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Lex Valtenbergs

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HumCo - Operative

Vol 1

Mutual aid for community sufficiency

Non
Profit

Organizations



Letter from the editor



Thank you for reading this self-published zine. It wouldn't happen without you: the reader. Words have power, but only when people interact with and respond to them. You are an active, not passive, participant. Together, we can change the world.

That's a bit idealistic, but I'd like to quote one of my favorite sci-fi authors of all time, Octavia E. Butler: "All that you touch, you **Change**. All that you **Change**, **Changes** you. The only lasting truth is **Change**. God is **Change**."

The local nonprofits highlighted in this zine are, in one way or another, catalysts of social **Change**. They are made for and by the people. They are grassroots organizations that emphasize the importance of mutual aid cooperatives, sustainability economies and social justice.

Change starts with you. There is a Greek term called 'metanoia.' It means to "change one's way of life," usually as a constant practice of spiritual repentance, but not exclusively. It's a lifelong journey that can begin inward and radiate outward. Here's to **Change**.

With gratitude,
Lex Valtenbergs

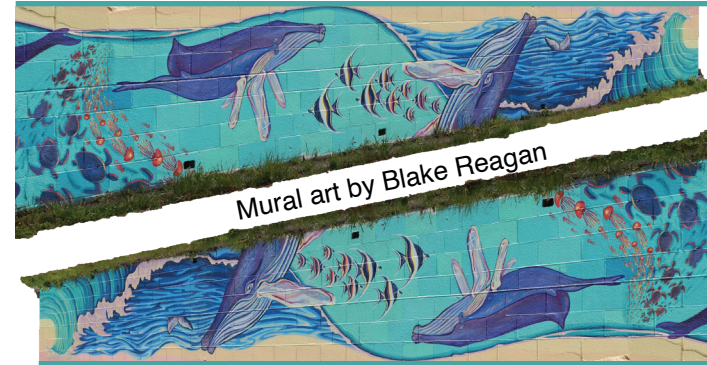


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Throughout Humboldt County,

There are numerous non-profit organizations made for and by the people that serve the local community. Interdependent sufficiency and mutual aid is key win a rural and isolated region like Humboldt. Grassroots organizations empower and connect community members across intersectional lines. Read on to learn more.

The Ink People Center for the Arts: A Bastion of arts and culture since 1979

Story and photos by Lex Valtenbergs



The community band 'Bandemonium' plays music in Eureka on March 12 during the Street Festival celebrating retired The Ink People Executive Director Libby Maynard

On March 12, 2022, staff from The Ink People Center for the Arts milled outside Synapsis Nova in Eureka. Two staff members set up a turntable and audio system under a white canvas tent just outside the entrance to the blue building behind them.

From noon till 5 pm, local community members

gathered together en masse to celebrate the lifelong arts and culture contributions of The Ink People's newly retired Executive Director, Libby Maynard.

At 73 years old, Maynard is an unimposing and stout figure with fair white hair. Despite her repute, she is approachable and tender. She doesn't parce her

words, but her bluntness, paired with her keen wit, lends to her air of sincerity.

"I'm a person who gets bored easily, and I've never been bored at The Ink People," Maynard said. "If I'd gotten bored, I would have gone, but I never have been bored. It's always been not only challenging, but fulfilling."

The Ink People was established in 1979 as a mutual aid effort by local printmakers to share the same printmaking equipment, since printing presses were so expensive. Maynard and Tuxford were printmakers themselves who couldn't afford their own presses. Thus, The Ink People was born.

"Nothing like a good personal agenda to move a social movement

forward," Maynard said.

It wasn't long after its creation that The Ink People started supporting artists across all mediums in Humboldt County. Many people wanted to start their own nonprofits

"The process is so awful and grueling and bureaucratic, and long. It can take 18 months to two years. We saw so many great ideas die."

Maynard and her late co-founder, friend and colleague Brenda Tuxford, created the DreamMaker Program in 1989 to foster grassroots art engagement in Humboldt County by offering fiscal and administrative support to peoples' creative projects.

Leslie Castellano is Maynard's successor as Executive Director of The Ink People, as well as the director of Synapsis, an aerial

dance studio that began as a DreamMaker project at Ink People.

"There's a lot of work The Ink People does to support DreamMakers," Castellano said. "I definitely deeply appreciate the work that the DreamMakers do in the community,

"I am a firm believer that in this world, everybody is good at something and passionate about something,"

-Monica Topping,
Administrative Director at
The Ink People



in The Ink People's stead, but quickly realized it was no small undertaking. "Everybody thought they had to become their own 501(c)3," Maynard said.

and they really do bring grassroots arts and culture initiatives to the people.”

The Ink People Administrative Director Monica Top-

ping also found her way to The Ink People through the DreamMaker program. Nowadays, Topping provides administrative support to DreamMakers and helps give them the opportunity to ‘fledge,’ or spread their wings and become their own nonprofits.

“I am a firm believer that in this world, everybody is good at something and passionate about something,” Topping said. “I think that those people should be doing those things that they’re good at and passionate about. Being a support system for our DreamMakers fills my



Libby Maynard at Cafe Brio in Arcata on March 15

cup in the biggest way.”

What makes the art community in Humboldt unique is that it’s not elitist or competitive. It’s open to everyone, regardless of their artistic back-

ground, or lack thereof.

“I don’t believe in the differentiation between fine art and craft,” Maynard said. “To me, it’s all art. It’s all creative.”

The Media Arts and Resource Zone, or MARZ, is a mentorship program at The Ink People that gives local youth the opportunity to create their own music and visual art.

“We’re a youth program, and the idea is that it’s a student-driven concept,” MARZ Audio and Music Mentor Cory Goldman said. “Our job is to mentor students through becoming creative people gener-

ally with a technological aspect.”

In 2015, Goldman took the rapper NotLewy under his wing and helped foster his musical prowess at MARZ. NotLewy has accrued over 1.3 million followers on TikTok and posts his music on SoundCloud, Spotify and Apple Music.

“Lewy’s great,” Goldman said. “Lewy’s such a treasure. He gets it. I feel like that guy really understands ‘it,’ you know what I mean? To the point where he can satirize it, but you get where he’s coming from.”

The Ink People has enriched the local community for over four decades and hopes to do so for the next four decades and beyond. At the core of The Ink People’s ethos is its community-oriented approach.

“We’re very grassroots, we believe in the community,” Maynard said. “We believe that basically people know what they need. And we don’t want to do it for them, we want to do it with them.”

This zine wouldn’t be possible without the Cal Poly Humboldt Library, specifically Sarah Godlin, for her know-how about zines and enthusiasm; Camille Delaney, for her superb copy-editing and support; and Kyle Morgan and Aaron Laughlin, for their expertise and willingness to digitally publish the zine.

I would also like to thank the staff at the Center for Community Based Learning at CPH, specifically Kelly Fortner, for her relentless belief in me; and Stacy Becker, for sharing a long list of nonprofit organizations and effectively giving me a roadmap to guide me.

I would like to thank the nonprofit organizations who were willing to participate in my project, although sadly not all of them were able to make it in the zine. I especially want to thank everyone who I interviewed from The Ink People

and MARZ, Tri-County Independent Living, NotLewy, Tobi McKee on behalf of Cooperation Humboldt, the Jefferson Community Center, Internews and Queer Humboldt.

Lastly, I want to thank my mentors; Dr. Alison Holmes, for never giving up on me and pushing me to do my best; Dr. Deidre Pike, for being the best advisor one could ever ask for and giving me sage advice when I needed it; and Andrea Juarez, for being a wonderful role model.

I want to thank Casey Vaughn for his graphic design prowess and giving me the ‘journalism tools’ to advance my career beyond graduation; Steve and Dr. Ramona Bell for accepting me and giving me hope for a better future; Dr. Cheryl Johnson for fostering my professional development; and, lastly, Samantha Karges, for being my first graphic design mentor in 2016.

Sincerely,
Lex

CHECK OUT HUMCO BIPOC ARTISTS & SHOPS ON INSTAGRAM!

Nikki
(she/they)
@soulbunni

Alex
(they/them)
@venusbearshop

Saramo
(they/them)
@sara_mo_arts

Humboldt Homies
@humboldt.homies

Brainwash Thrift
@brainwashthrift



88 Sunnybrae Ctr
Arcata CA 95521



NotLewy

LOCAL RAPPER BUSTS BARRIERS

by Lex Valtenbergs

Since he was in high school, Humboldt-based rapper and TikTok sensation NotLewy has been busting out rhymes at the Media Arts Resource Zone (MARZ) at The Ink People Center for the Arts in Eureka. MARZ Music Mentor Cory Goldman has been mentoring NotLewy since the beginning. The pair clicked immediately.

“I just found out by ear about them [MARZ],” NotLewy said. “I genuinely forget who told me about them, but I somehow got in contact with Cory, and from there we clicked right away.”

As a person with a disability, NotLewy isn’t able to play instruments himself due to the limited mobility of his fingers. He is very open about the physical limitations of his disability.

“I’ve never learned an instrument,” NotLewy said. “I know the most literally basic shit you could play on a piano.”

Instead, he hums melodies that come to his mind and Goldman accommodates him by turning the melodies into guitar chords or beats that match his lyrical flow. To him, all rap is poetic by nature.

“It’s all poetry,” NotLewy said. “Even the less lyrical stuff, it can be seen as poet-

ry I think.”

NotLewy settled on his social media handle and rapper name by necessity when he was 18 years old. Back when he had just started expanding from SoundCloud and posting his music on Spotify and Apple Music, he went by Lewy. Another artist named Lewy direct messaged him and threatened to sue him for using the same name.

“He was like threatening to fuck my life up over having the same name,” NotLewy said. “I was just baffled by that.”

In response, he graciously conceded to the other rapper and used it as an opportunity to re-brand himself, rather than let himself be intimidated by the threat and escalate the conflict. In the end, it worked in his favor.

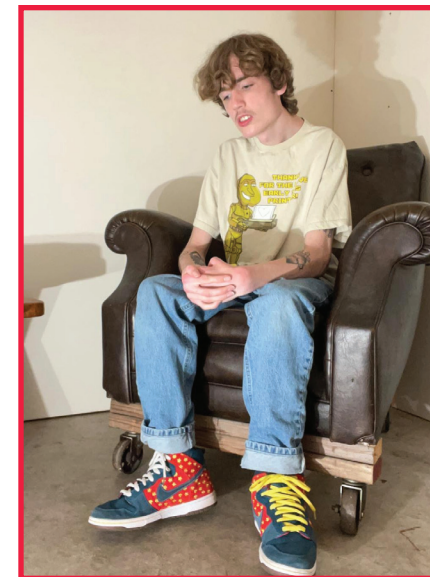
“It makes me distinct,” NotLewy said. “It’s so easy. All I tell people is [to] look up NotLewy and I’m there.”

NotLewy’s favorite song that he’s written is “Crippled Fuck.” It’s a subversive expression of the raw, justified rage that people with disabilities, particularly visible disabilities, often

develop as a result of being discriminated against in an ableist society that wasn’t made for them. At the time that he wrote it, NotLewy was working through his own insecurities about his disability and had an artistic breakthrough.

“‘Crippled Fuck’ is where I had this epiphany,” NotLewy said. “Why not take all the little flaws that I have, the little things that I thought were problems with my music, and instead exemplify them and make them one of the stand out things about my music?”

On March 17 at RampArt Indoor Skate Park in Arcata, NotLewy performed at a live concert



alongside fellow enterprising rappers.

During his set, NotLewy embraced his lisp, his poor balance and the other visible symptoms of his disability that he has felt compelled to mask in the past, to no avail.

“You can’t mask a physical disability,” NotLewy said. “I try. I wear baggy ass clothes. At this point it’s just how I dress.”

Ultimately, he accepted that he wasn’t like other rappers in terms of his physicality and didn’t try to suppress his disability. According to NotLewy, doing so enhanced his musical performance.

“With this last show I did, I just said ‘fuck it’ and I just started jumping around on stage when I was performing,” NotLewy said. “It was a lot, it was very high energy, but I was doing songs like Crippled Fuck and it worked. It fit with the song, it fit with everything. That seems more effective than trying to hide it.”

Anyone who knows NotLewy knows that he’s a sneakerhead,

or someone who collects sneakers. As someone who wears leg splints in day-to-day life, it’s hard for him to find accessible sneakers that fit him and adapt to his splints.

On Feb. 15, 2021, Nike released Go Flyease, an accessible hands-free shoe catered to people with disabilities. NotLewy recalled the backlash he received on social media after he called out resellers for grabbing up all the shoes before people with disabilities could get them.

“I’m a big sneakerhead,” NotLewy said. “I’m really into shoes. I was like, ‘this isn’t right, us disabled people should have access to that.’”

To him, his music is self-expression, not activism. Nonetheless, he subverts the status quo and parodies ableist constructs of disability by reclaiming ableist slurs in his offbeat jokes and evocative lyrics.

“I’m a fucking cripple and I make music about it,” NotLewy said. “That’s my brand, that’s me, that’s just who I am.”

Follow NotLewy on Instagram and TikTok @notlewy.

People with disabilities deserve to live on their own terms

Story and graphic by Lex Valtenbergs

As of 2017, approximately 22,500 Humboldt County residents have a disability, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Tri-County Independent Living is a nonprofit organization in Humboldt that assists people with disabilities to live independently and on their own terms.

“We try to meet the needs of as many people as we can, as much as we can,” Youth Coordinator Samantha

Nickles said. “Our whole philosophy is assisting people with living independently, and...[that] is

solely defined by the person who’s seeking independent living.”

In Humboldt, accessibility is a barrier for people with disabilities who have limited physical mobility.

Ramps that are either too steep or simply nonexistent make it difficult, if not impossible, for people with

disabilities to enter and exit public places and, by extension, be included as a member of the community.

“Access is not a privilege, it’s a right,” Nickles said. “Just because there is

a ramp doesn’t mean that it’s a good ramp. It doesn’t mean that we should just stop there. In Humboldt County, some of the ‘accessibility’ things that have been retrofitted in recent years are literally the bare minimum, and sometimes aren’t even that.”

Community Advocate Alissa Norman leads a peer group at Tri-County Independent Living for

interacting ableist norms in society is to become more conscious of people with disabilities to begin with.

“That bare minimum consists of always keeping access and disability justice in your mind, because I think a lot of able-bodied people forget that disabled

“Disability comes in so many different shapes, sizes, looks,”

-Samantha Nickles, Youth Coordinator at TCIL

people exist,” Nickles said.

Disabilities are not always visible or physical. Invisible chronic illnesses, neurodivergence, and mental illness are included under the umbrella term ‘disability.’

“Disability comes in so many different shapes, sizes, looks,” Nickles said. “Drop preconceived notions of disability, because

when someone thinks of a disability, they think of the most extreme thing that they’ve ever seen.”

Anyone who identifies as having a disability, including neurodivergent and mentally ill people, is eligible for the services offered by Tri-County Independent Living. Among those are the aforementioned peer group, advocacy for improved access throughout Humboldt County, housing assistance, independent living skills training, youth services and more.

‘Disability’ isn’t a bad word to Norman, which is part of her disability advocacy. In fact, she is very liberal with her usage of the word.

“I’m so free with the word,” Norman said. “It’s a term that’s needed by society because people with differences are outcasted, so we have to name what it is that makes us different because that’s the rules of society.”

people with disabilities every week. It’s a space that is made for and by people with disabilities to support each other in their struggles and treat each other with the basic respect and human decency that they deserve.

“We treat each other like people,” Norman said. “We are not unconsciously ableist to each other. We are completely supportive of that person being them and great just the way they are without any hidden agendas or thoughts.”

Ableism is discrimination against people with disabilities in favor of able-bodied people. Able-bodied people perpetuate ableism both consciously and unconsciously by favoring themselves and those whose experiences resemble theirs while failing to consider community members with disabilities. According to Nickles, the first step towards coun-

BUILDING A SHARING, CARING ECONOMY

Feature story by Tobin McKee

Photo courtesy
of Cooperation
Humboldt

I met Lex on a sunny Saturday afternoon at the Jardin Santuario Sanctuary Garden in Arcata. We were both enjoying a day of community gardening with our friends from Centro del Pueblo, a non-profit organization that serves the local immigrant indigenous community.

We came together to sow the seeds for a summer harvest that will be

shared freely with everyone. Lex asked me if I worked for Cooperation Humboldt. I said ‘yes’ and we got to talking. They asked me to write about my experience working with Cooperation Humboldt.

A dear friend of mine told me about the organization in 2019. We were talking about generosity



and giving of ourselves for the benefit of others. She pointed me to Cooperation Humboldt. I had been a Somatic Educator for more than 20 years, so naturally the Care and Wellness program at Cooperation Humboldt piqued my interest.

The former Executive Director and a volunteer told me that the program

was ‘aspirational.’ They gave me the opportunity to make it a reality, and so I did.

True to its name, Cooperation Humboldt is about people cooperating to create the kind of community that is formed when we work together and for each other, rather than for an employer or a government.

Cooperation Humboldt promotes a solidarity economy based on the principles of caring and sharing. According to their website, cooperationhumboldt.com, “A solidarity economy is a

system in which everyone has their needs met in a way that does not exploit anyone or harm the environment.”

I participated in a Solidarity Economics study group early on. There, I was introduced to an elegant analysis of the failings of our current economy as well as a model for a new

economy. Solidarity economics is a set of principles that guides creative, autonomous, diverse and independent approaches to cooperative economic development led by and for local communities. The word ‘economy’ is defined in its original sense as “care for home.”

Capitalist economies extract resources and create consumable goods through the exploitation of labor, then they sell the products at a profit. An exploitable labor class is created within the constructs of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, both of which underpin settler colonialism.

In contrast, a solidarity economy replaces white supremacy and colonization with intercultural collaboration and re-indigenization. Heteropatriarchy is ousted in favor of inclusive gender equity. Economic democracy eliminates the exploitable labor class and replaces it with freely-given unpaid labor as an essential contribution.

After graduating from the Solidarity Economy Study Group, I became a Core Leader at Cooperation Humboldt and, alongside other graduates, created projects that reflect its central values.

One example would be the Little Free Pantries program. Little Free Pantries are part of a community-run mutual aid network that decommodifies food and encourages neighbors to share with each other. Anyone can open a Little Free Pantry on their property, and the community takes from it and replenishes it as needed.

I have a Little Free Pantry in my yard. My neighbors are the main suppliers of the constant flow of food that people come to enjoy on a daily basis. The Little Free Pantries teach us how to share food with each other. That is a caring, sharing economy.

I created a Care and Wellness Circle with a couple of my fellow graduates. Together, “Our team inspires transformation

by creating education, services and community partnerships that remove the profit motives of traditional healthcare.”

We connected with Open Door Community Health Centers and asked them what gaps Cooperation Humboldt could help fill. Thus, we created the Community Health Worker Collaborative.

At one point the Open Door Health Centers decided to stop managing the community garden on the corner of 11th and F streets in Arcata. I called them up and said, “Cooperation Humboldt will do it!”

We partnered with Centro del Pueblo to transform Jardin Santuario into a vibrant, inclusive sanctuary space where all residents are welcome to participate and enjoy the harvest.

That’s where I met Lex, and that’s where I imagine the seeds for a beautiful new project were planted as inspiration in their heart. I look forward to what she creates in the future.

FROM RUIN TO RESTORATION

Story and photos by Lex Valtenbergs

Since 2011, the Westside Community Improvement Association has transformed the Jefferson Community Center from a dilapidated school building into a thriving community hub in West Side Eureka. The Center was made by the people, for the people.

“Almost all of our board members are neighbors,” long-time WCIA President Heidi Benzonelli said. “It’s how the project started. This was an abandoned school, it was really awful.

The neighbors said, ‘This is not okay. This is the community commons.’”

WCIA Special Projects Manager Steven Pera is a lifelong neighbor of the Center. As a first-generation Italian American, he was born and raised in the West Side and wanted to give back to his community.

“The West Side is an interesting mix, because not only do you still have homeowners who actually are living here, there is a huge amount of renters,



One of the two gardens at the Jefferson Community Center in Eureka on March 18



A playroom for children to play in at the Jefferson Community Center in Eureka on March 18

WCIA Special Projects Manager Steven Pera in Eureka on March 18

and all socioeconomic levels,” Pera said. “A community center in the middle of it definitely serves a purpose.”

The Center provides several resources to the West Side free of charge, including two gardens, a bike kitchen that teaches people how to repair their bikes, a Head Start program and a clothing closet. Every Saturday at 10 A.M.,

Food for People offers free food to the public at the Center.

In 2010, the former Jefferson School was abandoned and the property quickly fell into ruin, according to Pera. A group of proactive Eurekaans led by Benzonelli banded together to enroll for a state grant to fund the Jefferson Community Center Project and revive the school site.

“We heard about a grant from the state from Parks and Recreation, a grant to establish new parks and recreational facilities in inner cities,” WCIA Vice President Richard Evans said in a promotional video from January. “So we applied for the grant and boy, oh boy did we luck out. We got the grant.”

The Jefferson Community Center emphasizes mutual aid and environ-



A water tank painted like a Campbell’s Soup can by Blake Reagan at the Jefferson Community Center

mental sustainability. Solar panels are installed on the roof and several large water tanks attached to the gutters collect rainwater and irrigate the gardens on the premises.

Vibrant murals painted by Blake Reagan (@blakereaganart on Instagram) adorn the cement barriers, stairs and exterior walls of the buildings on the site, imbuing the Center with a life of its own.

“Art just makes you happy,” Pera said. “When you see a building, especially a building that’s kind of run down, you put some art on it and all of a sudden it’s interesting.”

To learn more, visit the Jefferson Community Center Monday through Friday from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Saturday from 10 A.M. to 12 P.M., or visit jefferson-project.org and check out the calendar for upcoming events.



GLOBAL NONPROFIT INTERNEWS HAS 'RELATIVELY QUIET ROOTS IN HUMBOLDT'

by Lex Valtenbergs

Photo by Lex Valtenbergs

Bridget McGraw, the Subgrants Manager at Internews, fell into her role by chance. Internews was established in Arcata in 1982 and now has seven international headquarters in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. McGraw just entered her tenth year working at Internews.

“It’s pretty nuts,” McGraw said. “Partially just because I can’t believe I’ve been at the same organization that long.”

The nondescript In-

ternews headquarters building in Arcata is located on 7th St. next to the Arcata Post Office. While Internews doesn’t produce news itself, it is instrumental in supporting independent news journalism globally and kickstarting projects.

The first Internews project in 1983 was called Space Bridges. Thus, Internews was born.

“From there, it [Internews] really expanded,” McGraw said. “It’s inter-

esting to see how we’ve maintained our relatively quiet roots in Humboldt. We always did have that international focus.”

McGraw graduated from Cal Poly Humboldt with a bachelor’s degree in International Studies in 2012. She got her first job post-graduation at Internews as a part-time assistant in the Subgrants department, then she was promoted to the Subgrants Analyst position. Most recently, she took on a job

at the helm of the department as the Subgrants Manager.

“I’ve definitely done a lot of different things,” McGraw said. “In this current role, essentially it’s a couple different things. I oversee our subgrant policy. In terms of [a] bigger picture of how we fit into the organization, we are funded by grants.”

After applying for and receiving grants, Internews uses the funding to financially support their various projects. Their media literacy program and Supporting Independent Media in the Baltics are two projects that stand out to McGraw, especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and culture of rampant political polarization that spurs the creation and propagation of misinformation.

“I feel like that’s the dangers with the Internet,” McGraw said. “You can always find something that will support whatever thought you’re having.”

In Humboldt County

in particular, Internews collaborated with Access Humboldt to do an Information Ecosystem Assessment and gauge where people in Humboldt got most of their news from.

Over the past two years, since the COVID-19 pandemic reached the shores of the United States, nonprofit organizations in general have received the brunt of understaffing, overworking and subsequent burnout. It’s a common reality for nonprofit organizations in isolated Humboldt County in particular.

“It’s been really interesting experiencing that in the nonprofit world,” McGraw said. “People in the nonprofit world have

both the internal and external pressures to put in the extra mile because they believe in what they’re doing.”

In spite of her own experiences with burnout, McGraw’s dedication to her job hasn’t waned. While reflecting on her ten-year anniversary at Internews, McGraw had nothing but good things to say.

“It’s been so cool to be with an organization that has motivated me, encouraged me, really challenged me, and let me grow into the person I am,” McGraw said. “I sort of feel like I serendipitously fell into this, and it’s just really become a huge part of who I am.”



Photo courtesy of Bridget McGraw

'Queer' isn't a bad word

Story by Lex Valtenbergs | Graphic courtesy of Cerberus Patterson of Queer Humboldt



The reclaimed slur 'queer' is an all-encompassing term that recognizes the diversity of the queer community and underscores the collective experience of being deemed 'other' or different. In 2004, Queer Humboldt adopted the word 'queer' in its name upon its creation.

"I often use the term 'queer' instead of LGBTQ-2SIA+ or other alternative acronyms because it gets to the heart of our shared identity while including

everyone who isn't 100% heterosexual and cisgender."

Ever since its creation, Queer Humboldt has supported the local queer community in Humboldt County as a grassroots resource that, as of 2017, is led by a majority Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) board of directors.

Cori, a board member at Queer Humboldt, knows all too well from personal experience how queer people can be excluded

the diversity among us," Executive Director Lark Doolan said. "When I use queer, I use it as a giant umbrella term, including

in BIPOC spaces, and vice versa. Identifying as both means that there are more opportunities for discrimination.

"Compound identities also means that there are compound ways to be excluded," Cori said. "A BIPOC space might not be queer friendly, and a queer space might not be BIPOC friendly and then you're out of space to be you."

Queer Humboldt provides accessible and affirming one-on-one, family and group therapy services for queer adults, queer youth and the parents/caretakers of queer youth. All of the therapists are also members of the local queer community.

"I love that QH [Queer Humboldt] is focusing on mental health and access for the community and building up a local network of safe mental health providers," Cori said. "I

also love our microgrant program because we can immediately fill needs that aren't being met by other local resources."

Queer Humboldt Intern

"The only person who can decide if you're 'queer enough' is you!"

-Cori, QH Board Member

Cerberus Patterson has found a safe, professional space at Queer Humboldt to embrace and express his gender identity as someone who defies the norm and has been dehumanized because of it.

"As someone who is Autistic, Fat, and Disabled, I have often been treated as subhuman," Patterson said. "Otherworldly gender descriptors allow me to reclaim my self worth, and distance myself from the societal weight and expectations that come with binary pronoun sets."

As an antiracist and

anticolonialist organization that is social justice-focused to its core, the staff and board members at Queer Humboldt are very cognizant of the various forms of discrimination that permeate society.

Doolan equates oppression to a figurative octopus, its tentacles representing each respective form of bigotry that is part of the larger whole.

"Each arm of the octopus is a different -ism or -obia," Doolan said. "There is the arm of queerphobia. The arm of racism. The arm of ableism, ageism, antisemitism, etc. Each of these arms operates independently and is unique, but they are all fed from the head, which is fear and ignorance."

Doolan emphasizes the need to be actively involved in the fight for liberation, not just as an ally but as an accomplice who takes direct action.

"For me, as a white person when it comes to racism, being an ally feels too passive and removed," Doolan said. "Being an

accomplice seems more potent because it implies being actively invested. An accomplice is committed to going beyond just being an ally to directly participating in abolishing bigotry in all its forms, with an awareness that our mutual liberation is dependent upon one another's freedom."

On the Queer Humboldt website, they explicitly acknowledge that they reside on colonized tribal land and disclose that they give a 1% annual honor tax to the Wiyot Tribe. In 2017, Queer Humboldt transitioned their leadership from white queer people to a majority BIPOC board of directors.

The queer community in Humboldt and beyond is diverse in every sense, something that should be celebrated both individually and collectively.

"I wish it was better understood just how diverse the queer community is and that the only person who can decide if you're 'queer enough' is you!" Cori said.

Put your compassion to action

Volunteer at the **Jardín Santuario Sanctuary Garden** on the corner of 11th and F streets in Arcata on Saturdays from 2-4pm.

Volunteer at the **Potawot Garden** in Arcata or at **Bayside Park Farm** on Fridays from 2-5pm. Pick up a City of Arcata volunteer packet at **Bayside Park Farm** and complete a Live Scan at the Arcata Police Department to become eligible to volunteer.

Shop at the BIPOC-owned businesses **Kiki Planet**, **Brainwash Thrift** and **Prism Gallery** at the Sunnybrae Center in Arcata. Prism Gallery accepts Venmo payments or cash only.



Digital illustration
by Lex Valtenbergs