

Guidelines

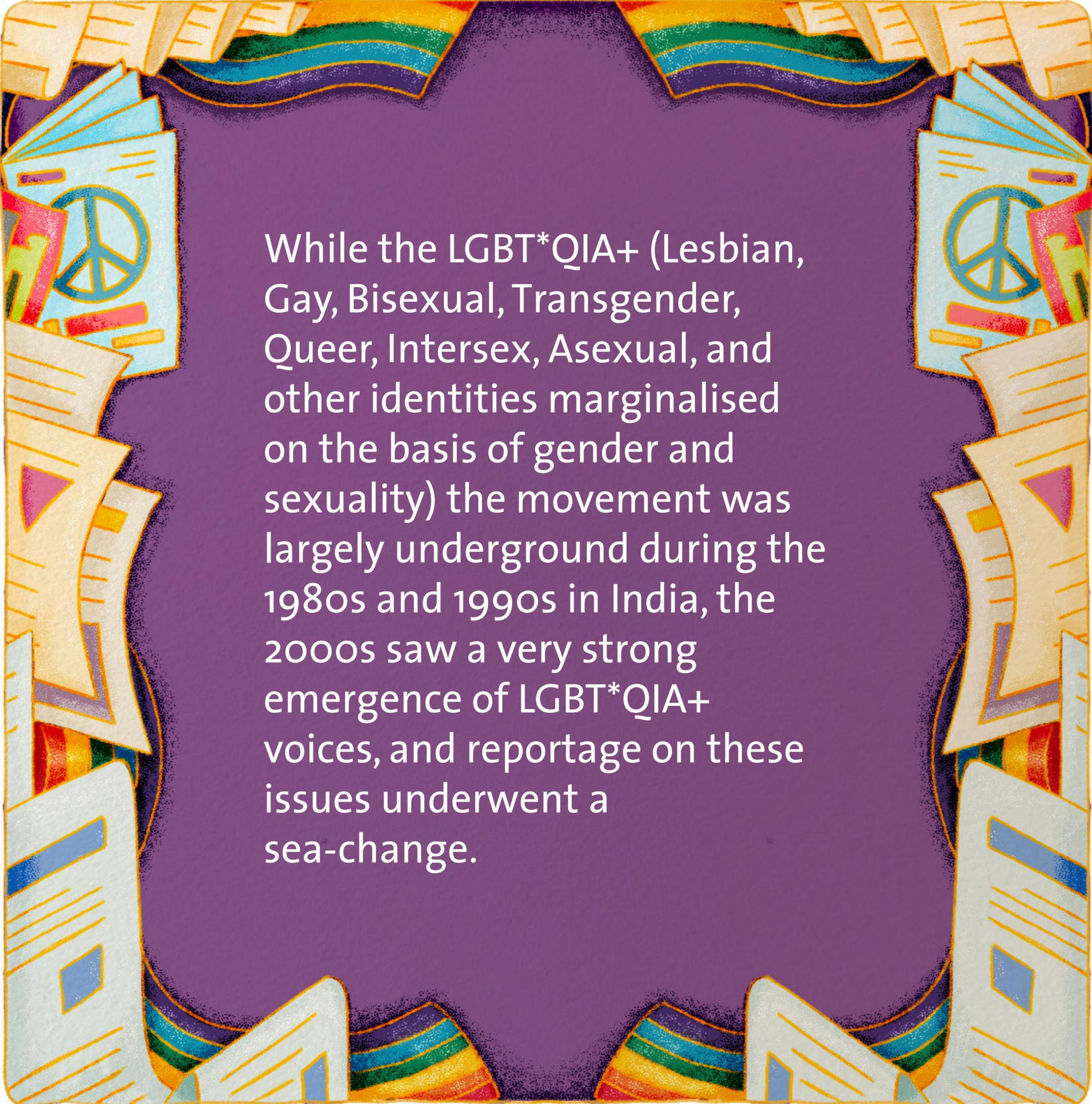
ON

LGBTQIA+

reporting

 **NAZARIYA**
FOUNDATION

CisProcs

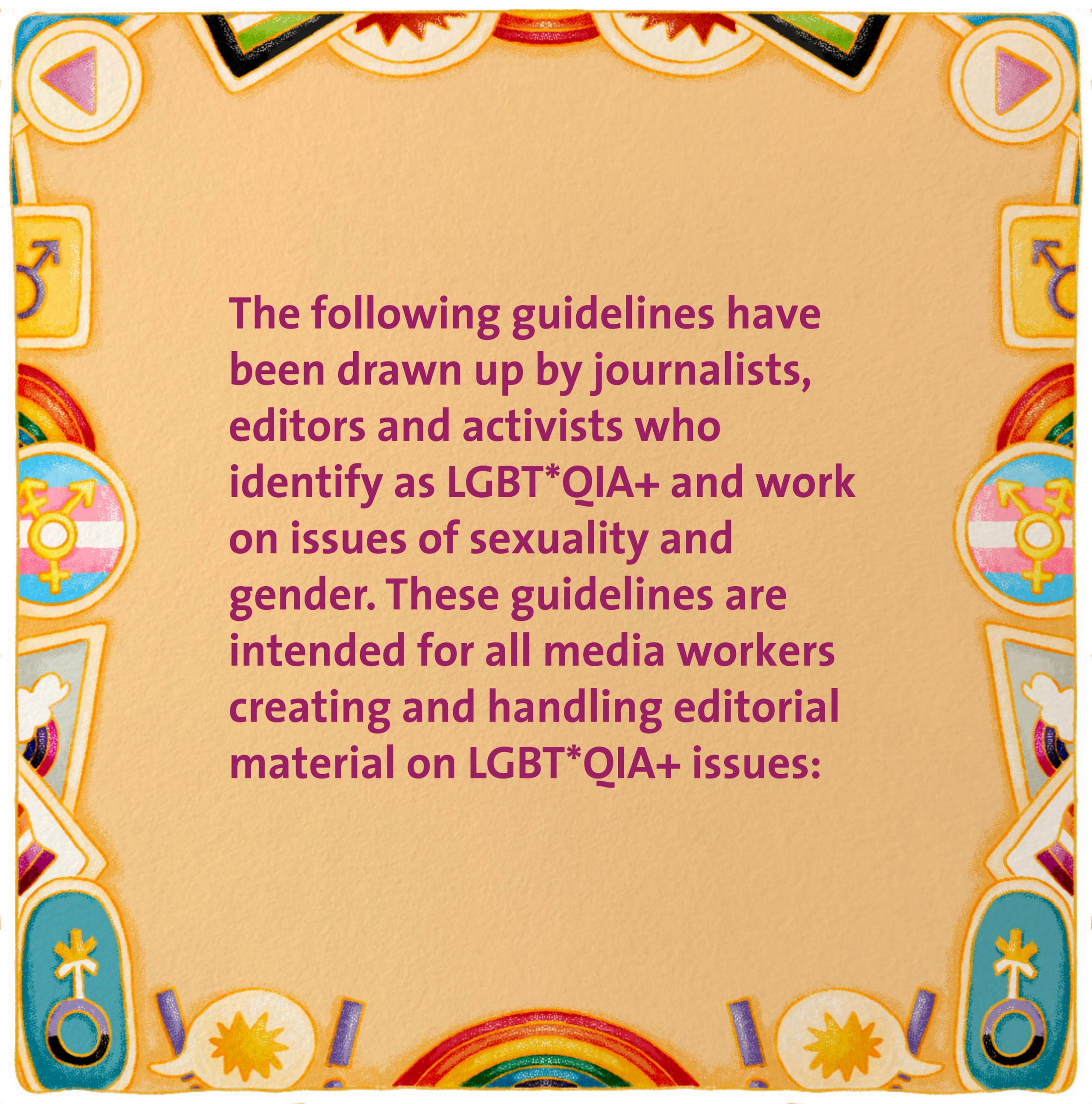


While the LGBT*QIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other identities marginalised on the basis of gender and sexuality) the movement was largely underground during the 1980s and 1990s in India, the 2000s saw a very strong emergence of LGBT*QIA+ voices, and reportage on these issues underwent a sea-change.

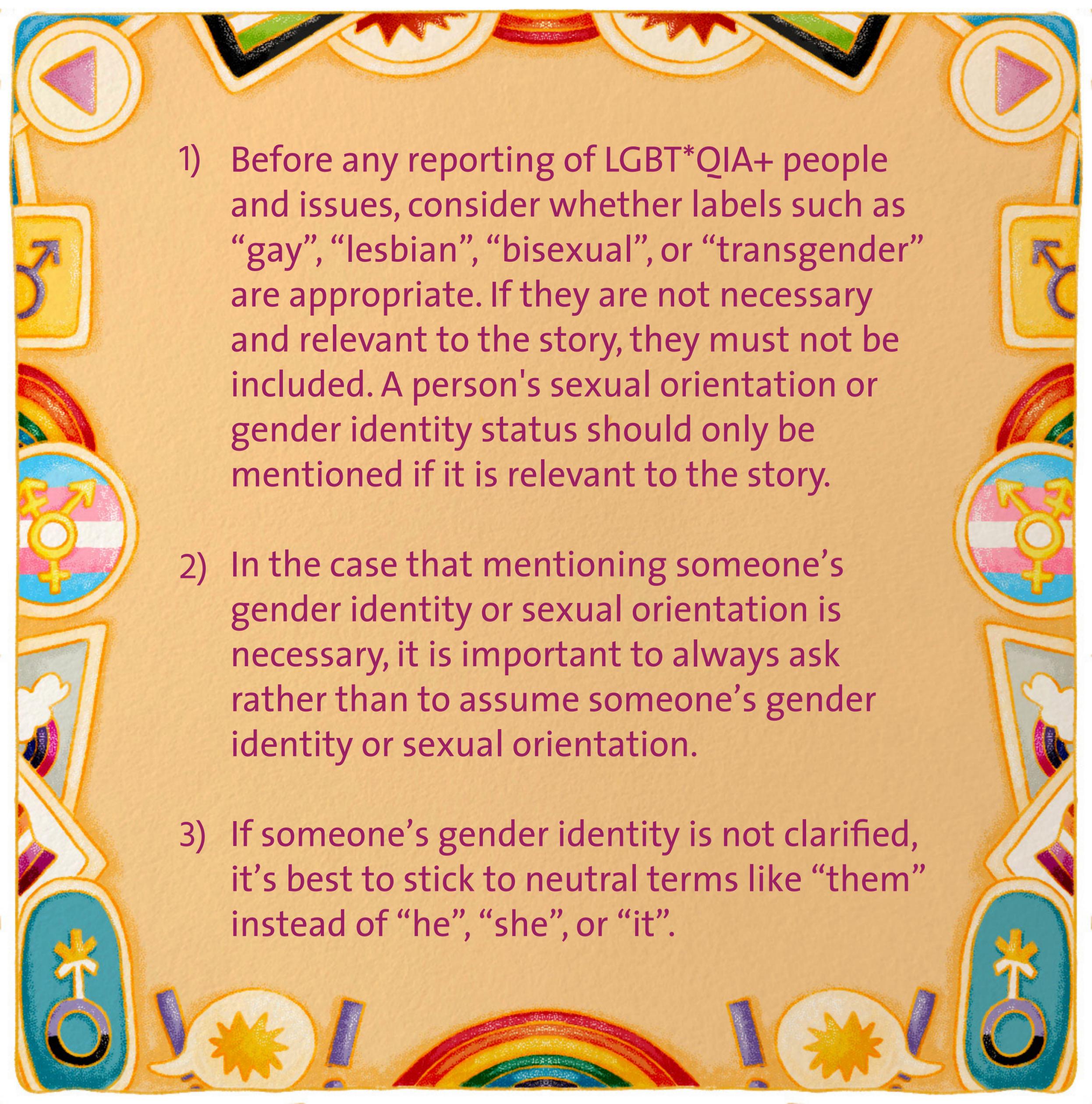


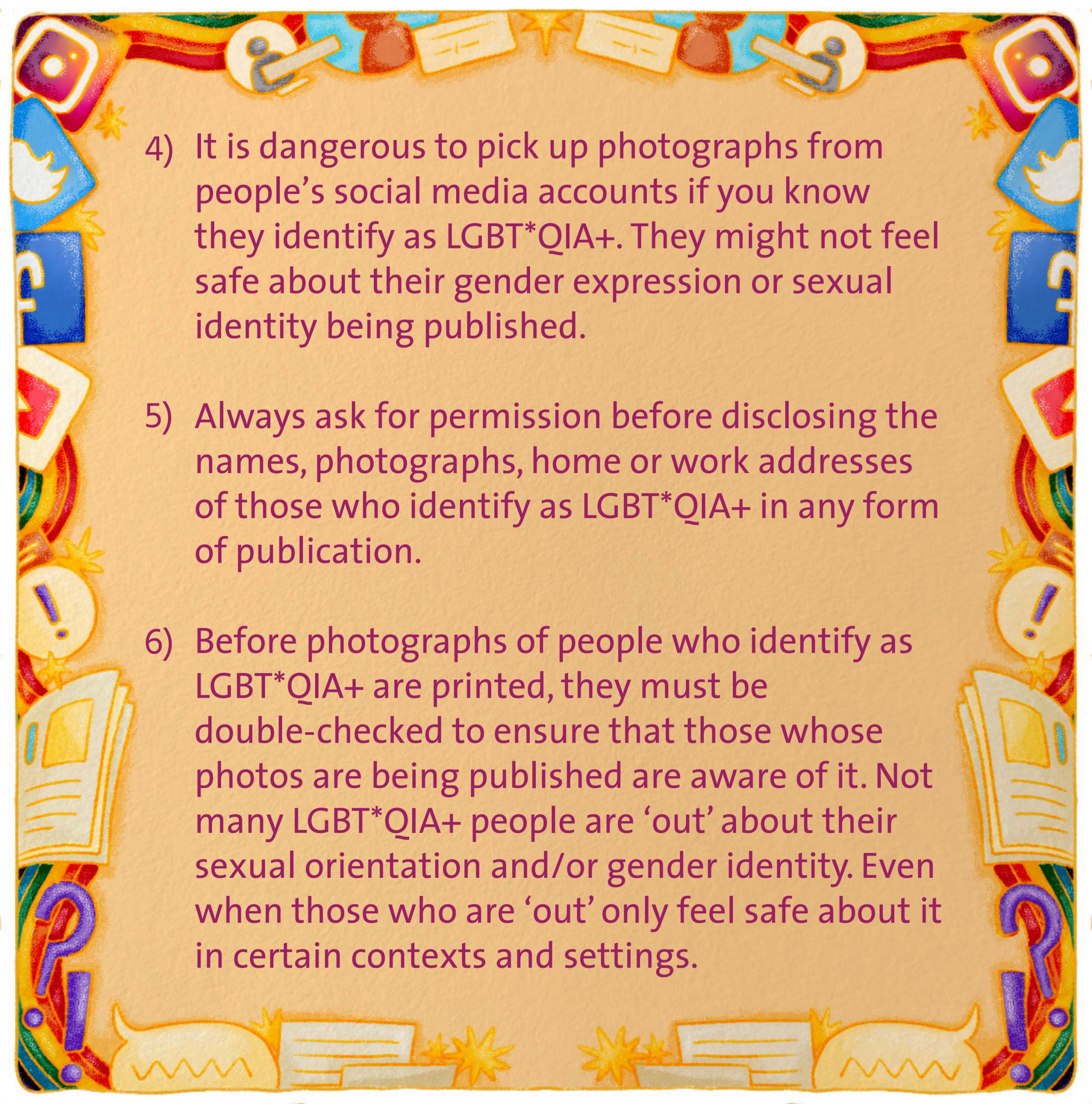
However, alongside empathetic reporting and self-aware journalism, yellow press and tabloid-style coverage of these sensitive issues with serious ramifications have always dogged the media.

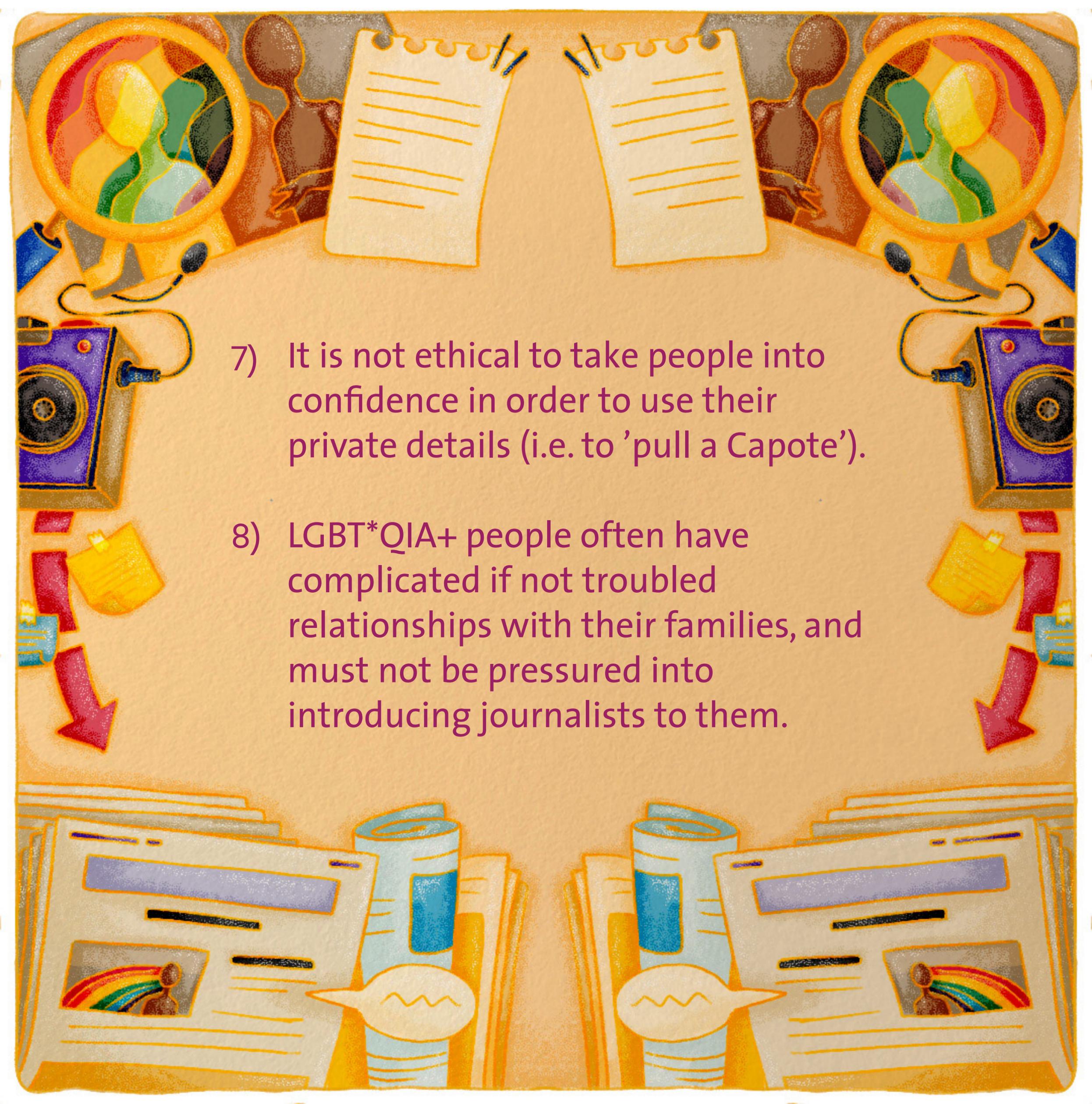
People with diverse gender identities, sexual orientation, sexual expression, and sex characteristics have the right to fair, accurate and inclusive reporting of their life stories and concerns.

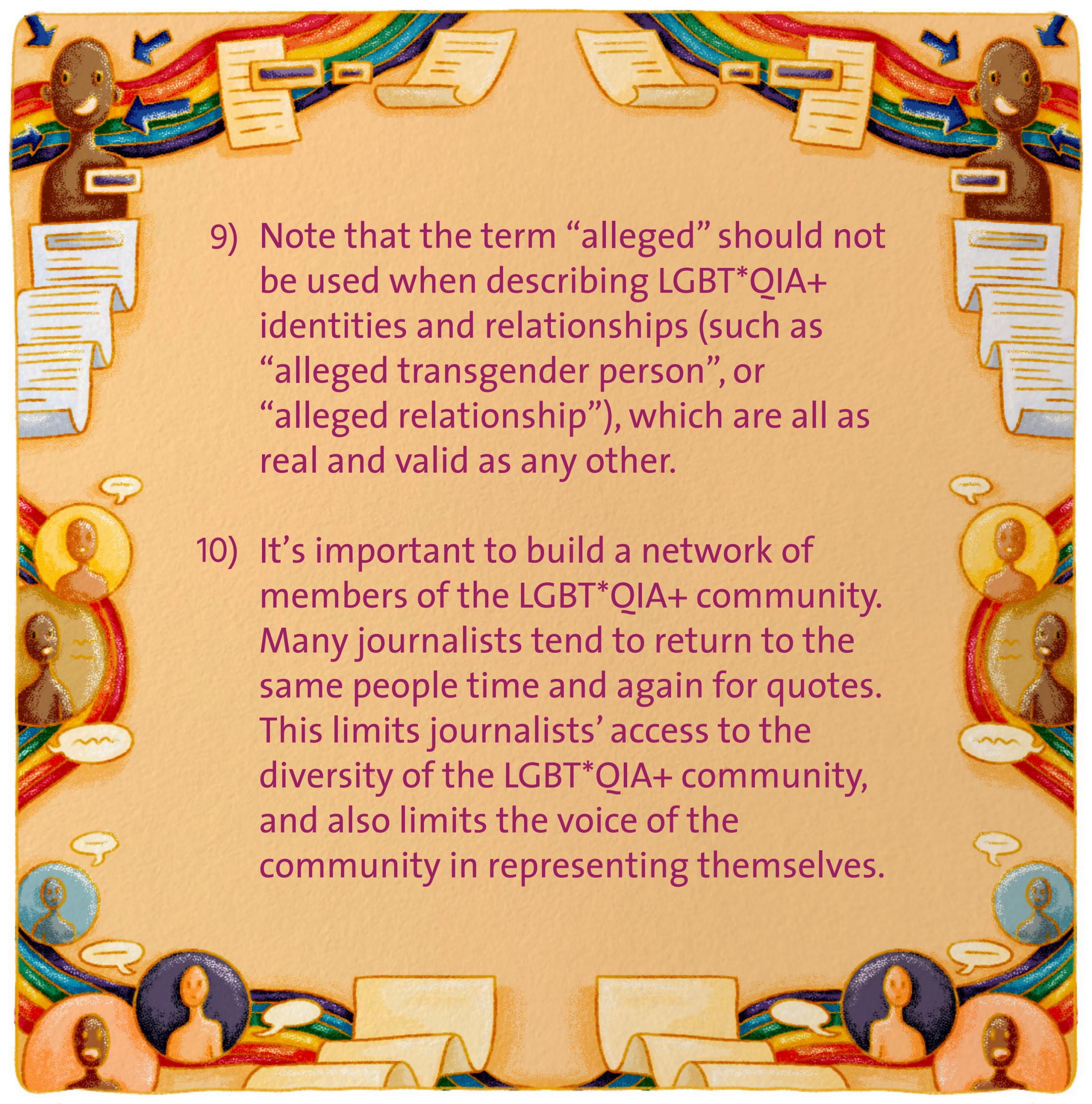


The following guidelines have been drawn up by journalists, editors and activists who identify as LGBT*QIA+ and work on issues of sexuality and gender. These guidelines are intended for all media workers creating and handling editorial material on LGBT*QIA+ issues:

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- 1) Before any reporting of LGBT*QIA+ people and issues, consider whether labels such as “gay”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, or “transgender” are appropriate. If they are not necessary and relevant to the story, they must not be included. A person's sexual orientation or gender identity status should only be mentioned if it is relevant to the story.
 - 2) In the case that mentioning someone’s gender identity or sexual orientation is necessary, it is important to always ask rather than to assume someone’s gender identity or sexual orientation.
 - 3) If someone’s gender identity is not clarified, it’s best to stick to neutral terms like “them” instead of “he”, “she”, or “it”.

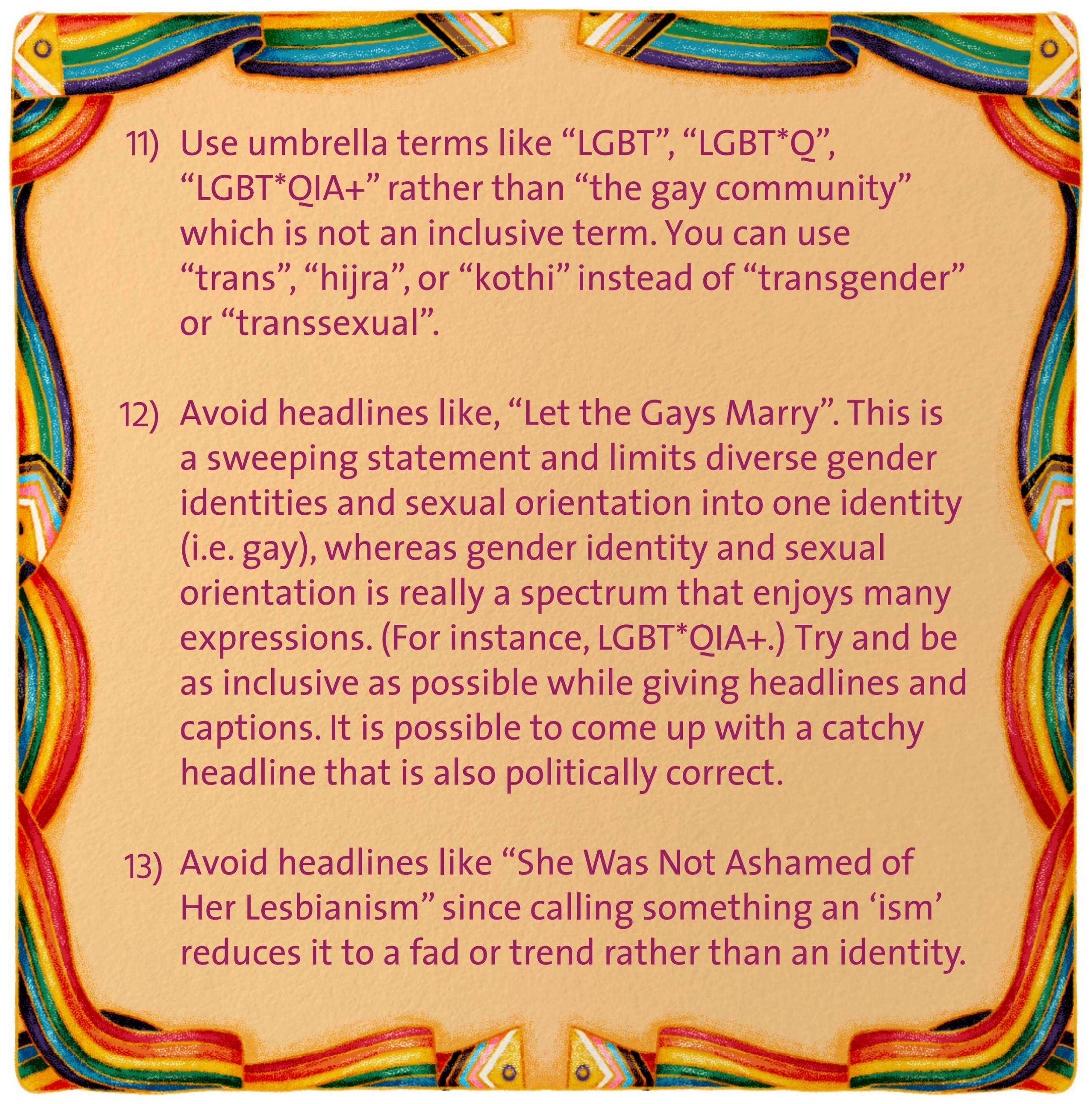
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- 4) It is dangerous to pick up photographs from people's social media accounts if you know they identify as LGBT*QIA+. They might not feel safe about their gender expression or sexual identity being published.
 - 5) Always ask for permission before disclosing the names, photographs, home or work addresses of those who identify as LGBT*QIA+ in any form of publication.
 - 6) Before photographs of people who identify as LGBT*QIA+ are printed, they must be double-checked to ensure that those whose photos are being published are aware of it. Not many LGBT*QIA+ people are 'out' about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Even when those who are 'out' only feel safe about it in certain contexts and settings.

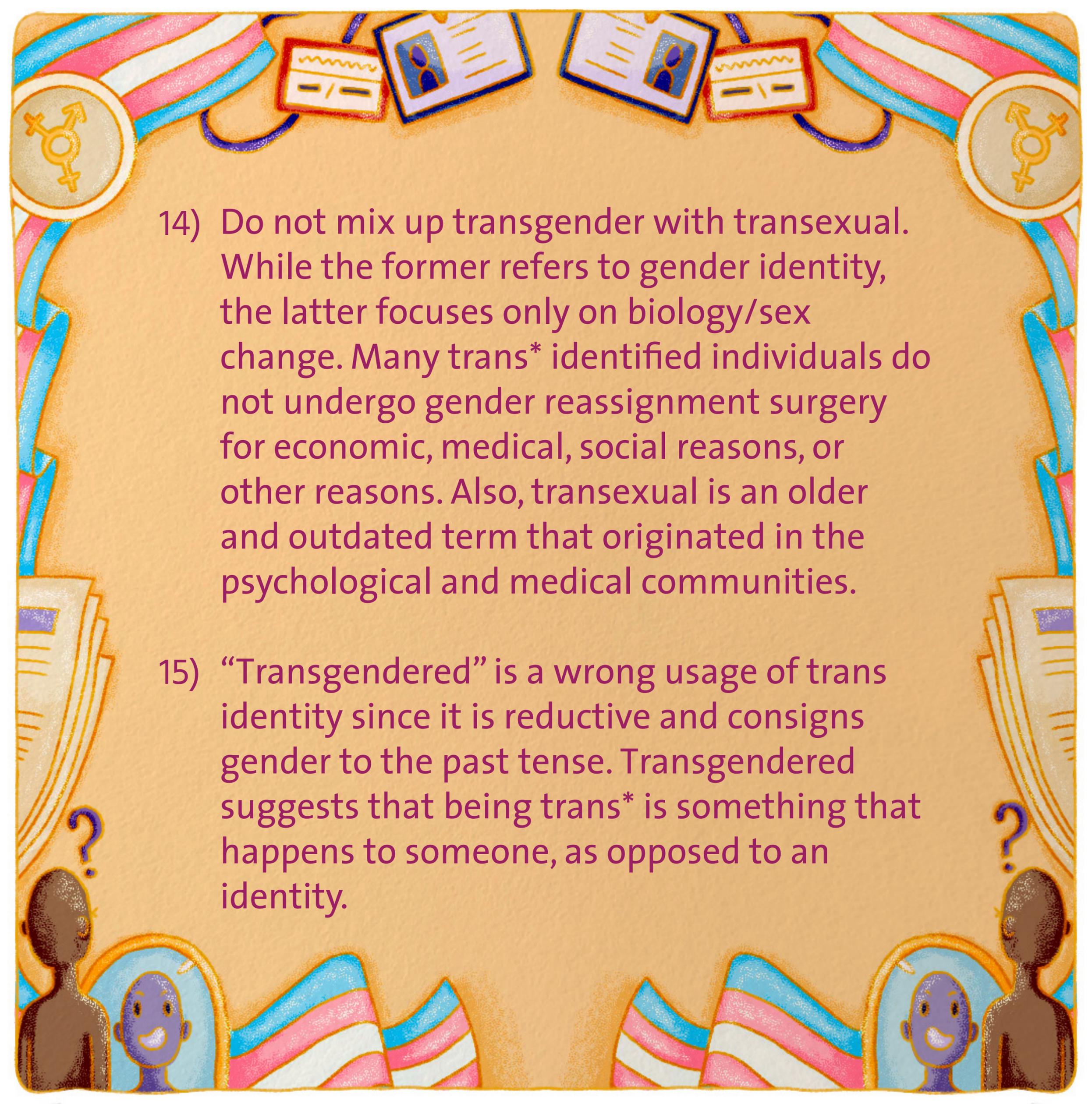
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- The background is a colorful illustration of a newsroom. At the top, there are two reporters in brown silhouettes, each with a magnifying glass over a person's face. Below them are two sheets of lined paper. In the middle, there are two purple microphones on stands. At the bottom, there are stacks of newspapers with a rainbow and a person's silhouette on the front page, and two stacks of blue folders. The text is centered in the middle of the page.
- 7) It is not ethical to take people into confidence in order to use their private details (i.e. to 'pull a Capote').
 - 8) LGBT*QIA+ people often have complicated if not troubled relationships with their families, and must not be pressured into introducing journalists to them.

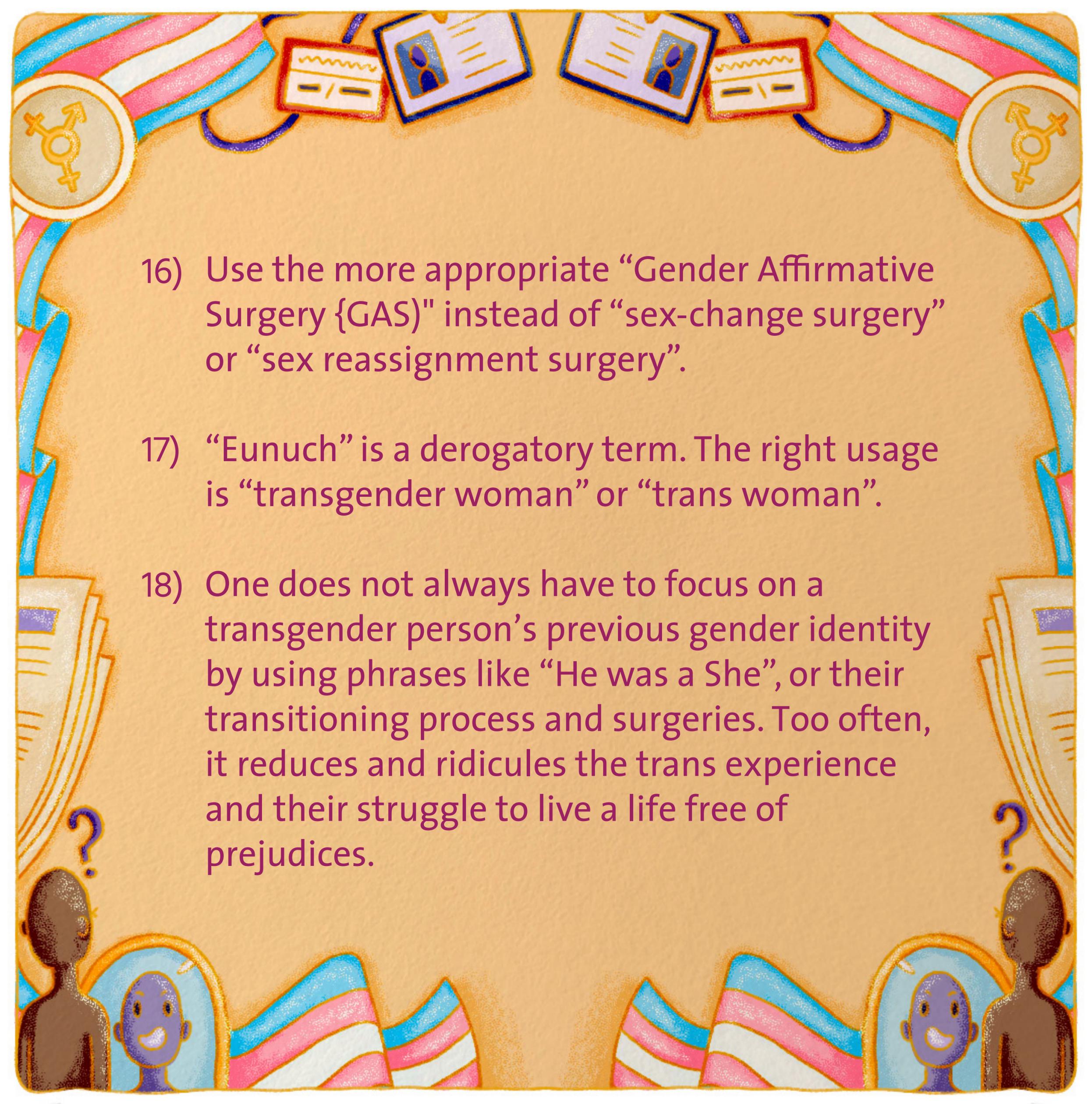
The page features a decorative border with a light beige background. At the top, there are two stylized human figures, one on the left and one on the right, both with dark skin and a friendly expression. They are surrounded by a vibrant rainbow that flows across the top. Below the rainbow, there are several white documents or scrolls, some with blue arrows pointing in various directions. The bottom border is more complex, featuring a variety of human figures in different colors (yellow, brown, blue, orange, dark blue) and shapes, some with speech bubbles. There are also more white documents and scrolls at the bottom. The overall theme is one of diversity and communication.

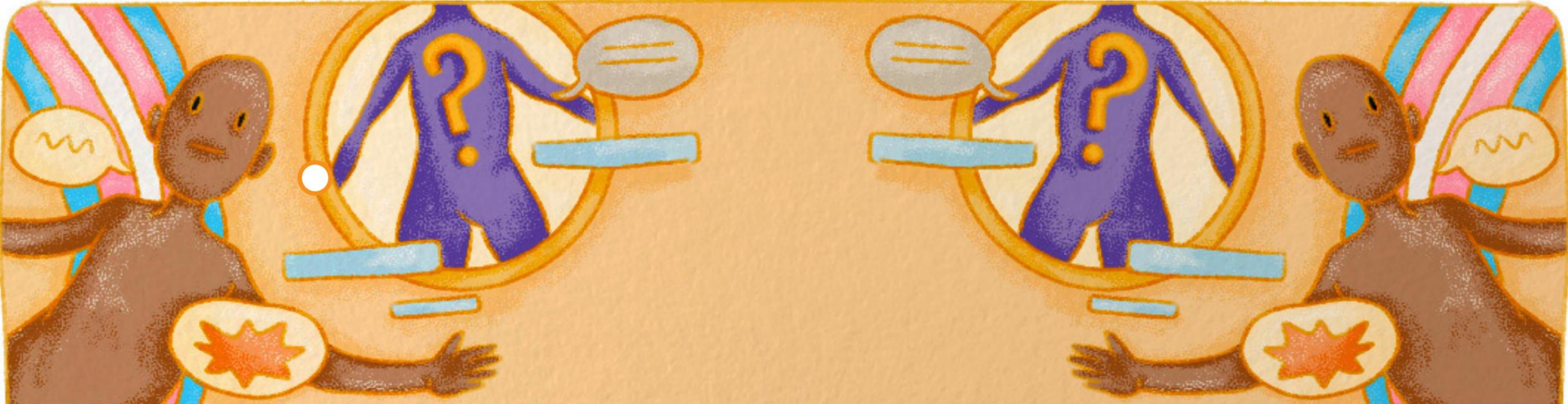
9) Note that the term “alleged” should not be used when describing LGBT*QIA+ identities and relationships (such as “alleged transgender person”, or “alleged relationship”), which are all as real and valid as any other.

10) It’s important to build a network of members of the LGBT*QIA+ community. Many journalists tend to return to the same people time and again for quotes. This limits journalists’ access to the diversity of the LGBT*QIA+ community, and also limits the voice of the community in representing themselves.

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- 11) Use umbrella terms like “LGBT”, “LGBT*Q”, “LGBT*QIA+” rather than “the gay community” which is not an inclusive term. You can use “trans”, “hijra”, or “kothi” instead of “transgender” or “transsexual”.
 - 12) Avoid headlines like, “Let the Gays Marry”. This is a sweeping statement and limits diverse gender identities and sexual orientation into one identity (i.e. gay), whereas gender identity and sexual orientation is really a spectrum that enjoys many expressions. (For instance, LGBT*QIA+.) Try and be as inclusive as possible while giving headlines and captions. It is possible to come up with a catchy headline that is also politically correct.
 - 13) Avoid headlines like “She Was Not Ashamed of Her Lesbianism” since calling something an ‘ism’ reduces it to a fad or trend rather than an identity.

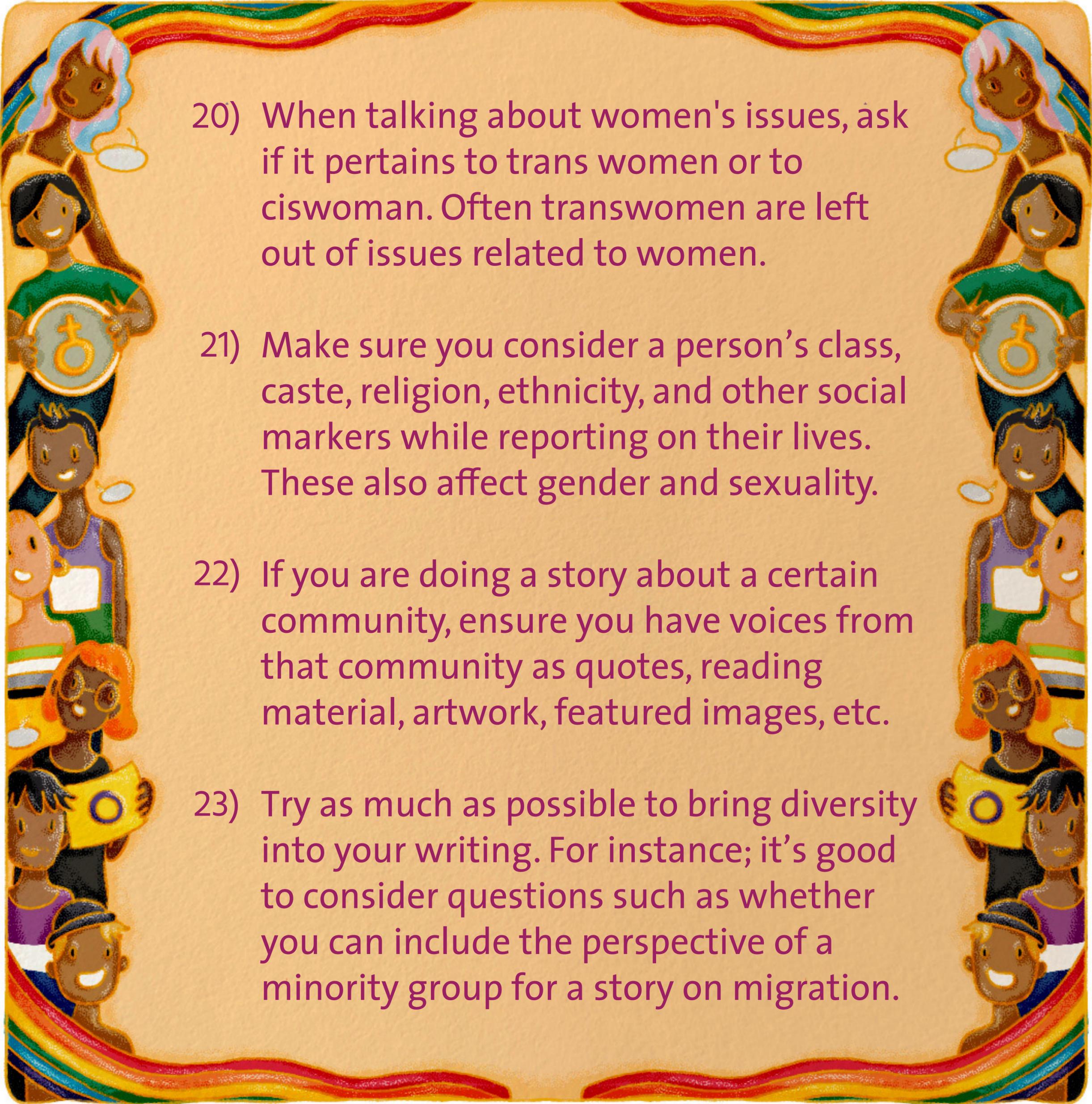
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- The page features a decorative border with a light tan background. At the top, there are two circular icons containing transgender symbols (a circle with a cross, a circle with a vertical line, and a circle with a diagonal slash). Between these are several icons of documents and forms, some with photos. The bottom border shows two stylized human figures, one purple and one brown, with question marks above their heads, set against a background of the transgender flag. The text is centered in a purple font.
- 14) Do not mix up transgender with transexual. While the former refers to gender identity, the latter focuses only on biology/sex change. Many trans* identified individuals do not undergo gender reassignment surgery for economic, medical, social reasons, or other reasons. Also, transexual is an older and outdated term that originated in the psychological and medical communities.
- 15) “Transgendered” is a wrong usage of trans identity since it is reductive and consigns gender to the past tense. Transgendered suggests that being trans* is something that happens to someone, as opposed to an identity.

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- 16) Use the more appropriate “Gender Affirmative Surgery {GAS)” instead of “sex-change surgery” or “sex reassignment surgery”.
- 17) “Eunuch” is a derogatory term. The right usage is “transgender woman” or “trans woman”.
- 18) One does not always have to focus on a transgender person’s previous gender identity by using phrases like “He was a She”, or their transitioning process and surgeries. Too often, it reduces and ridicules the trans experience and their struggle to live a life free of prejudices.



19) Care should be taken to be sensitive; just as one would not report about a cancer survivor's breast implants or silicone breasts, it is equally demeaning and insensitive to speak of the trans body just in terms of pre-op and post-op and focus only on genitals. It's important to let the trans person decide what they want to share.



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- 20) When talking about women's issues, ask if it pertains to trans women or to ciswoman. Often transwomen are left out of issues related to women.
- 21) Make sure you consider a person's class, caste, religion, ethnicity, and other social markers while reporting on their lives. These also affect gender and sexuality.
- 22) If you are doing a story about a certain community, ensure you have voices from that community as quotes, reading material, artwork, featured images, etc.
- 23) Try as much as possible to bring diversity into your writing. For instance; it's good to consider questions such as whether you can include the perspective of a minority group for a story on migration.

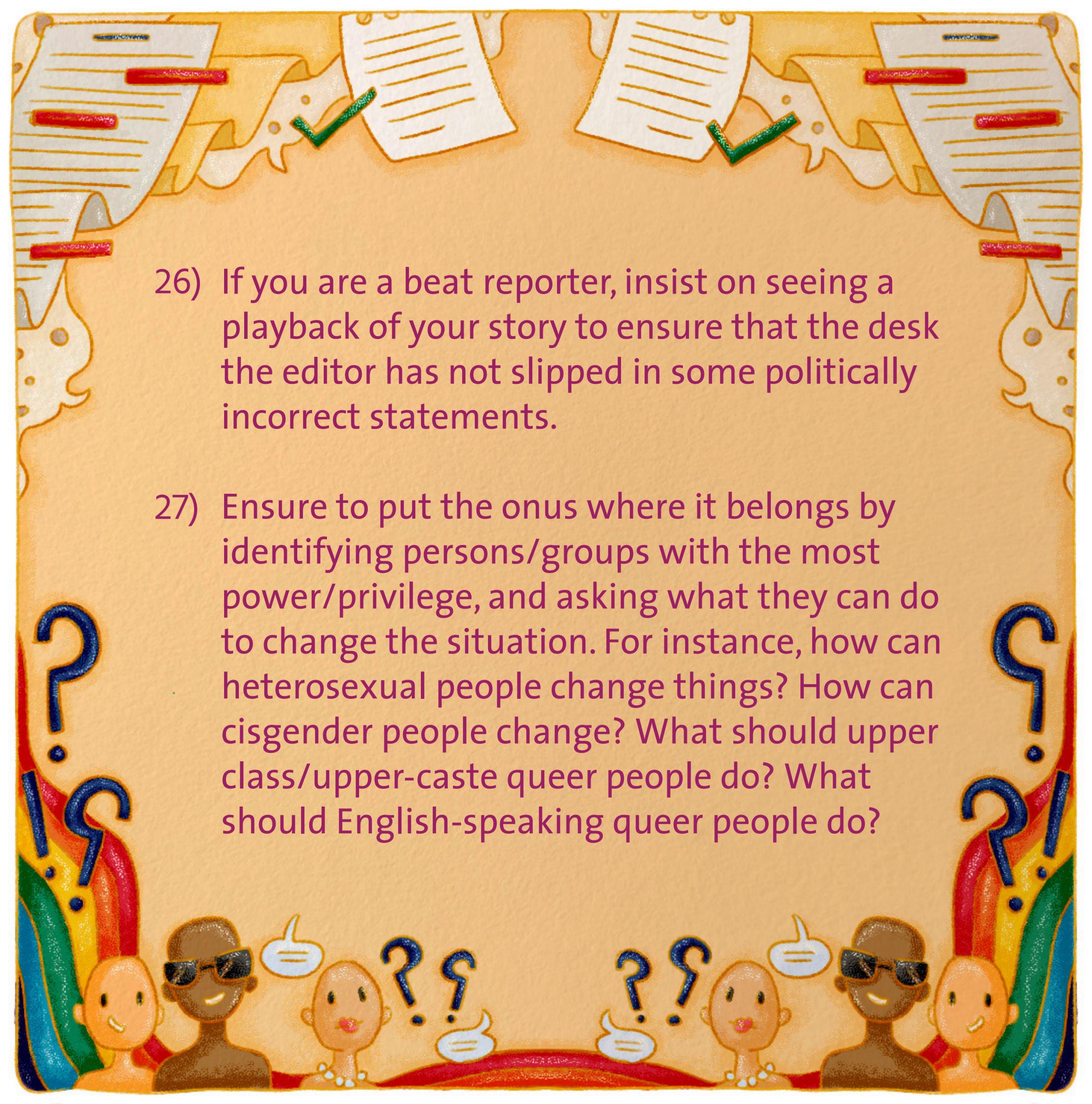


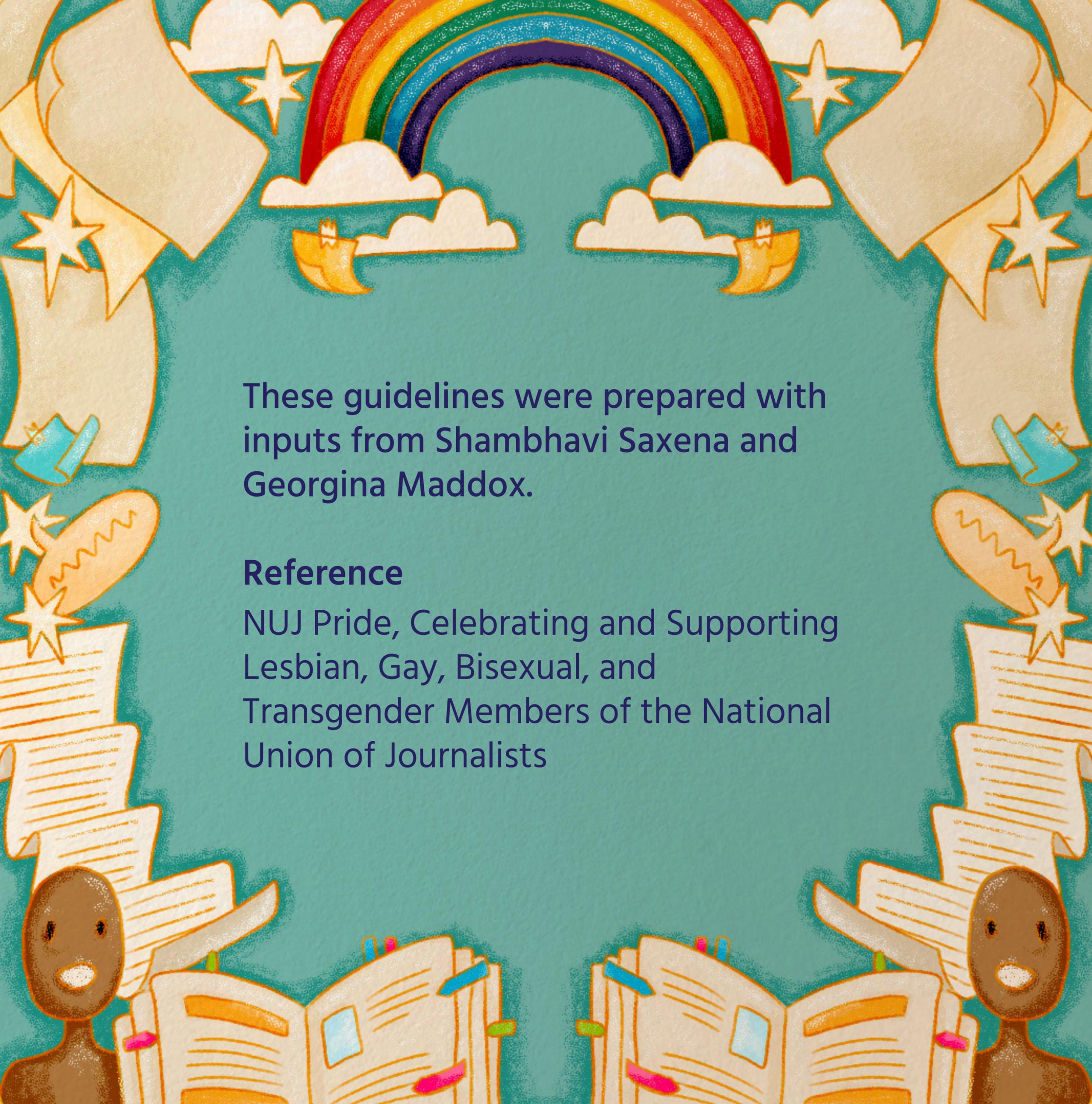
24) Persons from marginalised communities must not be treated as ‘victims’, as it further disempowers them. Avoid ‘the saviour syndrome’ and ‘top-down’ statements with a “we must save them” tone.



25) Look for stories on the LGBT*QIA+ community that do not focus on their identities as ‘victims’. To increase the visibility of LGBT*QIA+ people, look at queer and trans* persons in business, in art, activists, scientists, sportspeople.



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- 26) If you are a beat reporter, insist on seeing a playback of your story to ensure that the desk the editor has not slipped in some politically incorrect statements.
- 27) Ensure to put the onus where it belongs by identifying persons/groups with the most power/privilege, and asking what they can do to change the situation. For instance, how can heterosexual people change things? How can cisgender people change? What should upper class/upper-caste queer people do? What should English-speaking queer people do?



These guidelines were prepared with inputs from Shambhavi Saxena and Georgina Maddox.

Reference

NUJ Pride, Celebrating and Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Members of the National Union of Journalists

A note on the terminology:

- ★ LGBT*QIA+ : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, intersex, asexual people and + indicates all other people with diverse gender identities and sexualities.
- ★ Trans* persons are assigned a gender at birth and identify as another gender. All of us are assigned a gender at birth either male or female. For instance, some of us were assigned gender female at birth and now identify as women but there are people who were assigned gender female at birth and identify as men and there are people who were assigned male at birth and identify as women.
- ★ We have used the word trans* to indicate an inclusive way to address all non-cisgender identities in one simple term (for example, gender non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, etc.). Cisgender denotes or relates to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender assigned at birth. The document uses the word trans* throughout. While transgender is also correct. Trans* is more inclusive and widely acceptable.