

# Cisgender activists speak: Why is supporting trans rights important?

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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National March to Protect Trans Youth in Orlando, Florida, on Oct. 7, 2023. Photo: Lexi Webster / CCR



Andre Powell

### **Andre Powell, retired AFSCME leader, longtime gay activist**

A mere decade after the Stonewall Rebellion, as the LGBTQIA+ community was winning some victories, the right wing began mobilizing to take them away. It began in Dade County, Florida, as former Miss America Anita Bryant led a campaign called "Save Our Children."

Dade County had recently passed a law that added sexual orientation to its anti-discrimination protections. The goal of Save Our Children was to collect enough signatures to force a recall referendum at the next election to overturn the decision. They were successful at wiping away the gay rights ordinance.

Then the right-wing political operatives went into action and waged similar successful efforts, overturning newly won gay rights laws around the country. The political right had created a new weapon.

The LGBTQIA+ community began organizing itself around the country. Two national marches were held in 1979 and 1987. The second march in 1987 was held amid the

HIV/AIDS health crisis which had killed nearly 100,000 gay men. Over 750,000 LGBTQIA+ people and allies marched on Washington, D.C., under the banner, "For Love and For Life, We're Not Going Back." Following this march, organizing efforts mushroomed, gaining anti-discrimination protections from coast to coast.

Another political fight by the right wing began as the LGBTQIA+ community was winning the right to same-sex marriage. It had the same forces from the earlier battles in the 1970s, putting forth millions of dollars to push back against marriage equality. It was the organizing by the queer community which forced the Supreme Court to rule on the side of marriage equality during this reactionary period.

After this defeat, the right wing regrouped with all its money and began attacking the transgender community. First trying to deny trans people the right to use the bathroom that matched their gender identity. Secondly, harkening back to the days of Anita Bryant, they went after the rights of trans children to be able to get the gender-affirming medical treatment necessary to transition. From one state to another, using their money and bigotry, right-wing politicians have put forward several hundred bills to attack trans rights to equality.

Transgender activists, along with non-trans LGBTQIA+ community members, banded together to fight back against this latest onslaught. It began in Orlando, Florida, with a march on Oct. 7, 2023, against bigoted Gov. Ron DeSantis. The Protect Trans Kids March brought forces from all over the country to raise their voices and take a stand against the bigots, their laws, and their money.

While the trans community took the lead in organizing, the non-trans queer community was right there to reinforce our siblings in the fight for justice. It is absolutely imperative that the cisgender queer community stand up to the vicious money and power of the bigots who are targeting our siblings. After all, to attack one part of our community is to attack the entire community.

Our enemies are united against us, but our strength is in our own unity. The LGBTQIA+ community will not be pitted against each other by right-wing bigots, no matter how much money and power they have. The ultimate victory will be the abolition of capitalism, which will eliminate the material conditions that breed hatred and oppression.

LGBTQIA+ people and allies will once again face down the bigots this Oct. 19, 2024, at a march and rally called by the Coalition to Protect Trans Lives in Columbus, Ohio.



Sharon Black

### **Sharon Black, Women In Struggle/Mujeres En Lucha, Unemployed Workers Union**

First, I am very proud that Women In Struggle/Mujeres En Lucha, a working-class, anti-imperialist women's group, not only supports trans rights but includes trans women in our membership and leadership. With very little resources and support, we helped to organize the Oct. 7 National March to Defend Trans Kids in Orlando and spearheaded an LGBTQ-Two Spirit solidarity delegation to learn about Cuba's

work around the “Families Code.”

We are a broad working-class group of women of all nationalities. Each of us comes to our organization with our own special oppressions, whether it is based on white supremacy, as immigrants, as low-wage or no-wage workers. And this includes the special oppression of trans women. Our strength has been our unity, our recognition of our different oppressions, and our fight against capitalism.

Secondly, it’s critical that the entire working class see through the diabolical and vicious campaign by the far right against trans people, women, men and nonbinary.

There isn’t a day that you don’t see some derogatory lie against trans people posted on one social media or the other. The purpose is to whip up prejudice and backwardness — essentially to distract workers from the real enemies — the trillion-dollar capitalist class, their banks and war machine.

I would say to every cisgender person like myself, “Don’t take the bait.” It doesn’t matter what you don’t understand. Trans people are our sisters, brothers, siblings, friends, coworkers and neighbors. They are not hiking up prices on food and housing, closing schools and workplaces, taking away our rights to make decisions about our own bodies, or paying us slave wages.

The bottom line is: Respect trans people’s right to live! Something that is being threatened every minute.

Finally, it’s not just the far right. The “liberal establishment,” specifically the Democratic Party, can’t be let off the hook. They have stood by and basically done nothing — using trans rights as a political football to be pulled out during election time or ignored. It’s like turning your back on what amounts to violence and death for trans people.

And, I have to say with anger, let’s not forget the so-called left and progressives who

have been far too timid in acting to defend trans rights. Maybe it's hard to stand up to bigotry, but make no mistake: If you can't do this, how can you be counted on to defend the entire working class when the going gets tough?



Gloria Verdieu

### **Gloria Verdieu, San Diego Coalition to Free Mumia and All Political Prisoners**

I am a cisgender African woman and I stand in support of transgender rights for justice, safety, and inclusion. I believe that every human being should be given every opportunity to live a productive, fulfilling life.

The term cisgender was new for me. Many of these terms are new to me, but I am determined to gain an understanding of the range of gender identities.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Christynne Lili Wrene Wood, an African American trans woman who was the target of the racist, anti-trans panic that exists in this country.

Wood is a mother, grandmother, auntie, retired health care worker, and community activist who happens to be the same age as me. Just having a conversation with Christynne gave me a better understanding of why it is important for me as a cis woman who identifies with the gender assigned to me at birth to support the rights of trans women.

Christynne was targeted in the women's dressing room at a YMCA after a swim class. A 17-year-old girl claimed that she was traumatized when she saw a "naked man" in a dressing room shower stall. Her story was broadcast on major newscasts and the YMCA was forced to close when a hate rally was staged outside the facility.

I listened to Christynne because that could happen to me. I have been mis-identified many times and it became annoying enough to make me angry, which could jeopardize my freedom and even my life. I understood what Christynne was going through, and no one should have to go through that. Even after the truth comes out there are some lasting effects that stay with you.

The good thing is that at the next city council meeting I showed up along with many people supporting Christynne. The room was packed with many holding signs that read "Rise Up for LGBTQ+ Youth" and "Love you Christynne."

When I asked Christynne what her thoughts were about replacing the letter e in women with an X or Y? Her reply was, "I can understand this generation's usage of the spelling as a means of expanding the word 'women' to be more inclusive, but as for me, I don't want to be characterized or given a category. I am a woman."

After her transition Christynne was the same caring person as before, but happier.



John Parker

**John Parker, Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice coordinator, 2024 congressional candidate**

The U.S. increasingly uses racism, genocide, white supremacy and anti-LGBTQ2S bigotry. These tools of fascism promote Israel's horror in Gaza; the recent racist police killing of Frank Tyson in Ohio, so much like the murder of George Floyd; and the horrible attacks on the trans community in the U.S.

Nex Benedict, a 16-year-old transgender Choctaw student, was brutally beaten in an Owasso, Oklahoma, high school bathroom on Feb. 7 and died the next day. The school was complicit in that murder. It came nearly a year after the Oklahoma state legislature passed a ban on trans students and teachers using restrooms that align with their gender.

And the fascist attack is not only done by Republicans in backward legislatures in the states. Biden's Department of Veterans Affairs ruled that trans veterans would not be eligible for gender-affirming surgeries.

We have seen for decades now how anti-trans bills are used to divide and weaken our working class. Whether we conform or don't conform to our gender assignments,

whether we are people of color denied the right to life in the face of a cop's gun, whether we are victims of the denial of abortion – everyone in our multinational working class is targeted with poverty, austerity and the denial of dignity and humanity. People of color, immigrants and LGBTQ2S communities are the first and usual targets in each episode of falling back in time — stealing hard-fought gains of social progress in the U.S.

My family remembers being told to only use the bathroom labeled "colored," and we fall back in time when bathrooms are denied to our trans community. My parents remember not being allowed to see our Black representatives in sports, and now the divisive smokescreen excuses for not allowing participation of trans athletes sets back the clock on division in sports.

And the denial of gender-affirming health care, a denial that increases the number of trans youth considering suicide, reminds us of the past and current inadequate and unequal health care that pushes up the number of deaths of Black people.

I would, however, like to roll back the clock to the most militant and united struggles for social justice that help build the necessary consciousness to clearly see our common enemies who make the laws that attack us with poverty and repression and fascist ideologies.

In the 1960s it was the Black Panther Party, the Brown Berets, the Young Lords, the Civil Rights Movement, the Deacons for Defense, the Stonewall Rebellion, the movements inspired by Malcolm X and Rosa Parks, and the music of Nina Simone and others that helped build multinational unity, creating a powerful and effective movement against the war in Vietnam and Jim Crow, and that helped put the women's and union movements on more solid ground.

When fascist ideology raises its putrid head, it pushes the boundaries on violations of our humanity. It's an ideology used by U.S. Homeland Security in building the

boundaries on the Mexican border, constructed by an Israeli company that also built the walls to confine the Palestinian people in Gaza to terror and starvation.

But just like we know that human movement should have no boundaries or borders, we know that love and life have no boundaries of gender preference or gender fluidity. Even those stones and walls came down in the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969.

That rebellion of the LGBTQ2s community reminds us that those anti-human boundaries – like the walls against Palestine and Mexico – will also come tumbling down.



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## On May Day, New Orleans celebrates diverse working class

written by Melinda Butterfield

June 1, 2024

New Orleans, May 1 – Immigrant-worker organization [Unión Migrante](#) led a march to celebrate the international workers' holiday, which has been revived across the country in recent years by immigrant activists.

The march began on Conti Street beneath a statue of Mexico's Indigenous president, [Benito Juárez](#). (Juárez was a Zapotec leader from a peasant family who was exiled by a conservative government during the 1850s, first in Havana, Cuba, and then in New Orleans.) The May Day march ended with a rally in front of City Hall.

Representatives from many endorsing organizations spoke, including unions like the National Association of Letter Carriers, United Teachers of New Orleans, and Starbucks Workers United. Speakers from revolutionary organizations also took to the mic, such as Workers Voice Socialist Movement, Freedom Road Socialist Organization, and Party for Socialism and Liberation.

Reflecting the great movement that is sweeping the country, many participants wore keffiyehs and speakers emphasized the importance of the Palestinian liberation struggle. An organizer with Students for a Democratic Society spoke on behalf of Tulane University's Palestine encampment, which had been brutally suppressed by police the day before.

The prominence of Palestine solidarity on May Day is a very good thing. The workers' movement cannot confine itself to narrow economics. All attacks on oppressed people are attacks on workers. These are all workers' issues. Indeed, this was one of the main arguments in Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin's pamphlet, "[What is to Be Done?](#)"

He said that the workers' struggle absolutely cannot confine itself to just wages or economics in the narrow sense. Instead, our movement must expose the oppressors and exploiters in whatever sphere they're operating, and we must fight all their attacks. We might take this advice to heart, given that Lenin led the revolution that established the first lasting workers' state.

## **'Resist Landry!'**

Queer and trans contingents were prominent throughout the march, from trans youth organization BreakOUT!, to La Familia LGBTQ del Sur, to the Queer and Trans Community Action Project (QTCAP), newly formed by members of the old Real Name Campaign.

QTCAP activists held aloft a banner saying, “Resist Landry.” Jeff Landry is Louisiana’s far-right, bigoted governor, who recently tried to prevent hungry kids from accessing school lunch over the summer (doesn’t seem like much of a “family man”). Others in the crowd held up the blue, pink and white trans pride flag.

One stage and film set worker with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees or IATSE gave a talk. He said:

“The union movement right now in this country is huge. The workers’ voice is being heard and they are very frightened. Stay together, fight the fight, continue to spread the message of what is right.”

This message of unity was echoed in all the speeches. We are living in dangerous times. Capitalism is in crisis and attacks are coming down everywhere. Things are bad in Louisiana. Landry and his fascist movement are ramming through anti-worker, anti-immigrant, anti-Black, anti-queer, and anti-trans legislation. They’re imposing anti-women legislation. (Landry made a career undermining abortion rights long before he was elected governor.)

But that speaker was right. Our ruling class enemies are afraid. If they weren’t afraid, they wouldn’t be attacking us so fiercely. Six southern governors wouldn’t have signed a letter denouncing the United Auto Workers union drive in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Despite the governors’ efforts, the workers won! They organized a union.

As in cities and towns across the country, and around the world for that matter, the

crowd that gathered in New Orleans on May Day was a microcosm of the working class. Our class is diverse. It is immigrant and non-immigrant, Black and white, Asian, Indigenous. It is trans, cis, straight, and queer. Despite these differences, we are all workers. The capitalists are afraid of that.

May Day was a warmup. They know that we can come out in the thousands and the millions, just like we did for Black lives in 2020.

¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido! The people united will never be defeated!



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# May Day 2024: Resist the witch-hunts!

written by Melinda Butterfield

June 1, 2024

On International Workers' Day 2024, workers in the U.S. could swear that Senator Joe McCarthy and Minister Cotton Mather had returned from the dead.

More than 35,000 Palestinians, including 14,000 children, have died in just over 200

days of Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza - funded, armed and given political cover by Washington. Yet any expression of opposition to the mass slaughter of Palestinians is labeled "antisemitism" by politicians of both capitalist parties and the corporate media.

Congressional hearings reminiscent of the Red Scare anti-communist spectacles of the 1950s target university officials. Depending on how pliable they are, they are driven from office - like former Harvard President Claudine Gay, the first Black person to serve in that post - or they are [given marching orders to crack down](#) on student protesters, like Columbia University President Minouche Shafik.

After two weeks of violent police raids against campus Gaza Solidarity Encampments coast-to-coast, Columbia and other schools are now carrying out mass suspensions, threatening to prevent student activists from graduating. Right-wing politicians have called for students who participate in the encampments to be blacklisted from future employment.

Nor is it just Republicans. On April 29, [23 House Democrats](#) called on Columbia President Shafik to "end" the encampment that sparked a nationwide student uprising, or resign. And of course, [Genocide Joe Biden](#) himself joined fascist [House Speaker Mike Johnson](#) in threatening the heroic students and faculty resisting at Columbia.

This comes after months of police attacks, targeted arrests of organizers, and slander campaigns against pro-Palestine protesters.

Yet the student encampments continue to grow and spread day by day.

### **Whipping up anti-trans hate**

At the same time, another witch-hunt is unfolding across the U.S. targeting transgender people.

In many ways, this hate campaign - now underway for three years and growing ever-more dangerous - set the stage for how opponents of genocide in Gaza are being treated.

So far this year, [550 anti-trans bills have been introduced](#) in state legislatures in 42 states, along with 47 national bills. This includes some of the most drastic measures yet - cutting off all access to gender-affirming health care regardless of age, banning all restroom access, threatening the livelihoods of teachers, librarians and other workers if they are queer or respect the rights of trans students, and generally attempting to force trans lives out of existence.

State hearings on trans issues have the same tenor as the Congressional anti-Palestine hearings, driven by fascist politicians who repeat long-discredited theories or bigoted political and religious ideology as fact. When trans people and supporters show up and try to be heard, they are often silenced, driven out, or arrested.

Typical of this approach is the [Cass Review](#) commissioned by the British government, where anti-trans attacks are also at a fever pitch. This so-called review to advise the National Health Service policy on treatment of trans youth dismissed over 100 scientific studies to cherry-pick a handful that reached anti-trans conclusions.

The supposedly impartial review was carried out by a team that excluded trans people, but included known transphobes who collaborated with Florida's DeSantis administration.

And yet the Cass Review is already being used by the British government to cut off access to care, not only for trans youth, but also trans adults. It is being favorably cited by U.S. far-right politicians and "liberal" media like the New York Times and The Guardian to manufacture consent for anti-trans genocide.

Like the opponents of genocide in Gaza who are unjustly accused of antisemitism, no amount of evidence will suffice to refute the witch-hunters' charges of "grooming" and "social contagion." Like those accused of witchcraft in 17th century New England, the only way trans people can prove their innocence is to stop existing - death.



### **No more Odessa massacres!**

The witch-hunt rhetoric directed at pro-Palestine students and faculty and at trans people escalates the danger of fascist violence, whether from "official" repressive bodies of the state (police and national guard) or "unofficial" neo-Nazi aligned movements. It's an attack on the rights of the whole working class and all oppressed people, and must be fought with unity and urgency.

Ten years ago, on May 2, 2014, fascist gangs were given the green light by the U.S.-backed coup government in Ukraine to carry out a bloody massacre of nearly 50 activists and workers at the House of Trade Unions in Odessa. The working class movement in Ukraine was smashed and thousands of organizers driven into exile in its wake.

Anti-fascists from Ukraine to the U.S. warned then that Washington's support for neo-Nazi terror abroad would boomerang here. Now this is visible for all to see.

The working class is making important gains in organizing, from Starbucks to Amazon to the United Auto Workers victory at Volkswagen in Tennessee. But this progress is threatened by the attacks on the political and civil rights of students, teachers, and LGBTQIA+ people.

The bigoted politicians, the neo-Nazis and the big capitalists behind them will not stop with demonizing the Gaza solidarity movement and trans community. The

purpose of the witch-hunts is to shatter the ability of the working class and oppressed to resist.

Don't wait for an Odessa massacre to happen here! Mobilize to resist the bosses' witch-hunts!



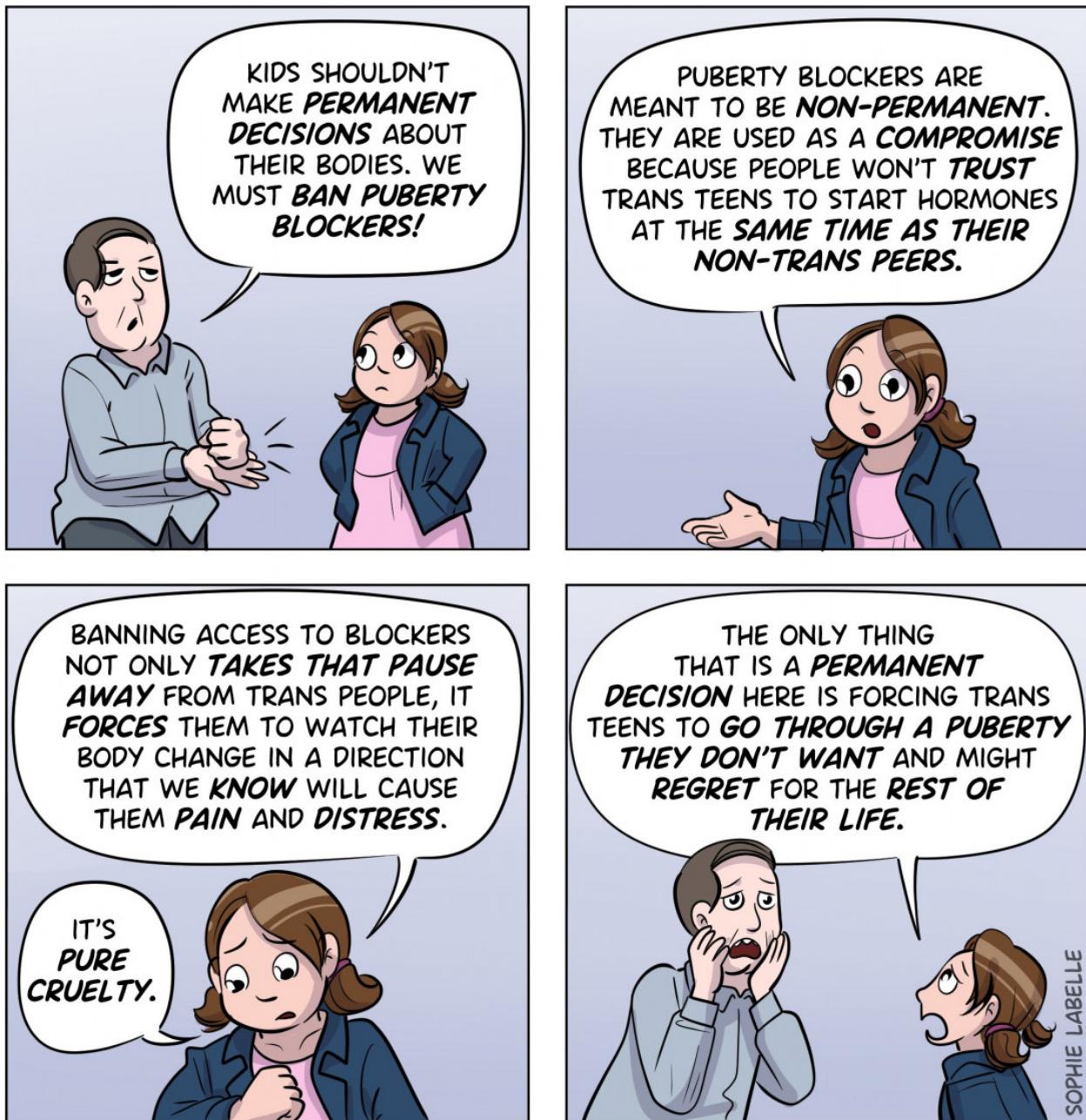
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## **Opinion: England's anti-trans Cass Review is politics disguised as science**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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**The recent report borrows from DeSantis bans on transgender care in Florida and appears designed to provide political justification for further attacks on transgender care.**



The anti-trans frenzy is peaking in England this week following the release of [a much-anticipated review](#) by Dr. Hillary Cass on transgender care. Many anticipated that the report would serve as a pretext to ban transgender care in England, and it

appears to have been crafted to provide just such a rationale. Nations already enacting restrictive laws against transgender individuals will likely use it as justification for further discrimination. In the United States, far-right Christian nationalist groups, including [Heritage Foundation \(retweeted\)](#), [Association of Christian Schools International](#), and the [Alliance Defending Freedom](#), have cited it to support anti-trans legislation they are involved in drafting or lobbying. The Cass Review is an exercise in politics with predetermined conclusions, not science and medicine, and health authorities worldwide should reject its findings.

For those unaware of the Cass Review and the general situation in England for transgender people, that's understandable. Transgender people have been struggling to raise alarms there for some time after wait lists to obtain gender-affirming care have ballooned [in excess of 5 years](#), which is often prohibitive in obtaining care. After a series of political attacks on transgender people and rising anti-trans sentiment in the country, the NHS [commissioned a review and tapped Dr. Hillary Cass](#), a pediatrician whose list of follows on social media include extremist anti-trans sources such as Transgender Trend (which argues, as is obvious, that being transgender is a "trend"), the LGB Alliance (a LGB group that believes in "dropping the T," or transgender people), and Graham Linehan (an anti-trans activist and comedian), along with many other noted anti-trans voices. From the outset, there were concerns about her ability to conduct a study neutrally.

Over the course of the review, these concerns intensified. On one occasion, Cass met privately with medical board members selected by Governor Ron DeSantis in Florida to ban transgender care through the Florida Medical Board and appeared to [collaborate via email](#). This only came to light during [a contentious trial](#) that revealed the board's intention to ban transgender care from the outset, prior to any review. Cass's involvement in what was essentially a predetermined strike by DeSantis against transgender people raised red flags. On another occasion, her team enlisted a researcher with [a history of promoting conversion therapy](#) as a viable

option for transgender individuals to handle reviews of evidence on which the report would be based.

Now that the final report is out, it is evident that it was crafted with a predetermined conclusion in mind. The review, [highly susceptible to subjectivity](#), disregarded the body of research on transgender care as [not “high quality,”](#) a subjective judgment that cannot be trusted as politically unbiased given prior concerns. The Cass Review lends credence to claims that being transgender is “contagious” and that it can influence others around them, claims that have been [debunked](#) by dozens of medical organizations. It cites YouTube propagandists that [share material](#) from “Gays Against Groomers,” a Republican-aligned anti-transgender organization in the United States. It fearmongers that being transgender might be caused by depression, anxiety, and autism, claims that the American Psychological Association, the world’s largest psychological organization, has [rejected in a recent policy resolution](#). It asserts that rates of detransition or desistance are high, citing outdated studies from conversion therapists like Ken Zucker, who reportedly used methods such as [withholding wrongly gendered toys](#) in an attempt to “treat” transgender youth. These purportedly high rates of “detransition” or “desistance” are challenged not only by [external fact checks](#) but also data within Cass’ own review.

The review cites heavily studies that have been misleadingly used to claim that being trans may be caused by being friends with other trans people. For instance, immediately after making social contagion claims, [it references a study](#) of “2,772 adolescents” that purportedly links the question “I wish to be of the opposite sex” to “poor self-concept” and “same-sex attraction.” Cass uses this to essentially claim that many transgender individuals do not know who they are, suggesting that trans individuals may actually just be gay people influenced into being trans by being friends with other trans people—a claim without evidence, often perpetuated by those opposed to trans care. It is important to note that the study Cass cites does not

concern trans people; rather, it focuses on cisgender individuals who occasionally wish they were the opposite sex for any reason, including tomboys, feminine gay boys, people experiencing sexism, and more. In that particular study, 19% of participants responded this way, a rate magnitudes higher than the often-estimated 0.5% of transgender individuals. Nevertheless, Cass includes this study as though it applies to transgender individuals, whose desire is not “occasional” but enduring.

It is important to note that the Cass Review contains very little new data and evidence. Any statements it makes are based on the same level of evidence that every major medical organization in the United States, along with some of the largest mental health societies in the world and professional associations of transgender health, have determined to support transgender care. If its claims differ from those institutions, it's because reviewers made choices to view the evidence around transgender care negatively. For instance, Cornell University has reviewed over [51 of these studies](#) and found that gender transition improves the well-being of transgender people. Interestingly, the scant data the Cass Review did commission on its own actually turned out to support gender-affirming care for trans youth.

For instance, the review on page 168 notes that in a study of patients in England, fewer than 10 transgender youth detransitioned or desisted. This could be seen as evidence of careful transgender care, supported by other research indicating that [97.5% of transgender youth are stable in their gender identity](#) five years later. However, Dr. Cass interprets this as evidence that puberty blockers cause transgender youth to feel locked into their gender identity, despite their role in giving both the youth and their care providers time to ensure that transition is appropriate. No evidence was presented that transgender youth feel this way, and the review certainly had the opportunity to ask the question of the youth it interviewed. It is conceivable that if a larger number of youth were desisting or detransitioning, Cass and others with similar views would argue that clinicians are failing to correctly identify transgender individuals and would use this as

justification to block care. They have created a situation where the evidence will be interpreted negatively no matter what it shows.

The Cass Review, like the Florida review, was not conducted through a rigorous scientific process by the field's leading experts. Instead, it seems designed to manufacture a consensus, using science as a guise for politics—there can be no other explanation for the decisions made in the document. This is evident when, after reviewing the same evidence, virtually [every major medical organization in the United States](#) strongly supports the evidence base for transgender care. Meanwhile, in Germany, [another report was announced](#) last month, which judged the exact same evidence strong enough to justify keeping transgender care for youth accessible. Announced in a press conference, this report involved collaboration among 27 professional medical organizations and 2 patient organizations. The press conference announcing the guidelines states that "not providing treatment can do harm" and that "These are not merely our personal observations; there are several longitudinal studies that now also show that there are some improvements in the medium to long term for these young people who are supported in such a fashion." This full report is expected to be published soon after a four-week review, at which point it will likely become the official recommendations of the Association of the Scientific Medical Societies in Germany.

Transgender individuals in England deserve far better than sham reports concocted to justify escalating crackdowns on their care. They merit more than being subjected to DeSantis-style politics that weaponize fear over their very existence and their fundamental right to bodily autonomy. They are owed individualized care, collaboratively done with their doctors and caregivers, that is meticulously tailored to meet their unique medical needs. Documents like the Cass Review fall drastically short of protecting transgender youth and instead serve to shield the sensibilities of those who tirelessly seek to justify their control over the lives of transgender people.

Source: [Erin In The Morning](#)



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# **Joan Gibbs, renowned lesbian activist and attorney, dies at 71**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Joan Gibbs, an activist and attorney who used her power — often on a pro bono basis — to fight HIV/AIDS and advance racial justice, women's rights, and LGBTQ rights, died on March 14 at the age of 71.

Gibbs was born in New York City, but spent her early youth in North Carolina before moving back to New York when she was 14 years old. By the time she was in high school, she became involved in activist movements, joining the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the Young Socialist Alliance, and a Black student group, she said in a 2012 interview with [ACT UP's Oral History Project](#). Gibbs earned a Bachelor's Degree from Empire State College and a JD from Rutgers University.

Gibbs said she joined ACT UP, an activist group fighting to end AIDS, beginning in

the 1980s when she attended a demonstration on Wall Street. She served as a legal observer for ACT UP and represented the group in court on multiple occasions, including when members were arrested in 1988 for occupying the New York City health commissioner's office to protest the undercounting of individuals living with HIV, according to the [National Lawyers Guild's New York City Chapter](#). Gibbs also represented the Haitian American Anti-Defamation League when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) deemed the group to be a risk for HIV/AIDS.

"ACT UP, to me, was one of the best expressions of progressive politics in its practice that has existed since, I would say, the Civil Rights Movement," Gibbs said.

Among others, Gibbs represented Black Liberation Army activist Sundiata Acoli, who spent decades in prison for the 1973 murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster. Gibbs wrote a letter to California Representative Maxine Waters in 1998 to criticize the lawmaker's vote in support of a resolution calling on Cuba to extradite Assata Shakur, also known as Joanne Chesimard, who was also convicted of the same murder as Acoli and fled to Cuba. Waters subsequently said she made a mistake and wrote a letter to then-Cuban president Fidel Castro saying she opposed the resolution.

Gibbs' legacy extended far beyond her legal work. She was a founding leader of Dykes Against Racism Everywhere (DARE), which launched in 1979 in response to the murder of demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina who were protesting racism.

"We would try to tell people," Gibbs recalled during the ACT UP interview, "'You need to organize, reach out,' explicitly to the lesbian and gay community, right? So the group was very heterosexist, slightly homophobic, and so then we decided, 'Well, listen, we should start a group, and then we can organize people going to these demonstrations.' And so that's how we started. So we started basically to challenge not only racism within society broadly, but also at a time within the lesbian and gay

community to raise consciousness around racism.”

During her ACT UP interview, Gibbs also recalled launching Azalea, a magazine for women of color, in the 1970s. She said she started the magazine “because at the time people were constantly complaining about how the, quote, unquote, white feminist and lesbian publications weren’t publishing writings by Black and Latina women principally.”

She added: “So then I decided, well, why don’t we just start our own magazine and stop complaining? There’s no point in complaining constantly.”

Upon graduating from law school, Gibbs worked with the Center for Constitutional Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Women’s Rights Project, and then the Center for Constitutional Rights again. She spent 28 years working at Medgar Evers College, where she served as the general counsel for the Center for Law and Social Justice.

At the Center for Constitutional Rights, Gibbs filed a lawsuit against the New York State Department of Corrections after an incarcerated individual living with AIDS was barred from participating in a family reunification program in 1987, according to the National Lawyers Guild’s New York City Chapter.

Kenyon Farrow, a Black gay writer and activist, said he first met Gibbs about 20 years ago when he was a young activist in New York City.

“She was so unassuming and down to earth, I didn’t realize I was looking into the face of a movement giant,” Farrow told Gay City News. “Her work as a movement lawyer crossed so many critical areas of work — from representing Sundiata Acoli to ACT UP, and her later work teaching at Medgar Evers. Instead of leveraging her relationships and work to become a movement celebrity in a way that is so pervasive now, she remained committed to freedom and liberation of oppressed people above

and beyond any personal recognition or fame her impact could have brought her. She is missed and her example of being committed to the work before ego is sorely needed now."

Author Sarah Schulman, who interviewed Gibbs for ACT UP's Oral History Project, remembers her as an individual who gave back to others.

"Joan was a kind person who devoted her life to creating community on all levels," Schulman told Gay City News. "Whether it was her work as a social justice attorney, or personally as a volunteer at Rikers, or housing friends with AIDS until their deaths. As a poet, she coalesced poets. As a lesbian, she co-built probably the first expressly anti-racist lesbian group. She was beloved by ACT UP for all her pro bono legal work in the streets and in the courts. A woman of great compassion."

Kazembe Balagun, a writer, curator, cultural historian, and activist, worked with Gibbs at the Brecht Forum from 2008 to 2013 and looked up to her as a queer activist.

"I remember the first event I organized at the Brecht, 'James Baldwin: Life and Legacies,'" Balagun said. "Joan enthusiastically participated along with Kenyon Farrow, Tourmaline, Anika Lani and Ajamu Sankofa. She was open funny honest and always led with integrity. She always made time for me and will be dearly missed."

Black Women Radicals, a Black feminist advocacy organization, also mourned Gibbs.

"We are saddened to hear about the passing of Joan Gibbs," the group wrote on Instagram. "Gibbs was an attorney, activist, writer and speaker. She was active in the US movement for social and economic justice since the late 1960s, most significantly the anti-racist, women's and LGBT movements."

[Out-FM](#), a weekly progressive, intersectional queer radio show airing on 99.5 FM and [wbai.org](#), is planning to devote its entire program to Gibbs on March 26. The

show runs from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. ET.

There will be a memorial for Gibbs in May. Details are forthcoming.

Source: [Gay City News](#)



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# **Nex Benedict's death must be a turning point in the fight for trans lives!**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
June 1, 2024

Nex Benedict, a 16-year-old transgender Choctaw student, was brutally beaten in an Owasso, Oklahoma, high school bathroom on Feb. 7 and died the next day. The school did not call an ambulance for Nex even though he couldn't get up after the assault. (Earlier Nex was widely reported as being nonbinary, but those close to him say that he preferred he/him pronouns.)

We stand in solidarity with Nex's family and community, with Owasso students who walked out of their classes in protest on Feb. 26, and with those who have come out to vigils across the country to demand "Justice For Nex."

The murder of Nex Benedict comes nearly a year after the Oklahoma state legislature passed a ban on trans students and teachers using restrooms that align with their gender. It's a completely predictable result of the statewide and nationwide legislative assault that demonizes trans people, including children.

Besides bathroom bans, state legislatures have passed bans on gender-affirming health care, participation in sports, book bans, drag bans, "don't say gay or trans" laws, and more. Nex's death also reflects the centuries-long war of the racist state and federal governments against Indigenous peoples, which often includes suppressing traditions with a more diverse view of gender and sexuality.

Since the story of Nex's death made national news, local police have attempted a cover-up, implying that Nex's death was caused by drug use rather than the violence inflicted on him (exposed thanks to Nex's family and independent journalists). Oklahoma Republican state senators held a public forum where they labeled LGBTQ+ people "filth" and teachers "terrorists." Prominent corporate media outlets have given whitewashing interviews to bigoted Oklahoma Department of Education Superintendent Ryan Walters and social media terrorist Chaya Raichik ("Libs of TikTok"), who last year instigated bomb threats aimed at a trans teacher at Nex's school.

But Walters, Raichik, and the rest are mouthpieces for wealthy capitalists and big corporations - the real forces behind the anti-trans panic. Of the 47 sponsors of the Oklahoma bathroom bill:

- 35 took money from energy or oil/gas companies
- 28 took money from the finance industry

- 22 took money from the health care industry

Other major contributors include the agriculture and construction industries. Many others are “self-funded” through their own wealth – they’re capitalists or executives themselves.

The deluge of anti-trans hate is meant to distract people from the deepening economic crisis, low wages, exorbitant rents, austerity measures, and genocidal wars that the politicians refuse to address. These industries profit off of the destruction of the environment, super-exploitation of workers, raising the prices for medicine and hospital visits, and the overall misery and fear of the people. They need a scapegoat for people’s suffering, and they have chosen trans people as one of their primary targets. They know that if they make us hate each other, we cannot unite against them.

The Biden administration and the Democratic Party, most of whom are in the pockets of war profiteers and oil companies, demand the votes of LGBTQ+ people. But Biden has done nothing to protect trans youth through the last three years of legal and extralegal attacks. In fact, while thousands were coming out to remember Nex Benedict, Biden’s Department of Veterans Affairs ruled that trans veterans would not be eligible for gender-affirming surgeries.

Trans people can no longer accept the argument that we must support the “lesser evil” Democratic administration when, with its silence and inaction, it is facilitating the Republicans’ deadly attacks on trans lives.

We call on all workers — transgender and cisgender — to stand against these attacks. We must not turn away from the killing of Nex Benedict. This must be the moment when we stand together in opposition and resistance.

We have seen for decades now how anti-trans bills end up hurting everyone,

whether it is cis women harassed in bathrooms for not appearing feminine enough, cis children harassed for being better at sports, cis parents under threat of losing their trans children, or intersex people who are harmed by these laws. If we do not unite against these attacks, the violence against trans youth and all trans people will snowball, and the attack against all workers will escalate as well. The forces of hate and oppression will not stop with trans people — a unified movement is our only hope.

There is a direct line between the rise in anti-trans laws of the last decade and the escalation of violence against trans people. Last year saw more reported murders and violent deaths of trans people than ever; suicide rates among trans people, especially trans youth, are alarmingly high.

Last October, the [Coalition to Protect Trans Lives](#) organized a National March to Protect Trans Youth in Orlando, Florida, and participants joined a lawsuit against Florida's bathroom ban. We are working to build an independent fight-back movement nationwide, in the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement, the Stonewall Uprising, and 1980s AIDS activism, to link arms with Indigenous nations, Black and Palestinian people, migrants, and other communities resisting the far-right onslaught. As we prepare for bigger and bolder actions in 2024, we ask you to get involved.

The trans community doesn't need any more martyrs. We call on all who are outraged by the death of Nex Benedict to stand against the assault on trans lives across the U.S.

Rise up and organize for trans lives!

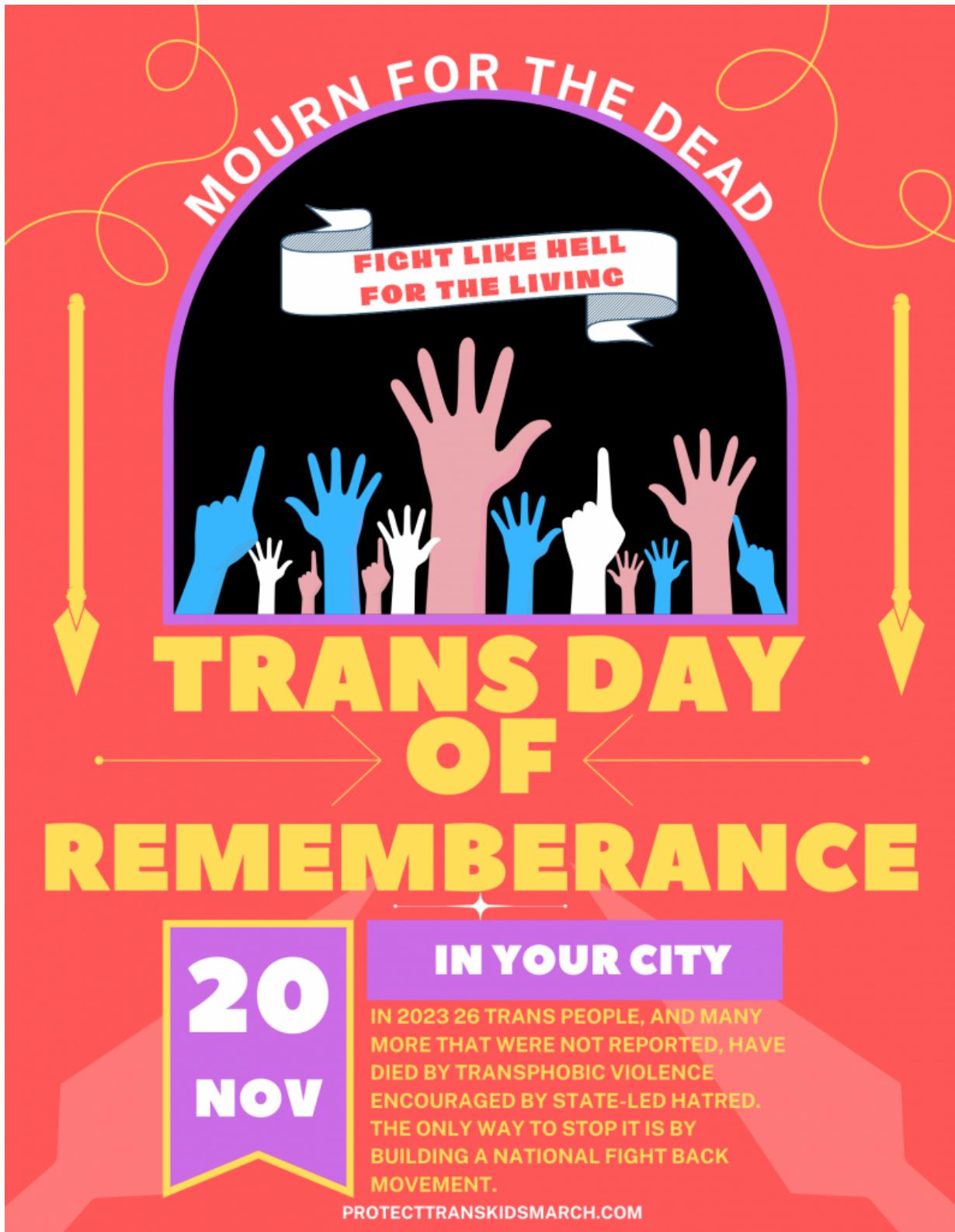


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# **Call to action: Trans Day of Remembrance 2023**

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 1, 2024



## **Trans Day of Remembrance 2023:**

### **MOURN THE DEAD, FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING!**

The [Coalition to Protect Trans Lives](#) calls on trans and queer people and our allies to come out in force for Trans Day of Remembrance events across the country on Nov. 20, 2023. The need to remember our fallen and fight for our future has never been more urgent.

In October alone, at least six of our Black trans siblings were murdered: A'nee Johnson, Skylar Harrison Reeves, Chyna Long, Lisa Love, London Price, and Dominic Dupree. Twenty-six trans people are known to have been killed so far this year, though the real number is likely much higher thanks to misgendering by police and media. This year, like every year, the overwhelming number of victims are Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color.

Anti-trans violence and threats have skyrocketed, propelled by hate campaigns driven by far-right politicians, corporate media, and fascist groups and funded by the super-rich. Laws passed in HALF of U.S. states in 2023 aim to eradicate trans lives, especially targeting youth, with more and worse to come in 2024.

Republican presidential candidates like Trump and DeSantis scapegoat trans people for political gain, while President Biden and Congressional Democrats offer us nothing but worthless “thoughts and prayers” while life-saving health care is ripped away.

Trans people are part of the working class and all marginalized communities under attack by the capitalists across this country. We are part of the movements for Black Lives, for immigrants, for a free Palestine, for unions. We need to reach out and build a united fightback in the spirit of the Stonewall uprising, AIDS activism, and the Civil Rights Movement.

That's why our grassroots coalition took the fight to the front lines of the fight against fascism in Florida. We organized the Oct. 7 [National March to Protect Trans Youth in Orlando](#), uniting hundreds from across Florida and the U.S. to defiantly resist. And we're not stopping there. More acts of resistance are coming in 2024 - get involved to help us plan and organize.

Join us to build a movement to turn back the attacks on trans lives. Let's fight to expand the rights of trans people and all people!

Speak to an organizer, email [info@protecttranskidsmarch.org](mailto:info@protecttranskidsmarch.org), or sign up at [ProtectTransKidsMarch.org](#).

### **No more stolen trans lives! We remember:**

London Price, Oct. 23, Miami

Lisa Love, Oct. 17, Chicago

A'nee Johnson, Oct. 14, Washington, D.C.

Dominic Dupree (Dominic Palace), Oct. 13, Gary, IN

Chyna Long, Oct. 8, Milwaukee

Skylar Harrison Reeves, Oct. 2, Washington, D.C.

YOKO (YouOnlyKnowOne), Sept. 19, New Orleans

Sherlyn Marjorie, Sept. 17, Albuquerque

Thomas 'Tom-Tom' Robertson, Aug. 17, Calumet City, IN

Luis Ángel Díaz Castro, Aug. 12, San Juan, U.S.-occupied Puerto Rico

DéVonnie J'Rae Johnson, Aug. 7, Los Angeles

Camdyn Rider, July 21, Winter Park, FL

Jacob Williamson, June 30, Monroe, SC

Chanell Perez Ortiz, June 25, Carolina, U.S.-occupied Puerto Rico

Ashia Davis, June 2, Detroit

Banko Brown, April 27, San Francisco

Koko Da Doll, April 18, Atlanta

Ashley Burton, April 11, Atlanta  
Tasiyah Woodland, March 24, St. Mary's County, MD  
Chashay Henderson, Feb. 26, Milwaukee  
Zachee Imanitwitaho, Feb. 3, Louisville, KY  
Unique Banks, Jan. 23, Chicago  
Maria Jose Rivera Rivera, Jan. 21, Houston  
Tortuguita, Jan. 18, Atlanta  
KC Johnson, Jan. 14, Wilmington, NC  
Jasmine "Star" Mack, Jan. 7, Washington, D.C.

[According to HRC](#), in 2023:

88% of victims are people of color  
52% are Black transgender women  
47% with a known killer were killed by a romantic/sexual partner, friend, or family member  
48% were misgendered or deadnamed by authorities or the press

**The Coalition to Protect Trans Lives demands:**

- Reverse the bans on trans health care, restroom access, Black & Queer history
- Stop racist attacks on our communities
- Stop censorship and attacks on the civil liberties of teachers, students & libraries
- Hands off Pride!
- Free, legal, accessible abortions
- Expand Medicaid and SNAP
- Stop voter disenfranchisement
- Drop charges on the Tampa 5 and all activists targeted by the state
- Demand Biden & Congress enforce civil rights from coast to coast



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# Capitalists behind anti-trans social media barrage

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
June 1, 2024

On Nov. 2, a hate group called PragerU spent what is reported to be a million dollars to promote anti-trans lies on the social media site “X” (formerly Twitter), owned by right-wing billionaire Elon Musk.

Who funds this hate group? It’s unknown where that specific million dollars came from, but the group was originally funded by two hydraulic fracking billionaires, and a quick search suggests those same billionaires are still involved in the group.

Research also shows that other major donors include a right-wing foundation started by people who made their fortune pushing automation in factories, one of whom was a founding member of the infamous anti-communist, racist, sexist, fascist

organization known as the John Birch Society.

There are three kinds of political group in this country:

1. Those that are kept together with the grit and spit of working-class people and what little we can scrape together to fund resistance to oppression, exploitation, and violence.
2. Those that are funded by rich people who want to push the most anti-worker, oppressive agenda you've ever heard of.
3. Those that are funded by rich people who want to push a more liberal agenda in order to keep you from supporting the first kind of group, because they hate the first kind of group since those are the only kind that can make a difference.

The hate group (of the second variety) pushing this anti-trans barrage on social media is not unique. There are many anti-trans hate groups, most of them funded by very similar billionaires (or, in some cases, multimillionaires, as if that makes a difference in their political outlook).

[A recent exposé by the Huffington Post](#) went into detail about Joseph Edelman, a hedge fund manager whose business focuses on health care. He funds anti-trans, anti-abortion, and anti-anti-racist (that's not a typo) groups, including PragerU.

## **Bosses need scapegoats**

You have to ask yourself: Why do they care?

The answer is: They don't. They don't care about trans people. They care about making money.

These capitalists make their fortunes destroying the environment, automating factories, and investing in for-profit health care. They make their fortunes

intentionally worsening conditions for most of humanity. They profit off human suffering, and they know that right now, that suffering has escalated all over the world.

Between the pandemic, climate change, unemployment, new forms of automation, and endless war, it's pretty grim for workers and oppressed people everywhere.

They know that those conditions breed resistance. They know that people are angry and that anger has to go somewhere. The best thing they can do to keep that anger from showing up at their doorstep (where it belongs) is to push a scapegoat.

A million dollars to tell everyone that trans people are coming for their kids is a small price to pay to keep justice at bay for another few years.

The fact that this will likely cause many trans people to die - as we lose access to health care ourselves, as we are so demonized that we become targets of violence, as we are driven into the closet and eventually to suicide - does not matter to them. They might hire people who have been deceived enough to sincerely hate us, but the rich and powerful people pushing this agenda? They don't care if we die.

And that makes them worse than the true believers. There's nothing there to convince, to shame, to educate, to grieve, to find compassion, to be debated. The only thing they will ever understand is mass resistance.

They are the source of the problem, not religion, not politics, not misinformed doctors, not terrified parents, not "stupid cis people." They dangle millions of dollars in front of enough people, and some of those people will sign up to be used to spread hate. Then the religious, political, medical, parental, people out there are gulled by the million-dollar campaigns and constant media barrage.

Without those millions dangled in front of them, most of the opportunists would never even think about trans people, and the deceived would never stop to think

about us unless we were part of their lives. The few true believers would be powerless to push their agenda without the money as well.

### **Pushing ‘de-transition’ myth**

The million-dollar campaign from PragerU is pushing the idea of de-transitioners. While many trans people do desist (the proper term for it), most do so due to economic hardship, threats of violence, discrimination, or other issues, not because they aren’t really trans. The number of trans people who permanently desist is very low.

(There are reports of anti-trans parents in online forums complaining that their kids “aren’t growing out of this trans phase” – i.e., parents shocked to learn that the lies they have been fed are lies.)

The number of people who regret transitioning is also exceedingly low, and even then, most regret it on the same basis as they desist — because of anti-trans bigotry, violence, or economic hardships.

Furthermore, there’s nothing wrong with de-transitioning. It’s another way of saying, “I explored my gender and figured out that transition wasn’t for me.” In the rare instances this happens, it’s perfectly okay. We should all be allowed to explore our genders without any barriers to doing so.

The problem is, the “de-transitioners” who are being promoted by these hate groups are opportunists using their stories to spread anti-trans hate. In the last year or so, there have been articles exposing anti-trans de-transitioner spokespeople as frauds. They’re usually paid to tell a story of de-transition, distort or exaggerate parts of it, and do the bidding of these hate groups.

One recently exposed story was about a trans woman who was encouraged to sue her medical providers for pressuring her into transitioning. When she did this, the

medical providers stopped providing her with hormones.

Yes, you read that right — this infamous “de-transitioner” was still transitioning! Cutting off her hormones sent her into a depressive spiral that sent her to a mental hospital. She eventually renounced her de-transitioner status and ties to the hate groups.

While this individual was used by them, she was also willingly involved in their agenda, making her story a clear example of how these groups operate, and more importantly, what empowers them and their agenda: the money behind it.

This is why we have to make it clear when we stand up for trans rights that our enemy is the super-rich and their willing, knowing pawns, not the ones who have simply been deceived. Once we defeat them, once we defeat capitalism, the power behind anti-trans hate is gone.

This is not to say we should not fight for better conditions and oppose anti-trans hate before we defeat capitalism, but that understanding who is funding and empowering anti-trans hate should inform how we fight.

To defeat the capitalists funding the anti-trans agenda, we need everyone we can get to stand with us, which means remembering that not everyone with a backward idea about trans people is actually our enemy. They’re victims of deception, and it’s to them that we should address attempts at education and persuasion – and also solidarity in their own struggles, which are caused by the same group of rich parasites.

Solidarity with others under attack should be the first step.

*The writer is a member of Workers Voice Socialist Movement.*



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# Queers say NO to GENOCIDE

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 1, 2024

On Oct. 24, the LA queer community (3 dozens of us anyways) showed up at Rep. Gomez's office to let it be known that queers stand firmly against the genocide of more than 2 million Palestinians.

The legacy of our community is standing up for justice and human rights for all. As a trans non-binary person fighting for the liberation of our siblings, I cannot stand idly by and let this atrocity unfold in front of our very eyes. It is our fight as well. IT IS UP TO US TO STOP THIS GENOCIDE.

#NoPrideinGenocide

#NoPrideinApartheid

#NoPrideinOccupation

We will not back down. We will keep fighting till we win. The Palestine Liberation is our liberation!!!



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# **Louisiana protest: ‘AG Landry, you’re a crook! Kids deserve to read gay books!’**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
June 1, 2024

Sept. 15, Lafayette, Louisiana - This writer joined over 30 protesters against corrupt far-right gubernatorial candidate Jeff Landry. We gathered outside KLFY studios where the second gubernatorial debate was happening; Landry skipped the first one, claiming that debate hosts would not treat him fairly, and has generally skirted other interactions with his rival candidates.

The action was led by both cis and trans women. Participating organizations included Real Name Campaign NOLA, Reproductive Freedom Acadiana, Louisianahbrah, DSA Southwest Louisiana, and Socialist Unity Party.

Amanda Anderson, an organizer with Reproductive Freedom Acadiana, told the

crowd, “Although we have these fascist, bigoted, corrupt politicians imposing restrictions on us, our state is in fact composed of diverse people, like the people that showed up here today. ... We have the people, power, and persistence to protect and restore fundamental rights back to the people.”

Quest Riggs of Real Name Campaign said, “Do the majority of Louisianians want to oppress their neighbors? Hell no! Does Jeff Landry want to oppress the people of this state? Absolutely.”

We chanted, “AG Landry, you’re a crook! Kids deserve to read gay books!” When Landry came out, we got as close as we could, pummeling him with noise as he rushed to his vehicle and sped off. So long, janky Jeff! (Another popular slogan from the night.)

Anderson’s words about our diverse community ring true. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know activists of many ages and backgrounds from across the state. We even had dinner together after the action, strengthening the feeling of solidarity. We are prepared to fight against the far-right, capitalist onslaught.

## **Who is Jeff Landry?**

Landry is cut from the same cloth as Ron DeSantis of Florida and Greg Abbot of Texas, basing his campaign on targeting trans youth and other vulnerable groups. This is his only appeal since he has nothing to offer the state’s working class. He opposes raising Louisiana’s \$7.25 minimum wage and even says [there shouldn’t be a minimum wage](#).

This is the same man who sued to kick 700,000 Louisianians off Medicaid. Apparently, he doesn’t care whether we live or die. Considering the following [from The Gambit](#), we can sum up Landry’s attitude as “I got mine, screw you!”

“As Attorney General, Landry makes \$104,942.72 a year — nearly four times the average income for Louisianans. He also has significant sources of outside income. According to Landry’s financial disclosure forms — which only require ranges of income, rather than specific amounts — in 2022 he made between \$160,000 and \$414,000 from outside sources. Landry also reported investment holdings — all of which are held in his wife’s name — worth as much as \$2.4 million.”

As the state’s attorney general, he pushed for strict abortion bans. His office has come under fire - including in this debate - for attempting to track women seeking abortions out of state.

In close collaboration with the St. Tammany Parish Library Accountability Project, a de facto anti-LGBTQ+ group similar to the misnamed Moms for Liberty, Landry has gone after library books. The group’s founder and Landry associate, Connie Nichols Phillips, cost taxpayers in her parish \$72,000 processing the 150 book challenges she submitted.

The St. Tammany Parish Sheriff’s Department has [issued a misdemeanor summons to Phillips](#), who appeared in a viral video assaulting a library supporter outside a parish council meeting.

Last year, it came to light that [Landry spent more than \\$420,000](#) from campaign donors on his own staffing company. The above are only a few of his ongoing scandals.



<https://www.struggle-la-lucha.org/lgbtq/page/3/>