

WHAT IS THE "HANKY CODE"? A SHORT HISTORY...

Flagging, also known as the "hanky code," is a way to wordlessly tell other queer people your sexual preferences. In a nutshell, it involves wearing different colors of bandanas in your pockets — left or right, respectively, to signal top/dom or bottom/submissive roles — to indicate different kinks, fantasies, and other sexual interests to the world. The system originated in the '70s, a time when it was illegal in most places to have queer sex. Like leather bars and BDSM spaces, flagging is an iconic part of queer history that's alive and well to this day.

Flagging's origins can be traced to the prosecution of queer people and queer sex, as researcher and author Jack Giesecking tells Them. In the 1960s, state sodomy laws were introduced across the U.S. to criminalize queer sex, though local laws banned cruising as early as the 1920s. Two men who entered a hotel together could be arrested on suspicion of sodomy, and so queer sex was often had in dark public places with low foot traffic, like parks, waterfronts, subway stations, and other abandoned or industrial areas that weren't surveilled.

As a result, communities developed a system of "flagging," using colored handkerchiefs to subtly indicate sexual preferences among those in the know, usually as a signal to other queer people. "I think [flagging] comes out of gay men not being able to talk so much in a lot of these spaces, which tend to be quiet and outdoors," Giesecking says. "Here's a way to just signal what I want."

Article taken from Them-written by Evelyn Bauer

Worn on Left Side	Color Hanky	Worn on Right Side
Fist Fucker	Red	Fist Fuckee
Masturbator	White	Stroker
S&M Top	Black	S&M Bottom
Pisser	Yellow	Pissee
Bondage Top	Gray	Bondage Bottom
Fucker	Navy Blue	Fuckee
Anything, Anytime	Orange	Nothing Now
Dildo Fucker	Light Pink	Dildo Fuckee
Daddy	Hunter Green	Hunting for Daddy
Wants Head	Light Blue	Expert Cocksucker

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