

From the Executive Director:

The recent shooting of patrons at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando that left 49 dead and 53 wounded is a stark reminder of the violent acts regularly visited on the LGBTQ community. While this heinous act has been linked to the terrorist ideology of ISIS, it is just the most recent example of violent acts regularly committed against the LGBTQ community by individuals who are fueled by hatred, ignorance and fear of difference.

Since the crime, there has been a concerted attempt by some to pretend that it was another mass shooting against a random group of Americans. It was not. This was a hate crime and attempts to change the dialogue are disrespectful of those who died or were wounded and of the LGBTQ community generally. The problem with naming it, is that those who want an excuse to continue their discriminatory actions towards these groups find themselves struggling with their consciences. As well they should be. With struggle perhaps comes better understanding and that is what will ultimately change people's attitudes.

Respect, concern, and dignity for all individuals regardless of difference are the pillars of a fair and just society. LGBTQ individuals are members of our families, parents of children, our co-workers, our friends, and our neighbors and they contribute immensely to the diversity and well-being of our communities, our State and this country. Our differences are a strength not a weakness. Working together, we can create a better, more inclusive, less violent world by combatting the ignorance and fear that allow individuals to target innocent people based on their protected characteristics, whatever they may be.

Karen Richards

“Race, gender, religion, sexuality, we are all people and that’s it. We’re all people. We’re all equal.”

- Connor Franta

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Did you know?

The definition of LGBTQ is:

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Transgender and Queer.*

In 1924 the Society for Human Rights was founded in Chicago by Henry Gerber. It was the first documented gay rights organization.

In 1961 Illinois became the first state to decriminalize homosexuality by repealing their sodomy laws.

In 1979 The first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights took place.

In 1982 Wisconsin became the first state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In 1996 Hawaii became the first state to recognize that gay and lesbian couples are entitled to the same privileges as heterosexual married couples.

In 2000 Vermont is the first state to legalize civil-unions between same sex couples.

In 2011 "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed, ending a ban on gay men and lesbians from serving openly in the military.

In 2012 Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to publicly support the freedom for LGBTQ couples to marry.

In 2015 Bruce Jenner publicly stated, "Yes, for all intents and purposes, I'm a woman." Jenner later revealed that she is now Caitlyn Jenner and will live as a woman.

In 2016 the U.S. Senate confirmed Eric Fanning to be secretary of the Army, making him the first openly gay secretary of a U.S. military branch.



Stonewall Riots

The Stonewall Inn located on Christopher Street in New York City is proclaimed to be "the birthplace of the modern Gay Rights movement."

In 1969 police raids on gay bars were commonplace. In a "typical raid" lights were turned on while lining up patrons to check their identification. Anyone without identification or who was dressed in full drag was arrested. Women not wearing three pieces of feminine clothing were arrested as well as bar staff and management.

In the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, eight police officers arrived at the Stonewall Inn to conduct a raid but this time the patrons refused to cooperate. A crowd gathered and the tension grew as patrons were forced to wait for patrol wagons to bring them to the police station. A scuffle broke out when a lesbian, who complained her handcuffs were too tight, was hit on the head with a billy-club and then heaved into a patrol wagon. By this time the crowd outnumbered the police by approximately 600 people. Upon seeing the attack on this patron the crowd fought back attempting to overturn the police wagon, throwing pennies, beer bottles and bricks at the wagon and when the ten police officers attempted to barricade themselves in the Stonewall until backup arrived, the crowd hurled garbage cans, bottles, rocks and bricks at the building. Eventually the streets were cleared, however news traveled fast throughout Greenwich Village and for the next two nights thousands of people gathered in front of the Stonewall spilling into adjoining blocks, rioting and battling police.

To this day Gay pride is celebrated by the LGBTQ community through Pride Parades that take place around the world to "recognize how far we have come, remember those less fortunate who came before us and to remind those who may have grown complacent, how far we still must go to achieve true equality."



The Bathroom Bill Debate

You have to use the restroom, so you make your way to the nearest bathroom and relieve yourself. Simple, right? But—what if you're a transgender male or female whose gender identity does not correspond with the biological sex you were assigned at birth and you're in North Carolina or Mississippi or another state that denies you that right?

On March 23, 2016 North Carolina Governor, Pat McCrory, signed into law House Bill 2 (HB2) putting in place a statewide policy that bans individuals from using public bathrooms that do not correspond with their biological sex and additionally more broadly restricts cities from passing nondiscrimination laws. The move prompted the acting executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina, Sarah Preston, to issue the following statement: "Rather than expand nondiscrimination laws to protect North Carolinians, the General Assembly instead spent \$42,000 to rush through an extreme bill that undoes all local nondiscrimination laws and specifically excludes gay and transgender people from legal protections." Preston adds, "Legislators have gone out of their way to stigmatize and marginalize transgender North Carolinians by pushing ugly and fundamentally untrue stereotypes that are based on fear and ignorance and not supported by the experiences of more than 200 cities with these protections."

Soon to follow on April 5, 2016 Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant signed controversial House Bill 1523 allowing individuals, businesses, and religious organizations—including homeless shelters, adoption agencies, hospitals and schools to refuse service to gay couples and transgender individuals. The law additionally makes it legal for a government employee to refuse a marriage license to a gay couple or any business associated with marriages or weddings (DJ's, florists, caterers, etc.) to refuse service. And if that wasn't enough it also allows foster parents liberty to "guide" a gay or transgender minor in their care into heteronormativity (a belief that people fall into distinct and complementary genders with natural roles in life. Consequently a view that involves alignment of biological sex). The new law goes into effect on July 1, 2016. In response to the new law Jennifer Riley-Collins, executive director of the ACLU of Mississippi stated, "This is a sad day for the State of Mississippi." This bill flies in the face of the basic American principles of fairness, justice and equality and will not protect anyone's religious liberty. Far from protecting anyone from 'government discrimination' as the bill claims, it is an attack on the citizens of our state."

In response to North Carolina's "bathroom bill" on May 9, 2016 dueling lawsuits were filed by North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory and Loretta Lynch, U.S. Attorney General on behalf of the U.S. Department of Justice. The lawsuits take opposing sides in the debate over the law which seems to have become the 'epicenter' of a larger fight over transgender rights.

President Barack Obama has also made his voice clear in this debate when it comes to allowing transgender students to use the bathroom of the gender with which they identify. On May 13, 2016 the President issued a directive telling schools to allow transgender students to use bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity or take the risk of losing federal funding. In response, Texas and ten other states have filed suit against the federal government.

So what are the statistics of transgender individuals attacking cisgender adults or children in public bathrooms? Is there a real need for these laws claiming to offer 'protection'? According to a report by Marcie Bianco dated April 2, 2015 the reported cases are zero. Yes, zero. Furthermore, the Transgender Law Center, the Human Rights Campaign, the *Advocate* and the American Civil Liberties Union among other organizations and spokespersons report that "no statistical evidence of violence exists." When reporter Bianco reached out to State Senators and Representatives requesting statistical evidence, her requests went unanswered.

Statistically speaking, it is the transgender community that is most at risk. According to the Williams Institute, in 2014 forty-one percent of transgender people had attempted suicide due to lack of acceptance. In a 2015 article published by Kelli Busey she writes that a trans woman is murdered every 29 hours. And according to the Human Rights Campaign [report](#) there were 53 transgender murders from 2013 to 2015 and not one was prosecuted or reported as a hate crime. It seems pretty clear to anyone interested in the facts, rather than the rhetoric, who really is in danger.

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.." - Martin Luther King, Jr.



LGBT Rights in Vermont

Vermont was the first state to make same-sex marriage legal through action of the legislature and the governor rather than by a court decision. The date was September 1, 2009. In 1999 the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that the state was required to provide equal marriage benefits to same-sex couples whether married or equivalent resulting in the introduction of civil unions in July of 2000. Same-sex partners employed with the State have been provided benefits since 1994.

Under Vermont law, same-sex and LGBTQ couples or individuals are permitted to petition to adopt children.

Protection from discrimination based on sexual Orientation was passed 1992 and gender identity was added as a protected category in 2007. Vermont law offers protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, public accommodations, education, housing, credit, insurance and union practices. Complaints of discrimination can be filed with the Human Rights Commission.

Vermont was one of the first states to enact hate crime legislation in 1990, rightfully called "The Hate Crimes Act." This Act included sexual orientation but not gender identity until 1999.

On May 25, 2016 Governor Peter Shumlin signed a bill banning the use of conversion therapy for LGBT Minors. It will take effect on July 1, 2016.

Vermont allows both pre and post-operative transsexuals to change their birth certificates and other state-issued documents. Additionally, in 2013, all health insurers underwriting policies in Vermont are required to cover transgender care, including genital reconstructive surgery.

Resource and Support for LGBTQ in Vermont: [PRIDE Center of Vermont](#) - [Outright Vermont](#)

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NEWS

Bill Passes That Lets Government Contractors Fire People for Being LGBT. Read the full story [here](#)

For One Transgender Vermonter, Rural Location Hasn't Hindered Her Transition. Read the full story [here](#)

Town Hall Project Aims to Bring Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Communities Together in NYS. Watch the full story [here](#)

Mom Opens Up About 7-Year-Old Transgender Daughter: 'She Always Was Elizabeth.' Read the full story [here](#)

Transgender Bathroom Debate Likely Headed to Supreme Court. Read the full story [here](#)