



5 Things You Should KNOW

1. Attacks on trans rights are direct attacks on our American government, our freedoms and our way of life. It might seem like attempts to remove trans people from society are targeted toward a specific group. But they're just part of a much larger plan to manipulate people's fear and discomfort into support for Right Wing propaganda. If they can successfully force one group back into the shadows, they'll just follow the same playbook to destroy the civil rights of any person or group they think won't vote for them. Using violence or intimidation against private, law-abiding citizens for political purposes is domestic terrorism.

2. Anti-drag laws jeopardize local businesses, violate the First Amendment, and make criminals out of virtually anyone. Private business operating with as little government interference as possible has been the foundation of our American economic and legal system since its very beginnings. But when legislators ban Drag—especially in places like bars or breweries where children don't typically go anyway—they overstep the government's bounds, and make small business owners afraid of even accidentally breaking the law.

Meanwhile, Drag bans are a direct violation of the First Amendment right to free speech and expression. They restrict a Drag Queen's ability to perform their art and endanger the right of every performer to do the same. Perhaps worse, legislators know this is illegal even as they do it. They just aren't concerned because they believe the laws they enact don't apply to them and their friends. You and yours don't have the same protection.

Policing the clothing and behavior of consenting adults is never a good idea. For example, if a state doesn't recognize legal gender transition, Drag bans mean that anyone wearing clothing they "shouldn't" wear based on how any other person perceives their sex or gender is at risk of violating the law just by existing in public.

With the stroke of a pen, a man wearing a kilt, a partygoer walking down the street to a Halloween party or even a woman in dress pants are suddenly all wearing "drag." What's in *your* closet?

3. Legislative bans on gender affirming care for trans youth are easily applied to the same care for adults assigned as women at birth. Whether you're a young trans person or a person going through menopause, a form of Hormone Replacement Therapy is the prescribed treatment. A ban on one opens the door to all kinds of restrictions on the other. The issue is complicated, but the bottom line couldn't be more simple. What right is more important to you: A legislator's 'right' to use their elected office to ban medical treatment as a way to raise more money for their campaigns or your right (and everyone else's) to private, medically sound, self or parent-directed healthcare?

To live in and control one's own body is the most fundamental inalienable right. It cannot and should not be restricted in any way—for anyone—because the government simply doesn't have the right.



4. Laws that prevent trans people from participating in sports have ugly consequences for all athletes. Physical sex characteristics are far more complex than conservative news outlets and your generally angry uncle would have you believe. Virtually all the characteristics that are considered physically "masculine" or "feminine" are determined by nothing more than hormones. And, as most people know, hormone levels vary widely even among people who live consistent with their assigned gender at birth (or "cisgender" people).

People born with intersex characteristics (meaning traits of both genders either physically, chromosomally or both) are about as common across society as people born with red hair. To prevent trans people from participating in sports based on something they came into the world with is as cruel—and wholly unnecessary—as banning red-headed athletes.

This cruelty has real consequences for good people who simply want to live their lives, use their talents, practice a discipline, experience the joy of participating on a team, and push their own limits. Consider, for example, Caster Semanya, who was born a woman with natural testosterone levels that were considered "too high" to allow her to compete in women's sports.

These rules didn't force her to compete with her own sex as they're intended. They nearly kept an Olympic gold medalist from competing at all—for no other reason than a misunderstanding of basic science, anti-trans fear and open racism.

5. Anti-trans laws put already-vulnerable people at heightened risk of abuse, depression, violence and suicide. There is no question that mental health issues are an increasing epidemic in the United States. Nearly every person reading this has experienced them at one time or another or has felt the pain and helplessness of watching someone we love struggle. Those of us who have wouldn't wish them on anyone—even our own worst enemies.

And trans people are not even your enemy. In fact, we might well be your friend. By creating an atmosphere that not only discourages our care and protection, but is actively hostile toward us, we harm innocent people and empower those whose own mental health issues cause them to choose violence.

Trans people already suffer from much higher rates of depression, suicide, and violence than any other segment of the population. These numbers increase significantly for trans people of color.

It may be difficult to pass sensible gun laws, or to get insurance companies or legislators to fund the mental health care we should all be entitled to for a more peaceful, productive, safe society.

But if we can't easily defend, the least we can do is refuse to attack. That is directly in each of our powers every day.

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5 Things You Can DO

1. Educate yourself, raise your media literacy, and expand your knowledge of history. These attacks aren't new and a perceived turn toward "progressivism" has been a predictable first act before the violent destruction of rights—and people. The period in Germany known as the "Weimar Republic" has often been considered one of the most progressive and open times for queer and trans people in the 20th Century. It's also the period that ended when the Nazis rose to power and went on to murder millions of people.

Please think through the practical result of these laws and who actually stands to benefit from them. History has shown us time and again that it's almost never those they claim to protect. Instead, it's people who already have a great deal of power merely wanting more—and the only power left for them to take is what little the rest of us have managed to keep for ourselves.

2. Show up, stand up at LGBTQ and especially Trans events. Anti-LGBTQ protesters have increasingly been showing up to protest events like Drag Queen story hours at libraries, and even drag performances at events that are explicitly for LGBTQ communities like Pride celebrations and marches. But you can show up—and stand up—too.

There's a reason why Donald Trump is so obsessed with crowd sizes—and it's not just his ego. People tend to follow a crowd. And when the crowd of support looks large, more and more people start to wonder if they shouldn't be a part of that crowd too. Just by showing up in any crowd, your body becomes one of a number of bodies. Taken all together, those bodies signal support. Do you want your number counted in support of happiness and acceptance or anger and hate?

But more than that, your physical presence—and the group it creates—acts as a barrier against those who want to restrict our freedoms, helps prevent violence and attacks, and creates actual space for Trans and Queer people to live and experience life freely, safely, and joyfully.

These are rights to which we are all entitled and you can help secure them at any given moment, just by showing up—even if you only feel comfortable hanging back.

3. Donate your money or time to organizations with direct impact. Since much of this fight is currently playing out in the legal system, it's a good time to give directly to organizations with a demonstrated record of success fighting back in that same forum. Thanks to GLAD's efforts in Florida, a federal judge recently declared unconstitutional a law that denied trans people access to established medical care. Likewise, the National Center for Trans Equality (NCTE) collects vital national and state-level data, passes legislation, and advocates in support of Trans people and rights. Either or both of these are exceptional organizations to support.

But, as a general rule, the best organizations to give to are always those whose leadership reflects and represents the people they claim to serve. NCTE is a trans-run organization and has a number of trans people of color in their leadership. But these organizations and others like them, are frequently underfunded, understaffed and face opponents with very deep pockets and large networks. They desperately need your support to keep fighting!

As an ally, this is the best real support you can give and any amount—large or small—helps.

4. Don't fall for media hysteria. Tabloid-style headlines catch people's attention. They don't have to be true or even make sense. They just have to draw eyes, give you an emotional response, and ultimately make money for the publisher. What they don't want you to know is that they assume you won't actually read the story or check the facts. For example, a recent headline and subject of internet clickbait screamed about how unfair it was that a trans woman "beat out 14,000" women in a London marathon. But, in truth, her "transness" must not have offered a very significant advantage since she ultimately came in 6,159th; having been beaten by 6,158 other women. If you take the time to dig deeper, you will invariably find that many of these scare stories turn out to have similarly less-than-lurid realities behind them.

Either get the full story or ignore the clickbait altogether.

5. Speak up and fight back. The whole point in marginalizing a group is to dismiss and silence their voices and to deny their basic rights. This means that Trans folks can't fight this battle alone. If you're straight and cisgender, your voice is especially loud, on full display, and desperately needed. What's more, it's really easy to do. When you hear someone in your orbit spreading false narratives and advocating for these dangerous laws, correct that narrative. Engage in conversation. Ask questions that challenge the specific underlying fears or discomfort and then work to reassure that these are unfounded.

These conversations are exhausting. But Trans folks have to have them and fight just to exist in society every day. So, resist the urge to segregate yourself away from your friends and relatives who are posting misinformation and anti-trans propaganda on social media. Don't ignore offensive comments at family gatherings simply to keep the peace. That temporary peace provided by the comfort of your dinner table means real danger for Trans people in the street on their way to work or eating ice cream with their families.

Please don't just, "let it slide." Not even once. My life depends on it.



Lorelei Erisis

Lorelei Erisis is a proud queer, trans woman and a writer, performer and advocate for the rights of trans and queer people. She has been heavily involved in helping secure protections for LGBTQ folks at the state and national levels, including the full suite of transgender civil rights laws enjoyed here in Massachusetts.

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