

Where Should Transgender People Pee?

You may think that a person's sexuality and gender identity* is completely accepted in today's society. Perhaps that such discrimination is a thing of the past. The reality is that life is difficult for most people on the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) spectrum, with many facing intolerance in their everyday lives. It's particularly challenging for youth who have to rub elbows in class with their homophobic peers every day after coming out.

You may not have realized that 86% of LGBT youth report being harassed at school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). In Canada, 33% of LGB youth have attempted suicide vs 7% of heterosexual Youth (Saewyc 2007) and that 47% of gay or bisexual males and 73% of lesbian or bisexual females had thought about suicide (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006). This is obviously still a serious problem.

Given all the public hate shown in the media, LGBT youth are constantly being bombarded with negative opinion that they could choose a different way of being or that God hates them. It's especially difficult if these youth's families or friends don't accept them, causing them to feel that there is no safe place for them to get away from the hatred and cruel words. Often these youth feel that they have no escape. This is the critical time when they take extreme measures, and why there are such staggering statistics on LGBT suicide all around the world.

With Donald Trump in Office as the President of the United States, America has become an even more divided and discriminatory place where many disenfranchised groups are now afraid to live, especially LGBT people. When Fox News asked Trump if he would try to appoint justices to overrule the decision on same-sex marriage Trump stated: "I would strongly consider that, yes." He has been very clear on his anti-marriage equality stance and has always been sure to tell his voters that he's opposed because he's a traditional guy.

Trump has also welcomed a very well known anti-LGBT Vice-President, Mike Pence. When President Trump chose Mike Pence as his Vice-President earlier this year, all LGBT people were very aware of Mike Pence's discriminatory views on their community as he had signed North Carolina's iconic HB2 bill/bathroom bill. This bill forces transgender** people to use the bathroom, restroom or locker room facilities that correspond with the gender on their birth certificate. And that would allow businesses to discriminate against LGBT people freely without any consequences.

Transgender people often face more discrimination than any other group as they are not given many (and in some countries zero) rights. They are fought against at every turn, even when they just need to use the washroom. This is clearly demonstrated through the passing of the dreaded "bathroom bill" in many states, which states that: transgender people must use the public restroom or locker room facilities that correspond with the gender on their birth certificate.

A US survey during the time that President Obama was in office, found that only 38 percent of those polled by CNN said they support laws that would require transgender people to use bathrooms that correlated with their birth sex, and not the gender they identify with. But with Trump now sitting in the oval office, these statistics may drastically change as people now feel the need to free to express their discriminatory views.

In the end, Transgender people, are just people, fellow human beings, and they should have the same rights as everyone else. They aren't asking for much, all they really want is to feel comfortable and respected, whether they are out in social settings or just trying to use the washroom.

Many groups are affected by different forms of intolerance around the world. And even though there have been many strides towards inclusivity, the LGBT community is still being discriminated against, even in Canada. Everyday, we come closer to a world of equality, where no one is seen as "less than". Hopefully we will keep moving in the direction of complete tolerance and acceptance of all the world's people.

If any of our readers feels scared, alone, or confused about their feelings. Or if you are in crisis or in need of immediate support please call:

- [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868) (Kids Help Phone)

Know that you are not alone, and that there is someone out there that you can talk to.

Bella Gavanski (grade 11 student)

* Personal conception of oneself as male or female (or rarely, both or neither).

** Noting to or relating to a person whose gender identity does not correspond to that person's biological sex assigned at birth.

*** Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.