

Gender Protests Erupt

With recent political unrest toward people who identify as LGBTQ+, City High students have participated in city-wide protests in addition to promoting change throughout the school

By Olivia **Lusala**,
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Xenophilus Tyne '20 came out as genderqueer three years ago. They are one of 1.4 million Americans who identifies as transgender or non-binary, according to The New York Times. Tyne identifies as genderqueer, and came out "sometime after eighth grade."

"I was questioning my gender all of [the previous year]," Tyne said.

Recently, *The New York Times* reported that the Department of Health and Human Services was proposing to make gender only identified by a person's sex organs at birth, meaning that they would limit gender to only male and female. and with any retaliation with one's sex, would have to be confirmed by genetic testings. For gender non-conforming and transgender Americans, this comes off as a violation of rights.

"At first, I was very peeved. As many of minorities it's hard to have the government say it's wrong for being who you are, but realistically that statement only presents a small part of the population, but there are more people fighting against it than there are people fighting for it. For anti trans messages," Tyne said.

High-risk policy states where anti-LGBTQ legislation have been proposed or existing supportive legislation is under attack might pop up within the next school year. The 15 states include Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas, and Iowa.

According to the 2015 National School Climate Survey, 65% of transgender students in America are harassed at school because of their gender expression. Schools often require these students to use separate bathrooms. Additionally, 70% of transgender students responded that they avoid bathrooms at school because they feel unsafe and uncomfortable.

"I used to feel a bit indifferent at times about judgment from others," Luna Kellicult '17, a City High graduate who identifies as genderqueer, said.

In the case of gym class, locker rooms, could "out" trans students to their peers if they are not openly transgender.

"I think forcing labels is too abrasive. You can't discipline a student or staff for how they want to express themselves," Kellicult said.

Schools have refused to update transgender student's records post-transition, so that their correct names and gender pronouns are not listed on attendance sheets. Some teachers and administrators refuse

to call transgender or gender non-conforming students by their chosen name, instead of using their birth name. According to a statement from MAP and GLSEN, dozens of pieces of legislation have been proposed in a multitude of states in the last several years, which, according to the organization, can potentially deny young transgender people the right to safe spaces in school and using the name and pronouns of their choosing.

"[GLOW is] going to be addressing better ways that staff can interact with queer youth and making the classroom more queer-friendly: including gender neutral pronouns, nonbinary pronouns, and giving examples that aren't just heterosexual," Tyne, who is president of GLOW club, said.

With about 15 students involved in the GLOW club, they have worked with student senate and administration to bring change to how queer students are being treated in school environments.

"Definitely, the most work needs to be done with staff. I've never run across students that were really passive-aggressively anti-queer," Tyne said. "But I have ran across staff that are like that, and so, that's our goal with GLOW this year—helping staff be more educated with this type of stuff," Tyne said.

This type of discrimination in schools leads to higher dropout rates for trans students across

America. According to the NYCLU, more than 50 percent of transgender youth avoid school "on a regular basis" and "drop-out rates are staggering." Transgender students who continue school statistically have lower grade point averages and "are less likely to plan on continuing their education." Iowa is one of the 15 most high-risk policy states where anti-LGBTQ legislation has been proposed. The 15 states include Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Dakota, Tennessee and Texas. According to the Human Rights Campaign's equality index, 2017 alone saw at least 100 anti-LGBTQ bills in 29 states, with many of them being specifically anti-trans.

"I guess I've always felt safe here, but I would also say I haven't always felt completely comfortable," Autumn Fields '19 said.

With dropout rates rates being higher, the transgender population's unemployment rate is twice the rate of the general population, according to the New York Civil Liberties Union. 25 percent of these youth who suffered verbal harassment, sexual or physical assault, or expulsion have been homeless. 50 percent of transgender youth who left school because of harassment were formerly or are currently homeless. Last year, City High's student sen-



ABOVE: Protesters at the Iowa City trans rights protest PHOTO BY ZOE BUTLER

ate created a gender-neutral bathroom with intentions to encourage a more diverse and accepting environment among students. However, administration and faculty have been checking in on students more frequently in the gender-neutral bathroom and questioning keeping the restroom, due to suspicion of vaping.

"I do know that a lot of students abuse [the gender-neutral bathroom], but a lot of students do that in every single other restroom. The only reason I feel like

it's being made into such a big deal is because students of multiple genders are doing it together. It's going on in every single bathroom, and the administration isn't targeting that as far as I'm aware of. They're only tar-

getting the gender-neutral bathroom," Tyne said. "I do know that a lot of trans and gender non-conforming students do use that bathroom for what it is meant for, and is a place that is needed here at school."

City High is just one of many schools beginning to take new steps towards educating students on gender identity.

"Just start to be equal to all students and staff and allowing all types of sexual education and safe sex practices. Allowing a positive, non-judgemental space," Kellicult said.

Schools throughout America are introducing new ways to educate students on the gender spectrum; teachers in a dozen elementary schools in Seattle have taught lessons on gender

and self identity that designed to fulfill new state standards on health education. These lessons require teachers to teach students as young as kindergarten-aged about the different ways people express gender, how to show respect for all people, and how to identify a trusted adult to ask questions about sexual orientation and gender identity.

"It's frustrating not being accepted by people in your country. It's very very demeaning there's no reason for it to happen," Fields said.

But government action has come in smaller doses throughout Trump's entire time in office. On February 22, 33 days after his inauguration, the Trump administration's policy concerning the trans community expanded in breadth when the justice and education departments withdrew a landmark guidance from 2016 explaining how trans students under Title IX. Less than two weeks later, on March 2, the justice department abandoned an injunction that it was going to impose on North Carolina for trying to pass the aforementioned anti-transgender piece of legislation.

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Many smaller policies affecting the LGBT community would follow in the coming months. However, none compare to the magnitude of the aforementioned “defining out” of the trans community from existence under the October proposal to limit gender to a strict binary which is biological. These actions are very much in line with heavily conservative ideas that were skeptical about the LGBT community, and with Trump’s support on the campaign trail of a North Carolina bill that wouldn’t allow transgender people to use the bathroom with which they identified. However, in recent years, there has been a trend towards more general acceptance of people based upon their sexuality, with opposition to gay marriage going from 57% to 35% since 2001, according to the Pew Research Center, but this has not yet occurred with the recent rise of the trans community.

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AUTUMN FIELDS ‘19

“It’s really important that trans people aren’t just noticed, but accepted. I think in this current political climate, trans people are being erased and that is just not fair to anyone,” Fields said.

In his time on the campaign trail, his rhetoric concerning the LGBTQ community resonated with his supporters, shown in a study conducted by Dr. Karen J. Blair, a professor at St. Francis Xavier University, found that Trump supporters were more

likely to be predisposed to having negative feelings towards a multitude of groups, including the LGBTQ community. Some of his supporters then spread an escalated version of this rhetoric in the form of spreading theories not supported by studies. These included ideas that people who identify as trans and non-binary were part of a “liberal conspiracy to undermine families,” that kids were being forced to be trans, and that the acceptance of trans Americans would lead to an increase of violence towards women. This was most popularly spread in the form of the idea that “if trans people are able to use the bathroom of the gender that they identify with, then people who aren’t trans would be able to go into bathrooms and assault people in those bathrooms, and police wouldn’t be able to stop them because they could claim to be trans so they couldn’t be kicked out.”

Such ideas have been spread by many conservative pundits regardless of their support of Trump. Some such pundits are Ben Shapiro, Steven Crowder, and Milo Yiannopoulos, the last two of whom are very committed Trump supporters and all of whom share his beliefs

on the trans community and have spread the aforementioned concerns. But the occurrences outlined in these theories haven’t happened, making fear around it believed to be unreasonable, barring enough empirical occurrences to justify these beliefs.

“It hurts; throughout history, trans people have been erased. I thought we were getting to a place where we were finally getting accepted in our society, but I guess not. Clearly, Trump doesn’t think that’s possible and has support from people who don’t think that’s possible,” Hannah* said.

Negative effects like these are isolated not just to the interpersonal level, but as well have had governmental actions that have contributed to actions that have adversely affected the trans community. The most recent example of this is a proposal to define gender as based upon the genitalia one is born with, which could potentially define trans people out of existence.

“The trans community has always stood up against what’s been thrown at us. We are proud of who we are. We have trans pride, Iowa City trans pride. We will continue moving forward and lifting up members of our trans community and the rest

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of the community as a whole. This is tough, but just one of many things we’ve had to encounter and it will never erase us,” Joey* said.

ABOVE: Protesters at the Iowa City trans rights protest PHOTO BY ZOE BUTLER



ABOVE: Autumn Fields ‘19 (left) at Iowa city trans rights protest PHOTO BY ZOE BUTLER



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ABOVE: A group including Xeniphilius Tyne ‘19 and Autumn Fields ‘20 at the Iowa City trans rights peotest PHOTO BY ZOE BUTLER