



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

One of the tracks at this year’s conference was on editing with cultural and social sensitivity. Karen Yin capped off this track by leading a standing-room-only panel on “The Language of the LGBT Community.”

After the conference, I asked Yin if she would answer a few questions about the [Conscious Style Guide](#), her new online resource for kind, compassionate, and inclusive language.

by Karen Yin, with questions from Samantha Enslin

What inspired you to create this resource?

Yin: I created the *Conscious Style Guide* to provide guidance on the language we use to talk or write about people, to gather other resources in one place, and to spotlight people and organizations involved in this movement toward conscious language.

Mislabeling people does more than just misunderstand; it erases identities and invalidates experiences. It’s not fun to be shoehorned into categories at every turn, socialized to fulfill cultural expectations, and then be criticized for being that way or not being that way. Nobody wins. To paraphrase Booker T. Washington, you can’t hold someone down without staying down with them. (Yes, another vote for the singular “they” and “them”!)



How did you decide what to include?

Yin: On the *Conscious Style Guide* website, I link to articles that illuminate corners and move the conversation along. They don’t need to mirror my personal philosophy or terminology, but they must make my brain light up. I’m interested in exchanging ideas, not promoting one voice.

The style guide portion of the *Conscious Style Guide* will focus on terminology that has reached a level of mainstream acceptance, as well as terminology that provokes thought, such as the need for acronyms like “QUILT BAG” in place of “LGBT.” There is no one right answer, and if there is, it’s likely to change. As a writer, I don’t believe in the existence of “wrong” words, only words that are used more skillfully or less skillfully depending on context and audience.

What are you hoping the guide will accomplish?

Yin: Those who are open to inclusive language may not have time to figure out the best key phrases to Google or wade through pages of search results. The content varies in relevance and authority and is often outdated.

The *Conscious Style Guide* addresses these blocks by being the aggregator and filter, collecting the most valuable resources in one place. And when the *Conscious Style Guide* publishes its own recommendations down the line, users can perform an on-site search for specific terms.

On a deeper level, my hope is that the *Conscious Style Guide* encourages acceptance and equal consideration of all people, including—or especially—ourselves. It’s about seeking to understand and having the option to honor our self-identities.

What should we expect from the guide in the future?

Yin: The *Conscious Style Guide* will become an online style guide with alphabetized entries a la the *AP Stylebook* or *The New York Times Manual of Style*. My team of advisers and contributors will help me evolve the *Conscious Style Guide* site to become a resource for writers, editors, and educators as well as anybody interested in becoming better at interpersonal communications.

How would you like ACES members to use the guide?

Yin: My advice for using any style guide is to familiarize yourself with it so that when you want guidance, you know where to find it. Sign up for the email newsletter, which rounds up the best news and blog posts related to conscious language.

Most importantly, consult your intuition and form your own opinions. Style guides exist to serve you, not the other way around. ●

Learn more:
Browse the [Conscious Style Guide](#).

Karen Yin is the creator of the Conscious Style Guide. She is also the style columnist for the Copyediting.com newsletter and writes about style on her blog, AP vs. Chicago.

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