PREFERRED GENDER PRONOUNS: A HE/HE/HE PERSPECTIVE

STEVE BAGGISI(I/I/I)
Wheelock College
Boston, MA
saggi@rcn.com

With greater acceptance and support on campus today for the diverse (and sometimes ambiguous) ways that gender may be defined and expressed, the practice of identifying Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGP’s) has become increasingly popular at colleges and universities across the country. It is not uncommon to see student and faculty email signatures that include curious-looking word chains such as, “he/him/his,” “she/her/hers,” “they/their/theiris,” or even “ze/zir/zirs.” While this is a serious and important sociocultural issue that warrants further discussion, I will leave that task to the true scholars amongst us. As for me, a lifelong punster and logophile, I can not resist the temptation to play around with the way PGP’s sound when read aloud. This experimentation led me to create a list of celebrities, characters, and miscellaneous classifications of people, paired with the PGP’s that would be “appropriate” for them. With apologies to any readers who find this work to be objectionable, I wish to state my conviction that a deep respect for the subject matter and the ability to engage in related wordplay can easily co-exist. In fact, I believe, in the words of author G.K. Chesterton, that, “Angels fly because they take themselves lightly.”

Notes

1: Amongst many options available, these are the most frequently used gender-neutral pronouns. (see Table 1)

Table 1.

Getting to Know Gender-Neutral Pronouns!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Masculine</th>
<th>He laughed</th>
<th>I called him</th>
<th>His eyes gleam</th>
<th>That is his</th>
<th>He likes himself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Feminine</td>
<td>She laughed</td>
<td>I called her</td>
<td>Her eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is hers</td>
<td>She likes herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Neutral (Singular They)</td>
<td>They laughed</td>
<td>I called them</td>
<td>Their eyes gleam</td>
<td>That is theirs</td>
<td>They like themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Neutral (Ze)</td>
<td>Ze laughed (pronounced: zay as in the letter 'z')</td>
<td>I called him (pronounced: him)</td>
<td>His eyes gleam (pronounced: hir)</td>
<td>That is his (pronounced: heir)</td>
<td>Ze likes himself (pronounced: hirself)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marcel Marceau  
(my/me)

Paris Hilton  
(she/she)

Female Lead in La Boheme or RENT  
(me/me)

Mrs. Goldberg  
(you/who)

Southern Manure Farmer  
(she/it)

Subtraction Expert  
(mine/us)

Chocolate Lover  
(her/she)

Bitsy’s Predecessor  
(its/he)

Political Candidate  
(who/we)

Poison Ivy Sufferer  
(it/she)

Asthma Sufferer  
(we/ze)

French Yes-Man  
(we/we)

Spanish “Walk the Dog” Champion  
(yo/yо)

The Fifth Little Piggie  
(we/we/we)  
All the way home!
Works Cited

Leff, Lisa - Associated, Press. 'Preferred' Pronouns Gain Traction at US Colleges.


Nordlinger, Jay. "What Are Your Pronouns? The Latest Craze on Campus."