

Transgender Danger in the Bathroom

By *Simma Lieberman, The Inclusionist*



A woman recently asked me why the word hater would be used for someone who just had a different point of view. This was in reference to my very strong opinion piece I wrote about Target supporting Transgender rights. She thought it was just a disagreement about whether men should use the women's bathroom and women should use the men's bathroom. Unfortunately, a lot of people have a mistaken idea about this issue.

Denying human rights to any group is not a "different point of view." Whether that decision is based on bigotry, hate or fear due to lack of information, the result is the same, discrimination, exclusion and holding people back. I understand that there are many people who don't understand Transgender issues. I also understand there are people that may be afraid, uncomfortable with what they don't know, and who lack information. However that's no excuse for refusing to learn and get the right information. I call that "willful ignorance," refusing to even want to know more, or open to changing their mind.

There was a time when I didn't understand Transgender issues but I took the time to learn, to talk to Transgender people and get informed.

I look forward to the time when we won't need to learn or understand, because it won't be an issue, when no one will even think to question or deny equal rights to anyone from any group.

Not too long ago interracial marriage was illegal, and it was illegal to be a lesbian or a gay man. Police would raid bars like Stonewall in New York and people who were not wearing a certain amount of what was considered "gender appropriate" clothing would be arrested and taken to jail.

There were people who supported segregation and claimed they weren't prejudiced but they just had a different point of view. There is a difference between a point of view where someone likes or dislikes a movie, or whether they support public or private schools, or whether kids should be allowed to drive at a certain age. Discriminating against a particular group is not "just a point of view." It's bigotry.

There is a mistaken idea that straight men will want to dress up like women to molest girls. The reason most transgender people want to use the bathroom according to the gender they identify with and live, is because they are the ones in danger of being molested and not safe.

This is Caroline Cossey, a former "Bond girl," and model who is a transgender woman. Decide for yourself whether or not she would be safe in a men's bathroom, or whether she should stay out of the women's bathroom.

This is award winning actress Laverne Cox who is Transgender. What bathroom should she use. Would you be scared if you saw her in the women's bathroom?

Below is Ian Harvey. Look at him and decide for yourself whether you would feel safe with him in a women's bathroom, or whether he would be safe.

Of course, like members of any other group, not all Transgender people are famous or glamorous, or even on Google. And Transgender people, who do not fit the "gender prototype," of what some people think a man or a woman should look like are often harassed, assaulted and sometimes even murdered. Transgender people often have to live with the fear of being molested, fired, or evicted.

Transgender people are all sizes, ages, body types and in different stages of transition. They are educators, food servers, lawyers, executives, salespeople, defense workers, risk managers, and in every other strata of society.

And then, there are more than a few cisgender (someone whose gender corresponds to their assigned sex) people who don't fit the "accepted prototype" of what a man or a woman should look like. Some of those people have already been harassed and assaulted because someone thought they were Transgender.

Let's stop the hysteria and begin to let go of old gender stereotypes of how people should look, dress and talk.

Here are five ways to get informed:

- * Take some time to learn. Go to the Transgender Law site, or Out and Equal.
- * Watch documentary about people who are Transgender.
- * Read about Transgender issues, watch a Ted Talk about what it means to be Transgender.
- * Read the personal stories written by Transgender people.
- * There are Transgender rights organizations across the country. Get to know a Transgender person and be prepared to let go of your assumptions.

And if you already are informed, share these actions with someone who needs to learn. And if you have more actions to suggest, or ways everyone can be supportive, I'd love to hear and share them.

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