

Interviewing LGBTQ+ Jews of Color: A Guide for Reporters

Thank you for your interest in conducting thoughtful interviews with LGBTQ+ Jews of Color. When interviewing LGBTQ+ Jews of Color, please be prepared to listen deeply, work to minimize harm, and amplify stories with care, accuracy, and respect.

Who Are JOC/ LGBTQ+ JOCs?

Jews of Color (JOC) refers to Jews who are also BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color).

LGBTQ+ Jews of Color (LGBTQ+ JOC or QJOC, for short, and if the person prefers this acronym) refers to individuals who identify as both part of the LGBTQ+ community and as Jews of Color.

Tips and Best Practices

1. **Educate yourself before the interview.** If you're unfamiliar with LGBTQ+ or JOC identities, please do some research in advance. Information on Jews of Color, such as JOCI's [Beyond the Count](#), and LGBTQ+ Jews of Color, such as Keshet's [Threads of Identity: LGBTQ+ Jews of Color in the Fabric of Jewish Life](#), are great starting points.
2. **Ask how the person identifies.** Every person self-describes and holds their identities in ways unique to them. Begin by asking your interview subject how they would like to be addressed and described in terms of their identities and lived experience. Honoring self-identification not only minimizes harm but also ensures accuracy and integrity in your reporting.
3. **Ask questions that don't include assumptions.** The most meaningful interviews happen when people feel safe enough to share their story, without battling the assumptions of others. Avoid filling in blanks based on stereotypes, past interviews, or your own assumptions. When you frame your questions as an open invitation rather than limitations based on your own ideas and understanding, you create space for authenticity. This allows someone to present their history on their own terms, without being confined to predetermined narratives.
4. **Focus on the whole person.** Avoid reducing someone to only their marginalized identities and negative experiences. Ask questions that invite joy, depth, and complexity, not only trauma or pain.
5. **Honor consent and boundaries.** Make it clear that they are under no obligation to share personal history or trauma, and that you will fully respect any boundaries they set. Give them the space and autonomy to decide if, how, and what they want to share, and check in to understand their comfort level, without adding pressure or responding defensively to receiving pushback or hearing a "no".

Top Questions to Avoid

“Did you convert?”

Why it’s harmful...

This is one of the most common and damaging assumptions made about JOCs/QJOCs. It suggests they must have “become” Jewish, reinforcing the belief that their Jewishness is viewed as an exception, rather than a given, and as if JOCs/QJOCs can’t be born Jewish.

Instead...

Don’t ask unless the person has already shared that this is part of their story and is open to discussing it.

“Which parent is Jewish?” or “Is your Jewish side maternal or paternal?”

Why it’s harmful...

It assumes that the person’s Jewish identity must come from only one parent, erasing the experiences of those with two Jewish parents, no Jewish parents, or those who define their Judaism beyond bloodline.

Instead...

Avoid asking. A person’s lineage may not be relevant to their Jewishness, and asking implies that ancestry dictates legitimacy.

“What’s it like to be ‘different’ in your Jewish community?”

Why it’s harmful...

This question labels the person as an outsider and reinforces the idea that their presence in Jewish spaces is unusual. It “others” individuals based on their marginalized identities and assumes their experience is defined by not fitting in.

Instead...

“What does belonging in Jewish spaces look or feel like to you?”

“How do you balance being Jewish with being [Black/LGBTQ+/etc.]?”

Why it’s harmful...

This frames parts of a person’s identity as conflicting with their Jewishness. It implies that these identities are in conflict and need to be reconciled or explained.

Instead...

“What identities feel most present in your Jewish life?”

Additional Resources

- [Invite the Whole Person: Representation vs Tokenism](#) (Keshet)
- [FACT SHEET: Reporter Guide to Covering Transgender People, Topics, and Legislation](#) (GLAAD)
- [GLAAD Media Reference Guide – In Focus: Covering the Transgender Community](#) (GLAAD)