



TO BE TRANS

OUT OF THE CLOSET, INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

You consider yourself an ally. You watch Orange is the New Black, you've attended a pride festival, and you try your best not to make assumptions about anyone's sexuality or gender. You think you support the LGBTQ+ community, but when was the last time you involved yourself on a deeper level as an ally?

When was the last time you asked someone what pronoun they identify as? The last time you went to a GSA meeting? The last time you took the time to listen to someone's transitioning story, to get to know them on a more personal level than just acknowledging them in the hallways between class periods? The last time you stood up for them when they were bullied or harassed?

Only when we dedicate ourselves to a high level of respect for every single one of our peers do we truly become allies. To be an ally means more than not discriminating; It means using someone's preferred pronouns. It means letting someone make their own decisions without questioning or second-guessing their every move. It means respecting each other's identities as we respect our own. It means defending the basic rights of a human being.

This respect comes through understanding, and this understanding is based on the problems and the issues that individuals of the transgender community face. Many are discriminated against for being transgender instead of identifying with the sex they were born into.

Felix Mitton, '21, began reconsidering their gender since the sixth grade, but started to transition during freshman year. At the time, Mitton attended Pomona, where they received retroaction for their identity and for wanting to transition.

"I'd get the off-hand comments like 'there's only two genders' and one time somebody asked 'Are you two genders or two people?' and I was like 'What..?' I get little comments like that all the time," Mitton said.

Mitton's interactions with members of the transgender community who have been harassed for their gender identity demonstrate the damage these experiences inflict on students. When a student of young age is harassed and bullied for differences in their gender identification, the effects are scarring, making many feel as though there is something wrong with them or that they don't belong.

"I remember talking with [victims] afterwards; it was crushing for them," Mitton said. "It was awful because coming out is such a hard thing for someone to be able to do and get out, so when somebody says the smallest thing, it becomes really damaging...when somebody says something or does something it takes you a step down again and you have to try to climb back up," Mitton said.

When parents are reluctant to accept the changes their children need, the toll is even greater. Growing up in a strict or deeply religious household often exacerbates the feelings of helplessness for trans teens. Especially in adolescence, a time when support is vital, not being able to fully express oneself at home can be difficult. A lack of support can lead to staying closeted, experiencing severe depression, or even suicide.

When Mitton came out to their parents, they received a very positive reaction from their mom. However, confronting their dad about their gender led to a more difficult discussion and less affirmation.

"On my dad's side, it was a little bit different; He outright told me he wasn't willing to use 'they-them' pronouns because they were grammatically incorrect," Mitton said.

For many parents, time is needed to adjust to the usage of different pronouns. This was the case for Jayden Nisely, '21 and his parents after he came out.

"It took [them] a little over a year to get my pronouns correct," Nisely said.

Some students even have to conform to parent-created stereotypes, such as the belief that 'if you're going to be a boy now, you should learn how to throw and catch.' This creates problems at home, making these teens even more uncomfortable with their identities.

Just like other students, some trans students play sports. Sometimes, identifying with one's team can pose an obstacle for trans athletes. Take, for example, Nisely, who plays basketball. Although CHSAA "recognizes the right of transgender student-athletes to participate in interscholastic activities free from unlawful discrimination", there are certain hurdles these athletes have to face in playing sports.

Nisely's mom made the decision regarding which basketball team he would play on for him, instead of letting him choose where he would want to be.

"It kind of makes me upset, a boy playing on the girl's team," Nisely said.

These kinds of struggles go beyond the playing field, extending to the locker room and bathrooms as well. Movements such as #wejustneedtopee have highlighted the difficulties of those who identify differently than their assigned gender in doing something so fundamentally human. Simple things like having to go to the bathroom have created complicated problems for transgender or non-binary people. The discrimination that they must face is unbearable and cruel, of which no human

being should be subjected to.

Dysphoria, misgendering and the pace at which transitions occur are amongst the most common day-to-day obstacles for trans students; dysphoria being the general state of unease or dissatisfaction with life.

"The obstacle is feeling uncomfortable in your own skin—feeling like despite the fact that you are in your body, it's the wrong body for you to be in," an anonymous student said.

Even though it is difficult to make a full transition while in high school, there are many different methods used to combat such feelings, binding and hormone therapy being some of the most common.

But there is light at the end of this tunnel; the trans community is

"[MY DAD] OUTRIGHT TOLD ME HE WASN'T WILLING TO USE 'THEY-THEM' PRONOUNS BECAUSE THEY WERE GRAMMATICALLY INCORRECT." - FELIX MITTON



THE BEST AND WORST STATES FOR TRANS EQUALITY

3. WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON'S TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IS SUPPORTED BOTH LEGALLY AND THROUGH THE STATE'S NETWORK OF NONPROFITS.

1. CALIFORNIA

PROTECTED BY STATEWIDE NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS, CALIFORNIA'S TRANS POPULATION HAS GOOD ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE: OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF THE STATE'S HEALTH-CARE FACILITIES DON'T DISCRIMINATE BASED ON GENDER IDENTITY

2. VERMONT

VERMONT HAS STATE-WIDE LAWS BANNING TRANS DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS, HOUSING, AND PUBLIC SPACES.

48. NORTH CAROLINA

NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE LEGISLATURE PASSED AND REPEALED THE "BATHROOM LAW", FORCING TRANS PEOPLE TO USE THE BATHROOM OF THE SEX ON THEIR BIRTH CERTIFICATE

49. TEXAS

IN STATES LIKE TEXAS, WHICH DOESN'T HAVE LGBT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS, TRANS PEOPLE HAVE OFTEN SOUGHT PROTECTION UNDER FEDERAL LAW. TEXAS LACKS MOST BASIC LEGAL RIGHTS FOR TRANS AMERICANS

50. MISSISSIPPI

THE STATE IS STILL ACTIVELY PUTTING ANTI-LGBT LAWS ON THE BOOKS — JUST LAST YEAR, THE GOVERNOR SIGNED INTO LAW A "RELIGIOUS FREEDOM" BILL THAT MANY SEE AS LEGALIZING DISCRIMINATION

growing and developing, and it is leaving a lasting, positive effect on our school.

"At Standley Lake, [the community] seems very friendly; it seems like a positive environment," Mitton said.

Trans teens face unique challenges, many of which can only be combated by widespread acceptance and support from the community. Despite many changes, we live in a world where different hasn't become the new normal quite yet. But being different is what makes Standley Lake and society abroad a more diverse and friendly place. The more diverse a community, the more welcoming it can be to new kinds of groups. This community has faced more than anyone deserves, and because of this, they have advice to give to all who might face the same backlash they did.

"What they want is a reaction, and if you literally don't do anything, then they just get bored and stop. Just stop giving them reactions, their opinions don't have weight on you," Mitton says.

This community is not new, but its growth is. The brave few who stood first for the trans community have allowed more individuals to

come out, fostering positivity as more and more trans people recognize themselves for who they are.

If the Standley Lake community wants to be an ally to the trans community, we must recognize the the issues that matters to trans teens and help by understanding and attempting to solve the problems these students encounter. Even actions as simple as correcting oneself when using the wrong pronoun matter.

"THE OBSTACLE IS FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN SKIN—FEELING LIKE DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU ARE IN YOUR BODY, IT'S THE WRONG BODY FOR YOU TO BE IN."

We can recognize someone's current gender and use someone's preferred name to make transitioning easier. In doing this, not only do we respect the individual, but we also give their community the respect and inclusion they deserve; the trans community is not a separate unit, rather, as much a part of Standley Lake as any other group or person.

As another said, "I know the saying is really generic, but it does get better. If you don't let the little things get to you, and I know it may be hard, then eventually you can overcome these things. You will get older, you will

change just as everybody else does."

You are who you want to be. You are more than the box society may attempt to confine you to. And you are welcome here.

Sejal Goud | Jasmine James | Jaden Keodonexay | Jackson Kessel | Aron Roush | Aimee Yan

WHY TRANS PEOPLE NEED MORE VISIBILITY

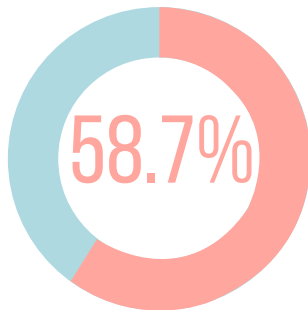


80% OF TRANSGENDER STUDENTS HAVE FELT UNSAFE IN SCHOOL BECAUSE OF THEIR GENDER

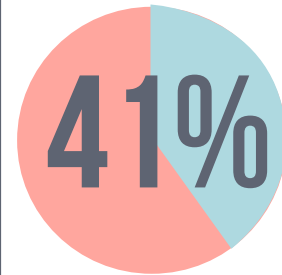
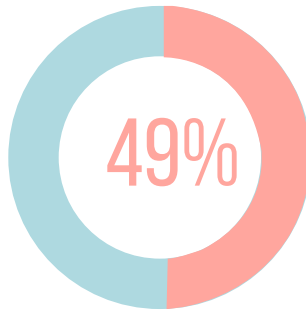


OF TRANS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RAPED OR ASSAULTED BY A ROMANTIC PARTNER

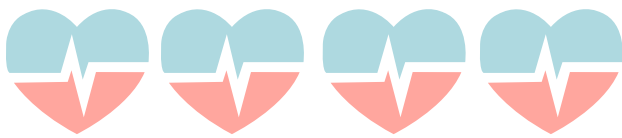
OF GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED VERBAL HARASSMENT IN THE PAST YEAR, COMPARED TO 29% OF PEERS



OF TRANS PEOPLE REPORTED PHYSICAL ABUSE IN A 2007 SURVEY



OF TRANS PEOPLE HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE



1 IN 4 INCARCERATED TRANSGENDER WOMEN REPORTED BEING DENIED HEALTHCARE SERVICES WHILE BEHIND BARS

98% OF DOCTORS WERE NEVER TAUGHT ABOUT TRANSGENDER HEALTH IN MEDICAL SCHOOL



1 IN 8

HAVE BEEN EVICTED DUE TO BEING TRANS

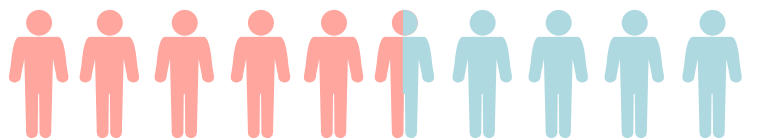


1 IN 5

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES



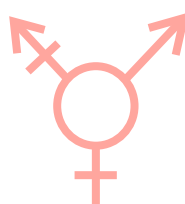
50% OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE REPORT THAT THEY FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE SEEKING POLICE ASSISTANCE



54% OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE HAVE DEPRESSION, WHICH IS 5X AS MUCH AS THE GENERAL POPULATION

700,000 THE NUMBER OF ESTIMATED PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS TRANSGENDER IN THE U.S

15,500 THE NUMBER OF TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS IN THE MILITARY



GENDER DYSPHORIA: CONFLICT BETWEEN A PERSON'S PHYSICAL OR ASSIGNED GENDER AND THE GENDER WITH WHICH HE/SHE/THEY IDENTIFY.