

Trans People and Bathrooms: Safety for All

Talking
Points !

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We all have the right to feel safe. We also all need the right to use the public bathroom that matches our gender. Many federal laws and agencies protect these rights (for example, Title IX, VAWA, HUD, the EEOC and others), but there are still some people saying that transgender people will make public restrooms unsafe for others. That's untrue! Here are the facts.

1.

THERE HAS BEEN NO INCREASE IN ASSAULTS WHERE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE HAVE THEIR BATHROOM RIGHTS PROTECTED.

17 states and an uncounted number of cities and school districts have granted explicit bathroom rights to transgender people. NONE of them have reported an increase in assaults in bathrooms since their legislation passed.¹

2.

CREATING FEAR IS THE PRIMARY TOOL OF CIVIL RIGHTS OPPONENTS.

The United States was founded on commitments to personal rights: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Americans typically support extending rights, dignity, and respect to all, including transgender people: currently 89% of Americans support equal rights for transgender people.ⁱⁱ To counter this valuing of equality, civil rights opponents have always promoted the false theory that granting respect and dignity to some will harm others: white people were told they would catch new diseases if they shared bathrooms and drinking fountains with Black people;ⁱⁱⁱ Americans were warned the Pope would take over the U.S. if Catholic immigration was allowed,^{iv} and heterosexuals were warned their own marriages would be endangered by giving lesbians and gay men the right to marry.^v It's time to put a stop to this ugly and misleading American political tactic. Allowing transgender people to use the bathroom that aligns with their gender endangers no one.

3.

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE ARE MOST AT RISK OF VIOLENCE IN BATHROOMS.

Sexual assaults in public bathrooms are extremely rare. Unfortunately, physical as well as verbal assaults on transgender people in bathrooms are not rare. Many transgender people have been physically violated or harassed by people who believe they are in the "wrong" bathroom. That's why we need legislation that makes it clear that transgender people have a right to use the bathroom that best matches their identity.

4.

YOU CAN KEEP YOURSELF SAFE IN PUBLIC RESTROOMS.

Everyone should feel safe in bathrooms. If you find yourself in a bathroom with someone who for some reason makes you feel unsafe, leave. You can then: 1) Wait to re-enter the bathroom when that person leaves; 2) Wait to re-enter the bathroom when someone else is available to go in with you; or 3) Find another restroom. If you feel uncomfortable sharing a restroom with someone because they don't look like what you think a woman or man should look like, ask yourself: do they appear to be engaging in the type of hygienic or cosmetic behavior restrooms are designed for? If they are, chances are very good they are where they belong and you can both safely take care of business.

5.

YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT WHO TRANSGENDER PEOPLE ARE.

Even though transgender people are on television and in magazines these days, many people still have misconceptions about what transgender people look like. There are many internet-based collections of photographs of transgender youth and adults. Some that we recommend are:

- Transgender survivors of sexual violence (Espavo Project) -- <http://forge.zenfolio.com/p484793039>
- Transgender children and youth
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/06/04/transgender-children-sarah-wong-photo-project_n_7510728.html
- Transgender elders -- <http://www.tosurviveonthishshore.com/photographs-and-interviews>
- Transcending Gender Project -- <http://www.transcendinggender.org/photos-page/>
- Transgender people pictured in bathrooms that do not match their gender identity
<http://www.advocate.com/politics/transgender/2015/03/14/trans-folks-respond-bathroom-bills-wejustneedtopee-selfies>

ⁱ Brinker, L. and Maza, C. (2014). "15 Experts Debunk Right-Wing Transgender Bathroom Myth," *Media Matters*, retrieved 11/1/2015 from <http://mediamatters.org/research/2014/03/20/15-experts-debunk-right-wing-transgender-bathro/198533>; Percelay, R. (2015). "17 School Districts Debunk Right-Wing Lies About Protections for Transgender Students," *Media Matters*, retrieved 11/1/2015 from <http://mediamatters.org/research/2015/06/03/17-school-districts-debunk-right-wing-lies-abou/203867>

ⁱⁱ Public Religion Research Institute. (2011). Retrieved 11/01/2015 from http://publicreligion.org/research/2011/11/american-attitudes-towards-transgender-people/#_VJULyberRaQ

ⁱⁱⁱ See, for example, correspondence by Eleanor Roosevelt at [https://www.sethkaller.com/item/658-Eleanor-Roosevelt-Stands-for-Civil-Rights-%E2%80%93-Her-Four-Freedoms-\(SOLD\)](https://www.sethkaller.com/item/658-Eleanor-Roosevelt-Stands-for-Civil-Rights-%E2%80%93-Her-Four-Freedoms-(SOLD))

^{iv} Rapczynski, J. (1999). "The Italian Immigrant Experience in America (1870-1920)," a Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute curriculum, available at <http://www.yale.edu/ymhti/curriculum/units/1999/3/99.03.06.x.html>

^v Barber, J. (2013). "Ten Reasons Why 'Same-Sex Marriage' Affects Your Marriage," *The Aquila Report*, retrieved 11/1/2015 from <http://theaquilareport.com/ten-reasons-why-same-sex-marriage-affects-your-marriage/>

