



opening the door to the inclusion of transgender people

THE NINE KEYS TO MAKING LESBIAN, GAY,
BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATIONS
FULLY TRANSGENDER-INCLUSIVE

by Lisa Mottet
and Justin Tanis

NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE POLICY INSTITUTE
NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY

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for
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National Gay and Lesbian
Task Force



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The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute

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introduction

Thank you for picking up this guide and for your desire to discover new ways to help your lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organization become a more inclusive place for transgender people. It is exciting to see the ways in which our movement continues to grow and challenge ourselves to be more inclusive and more effective as we serve our communities.

In this guide, you will find practical ideas for how LGBT organizations can take concrete steps to provide a more welcoming environment for transgender people. We'll address directly the challenges and opportunities that present themselves in this process.

This resource is specifically written for LGBT groups and organizations that want to be more inclusive of transgender people. This will mean various things to different kinds of groups—from welcoming more transgender people on your soccer team to passing transgender-inclusive legislation to running transgender-specific programs at your community center. We encourage you to take the ideas in this guide and think of ways in which you can apply them to your unique organization and mission.

LGBT organizations are made up of a wide range of people, including family, friends, and allies. Our volunteers, staffs and constituencies identify as lesbian, bisexual, straight, gay, transgender, non-transgender, queer and more. When we refer to LGBT organizations in this guide, it is our intention to speak to this diverse group of people with the goal of helping our community become increasingly inclusive.

Other organizations that are not LGBT-specific in their focus may also find this guide helpful. Please feel free to translate the information from the LGBT experience to your own in ways that are useful to you.

TRANSGENDER INCLUSION

Transgender people have been a part of the LGBT movement from its beginnings. As people began to see their sexual orientation as a healthy part of their identity, and found the prejudice they faced oppressive, they found common cause with those who expressed their gender differently than the majority of society. Together, they began the work that we continue—striving to create a world where we are free to be ourselves and where our identities are never a justification for discrimination and violence.

Those who oppose our rights see LGBT people as a common community. We are targeted

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for stigmatization and violence together as a group because we break stereotypes. Our common vulnerabilities may have brought us together, but the LGBT community works together because we are working towards a common purpose, for the freedom to be who we are and the right to live with dignity and justice.

When we talk about transgender-inclusion in this guide, it is with the understanding that transgender people are inherently a part of the LGBT community and have been from the beginning. In some ways, the term “transgender-inclusion” is not perfect; it could be taken to mean that transgender people aren’t inherently a part of something called the LGB(T) movement and that instead, transgender people have been added to the LGB movement. We use this term, despite this perceived limitation, because we believe it is the best term to describe the process of integration of transgender people throughout one’s LGBT organization and it is the term that our movement has been using for over a decade.

We also realize that the term “LGBT” sometimes glosses over the gap that exists between the realities of our community organizations (that they are not always inclusive) and the diverse and vast world of LGBT people. We know that our organizations want to accurately reflect and meaningfully serve LGBT people. Working together can be challenging and we need to be intentional in order to create a truly diverse and vibrant community.

As Suzanne Pharr has noted in her ground-breaking book, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*, homophobia is driven by a rigid gender code. A long-time feminist, Pharr observed that women who break out of constricting gender roles and take leadership in their communities are often branded as “lesbian” to make them stop pushing for change – whether that change means better schools for their children, clean-up of a toxic waste dump, or marriage equality. Similarly, men who visibly challenge gender conformity—by confronting male violence, expressing emotion, or embracing their artistic or “feminine” sides—are punished both socially and in the world of work. Simply, gender bias and homophobia are inextricably entwined.

Gay, lesbian and bisexual people have often constituted a significant share of our society’s gender outlaws, standing side by side on the gender non-conforming continuum with our transgender peers and bearing the consequences of not matching the gender stereotypes of straight society. Accordingly, bias against gender non-conformity threatens access to employment and other key societal institutions for all of us and exposes us to violence and prejudice. While we may not all be in the exact same boat, we are certainly all in the same water.

The divisive and disappointing federal legislative battle around the removal of gender identity/expression protections from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act in 2007 should not confuse any of us. There is no secure equality for LGB people without protections for gender bias. On a parallel course, there is no true community and no authentic expression of queer life or culture without transgender people. Often the most stigmatized people in

our ranks, gender non-conforming people have consistently led the charge for change in our movement and the society at large. We marginalize them/us at our own peril.

In different times and in different places, the LGBT community has varied between close-knit cohesion and an uneasy alliance between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender activists. We have been divided along lines of gender, gender identity/expression, race, class, abilities and more. But we believe that at the heart of the LGBT movement is a passion for inclusion and that at our best, and most effective, the LGBT community strives to open our doors to all who want to work together with people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions.

We hope this book provides you with the concrete tools you need to fully realize your vision for a fully transgender-inclusive organization. There is so much work to do and so many challenges facing our movement. We must draw on the vast talents and strengths that our brilliant, diverse communities have to offer to achieve our goal of full equality.

OUR PERSPECTIVES

The authors of this manual bring a variety of view points to our writing. One of us is transgender and the other is a long-time ally. We have both had significant others who are transgender people. Both of us have spent our careers working within the LGBT movement, which significantly informs our perspective. We have also been active in a number of LGBT community organizations as participants, taking part in book clubs, political advocacy organizations, sports teams and other groups.

We have been both leaders and members of the very kinds of organizations that we hope will benefit from this manual. In some cases, we've been very successful in bringing about the changes that we outline here. At other times, we've been met with resistance and have had the opportunity to learn how difficult this work can be.

Ultimately, we believe in LGBT communities—we believe in our drive for inclusiveness and in the strength of our vision. We have been proud to be a part of this movement and hope that this guide lends some ideas and experience that will help us move forward together into an even better future.

opening the door to a transgender-inclusive movement

The question before us now is not whether transgender people are part of our movement, but rather how to build organizations in which the participation of transgender people is affirming for both them and for the groups to which they belong. The purpose of this guide is to consider how we can strengthen that partnership so that the political and social organizations that we have worked so hard to build can truly be as diverse, effective and inclusive as we want them to be.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

One of the most significant challenges LGBT organizations face is that transgender (and bisexual) labels have often been added in name (the addition of the “B” and “T” to LGBT) without any authentic effort to integrate transgender and bisexual people and experiences into the organization. While often well-intentioned, changes in name only render the impact of adding those letters almost meaningless, as transgender people have learned the hard way. Because the addition of the “T” only sometimes translates into concrete programs or even a genuine welcome, trans people may view the “T” with suspicion or simply ignore it altogether.

Transgender people have also encountered overt hostility in some LGBT organizations. Some people—regardless of their sexual orientation—are uncomfortable with transgender people because of the transphobia that they have learned from the larger society. Sometimes lesbian and gay people recycle the homophobia they have heard and use it against transgender people, saying things like, “that’s not natural,” or “it’s just a phase.” Not intending to be hostile, some LGB people have pointed out the real differences between being LGB and T, and the different ways in which people experience discrimination, and have said that their organization should treat these issues differently. Whatever the reasoning, the result is that transgender people have learned, through painful experience, that lesbian, gay and bisexual spaces are not always welcoming, safe environments for them. Using prejudice to exclude others based on their identity weakens our movement and, as leaders, we must take whatever steps we can to counteract it.

Sometimes, gay, lesbian and bisexual people genuinely want to welcome transgender people

but don't know how. We may inadvertently include people in a way that demonstrates ignorance of the issues of gender identity/expression. For example, we might write a newsletter article on "LGBT marriage issues," failing to recognize that marriage rights for transgender people pose a different set of questions than same-sex marriage rights for non-transgender people. Or we might ask people if they are gay, lesbian, bisexual *or* transgender, rather than seeing that a person can be lesbian, gay, or bisexual *and* transgender.

Bisexual Inclusion

The participation of bisexual people in our movement is in many ways a parallel experience to the one addressed in this guide. While that is beyond the scope of what we are covering here, we believe that it is also vital to our movement and encourage you to consult additional resources, including BiNet, at <http://www.binetusa.org/>; the Task Force's resources on bisexuality, at <http://thetaskforce.org/issues/bisexuality>; and the Bisexual Resource Center's extensive resource list at <http://www.biresource.org/resources/>

LOOKING AT OUR MISSIONS

It is important that our organizations look carefully at our mission statements and make a decision about the inclusion of transgender people. While we would advocate that LGBT organizations are strongest when they are fully inclusive, you will have to make your own choices.

It is not acceptable, however, to just add the "T" to the mission or name of an organization out of perceived pressure to conform to a movement standard and then proceed to ignore transgender people. It is more honest to decide that transgender people are not part of your organization's mission and to say so than it is to try to *appear* inclusive but not *be* inclusive. If you feel your organization might fall into that category, you cannot change the past, but you certainly can change the future of your organization to fully live up to your name and desire for inclusion.

Mission statements of organizations that are fully inclusive of LGBT people should include gender identity/expression as well as sexual orientation. If transgender people are part of our mission, then we should do everything we can to fulfill the mission of our organization, including providing an equal place at the table for transgender people.

Transgender people can bring incredible gifts to our organizations to help us achieve the goals that we have as a community. Transgender people are often resilient, creative and strong. They have survived the prejudices thrown at them by family, friends and an all-too-often hostile world. They also seek what all of us seek in our LGBT organizations—safe and affirming places in which to be ourselves. By opening our programs—and our hearts and minds—to transgender people, we help to achieve the purpose that brought all of us together in the first place.

Below are some current mission statements from LGBT organizations. Note that they explicitly include language about gender identity/expression and/or clearly spell out "les-

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bian, gay, bisexual and transgender.” Although not all of these organizations’ names are inclusive, reflecting when they were founded, their statements have been updated to clearly articulate a transgender-inclusive mission.

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates educates and empowers organizations, human resource professionals, employee resource groups and individual employees through programs and services that result in equal policies, opportunities, practices and benefits in the workplace regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression or characteristics.

The ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives honors the past, celebrates the present, and enriches the future of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. We foster

Definitions

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transsexuals, cross-dressers, androgynous people, genderqueers, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.”

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man (see also “FTM”).

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (see also “MTF”).

Gender Identity: An individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

Transsexual: A term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. Often transsexual people alter or wish to alter their bodies through hormones or surgery in order to make it match their gender identity.

Cross-dresser: A term for people who dress in clothing

traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender.

Transvestite: A term for a cross-dresser that is considered derogatory by many.

Queer: A term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and, often also transgender, people. Some use queer as an alternative to “gay” in an effort to be more inclusive, since the term does not convey a sense of gender. Depending on the user, the term has either a derogatory or an affirming connotation, as many have sought to reclaim the term that was once widely used in a negative way.

Genderqueer: A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Gender Non-conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Bi-gendered: One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there.

Two-Spirit: A contemporary term that references historical multiple-gender traditions in many First Nations cultures. Many Native/First Nations people who are lesbian, gay, bisex-

acceptance of sexual and gender diversity by supporting education and research about our heritage and experience worldwide. ONE is dedicated to collecting, preserving, documenting, studying, and communicating our history, our challenges, and our aspirations.

PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

ual, transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments and responsibilities to one's community.

FTM: A person who transitions from "female-to-male," meaning a person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies and lives as a male. Also known as a "transgender man."

MTF: A person who transitions from "male-to-female," meaning a person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies and lives as a female. Also known as a "transgender woman."

Passing: A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender with which they self-identify. For example, a transgender man (born female) who most people see as a man.

Sex Reassignment Surgery: Surgical procedures that change one's body to make it conform to a person's gender identity. This may include "top surgery" (breast augmentation or removal) or "bottom surgery" (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. "Sex change surgery" is considered a derogatory term by many.

Sexual Orientation: A term describing a person's attraction to members of the same sex or different sex. Usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual.

Transition: The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. Transitioning may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, or changing legal documents (e.g. driver's license, Social Security record, birth certificate) to reflect their new gender.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a "standard" male or female.

Drag Queen: generally used to accurately refer to men who dress as women (often celebrity women) for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. It is also used as slang, sometimes in a derogatory manner, to refer to all transgender women.

Drag King: used to refer to women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

Most of these definitions are adapted from Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People, a joint publication of The Task Force and the National Coalition for the Homeless. You can find the full guide at http://thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/trans_homeless. The definition of "two-spirit" is from the Task Force's First Nations/Indigenous/Two-Spirit Collective.

THE JOURNEY TO A TRANS-INCLUSIVE LGBT ORGANIZATION

Although the path of each LGBT organization towards full trans-inclusion is different, there are some common stages. Different organizations spend different amounts of time in each stage and may experience these in a different order. This not always a linear process but we hope to show the ways in which organizations change over time as they become more inclusive. It is helpful to examine these different stages to see that LGBT organizations do face similar challenges to trans-inclusion and learn how other organizations have moved through the process of becoming fully transgender-inclusive.

Stage One: Not on the radar

Organizations in this stage have not yet recognized that they have an exclusionary posture and practice regarding transgender people. They typically don't have a "T" in their name and have not developed their mission statements to involve, serve or celebrate transgender people. They have no out transgender people on their staff or board; they make no attempt to serve trans people or make their facilities or events trans-affirming or -accessible. There are no policies to address transphobia or harassment, so jokes about gender non-conforming people, if they occur, go unchallenged. The organization makes no alliances with organizations that serve or advocate for the rights of trans people.

Stage Two: Not in the mission, but trans people are welcome

Leaders and members of these organizations may be personally welcoming of transgender people, but the organization itself still has a mission that only mentions sexual orientation or LGB people. People running these organizations may say they are not sure how to be trans-inclusive, since they may believe they don't know any transgender people. They may believe that there is no need to be trans-inclusive because they are not aware whether an active transgender community even exists in the area. In this stage, individuals in the organization or on the board may challenge anti-transgender attitudes, but there is no organizational commitment to addressing this systematically, and no larger trans-affirming policy work.

Stage Three: A trans-inclusive mission and possibly the beginnings of trans-inclusive programming and/or advocacy

An organization in this stage has either incorporated transgender people in their mission or they were founded with a trans-inclusive mission originally. However, their trans-inclusion may be mostly on paper. In many ways, the "ethic" of the LGBT movement has evolved so

that there is now an expectation that groups have a “T” in their name, and this may have been the motivation for developing a trans-inclusive mission. Yet, the actual activities of the organization may not have caught up to the change in mission, leaving transgender people to have negative or mixed experiences with staff or at events.

An organization in this stage may also be doing some things to realize their mission, such as ensuring that educational events/programs include transgender people as speakers, posting event notices on transgender list serves, and using the term LGBT instead of LGB. But while transgender people are invited to participate, there is no effort to recruit trans people into leadership positions.

Gay City Health Project

Gay City Health Project was founded in Seattle in 1995, growing out of the Gay Men’s AIDS Prevention Task Force which focused on AIDS prevention for gay men. Over the years, the organization has become more trans-inclusive. In 2003, the organization printed the fully-inclusive guide, **ACTION: a handy STD guide for gay, bi & trans men**. The language used in the title of the printed (and online guide) and throughout is a model for trans-inclusive STD educational materials. “Gay, bi and trans men” has become Gay City’s standard way of describing their target audience. Gay City doesn’t take shortcuts in titles of their events either; for example, in a forum on crystal meth, the fully inclusive phrasing is used in its entirety: **“Tweaked: A Community Forum for gay, bi and trans men about the Highs and Lows of Crystal Meth.”** For more information on Gay City Health Project, visit www.gaycity.org.



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Stage Four: The organization's work is trans-inclusive and there is greater trans involvement throughout the organization

Organizations in this stage have missions that are trans-inclusive and they take this seriously. The work of the organization reflects the needs of LGB and T people most of the time, and there are transgender people at most levels of the organization, from volunteers to board members. In terms of its policy work, organizations at stage four commit to policy work that is fully inclusive of transgender rights and concerns.

This stage includes organizations that sometimes do things that are not fully trans-inclusive. Their name may not be trans-inclusive, they may not have fixed all of the physical space issues that block trans people from fully participating, or there are some people affiliated with the organization who are not fully on board with trans-inclusion or don't know how to be.

Nonetheless, there is an institution-wide commitment to understanding and addressing the needs of transgender people. Anti-trans jokes and attitudes are confronted and challenged. Transgender people feel positive accessing services and coming to events. Trans people on staff have access to the same advancement opportunities as their LGB peers.

Stage Five: The fully-inclusive organization that prioritizes transgender work

The fully transgender-inclusive organization has trans people involved at all levels and the activities of the organization always reflect the needs of transgender people as well as LGB people. Safe, accessible bathrooms are the norm. Organizations at this stage recognize that there are some activities that need to be done specifically to meet the needs of trans people and it is an organizational priority to get these things done. For example, a political advocacy organization at this stage would be actively working on ensuring that transgender people can get driver's licenses and other documents that reflect the gender they live as, in addition to the other legislative priorities of the organization (such as relationship recognition bills).

At a stage five organization, there is a recognition and true culture of celebration around the vibrant legacy of transgender leadership in the LGBT movement. Transgender leadership is seen as bringing essential talents and perspectives to any effort undertaken.

Voices from the Movement: Partnering to Meet the Needs of Transgender People

Contributed by Masen Davis, Executive Director, Transgender Law Center

After a 2006 survey found that transgender adults face rampant under- and unemployment in the City of San Francisco, the San Francisco LGBT Community Center expanded its Economic Development Program to offer transgender-specific workforce development programs. The Center partnered with the Transgender Law Center and Jewish Vocational Services to create the Transgender Economic Empowerment Initiative (TEEI), launched a series of annual transgender job fairs, and began educating employers about the benefits of hiring members of the transgender community.

The Center's 2007 Transgender Job Fair drew 98 job seekers and 20 employers, including Kimpton Hotels, Macy's West and the City of San Francisco. "Employers recognize that achieving diversity in the workplace is absolutely critical to their ability to access new markets and compete in today's ultra-competitive environment. And although the transgender marketplace is rapidly expanding, the transgender community remains an under-represented workforce that for employers is incredibly difficult to access," notes Ken Stram, the Center's Director of Economic Development. Ninety-three percent (93%) of participating employers reported that they met qualified candidates at the fair.

"The job fairs fit perfectly into the Center's mission," notes Stram. Transgender people face significant employment discrimination—85% of the job seekers who attended the Center's

2007 job fair reported at least one experience with workplace discrimination. For this reason, Stram asserts, "transgender job seekers are more likely to struggle with job interviews—even in liberal-minded San Francisco. Barriers develop; as a result transgender job seekers are unable to find employment and financial stability, and employers find it difficult to integrate the transgender workforce into the workplace despite their best intentions. Transgender job fairs make sense because they bring job applicants and employers together in a safe environment, establishing a direct link and dialogue between transgender job seekers and transgender-friendly employers."



Ken Stram, San Francisco LGBT Community Center's Director of Economic Development

By creating this program, the Center demonstrated in a very concrete way its commitment to transgender-inclusion and wellness.

keys to transgender inclusion

In the sections that follow, we will outline nine concrete principles that are key to full transgender inclusion in your organization. In our experience, we have found that when organizations pay attention to these particular areas, they have significantly greater success bringing transgender people fully into the life of the group.

Each of these principles can be seen as a key that helps unlock doors to the participation of transgender people. They are not listed in order of importance—we believe that organizations need to address all of these areas in the course of their work. However, some organizations may already be doing well in some areas. The individual circumstances of your community and the history of your work with transgender people may make it necessary to address some areas before others. Use this information in whatever way you believe will be the most effective in opening doors to increased transgender participation.

Each section includes information about necessary steps and also the reasons why we feel they are important. There are questions for reflection on each key, to help you consider where your organization is currently, and action ideas to get you started thinking about how to take next steps to implement that key. Our goal has been to make this information as practical as possible, based on our real-life experiences in LGBT non-profits, while leaving it as flexible as we can so that you can insert your ideas and the needs of your particular circumstances.

In addition to the concrete ideas that are provided with each key, we have outlined, starting on page 60, some action ideas for different kinds of LGBT groups to use in implementing these keys. We have highlighted some of the areas that you may want to consider based on the type of organization or programming you have. These are designed to help get you started in considering additional ways to adapt this material to your specific situation.

KEY #1 WORK TOWARD FULL INTEGRATION AT EVERY ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

The first key to becoming a transgender-inclusive organization is to have transgender people integrated throughout the organization. A fully inclusive organization brings transgender leaders onto the board, recruits volunteers, identifies staff, serves clients, attracts members, and engages participants in the organization's events, etc.

Integration at every level is critical to succeeding as a trans-inclusive organization. If transgender people are not in the decision-making process as staff or board members, then the organization is likely to be missing the insights of the transgender community in setting its agenda. If an organization claims to serve all LGBT people, but transgender people are not among its members, clients, or attendees, then the organization is failing in its expressed mission.

It is especially important to bring transgender people into the decision-making bodies of the organization. Whether a group is writing a strategic plan, revising its mission, setting legislative priorities, deciding which medical services to provide, or choosing the speakers for an event, with transgender voices at the table, the organization will likely be better able to make decisions that reflect the needs of the entire LGBT community. Additionally, visible transgender leadership tends to attract transgender members and participants much more effectively than "outreach" methods driven by non-trans people.

One common pitfall that LGBT organizations have fallen into is to rely on the leadership of one transgender person (or a select few) or to use the one person as a liaison to the rest of the transgender community. For example, an LGBT political organization may always ask the "lead" transgender person about the political priorities of the transgender community. Or, this may be an LGBT faith organization that tries to reach out to transgender people in the community by sending an email to the "lead" transgender person to advertise the faith organization's events. While well-intentioned, this is ineffective and can undercut your attempts to make the organization fully inclusive.

The truth is that no one transgender person can represent or access the entire transgender community. First, transgender people have many similar but also many different experiences from each other, and going to that one person, even if they are a "leader," means that only one leader's ideas are being considered. Second, all transgender people may not view this person as their leader. As happens in all communities, sometimes self-appointed leaders emerge who are actually not viewed favorably by the larger community. Other leaders may only represent and have access to one segment of the transgender community. Thus, trying to reach the transgender community by going through a single leader will not be fruitful.

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Instead, an organization that integrates transgender people at every level will be better able to consider the full range of transgender perspectives and issues. An organization that is fully integrated will not need to seek outside counsel on how to conduct their work in a trans-inclusive way.

Another benefit for the transgender and LGBT community to having transgender people involved at all levels of an organization is to build more leaders. The transgender community may have a high percentage of people just coming out or just becoming involved in LGBT organizations. Some people may not have the experience needed to be a part of decision-making processes of LGBT organizations immediately. Thus, having transgender people involved and welcome at all levels helps build a pool of potential new leaders for the community and the organization. The transgender event attendee may ultimately become an event volunteer, later become a volunteer coordinator, eventually direct the event committee, then later join the board of the organization.

In conclusion, as our organizations increase transgender involvement in all the levels, from volunteer to board members, our capacity to develop LGBT organizations that are genuinely representative of and accountable to the transgender community increases enormously. And, in the process, not only do we build stronger organizations, but we also build stronger LGBT communities.

Reflections

- What parts of your organization currently involve transgender people? Why have transgender participants felt welcome to be involved in this way? What motivates them to participate?
- Have transgender people started to become involved with your organization, and then decided against it? If so, do you know why they left?
- Does your organization rely on one transgender leader or a small set of leaders for advice or involvement? Is this strategy creating the full integration you seek? Whom else might you involve?
- Are transgender people among your clients/members/attendees? Why or why not? Do you feel that the current level of involvement of trans people taps into the full strength and diversity of your transgender community?
- Are transgender people part of your decision-making bodies? How has this shaped the decisions you have made? Are there decisions that would have been made differently if there were or were not transgender people there?

keys to transgender inclusion

Action Ideas

- Do an inventory or assessment of transgender participation at all levels of your organization. Identify areas in which there should be more transgender involvement.
- If you have transgender people at the “lower” levels of your organization but not in the decision-making bodies, consider recruiting and training them for higher levels of involvement.
- If your organization has primarily relied on one transgender person to give information or organize programs, consider starting a “transgender advisory board” or “transgender services committee” (whichever is more appropriate for your work) to involve more transgender people in your organization’s work. This will allow you to continue to include that person’s voice while also expanding the number of trans voices giving input to the organization.

Voices from the Movement: Incorporating Trans People from Clients to the Board

Contributed by Yoseño V. Lewis, Board of Directors, Tenderloin Health

In 1992, I was recruited to join the Board of the Tenderloin AIDS Resource Center (TARC) in San Francisco, CA. Though I was not the only trans person on the Board, in the next year I became the first trans person who was an officer of the Board, and in 1994 I became the first trans person who was Board Chair (holding this position for five years). This milestone was quite significant, as it occurred at the forefront of the second wave of the modern “Transgender Revolution” (the first being the Compton Cafeteria Riots and Stonewall). There were certainly already clients who were transgender and some staff who identified as trans, but this was the first time (to my knowledge) that a major AIDS organization had been deliberate in its inclusion of trans people at all levels of the agency.

In the early 1990’s, TARC developed a strategic plan which placed great focus on attending to the needs of transgender people, who were often ignored by other AIDS agencies. There was some concern that funding might be lost, that the organization would not be taken as seriously by other organizations as well as regulatory agencies, and that some non-transgender clients might not be comfortable. All of those concerns were addressed through education and acclimation with clients, staff, sister agencies and funders to ensure that the organiza-

tion would continue to thrive as a provider and advocate for those considered “marginalized populations.” The upshot was that TARC re-committed itself to being a leader in the provision of services to transgender people, no matter their surgical/hormonal status.

Today TARC has been re-named Tenderloin Health through its merger with Continuum Day Health Services. Tenderloin Health remains a key factor in the dissemination of appropriate, respectful services to transgender people without regard to class, race, gender, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, sexual orientation, substance use, immigration status, or housing status. I remain on the Board of Directors and, after 15 years, continue to carry a tremendous amount of pride in an organization which recognizes and celebrates people like me.



Yoseño V. Lewis

KEY #2 RECRUIT A BROAD RANGE OF TRANS PEOPLE

It is important to recognize that the transgender community is as multifaceted and diverse as any other, including people of all races, ages, classes, ethnicities, abilities, and sexual orientations. As you attempt to increase transgender participation in your organization, it is critical to think in terms of the great range of experiences in the community.

It is very important that you recognize the diversity within the transgender community. Remember that there are female-to-male and male-to-female transgender people. There are people in the community who do not identify as either gender, people who consider themselves both male and female, and people who live part of the time in one gender and part in another. While much of society thinks only of transsexual women when thinking of transgender people, the savvy trans-inclusive organization knows better.

Because transgender people come from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, all classes, nationalities, levels of education, religions, and abilities, it is important to be as diverse in your outreach to transgender people as you are in your work to include people of various backgrounds and characteristics.

Recognize that the work of full integration is never done. In order to include transgender people in your programming, you will need to continually and deliberately work at recruiting transgender people to participate. Reaching out to one segment of the transgender community should not be interpreted as a sign that you have now reached the entire “trans community.” In addition, experienced community organizers realize that people come and go in their level of involvement with organizations, so it is important to continually be reaching new people even as we seek to retain and develop those who have been with us for a while. This means our outreach efforts must be ongoing.

Not having any transgender people involved in your organization should never be interpreted as meaning that transgender people are disinterested or don’t need the services you are providing. More likely, it means that you have more work to do to locate, engage and serve transgender people.

Finding Transgender People

Many organizations find it initially difficult to know where to start in finding transgender people. There are few gathering places or publications that cater exclusively to the transgender community. But transgender people are present in the community and you can find them.

One place to start is to do an internet search of your city, town or state and the word

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“transgender.” You will hopefully find the names of support groups, social networks and political organizations. Personal websites, blogs and other information will also come up.

You can begin to learn about the community by attending public events that transgender groups organize. Obviously, you will not want to drop in unannounced to a support group meeting but you can certainly attend a fundraiser or a dance. Many social and support group meetings are closed to non-transgender people but you can meet with the group’s leader(s) to discuss how best to get information to participants, explore co-sponsoring events and generally working together. Participating in a transgender-specific group may be some people’s only involvement in the LGBT movement; this is your opportunity to invite them to explore the community more fully.

Some social/support groups hold educational programs and it might be appropriate to see if you might do a presentation to the group. For example, if you are leading a smoking cessation campaign for the LGBT community, you might see if a cross dressing support group would be willing to have you give a presentation. This increases your visibility with the community and gives you an opportunity to speak directly to transgender people. It also gives you a way to contribute something to the community as you introduce yourself, as opposed to showing up with a request to fulfill a need of your own.

If there are transgender people who are part of your program, ask them to introduce you to other transgender people or to spread the word about your organization. Keep in mind that you don’t want to set up one transgender person as the expert or “leader” of the whole community, but it is also important to use social networks as a way to meet more people. Ask trans people who are involved in your program for their ideas about how to reach other transgender people and ask them why they chose to be involved in your organization. You will often gain valuable insight into how people view your group.

Another way to reach transgender people is by networking with other groups and providers who serve the trans community. Some examples include therapists, medical providers, and HIV educators. You might ask them to put out flyers or brochures in their waiting areas as a way to let their clients know about your programs.

Talking with service providers directly can help them be aware of you as a possible referral. Therapists may be encouraging transgender people to explore their identity and would welcome knowing about transgender-inclusive programming. For example, someone exploring a different gender presentation might want to participate in a book discussion group or other program in a safe environment before trying it at work. If your organization is known as a place where transgender people are encouraged to be themselves, more of them will choose to participate in your events.

LGBT-affirming communities of faith may also have transgender participants who would

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like to know about other places where they are welcome. You can contact the leaders of a faith community and see if it would be appropriate for you to leave literature or information with them.

Local, state and national political organizations also may be in touch with transgender people in your area. Work with community organizers to identify people who might be good connections for you. One great way to increase your organization's visibility is to actively support transgender-inclusive legislation and other public policy initiatives. If transgender people see you working as an ally for their civil rights, they will be much more likely to want to participate in your organization.

Keep Trying

Sometimes organizations become frustrated because they will invite transgender people (or people of color or women or whichever group they are trying to reach) to participate and yet no one from the group shows up. Transgender and other marginalized peoples are much more likely to take up such offers when your organization has made sincere attempts to show up for, support and lend resources to their events and projects. The bridge you are trying to build is likely to be much more travelled if you have crossed over it first, and arrived with an open mind and potential resources rather than fixed agenda and a need.

Keep in mind that it takes perseverance to develop authentic relationships, especially among those who have been stigmatized and excluded in the past. You will need to prove that your organization is trustworthy and truly welcoming of transgender people. Don't expect a huge response to a first invitation. People may take time to assess these opportunities for a variety of different reasons, often due to current or historical exclusion by your or other organizations. Keep the doors open for people to come when they feel ready to take a chance on your organization or when their schedules permit.

If you want to include transgender people, but feel they aren't coming in the numbers you'd like, take a few minutes and consider why they might not be present. Think about your organization and imagine yourself as a transgender person; what things might prevent you from being fully a part of this group? Which of those things can you change? As you work through this guide and implement some of these ideas, you may find that transgender people take your organization more seriously as you bring those barriers down.

So, continue to actively work to involve transgender people while asking yourself: are there aspects of my organization that are inadvertently keeping transgender people away?

Reaching a Critical Mass

People rarely enjoy being the “token” anything, whether it is the token transgender person, token person of color, or token queer. Reaching the first few members of a marginalized group is often the most difficult because they don’t see anyone else like themselves participating in your organization already. This is understandably taken as a sure sign that the organization isn’t serious about creating a fully inclusive organization.

To address this phenomenon, your organization might consider creating events or programs to draw a number of transgender people all at once—like a transgender-specific group or Trans Unity celebration—so that transgender participation in your organization increases visibly. This helps people feel like they are not the only transgender person around, but one of a group of people who are part of your organization. It may take less work to hold a bigger event drawing dozens of transgender people than it is to convince two or three trans people to come to an LGB-dominated event.

Whether through programs and events or through consistent efforts that draw in transgender people one at a time, there often comes a point when participation starts increasing much more rapidly. When this happens, you’ve finally reached a “critical mass” and transgender people will come and go like all of the other communities and constituencies in your organization, for they can see that your fully integrated group really does welcome, serve and value them.

Reflections

- Among the transgender people currently participating in your organization, are they a diverse group? Do they represent a broad spectrum of gender expression? Are they diverse in race, class, ethnicity, ability and other characteristics?
- What has been the most successful strategy you’ve used to involve transgender people? What strategies have been the least successful?
- What barriers exist that keep transgender people from participating in your organization? What opportunities do you see to increase the participation of transgender people?
- Who is not present at your organization who you would really like to see there? What steps can you take to let them know that they would be welcome at your organization?

Action Items

- Do an internet search for your city, town or state and the word “transgender,” even if you’ve done this in the past. There may be new groups since you looked last and existing groups may have new leadership or programs that you need to know about.

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- Contact the leaders of those groups to give them information about your programs and get their ideas and input. But don't limit your contact only to the leaders; your goal is to work together with them to increase outreach. Getting together for coffee, a meal, or meeting face to face are more effective in finding common ground and building a collaborative relationship than simply corresponding by e-mail.
- Find a way to get direct input from transgender people in your community about your programs and services. This might take the form of a survey, focus group or direct conversations with transgender people. Remember that the goal is to listen and get feedback.
- Hold an event specifically to draw a larger number of trans people to help you reach "critical mass."
- Find transgender events in your community. Support them by attending, providing a service or serving as a sponsor, and take the opportunity to listen to those who are there.
- Contact service providers and ask if you can distribute material through their offices. See if they have other ideas about how you can reach or serve their transgender clients.
- Be aware of legislation and other public policy initiatives that will impact transgender people. Take steps to have a positive impact on these policies.

Voices from the Movement: Increasing Diversity

Contributed by Roey Thorpe, Director of Advocacy Services, Equality Federation & Equality Federation Institute

The Equality Federation is a network of statewide LGBT advocacy groups that work together to strengthen each other's work for full LGBT civil rights in every state. Equality Federation is committed to full inclusiveness for trans people and issues. We try to do as many tangible things as we can to encourage inclusiveness and to raise the number and visibility of transgender leaders, by making gender identity a priority for increasing diversity in our organizations and leadership, and by finding ways to support those trans leaders who want to get more involved. For example, we prioritize trans-identified people for scholarships for our annual Summer Meeting and for inclusion in our internship program. We recognize that broader LGBT advocacy organizations are often not the only organizations in their state that take the lead on trans issues, so we designed membership criteria that allow

trans-specific organizations to join the Federation and to access our services.

And most recently, we were proud to take a leading role in the United ENDA coalition, facilitating lobbying efforts so that every state organization could make their voices heard to demand an inclusive bill. From that effort we learned that state organizations are often at the forefront of educating and advocating for trans equality, and that they can lead the way with their federal legislators as well. Equality Federation is proud to represent what an inclusive organization can look like.



KEY #3

CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

When people enter your building, pick up one of your brochures or go to your website, they will begin to evaluate—consciously or unconsciously—whether you are welcoming their participation and presence. The environments we create send out cues about who we expect to be there. Thinking clearly about the signals you send can help your organization be more welcoming to transgender people.

Transgender people often feel unwelcome in a number of public places. You can create a space that feels safe and supportive by addressing several key areas:

- The physical environment
- Restrooms
- Changing areas
- The verbal environment
- The questions you ask people
- Communication materials, including your organizational mission and policies

By explicitly addressing the needs of transgender people in these areas, you communicate the overall welcoming environment of your organization.

The Physical Environment

Consider what messages the space you meet in or use says about your feelings about transgender people. When a transgender person walks into the space, do they see things that communicate that you expected them to be there? Posters on the wall that include transgender people or notices on the bulletin board that show the active participation of the transgender community can go a long way in helping people to see that they are fully part of an organization. All people should be greeted in a positive way and transgender people will notice if they are being treated respectfully.

Consider, too, the dangers that transgender people face in a transphobic world. Just as gay, lesbian and bisexual people face hate-motivated violence, so too do transgender people. Make sure that you address security issues as well as you can, providing safe, well-lit places for parking, meetings and so forth. Recognize that transgender people coming to your events may face even higher levels of danger if they are visibly gender non-conforming.

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Restrooms

It is important to think through the physical needs of transgender people, especially the use of restrooms and changing areas. Many transgender people, particularly those who do not “pass” as one gender or the other, face considerable challenges in society at large in finding safe and accessible places to change and to use the bathroom. Non-transgender people may feel threatened by a gender non-conforming person in the restroom and may respond with hostility or even violence. It is up to you to ensure and communicate that your restrooms are safe.

Restroom Resources

There are many sources for good educational pieces on restroom access and solutions. Explore the Transgender Law Center's **Peeing in Peace** resource, which you can find at <http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org/publications.html#bathrooms>. The Sylvia Rivera Law Project also has a film and companion resource, **Toilet Training**, information is available at: <http://www.srlp.org/index.php?sec=05A&page=toilettraining>. The Transgender Law and Policy Institute website has Campus resources, including many relating to restrooms, at <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/college/index.htm>



from *Peeing in Peace*

People who do not identify as either male or female, or who do not appear obviously male or female, face continual difficulty in having to decide which restroom to use. Providing gender-neutral restrooms is very important. If you feel this is a problem, ask yourself why it is important to your organization to have separate male and female restrooms or whether you can establish gender-neutral restrooms. In addition to helping transgender people, providing gender-neutral restrooms will also make your space more accessible to people who might need assistance in the restroom from someone of the opposite sex, such as parents with young children and people with some disabilities or seniors with caregivers.

Often restroom use becomes a point of contention or anxiety around the presence of transgender people, yet there are a number of fairly easy ways to address this:

- If you have single use restrooms, make them all gender-neutral. Since people won't be encountering other people, there is no need to for gender segregated restrooms.
- If you have multiple use restrooms, make all or some of them gender-neutral. Clearly, the strongest message of trans inclusion comes from having all gender-neutral restrooms.
- Signage is really important; don't force people to ask if they are able to use your restrooms. Provide clearly marked signs on the doors of gender-neutral restrooms. If you have male or female restrooms, place a sign on the door that states that people are welcome to use the restroom of their choice and give clear directions to the location of the nearest gender-neutral restrooms, if available.

If a non-transgender person objects to the presence of a transgender person in the restroom, it is absolutely critical that your staff and security make it clear that restroom space is available for all people, including transgender people. It is unacceptable for transgender people to be denied restroom use or hassled in the restrooms. If a transgender person is

creating a disturbance or misusing a restroom, then address it as you would with any other person; but their simple presence in the restroom should never be an issue.

Changing Rooms

In addition, your organization may consider the need for changing rooms for transgender people. If you offer exercise classes or other activities for which participants may need to change out of their everyday clothing, it is important to offer people the opportunity to dress in private. Not all transgender people are out about being trans and therefore may not want others to know that their bodies may be different under their clothing. Many people—transgender or not—are uncomfortable having to reveal their bodies to others and deserve as much privacy as possible. In addition, gendered locker rooms offer the same challenges to gender non-conforming people as gendered restrooms do. Provide gender-neutral options whenever possible.

People who cross-dress may feel unsafe—for very good reasons—coming to and from your events while dressed in the clothing generally associated with a different sex. The same is true for people who live as a different gender part of the time (for example, people who work presenting as one gender and spend their personal time as another), or who are in the process of transitioning. Providing places for people to change their gender presentation goes a very long way in creating a welcoming environment clearly designed for transgender people. Changing rooms create a safer alternative to traveling the streets when visibly gender variant.

You can simply designate a room as a dressing room and then communicate in your invitations that this option will be available to those who wish to dress after arriving at the event or program. It is very helpful to provide mirrors in the room so people can check their appearance after changing. If you do not provide a dressing room, people may use the restrooms for this purpose, which can create additional traffic and delays in the bathroom. Providing a changing room is both more practical and shows greater sensitivity to the needs of cross-dressers, people in transition, and those who live part-time in different genders.

Verbal Environment

When people come together at an event, meeting, or gathering, leaders should be conscious to set a transgender-inclusive tone from the very beginning, as well as throughout the gathering. Language is a very powerful tool and can be used to either create transgender-inclusive space, or prevent people from experiencing a safe space.

The event name and description, of course, should be trans-inclusive. Speakers should always use inclusive language, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender or LGBT, and

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never shorthand to “gay and lesbian” or “gay.” Shortening LGBT to gay or lesbian is a very common way to inadvertently tell transgender people (and bisexual people), subtly or not-so-subtly, that they are not part of the core of the group. Another easy way to damage safe space is to make a joke about gender that is insensitive (for example, a Master of Ceremonies saying, “Welcome ladies, gentlemen, and others...”) even by someone who thinks they can make inside-the-community jokes about gender expression.

It is important to include in remarks (such as during announcements), the location and existence of gender-neutral restrooms and/or the fact that transgender people are welcome to use whichever gendered restroom they feel most comfortable using.

Depending on the gathering, it may be important to create an opportunity for people to identify which pronouns are appropriate to use in reference to them in order to avoid mistaken pronouns being used later. For example, at the beginning of a meeting or training, when participants introduce themselves, it may be good to ask that all people indicate which pronoun is appropriate for them. However, there are cons to this approach. First, some people may not be comfortable sharing their gender identity with a group of strangers whom they do not yet trust. Second, those who are in the process of figuring out their gender identity may not be ready to disclose their current thoughts to the group, preferring to keep their feelings private for now; this exercise puts them on the spot. Third, for groups of people that may include those who are not fully transgender-sensitive, the request that everyone include which pronoun is appropriate for them could lead to transgender-insensitive jokes (for example, “My name is Joe, I am feeling kinda girly today, so please refer to me as Mrs. Joe” (when Joe really doesn’t identify that way)).

We have found a better approach to ask that each individual, if they want, share anything important about their identity, including which pronoun they prefer. Then, the group leaders introduce themselves first to model both options (at least one includes a pronoun and at least one does not). This way, people who want to share can, and people who don’t want to share are not put on the spot.

If gender identities and pronouns have not been established at the beginning, it is also important not to assume a person’s gender. Those who are called on in a group setting, for example, should be identified by articles of clothing, etc. instead of being gendered (for example, the “person in the blue shirt,” instead of the “woman in the blue shirt.”). Similarly, “Sir” and “Ma’am” should not be used either unless you are sure about a person’s gender identity.

Forms and Surveys

What does your organization say about transgender people in your written forms and in the questions you ask? This is critical to whether transgender people feel they are genuinely welcomed or if the “T” is simply an afterthought.

You may also want to consider when or whether it is important to ask about gender at all. The question is so widely asked in our society that we sometimes fail to think about whether it is information that we actually need. If you need to know, then ask, but if it is not relevant to the data you are collecting, leave it off. If you do need the information, consider how it will be read by transgender people.

One important area to consider is the forms that you use. Many organizations have forms that require people to check off one of these boxes:

☐ Male ☐ Female

For people who do not identify as either male or female, this presents a problem. If someone attends an event and is biologically male, but has dressed *en femme* for the evening, the person may not know which gender you are trying to identify—the birth gender or the current presentation.

Replacing the line with:

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender

helps but some transgender people don’t readily identify as transgender and for some people, their transgender identity/expression is secondary to their male or female identity.

A better approach to forms may be something like this, which allow people greater freedom to choose multiple options:

Please check all that apply:

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender ☐ Other: _____

or simply this:

Gender identity: _____

which allows people to select more than one option and identify their own genders. It makes tabulating the data a little more complicated, but it also makes it much more accurate. Note that if you are doing this on a web-based form, you must use check boxes, which allow people to select multiple items, rather than radio buttons, which force people to choose only one item in each group, or create a text field for them to write their own entry.

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If your survey or form specifically deals with transgender people, you may wish to break it down further by asking about different types of gender identities, such as:

☐ Cross-dresser ☐ FTM ☐ MTF ☐ Genderqueer ☐ Other: _____

and so on, using whatever terms are culturally appropriate to the group in question.

Also, it is very important to recognize the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. This is not an appropriate question if people can only choose one (such as radio buttons on a website):

☐ Lesbian ☐ Gay ☐ Bisexual ☐ Transgender ☐ Heterosexual

After all, transgender people might be any of those sexual orientations in addition to being transgender. Many transgender people will read this as a sign of complete ignorance about the difference between sexuality and gender. It is much better to ask about sexual orientation:

☐ Lesbian ☐ Gay ☐ Bisexual ☐ Heterosexual ☐ Other: _____

and then ask separately about gender identity/expression as noted above.

Written Materials/Website

Look at your brochures, website and program listings. It is important that they clearly communicate the presence of transgender people in your organization. Transgender people often look to see if the mission of an organization includes language like “gender identity and expression.”

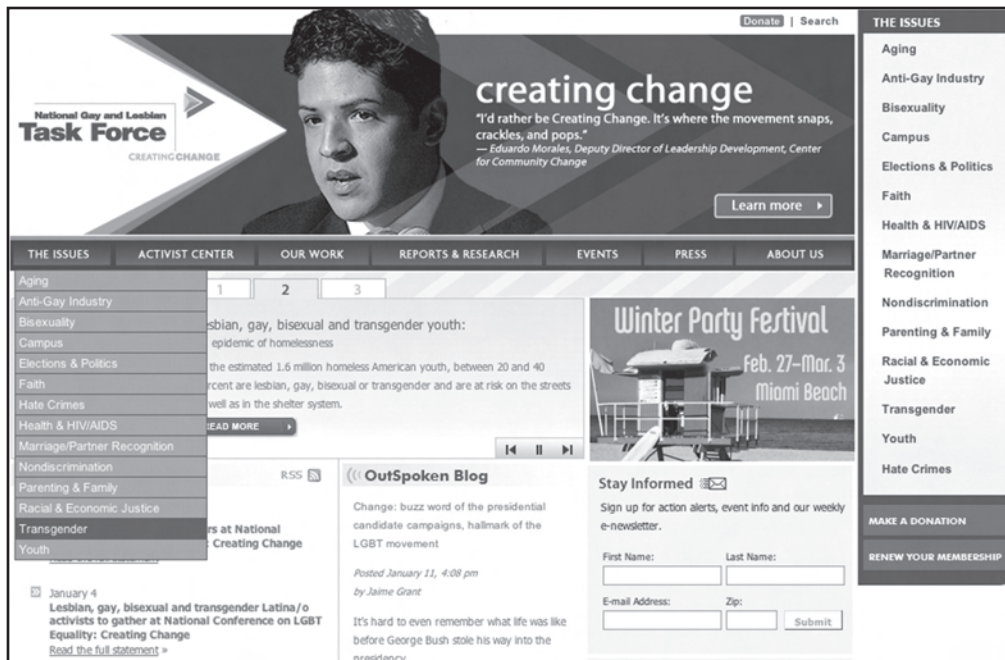
Communicating Transgender Inclusion

Here’s a good example of how an athletic organization, with gendered sports teams, has made clear on their website (<http://www.federaltriangles.org>) that they have considered the inclusion of transgender people in their programming. “Federal Triangles Soccer Club has many options for those who seek the intensity of a refereed game and the camaraderie that comes from playing with the same group of people week in and week out. League teams often form the core roster of teams that represent FTSC at travel tournaments. We have women’s, men’s, and co-ed teams and we register them to play in DC

area recreational leagues (DC, Arlington, Fairfax, Montgomery County). We support transgender players playing on whichever team matches their self-identified gender.”



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The Task Force website features a transgender Issues section.

Consider how your written materials might let a transgender person know that this is an organization that values and includes transgender people. Think about the types of photographs you use, whether there is a specific mention of transgender-specific programming or text about a transgender volunteer, board or staff member.

Naming transgender people as part of the organization's title and mission statement is also important. Sometimes this is challenging when the historical names of our organizations fail to reflect their current reality. An organization may have been called "Lesbian and Gay" for the past twenty years, but now offers trans-inclusive programming and participation. It remains an ongoing challenge to honor the origins of our organizations but update names to include the current members of our community. Nevertheless, failing to name the presence of transgender people is not helpful and can seriously hinder your efforts to include the community.

Reflections

- Take a walk through the building or space that you use. List all of the things that you see or hear that will help a transgender person feel welcome and safe in that environment. What explicit clues are there? Make a separate column and list the things that

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might make a transgender person feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. Ask yourself how those things might be changed.

- Go to your website and do the same thing. What will help a transgender person realize that they are part of your organization? Are there things there that will make them feel uncomfortable or unwelcome?
- Evaluate your restroom and changing area policies. Do you provide a safe and comfortable place for transgender people? If not, how could you change that? And, how are you communicating that?
- Do your brochures and program listings include things that will make a transgender person feel welcome?
- What questions do you ask on your forms? Do you need that information? Are you asking it in a way that communicates that you are aware of the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?

Voices from the Movement: Naming the Organization

contributed by Pedro Julio Serrano, Board Member, Unid@s

The mission of Unid@s, The National Latin@ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Human Rights Organization is to create a multi-issue approach for advocacy, education and convening of and for our communities. Guided by economic justice, feminist, environmental and pro-peace values, Unid@s

joins a global effort to transform systems and policies to create the just and equitable World we know is possible.

We chose to name ourselves Unid@s to be inclusive of all of our genders and our identities. In the Spanish language, Unidas refers to females and Unidos to male, so we added both genders in the @. But we wanted to make it even more inclusive by including the @ as a symbol of people who don't identify with either gender too.

The Board of Directors structure of Unid@s included spaces for 13 members, 4 of which were to identify as transgender or gender-non-conforming, 4 as lesbian or bisexual women, 4 as gay or bisexual men, and an additional slot to be filled by an individual identifying in any of the previously mentioned manners. We also have three chairs, one non-trans female, one non-trans male and one transgender or gender non-conforming person.



Board of Directors of Unid@s

Action Ideas

- Designate gender neutral restrooms and changing spaces and create necessary signs.
- Update brochures, websites and other written material to clearly and visibly include transgender people.
- Evaluate your training material to be sure that all presenters know how to address issues like pronouns, gender references and restrooms. Provide the same material to guest presenters, entertainers etc.

KEY #4 DEAL WITH PREJUDICE

Transphobia is the fear of, discomfort with, disrespect of, or dislike of transgender people and/or those with non-traditional gender identities or gender expressions. Because LGBT people grow up in a transphobic society, transphobia permeates the LGBT community as well. Just because a person is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or even transgender doesn't mean that they are immune from transphobia or other prejudices. Transphobia can manifest itself more obviously in anti-transgender jokes or in statements that show disrespect for a trans person's identity, or in more insidious ways like misusing pronouns (he, she, etc.).

Transgender people may come to an LGBT organization expecting to be respected (after all, it is an LGBT organization), but find that when they get there, the LGB people don't respect their identities, misuse pronouns, and in general, are not comfortable being around transgender people. To become a trans-inclusive organization, the transphobia that has been learned from general society must be unlearned. And that takes effort.

Sometimes lesbian, gay and bisexual people do not want to associate with transgender people because they believe in the idea that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are really "normal" and not that different from straight people (except for being LGB), whereas they see transgender people as really different (translation: weird or freaky or lesser). Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are emotionally invested in being considered normal when it comes to gender expression, in opposition to the stereotypes of masculine lesbians and feminine gay men. (Of course, other LGB people are proud of their nonconformist gender expressions.) Much schoolyard teasing and even violent harassment of actual or perceived LGB youth is centered around cross-gender expression. Thus, growing up in this environment, it may not be a surprise that some people are extra sensitive when it comes to being associated with people who break gender stereotypes. And thus, they may tease, make jokes about people who break gender stereotypes, or do other things to show their discomfort.

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Often, homophobic violence is based in the gender prejudices of our society. Gay men are bashed for appearing too feminine to the attackers; lesbians are attacked for being too masculine. Because transgender people push this even further, some gay men and lesbians may fear that the presence of transgender people will bring additional violence and discrimination to their own lives.

Sometimes LGB people do not believe that transgender identities are valid, in part because of their own experiences of discovering their own identities and/or rejecting transitioning as the appropriate choice for them. For example, occasionally a butch lesbian will express disapproval and disrespect if someone desires to transition from female to male, asking why that person can't just be a butch lesbian. Or, someone may look at a transgender person who is genderqueer and say, "that must be a phase."

Other LGB people do not want to associate with transgender people for more political reasons. They may believe, for example, that "gay" people are acceptable politically or socially, whereas transgender people are not yet politically or socially acceptable. Thus, for what they perceive to be practical reasons, they may support a strategy of passing LGB-only protective nondiscrimination policies and adding gender identity/expression later, even though this has proven to be ineffective (see the Voices from our Movement sections by Matt Foreman (p. 39), Stacey Sobel (p. 44), and Dan Furmansky (p. 35), which speak about the ways this compromise is neither necessary nor helpful).

Regardless of the "reasoning" behind the bias against or discomfort with transgender people, it must be addressed. After all, you may have worked hard to create a dynamic, welcoming environment and have developed all the right trans-inclusive policies, but one transphobic comment by a staff or board member can sabotage all of those efforts.

Bias against and discomfort with transgender people can manifest itself in many ways. First, it is often found in jokes or statements about transgender people, either to them or behind their backs:

- "PJ is finally supposedly transitioning now, but she's just fooling herself."
- "The youth in that group identify as something called 'genderqueer' but I just think they're 'gender-confused.' They'll grow out of it."
- "I don't understand why you can't just be the gay man you are instead of transitioning to female to be with straight guys. You're a faggot – just be proud of it."

This lack of understanding should be called out for what it is: transphobia. These statements all claim that the transgender person doesn't know what his or her true identity is and that the person's self-identity doesn't deserve respect. People showing this kind of disrespect need to be further educated about transgender people. Various small-scale or

larger-scale interventions may be in order: a person may need individual education, the board may need transgender training, staff may need to be trained on respectful treatment, or policies may need to be developed. Whatever action is chosen, the only truly wrong action is to look the other way.

Mistaken Pronouns

Oftentimes, disrespect comes out in use (or misuse) of pronouns. Basic principles of respect dictate that people should be addressed by the pronouns that they prefer, those that match their gender identity/expression. Thus, transgender men (born female and living as men) should be addressed as “sir” and referred to as “he,” and transgender women (born male and living as female) should be addressed as “ma’am” and “she.” Transgender people who use gender-neutral pronouns (such as ze, zir, etc.) should be addressed with those pronouns.

It is important to set up a system, policy, or ethic in your organization about how to address pronoun usage. This can include providing the option for people to identify their pronouns when introducing themselves at the beginning of a meeting/event as discussed in Key #3 (the Verbal Environment) and not using gendered words on anyone whose gender identity is not known to you (sir/ma’am, man or woman).

There are various approaches to use when a person’s pronoun preference is not known. The most common is to use pronouns according to the person’s chosen gender expression, and if that is not clear, then to politely ask the person (or someone with whom the person closely associates) what pronoun the person prefers. Additional policies may include not using pronouns for a person (using only their name) until you are sure what they use, and always identifying people by their clothing or other features if you don’t know their name (for example, when calling on someone, say “the person standing in the back” rather than, “the man in the back.”).

An additional helpful policy is to have those who know the pronoun that a person prefers to demonstrate the proper pronoun for others (for example: “Hello everyone, tonight Chris is volunteering with us. She is our newest volunteer so please give her a warm welcome.”)

When leaders, staff members, or other volunteers, members or clients use the wrong pronoun for a transgender person, it says to the transgender person that they are not being respected or seen as how they see themselves. Being repeatedly addressed by the wrong pronoun (whether mistakenly or intentionally misused) leads to feelings of anger and resentment. Eventually, one wrong pronoun use can become the straw that breaks the camel’s back.

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It is very important to have an ethic that if anyone hears someone misusing pronouns that they are to correct the person who makes the mistake (in an appropriate manner), regardless of the relative organizational position of the parties. For example, a lower-level employee who hears the executive director misuse a pronoun should be made to feel welcome to approach the executive director to correct them and ensure that the mistake is not repeated.

Ultimately, non-transgender people should understand that misusing a person's pronoun can be very hurtful, even if it is done as a simple mistake. Non-transgender people need to understand that a transgender person may be coming into contact with scores of people in the general public who are using the wrong pronoun, and that, by the end of the day when they are at the LGBT social event where they finally expect to be treated with respect, a mistaken pronoun can be the breaking point. The best thing to do, if you are the person who uses the wrong pronoun is to apologize and make the correction.

While at times people's preferred pronouns might be different from our experience of their gender expression, all of us can learn to use the appropriate pronoun of choice. Silently using the pronoun in a sentence until you're fluent with it is a good strategy (for example, "Chris is our newest volunteer. She is really great. Can you go show her where the copy machine is?") Rehearse this in your head until you are sure that you won't revert to whatever your bias or limitation tells you. It does get easier with practice.

Other Prejudices

Just as transphobia exists in LGBT communities, so do various other types of prejudice: racism, classism, ableism, religious intolerance, ageism and sexism, among other prejudices. These are also powerful forces that include and exclude people from participating in your organization. All LGBT organizations should pay close attention to the ways in which the larger society's prejudices shape our organizations and do all that we can to counter them.

It is vital that organizations address issues of prejudice through trainings and other learning opportunities. These trainings should include your Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, as all have an impact on those who walk through your doors. When setting up a training for your organization, be sure that the leaders are able to competently address issues of gender identity/expression along with other issues of concern. Be sure to find trainers who are skilled and able to help your organization address the multi-faceted aspects of the world in which we live.

Ultimately, our organizations must do conscious and ongoing work to address all types of oppression in order to reflect and support the diverse LGBT communities we aim to serve.

keys to transgender inclusion

Reflections

- What are your personal views about transgender people? What are your ideas about cross-gender expression? What were you taught as a child, middle schooler, high schooler and adult about transgender people?
- Are you comfortable with the range of gender identities and gender expressions that transgender people present?
- Think about your own gender identity or expression, when and how did that develop in you? Did you always feel like you were a boy or a girl, or another gender?
- What do you do when you aren't sure of a person's pronoun? What do you think should be your approach to learning a person's preferred pronoun after reading this section?
- What do you think drives some LGB people to be uncomfortable with transgender people?
- What do you think are the roots of anti-LGB and anti-trans discrimination and violence?

From the 2008 Creating Change Conference booklet

a word about transgender etiquette:

There are many transgender people at Creating Change™. To be inclusive and improve the quality of life for transgender people here, please read and act upon the following.

Please do not assume anyone's gender, even people you may have met in the past. A person's external appearance may not match their internal gender identity. You cannot know the gender or sex of someone by their physical body, voice, appearance or mannerisms. Pay attention to a person's purposeful gender expression. We consider it polite at Creating Change to ask: "What pronoun do you prefer?" or "How do you identify?" before using pronouns or gendered words for anyone. When you are unsure of a person's gender identity and you don't have an opportunity to ask someone what words they prefer, try using that person's name or gender-neutral phrases like "the person in the red shirt," instead of "that woman or man."

One way of acknowledging transgender people's needs is to designate restrooms gender neutral. In bathrooms, many



transgender people face harassment that can lead to anything from deep discomfort to arrest or death. Regardless of what bathroom you are in, please let everyone pee in peace. Each of us can decide for ourselves in which bathroom we belong.

Please listen to transgender people's needs and stories when they are volunteered; yet please respect people's privacy and boundaries and do not ask unnecessary questions. Educate yourself through books, websites, and transgender workshops. Then please join the many hardworking allies who are working to respond appropriately to transphobic situations. Respectful allies, who learn from and with transgender people and then educate others, are important for successful transgender liberation.

Thank you for your help.

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Action Ideas

- Read books on transgender people and experiences. There are fun books and serious books, but either way you go, you will get more comfortable with transgender people and issues, and start to unlearn unconscious prejudices.
- Bring transgender educational programming or more formal trainings on transgender issues to your organization.
- Hold ongoing diversity trainings and make sure they include transgender-sensitivity as well as addressing the full range of diversity represented in our community.
- When you hear a transphobic remark, talk to the person about it to educate them, or make sure the organization addresses it. Support those in your organization who speak out against transphobic language and actions.
- Create a policy about pronoun usage, which includes information on how to correct mistakes and how to inform colleagues about others' preferred pronouns. Make sure that all staff, volunteers, and Board members know the policy and understand the reasons behind it.

Voices From the Movement: Taking a Stand

Contributed by Dan Furmansky, Executive Director, Equality Maryland:

I took over Equality Maryland in 2003, just two years after the organization had shepherded to passage an anti-discrimination law that covered sexual orientation and not gender identity and expression. I knew transgender activists, rightly so, still had animosity against the organization and even though I was not personally a part of the legislative process that removed the transgender protections, I would be met with a great measure of skepticism by mere association with the organization. My personal commitment to transgender issues was already in place, and I first made sure the Board of Directors was on the same page. I was pleased to find that they were, and I was anxious to make gains for the community as a whole, and especially transgender Marylanders.

One of the first major measures we took on in the 2004 legislative session was an expansion of our state's hate crimes statute to cover LGBT-motivated crimes. A state senator, upset by the House bill's defeat the prior year, was ready to introduce companion legislation in the Senate. We had numerous conversations with the senator about why the bill he introduced had to be inclusive, bringing in lawyers, lobbyists and transgender Marylanders. Still, the legislative session began, and he would not commit to introducing the bill inclusively. It was clear a confrontation would have to occur, and we would have to choose between potentially burning a bridge with a powerful ally or seeing the transgender community again be stripped out of a crucial policy initiative. There was no choice. The last day to introduce a bill arrived and we called the senator, urging him one last time to introduce the bill inclusively. He said he would not because he wanted to see the bill pass, and we went round and around until I finally and forcefully told him that we did not want him to introduce the legislation at all. He was floored, and I explained as diplomatically as possible that his goal of helping the community would be overshadowed by the negative response to introducing the bill in a way that ignored the overwhelming rash of hate crimes against transgender per-

sons. Upset, he reluctantly agreed not to introduce the bill, and we asked another lawmaker to file the bill that day. She didn't sit on the committee that would hear the legislation, but still, we had an inclusive bill in both the Senate and House.

No, we didn't pass the legislation in 2004, and yes, one reason (but only one reason) for that is because it was inclusive. Some lawmakers came back to the gender identity issue time and again, yet most said "I have no problem with this, but it will never pass as is." Still, we chose to draw a line in the sand and let lawmakers know that the LGBT community in Maryland would only move forward as one. The next year, we came back, we worked the bill with everything we had, and we passed the bill inclusively, showing that it could indeed be done.

Compelling testimony by transgender persons who had been victimized helped tremendously, but really, what assured the bill's inclusive passage was our willingness to draw that line in the sand and stick to it. Equality Maryland is an LGBT civil rights organization, and no organization with that title should be willing to sacrifice some of its own. Incremental change is fine when it moves the whole community forward one step at a time, but not when it moves some in the community forward while leaving others at square one.



Del. Adrienne Jones, who sponsored the hate crimes bill, and Owen Smith, who testified for the legislation, receiving an award from Equality Maryland for their work to pass the hate crimes law in 2005.

KEY #5 ACKNOWLEDGE PAST MISTAKES REGARDING TRANS-INCLUSION

Many LGBT organizations have a history of being “gay and lesbian” or LGB organizations. Even organizations founded more recently with the intention of serving LGBT people may not have done their work in trans-inclusive ways from the beginning. Thus, as the organization moves into becoming transgender-inclusive, previous actions of the organization can be a major barrier. Until these actions are addressed, there may be distrust of the organization by transgender community members.

There are many ways that LGBT organizations have been not trans-inclusive, or even anti-transgender, in the distant or more recent past. Without being fully aware of it, perhaps your organization is currently doing things that are anti-transgender or fails to prioritize the needs of transgender people. Examples include: a political organization that supported an LGB-only protective discrimination law or policy; a community center that disallowed transgender women from attending women’s support group meetings; an athletic association that told transgender people they had to compete according to the gender they were assigned at birth; a health organization that did a fundraiser featuring transgender-insensitive performers; or an LGBT nonprofit that looked the other way when coworkers created a hostile environment for a transitioning employee.

Organizations are ultimately people who have chosen to associate with each other for common purposes. In organizing ourselves, we develop relationships with each other; without these relationships, there is no organization. And, just as in the personal relationships we have with our family members, friends, significant others, etc., what we do and what we say matters. What an organization’s leaders have to say is especially relevant. An organization’s board and executive director must make a consistent and visible commitment to speaking the organization’s values around the desire to integrate transgender leadership for meaningful integration to occur.

The good news is that any of the above examples of mistakes your organization has made or is making are survivable. An organization can, by taking responsibility for its mistakes, taking action to create a welcoming environment, and demonstrating integrity with the transgender community, mend broken relationships and become a fully transgender-inclusive organization.

The first step is to acknowledge that your organization (and you, if applicable) made a mistake; that the organization has acted in ways to exclude or disrespect transgender people. It is important to acknowledge this to oneself, to the relevant transgender people (if applicable), and to the community more generally. Even if it wasn’t you, or you weren’t involved

with the organization when it made a previous mistake, acknowledging it is important. For example, if you were just hired as Executive Director of an organization with a poor track record on trans-inclusion, you may need to acknowledge the organization's previous mistakes on behalf of the organization, even if you weren't involved during that time. Putting aside feelings of defensiveness is also critical to this process. LGB/allied leaders make mistakes, as we all do, and the first step to remedy them is to acknowledge and take responsibility for the mistake(s).

Apologies may be made publicly or privately, but it is important to remember that public mistakes need to be mended publicly. Perhaps the best thing to do as an organizational leader is to invite transgender community leaders to a meal where you personally and organizationally express regret for previous harmful actions. Or, if the trans-exclusive action was particularly public, perhaps an op-ed in your local LGBT newspaper is in order. Or, the board of your organization may need to vote on a resolution. If you go a public route, a statement may be a good way for you to demonstrate to the LGBT community overall your group's new understanding of transgender issues and the importance of respecting and celebrating transgender people in the organization.

The second and critical step is to engage in concrete corrective action. Acknowledgements and apologies, although necessary, have the potential to be empty gestures. Therefore, you must pair your apology with a plan for trans-affirmative actions in the present and future. Ask for input from people in the transgender community about what these corrective actions should be. There are many and various actions to take. For example, you may put into place a specific plan to avoid the offensive action in the future; unroll your plan to undertake an organizational evaluation for trans-inclusiveness; bring transgender sensitivity training to the board and staff; change your legislative priorities, etc. Don't promise what you cannot deliver, of course, as becoming a fully-inclusive LGBT organization is a journey; however, it is important to commit to the process and start or continue taking steps in the right direction.

As you acknowledge and apologize for mistakes, and outline your next steps for building a trans-inclusive organization, understand that some transgender people may still be angry or disappointed in your past actions. They are justified in this, as they were harmed by the organization's actions. Although it may take a while to rebuild trust between the LGB and T members of the community, through honest, diligent effort, that trust can eventually be restored.

The "people" part of this process cannot be underestimated. Ultimately, whether or not the transgender community trusts that an organization is fully inclusive is really a question of whether or not they have trust in the people who are leaders of the organization. Transgender people who are considering joining and investing in your organization while

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you are still on a journey to trans-inclusiveness may have to put themselves out on a limb to be associated with your organization. Frequent meetings, meals, and consultations over time contribute to rebuilding a relationship and rebuilding trust. This process may take some time; but the time invested is well worth it.

Reflections

- What are mistakes that your organization has made with trans-inclusion? How did these mistakes make transgender people feel about your organization? If you were transgender, how would you have felt?
- What has been the impact of your mistakes on the transgender community? What can you do to address this?
- What new mistakes are you afraid you or your organization might make on its journey to trans-inclusion? How do you plan to handle them if they happen? What might you do to prevent them?
- How could your organization start to rebuild trust with the transgender community?
- Is a public apology from your organization necessary or helpful to repair relationships with the transgender community? If not, what other ways could you acknowledge and heal past rifts?

Action Ideas

- Have meals or meetings with transgender community leaders to acknowledge and apologize for previous actions.
- Ask transgender community leaders and members what correction actions they believe would be helpful; then implement them as appropriate.
- Develop an overall plan for corrective action that addresses past mistakes and ways to prevent future steps that damage your relationship with the transgender community.
- Pass policies to ensure that trans-inclusion is the policy of your organization.
- Create transgender advisory boards to help facilitate change. Hire transgender people as consultants to your transformational process.

Voices from the Movement: Repairing Past Mistakes

contributed by Matt Foreman, Executive Director, The Task Force.

Matt reflects on his own work on transgender-inclusion in this important Op Ed from August 3, 2004

For many years, our community has debated the place of transgender people in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). The time for debate is over. The question must be called. ENDA must be amended to protect transgender people. If it is not, we all must walk away from it.

I would completely understand someone saying that it's the height of hypocrisy for me to be saying this. After all, I was executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda when New York enacted the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act (SONDA), which extended broad nondiscrimination protections to gay, lesbian and bisexual—but not transgender—New Yorkers. All I can say is that hindsight is 20/20. I made mistakes in New York and that painful experience seared into my mind and heart three lessons that I think are directly applicable to ENDA.

The first lesson is not to accept what legislators have to say on this subject, which is invariably that trans-inclusion will kill legislation. In New York, the leaders of each house of the Legislature exercise absolute control over everything (and I do mean everything). For years, we asked the leadership of the Democratic-controlled Assembly to add “gender identity and expression” to SONDA and every time the answer was a very curt “No.” On the side, we’d be told that, “Look, let’s be honest. It took this long to get members OK with you (gay) people, but this transgender thing? No way.” (A lot of what we were told was far worse than this, but being an insider organization we could never go public with those comments. That’s the way it works.)

We accepted that answer because we thought we had to. We thought that making a stink about this would derail other legislative priorities—like enacting a hate crimes bill, making sure a DOMA never saw the light of day, and winning significant appropriations for LGBT health and human service programs.

In hindsight, my judgment was wrong. Ultimately—and often reluctantly—legislators do have to respond to the pressure of constituencies they support. Ultimately, a constituency has the right to decide what kind of legislation is advanced on its be-

half. I believe now that if we had insisted on trans-inclusion years back, it would have happened, maybe not immediately, but it would have happened. Part of my resistance was a belief that we could only get so much, and that pushing for too much would have jeopardized everything else. As we went along, I began to realize the more you ask for, the more you get, and the harder you push, the quicker it comes.

Working at the Task Force, I’ve already witnessed dozens of situations at the state and local level where legislators have initially said no to trans-inclusion. Our community, united, has said no way. And guess what? In almost every instance, legislators have backed down and the bills have moved forward with trans-inclusion never an issue.

It feels like ENDA is caught in a similar situation. ENDA’s congressional sponsors, including our champion Barney Frank, believe that trans-inclusion will cripple ENDA’s chances and that it will cost the support of some co-sponsors. (I have no doubt Barney and our community’s insider lobbyists are hearing the same kind of egregious transphobic statements from members of Congress that we heard from legislators in Albany.) Our side probably feels like we have no choice and can’t risk angering key allies by demanding trans-inclusion, particularly since we have had to lean on House and Senate members to vote against anti-marriage legislation and other attacks.

I do think our community has options. For one, we should make sure that our legislative allies are the ones with no choice—a trans-inclusive bill is the only bill acceptable. Period. Years of



Matt Foreman

Sophia Hantzas

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friendly persuasion haven't worked and so long as we offer any support for the existing version of ENDA it will live on. Some sponsors may very well fall off the bill. When the new ENDA is the only major gay rights bill on the table, those who are truly our community's friends will either stay on or come back.

The second lesson I learned is that you have to make a bill trans-inclusive early on so that when it finally starts moving, the issue is behind you and can't be used as another excuse for inaction. This also requires not falling into the "this will be the year if only" trap.

After languishing for nearly 20 years, SONDA began passing the New York Assembly every year starting in 1993, by increasingly bipartisan margins. Every year after that, we hoped—we believed—that we could move the bill through the Republican-Conservative dominated Senate. In retrospect, I realize we were playing out "if only" Hail Mary-like scenarios. IF ONLY we applied enough pressure (or IF ONLY we kept our mouth shut). IF ONLY we could pressure our representatives in Washington to use their clout in Albany. IF ONLY we could persuade the governor to weigh in. IF ONLY the Democrats in the Assembly would make SONDA a priority in end-of-session horse-trading with the Senate. IF ONLY. IF ONLY. IF ONLY.

When every year seemed like it would be THE year, we didn't want to do or add anything that might upset or stall our applecart. We couldn't imagine walking away from the legislation around which our organization had been founded when it was SO close to becoming law. This, too, kept me from pressing harder and insisting on trans-inclusion.

In hindsight, I should have recognized that the "this will be the year if only" scenarios were a combination of wishful thinking on our part and the way in which legislative bodies keep hungry constituencies in line—dangling different varieties of carrots which inevitably vanish at the end of successive legislative sessions. I should have recognized that SONDA would pass only when we had real contacts and leverage with the Republicans. In hindsight, it's clear that that demanding trans-inclusion from the Democrats years back would not have caused either the bill's demise or delayed its enactment, and that not demanding inclusion was wrong. Because I did not do that, when three de-

cades of work and a series of complicated political maneuvers engaging Republicans finally got the bill to move in the State Senate, the only bill on the table was the trans-exclusive bill repeatedly passed by the Assembly. (Then, miraculously, the Democrats in the Assembly who'd said no to trans-inclusion for years, turned around and said, "Well of course we'd pass a trans-inclusive bill— IF ONLY the Republicans do it first." Oy.)

It feels like ENDA might be afflicted by the miasma that surrounded SONDA years back. ENDA was introduced in a moment of hope—1994—when Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the White House. The comprehensive civil rights bill (which I'm proud to say the Task Force played a leading role in getting introduced in the early '70s) was abandoned in favor of this bill, covering only employment discrimination because that's what the polls showed (and still show) had the highest public opinion support. At that moment in time, ENDA did have a shot, and it came within one vote of passing the Senate in 1996. Even then, however, House approval was a long shot and the bill's prospects have obviously not soared since then.

Nonetheless, I have no doubt the "IF ONLY" scenarios have been playing out endlessly since then. IF ONLY President Clinton would bargain with Republican leaders over ENDA. IF ONLY Al Gore is elected. IF ONLY we can get "friendly" Republicans to put pressure on their leaders. IF ONLY the Democrats regain control of Congress. IF ONLY John Kerry is elected.

ENDA isn't poised to pass and be signed into law anytime soon, even if most of the bums are thrown out in November. Now is the time to make it trans-inclusive, so that when all the conditions come together and make ENDA ready to move at last, it will be the law we can all embrace. Take it from me—while I am very proud that gay, lesbian and bisexual New Yorkers are now protected from discrimination—there isn't a day that goes by that I do not have real regrets about the mistakes I see I made with SONDA.

Finally, the third lesson is not an easy one to admit: I failed to recognize my own anti-trans ignorance and prejudices. Legislators essentially said, "You gays in suits are OK, but them, there's no way." I realize now that I bought that I was a "good

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gay” and from that point there’s no escaping the unspoken corollaries, I am better and I am not one of them. From there, it’s easy to start spinning out the differences between anti-gay and anti-transgender discrimination and why the remedies to it are different, etc., etc.

On this front, I do not think for one minute that those still pushing the trans-exclusive ENDA share my prejudices. To the contrary. It would be disingenuous not to recognize,

however, that many in our community do not understand why or how trans issues are “gay” issues—and how “gay” issues are trans issues—and don’t see any reason to spend time or political capital on them. This, I think, has kept us from being strongly and implacably united around trans-inclusion.

That needs to change now. ENDA as we have known it must die. Long live a new ENDA for all our people.

KEY #6 HAVE TRANS-INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING, SERVICES AND ADVOCACY POSITIONS

In our society, there are a limited number of places that transgender people—especially visible and out transgender people—can go, be safe and be themselves. Your organization can make an incredible impact on people’s lives by increasing that number with every trans-inclusive program that you put on, every group you sponsor and every piece of legislation you advocate for. By creating a trans-affirmative organization, you can provide the opportunity for people to express themselves freely, build new friendships and networks of support, access essential services, or gain valuable education—in short, you can help people who are often targeted and marginalized to enlarge and enrich their lives.

Programs

The programs that you conduct and the way you include people in those programs can make all the difference for transgender people. There are a couple of important things to keep in mind:

1. There is a need for transgender-specific programming, and
2. Transgender people want to participate in other programs as well.

There are often limited opportunities for transgender people to gather with other trans people.

It can be very important for people to have the chance to gather with those who understand and share their experiences. There are unique questions that people may want to ask others like themselves and topics of conversation that are most appropriate or feel safest within that context. Therefore, it is important that transgender people have trans-specific programs that meet their needs.

Needs Assessments

Needs assessments require some expertise in order to yield the results you want. For some resources to get you started, visit NCTE's website at:
<http://www.nctequality.org/52things.html#44>.

Transgender people—like all people—have a variety of interests and those needs may change over time. Transgender-specific programming could include a group for those who are newly identifying as transgender (for ex-

ample, a coming out session or a support group to explore the options of transition) as well as topics of interest to people who have been out for a longer period of time.

However, a transgender-inclusive organization does not limit transgender people to trans-specific programming. Ideally, transgender people will be involved at all levels of your organization—from the bowling league to the board room to the front lines of political advocacy. Don't assume that all transgender people will want to participate in your transgender-specific programming, but don't assume that they won't want it either.

It is also vital for you to consider the participation of transgender people in other gender-specific groups. For example, if you have a gay men's book discussion group or a lesbian parenting class, think of how to communicate that transgender gay men who are interested in literature or transgender lesbian parents are welcome to participate in those groups. Transgender people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual may be coming to your organization because of those identities, rather than because they are transgender. They are also part of the lesbian, gay and bisexual experience and have a right to participate in those groups.

On the other hand, it is also important to remember that not all transgender people are bisexual, lesbian or gay. Some identify as heterosexual. To be a truly inclusive LGBT organization, your programs need to reference and welcome straight transgender people and their families.

Plan Your Programming to Meet Needs

It is important to understand the communities you are seeking to serve. Far too often, we waste precious money and resources on programs based on what we think that people will need or want rather than taking the time to find out what the genuine needs are. Conducting a community needs assessment can be a valuable investment to ensure that you are planning the right type of events and services. That way, you can target your efforts to be sure that you are being effective.

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Recognize the Diversity of the Transgender Community

Not all transgender inclusive programs will be of interest to all transgender people and that's fine. It is important to realize that within the community there are different types of people under "transgender umbrella." We advocate for incorporating as many people as possible and setting a welcoming, inclusive tone to all of your programs.

Occasionally people will want to draw a distinction between those who have had gender reassignment surgery ("post-op") and those who have not ("pre-op" or "non-op"). Unless there is a very specific programmatic need for it (such as a support group for people considering surgery), this is not helpful. In almost every case, surgical status should be a private matter between individuals and their health care providers, unless they choose to reveal that information. In no circumstances should surgical status be the basis for receiving civil rights, having access to safe restroom facilities or being allowed to participate in the life of an organization.

It is also important to be aware that there is a diversity of opinion about and experience of drag queens and kings within the transgender community. Drag is sometimes integral to a person's gender identity and sometimes not. Gender conforming people perform drag in addition to transgender people. Although the majority of performers are exploring or deconstructing femininity or masculinity in a way that challenges or enlarges our ideas about rigid gender stereotypes, some drag performers depict women or transgender people in demeaning ways. Talented drag performers can point out the irony of our gender-divided society and provide us with a way to reconsider or laugh at the challenges it presents us. Drag is part of our historical tradition as LGBT people and can be a vital part of our organizations. It is at its best when it brings affirmation to us, without putting down other members of the community.

Transitioning Our Shelters A Guide To Making Homeless Shelters Safe For Transgender People

Recognizing the need for advocacy for transgender people who are disproportionately homeless, the Task Force partnered with the National Coalition for the Homeless to produce the resource, *Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide To Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People*. The guide is an example of a transgender-specific resource that was needed to address a serious problem that faces transgender people more than lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The guide is available for free at:



<http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/TransitioningOurShelters.pdf>

OPENING THE DOOR

Have a Fully Trans-Inclusive Public Policy Position

In order to have credibility as a transgender-inclusive organization, you must take a consistent position on the inclusion of transgender people. This cannot be emphasized enough.

It is absolutely critical that all types of groups that serve the LGBT communities take a position that the laws and policies that govern our societal institutions, our states and our country must protect all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression. We must take the stance that we cannot leave anyone behind. It is not acceptable to argue that securing rights for gay and lesbian people first is the best strategy and that transgender people can be added later; this has not proved to be a necessary strategy and should not be pursued. All over the country, including in conservative places, municipalities and states are passing laws and policies that protect people based on gender identity/expression and sexual orientation simultaneously; if you are working for anti-discrimination legislation, we urge you to do likewise.

Whether you are advocating for a nondiscrimination law, an anti-harassment policy at a school, or dealing with a restaurant that is uncomfortable with transgender patrons, taking a strong stand on inclusion—that we go together or not at all—will gain your organization a great deal of respect from the transgender community.

Voices From the Movement: Refusing to Compromise, and Winning!

Stacey Sobel, Executive Director, Equality Advocates Pennsylvania

In 2001-2002, Pennsylvania activists and state legislators worked together to pass an LGBT-inclusive amendment to the state's hate crimes law. A few weeks before the Senate vote, the coalition working on the legislation was approached by our legislative allies to amend the bill. The legislators suggested that we would be able to get more votes for the legislation if we removed gender identity. The coalition decided that we should not and would not do this, and we asked the Senators to proceed with the bill as written.



Stacey Sobel

was used and passed by a two-thirds majority (32-15) in a Republican-controlled Senate and later that year, by 118-79 in the Republican-controlled House. It was then signed by a Republican Governor. If the coalition had agreed to take out the protections for transgender people, I know we would not have gender identity protections today. We needed to draw the line with the legislators. This showed us what we knew already—that the legislators would pass the transgender-inclusive bill—they just needed us to tell them that nothing else was acceptable. Today, as we advocate for a statewide non-discrimination bill, the issue of transgender-inclusion is not on the table. When we eventually pass this bill, it will also be fully inclusive.

The original LGBT-inclusive language

Prioritize Transgender Needs

Because transgender people have often been left out in the past, there are times when transgender needs must be prioritized in order to level the playing field. Transgender people currently have fewer civil rights than lesbian, gay and bisexual people and are less protected from violence and discrimination. For us to be a genuinely LGBT movement, we must close that gap.

There are also transgender-specific initiatives that your organization may need to advocate for. Creating transgender-inclusive policies with regards to bathrooms and changing areas is one critical area. For example, a Gay-Straight Alliance may advocate for a gender-neutral locker room at their school; doing so will send a strong message to transgender students that this group is one that welcomes them and will support them. Other important issues to the transgender community include work on changing identification documents, such as passports, drivers' licenses, student IDs and birth certificates, among others. Be aware of the legislative efforts of national, state and local transgender and LGBT organizations and take a position in favor of bills that increase the rights of transgender people.

While there have been transgender leaders in the LGBT movement from the beginning, it is also true that the transgender community is just beginning to collectively realize its political potential. There are fewer seasoned leaders in the legislative and political arenas and therefore it is important to provide for leadership development within the transgender community and opportunities for self-advocacy. A fully transgender-inclusive organization recognizes the need to stand with the transgender community while allowing transgender leaders to speak for themselves.

Advocating for Transgender-Inclusive Laws and Policies

In 2001, the Task Force developed the Transgender Civil Rights Project, staffed by an attorney ready to help LGBT and allied activists pass transgender-specific and transgender-inclusive laws and policies, from nondiscrimination laws to driver's license policies, to homeless shelter access. For help with local, state, or federal legislation and policies, contact the Transgender Civil Rights Project or visit the website at http://www.thetaskforce.org/our_work/public_policy/transgender_civil_rights

Reflections

- What programs do you have that specifically meet the needs of transgender people?
- What do you think are the most critical needs of the different transgender communities at this time? What led you to draw that conclusion?
- Do transgender people participate actively in other programs that you run? Are transgender people shaping these programs? Why or why not?
- What positions has your organization taken on trans-inclusive policies and legislation?

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- Do the straight partners and children of transgender people feel welcome at your organization? How can you make it clear that transgender people can bring their families to your events?

Action Items

- Conduct a needs assessment of the transgender community. Find out in which specific areas there are no services addressing the community's needs. Consider what you can do to address un- or under-serviced areas.
- Create programs that address the unique needs of transgender people. Based on your needs assessment and input from community members, develop transgender-specific programs.
- Make sure that transgender people know that they are welcome to participate in all programs.
- Check your internal policies and procedures to make sure that they are all transgender-inclusive. Evaluate each policy considering transgender-inclusion. Eliminate any policies that reference surgical or hormonal status.
- Advocate for public policies that protect transgender people from violence and discrimination. Develop organizational policies that clearly state your commitment to advocating only for transgender-inclusive legislation and advance the entire LGBT community.

UNITED ENDA: A Definitive Fight for Trans-Inclusion at the Federal Level

When plans for a transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) fell apart in the U.S. House of Representatives in the Fall of 2007, many LGBT organizations rallied in support of keeping gender identity protections in the bill. More than 350 organizations signed on with United ENDA, a campaign that was formed to favor of a fully-inclusive bill and oppose passage of a LGB-only bill. Transgender people paid very close attention to which LGBT organizations were willing to drop gender identity protections and support a sexual orientation-only bill, and which took a stand in favor of only inclusive legislation.

The strong support for the inclusive bill by the majority of LGBT organizations is an important demonstration of the ways in

which transgender people have become an integral part of the LGBT movement. This impacts the way in which the movement is seen externally, for example, by members of Congress, as well as the ways in which our organizations are viewed as fully and genuinely committed to transgender inclusion.

If your organization is not yet a member of United ENDA, it is still possible to join as the campaign plans to stay together and work for passage of a trans-inclusive bill until it passes. To participate, send an e-mail to: info@UnitedENDA.org, including full organization name, geography served/type of group (national, state, city, college, etc.), and contact name, email address, and phone number.

KEY #7

UNDERSTAND TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCES

In order to work effectively with transgender people, it is important to learn about their experiences. A critical first step is to be knowledgeable about the terminology transgender people use to refer to themselves (see page 6) and to use correct names and pronouns (see pages 23, 31).

Being transgender may or may not be the most important factor in an individual's life. During certain periods, such as when someone is transitioning, it may be an all-consuming issue. At other points in a person's life, they may rarely think about the fact that they are transgender. This is very similar to the focus that lesbian, gay and bisexual people may have on their sexual orientation while they are coming out; sometimes it is very important to pay attention to, while at other times, it is simply one facet of a person's identity.

The way in which transgender people feel about disclosing their transgender identity may be different, however, than the way many gay, lesbian and bisexual people feel about being out of the closet. Transgender people may be public about their LGB identity but feel that their birth gender is a private matter. They may feel comfortable discussing their attractions and relationships—their sexual orientation—but not want to reveal details of their medical background and gender identity/expression. Some transsexual people feel very strongly about blending in to their target gender and do not want their history revealed because it is painful to them. Because there are fewer legal protections for transgender people, they may feel a greater risk in being out about their trans status.

When people reveal to you that they are transgender, it is impolite to ask them questions about their medical history. In particular, you should not ask them if they have had surgery or any other question about their genitals, unless there is some compelling reason you need to know (for example, if you are a medical provider treating someone with a groin injury). If someone tells you that they are transgender, asking them about their genitals is equivalent to coming out to someone as gay and having them ask you to describe the last time you had sex. Telling someone about your identity is not an invitation to inquire about intimate details of your life.

You should also not draw distinctions between transgender people based on whether or not they have had surgery of any kind. There are a number of different surgeries that transgender people may have (there is no such thing as “the surgery,” that transforms a person's gender in one medical procedure) and all of them are expensive. Very few transgender people have access to insurance or financial assistance to pay for treatment. Many transgender people choose not to have surgery for a variety of reasons, including finances, the risks of having surgery and because they may be happy with their body the way it is. Surgical decisions should be made between individuals and their physicians.

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You should absolutely never prioritize civil rights based on surgical status. “Post-op” people should not have greater access to appropriate restrooms or legal protections than “non-op” or “pre-op” transgender people. All people should have the right to safety and freedom from discrimination. Drop the distinctions between pre-op, post-op and non-op from your vocabulary; they serve no purpose and serve instead to stigmatize and divide the community. These differences are only relevant to an individual’s medical providers and therapists working with those who wish to explore surgical options.

For people diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder—a classification in the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual used to categorize mental health conditions—there is the added societal stigma of being considered mentally ill. Many medical providers require a GID diagnosis in order to provide transgender-related care. People have every right to keep their health, including mental health, conditions a private matter between themselves and their doctors. For some people, having this information become public could jeopardize their jobs or other things that are important to them.

It is also critical to acknowledge that our society stigmatizes and penalizes people who have a different gender presentation. Some transgender people grow up being belittled by their families of origin, their schoolmates, teachers, ministers and the general public. There is a great deal of punishment heaped especially upon little boys who are viewed as being effeminate. Girls who pursue “tomboy” activities can also be chastised or made to feel ashamed.

This negative attention to children from a very young age can have a devastating effect on self-esteem and on the ability to socialize well with others. There are some transgender people who are awkward in public simply because they have never felt welcomed or accepted by others. While we cannot undo the damage done in childhood, we can be patient with people who are at times struggling socially, recognizing that a punishing, intolerant society is to blame. There are people who may be hostile when you first meet them, assuming that you—like others they have encountered—will be prejudiced or rude to them. When you demonstrate consistently your advocacy for and acceptance of transgender people, you may find that they come to respect and treat you very differently.

You should also be aware that transgender people live every day with negative stereotypes and attitudes from an intolerant society. People may try to keep trans women from using the women’s restroom, citing fears about sexual assault—just like the old fears that people had about women being assaulted by lesbians in the showers. People may fear having children around transgender people—just like the baseless phobias about gay men being pedophiles. It is vital that transgender-inclusive organizations provide spaces where we can live free from the impacts of these outrageous lies and be sure that we are not furthering them.

Transgender people also face a world in which anti-transgender violence is prevalent. For someone who is visibly transgender, just walking down the street may be life-threatening. Additionally, transgender people fear—based on real experiences—that they will not be protected by the police or treated properly by emergency medical personnel. Again, transgender-inclusive LGBT organizations can provide havens of safety and acceptance in an all-too-often hostile world.

At the same time, transgender people have valuable experiences seeing the world in more than one way. They may have perspectives on what it means to be male and female that very few other people in our society may have. They can bring their gifts of self-discovery and self-affirmation to our organizations. Transgender people live full lives with all of the same passions that non-transgender people have.

It is important not to view transgender people as victims, even while recognizing the negative impacts of transphobia. Just like gay, lesbian and bisexual people have fulfilling lives—with relationships, careers, hobbies and families—while living with pervasive homophobia, transgender people also balance living with transphobia and everyday life. It is important that you know the realities of transgender life while treating transgender people as individuals who deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

An important step toward understanding is to undertake your own research and learning on all of these issues. While it is important to talk to transgender people about what they experience, transgender allies should not expect transgender people to do all of the teaching for us. Read books, explore websites and watch documentaries about transgender people. Stay abreast of newspaper articles and legislative initiatives. Being knowledgeable about the world transgender people live in helps demonstrate a willingness to learn and understand the experiences of others.

Reflections

- What do you think about when you think of transgender people?
- When did you first learn of transgender people? From television? From a person? Because of your own feelings? How have you learned about transgender people?
- Is there a time in your own childhood that you remember someone telling you about how boys or girls were “supposed” to behave? How did that make you feel?
- Imagine coming out to your family and friends as transgender. How do you think they would react? Would they be supportive of you?

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- Consider someone asking you about your genitals or specific details about your medical history. How would this make you feel?
- If you were transgender, how would you express your gender? Would you transition? Crossdress? What would you be afraid of? What do you think you might enjoy most about being a different gender than the one you are now?

Voices from the Movement: Trans-Inclusion in the Midwest

Contributed by Kylar Broadus, transgender activist, board member Transgender Law and Policy Institute

In building bridges within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movement, PROMO, Missouri's statewide LGBT advocacy group, has been stellar. As the debate nationally and locally on whether transgender people should be a part of the LGB movement raged on, PROMO was unwavering in its support for inclusiveness and has continued this course for the past six or more years. No doubt that this commitment is one of the reasons Missouri was one of the first states to have a fully transgender-inclusive hate crimes law.



Kylar Broadus

afterthought or in tokenism. I served on the PROMO board for a number of years. I don't believe that I was picked just because I was transgender; however, I do believe I was chosen due to being qualified and having skills the board needed at the time.

PROMO has made transgender people a regular part of their work rather than as an

Currently, PROMO is continuing its efforts to be inclusive by initiating the Gender Identity Project to help educate the LGB and greater community on transgender issues and needs. In the past, PROMO has sponsored town halls on transgender issues across Missouri to educate and inform the LGB community. In the spring of 2008, PROMO will again be sponsoring town halls on transgender issues in several cities across the state. Additionally, they are updating their website to provide educational tools, collect stories and to educate. The organization is also looking at what key cities to target to pursue local nondiscrimination legislation and policies in cities, universities, and counties across the state.

Finally, PROMO has been supportive on the national level by rallying constituents to telephone, email, fax or send letters to Congress in support of transgender-inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and in the federal hate crimes bill. PROMO joined the United ENDA coalition and signed on to national letters of support for inclusiveness.

There is always room for improvement and much work to be done. However, we cannot go on without recognizing the work of our allies that has been so beneficial. For this, I am grateful.

keys to transgender inclusion

Action Items

- Listen to transgender people tell their stories—in person or through a book, documentary or blog. Consider multiple transgender perspectives by thinking about the ways in which different people share their unique stories.
- Learn about different transgender-related terms and what they mean. Make sure that your organization is using proper terminology.
- Advocate for the rights of transgender people. Provide ways for transgender people to be active in achieving our political rights and work alongside us as an ally.
- Speak up against any stereotypes that you hear about transgender people. Confront anti-transgender prejudice and myths when you hear them by giving accurate information that you've learned.
- Let children in your life know that is okay to be themselves, however they express their genders.

Books

Boylan, Jennifer F. *She's Not There: a Life in Two Genders*. Random House, 2003.

Brown, Mildred L., and Chloe Ann Rounsley. *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism--for Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals*. Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Conover, Pat. *Transgender Good News*. New Wineskins Press, 2002.

Cromwell, Jason. *Transmen and FTMs: Identities, Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities*. University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Currah, Paisley, Richard M. Juang, and Shannon Price Minter, eds. *Transgender Rights*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Green, Jamison. *Becoming a Visible Man*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*. Little, Brown Young Readers, 2006.

Rudacille, Deborah. *The Riddle of Gender: Science, Activism, and Transgender Rights*. Pantheon, 2005. Non-fiction

Sycamore, Matt Bernstein. *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity*. Seal Press, 2006.

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Parrotfish*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007.

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Films

Boys Don't Cry. Dir. Kimberly Peirce. Perf. Hilary Swank. DVD. 20th Century Fox, 1999.

Call Me Malcolm. Dir. Joseph Parlagreco. DVD. United Church of Christ, and Filmworks, Inc., 2004.

Cruel and Unusual. Dir. Janet Baus, Dan Hunt and Reid Williams. Outcast Films, 2006.

Ma Vie En Rose. Dir. Alain Berliner. Perf. Michèle Laroque, and Jean-Philippe ÉCoffey. DVD. Sony Pictures, 1997.

The Brandon Teena Story. Dir. Gréta Olafsdóttir. DVD. Docurama, 1998

Transamerica. Dir. Duncan Tucker. Perf. Felicity Huffman, Danny Burstein, and Andrea James. DVD. Weinstein Company, 2005.

TransGeneration. Dir. Jeremy Simmons. DVD. New Video Group, 2005.

Voices from the Movement: Educating Oneself On Transgender Issues

Contributed by Patrick Paschall, law student, Hofstra University School of Law,
former National Center for Transgender Equality public policy intern

The most important thing I have done to educate myself about transgender legal and social issues was to make a conscious effort to meet transgender people. We can all read books, re-

source guides, videos and newspapers which purport to tell us every issue that affects the transgender community, but we will fail to fully understand the difficulties that trans people deal with in every day life unless we put a human face on it.

Unlike books and videos, real people can answer questions that we may have about their perspective on things. Books and movies can of course lay a foundation of knowledge,

but I have found they cannot compare to the value one gets out of personal interaction.

That being said, I was always careful not to use transgender people for the educational value they may be able to bestow upon me. I was always careful to be sure someone was comfortable sharing their stories with me as we talked. As a person with privilege, sending another the message “you are only valuable inasmuch as I can use you” is to abuse privilege and belittle others. Transgender people have value, not just as those who can provide us non-transgender people with unique insight or an educational opportunity, but as courageous persons whose character is made up of much more than just their gender identity. I am a much better person today because I know and love the many transgender people in my life. And, the LGBT organizations I am a part of are stronger because I am much more aware of the issues transgender people face, in their lives, and with being included in the LGBT movement.



Patrick Paschall

KEY #8

UNDERSTAND ONE'S ROLE AS AN ALLY

The eighth key to being a successfully transgender-inclusive LGBT organization is to be an organization of people who are transgender allies. A transgender ally is a person who has taken the time to understand the transgender experience and has considered his or her role as being personally responsible for ensuring that the actions of the organization are transgender-inclusive. A transgender ally doesn't just talk about being inclusive, but instead they take concrete action, using their privileges as a non-transgender person to effect change. And, an ally doesn't sit silent when they see transphobia appear.

The most confusing aspect of being a transgender ally is how much of a lead to take on transgender issues in relation to transgender people. As a non-transgender person, one may question one's authority or right to assert what course of action the organization should take with regard to a particular issue, especially if the transgender community is divided itself.

Generally, it is best to think of oneself as in a "sidekick" role—Robin to Batman, for example. Transgender community members need you to dig in and do work with them, but it may not be appropriate for you to be setting the agenda for the group. Of course you should give input, and use all of your knowledge and skills in the discussion process, but it is best to think of ourselves as serving the group's needs, as opposed to telling the group what it needs or should accomplish. When you are doing work as a transgender ally, it is imperative to be wearing your "transgender hat"—putting yourself in the shoes of transgender people, as opposed to considering what would be best for the LGB part of the organization.

It isn't always as simple as putting on one's "transgender hat" and then being the worker-bee on the community's priorities. A true ally must also use their critical thinking skills and must engage actively. It is not enough to simply follow the transgender activist that the ally is accustomed to working with and deferring to them. Part of being a good ally is being aware of divisions and differences in the community and actively working with a broader community.

This may be easier to understand if one is to make a comparison to the LGBT community. As members of LGBT organizations, there are often times you find yourself having to make decisions when the LGBT community is divided about a course of action. In fact, you often have a responsibility to act even though there is division about how to proceed. This is true for a transgender ally; even if there is division about how to proceed, an ally must ultimately help move towards action even though not everyone can agree on what is best. An ally can't sit there and be immobilized by community disagreement. This would be akin to a straight person saying that until all LGB people agree that marriage is desirable they will not take action to support same-sex marriage rights.

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When a person is just starting out as a transgender ally, they may not see the power they have as a non-transgender person. When non-trans people advocate for transgender issues, whether within their LGBT organization or to non-LGBT people and institutions, other people listen. This is because a non-trans person is often seen as objective and not self-serving when they advocate for a course of action. For example, if a non-trans person advocates for gender-neutral bathrooms at their college or at the LGBT community center, this idea will likely be taken more seriously than if a transgender person were to advocate for the exact same thing.

Using one's power as a transgender ally is very rewarding. Many LGB people in LGBT organizations are accustomed to advocating for LGB rights and when they do so, they are not advocating from a position of privilege. Yet, when they adopt the role of a transgender ally, they experience considerably more power and find they are able to be more effective. Many transgender allies report that their work on transgender issues is significantly more fun, exciting, and more effective than their work on LGB issues.

Ultimately, transgender rights and transgender inclusion will never happen if only transgender people are advocating for it. This is true in exactly the same way that LGB rights and inclusion in greater society will never happen unless straight allies work for it as well. LGBT organizations have tremendous power to transform our communities, both the LGBT community and our general society, to be transgender-friendly. Many would say they have the obligation to use that power for the greater good.

Reflections

- What have you done already as a transgender ally? What would you like to do more of in the future?
- Is your LGBT organization composed of people who consider themselves transgender allies, or not? If there are transgender allies in your organization, what made them become transgender allies?
- As a transgender ally, what authority do you think you should take to make decisions about what actions to pursue relating to transgender issues and inclusion?
- Do you call yourself a transgender ally? If so, why is this important to you? If not, what are your reservations about doing so?
- Have you taken concrete action as a transgender ally? What steps did you take?

Action Ideas

- Talk to the transgender people involved in your organization or in the community

about how they would like you to work on transgender issues. Do they want you to take the lead or follow their lead?

- Use your power as a non-transgender person by tackling a trans-inclusion problem at your organization. See what it feels like and whether or not you are listened to in part because you are not transgender.
- Sit down and make a list of all of the things you would change about your organization so that it will be more transgender-inclusive. Tackle them one by one.

KEY #9 HAVE FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

A number of our LGBT organizations pay staff to do a variety of jobs in our community. Organizations with employees need to address some specific issues. This section will discuss transgender inclusion as it impacts our groups and organizations that are also employers. In some cases, there will be applicable laws that you will need to follow (for example, in states that ban discrimination based on gender identity and expression). We recommend that all of our organizations uphold workplace practices that ensure fairness for all of our employees, recognizing that we have a responsibility to support those who are devoting their professional lives to building our communities.

Hiring Practices

To be a transgender inclusive organization means being open to transgender participation in all levels of our work, including hiring transgender people. You can communicate this when you have a job opening by including statements such as, “Our organization is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage people of color, transgender people and women to apply for this position.”

Consider your job applications and see if they ask specific questions about gender. Do you need that information? If so, look at ways to include categories beyond just “male” and “female.” (See Key #3 for specific suggestions).

Recognize that some transgender applicants may have transitioned on the job at another workplace or since their employment. They may have a different name listed on their college transcripts or with a prior employer; references may know them under a prior name. When creating a file for an applicant, keep all of the information about that person in one file. Realize, too, that some past employers may give a poor reference to a transgender applicant because of their own transphobia, rather than as an accurate reflection of that person’s performance.

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New Employees

It can be difficult for transgender people to change their name and gender marker on federal identification due to the heightened scrutiny of records. Therefore, you may receive notification by the Social Security Administration that there is a discrepancy between an employee's stated gender and the gender marker on their Social Security records. This has the impact of outing transgender people to their employers; however, it is not illegal to have inconsistent gender markers. Essentially, the Social Security Administration has just

informed you of a fact that should not affect your employment of this staff member. It is, however, helpful to ensure that your organization has a policy that states that you will not take negative action against an employee in this instance.

Set a positive tone when introducing a new employee to other staff members and to clients. If a person has a non-conforming gender presentation, clarify which pronouns the person prefers and model them. For example, you

might send out an e-mail that says, "Please welcome Pat Freeman to our staff. She brings a wealth of experience to our organization and we are delighted she is here. I look forward to the opportunity to introduce her to you at our staff meeting on Wednesday." This lets people know which pronouns to use without having to make a big deal about it.

Be aware that not all transgender people are out so speak with your new employee about whether that information is something that should be shared with other staff or clients. Just like gay, lesbian and bisexual people, some transgender people are very open about their identities while others are not.

Employment Issues

It is vital that LGBT organizations implement non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression. Our organizations are strongest when they are fully inclusive. It is important that the organization, its staff and board share a commitment to upholding these policies. Information about these policies should be clearly included in any employee handbooks or guidelines that you have. When you hold diversity trainings for your staff, be sure that you include information on transgender people.

If your workplace has a dress code, ensure that it applies equally to people of all genders. We can't imagine an LGBT organization that would even try to force lesbians to wear dresses nor should a gay man be prevented from wearing skirts if that expresses his gender. Nevertheless, there are sometimes unwritten rules or social norms that look down on peo-

Resources on Federal Documents & Social Security

Federal laws and regulations relating to gender and Social Security and other databases, and obligations of employers to match data, are constantly changing. For the most up-to-date information, see the NCTE website at <http://www.nctequality.org/issues/nomatch.html>, or more generally at www.nctequality.org.

ple for cross-dressing or, on the opposite side of the spectrum, for looking “too straight.” Some organizations adopt norms about the standard of dress appropriate for their business—for example, no jeans or shorts during work hours—and these rules should apply equally to all employees, regardless of gender, gender identity or expression.

Some jobs require an employee to change into a uniform. In such cases, employees should be offered a safe and private place to do so. Transgender employees, as well as other employees, may be hesitant to change in a group locker room.

When attending events such as a staff retreat or a conference, employees may be asked to share a room. Often, these assignments are made based on gender. We believe that the best practice is to allow adults to make their own choices about who they share sleeping space with. For example, if a lesbian and a gay man are friends and would prefer to room together, what is the harm to the organization in allowing them to do so? There may be other factors that influence your decision, such as cost and lines of supervision, but gender per se shouldn't be the basis. Recognize, also, that transgender people may be shy or uncomfortable about having a body that differs from others and that may make them hesitant to share a room. If they are not public about being transgender, having to share a room with a colleague could out them. If room sharing is necessary, trans staff should be assured that they will be able to share a room with a transgender-friendly colleague.

Health Care

Having equal access to competent health care is a vital issue for the transgender community. Many, if not most, insurance companies have explicit exclusions for transgender-related health care. Check your insurance policy to have accurate information about the regulations of the plan you are using. Ask your insurance carrier to drop that exclusion; changes only come about because we advocate for them.

You can find insurance companies that cover hormone replacement therapies. Make sure that your plan includes this.

Because transition-related health care is not included in most health plans, some organizations are creating an employer-housed health care fund that provides money directly to employees to cover care that is explicitly denied by the insurance companies. Providing transgender health care is an important part of attracting and retaining transgender employees. Transgender people are not asking for special rights, but rather only for coverage of the procedures that they and their doctors have concluded are medically necessary for their well-being. When employers make funds available for these health care services, employees are eligible to apply for these funds to cover services that are denied based on the discriminatory practices of the insurance industry. Covering even

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some of the employee's out-of-pocket costs demonstrates a commitment to equal health care for transgender employees.

Be Proactive in Planning and Evaluations

When you set priorities for the coming year or do long- or short-range planning, include the needs of transgender staff on your agenda.

When doing staff evaluations or supervision, consider how well each employee has worked to achieve the organization's objectives about the inclusion of transgender people. Work with your staff members to set workable goals for increasing their own effectiveness in reaching and serving the transgender community.

Fair workplace resources

For more information about fair workplace policies, visit:

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates

<http://www.outandequal.org/programs/transgender/default.asp>

Pride at Work, AFL-CIO

<http://prideatwork.org/page.php?id=155>

Equality Project

<http://www.equalityproject.org/>

Be a Model

We have the opportunity to model to the larger world how well inclusive organizations work. We can show what humane and fair employment practices can do for employee morale and demonstrate that they are the right

thing to do. It gives us a great deal more credibility when advocating for enhanced nondiscrimination laws in our cities, states and country when we can point to our own successes as inclusive employers.

Reflections

- Do you have transgender employees at your organization? If so, what do you think their experience has been with your organization? If you don't have any transgender employees, what are the reasons for that?
- Does your organization advertise available jobs in a way that transgender people know that they are welcome to apply? How might you get the word out about available positions to the transgender community?
- How do your employees express their gender through the ways that they dress?
- How would you handle it if a client at your agency were uncomfortable with a transgender employee?

Action Ideas

- Review your hiring practices and employee manuals to be sure that they address the

needs of transgender workers. Work with other organizations who have already addressed this if you need ideas. Be sure that you consider issues of confidentiality and non-discrimination.

- Ensure that when your organization is hiring, you publicize the position to the transgender communities in your area. Post job listings on transgender message boards.
- Evaluate your job applications to see if they ask about gender.
- Be sure that you have accurate information about transgender-related health care provided under your insurance plan. Consider whether this is adequate to provide transgender employees with the same level of care as your other employees. If it is not, develop a plan of corrective action.
- When doing employee evaluations and organizational planning, consider effectiveness in reaching the transgender community.
- Develop policies regarding room sharing, if applicable, that meet the needs of transgender employees.

action ideas for LGBT groups

Throughout this guide, we've been talking about actions for a wide variety of LGBT groups. However, given the broad diversity of LGBT organizations, clubs and events, there are some actions that need to be addressed by specific types of groups. Here are some ideas to get you started:

POLITICAL/ADVOCACY GROUPS

- Ensure that all proactive bills/policies you support include sexual orientation and gender identity or expression
- If policies or laws exist that only include sexual orientation, work to get gender identity/expression protections added
- Prioritize working on transgender-specific policy needs, such as fighting for driver's license policies that allow transgender people to change gender markers, or fighting for transgender healthcare to be covered through public and private health insurance
- Insist that legislators and other elected officials say "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender" instead of "gay" or "gay and lesbian"
- If you ask candidates running for office their stances on LGBT issues, include transgender policy priorities in the questions and then only endorse candidates who are fully supportive of transgender rights
- Invite transgender non-political groups to provide input on what advocacy or political needs they have, by inviting them to forums or by meeting with them directly
- Insist that the local or state government has transgender-inclusive policies throughout, such as training police and emergency personnel to be trans-sensitive
- Ensure that transgender people are sent to meetings with legislators so that legislators see that the "T" is a true part of the organization and priorities

COMMUNITY CENTERS

- Host support groups or social events for transgender people of all varieties, such as for men, women, genderqueer people, cross-dressers, etc.
- Ensure that men's and women's groups allow transgender men and women respectively
- Generally ensure that all programs are trans-inclusive, and find ways to indicate trans-inclusiveness in advertisements/descriptions for all programs/events
- If relevant, find ways to increase security outside of the center building to prevent anti-transgender violence. Have volunteers or others stand outside the building when people are arriving for events to deter harassment or violence
- If there is an incident of anti-transgender violence in the community, ensure that your community center becomes the response center where people can go to plan actions and get needed help
- In libraries, include books, videos, and DVD's on transgender topics
- Maintain referral lists of providers and groups (medical, social, etc.) geared for transgender people
- Provide gender-neutral restrooms
- Declare one room in the center to be a changing room

HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

- Create a referral list to transgender-affirming medical and mental health providers and a network of medical and mental health providers
- Train staff to be sensitive and supportive of transgender care issues
- Use forms that recognize transgender individuals and their specific health care situation
- Provide a safe space for patients to receive transgender-specific health care, including hormones, gynecological care, etc.
- Be sure that HIV prevention and treatment information includes the needs and perspectives of transgender people

OPENING THE DOOR

- Recognize that the names that patients/clients use may be different than that known or used by their insurance carrier; use the person's chosen name and pronouns when speaking with the person and when calling them when in the waiting room
- Advocate, as needed, with insurance companies for appropriate care (for example, pap smears for female-to-male patients is routinely turned down by insurance companies; you may need to explain that this is necessary care and not a billing error on your part)
- Realize that some transgender people (and others) have difficulty revealing their bodies or disclosing their transgender identity; provide a safe space that treats the patient with respect and understanding
- Many transgender people have had negative experiences with health care providers, leaving them feeling stigmatized or wary. Acknowledge, as appropriate, and work through these issues to establish a positive relationship with the client/patient

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

- Hold transgender-themed worship services, such as celebrating the transgender experience or commemorating the Transgender Day of Remembrance
- Include examples of transgender people in sermons and other public speaking occasions
- Invite transgender people to speak or preach in worship; to serve as liturgist, musician/cantor or communion server; or to lead educational classes on any topic
- Provide pastoral caregivers who are knowledgeable about transgender issues
- Be prepared to address the theological issues as applicable to your faith tradition, including hospitality, diversity of creation, justice-making, etc.
- Include transgender people widely in your community, as members of councils, teachers of religious education, leaders in worship, etc.
- Ensure that your religious education of children include sessions on gender identity or expression
- Ensure that there are gender-neutral bathrooms available in the building
- Work to be sure that the policies of your local congregation/community and your denomination/wider religious community that apply to ordination of religious leaders and membership include transgender people

LGBT EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS

- Advocate for non-discrimination policies that include gender identity and expression at your workplace and off the job
- Ensure that appropriate written policies are in place to address the needs of employees who are transitioning
- Include heterosexual transgender people and their spouses in your programming as well as gay, lesbian and bisexual transgender people
- Mention transgender people explicitly in your recruitment material for your group
- Encourage the company to hire transgender people; volunteer to provide materials about your company at Job Fairs organized by the transgender community or to transgender groups
- Include transgender speakers or themes in your programs
- When donating money to LGBT nonprofits, prioritize organizations that are transgender-inclusive, or give money to transgender advocacy groups
- Advocate for the inclusion of transgender related health care in your company's insurance plan or the creation of an employer housed health care fund that provides money directly to employees who are denied health care coverage by the insurance carrier
- Speak up for gender neutral restrooms in the workplace and ensure that transgender people have access to equitable restroom and changing room facilities

CAMPUS GROUPS

- Get your university to add "gender identity or expression" to its nondiscrimination policy
- Fight for more gender-neutral bathrooms on campus (single- and multi-use)
- Work for gender-neutral dorms, or, ensure that transgender students can choose their roommate or be assured to be housed with a transgender-friendly roommate
- Bring a trans speaker to campus as part of your LGBT Awareness Week/Month
- Hold a Transgender Awareness Week with a variety of trans-related programming
- Ensure that students and alumni can update their records with their new gender and names

OPENING THE DOOR

- Ensure that trans students can get their needs met at the student health center and counseling centers and that trans-related services and counseling are covered by student health insurance
- Train critical personnel on campus on trans sensitivity (and, ideally, all staff). Critical personnel include: public safety officers, resident advisors, student health center staff, counselors. Include how to respond to anti-transgender harassment and violence
- Bring up transgender issues in classroom discussions or recommend to professors how to add issues to syllabi
- Set up internship programs with local, state, and national LGBT and transgender organizations

SOCIAL/ATHLETIC/ACTIVITY GROUPS

- Ensure that advertising about and descriptions of your group and its activities make clear that transgender people are welcome
- Think about the physical space in which you meet or have events; ensure that bathrooms are safe (possibly ask that they be declared gender-neutral with signage during your event) and if relevant, that changing space be provided. Also, if you meet in a part of town or are going to a public place where a trans person may worry about being the victim of crime, then find ways to ensure their safety, such as by having event volunteers monitor the parking lot
- If doing an event that involves dividing up into smaller groups, don't divide along gender lines unless that is absolutely relevant to the topic. As a general rule, use random characteristics (such as those wearing or not wearing jeans, the month people were born, etc.) For sports teams, ensure that transgender participants can play according to their self-identified gender

ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

- Provide space for transgender artists to showcase their works
- Include transgender artists and gender-related themes in your programming
- When holding a series or a show, include the works of transgender artists and writers
- Don't assume that historical figures who had a different gender expression were necessarily gay or lesbian; they may have been closer to modern transgender people (for ex-

ample, was Joan of Arc a lesbian or a female-to-male cross-dresser?). Lumping everyone under the heading of “gay” erases the identity of transgender people

- Reach out to transgender people and let them know they are welcome to participate in your group (for example, a women’s book discussion group might say in its brochure, “This group is open to all who identify as women and are interested in exploring contemporary queer fiction”)
- Explore options for including transgender people in musical groups, such as considering how to assist a female-to-male individual make the transition to a lower vocal range or provide an appropriate part for a woman who sings baritone
- Utilize venues with gender-neutral restrooms for performances and practices

BARS AND RESTAURANTS

- Provide gender-neutral restrooms for your clientele
- Create a safe and welcoming space for people in drag or those who cross-dress
- Ensure that performances do not rely on negative satires of women or transgender people; drag is a part of our cultural history and can be an art form that recognizes the right of people to express diverse genders
- If you hold performances or allow artists to hang their works in your space, include transgender performers and artists
- Work with your bartenders, waiters, security staff and other employees to set a tone that all people are welcome to patronize your business; the more customers you have, the more successful your business will be

conclusion

By now you have a very good idea of what it is going to take to move your LGBT organization along in its journey to become fully transgender-inclusive. If you have a long way to go, you may feel overwhelmed. Rest assured, by slowly taking steps one by one, you will get where you need to go, and bring along the others in your organization with you. Many hands make light work. You will likely find the process enlightening and empowering. It certainly has been for us in our work in building transgender-inclusive LGBT organizations.

The work of trans-inclusion is critically important. Have no doubt that each of us doing our part will create a new world where it is safe and acceptable to identify as any gender and express our gender in any form we choose. As LGBT organizations demonstrate trans-inclusion, our example will be noted by other organizations and institutions we work with; indeed, we should be actively encouraging them to adopt these practices. Ultimately, our hope is that through each of us making our part of the world trans-inclusive, we will help spread trans-friendly attitudes and behaviors everywhere.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” The power to change the world is yours and ours; we must recognize that power and use it to create a dynamic, inclusive LGBT movement. Hopefully, this guide will support that process. We look forward to working with you and your organization as we build an ever stronger, more powerful, and fully integrated movement for justice.

transgender inclusion: the nine keys for success

#1 WORK TOWARD FULL INTEGRATION AT EVERY ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

- Transgender people should be more than just clients; trans people should be in key leadership positions, serve on the board, act as volunteers, and be on the staff of an inclusive organization.
- Avoid the pitfall of tokenization or having one transgender person that the organization consults with on all trans issues.
- Unless trans people are fully integrated, transgender people will not be fully represented in and by your organization, which hurts not only the organization, but robs the movement of the chance to develop more experienced community members.

#2 RECRUIT A BROAD RANGE OF TRANS PEOPLE

- The work is never done; so one can never put this issue aside as complete.
- Not knowing trans people isn't an adequate excuse; there are transgender people interested and excited to work on LGBT issues. They can be found.
- The differences between transgender people must be recognized, both in gender identity and expression, but also in class, race, ability, age, and religious affiliation.

#3 CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

- Physical space is important. Trans people need trans-friendly bathrooms. Some need a place to change into their gender presentation before a meeting or event.
- What you say really matters. Watch language on forms asking about gender and sexual orientation and think about whether the names of your organization and events are inclusive.

#4 DEAL WITH PREJUDICE

- There is serious transphobia within LGB communities which must be addressed, not swept under the rug. Racism, classism, ableism, sexism and other oppressions are also problems in nearly every environment and must also be addressed.

#5 ACKNOWLEDGE PAST MISTAKES REGARDING TRANS INCLUSION

- If your organization has previously done something that was not transgender-friendly, it is important to put aside defensiveness in the process of healing and repairing any rift that exists between LGB and T people in the organization.
- This is not always a fast process; typically, it will take time to rebuild trust.

#6 HAVE TRANS-INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING, SERVICES, AND ADVOCACY POSITIONS

- There should be trans-specific programming/services; but they shouldn't be the only places trans people are expected to show up.
- Remember that not all trans people are gay/lesbian/bisexual, so include heterosexual transgender people and their families.
- For legislative- and policy-related organizations, the organization must take a non-negotiable stance on transgender-inclusion.

#7 UNDERSTAND TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCES

- Be conscious of social and cultural differences that transgender people may have. Being trans is different than being gay.
- Do one's own education about trans issues; read a book, look on the internet, or do research so you better understand all of the different ways to be transgender and how that affects one's life.

#8 UNDERSTAND ONE'S ROLE AS AN ALLY

- Being an ally means that one should help facilitate the trans community's goals and agenda, without undue influence on setting the agenda.
- However, you can (and should) still use your own critical thinking skills and contribute to agenda-setting and strategy when invited to do so by transgender leaders and colleagues.

#9 HAVE FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

- Implement strong nondiscrimination policies, include nondiscrimination statements in job listings, establish transgender-friendly hiring practices, and provide trainings for employees on sensitivity.
- Provide transgender-related health care, integrate transgender-sensitivity into staff evaluations, ensure employees can update their name and gender in files, ensure that transgender status is confidential, and ensure that transgender employees are safe from harassment on the job.

acknowledgments

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Lisa Mottet has staffed the Transgender Civil Rights Project at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force since helping to establish it in 2001. In this role, she assists transgender activists and allies with all transgender-related legislation and policy. Through her years at the Task Force, she has assisted LGBT and allied activists in over 45 states with passing transgender nondiscrimination laws and has trained activists throughout the country on how to mount a successful legislative campaign. She co-authored “Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People,” a joint publication with the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Before joining the Task Force, Lisa was involved in leadership positions with various other LGBT organizations. During college, she worked on LGBT issues in Washington state as a member of the board of the statewide LGBT advocacy organization, as an LGBT activist affiliated with numerous organizations at the University of Washington, and as an intern at the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. During law school, she interned at the ACLU LGBT Rights Project and served on the board of Outlaw, the LGBT law students organization at Georgetown University Law Center.

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OPENING THE DOOR

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