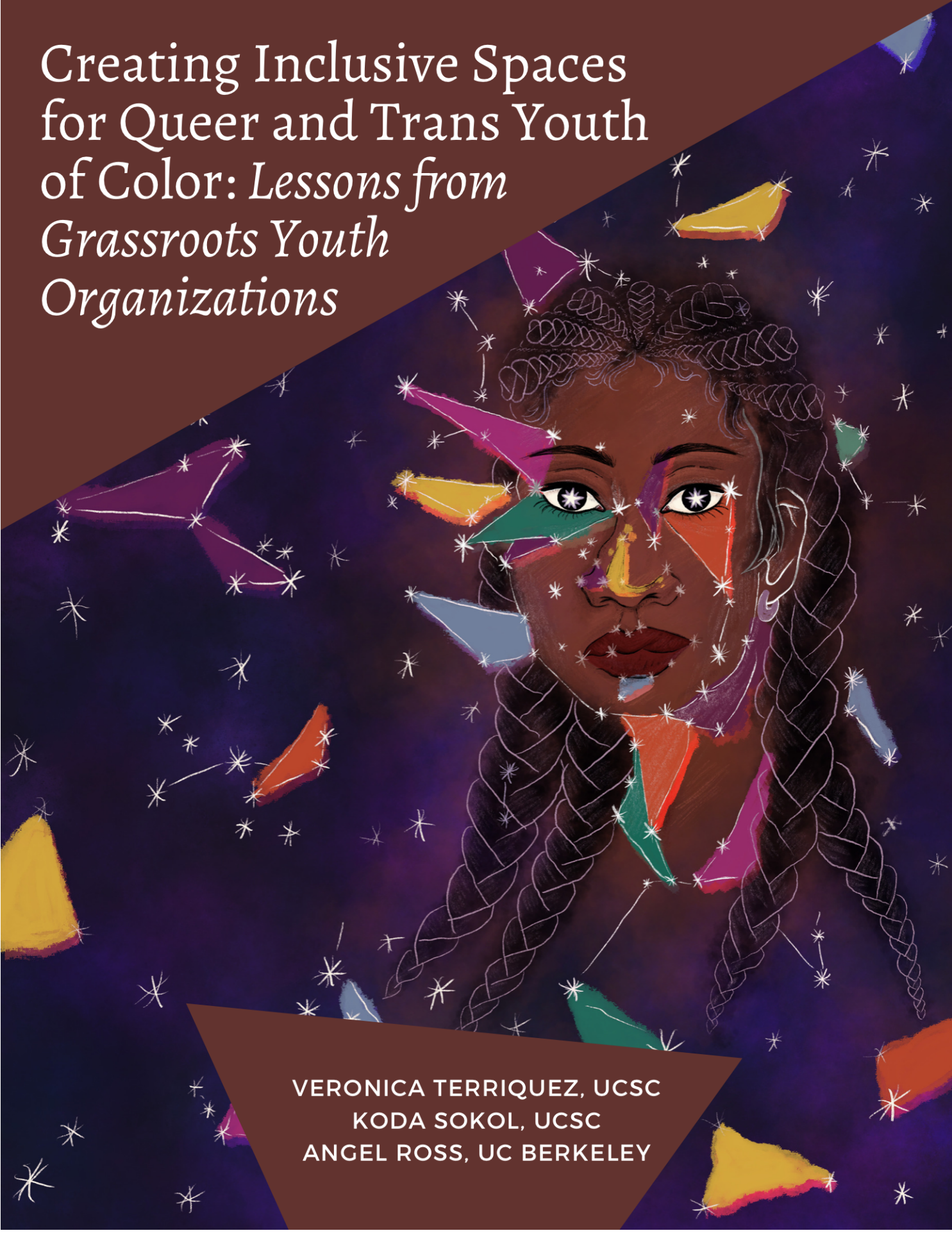# Creating Inclusive Spaces for Queer and Trans Youth of Color: *Lessons from Grassroots Youth Organizations*

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Introduction

Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC) are well-represented in California's youth organizing groups, serving at the forefront of campaigns for educational equity, environmental justice, health equity, immigrant rights, racial justice, and other issues affecting low-income and marginalized communities. Equally important, they are challenging gender binaries and addressing homophobia and transphobia within their organizations, families, and communities. QTBIPOC bring valuable perspectives to youth organizations, given their experiences of racial, gender, and sexuality injustice and the strategies they develop to survive and counter these multiple, interrelated oppressions. This report details how grassroots youth organizing groups can create inclusive spaces for young QTBIPOC to lead and be heard, even when their campaign work may not necessarily focus on addressing gender and sexuality issues.

Informed by theories of intersectionality, this report draws on 2019 survey data from 122 self-identified California youth organizing groups, semi-structured interviews with 125 youth collected in 2018-2020, and occasional participant observations conducted throughout the 2010s. We begin by discussing the importance of creating QTBIPOC-inclusive spaces. We then define the framework of intersectionality and explain how it can inform organizations' efforts to be inclusive of their young QTBIPOC members. After briefly describing the demographics and diversity programming of California's youth organizing groups, we outline some best practices for creating spaces where young QTBIPOC can feel safe to participate as their full selves. Finally, we offer ideas on how to share and strengthen promising practices in order to create inclusive organizations for queer and trans youth. This report complements another that outlines promising practices for transformative leadership development for BIPOC youth more generally (Terriquez, 2021). (An appendix includes key terms used and referenced in this report.)

Why We Should Pay Attention to Young QTBIPOC Leaders

Among U.S. residents aged 24 and under, people of color comprise nearly one in two, and in California, nearly three out of four. Younger people are also significantly more likely than their elders to identify as part of the queer and trans community (Gates, 2017; GLAAD, 2017; Herman et al., 2017; Williams Institute, 2019). Notably, over one in four California youth ages 12 to 17 identify as gender non-conforming (Wilson et al., 2017). Young QTBIPOC are a growing and increasingly visible population with much at stake in struggles for social justice.

From gay liberation to civil rights to Black Lives Matter and beyond, QTBIPOC have long been leading the most transformative movements for justice in the U.S., even if their voices are not always amplified or their contributions adequately recognized. As such, their inclusion in youth organizations is crucial, especially given their increasing numbers and disproportionate experiences of violence and discrimination. Queer and trans youth report higher rates of mental health issues, bullying, and violence, and queer and trans youth who are also people of color experience disproportionately high rates of criminalization and incarceration (Hanson et al., 2019; Kann et al., 2018). Young QTBIPOC are particularly likely to experience homelessness, substance abuse, and punitive disciplinary measures in school (Advancement Project, 2015; Fine et al., 2018; Green, 2017). It is likely no coincidence, then, that queer and trans youth overall are much more likely to be civically engaged than their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts (Deckman & Kromer, 2019; Perez, 2014). Given the growing size of this population, the challenges some face, and their investment in social change, it is important for youth organizations to support QTBIPOC leadership.
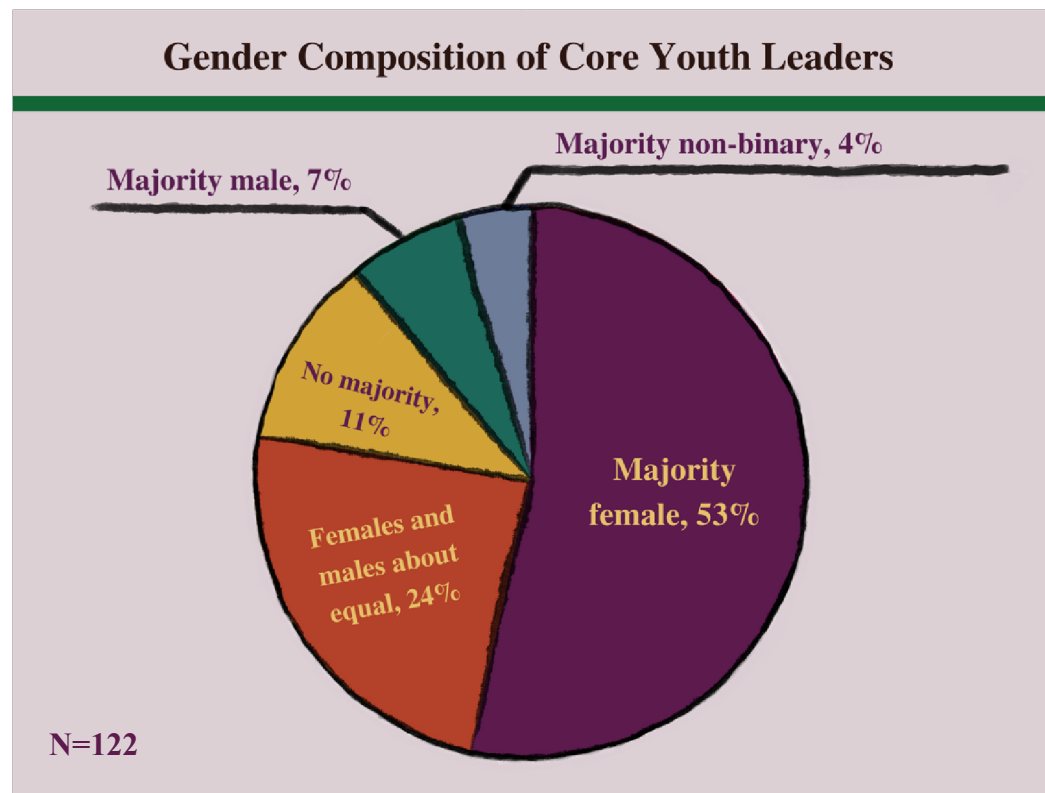

Source: 99Roots

Intersectionality & the Inclusion of QTBIPOC in Youth Organizations

Coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality is a theoretical concept rooted in Black women's activism in the 1960s and 1970s, which offers guidance for creating inclusive spaces for QTBIPOC. At the heart of intersectionality is the idea that all individuals have multiple identities associated with different forms of privilege or marginalization, and these identities are always experienced in relation to each other. Intersectionality highlights how people who have multiple marginalized identities experience compounded oppressions, which is different from simply experiencing, say, racism *alongside* sexism. Our identities, whether privileged or marginalized, are experienced not one at a time but rather as interconnected and inseparable. Intersectionality emphasizes that disadvantage and privilege can vary for the same individual across social settings. For example, a U.S.-born, Asian-American trans boy from a working-class family may at times enjoy privileges associated with his U.S. citizenship, but he may simultaneously experience compounded discrimination or oppression associated with his marginalized race, gender, and class identities. This boy's relative disadvantage or privilege can change depending on whether he is spending time with his family, at school, or at work, or whether he finds himself in a predominantly middle-class white and queer social setting, or in an immigrant and working-class social setting. By drawing attention to how different systems of oppression interact, intersectionality demands that we consider the full complexity of these systems and the identities they implicate when organizing for social justice.
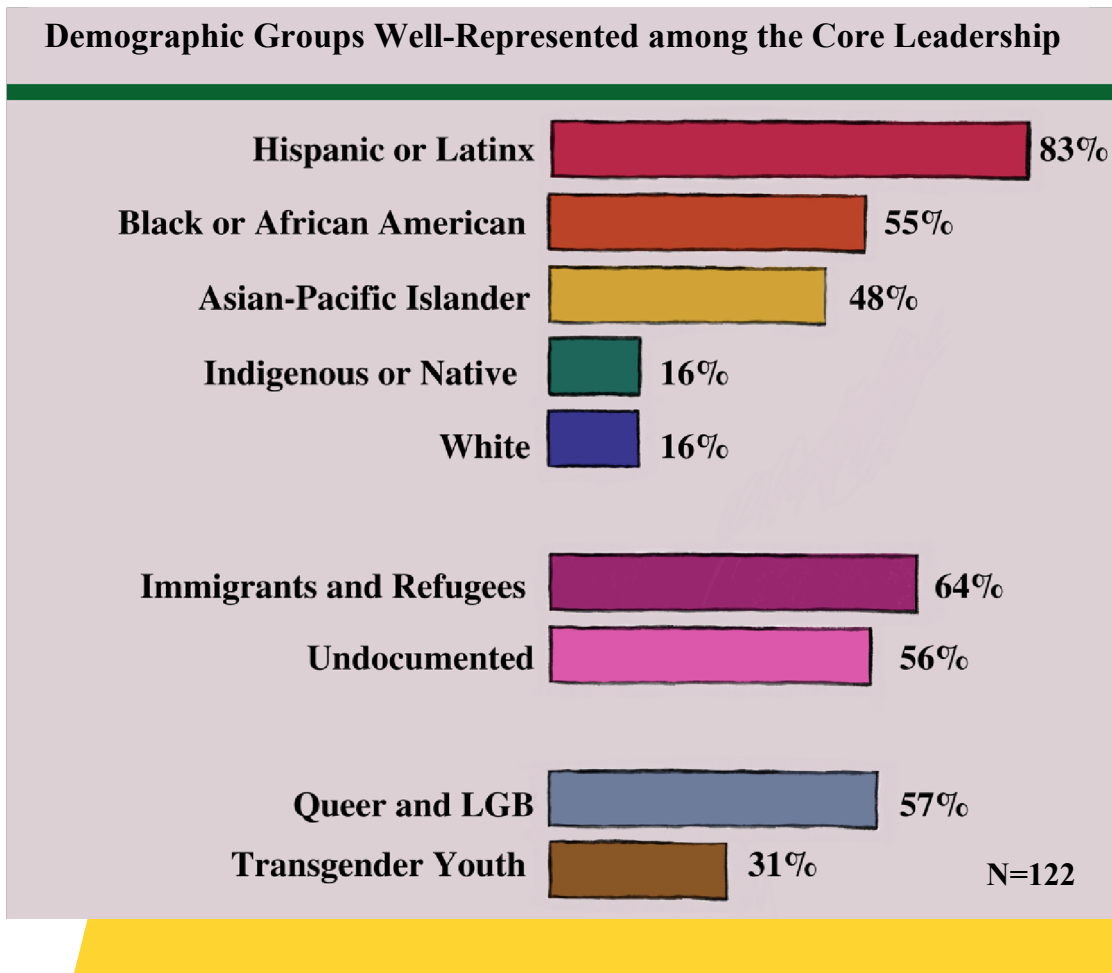
Youth organizations should strive to operate in ways that do not replicate—and in fact, actively fight against—the racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ageism, and ableism found in broader society. Intersectional thinking can prompt youth organizations to see and address the ways that diverse individuals might experience the same space or system very differently. For example, a group that feels safe and inclusive for a cisgender, heterosexual Black boy may feel uncomfortable and exclusionary to a queer, nonbinary, Latinx person. By recognizing the diversity of members' racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender, sexuality, and other identities (e.g., immigrant background, legal status, class background, disability status), youth organizations can attend to the ways that various members might experience the same context differently. Youth organizations might also use intersectionality to discuss the nuances of broader inequalities, like how police brutality creates violence for many but uniquely harms visibly queer Black and brown people, for example. Fostering this nuanced understanding can help youth recognize and take pride in their multiple identities and view their connections to various communities as a resource (Terriquez, 2015).

Diversity Within California's Youth Organizing Groups

Gender Composition of Core Youth Leaders

Majority non-binary, 4%

Majority male, 7%

No majority, 11%

Majority female, 53%

Females and males about equal, 24%

N=122

California is home to over one-third of the grassroots youth organizing groups in the United States. Embracing youth impacted by a range of social injustices, these groups engage their members in fighting for policy and systems change that advance justice and equity. Our 2019 survey of The California Endowment-funded and other youth organizing groups indicates that almost all involve high school-aged adolescents as core leaders, although the majority also involve young adults. Meanwhile, 29% also include middle school-aged youth in leadership. As shown in this pie chart, more than half of groups have majority female leadership teams, though a small percentage (primarily groups focused on LGBTQ campaign issues) have majority nonbinary leadership.
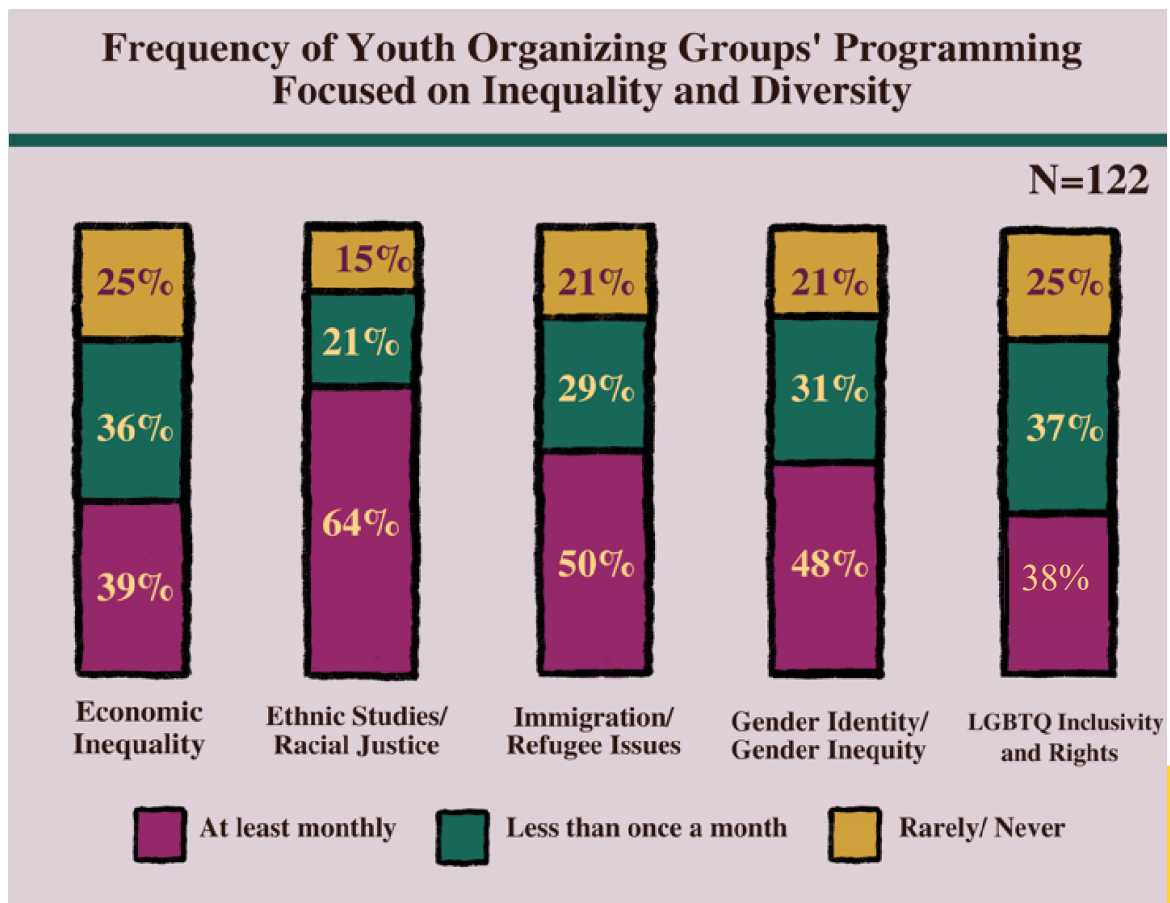
Representation of people with marginalized gender and sexuality identities on the leadership team can have a powerful impact on young QTBIPOC inclusion. Quite notably, more than half of groups also have significant lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth leadership (57%), and some have significant transgender youth leadership (31%) (see graphic below).

Demographic Groups Well-Represented among the Core Leadership

Group	Percentage
Hispanic or Latinx	83%
Black or African American	55%
Asian-Pacific Islander	48%
Indigenous or Native	16%
White	16%
Immigrants and Refugees	64%
Undocumented	56%
Queer and LGB	57%
Transgender Youth	31%

N=122

Youth organizing groups are disproportionately located in high poverty communities, and participants disproportionately come from low-income backgrounds. Young members are primarily people of color, and many are immigrants or the children of immigrants. The majority of groups report significant Latinx and Black leadership, and 48% claim to have significant Asian-Pacific Islander leadership. Meanwhile, 16% report that Native American and Indigenous youth are well-represented among their leaders. Immigrant and refugee youth are also well-represented in 64% of these groups, and undocumented youth in over half. These demographics show that youth organizing members typically occupy marginalized identities in the categories of gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, legal status, and social class.

Offering a Critical Civics Education that Attends to Multiple Identities

To varying degrees, youth organizing groups educate their members about structural causes of community problems, the dynamics of power, and the way various systems of oppression differentially shape people's experiences. In other words, these groups sometimes prompt their members to view social issues and diversity through an intersectional lens, highlighting the inextricable connections between identities and inequality. That said, the extent to which this programming prepares members to think critically about their own identities and those of others can vary quite a bit. In our 2019 survey, we asked groups how often their programming attends to different forms of inequality and diversity. The graphic below demonstrates the percentage that offer programming attending to these topics at least once a month. It shows that groups were most attentive to racial/ethnic issues, with 64% providing workshops on ethnic studies or racial justice. Meanwhile, half or nearly half have attended to immigration issues and gender issues, and 39% discussed issues pertaining to economic inequality. Less attention was paid to LGBTQ+ issues, with 37% reporting that they did so on at least a monthly basis. To their credit, another 38% reported offering such programming less than once a month; however, this means that 25%, or 1 in 4 organizations, failed to address LGBTQ+ issues at all. These findings suggest opportunities to share best practices and offer lessons learned by those groups that do incorporate LGBTQ+ programming.

Frequency of Youth Organizing Groups' Programming Focused on Inequality and Diversity

N=122

	Economic Inequality	Ethnic Studies/ Racial Justice	Immigration/ Refugee Issues	Gender Identity/ Gender Inequity	LGBTQ Inclusivity and Rights
Rarely/ Never	25%	15%	21%	21%	25%
Less than once a month	36%	21%	29%	31%	37%
At least monthly	39%	64%	50%	48%	38%

Organizational Practices that Support QTBIPOC Inclusion

Based on our analysis of 125 interviews with youth within and outside of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as our participant observations, we have identified some of the practices that help create inclusive spaces for young QTBIPOC.

Foundational programming on queer and trans issues and identities. Introductory workshops on sexuality and gender can provide youth with shared terminology fundamental to interacting respectfully with queer and trans individuals (i.e., what it means to be nonbinary, how to use non-normative pronouns, what it means to medically transition, etc.). Foundational workshops can help all members develop a better understanding of various manifestations of homophobia or transphobia and how they can cause individual and collective harm. Such workshops can also help members understand what inclusive behavior looks like, given that many youth may not have had experience building relationships with openly queer and trans people. For queer and trans youth, these workshops can be validating, empowering, and even informative.

> **"It's not impactful for an adult to tell someone about these issues, but it's more impactful if a person of the same age or same demographic talks about these issues." AYPAL member, age 24**

Intersectional political education. Queer and trans issues do not exist in a vacuum and cannot be adequately covered by a single workshop. To fully encourage QTBIPOC inclusivity with an intersectional lens requires ongoing analysis of how individuals who are marginalized by their sexual orientation and/or gender (as well as race, legal status, and other identity markers) might experience social justice issues more broadly. It is important to address how relative disadvantage and/or privilege can shape the varying ways different population or subpopulation groups experience social issues. Even when workshops on campaigns and related social issues do not center gender and sexuality, organizations can still find ways to incorporate QTBIPOC representation and consider the impact on QTBIPOC communities. For example, a discussion on affordable housing access can include discussions on how Black, undocumented, and trans individuals might encounter different challenges in securing affordable housing.

> **"It's never just a one-time thing... They're able to explain just how these issues relate to everything that's going on in society. So for me it was every time I turned around, every time there was an issue with race or social justice, LGBTQ issues popped up as well because it's something that's important and it's also something that we're plagued with that oppresses people and dehumanizes individuals." Californians for Justice member, age 22**

QTBIPOC role models. The presence of QTBIPOC staff, outside speakers, and elders can advance inclusivity by exposing youth to role models who embrace their identities. As such, organizations should strive for gender and sexuality programming facilitated by QTBIPOC. Witnessing firsthand the significance of QTBIPOC issues to an actual QTBIPOC, especially one whose racial/ethnic identity reflects that of workshop participants, can promote deep understanding of and advocacy for these issues and communities. While QTBIPOC should not be expected to simply educate others on issues of gender and sexuality, providing opportunities for them to share their own personal journeys can inspire young QTBIPOC and introduce queer and trans identities to young people who may have little exposure to sexual and gender diversity.

> **"So, to have someone who was non-binary, trans, and a person of color, it really—and was born as a female—to see all of that within one person, like all of the different issues that that person could have within the society that's biased and very hateful, it definitely opened my eyes and made me very accepting and more aware and I tend to call people out whenever they would misuse their pronouns... I found myself becoming an advocate in becoming more supportive for people who were finding themselves."**
> **Youth Together Member, age 18**

Gender pronouns. Young people need to know that they are safe to be queer and trans in order to feel included and participate fully. One important strategy toward this end is sharing and inviting people to share gender pronouns when introducing themselves. Gender pronouns are the words people want others to use when referring to them in conversation (e.g., they/them/theirs, he/him/his, etc.). Setting this norm requires introducing the context and importance of sharing pronouns as a practice of gender inclusivity. Using gender pronouns reminds youth and their adult allies that people's gender identities cannot be assumed simply by their physical appearance or their voice. Instead, each person has the agency to declare how they identify and how others should refer to them. Pronouns can also be added to participants' names when they appear on Zoom or other online platforms. On learning to use pronouns, several young people explained that the practice opened their eyes to the diversity of gender identities and experiences, which created a feeling of inclusion and built respect for queer and trans peers. Maintaining this norm can also help young people understand the threat to inclusivity associated with misgendering (i.e., referring to a person by a gender with which they do not identify). Regularly sharing and inviting others to use appropriate gender pronouns is a simple step toward welcoming youth of all genders to feel safer in their identities.

Gender-neutral, accessible communication. Many young people described their respective organizations as a "safe space" or a "space for everyone," meaning that all identities and differences are respected. Language constitutes an important part of creating this safety by demonstrating respect for marginalized identities. Beyond sharing and asking for gender pronouns, individuals can also normalize using gender-neutral language to refer to groups of people (e.g., "y'all" instead of "you guys," "everyone" instead of "boys and girls," etc.). More broadly, organizations can establish community norms that promote respectful and equitable dialogue. For example, dialogue is more accessible when organizations encourage sharing talking space appropriately with others and speaking from one's personal experience.

> **"First I was just like what's the whole point of it, but then after a while, after I went to a couple more events out of the states, I noticed why it's so important for people to let others know why their pronouns matter. ...When I see [misgendering], it's like you don't want to welcome them to how they want to feel welcomed, calling them *she* instead of the *he.*"**
> **Labor Community Strategy Center Member, age 20**

Source: Latino Equality Alliance

Prohibition of homophobic and transphobic language. Organizations can also normalize intolerance of homophobic and transphobic language, making sure to explain, where appropriate, why certain words and behaviors are harmful. Refusing to permit this kind of language, regardless of the user's intentions, sends a message that queer and trans antagonism is unwelcome. These incidents can also serve as learning opportunities. When offensive or inconsiderate language is used, leaders can pause the moment to explain the harmful impact of that language. QTBIPOC individuals should not be expected to address homophobia and transphobia as it arises, and any queer or trans individual impacted by harmful language or attitudes should be allowed to leave the interaction in order to receive care. Organizations can encourage non-QTBIPOC to speak against anti-queer language and attitudes and for the inclusion of QTBIPOC perspectives. Prompting youth leaders to advocate for the rights and interests of others who are being marginalized can alleviate the hardship of speaking up for those directly experiencing harm or exclusion.

Healing activities. Many queer and trans young people carry the trauma of being rejected or discriminated against, even within their own homes and communities. Activities that allow queer and trans young people to tell these stories and share their challenges and experiences in a safe space can offer much-needed catharsis and relief. Carefully moderated healing circles, particularly when led by youth and/or QTBIPOC mentors in affinity spaces, can provide opportunities for young QTBIPOC to feel supported and held while navigating difficult identity-based questions. For young people whose gender and sexuality identities have been disregarded or rejected in their families or communities, having a third place that feels like home can prove especially healing. Organizations can also provide opportunities for healing through education by supporting young QTBIPOC in researching and teaching others about gender and sexuality in their specific cultures and ancestries.

> **"It [the queer group healing circle] just helps me sleep at night better, helps me not think so much about it, and not have me worry about it and worry about if something does come up and my family does find out a certain way, then where am I going to? Will they accept me? Will they disown me? Will they kick me out, and where would I go to? And I think that whole fear for me has completely been lifted off my shoulder just because of HIP, man, the spaces they offer." Hmong Innovating Politics member, age 18**

Affinity spaces for QTBIPOC. Often opportunities arise in youth organizations to break into smaller affinity (or identity-based) groups for activities, collaboration, or community-building. Providing affinity spaces for QTBIPOC to build community and work together in a group with shared identities and experiences can facilitate more openness and identity-based empowerment. For young QTBIPOC who might feel like minorities in both their racial/ethnic communities and their queer communities, these spaces provide critical opportunities for dialogue, healing, and growth. Other youth experiencing multiple marginalization (e.g., undocumented queer youth, mixed-race Black youth) might also find affinity spaces healing and empowering.

> **"A lot of us in the group do identify as LGBTQ, so being able to openly discuss LGBTQ issues or just, I guess, everyday struggles identifying as queer, especially as a person of color, I think has been super empowering. It makes it feel so safe and welcoming to just be able to have someone who kind of understands that." Fresno Barrios Unidos Member, age 19**

Solidarity across difference. Organizations can encourage non-QTBIPOC to show up for their QTBIPOC peers both reactively and proactively. As aforementioned, non-QTBIPOC can step in during homophobic and transphobic incidents to relieve queer and trans people from the responsibility of naming the harm and offer care to those who might have been negatively impacted. Moreover, non-QTBIPOC can demonstrate proactive solidarity by ensuring that QTBIPOC experiences and identities are thoughtfully considered and included in the organization's work and culture. For example, when planning a political education workshop, cisgender heterosexual leaders can ensure that facilitators consider the relevance of QTBIPOC experiences and incorporate them into the workshop's content. Another proactive step could entail non-QTBIPOC sharing their gender pronouns without waiting for their queer and trans peers to do so. Without disregarding the importance of affinity spaces, organizations can also intentionally create opportunities for relationship-building across difference. Providing a safe environment for youth to share their diverse experiences and cultures with each other can build empathy and solidarity among young people of all identities.

Queer and trans-affirming imagery. Organizations create welcoming environments for young QTBIPOC when their physical spaces and social media pages contain imagery celebrating diverse queer and trans identities. This could include LGBTQ+ flags, artwork that positively represents QTBIPOC identities, or images of QTBIPOC leaders. Imagery should reflect the diverse ethnic/racial identities represented in and languages spoken by the groups' membership. Additionally, statements that acknowledge and affirm QTBIPOC identities can signal that QTBIPOC are invited and welcome.
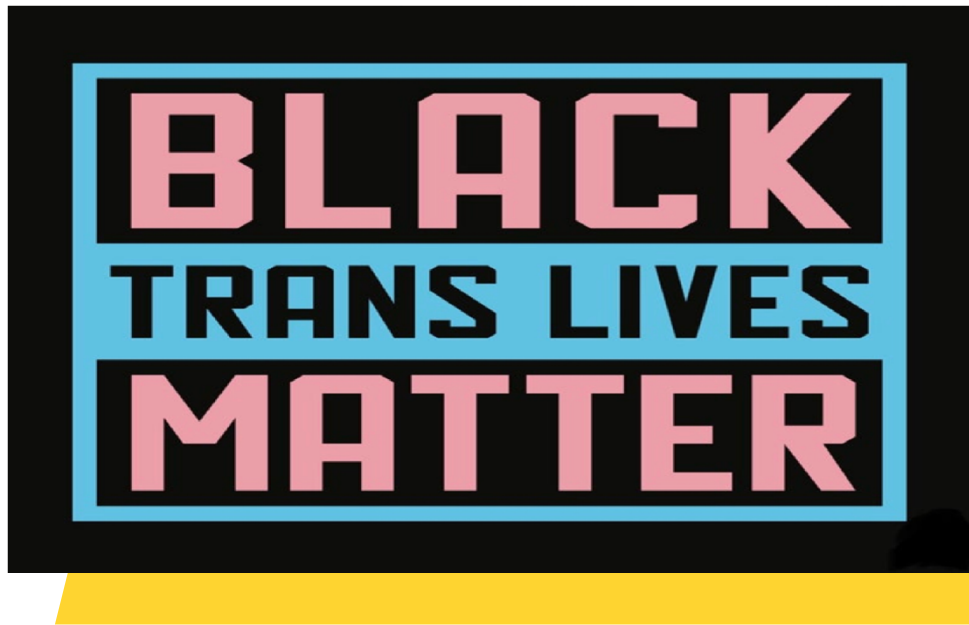
Conclusion

The above promising practices, while not exhaustive, can be more widely incorporated into youth programming through various mechanisms. Youth organizing staff and youth can be trained on these practices, and networking opportunities among staff and youth (including but not limited to QTBIPOC) can facilitate the refinement or development of new approaches to addressing the needs of QTPIBOC. When possible and appropriate, separate physical spaces for QTBIPOC can be made available. In general, visible QTBIPOC organizational leadership and the presence of QTPIBOC elders who are respectful and appreciative of what young people bring to the table can also enhance the support organizations provide for youth from such diverse backgrounds.

Grassroots youth organizing groups can be inclusive spaces for youth of color of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. All organizations have room for growth, and the practices outlined above, along with those that support authentic youth leadership development more broadly, can contribute to the inclusivity of these spaces for young QTBIPOC (Terriquez, 2021). Through steps like implementing foundational and intersectional education on queer and trans issues, normalizing gender-affirming language, and providing opportunities to heal together and build solidarity across difference, organizations can support the ability of youth of color of all genders and sexualities to safely express their authentic selves.

Glossary (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2020)

Allyship: The action of working to end oppression through support of, and as an advocate with and for, a group other than one's own.

Bisexual: A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender. Some people may use bisexual and pansexual interchangeably.

BlaQ/BlaQueer: Folks of Black/African descent and/or from the African diaspora who recognize their queerness/LGBTQIA identity as a salient identity attached to their Blackness and vice versa. (T. Porter)

Cisgender: A gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across." A term used to highlight the privilege of people who are not transgender.

Cissexism/Genderism: The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders and that one's gender, or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex. This system oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of cis-normative constructs. Within cissexism, cisgender people are the dominant group and trans/gender non-conforming people are the oppressed group.

Filipinx: A non-gender specific way of referring to people with ancestral ties to the Philippines. The term Filipinx, unlike terms such as Filipino/a and Filipin@, does not assume a gender binary and includes nonbinary folks.

Gay: A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender.

Gender: A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

Gender Expansive: An umbrella term used for individuals who broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms. Gender expansive individuals include those who identify as transgender, as well as anyone else whose gender in some way is seen to be broadening the surrounding society's notion of gender.

Gender Expression: How one expresses oneself, in terms of dress and/or behaviors. Society, and people that make up society characterize these expressions as "masculine," "feminine," or "androgynous." Individuals may embody their gender in a multitude of ways and have terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s).

Gender Fluid/Genderfluid: A person whose gender identification and presentation shifts, whether within or outside of societal, gender-based expectations. Being fluid in motion between two or more genders.

Gender Identity: A sense of one's self as trans, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth.

Gender Nonconforming (GNC): Adjective for people who do not subscribe to societal expectations of typical gender expressions or roles. The term is more commonly used to refer to gender expression (how one behaves, acts, and presents themselves to others) as opposed to gender identity (one's internal sense of self).

Gender Queer: A person whose gender identity and/or gender expression falls outside of the dominant societal norm for their assigned sex, is beyond genders, or is some combination of them.

Gender Variant: A person who varies from the expected characteristics of the assigned gender.

Heteronormativity: Attitudes and behaviors that incorrectly assume gender is binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should and will align with conventional expectations of society for gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction. For example, someone assigned female at birth is expected to 1) have a body that is considered "female" by the dominant culture, 2) identify as a girl or woman, 3) act feminine and fulfill the roles associated with girls and/or women, and 4) be romantically and sexually attracted to men.

Heterosexuality: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.

Homosexual/Homosexuality: A term to describe a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Historically, it was a term used to pathologize gay and lesbian people.

Intersectionality: A term coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to describe the way that multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalized identities. Intersectionality looks at the relationships between multiple marginalized identities and allows us to analyze social problems more fully, shape more effective interventions, and promote more inclusive advocacy amongst communities.

Intersex: An umbrella term to describe a wide range of natural body variations that do not fit neatly into conventional definitions of male or female. Intersex variations may include, but are not limited to, variations in chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and internal characteristics. Many visibly intersex people are mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors to make the individual's sex characteristics conform to society's idea of what normal bodies should look like. Intersex people are relatively common, although society's denial of their existence has allowed very little room for intersex issues to be discussed publicly. Hermaphrodite is an outdated and inaccurate term that has been used to describe intersex people in the past.

Latinx: Pronounced "La-TEEN-ex", is a non-gender specific way of referring to people of Latin American descent. The term Latinx, unlike terms such as Latino/a and Latin@, does not assume a gender binary and includes nonbinary folks.

Lesbian: Usually, a woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender. However, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women. (See nonbinary below.)

LGBT: Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. An umbrella term that is often used to refer to the community as a whole. Our center uses LGBTQIA to intentionally include and raise awareness of Queer, Intersex, and Asexual communities as well as myriad other communities under our umbrella.

Masculine of Center (MOC): A term coined by B. Cole of the Brown Boi Project to describe folks, including lesbian/queer womyn and trans folks, who lean towards the masculine side of the gender spectrum. These can include a wide range of identities such as butch, stud, aggressive/AG, dom, macha, tomboi, trans-masculine, etc.

Misgendering: Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language (e.g., "Hello ladies!" "Hey guys"), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify (e.g., "Well, since we're all women in this room, we understand…").

Non binary/Nonbinary/Non-binary: A gender identity and experience that embraces a full universe of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an individual, moving beyond the male/female gender binary. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or an intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. For some people who identify as nonbinary there may be overlap with other concepts and identities like gender expansive and gender non-conforming.

Pronouns: Linguistic tools used to refer to someone in the third person. Examples are they/them/theirs, ze/hir/hirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his. In English and some other languages, pronouns have been tied to gender and are a common site of misgendering (attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect.)

Queer: One definition of queer is abnormal or strange. Historically, queer has been used as an epithet/slur against people whose gender, gender expression, and/or sexuality do not conform to dominant expectations. Some people have reclaimed the word queer and self-identify in opposition to assimilation (adapted from "Queering the Field"). For some, this reclamation is a celebration of not fitting into social norms. Not all people who identify as LGBTQIA use "queer" to describe themselves. The term is often considered hateful when used by those who do not identify as LGBTQIA.

Questioning: The process of exploring one's own gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. Some people may also use this term to name their identity within the LGBTQIA community.

Same Gender Loving: A term used by some African American people who love, date, have attraction to people of the same gender.

Sex: A medically constructed categorization. Sex is often assigned based on the appearance of the genitalia, either in ultrasound or at birth.

Sexism: The cultural, institutional, and individual set of beliefs and practices that privilege men, subordinate women, and devalue ways of being that are associated with women.

Sexuality: The components of a person that include their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual practices, etc.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction or non-attraction to other people. Sexual orientation can be fluid and people use a variety of labels to describe their sexual orientation.

Transgender: An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to "trans." Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that one's internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. While transgender may refer to a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man who was assigned female at birth, transgender is an umbrella term that can also describe someone who identifies as a gender other than woman or man, such as nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid, no gender or multiple genders, or some other gender identity.

Trans Man: A person may choose to identify this way to capture their gender identity as well as their lived experience as a transgender person.

Trans Woman: A person may choose to identify this way to capture their gender identity as well as their lived experience as a transgender person.

Transition: Transitioning is the process of taking steps to live as one's true gender identity. Transitioning is different for each individual and may or may not involve medical interventions like taking hormones or having surgery. Some people may not choose to transition in certain ways for a variety of reasons. The extent of someone's transition does not make that person's gender identity any less or more valid. Transitioning may include socially transitioning, such as going by certain pronouns or going by the Lived Name that affirms one's gender identity. Transitioning may involve making changes to one's physical appearance, such as wearing certain clothing, wearing one's hair in a different style or length, or more complex changes such as medically transitioning through hormones or surgery. Transitioning can also involve changing legal documents to match one's authentic sense of self.

Two Spirit: An umbrella term encompassing sexuality and gender in Indigenous Native American communities. Two-Spirit people often serve integral and important roles in their communities, such as leaders and healers. It may refer to an embodiment of masculinity and femininity, but this is not the only significance of the term. There are a variety of definitions and feelings about the term Two Spirit – and this term does not resonate for everyone. Two Spirit is a cultural term reserved for those who identify as Indigenous Native American. Although the term itself became more commonly used around 1990, Two-Spirit people have existed for centuries.

Womxn: Some womxn spell the word with an "x" as a form of empowerment to move away from the "men" in the "traditional" spelling of women.

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