



**kort's korner**

# Sticks and Stones *will* Break My Bones

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY, degrading, humiliating names like “faggot” and “queer” were hurled at me repeatedly. Today, younger kids and teenagers use the word “gay” to degrade and humiliate others. “That is so gay!” you can hear in school corridors and in the malls.

It's reminiscent of slang expressions like, “I Jewed him down,” or “I was gypped.” These verbs have become so overused that people use them without even knowing where they originated or how it offends people.

Today, however, we see the word “queer,” once a pejorative, often being used in a positive way. Dozens of books and articles are getting published with *Queer* in their titles, and the term has come into common, affirmative usage by lesbians and gays as well. Originally, the adjective “homosexual” was mostly derogatory or pathological, as in calling someone a “known homosexual.” Today's “homosexuals” don't want to own that title, because its negative connotations remind us of the bad old days. The “sexual” part of the word reflected the homophobic belief that homosexuality is pri-

marily or “only” about sex, which it isn't.

The labels “gay” and “lesbian” were therefore adopted, to the extent that today's reparative therapies often refuse to use the word “gay” because of its affirmative connotation!

Then bisexuals were included. These days—again, removing “sex” from the word—the politically correct term would be “bi-attractional.”

Gay culture then adopted the acronym GLB to welcome in bi-attractionals. Next to come on board was “transgendered,” an umbrella term for drag queens, drag kings, transvestites and pre-and post-op sex reassignment individuals; and so the acronym changed to GLBT. When those questioning their orientation came into the fold, the acronym expanded again to GLBTQ.

As a result of the addition of letters maybe it all just seemed to much and the best letter for us is just “Q” for *Queer*. We see it in the media (*Queer as Folk* on Showtime) and now the hysterically funny and well done *Queer Eye on the Straight Guy*.

I have to admit I still cringe when I hear the word *queer*. It takes me back to the playground where I was made fun of and put down. However, I am getting used to it as it is used more and more. When in relationship with someone “queer” my judgment is the best thing to do is to ask them how do they self identify and what would they like to be called. I prefer to be called *gay*. That is how I self-identify. How do you self-identify?