How BIPOC queer activists are using artivism as resistance

Blog, Civil Rights and Freedom, Anti-racism, Community Organising, Intersectionality

> Art has always been a powerful tool of resistance, allowing the oppressed to share their truths and experiences. For many Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour (BIPOC[1]) LGBTI activists, it is more than expression—it's a survival tool, a way to build community, a political statement, and a means to reclaim joy.

With this new blog series, we're sharing insights from the work of LGBTI organisations tackling injustice, racism, and the unique challenges faced by racialised LGBTI communities in Europe. We hope their stories and practices will inspire and resonate. We believe that solutions and approaches that include a few will pave the way and point to the solutions for many. You can read the previous blog in the series here.

Across Europe, LGBTI collectives are harnessing film, music, poetry, and performance to tell their stories, connect with others, and challenge dominant narratives. In today's blog, we explore how four different racialised queer groups use art in their activism.

Wassla Ciné Queer: Film as a lifeline

For Wassla, a queer cultural organisation based in Paris that works with migrants, film is more than entertainment – it is a lifeline. Their initiative, Ciné Queer, curates short and feature-length movies directed by Arab filmmakers that explore LGBTQIA+ experiences in Arabic-speaking communities. More than just screenings, these events spark critical conversations. Often followed by discussions with directors, the gatherings create a space where people can process what they see on screen, debate social issues, and reflect on their own realities.

At Wassla, there is no distinction between volunteers and participants; everyone plays a role in shaping the community. Many of their screenings feature works by their own members, amplifying voices that might otherwise remain unheard. With audiences sometimes reaching 80 people or more, Ciné Queer combats isolation and fosters solidarity in a safe and empowering space. For Wassla, film is not just about representation, it is about connection, healing, and breaking the silence.

Photo by Wassla

Sadiqa and LIMBO queer exilic narratives: Music as a battle cry

“I am a reality, not an illusion.” These words, from Sadiqa’s song The Voice of the Queer, embody the defiant spirit of many BIPOC queer artists who refuse to be erased. Sadiqa was part of Art for Change, an initiative that examined art as a tool for solidarity and engaged scholarship. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Art for Change brought together queer refugee artists, offering a space to create and share music, poetry, film, and design.

That work continues through LIMBO queer exilic narratives, a platform for queer refugees in the Netherlands to tell their stories through art, to challenge the laws and structures that criminalise their existence, and to carve out spaces of belonging. Sadiqa’s music does not ask for permission; it demands recognition. Their lyrics are a protest against laws such as Article 489 of the moroccan law, which criminalises the sexuality of queer people, and a call

out to all systems of oppression that seek to control and suppress marginalised communities:

> “The voice of the queer is everywhere, calling against oppression… now we are all aware of the system’s malfunctions”
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THE VOICE OF THE
QUEER
BY SADIQA
I dedicate these words to the Loubia's, Gays and Lesbians, to the Trans* and Queers and those who are neither men or women... I dedicate my words to the masculine and the femmes and the queer sex workers... Sex workers are making their own living NOT asking for your charity...
I am an aggressive Loubia, not a cute gay, and I will still be a Loubia no matter what your hateful mouths say, I know my self-worth and I will keep having queer sex, and my life in none of your business under any pretext...
They say am a "scandal" they say am a "dirt", a "burden on society" am just a "sick perv"... I should have never come to this life because I am a "disgrace" and heterosexuality is the base...
They want to oppress me and shut me but I rise up, I will fight the fight till I win or die but will never give up... Am a rebellion free Loubia that will shut you down, and show you who is defected, the system or I?...
Against oppression against hate I raise my voice, won't put my arms down, won't take a break until the abortion of the law 489 (law that criminalizes queers in Morocco) and all the other laws that criminalises the freedom of the free children of the universe... the laws of colonialism that enslaved us, and the laws of bearded Imam's who own the keys to heaven and hell, thinking they will foul us with their Fatwas (Interpretations of religious texts by MEN of religion)...
How can a Loubia like be the cause of destruction? How can a sex worker cause a Natsumi in the Ocean? How can the throne of God, the creature of all, shake when a person loves another person?... Fuck off! My faith is personal, between me and my creature, and I know he loves me and that is all what matters... As Adam and Eve were not the only God's creation... He also created this Queer fascination.
We were sentenced to live in this contradictory world, in a Male – dominated system... To be worthy of living you need to pass a hetero-normative threshold, a threshold made out of pre-fixed idea's and myths and legends... Queer rights will never be a priority, in a country that has abandoned its people long ago... we are criminals in your eyes and you are all judges, and the court is the street and the law has long ago died...
I don't believe in the bourgeois classist fight for Queer people, I only believe in Queer revolution... a revolution that will lead to liberation...
I am a rebellion Loubia that will let their voice be heard... with all means possible, with rap and with music, with words, with existing, with fighting, with resisting... I will sing and make others listen to the cries of my pen...
And if your masculinity is fragile, you better not listen... I am a reality not an illusion... You don't know what I am? Am I a woman or a man? You are curious to know what I have in my pants?...
All you need to know is that I AM A HUMAN
And today you will hear my voice, our voice: the voice of the Queer...
The voice of the Queer is Everywhere... Calling against Oppressions
Now we are all aware... of system's malfunctions
Now we are all aware... of system's malfunctions

Rainbow Mind UK: Art as radical self-care

For Rainbow Mind UK, creativity is a crucial part of their radical self-care approach. Working with LGBTI people of colour and refugee communities in the UK, they realised that traditional self-care practices often required participants to re-live painful experiences. Instead, they turned to art and music as a means of engagement, connection, and healing.

One of their most popular practices is the Queer Pencil Disco, where participants use drawing as a form of self-expression, and another involves recalling empowering song lyrics when words are hard to find. For a group of LGBTQ+ refugees, ‘Flowers’ by Miley Cyrus became an anthem of resilience. These practices offer creative expression and make self-care accessible and joyful. Rainbow Mind UK uses art to help people take control of their stories without re-experiencing trauma.

Break Isolation Group: Slam poetry as protest

For Break Isolation Group, spoken word and slam poetry are forms of protest, catharsis, and survival. Many members are queer racialised asylum seekers and refugees who face state repression, deportation threats, and systemic silencing in Germany.

Ann and Rose from Break Isolation Group explain that poetry provides them with a platform to express anger, tell their stories, and build community when traditional political spaces are closed to them.

“We are not able to speak openly in many spaces anymore,” Ann explains. “So now, we turn to slam poetry. Art allows us to purge, to bring experiences to life in a way that just talking about them doesn’t.”

For Break Isolation Group, redefining what counts as ‘art’ is part of their activism. Rose points out that in many BIPOC cultures, storytelling has always been woven into song and dance, but Western frameworks often fail to recognise these as legitimate art forms. “Our ancestors sent messages through music; this is nothing new.” Through their work, Break Isolation Group challenges Eurocentric definitions of art and reclaims creative expression on their own terms.

RIDE IN
RTATION

Photo by Break Isolation Group

New funding

ILGA-Europe continues its commitment to providing funds and support for this part of LGBTI movement that addresses intersectional impacts of injustice, racialisation, racism and supremacy. On 30 January 2025, we launched a new call for proposals to support European groups working for and with racialised LGBTI communities. This is the third cycle of this programme. Apply by 30 March 2025, 23.59 CET.

1. BIPOC is one of many abbreviations that our partner organisations use to self-identify the racialised communities they belong to. We use it here while acknowledging that there are other terms that might be more apt in different contexts by various groups, such as BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic), BAPOC (Black, Asian and People of Colour), LGBTQI+ individuals of African descent, Arab queers from SWANA region (Southwest Asian and North African region) to name a few that are used by organisations we work with. ??