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Beyond the ballot: Trans community calls for united resistance

written by Melinda Butterfield
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National March for Trans Youth in Orlando, Florida, Oct. 7, 2023. Photo: Lexi Webster / CCR

Since mid-September, Donald Trump's presidential campaign reportedly [spent more than \\$30 million](#) on television ads promoting anti-transgender hate. These have aired primarily in contested "swing states" and during high-viewership national sports broadcasts, including the World Series, NFL, and college football games.

Not only Trump and the Republican Party but the sports industry and television networks should be condemned for their complicity and for profiting off bigotry.

One of these insidious ads explicitly targets Black men viewers, featuring actors complaining about tax money spent on health care for trans prisoners and immigrants and about “men” competing in sports against “our girls.”

This ad, in particular, seeks to erase the solidarity trans people and other queers of all colors showed during the 2020 uprising after the police murder of George Floyd – when Trump, then in the White House, threatened to unleash the military against Black Lives protesters.

Likewise, Trump ads targeting immigrants and refugees contribute to whipping up a lynch-mob atmosphere ahead of the Nov. 5 general election. Trump has vowed to ban trans health care and begin a military roundup of migrants. He says he will make good on the threat to deploy U.S. troops against Palestine solidarity protests.

During the last year, trans and queer people have also been in the forefront of protests and actions against the U.S.-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Speakers at Trump’s neo-Nazi rally in Madison Square Garden on Oct. 27 – in the middle of multinational, immigrant, queer New York City – likewise used openly genocidal language against trans people, along with racist hate directed at immigrants, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Palestinians.

No support from Harris

Democratic candidate Vice President Kamala Harris has gone out of her way to avoid any hint of support for trans people, who are under vicious attack from the far right. In fact, Harris hasn’t even offered the hollow “thoughts and prayers” for which President Joe Biden became notorious.

In an [interview with NBC News](#) on Oct. 22, Harris deflected a softball question about her position on trans rights. Instead of expressing support for trans people, their rights, and their health care, Harris simply said she would “follow the law.”

While some Harris supporters attempted to paint this as a win for the LGBTQ+ community, many trans people pointed out that this is no kind of support at all – given that half of U.S. states have now passed anti-trans laws. The ultra-right U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear a case in early December that could have devastating consequences for trans youth health care and beyond.

As the anti-trans panic continues to crest at home and abroad, in defiance of medical science and the lived experience of trans people, there is a high likelihood that a new Democratic administration and Congress will follow the example of the Labour government in Britain – which adopted the anti-trans policies set out under the previous right-wing Tory government.

After all, Harris, following Biden, has already taken up the Trump policy against immigrants and refugees at the Mexican border. Her campaign has steadily moved to the right since her nomination, courting right-wing war criminals like Dick Cheney and other anti-LGBTQ+ Republicans who oppose Trump and declaring her total support for the genocidal apartheid regime in Israel.

[Harris told “The View”](#) that the only difference between her and Biden is that she would include Republicans in her administration.

Taking their cue from the Harris campaign, Democratic congressional candidates in Ohio and Texas have adopted openly anti-trans positions.

The ballot box? Or another way

The city of Odessa, Texas, just [enacted a ban on trans people](#) using public restrooms that match their gender. The law includes a \$10,000 bounty for people who report trans people using the “wrong” bathroom.

A new study published by the [Journal of the American Medical Association \(JAMA\)](#) has once again confirmed the high rate of long-term satisfaction among people who

started gender-affirming health care in their youth. But another study published in September by the journal [Nature found a 72% increase](#) in suicide attempts by trans youth and young adults in states that have enacted measures like Texas, with its ban on gender-affirming care and other legal attacks on trans rights.

Trump applauds such measures. Harris stays quiet and will “follow the law.” What choice is there in November for trans people, their families, and supporters?

Progressive third-party campaigns are an option for a protest vote at the ballot box. Black activist Cornel West and socialist Claudia de la Cruz have both taken strong positions in favor of trans rights and queer liberation, as well as for Palestine. Jill Stein, who has received a lot of publicity as an opponent of U.S. collaboration with Israel, has a platform that is generally pro-LGBTQ+, though it makes unnecessary concessions on trans youth health care.

However individual trans people and allies choose to vote or choose not to vote, what’s most important is to recognize that we must organize and prepare to fight for our right to live – no matter the outcome on Election Day.

If Harris is elected, we must be in the streets to help stop the probable coup attempt by Trump while continuing to fight the genocidal policies of the Democratic Party in Palestine. If the Democrats concede to Trump, we must resist the new fascist regime by any means necessary.

The most crucial thing trans people can do is learn from the example of the heroic Palestinian resistance. We must work to build alliances with immigrants and other communities facing genocidal attacks.

[As I wrote during Pride month](#): “It’s the same U.S. ruling class, the same bosses and profiteers, the same reactionary politicians and media – the same capitalist system – aiming at people in Gaza and trans and queer people here at home. We are all sand

in the gears of their efforts to turn back the clock on people's rights worldwide.

"Let's do whatever we can to unite our struggles, together with all workers and communities under attack, to say: Our rights are not negotiable, and we are not going anywhere!"

Melinda Butterfield is an organizer with Women In Struggle-Mujeres En Lucha. She was the initiator of the National March and Speakout to Protect Trans Youth in Orlando, Florida, on Oct. 7, 2023.

