



INVITING IN

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INVITING IN

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INVITING IN acknowledges that it is important for everyone to do the work required to demonstrate compassion and to increase competence such that people feel comfortable sharing important parts of themselves when they so choose.

- **COUNTERS THE IDEA OF "COMING OUT"** to disrupt traditional power dynamics that do not center the lived experiences of LGBTQ/Same Gender Loving[1] (SGL) people.
- **HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE** of bilateral relationships.
- **REMINDS US** that no one is entitled to information about the lived experiences of other people that are not voluntarily offered up.
- **SUGGESTS** that if someone puts in the work, they may be **INVITED IN.**

1 Same Gender Loving: A term used by members of the African-American /Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of Anglo/European descent

COMING OUT

is PROBLEMATIC... for a LOT of reasons

- Coming out is the process by which LGBTQ+/SGL people disclose that they are queer (read: not heterosexual, which is assumed to be natural or normal because heterosexuality is the dominant sexual identity in Western society). Coming out is often celebrated on "National Coming Out Day," which is an important acknowledgement that there is much education and inclusion training to be done to normalize the existence of people who are not heterosexual.

INVITING IN shifts traditional power dynamics that benefit people in positions of privilege (read: cis gendered heterosexual people, especially white heterosexual men) by acknowledging that no one is owed or should expect to have access to information about people, especially people that they are not in a relationship with.

- Coming out is important and it is also problematic, especially for people who are trans, queer, and non-binary in communities where there are policies and practices that render them not safe.
- Consider popular stories of white people who come out and move to gayborhoods like Chelsea, New York; Boystown, Chicago; or San Francisco—communities with a large gay population where they can draw power from that aspect of their identity. For a number of reasons—including economics and race—public, safe spaces are not available to Black trans, queer, and non-binary people en masse.

Many Black people live in the South–in states where it is still legal to deny people access to public accommodations based on sex, sexual identity, gender orientation, and gender expression–which can make it unsafe for them to disclose their gender identity and/or sexual identity.

INVITING IN

ROYCE HALL



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BRENTON BROCK



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ASHA FALCON



- Coming out is problematic when implying that queer, trans, and non-binary people are expected to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. Cisgender heterosexual people are almost never expected to disclose their sexual orientation (or explain how they came into an awareness of their sexual identity in the ways that queer, trans, and non-binary people are expected to demonstrate on demand). Coming out affirms the assumption that heterosexuality is normal.
- Coming out implies that in the absence of repeated and public disclosure can imply that LGBTQ+/SGL are hiding or not acknowledging important parts of who they are and how they show up in the world.

INVITING IN acknowledges that everyone has opportunities to disclose, to share critically important information about parts of themselves.

- Some LGBTQ+/SGL people, especially Black people, do not have the privilege of coming out.
  - The Supreme Court only recently made it illegal to deny employment to someone based on the basis of sex, sexual identity, and gender orientation.
  - It is still legal in 27 states to deny public accommodations to someone based on the basis of sex, sexual identity, and gender orientation. Public accommodations include hospitals, restaurants, gas stations, and hotels.

INSTEAD OF COMING OUT

Black and other LGBTQ+/SGL people might "Invite In" people they know and love by sharing information about them that may otherwise be shrouded in stigma or that society might suggest should only be discussed in secret.

"Words matter. Ontologically, the word "ally" has the unintended consequence of "othering." If you tell me you're an ally, the one thing that I know is that you're not a member of that community. While I understand the intent of allyship, I seek to highlight the potential for "Inviting In" to describe the "work" that non queer, trans, and non-binary people can do to demonstrate they love and respect us—members of our community."

—David J. Johns
Executive Director, NBJC

Access a library of Inviting In stories on the NBJC Blog.

Watch Executive Director David Johns talk about Inviting In.
"Why Some Black LGBTQIA+ Folks Are Done 'Coming Out'"