

What's The Big Deal About Transgender Rights?

By Guest

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Abstract

Editor's note: Today's guest post is from Jillian Burrows. Chaz Bono is going to be on Dancing with the Stars. For people who don't know, I'm reluctant to let you in on the fact that he's transgender. He was assigned to the female gender at birth, but didn't fit the mold. People who know about [...]

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Editor's note: Today's guest post is from Jillian Burrows.

Chaz Bono is going to be on Dancing with the Stars. For people who don't know, I'm reluctant to let you in on the fact that he's transgender. He was assigned to the female gender at birth, but didn't fit the mold. People who know about his past have conniptions -- or at least they still want to classify him as a woman, and then say that what he's doing is all wrong and messed up (or sinful in some cases). For more on those type of comments, I'll direct you here.

I will bring up one nasty comment from The Hollywood Review. A person who's handle is Bellcindy wrote, "I do not hate Chaz as a person. I just resent the media shoving so much of anyone's personal life choices down our throats." The problem I have with this statement is it wouldn't apply to people who are similar to Bellcindy. The personal lives and choices of hetro-normative people are constantly shoved down everyone's throats. TV would have no substance to it if that were not the case. There would be no sitcoms, no reality TV, and no soap operas if it were not for constantly having hetro-normative life choices presented in the media. Bellcindy (and to all those out there like you), I'm sorry to inform you that your statement is just plain ignorant of reality.

Transgender people get to deal with many things in addition to harassment and abuse. For instance, the US (or at least now days, the SSA) doesn't recognize the gender that one lives in, but rather the gender one was assigned at birth. The only exception is when one has had sex reassignment surgery and a letter from the surgeon is presented to the SSA (Social Security Administration). As of last year (see here), passports can be changed if one gets a letter from a doctor saying they have been undergoing clinical therapy towards living in the other sex (at least two years of it, otherwise a temporary passport is issued).

Some states do not recognize transgender people as their lived gender. There's the question of, "Does his drivers license says M or F under sex?" In Oregon, one is able to change the sex marker with a notice from a licensed psychologist stating that one has been living as their intended sex for two years. This is not true in all states; other states that do allow it have differing requirements.

In a few states, one can have their birth certificate amended with the new gender once the surgery has

happened. There are states in which the new gender is not recognized, even if the person has had surgery. Those states also make it nearly impossible for a transgender person to get married.

In some states (such as Oregon, if I remember), it is illegal for a person to use a public (multi-stall) restroom designated for the opposite gender (according to one's state recognized gender on their ID). At the state level it becomes an issue of, "Is it legal for me to be who I am? If it is, what protections of my rights are there? If I were attacked or harassed, would I just be mocked in the justice system, or would someone uphold and respect my right to exist?" All of these questions and more are a daily reality for most transgender people.

I tend to dislike people who are narrow minded enough to define who a person is based on what is between their legs, and then expect that person to always live up to what the other thinks it means to have those genitalia. Then, when the gendered person deviates from the assigned gender, they are coerced (by humiliation, punishment, abuse) into conforming to the expectations others have for how others have gendered them.

Unfortunately, there are far too many of these people in the world. Unfortunately, people make laws that may discriminate against transgender people based on the assumption that having a penis makes one attracted to women, and that if one has a vagina they were meant to be penetrated by a man (with a penis, of course). GOD FORBID a man who doesn't have a penis whom is attracted to women and sexually aggressive. It goes against their moral fiber.

It makes the world seem like an elementary playground where rules are arbitrarily created by the majority -- a majority unable to think about other people and other experiences because they are not mature enough. Each one of them thinks they are the whole of the universe. Anyone who seems similar to them, but doesn't conform to how they would behave is marginalized by them because they aren't acting right. This happens no matter who the majority is, so it is not about hetero-normative people -- it's about marginalization through group think that becomes enforced as religious dogma in the resulting group.

The big deal about transgender rights is not just about transgender people. It is about making a more just, open, and loving society in which anyone can be free to express themselves without fear of being marginalized because they are different than other people. To finish this off, I'll quote from my friend Maymay's recent post, "That's why ostracism is so powerful and so harmful: it is the epistemic equivalent of rejecting the instrument of liberation being offered."

cross-posted from Jburrows.wordpress.com

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