

What happens when PJI is confronted by parents?

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Abstract

The Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) is the ex-gay organization that stirred up the right-wing word by claiming that a trans kid (who I will refer to as Jane Doe, for reasons of safety) in Colorado was harassing cisgender girls in the restrooms. Right-wing media outlets jumped at the story without conducting any fact checking, prompting members of the right-wing community [...]

Article

The Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) is the ex-gay organization that stirred up the right-wing word by claiming that a trans kid (who I will refer to as Jane Doe, for reasons of safety) in Colorado was harassing cisgender girls in the restrooms. Right-wing media outlets jumped at the story without conducting any fact checking, prompting members of the right-wing community to call for the death of the trans kid.

While I interviewed Matthew McReynolds, staff attorney for PJI earlier this week, McReynolds was first interviewed by the right-wing media organization, the World Daily News:

“First of all, it’s our position that a teenage boy’s presence into the bathroom for teenage girls is inherently harassing,” said McReynolds, who is representing the families of the girls involved. “It’s inherently violative of their privacy rights. It’s also intimidating when you have a boy like this, who is not a freshman, going in there with younger freshman girls. They feel violated. They feel intimidated, and that’s been expressed to us.”

The girls have alleged the boy has made sexually harassing comments in that setting.

“Details continue to emerge on this in terms of what what kind of comments may have been made. We’ve heard some reports that he’s commented on what girls are wearing or their figure while in the bathroom. If you can imagine that scenario from the reference and framework of a teenage girl, I think that’s pretty harassing,” said McReynolds, who reiterated that a boy simply being in the girls’ restroom is ample harassment in itself.

You are about to hear the rest of my interview with PJI’s McReynolds. In this portion of our interview, McReynolds is confronted by Jane’s mother and another school mother. Additionally, we learn that PJI supports ex-trans efforts.

I initially withheld this portion of our interview because the way in which McReynolds responds is

chilling to me. I had initially felt that PJI had spewed enough obloquy upon Jane, her parents, her town and the entire trans community and I didn't want to be responsible for putting more of it out there. However, after talking with a friend recently, I began to feel that by not releasing this portion of the interview, I was helping PJI conceal their true nature. Since we're dealing with the well-being of our children, I think we need to very clearly see who we're dealing with.

When I interviewed McReynolds I wish I could tell you that he was noticeably moved by the suffering of Jane Doe's mother or the outrage of a high school parent, but apparently that was too much to hope for. McReynolds never once broke character. When confronted by the suffering he had inspired in Jane's mother, McReynolds' monotone evasions and adherence to predetermined talking points were alarming to me. McReynolds' smug victim blaming, liberally peppered with falsehoods, was beyond disgusting to me.

So, before you listen, I want to give you a Trigger Warning. McReynolds' response to the suffering he has helped inflict upon a kid, coupled by his rhetorical micro/macro aggressions and dishonesty might be triggering to some. IF you feel that this TW applies to you, PLEASE scroll down the CONTEXT section. Your help is needed.

The Confrontation:

Cristan: I've collected a number of questions and issues from the community that they wanted to have you address. The first one comes from Florence, Colorado and here it is...

Jane Doe's Mom: They can't... how do you say... They have to learn to love all God's creations and to believe that they have so much hatred in them... and to be this way [begins to sob] is hard. Because, because my daughter is a precious life just like, just like anybody else, I know how precious everybody's kids are to them and they have to understand that it's been a lot of hurt, that there could be so much hatred directed at my daughter, who, she's just trying to be a normal teenager and go on with life.

Cristan: So, that's Jane Doe's mother and specifically she has a statement that she wanted me to read to you: "What you're doing isn't right. You say that you're a God-loving people but you've targeted my daughter - a kid - like this. You shouldn't do this to any kid. You should be ashamed. You're wrong for what you've done to my daughter." What do you have to say to Jane's mother.

McReynolds: Well, a couple of things. First of all, all of us identify with the raw emotion we hear in her voice and her instinct to for her son who's now her daughter and all the many, many issues that accompany that. At the same time, we have to go back to the reality that nobody went out looking for Jane Doe to launch this. We didn't come from California to Colorado looking for this situation...

FACT CHECK



Figure 1. ab1266-PJI

The above is a California ad directed to a national audience from PJI seeking plaintiffs to help them fight the California law AB1266, protecting trans kids. This ad was live prior to PJI going to Colorado from California, to target Jane Doe.

... because, he decided that he wanted to walk into the girl's bathrooms and girls locker rooms and interact with them there, that caused some serious discomfort on our client's part as it would on the part of most teenage girls in that situation and so, as much emotion as is there and as much desire is there to protect that child, you know, we have to balance that with the privacy interests and the constitutional privacy rights of all the other students and that is what has not been done to date.

victim blaming

Web definitions

Victim blaming occurs when the victim of a crime or any wrongful act are held entirely or partially responsible for the transgressions committed against them. People familiar with victimology are much less likely to see the victim as responsible. ...

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victim-blaming>

Figure 2. VB

Cristan: Ah, and so, here's another from a Florence High School mother.

Florence High School mom: "A little background, my daughter is a sophomore at Florence High School and my daughter and I sat down about this, you know, 'Have you seen this happen?' and she said in the bathroom there's no big deal. She goes in, goes into the stall and is very discrete and is very quiet and stays very much to herself and never poses a problem with anybody. So my daughter asked around to the other students, 'Does anybody have a problem with [Jane] being in there?' and their answers were 'No' and they all pointed the finger at this one individual.

Cristan: And I believe the one individual she's speaking of is a freshman daughter of someone who happens to be conservative. What would you have to say to that mother?

McReynolds: Well, a few different things. Number one, I don't doubt that that's what she's hearing

from her daughter and maybe what they're hearing from other members of the community. We're certainly hearing the opposite and we're hearing that from, not just one individual, as has been falsely stated that we represent. We actually represent a co... a few different students from more than one family from within the Florence High School family who have been affected by this and they, in turn, have been in contact with a number of other parents and young people who are very, very uncomfortable with it. So, that that one student or other students, you know, don't have um, a reasonable expectation of privacy that would interfere with, uh, this other student's exercise of, you know, his newfound gender, um, you know, that tells me that there are potential solutions to this situation...

FACT CHECK

During our interview I asked McReynolds if one of these PJI-style "solutions" include treating trans kids like cis kids:

"Would one of those [solutions] be that transgender children would be able to function in day to day school life exactly as their cisgender counterparts?"

His answer was:

"Well, I think there's a very active debate as to whether someone like this Jane Doe, who I understand has not completely transitioned into his or her newfound gender can ever function normally in that role."

Double Fact Check: Jane Doe transitioned in 2011 with the support of her therapist and family.

... and unfortunately, we've just not heard back from the school in reference to working out what those solutions might be.

Cristan: Ah, yes. I saw the interview you did on World Daily News in which you said that you were aware of what the superintendent had to say, specifically that they had conducted an investigation that found that, in fact, no harassment is going on. If that's the case and you're aware of that, why continue?

McReynolds: [laughing] Well, a couple of things, Cristian. We've sent a letter to the school now - eleven days ago - laying out the serious concerns that we had for the constitutional privacy rights, as well as the harassment issue. To date, and in that letter, anybody can go to our website again, pji.org, under the press releases section and read our letter. We invited the school to engage with us and to, you know, identify any allegations that they considered to be disputed. Not one of those allegations have been rebutted to us by the school. They made some vague comments in other forums, the superintendent has...

FACT CHECK

The "vague comments" the Superintendent made are as follows:

"We do have a transgender student at the high school, and she has been using the women's restrooms. There has not been a situation. All the students of these parents who say they feel uncomfortable just about the fact that the student is allowed to go into the restrooms at the high school, into the stalls - they don't believe that that's appropriate, so that's where it stems from. There has not been an

incident of harassment, or anything that would cause any additional concern.”

... but to date, not one has been rebutted to us...

Cristan: So, you’re basically that they’ve not responded or that they’re ignoring you?

McReynolds: Well, they’ve indicated that they will be responding, but they’re taking their time in doing so because, as much as a lot of activists want to believe that the story is over and there’s nothing to it, the school is certainly not treating it that way and the school is being very deliberate in dragging its feet in trying to ...

Cristan: I understand that the school is actually closed until, I believe, the end of this month. Is that what you understand?

McReynolds: No, my understanding is that the school was closed last week and has reopened today [Monday].

Cristan: Oh, okay. So, basically most of the time that you say that they’ve not replied, they were, in fact, closed.

McReynolds: No, that’s not actually quite correct because we were interacting with their lawyer who was on an entirely different schedule.

Cristan: Oh, okay. [BREAKS IN FOR CONTEXT] Hey folks, I want to break in just for a second and point out that, while he’s saying that school lawyers don’t work on school hours, the people the lawyers would need to speak with actually do. So, I wanted to plant a red flag right there before we move on to more of the Pacific Justice Institute’s evasions of these questions [/] Now, here’s another clip from a mother in Florence.

Florence High School mom: “It’s their prerogative to seek out everywhere they can find in the US to try to do this, there’s not much we can do about that from the standpoint that that’s their prerogative. It is my prerogative, however, to prevent them from injuring this child, or any other child. You want to go after an adult, that’s fine. As an adult, you have a right to do that, but do not do it against a child.”

Cristan: A common theme that keeps coming up, and let me just ask you this directly: Do you value the life of Jane Doe?

McReynolds: Oh absolutely. I think that’s a point we can all agree on and we have very different approaches. What we believe, you know, the health and wellbeing of kids who are in this situation entails and so from our perspective, you don’t lead to healthier outcomes by enabling potentially unhealthy behavior and so that’s where we, you know, our paths diverge.

Cristan: So, the way I’ve encountered your group online, it seems that you advocate for, or at least you have advocated for, ex-gay therapy. Is that correct?

McReynolds: Uh, yeah. That’s one way to put it. It’s particular name here in California, in terms of the statute we’re challenging is ‘sexual orientation change efforts.’

Cristan: Sure, sure... And would that also include gender orientation change efforts?

McReynolds: Well, that statute does, the litigation is focused on the sexual orientation change efforts, but it could include that.

Cristan: Oh, okay. Does your organization, as a philosophical stance, believe that people can - if they're male assigned at birth, and their gender orientation is female, that through therapy or certain processes, that their gender orientation could become male? So, that they would [now] have a gender orientation of male, being assigned male at birth?

McReynolds: Well, as an organization we tend to not wade into the scientific debates as much as focusing on the constitutional debates and our mission is to ensure that we can continue to both vigorous constitutional debates, that freedom of speech is protected and that's why we've been so involved in the sexual orientation change efforts battle. We see the limitations on freedom of speech as being inherently detrimental to this entire debate.

Context

Having lost the Prop 8 battle, equality foes have found a new target: transgender children.

The law protecting transgender children, which California Gov. Jerry Brown signed in August, says schools must treat transgender students as equal to cisgender students. A coalition of anti-LGBT groups calling itself "Privacy for All Students" has circulated 200,000 anti-trans petitions throughout California. Their goal is to collect 505,000 valid signatures by November 12, 2013. If they collect those signatures, it will stop the trans equality law from taking effect in January and put the civil rights of trans kids up for a popular vote in November 2014.

The old Prop 8 cast of characters have organized as the coalition for the "Privacy for All Students." Care to take a guess at who's one of the largest supporters of the coalition?

It's the Pacific Justice Institute - the same group currently orchestrating a smear campaign against Jane Doe. PJI claims that if these trans-equality policies go into effect, it will lead to government-sponsored X-rated scenes in all the public schools.

Of course, PJI won't tell you that these California-style policies have already been enacted across the country, even in America's most conservative areas. For example, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Dallas, and Ft. Worth Texas public school districts all have California-style policies protecting trans kids. These policies have been in effect for years without incident.

Consider the testimony to the California Senate Education Committee by Judy Chiasson, Ph.D., a Program Coordinator for Human Relations at the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD):

At first we had our concerns. Would letting students participate in activities and facilities that were consistent with their gender identities create problems? What would happen? And, ultimately we decided that we as the adults needed to manage our fears and give the students the respect and dignity that they deserved. And I'm pleased to say none of our fears have been materialized. Our transgender students use facilities, participate in gym class and play on sports teams in a way that corresponds with their gender identity.

We treat our transgender students -- our boys, our transgender boys and girls -- simply like any other

boys and girls with the same rights and responsibilities, rules, and obligations.

In the eight years that we've had our policy we've not had any problems. On the contrary, it has solved many problems. It's a non-issue on our campuses. Our transgender students use the bathrooms for the same reasons as everybody else. They do their business, fix their hair and make-up, and gossip with friends.

So when we instituted this policy we had no idea how many students that this would effect. In 2011, we conducted a survey in conjunction with the YRBS, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and we learned that point-five percent of our students self-identified as transgender. In a district of our size, that's about thirty-five-hundred students. We were shocked. We had no idea that we had that many transgender students.

For most of them, this is their private secret. But, we want them to know that we're here for them whenever they're ready.

After providing a \$10,000 boost to the effort to collect signatures in California for repealing trans protections for school children, the PJI sent out a fundraising letter last week claiming that they've sent the LGBT community scrambling in a "near-panic." Here's a copy of one of the fundraising letters from PJI's coalition. Note their use of Jane Doe to scare people into emptying their pockets and signing the petition to repeal trans protections for California trans kids:



Privacy For All Students

Privacy For All Students

Courting Disaster



The co-ed bathroom law in California does not take effect for another two and a half months, but students and parents in the Golden State are beginning to see what the future holds if the law is not overturned by referendum. For anybody new to this discussion, California signed first in the nation legislation in August that allows boys and girls in public schools to choose the bathroom, shower and locker room that aligns with their personal assessment of sexual identity. Boys in the girls' locker room. Girls in the boys' bathroom. No right to object.

Now a [story emerges](#) from Colorado where female students at a high school were threatened with **hate crimes** charges when they complained about harassment by boys using the girls' bathroom.

Will it end there or should California and other states wishing to imitate their "facility freedom" law be concerned about the legal actions to follow?

DONATE NOW

October Signature Harvest

Is your church participating in [October Signature Harvest?](#)

WARNING!

Figure 3. BOO!!! Give us money!

And, let's not forget the fact that PJI's coalition was caught lying to people in order to trick them into supporting their effort to legally discriminate against trans children:

The recording was made in front of a Walmart in California. What follows is the transcript between the dishonest anti-trans activist and his mark.

TRANSCRIPT:

Signature Gatherer: Ma'am, would you sign the petition to say no to same-sex restrooms at the schools...

Victim: Uhm...

SG: This puts it on the ballot. Gay- gay students at the schools, like the gay guys who want to go in the restrooms with girls...

V: Gay guys?

SG: Yes.

V: Why do the gay guys want to go to the girls' restroom when they like guys?

SG: That's what I thought.

V: Yeah...

SG: But what this does...

V: But, but, but what are gay guys doing going into the girls rest room?

SG: (exasperated) I don't know, they just want to make, y'know, to be able to make it, like, both restrooms, whatever they...

V: Both of them?

SG: Yes. Well, just whatever they prefer, like when a guy, uhm, y'know, wanna'... But this right here puts it on the ballot and stops it.

V: Uh-hum...

SG: It says the girls must go to the girls room and...

V: And how does it stop it?

SG: It puts it on the ballot, and then we'll vote on it. Majority votes, and (unintelligible)

Lying to people so that they lend their good name to an effort designed to harm trans kids is apparently a moral tactic for PJI and their supporters.



Figure 4. Jane Doe

Take a good long look Jane Doe. PJI has managed to smugly destroy the life she knew.

PJI has demonstrated that they are more than willing to perpetuate a hoax that harms Jane and her family while disrupting school if it means scoring some political points and raising some extra cash to throw at their effort to discriminate against California school kids. Nothing about representing PJI's "clients" required them to go to the press. I believe they went to the press because they thought that it would help their war against trans kids in California.

It seems that they're willing to lie to people in order to trick them into supporting their efforts. They are the types of people who can listen to a mother weep over the cruelty inflicted upon her daughter - at their own hands - and respond by misgendering Jane and in the next breath, paint her as a predator who deserves whatever "he" gets.

In the meantime, Jane Doe is now on suicide watch.

Yes. You read that correctly.

This afternoon I was notified that the family decerned that Jane needed immediate professional intervention due to the scope of suicidal ideation Jane has recently exhibited. The family is now working with specialists in Denver to address Jane's needs.

What you can do:

There are three things I would like to encourage the trans and allied community to do:

1.) Send supportive messages: Videos, audio, or email. You can leave your supportive comments below, email them to me or leave links to your supportive audio, video or blog posts in the comment section below. If you would like to mail cards, notes, and letters, the Transgender Center in Houston will collect and vet each letter. Your correspondence will be collected and forwarded to the family. Send physical correspondence to:

Jane Doe, c/o
The Houston Transgender Center
604 Pacific, Houston, TX 77006

The hate directed at Jane has been immense and it is having it's intended effect. A large 2011 survey found that 51% of bullied school trans kids attempt suicide. The scope and scale of bullying that Jane has endured is unprecedented. Please, let her know that you support her, that you wish her well and that it will get better.

2.) Let others know what's happening: Please, spread the word. Let people know what hate has done to this family. I know it's kinda cheesy, but I'm changing my FaceBook photo to this:



Figure 5. NOMW

Purple is Jane's favorite color. If you'd like to do something similar to let people know that you stand with Jane and her family, please do.

3.) Help out. It's not like Jane's family is rich and between the extra travel and medical bills associated with Jane's care, the family is at the breaking point this month. While they were uncomfortable with asking for help, I convinced them to allow people to help if they wanted to. A few 100 could make or break things for the family. My goal is to raise \$500 to help cover medical expenses this month. If you can chip in, please do:

Proof of the donation to the family will be posted to TransAdvocate.

While we here at the TransAdvocate are facilitating legal representation for the family, that's not enough. Jane and her family are in trouble and while it's gratifying to think that those who've caused such hardship will be held to account down the road, Jane and her family are in trouble right now.

Please help out however you can.

Suggested citation

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