



Advancing LGBTQ+ Justice and Transgender Advocacy



Participant Handouts

UniServ Directors, Organizers, Leaders, and Members will gain a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ+ community and the issues critical to providing support and guidance that is not only inclusive but liberating.

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PRONOUN GUIDE

This is a guide for NEA leaders, members and staff to better understand and use pronouns in a respectful way for all NEA meetings and communications. Please be aware that some of this advice may not be appropriate for your school community, depending on current state law; check with your state or local affiliate regarding questions related to state law or school district policies.

PRONOUNS

Pronouns are words that function in the place of a name. Instead of saying, "My brother Steve is coming to pick me up in Steve's car, and we are going to Steve's favorite restaurant," a person could instead say, "his car/his favorite restaurant."

In English, we have two sets of gendered pronouns: "she/her/hers" and "he/him/his" are pronouns that are attached to a particular gender. Men/males have typically been referred to using he/him/his and women/females by using she/her/hers. We likely all grew up assuming we knew someone's pronouns just by looking at them, or knowing their gender, but that isn't the case. In an effort to be more affirming of all, it is important to get out of the habit of assuming pronouns.

Plural pronouns are becoming more widely accepted as gender-neutral singular pronouns. It is grammatically correct to use singular 'they' to refer a singular person of unknown gender or to a non-binary person who does not feel gendered pronouns work for them.

Here is a list of the most common pronouns used. Always use the pronouns of the individual once they have told you what pronouns they use. You may see more pronouns outside of this list.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronouns	Reflexive	Pronunciation
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself	
He	Him	His	His	Himself	
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves	
Ze	Zim	Zir	Zirs	Zirself	Zay or Zee Zim (rhymes with them) Zir (rhymes with their)

Some people also use more than one set of pronouns. For example, "she/they" or "he/them." When someone uses more than a single set of pronouns, it could mean that they are okay with either one being used, or that they accept both. Do not assume that they can be used interchangeably. Kindly ask if the person uses one set in particular contexts versus another.

TIPS ON USING GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

Chances are that you've used 'they, them, or their' as neutral pronouns when you weren't aware of a person's gender. These pronouns are gender-neutral and are used by some transgender and gender non-conforming people. Recognizing that it's natural to do this can help when a nonbinary person asks you to use gender-neutral pronouns for them. The following are examples when you might have used gender-neutral pronouns without realizing:

- ▶ You're at an event, and someone left a key for you, but you can't find it. You might ask, "Where did they leave the key?"
- ▶ You are awaiting a delivery from a postal worker and wonder, "When are they dropping off the mail?"
- ▶ Someone gives your organization a gift, but you didn't meet the donor. You might say, "Please tell them I said thank you!"

SHARE YOUR PRONOUNS

If we want to get out of the habit of assuming pronouns, we need to learn and let people introduce their pronouns.

Role model your pronouns before inviting everyone to introduce theirs.

"Hi, my name is Meg and I use she/her/hers pronouns. Could everyone please go around and share their name and pronouns."

Explain what pronouns are and why you're asking people to introduce theirs before you do.

"Hey everyone! So during introductions we are going to introduce our name and pronouns. Pronouns are words that we use to replace names, like she/her/hers, he/him/his, or they/them/theirs. I want to make sure that we are referring to each other in the way that feels most accurate, so we are going to be going around and if everyone could share their name and pronouns that'd be great!"

A common question and fear that we may have when getting to know someone who has recently changed pronouns or who uses singular they as their pronoun, is that we will make a mistake and misgender the person.

Apologize briefly and correct yourself. For example, *"And I was saying to someone that he's a really good – sorry, she – that she was a really good painter."*

Do not over apologize. Over apologizing could sound like, *"Oh gosh I am SO SO sorry, I really am. I know it's wrong and this must happen all the time. Gosh pronouns are so difficult!"* You're doing a few things when you over apologize. Instead of the moment being about them, you've made it about your feelings.



IT'S ABOUT RESPECT

Positive experiences of social gender affirmation are critical to the health and well-being of transgender and gender diverse people. Social interactions where a person is addressed by their correct name and pronouns, consistent with their gender identity, are widely recognized as a basic – yet critical – aspect of gender affirmation. Addressing someone by the wrong name or misgendering them through the use of incorrect pronouns can feel disrespectful, harmful, and even unsafe to the person being misgendered. Misgendering results in marginalization and communicates that a person's identity is not being seen or respected. So, practice using the pronouns a transgender or nonbinary person requests... yes, even plural 'they'. It's a show of respect.

PRONOUN USE IN POLICY

Over the last few years, the transgender community has asked allies to help normalize offering pronouns during introductions, in education, and the workplace to indicate an understanding of trans identities and show that they are a safe person. As gender identity and gender expression do not always align, offering pronouns is a way to create a space where people do not need to rely on assumptions of others' gender.

However, not everyone is comfortable sharing their pronouns. Some transgender, nonbinary, or questioning individuals might not be "out" yet or ready to let others know of their status. Others might object to sharing for any number of personal reasons. Respect those who offer to share their pronouns and those who do not. No one should be forced to comply, as long as they simply skip the practice and do not mock or belittle it.

Offering your pronouns is the simplest way to put things into practice. When you meet someone new, you can say, "Hi, my name is ____ and my pronouns are ____." If you wear a nametag or ID badge, you can add your pronouns to it. If you cannot alter your official nametag, it is easy to find pronoun pins in stores and online. When you participate in an online meeting, you can change your name to include your pronouns in parentheses to the side.

For more information on pronouns and additional LGBTQ+ Resources, please visit the following:

NEA LGBTQ+ Resources | NEA EdJustice | Why Share Your Pronouns?

First Impressions

Reflect on Your Own: Create your own word doc

1. When's the first time you can remember learning that some people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer?
2. Where did most of the influence of your initial impressions/understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people come from? (e.g., family, friends, television, books, news, church)
3. When's the first time you can remember learning that some people are transgender?
4. Where did most of the influence of your initial impressions/understanding of transgender people come from? (e.g., family, friends, television, books, news, church)
5. How have your impressions/understanding of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning) people changed or evolved throughout your life?

Read the following contract/policy provisions. Based on our understanding of gender identity, who may be excluded by these provisions? How would you revise these provisions to make them more inclusive?

EXAMPLE 1:

B. Temporary Leaves of Absence

All employees covered by the Agreement who are steadily employed by the Board of Education shall be entitled to the following non-accumulative leaves of absence with pay during each school year.

1. In the event of a death in the immediate family which occurs between September 1 and June 15th an allowance up to five (5) days leave shall be granted. Such leave must be used within thirty (30) days of the death. The Superintendent shall have the discretion to extend these periods where he deems it appropriate. "Immediate family" shall be husband, wife, child, stepchild, father, mother, brother, sister, parents-in-law, or any members of the employee's immediate household.

EXAMPLE 2:

C. All teachers shall receive coverage including spouse and dependent coverage as provided by the applicable plan.

1. A teacher may elect to forego the above coverage. In such event, the teacher shall receive the following:

<i>a.</i>	<i>Family to no coverage</i>	<i>\$2,300.00 per year</i>
<i>b.</i>	<i>Family to Single coverage</i>	<i>\$1,300.00 per year</i>
<i>c.</i>	<i>Family to Husband/Wife coverage</i>	<i>\$800.00 per year</i>
<i>d.</i>	<i>Family to Parent/Child coverage</i>	<i>\$800.00 per year</i>
<i>e.</i>	<i>Husband/Wife to no coverage</i>	<i>\$1,800.00 per year</i>
<i>f.</i>	<i>Husband/Wife to Single coverage</i>	<i>\$800.00 per year</i>
<i>g.</i>	<i>Parent/Child to no coverage</i>	<i>\$1,800.00 per year</i>
<i>h.</i>	<i>Parent/Child to Single coverage</i>	<i>\$800.00 per year</i>
<i>i.</i>	<i>Single coverage to no coverage</i>	<i>\$1,300.00 per year</i>

EXAMPLE 3:

Section P. Coed Activities

It is required in cases where students will be using locker rooms or staying over night, and recommended for all other circumstances, that an adult of each gender must be present to supervise coed junior high and senior high activity groups traveling out of district. Single gender groups must have at least one matching-gender supervisor present. These adults may be paid coaches/supervisors or volunteers officially designated by the athletic director or building principal.

EXAMPLE 4:

X. MATERNITY LEAVE POLICY

A maternity leave policy is hereby established under authority of law and to become effective July 1, 1976. All female employees who become pregnant or who are otherwise qualified hereunder are hereby granted a maternity leave for a reasonable period of time.

A. Period of Leave

A pregnant employee who desires a maternity leave of absence shall submit an official written request for such leave to the Executive Director. Such request shall include a certification of pregnancy from the employee's physician and the beginning and ending dates for said leave. The term of leave shall be no longer than one (1) year. A request for maternity leave shall be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the requested leave.

Additional leave, not to exceed a maximum of one (1) year may, at the Board's sole discretion, be granted to an employee because the employee is disabled and unable to return to work. Such disability must be verified by the employee's physician, including the additional anticipated beginning and ending dates for said additional leave. The Board will not unreasonably deny the request for an additional year for maternity leave.

Three (3) week notice shall be given by the Professional employee prior to returning to work.

B. Eligibility

Any employee of the school shall be eligible for this leave on the basis of either pregnancy of the natural mother or immediate adoption of a new born infant by the employee.

A male employee will be granted a paternity leave similar to that given a female employee. A request for a paternity (child-rearing) leave shall be submitted at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the requested leave.

C. Benefits While on Leave

No salary shall be paid said employee, nor shall pension rights accrue during the period of leave. While on maternity leave as herein defined, the employee is entitled to sick leave for disabilities caused or contributed to by pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, childbirth and recovery therefrom, according to guidelines by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Part 1604.10, issued under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

D. Return from Maternity Leave

Upon application by the employee on such leave to return to employment following such reasonable maternity leave, the Board shall offer her the job she held before going on leave or a substantially equivalent position. To the extent applicable, this regulation shall be administered in a reasonably consistent way with other leaves of absence as provided under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

EXAMPLE 5:

Family Illness

Ten (10) personal illness days per year may be used to attend to an immediate family member with a personal illness. These days shall not be cumulative. "Immediate family member" shall be defined as father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, husband, wife, a near relative who resides in the same household, or any person with whom the employee has made his home or deemed the primary caregiver.

Bereavement Leave

Three (3) days of bereavement leave shall be granted for the death of an immediate family member as defined above, as well as parents-in-law, ~~and~~ grandchild and great grandchildren.

One (1) day of bereavement leave shall be granted for the death of a near relative. "Near relative" shall be defined as first cousin, grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, ~~or~~ sister-in-law, grandfather-in-law and grandmother-in-law.

The Superintendent may extend the period of any bereavement leave at his/her discretion. This benefit shall not be cumulative.

The Cornell University

**TRANSGENDER GUIDE
TO TRANSITIONING &
GENDER
AFFIRMATION
IN THE WORKPLACE**



Cornell University
Division of Human Resources

Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity

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Introduction

Cornell University is committed to creating a safe and respectful campus for all members of our community including those of all gender identities and expressions. The following guide provides information about the ways in which the University is committed to supporting our transgender employees. This guide covers specific situations and questions for transgender employees, but is also useful to HR professionals, managers, hiring managers, and allies.

An inclusive workplace aligns with Cornell's institutional values and helps us attract, retain, and promote the best talent. The best talent comes from all backgrounds, experiences and identities and we are committed to supporting a diverse workforce. The goals of this guide are to:

- Provide steps transgender employees can take when coming out and transitioning at work.
- Provide knowledge to help transgender employees update their personal information in university systems.
- Offer information about on-campus and off-campus resources available to support transgender employees.

Cornell University's Non-Discrimination Policy

Cornell University's official [non-discrimination](#) policy includes the protection of "sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. This policy furthers the University's commitment to creating a learning, living, and working environment free of bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual and related misconduct, and to meeting applicable legal requirements.

Tips for Coming Out At Work

This process is very personal and there is no one way to tell your employer and colleagues that you are transgender. Whether, how or when you choose to share this information and who you choose to tell is entirely up to you. Below we provide some tips for your consideration:

- Coming out can be a stressful experience for some people. Remember, you make the decision about when you are comfortable coming out.
 - What does safety and comfort look like for you?
 - Are you comfortable with your own understanding of your identity?
- If and/or when you are ready to share with others, determine what you want to say to your supervisor and/or colleagues.
 - What is important for them to know about you?
 - What is not important for them to know?
- Start with one individual who you believe will be an ally to you and ask them to support you as you come out to others. This might be a close colleague, your supervisor, or someone in human resources.
- Consider developing a personal timeline for when you will tell various colleagues.
 - When do you want to start telling people?
 - Who will you tell first?
 - How will you do this? Email? In-person?
- Meet with your supervisor. Think of what support looks like for you and share this with them when you meet.
 - What do you need to make the workplace feel inclusive to you? This could be access to a bathroom that aligns with your gender identity and gender expression.
- The Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity can support by helping you plan your first steps. For more information, email Cornell F. Woodson (cfw58@cornell.edu).

Tips for Transitioning at Work

Whether or not you plan to medically transition or just change your name and gender expression, Cornell is committed to supporting you. Here are a few items you might consider:

- Share this guide or its companion version, “A Guide to Supporting Transgender People in the Workplace”, with someone you trust to act as an ally to you during this process. This might be a colleague, your supervisor, or someone in human resources.
- Develop a personal timeline for your transition.
 - If you plan to medically transition, how long will you need to be away?
 - Do you have a timeframe for when this will take place?
 - Even if you don’t plan to medically transition, will you want time away? How long?
- Speak with your supervisor about your plans and what you might need in terms of support.
 - Do you want someone to accompany you to this meeting? Someone from Human Resources or the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity is more than willing to attend with you.
 - What does support look like for you?
 - What do you need in order for the workplace to feel inclusive to you?
 - What bathroom will you need access to?
- Construct a timeline with your supervisor.
 - Would you like an announcement made about your transition? When should this be done?
 - Who should receive this announcement? The entire division, department, or just your colleagues? Who will share this and how?
 - When would you like to start using different gender pronouns?
 - Will you take on a new name?
 - When would you like to start using that name?
 - If you plan to use a different bathroom, when will that begin?
- Build your support system. Do you know of university, local, and national resources?

For more questions or items to consider, please view the “[Sample Workplace Transition Plan and Guiding Questions](#)” at the end of this guide.

Updating Your Personal Information via Workday

As you begin transitioning, you may want to update your personal information in Workday. Here are some steps for doing so.

Legal Name Change in Workday

Your legal name in Workday must match exactly how your name is listed on any official documentation, such as a social security card, birth certificate, permanent resident card, or employment authorization document. If, as part of your transition, you legally change your name and obtain a new copy of any of these documents---you can submit your legal name change by following these steps:

- Log into Workday and select *personal information*.
- On the next screen, select *legal name* from the *change* column.
- Make the changes you wish to make and select a date your name change should become effective.
- Click submit!

Once you submit the change via Workday, it will route to your local Human Resources Representative who will contact you for supporting documentation. You must submit a copy of your official documentation reflecting your new name to the local HR representative or bring them to Records at 337 Pine Tree Rd., East Hill Plaza.

Preferred Name Change in Workday

Before your name is legally changed or if you are not planning to legally change your name, you may wish to still use a preferred name at work. To do this, follow these steps:

- Log into Workday and select *personal information*.
- On the next screen, select *preferred name* on the *change* column.
- On the next screen, uncheck the box at the top that says, “Use legal name as preferred name”.

- On the same page, make your desired changes to your name.
- Click submit!

Please note that your legal name should not be visible to others in the system. Employees will be able to search for you using your preferred name. However, some records such as payroll, health insurance and some benefits, require use of your legal name and; therefore, your legal rather than your preferred name will continue to appear on those records.

Updating the Name Associated with Your Email

When you change your legal or preferred name, as described above, the name that appears when you send email will also be updated. It may take a few minutes before the change actually happens.

Updating Your NetID

Your NetID can only be changed if you change your legal name and after you have submitted your legal name change request to Human Resources via Workday. Once this has been updated in Workday, email computer_access@cornell.edu to request a new NetID.

If you have not or do not plan to legally change your name, then your NetID will remain the same. However, you can choose an alias for your email address to reflect your preferred name. Let's say, for example, your preferred name is Pat Smith, but your legal name is John Smith and the NetID version of your email is js1@cornell.edu. You can create and use an email alias that reads pat.smith@cornell.edu. To do this, you should:

- Go to whoiam.cornell.edu.
- Click the *email* tab.
- Under *advanced options*, look for the section labeled *optional email alias*.
- Click *select your email alias*.
- Select the format you want to use. If you select *special request*, make sure your request meets the special format request guidelines and remember to fill in the *justification* field.

- Click submit!

Please note that if you have only changed your preferred name and then created an email alias, your original NetID will still exist and remain your official NetID for Cornell purposes. Anyone with that NetID will still be able to use it to reach you. However, you can also share your email alias as a way to contact you. Both email addresses reach the same inbox.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in Workday

While you cannot change your gender marker in Workday until it has been legally changed, you can indicate your gender identity. To do this, you should:

- Log into Workday.
- Select *personal information*.
- On the next screen, select *personal information* again in the change column.
- Scroll to the bottom and find *sexual orientation and gender identity box*.
- *To edit, click the pencil icon on the box*
- Make the changes you desire.
- Click submit!

Employee Picture ID

The Office of the University Registrar is responsible for creating university picture ID cards for the Cornell community. To obtain a new employee ID to reflect your preferred name or legal name change and to take a new photo, you can visit the Registrar's Office located in Day Hall, B07. IDs are produced between 8 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. No appointment is required and there will be no fee for obtaining a new picture ID.

Transgender Inclusive Health Insurance Plan Options/Features

To learn more about your benefits, please make an appointment with someone in the HR Services & Transition Center. They are located in the East Hill Office Building, Suite 130 (395 Pine Tree Road). You can also contact them via phone at (607) 255 – 3936 or via email at benefits@cornell.edu.

Gender Friendly Restrooms

A part of your transition may include needing access to a bathroom that aligns with your gender identity. In keeping with the University's policy of nondiscrimination and the commitment to inclusion, the University allows students, staff, faculty, and visitors to use the restroom or facility that corresponds to their gender identity. To view our Restroom/Facilities Use Guidelines, [click here](#). The University also maintains a number of [universal restrooms](#) across campus to address restroom facility access not necessarily related to gender identity, such as access for parents with children and for other attendants/caregivers. These facilities are all-gender, accessible spaces, which may include amenities for families such as baby changing stations.

On-Campus Resources and Services

Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)

Located at 312 College Avenue, [FSAP](#) provides confidential counseling and consultation services to benefits eligible Cornell employees and their partners.

Colleague Network Groups (CNGs)

The university sponsors a number of [CNGs](#). There is one for LGBT employees, among other identity groups. For more information, contact Cassandre Joseph at 607-255-3976.

Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity (DIWD)

The [DIWD](#) is here to provide support as you navigate this process, if issues arise in your workplace, or if you need help finding resources. For more information, contact Cornell F. Woodson at 607-255-5740.

Incident Reporting Form

Should you ever experience or witness an incident related to bias, discrimination, or harassment, you should feel free to submit a report through our [incident reporting form](#). We have dedicated staff members who provide support and follow up on reports.

LGBT Resource Center

Faculty and Staff are involved with the LGBTQIA+ community in a variety of ways by attending one of the many events offered to the larger Cornell community, explore the many academic and social offerings, as well as collaborate with the Center to organize speakers, panels, and other events that help build an inclusive campus community.

Off-Campus Resources and Services

The Ithaca community has a number of great resources for transgender health.

Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes

Located in downtown Ithaca (620 W Seneca St, Ithaca, NY 14850), Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes has hormone therapy and preventive health services for transgender people. This is not a campus service, but a service provided in the local community. There is a fee for this service but if finances are a concern these can be discussed before one's first appointment. A person may become a new patient if they are seeking transgender related health care for the first time — or, if they are already being seen by a medical provider in their home community or their previous town that is providing transgender related health services to them, they may transfer their care and their records to this office so that they have a local provider here. You can reach them at (607) 273-1513 to request an appointment or request additional information.

The Planned Parenthood website also includes an awesome new booklet that has information on every process for changing your name and information as a transgender person!

[Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes Transgender Overview](#)
[Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes Transgender Healthcare, Booklet, and Forms](#)

Voice and Communication Modification Program

One of the only programs like it in the country, the Voice and Communication Modification Program at Ithaca College focuses on developing voice, articulation, non-verbal communication, language, voice-related quality of life, and self-perception. It's open to both male to female and female to male transgender people. Community members have to pay a nominal fee and must sign up in advance to be a part of this group. Information and brochure about the Voice and Communication Modification Program can be found [here](#).

Transgender Support Group

The Ithaca Transgender Group is a confidential, peer-led support group. It meets every other Sunday from 5PM to 7PM. They also hold meetings where they welcome significant others, friends, family and allies. To learn more, visit ithacatransgendergroup.com or email Natasha at natasha@ithacatransgendergroup.com.

Tompkins County Human Rights Commission

Offers telephone or in-office consultation regarding questions of rights, disputes, alleged violation of anti-discrimination laws which provide protection in the areas of employment, housing, credit, public accommodation, and public, non-sectarian educational institutions. To learn more, visit their website [here](#).

Sample Workplace Transition Plan and Guiding Questions

This sample Workplace Transition Plan addresses some of the processes that you might consider discussing with your supervisor. It can be customized to fit your needs and vision for your transition.

1. You could first choose to share the news of your upcoming transition with a trusted ally. This person could be a colleague, someone in HR, or a supervisor.
2. You could then contact someone in HR to discuss your plans for transitioning. This would be an opportunity to learn about all policies related to inclusion, coverage for medical transition, if you are comfortable telling your supervisor, etc.
3. A meeting could be planned between you and your supervisor, as well as anyone else you would like to be present.
4. You, the HR Rep, and your supervisor could consider discussing how the announcement will be made. Will it just be sent to your immediate colleagues? Will it be department wide? Division wide? All three? What format? Who should employees with questions contact?

***Note:** Depending on how widely communication about your transition will be shared, management staff beyond your supervisor should be made aware early so they can be prepared to support once the announcement is made.*

5. Consider a timeline for your transition. However, you may not know what this looks like right away. These are some questions to consider as you are planning:

- A) When will you begin using a new name, if you choose to do so?
- B) When will you begin to use your affirming gender pronouns?
- C) If you choose to, when will you begin making changes to your gender expression?
- D) If you choose to, when will you begin transitioning medically?
- E) How long will you need to be away from work? What dates?
- F) When will colleagues be made aware of your transition?
 - i. Do you plan to tell certain colleagues one-on-one? What date?
 - ii. What date should the department announcement be made?
 - iii. What date should the division be made aware?
- G) By what date should your email address, employee ID, and name change go live?

***Note:** This timeline can be changed, because it is YOUR process. Please remember that certain parts of your transition will take longer than others. Create a timeline that attempts to realistically and accurately predict how long each step might take.*

- 6) Consider what bathroom you will use and communicate your needs to your supervisor. Do you need a gender neutral bathroom?
- 7) **For Managers to consider:** Will any bathroom signs need to be changed?
- 8) **For Managers to consider:** If training will be implemented, when will this take place?
- 9) **For you to consider:** If training will be implemented, would you like to be present for it?

Transition Plan for [ENTER NAME]

Note: The process of transitioning can change day to day for an individual. This means, the dates chosen for this plan can change too. These dates are meant to be guides for ensuring that the plan is clear and the involved individuals understand their roles and responsibilities. Lastly, it is possible that it may take a few meetings to complete this plan.

Estimate of date to begin using affirming name and pronouns: _____

- What name should be used at this time: _____

Note: It is completely fine if you do not know at this time.

- What affirming pronouns should be used at this time: _____

Note: It is completely fine if you do not know at this time.

Prior to the above date, is there another name that you would like used: _____

Note: Until you are ready to use your affirming name, you may not want to keep using the name given to you at birth. Some people choose a nickname.

Estimate of date for obtaining employee ID with new photo: _____

Estimate of date for announcement to team members, if applicable: _____

Estimate of date for making department or unit wide announcement, if applicable: _____

Estimate of date for use of a different bathroom: _____

If you plan to medically transition, what dates will you need to be away from work?

Note: It is completely fine if you do not know at this time.

- Start - _____ End - _____

If training is provided for your team, department, or unit ---- would you like to be there?

- Y or N (Circle one.)

Is there additional information/needs you would like to share at this time?

Sample Employee Transition Announcement Email

Sent: Monday, July XX, XXXX 9:00 AM

To: XXXXXXXXXXX@cornell.edu

Subject: Staff change

Dear [INSERT NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR UNIT],

I am writing to notify you of a change regarding one of our staff members in [NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR UNIT].

On [ENTER MONTH] XX, [ENTER NAME OF EMPLOYEE] will have a new preferred name, thus moving forward would like to be addressed as [ENTER AFFIRMING NAME]. [ENTER AFFIRMING NAME] will be using [ENTER AFFIRMING PRONOUNS] as pronouns.

Leadership is working to support [ENTER AFFIRMING NAME] during [ENTER PRONOUN] transition period, as well as with the performance of [ENTER PRONOUN] job. You may address any questions or concerns to [ENTER NAME OF SUPERVISOR] at [ENTER EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER] or to [ENTER NAME OF YOUR UNIT'S HR REPRESENTATIVE] at [ENTER EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER].

If you are interested in learning more about the LGBTQIA+ community at Cornell, please visit the LGBT Resource Center for information, education opportunities, and ways to get involved: <http://lgbtrc.cornell.edu>. Cornell's Inclusive Excellence Academy is another great resource that offers programs and workshops designed for participants at all stages of their understanding of diversity, inclusion, and belonging: <https://diversity.cornell.edu/learning/inclusive-excellence-academy>. You may also contact Cornell's Workforce Diversity and Inclusion office at owdi@cornell.edu or (255-7066).

Thank you for your understanding and consideration in keeping Cornell University and [ENTER NAME OF DEPARTMENT OR UNIT] a productive and safe working environment for everyone.

Sincerely,

[ENTER NAME OF PERSON SENDING EMAIL]

Levels of Expressions of Oppression

I n d i v i d u a l	Internalized Oppression lies within individuals. These are our private beliefs and biases about others, influenced by our culture.	S y s t e m i c	Institutional Oppression occurs within institutions and systems of power. It is the norms, policies and practices that are structured into political, societal and economic institutions that have the net effect of imposing oppressive conditions and denying rights, opportunity, and equality to identifiable groups.
	Interpersonal Oppression occurs between individuals. Once we bring our private beliefs into our interactions with others, we are now in the interpersonal realm.		Structural Oppression is bias across institutions and society. It's the cumulative and compounded effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege some and disadvantage others.

Key Points to Remember

Key Point 1 - There are not hard and fast lines between the levels - and changing one can affect another.

Key Point 2 - The way to effect change is by addressing institutional and structural oppression- this is where injustice lives.

Expressions of Oppression Exercise

INSTRUCTIONS: Please review the cases below and as a group, have a discussion on your assigned case to come to a decision about which level of oppression each case belongs to. Please ensure there is consensus in your group in your answers. Be prepared to share in three minutes – a summary of your case, the level you chose, and why you made that decision.

Scenario #1: Oppression in Medicine

Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	

<https://www.thetaskforce.org/new-report-reveals-rampant-discrimination-against-transgender-people-by-health-providers-high-hiv-rates-and-widespread-lack-of-access-to-necessary-care-2/>



Transgender and gender non-conforming people face rampant discrimination in health care settings, are regularly denied needed care, and experience a range of health risks because they are transgender or gender non-conforming, according to a report of more than 6,450 transgender and gender non-conforming people. The National Transgender Discrimination Survey: Report on Health and Health Care was released nationally today by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Center for Transgender Equality.

Key findings include:

- Nearly 1 in 5 (19 percent) reported being refused care outright because they were transgender or gender non-conforming.
- Survey participants reported very high levels of postponing medical care when sick or injured due to discrimination and disrespect (28 percent).
- Harassment: 28 percent of respondents were subjected to harassment in medical settings.

Scenario #2: Financial Services

Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/28/30percent-of-lgbtq-adults-experienced-discrimination-in-financial-services.html>



Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are still struggling, in some instances, to access financial services that would help them manage their money.

Some 30% of LGBTQIA+ adults have experienced bias, discrimination or exclusion in the financial services sector, either from individuals or organizations, a survey from the

National Endowment for Financial Education found. The online survey of more than 1,000 adults in the LGBTQ+ community took place from May 6 to May 17.

Of those who experienced such barriers to accessing financial services, many noted that age and orientation were the top reasons they felt led to the experience. In addition, transgender respondents face the most discrimination, the survey found.

Scenario #3: Workplace Gender Change	
Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/04/30/transgender-woman-wrote-letter-her-boss-it-led-her-firing-trip-supreme-court/>



It took Aimee Stephens several months to write a letter to her boss explaining that she was a transgender woman and planned to start coming to work as her true self.

She had been working as a funeral director and embalmer for RG & GR Harris Funeral Homes in Garden City, Michigan, for almost six years. [She loved her job](#), but didn't want to hide who she was anymore.

She agonized over what to say in the letter, wrote several drafts and sought input from her therapist.

Finally satisfied, she handed the letter to her boss in the summer of 2013.

"He read it, he folded it up and put it in his pocket," Stephens recalled in an interview with CNN. "And basically stood up and walked away."

She was fired two weeks later. Stephens [filed a complaint](#) with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which then sued the funeral home claiming that firing Stephens for being transgender was unlawful sex discrimination based on her employer's sex- or gender-based expectations.

"I was proposing to go from being a man in a suit to a woman in a dress and they couldn't handle that part," Stephens said.

Her boss stated that he fired Stephens because she "was no longer going to represent himself as a man" and "wanted to dress as a woman,"

Scenario #4: Biracial Boy Pushed Off Table	
Quick Summary of the Case	

Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	
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Associated Press September 12, 2017

CLAREMONT, N.H. — Teenagers in New Hampshire taunted an 8-year-old biracial boy with racial slurs and then pushed him off of a picnic table with a rope around his neck, injuring him, the boy's family said.

The child was treated at a hospital for cuts to his neck following the near-hanging Aug. 28 in Claremont, the boy's grandmother, Lorrie Slattery, told the Valley News of West Lebanon, N.H. He has since been released and has returned to school in Claremont.



Slattery said the children were in a backyard when some of the teens got on the table and grabbed a rope that held a tire swing. It's not clear how the rope got around the child's neck, but Slattery said the teens pushed him off the table. No adults are believed to have witnessed the incident.

An expert on abuse who spoke to the boy at the hospital said he swung from his neck three times before being able to remove the rope, Slattery said. None of the teens came to his aid, she said.

Scenario: #5 The School-To-Prison Pipeline	
Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	

A significant number of Chicago students are pushed into the path of juvenile and adult prisons as a result of harsh disciplinary policies and high stakes testing. By harsh disciplinary policies, we mean excessive security procedures and police involvement as well as the overuse of suspensions and expulsion for minor infractions. These policies feed the "School to Prison Pipeline", sometimes also called the "Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track". Research suggests that students of color, in particular African American students, are disproportionately impacted by these punitive policies.



As Matt Kelley has written: "Whether or not they realize it, the punishments school officials hand out can literally determine — and derail — the path of a student's life. Which makes it even more critical that when schools make these decisions, they hand out discipline that's fair."

The "School to Prison Pipeline" describes a reality in which many young people are being pushed OUT of schools through zero tolerance policies, suspension, expulsion, discouragement and high stakes testing requirements; and INTO the juvenile and adult legal system. These zero tolerance policies involve the police in minor incidents and often lead to arrests, juvenile detention referrals, and even criminal charges and incarceration.

Scenario #6: Doorway To A Better Life?	
Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	

A state government agency decides that low-income housing must be built, which will house low-income Blacks and Latinos. The agency fails to look for locations near jobs and important infrastructures, like schools, decent public transportation, and other services. In fact, it is built in a poor, mostly Black and Latino part of town.



Often times the government locates the housing where it will have the least opposition. White neighborhoods tend to oppose public and affordable housing. Resources, whether public or private, often follow whites who flee urban problems for white suburbs. When the housing is built, the school district, already under-funded, has new residents too poor to contribute to its tax base. The local government spends its limited resources on transportation to connect largely white, well-to-do suburban commuters to their downtown jobs.

The public housing residents are left isolated, in under-funded schools, with no transportation to job centers. Whole communities of people of color lose opportunities for a good education, quality housing, living wage jobs, services and support-systems. In this town, no one individual stands in front of the doorway to a better life and says, “No Blacks/Latinos/ Native Americans/Asians allowed.” Race, however, is the unspoken motivator behind a series of actions which lead to decisions about where to place the walls.

Scenario #7: The Doll Case	
Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	



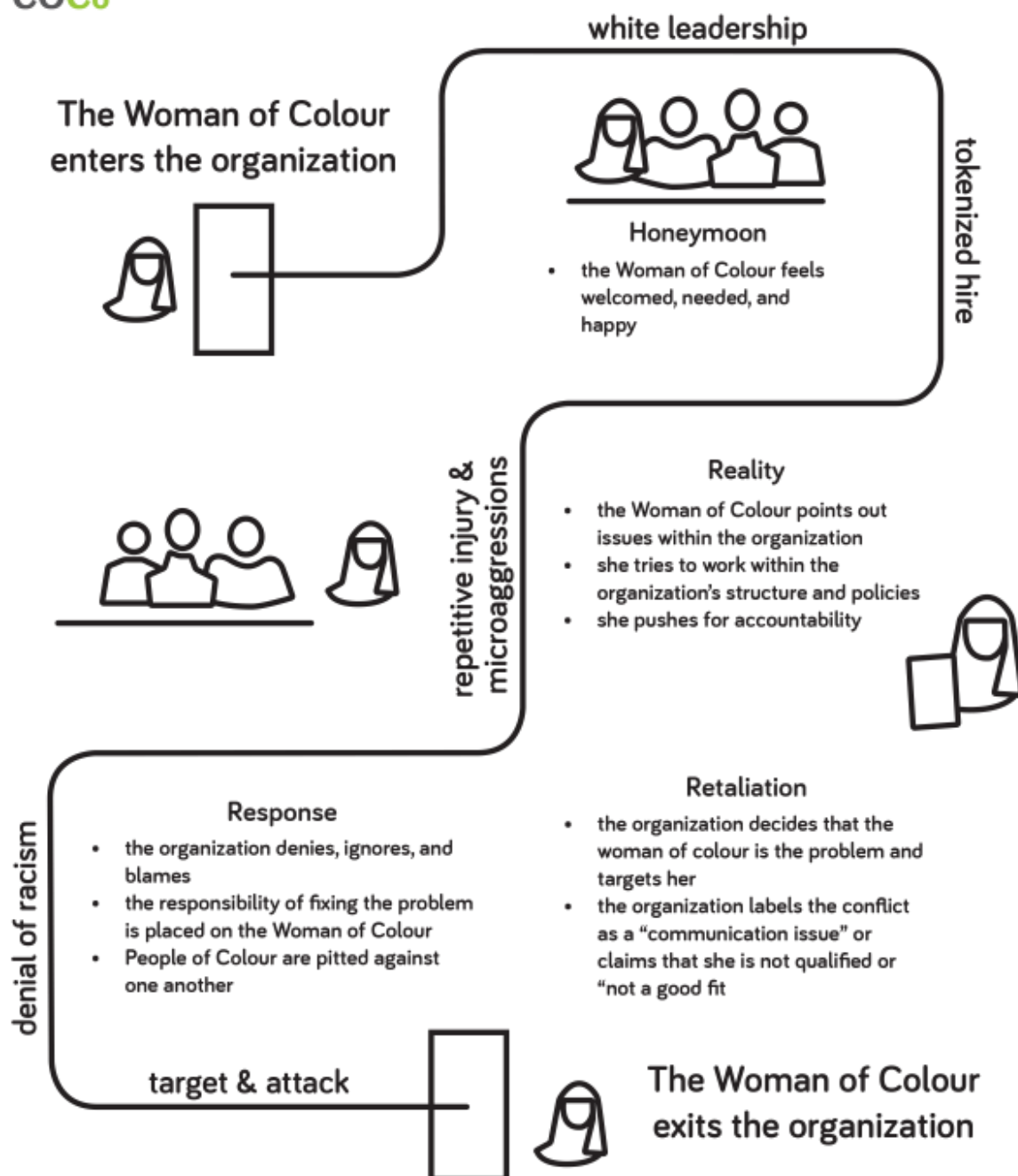
In the 1940s, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark designed and conducted a series of experiments known colloquially as “the doll tests” to study the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children. Drs. Clark used four dolls, identical except for color, to test children’s racial perceptions. Their subjects, children between the ages of three to seven, were asked to identify both the race of the dolls and which color doll they prefer. A majority of the children preferred the white doll and assigned positive characteristics to it. The Clarks concluded that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation” created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem.

Scenario #8: The Problem Woman of Color

Quick Summary of the Case

Level of Expression of Oppression
and Why you chose this

The “Problem” Woman of Colour in the Workplace



Scenario #9: Office Professionals Back to Work During a Pandemic	
Quick Summary of the Case	
Level of Expression of Oppression and Why you chose this	



In October 2020, the office professionals in the Lakeview School district are required to return to work in person during the pandemic. The district has offered a high level of personal protective equipment (PPE) in gloves, face shields, and masks, but the district can only put up shield guards in the front office and encourage staff to work 6 (six) feet apart. There is no change in the ventilation system where they office professionals work or ability to move their work stations from where they prior to the pandemic.

The building office professionals are required to handle their day to day tasks (payroll, managing sick leave entries, student attendance, purchasing, etc.) as well as the additional requirements, which includes print for the teaching staff who are teaching remotely. They also must process all the additional payroll for the stipends that the teaching staff receive when they have additional workload associated with working remotely. The district refuses to offer a pay differential to the office professionals for working in person or offer additional sick leave for working in person. Administration can opt to work remotely and rarely come into the building and the office professionals in the district office can work remotely.

Scenario #10: Custodial Schedules**Quick Summary of the Case****Level of Expression of Oppression
and Why you chose this**

In recent years The Seaside School District has hired a number of teachers that are on J1 Visas. When they moved to the community, some of these teachers brought their families. They enrolled their children in the schools and their spouses and other family members applied for jobs in the school. The cost of coming to the US was great, many of these families are in dept to an agency that helped them find their jobs. Much of the money they earn is given to the agency or sent back to their families in the Philippines.

Dick Summerville is the Facilities manager for the Seaside School District. Dick is responsible for overseeing all the facilities in the District, which includes hiring and managing all the custodial and maintenance staff. Some of the spouses and family members of the teachers were hired by Dick to work in the Facilities Services Department. For many of these new employees English is a second language, and they do not read English well or at all.

This group is affiliated with the Teacher's Union. The Union supports four negotiated agreements, one being the agreement that covers the custodians and maintenance workers. This agreement outlines pay, benefits, leave, and other workings conditions such as breaks and lunches. The new employees were not provided with a copy of the contract or told about then Union when they were hired. The Union has not been provided a list of the new employees hired in the district, nor have they asked. The Union Executive Board is made up mostly of teachers or paraprofessionals.

Dick makes all the building and maintenance schedules. He schedules one full-time custodian during the day at most buildings and schedules multiple part-time evening custodians. The day custodians tend to be people that have worked for the District many years and are from the community. The evening custodians tend to be the spouses and family members of the J1 visa holders. He does not schedule breaks or lunches into this schedule. He schedules all of his employees 30 hours (part time) a week so they do not qualify for insurance. He refuses to allow overtime and thus the buildings are understaffed and impossible to clean and maintain in the time allowed by the schedule. He stops by the sites unannounced on a regular basis and does spots checks unscheduled evaluations. The employees live in fear of being written up and losing their job.



BOSTOCK AND EDUCATOR RIGHTS

On June 15, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court announced that LGBTQ employees – including all LGBTQ educators – are protected under federal law from discrimination at work based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This means that employers, including public employers like school districts and public universities, are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Below is a quick reference guide developed by NEA's Center for Social Justice and General Counsel to help inform educators about their rights as LGBTQ employees.

IMPACTS OF THE SUPREME COURT'S DECISION

Hiring, Firing, and Promotion. Employers can't fire someone or decline to hire them for being LGBTQ. And they can't decide who to promote based on that person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Benefits and Compensation. Employers cannot pay employees less because they are LGBTQ. They cannot offer health or other benefit coverage to opposite-sex spouses but deny coverage to same-sex spouses.

Employer-sponsored healthcare plans can't choose which services to cover based on sexual orientation or transgender status. They must cover medical conditions that relate to LGBTQ status to the same extent as they cover medical conditions facing heterosexual and cisgender individuals.

Conditions of Employment. Employers cannot consider their employees' sexual orientation or transgender status when setting class schedules, class assignments, assigning extra-curricular responsibilities like coaching or leading student groups, or supervising and evaluating employee performances.

Harassment. LGBTQ harassment is also prohibited at work. Harassment can consist of offensive comments, gestures, and physical acts of a sexual nature or related to sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, by the employee's coworkers or supervisors. Employers cannot harass employees based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, but instead must protect employees from sexual harassment that is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Not only is it unlawful to discriminate based on LGBTQ identity, it is also unlawful to discriminate based on a perceived sexual orientation or gender

identity. Employers also can't discriminate against their employees for participating in LGBTQ organizations or for bringing their spouses to events where opposite-sex spouses would be welcome.

Examples of unlawful discrimination that educators should be aware of:

- ▶ The school registrar transitions from female to male over the summer. When fall semester begins, the school principal reassigns him to a position that pays the same amount but doesn't involve contact with students.
- ▶ An athletic director is interviewing candidates for a football coaching position. She's about to hire someone, but realizes the candidate is gay. She worries that some families will be uncomfortable with a gay coach so hires someone else.
- ▶ A female teacher puts a photo of her wife on her desk. The principal tells her she has to remove it, even though many teachers with opposite-sex spouses have family photos in their classrooms.
- ▶ A school bus operator and his husband adopt a baby. The school refuses to grant him paternity leave, even though educators in opposite-sex couples who adopt children are granted maternity or paternity leave.
- ▶ A group of parents complain to the school board after seeing a teacher march in the city's gay pride parade. The school board directs the school principal to transfer any objecting students to another class and warns the teacher that she is on probation because of her disruptive behavior.
- ▶ A school hires a transgender woman who transitioned years before. The school will not allow her to use the women's faculty bathroom but allows her to use a private unisex bathroom.

If you experience LGBTQ discrimination at work, contact your local or state affiliate for assistance.

For information on protecting students' civil rights, visit www.neaEdJustice.org



edjustice



Best Practices for Supporting Inclusive Education Following *Mahmoud v. Taylor* **Legal Explainer and FAQs**

This resource is intended for educators and their unions as general guidance on supporting inclusive education in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*. This guidance is intended for educational purposes only, and is not legal advice. If you have questions about your school’s policies, contact your union representative or your association’s legal counsel.

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

In *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, a group of parents from different religious faiths sued to challenge Montgomery County Public School’s (“MCPS”) decision not to allow parents to opt-out their children from reading certain elementary storybooks. MCPS had included storybooks that featured LGBTQ+ characters and themes in the reading curriculum as possible readings to promote an inclusive school environment that better reflected the diversity of the community. Although MCPS initially had allowed for religious opt-outs of students from reading the books, when opt-outs became administratively unmanageable and inconsistent with the purpose of exposing students to diverse characters and ideas, MCPS announced that it would no longer allow any opt-outs.

The plaintiff parents sued seeking to require MCPS to notify them when the books would be used and allow them to opt their children out of reading them. The district court rejected this challenge, and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court’s decision. The Supreme Court granted certiorari on the question: “Do public schools burden parents’ religious exercise when they compel elementary school children to participate in instruction on gender and sexuality against their parents’ religious convictions and without notice or opportunity to opt out?”

The Supreme Court answered that question, “Yes,” holding that the parents did have the right to notice and an opportunity to opt their child out of reading the books. The Court explained that a public school “burdens the religious exercise of parents when it requires them to submit their children to instruction that poses ‘a very real threat of undermining’ the religious beliefs and practices that the parents wish to instill,” and that the “government cannot condition the benefit of free public education on parents’ acceptance of such instruction.” The Court considered factors including that the books supposedly presented a positive normative view of LGBTQ+ relationships and identities (e.g., other characters in the story expressing happiness for a same-sex couple or affirming a trans child) and the age of the children in question (elementary school students). As a result of the ruling, MCPS was required to notify the plaintiff parents of “any use” of the challenged texts or “any similar” book and to allow them the opportunity to opt out.

The Court's decision hinged on the specific facts of the case and did not create a clear general rule, leaving room for school districts to respond to the ruling in a way that provides the required notice and the opportunity to opt out while still running an effective school system.

MAJOR TAKE-AWAYS

This decision has rightly caused concern that it will be used to undermine safe and inclusive schools for all students. Some right-wing groups have seized on the decision to continue to push harmful policies that target LGBTQ+ students and families, and some have attempted to wrongly portray the decision as requiring schools to censor books or curriculum or to change policies that respect and affirm transgender students.

In the current climate of relentless attacks and dehumanizing rhetoric toward transgender students, as well as the attempts to erase historical injustices and deny the realities of racism, it is more important than ever to support inclusive curriculum and policies that support and affirm all students and families. In that context, the key points to take away from this decision are:

- 1) This is not a book ban. Schools do not have to remove any books from classrooms or school libraries; nor do they have to censor the curriculum in any way. LGBTQ+ inclusive books and curriculum are not presumptively objectionable.
- 2) The decision does not prohibit teachers from acknowledging LGBTQ+ identities or answering student questions. Nor does it allow “opt outs” from interacting with LGBTQ+ students, staff, or families. Nondiscrimination protections remain in place, and schools should continue to foster an inclusive environment where everyone is acknowledged and treated with respect.
- 3) This decision does not impact any student's rights to be themselves, to talk about LGBTQ+ issues, and to have student clubs like GSAs on the same conditions as other student extracurricular clubs.
- 4) Schools must allow parents and guardians to opt their child out of instruction that substantially interferes with their child's religious development or “undermin[es] the religious beliefs and practices the parent wishes to instill in the child.” This opt-out right is limited to religious objections, and does not include political, ideological, or moral objections.
- 5) State laws and individual school district policies concerning religious opt-outs vary greatly from state to state. Most districts already have opt-out policies in place that should be evaluated to determine if they are sufficient to provide parents with the required notice and opportunity to have their child excused from instruction that substantially interferes with their religion.
- 6) Educators and school administrators do not have an obligation to make guesses about what religious beliefs anyone holds or what may be objectionable based on those beliefs. It is the

responsibility of the parent or guardian to assert a religious belief they want the school to accommodate.

- 7) The decision emphasized the young age of the students in this case (elementary school students). While the Court didn't create a bright-line rule, it strongly implied that religious objections to exposure to LGBTQ+ topics (and presumably other topics about which a parent may have a religious objection) are particularly forceful when focused on younger students.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS & BEST PRACTICES

As school districts and individual school administrators determine what may be needed to implement the requirements of the *Mahmoud* decision, the impacts on school policies and practices will vary greatly. In some districts, no changes may be required; in others, districts may adopt new policies or change the process for religious accommodations. Where policies are changed and as issues arise that impact the school environment, educators and their unions have an important role to play in advocating for best practices that ensure fairness, respect the needs of all students, and reduce administrative burdens. Below are suggested best practices in key areas.

NOTICE TO PARENTS:

- **No clear rule.** It is not clear from the decision what level of notice is required. In the specific facts at issue in *Mahmoud*, the parents were already on notice about the books in question and had objected to their children using the books. Parents/guardians already have the right to inspect curriculum upon request, and many schools proactively provide information about their curriculum in a variety of ways.
- **Guidance from state laws.** The Court favorably cites the Minnesota law detailed below as an example of an opt-out policy that would presumably satisfy the requirements of the decision. The Minnesota law requires that schools generally have a procedure that allows parents/guardians to review instructional materials by providing as follows:
 - “Each school district shall have a procedure for a parent, guardian, or an adult student, 18 years of age or older, to review the content of the instructional materials to be provided to a minor child or to an adult student and, if the parent, guardian, or adult student objects to the content, to make reasonable arrangements with school personnel for alternative instruction.” Minn. Stat. §120B.20.
- **Neutral notification.** If schools choose to provide some kind of affirmative notice beyond an existing policy, that notice should be neutral regarding inclusive content and should not single out LGBTQ+ issues or other topics. That is, it should not guess at what topics any family may find objectionable based on religious beliefs.
 - Possible examples:

- A school may ensure that curricula are generally made available and that student assignments are posted online through a parent portal, allowing parents to undertake their own investigation.
- A school may provide parents a notice at the beginning of each school year indicating that the curriculum includes certain instructional materials that contain messages promoting respect, tolerance, and inclusion, and directing parents to contact specific personnel if they want information on these materials.

OPT OUT PROCEDURES AND FORMS:

- **Guidance from state law examples.** Helpfully, the *Mahmoud* opinion does cite favorably three state laws as examples of adequate opt-out procedures, and none impose significant burdens on school districts. As detailed below, all three generally provide that schools must have some process for objections to be raised and for those students to be granted an exception from the instructional material or activity.
 - Minn. Stat. §120B.20 (2024): “Each school district shall have a procedure for a parent, guardian, or an adult student, 18 years of age or older, to review the content of the instructional materials to be provided to a minor child or to an adult student and, if the parent, guardian, or adult student objects to the content, to make reasonable arrangements with school personnel for alternative instruction. Alternative instruction may be provided by the parent, guardian, or adult student if the alternative instruction, if any, offered by the school board does not meet the concerns of the parent, guardian, or adult student. The school board is not required to pay for the costs of alternative instruction provided by a parent, guardian, or adult student. School personnel may not impose an academic or other penalty upon a student merely for arranging alternative instruction under this section. School personnel may evaluate and assess the quality of the student's work.”
 - 22 Pa. Code §4.4(d)(3) (2025): “School entities shall adopt policies to assure that parents or guardians have the following: The right to have their children excused from specific instruction that conflicts with their religious beliefs, upon receipt by the school entity of a written request from the parent or guardians.”
 - Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§15–102(A)(4): “Procedures by which parents who object to any learning material or activity on the basis that the material or activity is harmful may withdraw their children from the activity or from the class or program in which the material is used. Objection to a learning material or activity on the basis that the material or activity is harmful includes objection to the material or activity because it questions beliefs or practices in sex, morality or religion.”
- **No requirements beyond Mahmoud.** Some right-wing groups have been encouraging their members to submit extensive opt-out requests, such as using form letters that assert a right to “opt-out” of participation in broad and often vaguely defined aspects of the school environment. Schools have no obligation to honor requests that go beyond the requirements of the *Mahmoud* decision (which is limited, among other ways, to religious objections) and existing federal and state law. When schools receive opt-out requests that are not in

conformance with their requirements, they should refer parents/guardians to their standard procedures.

- The decision only requires schools to provide opt-outs on the basis of sincerely held religious beliefs and practices. It does not require schools to grant opt-outs based on parent/guardian personal, political or ideological beliefs or preferences.
- **Standard form and sample language.** To ensure a consistent, transparent, and fair process, schools should have a standard written form for requesting a religious opt-out. When requests are received outside of the standard form, the school is on notice of a need but should advise the parent to submit the request on the standard opt-out form.
 - The standard form should use simple language and collect basic information, such as: “Parents and guardians have the right to request that their child be excused from specific instructional content that substantially interferes with sincerely held religious beliefs. Please complete the form below with detailed and specific information regarding what content you are requesting an opt-out from and on what basis.”
 - Forms should include a space for parents/guardians to 1) list specific curricular material that the parent/guardian finds religiously objectionable; and 2) identify their religion and explain why the curricular material interferes with their religious belief.
- **Relationship with existing opt-out policies.** If current opt-out procedures do not require a religious basis, schools should create a new and separate form for religious opt-outs from curricular instruction. For example, state laws and school policy often allow opt-outs from sexual health education for any reason, including non-religious reasons. To be clear about the school’s obligations under *Mahmoud*, the procedure for religious opt-out to other curricular material should be contained in a separate policy and procedure.
- **Review and approval of opt-out requests.** To ensure consistency and privacy, opt-out requests should be submitted to trained administrators and should be kept confidential. Administrators should be solely responsible for reviewing and approving religious opt-out requests. Teachers should not be involved in processing requests.
 - Educators who receive a request directly or are notified of a religious objection to curricular material should refer the parent/guardian to the appropriate administrator.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

- **Individualized and reasonable.** Although the decision itself does not specify a process for schools to use when considering requests for accommodations, in general, accommodations should be reasonable and should be made based on the individual needs of the student. When schools are considering requests for religious accommodations, they should engage in an interactive process with the family based on their individual religious objection in order to reach a reasonable accommodation. What may constitute a reasonable

accommodation may take into account the school's resources, staffing, and impacts on the school environment.

- ***Nondiscrimination, anti-harassment, and anti-bullying obligations.*** In implementing opt-out policies and determining a reasonable accommodation for individual opt-out requests, schools should consider the impact on other students and the school climate. Schools continue to have legal and ethical obligations to protect all students from discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), national origin, disability, and other protected characteristics. Many schools are also covered by anti-bullying laws or policies that protect all students against bullying.
- ***Burdens on educators.*** If a school's opt-out policy or the accommodations provided under it impose additional burdens on educators, such as requiring teachers to create separate lessons for students who have been excused from a lesson or requiring additional staffing to supervise students who are removed from the classroom, this may trigger bargaining requirements in states with bargaining rights. Even in non-bargaining states, local unions play an important role in advocating for members when new requirements impact working conditions.
 - In states with bargaining rights, local unions, in consultation with their state affiliate, should request to bargain over the implementation and/or effects of new policies.
 - In non-bargaining states, local unions should track any impacts on instructional time and any additional burdens imposed on educator members, and should seek to address those burdens with management.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

- ***State requirements.*** Many states still affirmatively require inclusive education, and the *Mahmoud* decision does not change those requirements.
 - For state laws requiring LGBTQ+ inclusive education, see [Movement Advancement Project | LGBTQ Curricular Laws](#)
 - Even where state law does not include LGBTQ-inclusive curricular standards, general state standards may include components that recognize diverse identities and encourage respect and tolerance.
- ***Schools have a right to continue to provide inclusive curriculum.*** Recent court decisions, including in a case brought by NEA, have affirmed the right of schools to provide inclusive curriculum: [NEA Defends Inclusive Education and Wins – What you Need to Know | NEA](#)
- ***Importance of inclusive education.*** Curriculum that allows all students to see themselves, and which includes the full diversity of our identities, history and experiences, as well as policies that promote respect and tolerance for all students, families, and school staff are

important for the education, safety, and wellbeing of all students. Following are some resources that can be cited in support of inclusive education:

- National Education Association and the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance: *The Very Foundation of Good Citizenship: The Legal and Pedagogical Case For Culturally Responsive and Racially Inclusive Public Education for All Students*, [lfaa-nea-white-paper.pdf](#)
- GLSEN: [Inclusive Curriculum Standards | GLSEN](#): *Representation of LGBTQ+ and Other Marginalized Communities Promotes Student Achievement and Wellbeing*
- American Psychological Association: *School-Based Risk and Protective Factors for Gender Diverse and Sexual Minority Children and Youth*, [risk-factors.pdf](#)
- Wojciech Kaczowski, Jingjing Li, Adina C Cooper, and Leah Robin: [Examining the Relationship Between LGBTQ-Supportive School Health Policies and Practices and Psychosocial Health Outcomes of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Students - PubMed](#)
- U.S. Center for Disease Control & Prevention: *LGBTQ-Supportive School Policies and Practices Help All Students Thrive*, [Wayback Machine](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Below are other resources that provide general guidance, or in the case of state-specific guidance, illustrate how different states are applying the decision. If you have questions or want to discuss how *Mahmoud* specifically affects your school or applies to an individual situation, please reach out to your union representative or legal counsel.

- Human Rights Campaign: [LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum: What School Staff Need to Know About Mahmoud v. Taylor](#)
- CA Department of Education, non-binding guidance: [Supreme Court Decision in Mahmoud v. Taylor - Laws & Regulations \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)
- ACLU of Southern California: [LEGAL FAQ: Supporting Inclusive Education in California After Mahmoud v. Taylor | ACLU of Southern California](#)
- PA Education Law Center: [Mahmoud-Religious-Opt-Out-Analysis-2025.pdf](#)
- National Women's Law Center Resource: [Breaking Down the Supreme Court's Decision in Mahmoud v. Taylor: Why It is More Important Than Ever to Advocate for Inclusive Schools - National Women's Law Center](#)

Messaging Guide

Transgender Youth and the Freedom to Be Ourselves

Building Our Choir with a Race Class Gender Narrative



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INTRODUCTION

Organizers know that advancing justice and safety for transgender people in the U.S. will require building a strong, vocal, and durable multiracial coalition championing a trans-inclusive, progressive vision for the country. Yet there has been little to no public opinion research or targeted narrative development focused on building that base by contextualizing trans issues within the broader fight for racial, gender, and economic justice. Instead, colorblind messaging dominates LGBT advocacy. Where race is mentioned, it is usually to name disparities — a simple acknowledgment of the increased violence and discrimination trans people of color face. Frequently, talking points on LGBT policies have been formulated to calm audiences' discomfort with transgender people, tacitly reinforcing a conservative worldview around race and class and further siloing trans issues from related progressive causes.

The right has exploited ignorance about transgender people and our lack of an affirmative, race-forward message to advance anti-trans attacks, further splinter and impugn the left, and sabotage progressives on a broad range of issues. Over the last ten years, Republicans in state legislatures have increasingly turned to anti-transgender rhetoric and legislation as a powerful complement to their arsenal of racist dog whistles used to whip up fear and consolidate power. In 2021, they have refined this strategy in the form of a moral panic over transgender youth, introducing over 100 bills across the country to criminalize medical care for trans youth and bar trans young people from participating in school sports. Recently, they have paired these attacks with fear-mongering about Critical Race Theory, mobilizing their base with a potent mix of racist and transphobic tropes. Progressives cannot ignore these attacks hoping that simply sticking to economic issues alone will save us. Our appeals on any topic will always be filtered through the noise of this unrelenting fear-mongering and scapegoating on the right.

New research by ASO Communications, Transgender Law Center, and Lake Research Partners finds that we can cultivate resistance to these attacks, build cross-racial solidarity, and advance a shared vision for the future by weaving together our shared values, experiences, and demands across races and genders. This new approach builds on the [Race Class Narrative](#) to tell a convincing story of how our opposition uses strategic racism and transphobia to harm us all; and how, by coming together, we can ensure we all have the freedom to be ourselves and support one another. Using a Race Class Gender Narrative, we can mobilize our progressive base (particularly Black, AAPI, and Gen Z audiences), marginalize our opposition, and move persuadables across race.

¹Online nationwide survey conducted July 29 – August 5, 2021 among 1000 adults, with additional oversamples of 100 Black adults, 100 Latinx adults, 100 AAPI adults, and 100 Indigenous adults, as well as a separate sample of 95 activists collected August 13 – September 24, 2021. Quantitative research was preceded and informed by eight focus groups with base and persuadable Black, AAPI, and Latinx cisgender men and women and two mixed race and gender groups, one with parents and one with Gen Z adults.



FULL NARRATIVES

The following narratives proved compelling to our base and persuadables, increasing support for our policies and enthusiasm to join together with people across races and genders to create positive change. Campaigners and organizers across movements should use these narratives for creative and social media content, visuals, public messages, calls to action, spokesperson materials, and more.

FREEDOM FROM BOXES

Most effective message at moving voters away from opposition sports policies and towards supporting transgender student athletes, as well as driving enthusiasm to join together with others to create change. This was particularly strong with Black and Latinx respondents.

Whether we are Black, white or brown, Native or newcomer, transgender or not, we want the freedom to be ourselves. But some people try to get and hold onto power by putting us in boxes based on what we look like, where we're from, or our genders. We see this in how schools tell Black kids how to keep their hair or send girls home for the clothes they wear. And in how certain politicians exploit lack of familiarity with transgender people, excluding trans kids from healthcare, school, or sports. They stoke fear so we turn against some group instead of demanding what our families need. By joining together, we can make this a place where we are all free to thrive and support each other for who we are.

AUTHENTIC SELVES

Our top message for persuadables and the highest or second highest rated narrative for respondents of every racial group. This message also increased people's excitement to join together with others to create change.

Across our races, backgrounds and genders, we want to be treated with dignity and respect. But today, certain politicians are pushing laws that restrict our freedoms because of the color of our skin, what's in our wallets, or because we are transgender. They exploit divisions and fears among us so they can get and hold onto power, denying us the basic rights, resources, and respect all people deserve. By [rejecting this division/passing protections against discrimination], we can ensure each one of us has the freedom to be ourselves, pursue our dreams, and have a good life — no exceptions.

YOUTH POWER

Strongest message for our base and Gen Z respondents.

Young people across time, race, and movements for equality have always helped lead the way. But now as before, certain politicians are trying to get and hold onto power by silencing young people – stoking fear against Black and brown kids leading protests for racial justice, and taking advantage of unfamiliarity with transgender people to punish students for being their authentic selves. Whenever a powerful few have tried to pick and choose who counts, there have always been those of us who showed up for each other and built welcoming communities. Now it's our time to show up, reject division, and chart a better future for all of us, no matter our ages, races, or genders.

²Narratives adjusted slightly from messages originally tested based on findings from dial test.



ARCHITECTURE OF A RACE CLASS GENDER NARRATIVE

1. Open with a shared value, explicitly naming or evoking race, gender and class. Effective opening values include the following: freedom to be ourselves, treating each other with dignity and respect, and the golden rule/treating others as we'd want to be treated.
"Whether we are Black, white or brown, Native or newcomer, transgender or not, we want the freedom to be ourselves."
2. Name the villains who violate our values, expose their motivation of getting back into or holding onto power, and position them as a barrier to what our families need.
"But some people try to get and hold onto power by putting us in boxes based on what we look like, where we're from, or our genders. They stoke fear so we turn against some group instead of demanding what our families need."
3. Call out how the villains:
 - exploit divisions across races
"We see this in how schools tell Black kids how to keep their hair or send girls home for the clothes they wear."
 - and exploit the lack of familiarity with transgender people
"And in how certain politicians exploit lack of familiarity with transgender people, excluding trans kids from healthcare, school, or sports."
4. Deliver a unifying call to action with which the audience can bring about a positive vision or outcome, aligned with the initial shared value.
"By joining together, we can make this a place where we are all free to thrive and support each other for who we are."

THE OPPORTUNITY: CREATING A BROADER "WE"

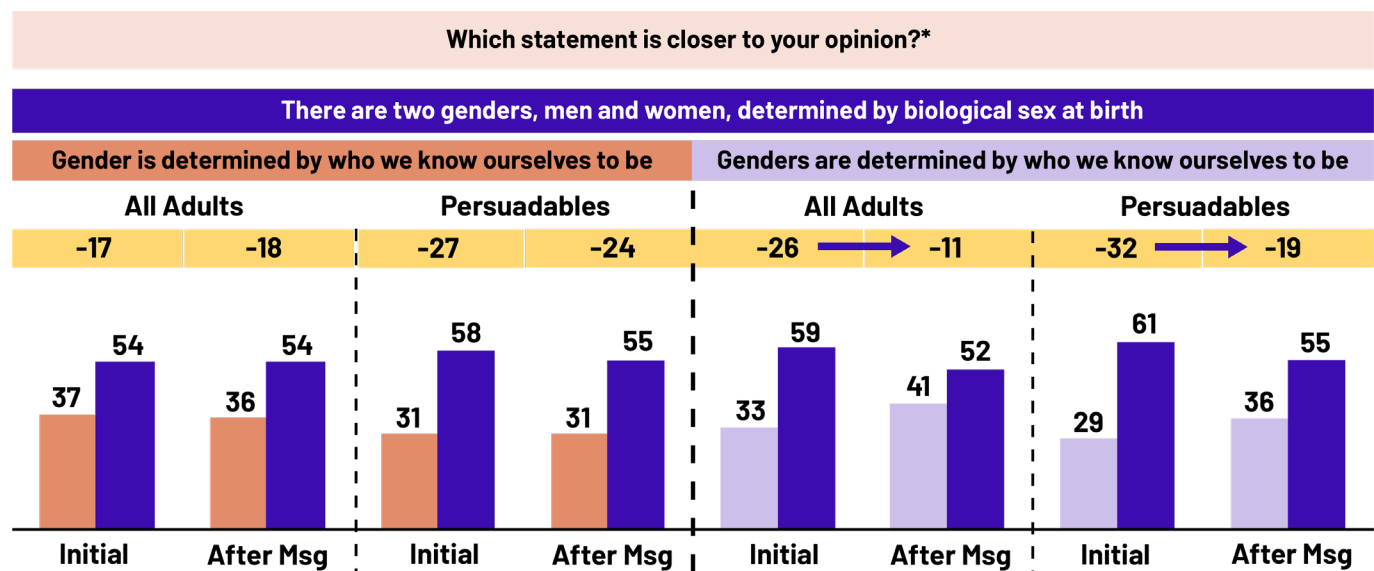
Evoking a sense of personal connection to an issue is critical to driving engagement and action. Without that, we can at best elicit sympathy, a passive and often patronizing attitude that alienates our base and fails to generate sustained interest from persuadable audiences. Moving people towards empathy – an ability to identify with another person's experience – is therefore key in activating cisgender audiences around trans issues.

Unfortunately, our focus groups echoed past research in finding concerning low connection to, understanding of, and familiarity with transgender people in the U.S., including among our traditional progressive base. Even where people expressed support, it was for a category of people they clearly perceived as wholly separate from and unrelated to their own lives. The implicit and occasionally explicit line people drew between their own communities and transgender people frequently had a racial dimension, with comments indicating many participants largely associated being transgender with being white, or associated acceptance of transgender people with whiteness.

We found several effective paths towards interrupting this othering framework and increasing empathy and a sense of shared fate and community with transgender people, especially among Black, Latinx, AAPI and Indigenous audiences.

First, rather than separating out and exceptionalizing trans people's experience of gender, we should present and discuss our genders as a spectrum on which both cis and trans people exist. A freedom from boxes metaphor is particularly effective at moving people towards this more encompassing understanding. People of all races and genders want to be free to fully express ourselves and connect authentically with others, and can identify with the feeling of being boxed in and told what to do based on what we look like or where we come from. Most of us chafe against the stereotypes and narrow expectations others project on us. Positioning this limitation in contrast to the core value of freedom to be ourselves helps energize base respondents. By anchoring our discussion of gender in this relatable experience, we make our audience part of the story and position cis and trans people on one shared continuum of experience. For instance, we found that base respondents agree strongly when we say "people should be respected, trusted, and empowered to make decisions about our own lives and bodies, whether...transgender or not" – a helpful insight for aligning and developing joint messaging on transgender and reproductive justice. Our research also suggests that pluralizing and personalizing genders – making statements about "genders" or "our genders" instead of "gender" as a singular and abstract concept – subtly helps orient people towards our worldview.

The increased agreement with the "genders" statement after messaging suggests that pluralizing genders helpfully shifts people towards our worldview.



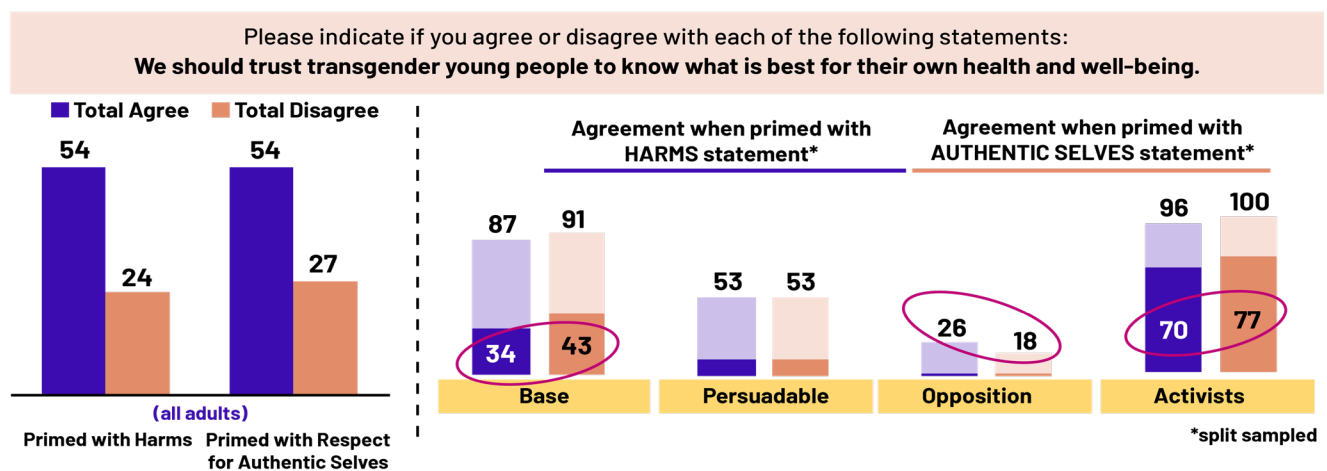
These statements were split-sampled. This data does **not** represent shifts in individual opinion.



Second, we can successfully adapt the Race Class Narrative to reframe attacks on trans youth as part of a broader offensive opposition strategy, and highlight our shared values and interests across races and genders. The resonance of a Race Class Gender Narrative with communities of color suggests that the perception of transgender issues as a ‘white person problem’ is at least partly a function of dominant (colorblind) advocate messaging. In our survey, white people were the only racial group to rate the opposition message we tested above all of our side’s messages; Black and AAPI respondents rated all of our messages as far more convincing than the opposition, while Latinx and Indigenous people rated some but not all of our messages above the opposition. We can and should connect justice for transgender people to issues of racial and economic justice, and by doing so we move our base and persuadable audiences on key metrics of support. In short, a Race Class Gender Narrative can successfully make the case for a broader ‘we’ and solidarity across races, backgrounds, and genders.

Finally, to shift people from ignorance or indifference to empathy and advocacy, we must ground our messaging in the values, visions, and desires we share across genders rather than in the unique harms, horrors, and discrimination trans people suffer. While it’s important to acknowledge discrimination in order to combat it, we should not lead with or primarily define trans people by the harms inflicted upon us. When we primed people with a statement about the “crushing weight of discrimination” trans youth face, for example, our base and even activists were less likely to trust trans young people to know what’s best for their own health and well-being than when, in contrast, they were primed with a statement about how we should all be free to express our authentic selves.

Priming Experiment: Base adults and activists are more likely to agree with strong intensity that we should trust transgender young people to know what is best for their own health and well-being when they are primed with the authentic selves statement, which also better alienates opposition adults.



*We asked all adults their agreement with the phrase “we should trust transgender young people to know what is best for their own health and well being” immediately after asking their agreement on EITHER a statement focused on harms (“We need to protect vulnerable transgender kids, who already face bullying and crushing discrimination in schools, public spaces, and health care, which threatens their physical and mental health”) or a statement focused on authentic selves (“We need to respect each other for who we are, transgender or not, and support all young people to be their authentic selves and pursue their dreams”)

THE CHALLENGE: ENGAGING THE SPORTS DEBATE

Right now, our opposition wins the debate on trans youth in sports against any and all arguments we have tried for our side. There is a huge gap in awareness and concern, with most base and persuadable respondents unaware of proposals regarding transgender girls' participation in sports, while a strong majority of our opposition has heard some or a lot about it. When pressed, our audiences hold contradictory views, with a third supporting both a policy to ensure transgender student-athletes can play on the team that matches their gender identity and a policy to require that student-athletes play on the team matching their "biological sex." Our base and persuadables want to support transgender student-athletes, but are extremely susceptible to our opposition's argument that excluding trans youth is necessary to protect the fairness of women's sports.

We suspect there are two key factors differentiating views on sports from other issues. First, people primarily understand sports through the individualistic lens of competition, where if one person wins then another, by definition, loses. Entrenched in this zero-sum framework, people resist and dismiss our calls for sports policies that benefit our collective good, the core of a Race Class Gender Narrative. Second, opposition rhetoric on sports is more directly transphobic and dehumanizing than their discourse on other issues. With bathrooms or schools broadly, for example, our opposition often tries to claim some degree of sympathy for transgender people and win over persuadables with coded language, "slippery slope" arguments, and dog whistles about bad actors pretending to be trans in order to "take advantage" of nondiscrimination policies. There is far less buffer in their attacks around sports, where they use the physicality of the issue to directly spout dehumanizing stereotypes about transgender women and girls.

Since the Race Class Narrative was designed to inoculate against dog whistles and make the case for collective action for our collective good, it makes sense that this approach falls short on sports, specifically. That said, a Race Class Gender Narrative does help us call into question the motives of people introducing these bills and even cast doubt on their necessity as a matter of state legislation (as opposed to sports association/local school policy). At present, no arguments we tested bested the opposition in a direct debate on sports policy.

In addition to using the Race Class Gender Narrative to build long-term solidarity and resistance to anti-trans attacks, we recommend two complementary paths to counteracting the sports-specific challenges we identified:

1. As much as possible, shift conversation around sports from a competitive to a collective frame.

Our best-testing way to accomplish this was through a message that positioned supporting transgender women athletes as part of the broader fight for equality in girls' and women's sports. By connecting attacks on trans women athletes to

the long legacy of discrimination against all women athletes, this message both shifted our audiences from an individual to a collective mindset and disrupted transphobic conceptions of transgender girls and women as actually male:

Women's sports have never existed on an equal playing field. For too long, we have devalued women's sports, and we see this in the way that professional women athletes are underpaid compared to men and how transgender women athletes are targeted, attacked, and forced out of their sport. And instead of striving for equality in sports, certain politicians are distracting us from the real issue by blaming transgender women, instead of helping make sports a better place for all women.

This argument outperformed the opposition's claims with AAPI adults, lost by only 6 points with persuadables (and by 8 points overall), and garnered a notably high "unsure" response across the board, suggesting it helpfully caused people to question their understanding of the issue. A version of this message that named how elite competitions question and disqualify Black women athletes yielded even greater support from our base, but considerably increased the margin by which we lost persuadables and all racial groups, including Black adults.

[Current messaging recommended by the Movement Advancement Project](#) offers another approach to rendering this issue more collective by highlighting teamwork and other values young people learn through sports. While this framing loses to the opposition by 10 or more points both overall and with persuadables, it puts us slightly above water with Latinx and Indigenous adults and draws in overwhelming support from AAPI adults.

2. Reduce the potency of opposition attacks through race-forward, deep, story-based, and culturally specific public education on who transgender people are.

While we can counteract transphobic dog whistles and coded attacks using a Race Class Gender Narrative, the best antidote to the barrage of direct transphobia and dehumanization our opposition employs around sports is for our audiences to get to know a transgender person. Past research has consistently demonstrated the power of personal storytelling in shifting attitudes towards transgender people. There is simply no substitute for that deep and long-term work. While there have been and are many powerful trans public education efforts, our research suggests that they have not broken through on a dominant scale – or, to the extent they have, they have reinforced the association between transgender people and whiteness in communities of color, including among our progressive base. We hope the Race Class Gender Narrative can serve as an opening to deeper multiracial public education efforts within progressive movement spaces, including community-based storytelling conducted effectively, responsibly, and at scale.

EMBRACE/REPLACE

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Our genders Genders	Gender	Pluralizing genders enables greater agreement with our worldview and helps activate more expansive attitudes towards our genders and transgender people.
Respect each other for who we are, transgender or not Support all young people to be their authentic selves and pursue their dreams Each one of us should have the freedom to be ourselves, no matter the color of our skin, how we worship, or our genders	Protect vulnerable transgender kids	Promoting the creation of a positive good (the freedom of self expression) is more effective than appeals to ameliorate harm (protecting transgender young people from violence and discrimination). It generates support and trust from our base for transgender young people to know what is best for their own health and well-being.
Some people in power try to put us in boxes based on what we look like, where we're from, or our genders. Certain politicians push laws that restrict our freedoms based on the color of our skin, what's in our wallets, or because we are transgender.	Transgender kids face crushing bullying and discrimination, which threatens their physical and mental health.	The container/box metaphor is extremely effective across racial and ethnic groups for explaining what the villains are doing and how it harms all of us. It resonates with persuadables, builds empathy, and galvanizes our base to oppose those in power who seek to limit us based on who we are and control what transgender people can or cannot do.



		Focusing on the unique harms that transgender people face, on the other hand, further distances our audiences from the discussion, othering transgender people and at best eliciting pity. It also decreases our base and even progressive activists' trust in transgender young people to know what is best for their own health and well-being.
Whether we are Black, white or brown, Native or newcomer, transgender or not People of all races, backgrounds, and genders No matter what we look like, where we come from, or how we express our genders	All of us / Everyone/ We all	For a Race Class Gender Narrative to be effective, it's important to build connection by naming what we share across our differences. Explicitly naming specific races and genders can be more helpful than broader references to "races and genders," but both approaches perform well.
Certain politicians exploit divisions among us to try to get back into power. Some people in power fuel divisions based on race and exploit our lack of familiarity with transgender people so they can deny our communities the resources, jobs, and healthcare we all need. A handful of politicians stoke fear, trying to get us to turn against some group instead of joining together to demand what all of our families need.	Our opposition is racist/transphobic. Politicians divide us.	Framing the strategic racism of our opponents as fueling or exploiting existing divisions between us generates stronger agreement than directly blaming them for those divisions. This is an especially important distinction when talking about how our opposition stokes fear of transgender people. Our target audiences know that transphobia is widespread – and often themselves feel unsure about transgender people – so they do not buy statements attributing fear and division to certain politicians.

		By acknowledging our audience's own questions, concerns, and lack of familiarity with what it means to be transgender, though, we can remind them of their better values and intentions, and help them recognize how certain politicians take advantage of and manipulate their unease. It is helpful to echo and link how they "exploit" division across races and lack of familiarity with transgender people.
Certain politicians... Some people in power... A powerful few...	Politicians The wealthy/powerful	To credibly name a villain, it's critical to make clear that you're implicating specific individuals (e.g., <i>certain</i> or <i>some</i> politicians) as opposed to vilifying whole categories of people.
[Certain politicians]... trying to get back into power/ get and hold onto power. who want to block us from joining together to demand what we all deserve. ... who want to pick and choose who counts.	Transphobes/racists	In addition to naming our villains, we must expose the motivations behind their actions. "Getting back into power," "getting and holding onto power," exclusion and control broadly, and blocking us from demanding the resources we need all currently resonate with base and persuadable audiences in explaining why the opposition introduces these attacks on transgender people.



From our Work—LGBTQ+ Scenarios

For this activity, you are going to be asked to pick one of three scenarios. In order to be prepared for the scenarios, you should spend some time reading through the following supporting documents for what you selected.

Scenario 1 deals with a teacher who was disciplined after they presented 7th grade students' "About Me" projects around the room. One of the projects has LGBTQIA+ flags in it. The teacher was directed to remove only that project.

Scenario 2 involves a school board policy that directed teachers to shelter students in locker rooms based on gender, and the aftermath of keeping a non-binary student sitting on the gym bleachers during an active shooter drill.

Scenario 3 involves a local community group that identifies the librarian and library paraeducator as groomers and is proposing school board policy that looks to limit LGBTQ+ affirming books available to students in the library.

You will receive more specifics about each of the scenarios during class. For now, please review the information and begin brainstorming how you might support your member and local, should this happen in your own work.

Specific things to think about:

How would you handle this from a service model perspective?

How would you handle this from an organizing perspective?

What documents would you need to help your work?

How would you work with the press?

Scenario #1

You, the union staff, get a call from a building rep and a president. A well-respected teacher and union member, Mrs. J, was given an unfair disciplinary write up.

This is the situation: A parent complained that a 7th grade girl's "about me" project showed 4 LGBTQ+ pride flags. The parent did not come speak to the teacher—she went straight to the school board. On the write up, the principal wrote that Mrs. J didn't show "good judgment" and "clear classroom expectations of appropriateness." In his disciplinary meeting with the member, the principal told Mrs. J that he's a conservative Christian, "we can't promote this here" and asked her if she would allow a Confederate flag or swastika on the wall of her classroom. He also announced that he needs to talk to the students about talking about their sexual orientation at school.

He directed her to turn in lesson plans weekly for his review. He ordered Mrs. J to take down ONLY the project with LGBTQ+ flags and leave every other student project up on the classroom walls. Mrs. J didn't want any student to feel targeted, so she took down every project. Mrs. J and her building rep both tried to talk to the principal and assistant superintendent about this unfair treatment of both students and staff. Neither administrator corrected the issue, and just keep telling Mrs. J that she needs to "understand that parents have opinions too."

The local president and building rep are horrified. There's a history of homophobia in the district, including several union members who fear retaliation from their supervisors. The local officers know their superintendent and school board members well. They believe that the district leadership will back the principal's actions. The president, building rep, and Mrs. J are game to try anything and believe that many of their colleagues would also be horrified. The local isn't familiar with grievances, and doesn't have a grievance chair

Scenario 2:

You are the UniServ director for a rapidly changing county. The northern portion of the county is quickly becoming a bedroom community for Washington DC while the southern portion of the county is fighting hard to remain true to its rural southern roots. This has led to many clashes regarding local policy, both at the school board and board of supervisor level. Four years ago, you and your teachers sat through a series of increasingly contentious school board meetings regarding the bathroom and locker room policies for a young transgender girl in the fourth grade-the only openly transgender student in the county. During that spring, parents became increasingly hostile and threatening to the board and indicated that they would personally go after the jobs of any employee who allowed this young girl to use the girl's bathroom or locker room. That summer, the school board passed a policy that required the student to use only single stall bathrooms and barred her from using both the boys' and girls' bathrooms or locker rooms.

In the first month of a new school year, you receive a call from a PE teacher at one of your schools. She tells you that earlier that week, the school held one of the state-required lockdown drills during a PE class where that girl, now an 8th grader, is a student. The three PE teachers quickly conferred after realizing that their lockdown procedures, which call for boys to shelter in the boys' locker room and girls to shelter in the girls' locker room, did not take this student into account. This student uses the single stall accessible restroom in the gym when she needs to change or use the restroom during PE class. Without clear guidance-and with the wrath of the parents still echoing in their minds- the teachers had decided to have the PE teacher that is a man take the boys into the boys' locker room, while the PE teacher that is a woman took the rest of the girls into the girls' locker room and the second PE teacher that is a woman remained in the gym with the transgender student.

The PE teacher proceeds to tell you that the mother of the child runs a group called Equality Stafford and has posted on Facebook about the incident. That post has quickly gone viral and has already been shared a couple hundred times:

Equality Stafford Community,

This past week, an incident occurred during a middle school lock down drill in Stafford County. When the drill began, a particular class of children took shelter in the bathroom/locker room nearest them as they were in PE. One student was prevented from entering either the boys or girls locker room while the teachers discussed where she should go. The student was forced to watch the adults charged with her care, debate the safest place (for the other students) to have her shelter. During this debate, she was instructed to sit in the bleachers until the drill was complete, away from her peers and identified as different. After some additional debate, she was made to sit in the locker room hallway, by the door alone and away from her peers. This happened because the child, in addition to being a model student, also happens to be transgender.

Let me be clear. During an event that prepares children to survive an attack by actual assailants, she was treated as if she was so much of a danger to peers that she was left exposed and vulnerable. These events occur across our country right now, but this one happened here.

We need you. We need all of you to come out on October 9th at 6:30 pm to the Stafford County School Board Meeting at 31 Stafford Avenue. We need you to come and lend your voice to the growing cry. This is unacceptable, this cannot happen to one more child. Not one more in this county. Not ever again.

Please bring yourselves, your friends, your colleagues and your voice to this school board meeting. We need you.

How do you support and educate other union members to understand the needs of transgender students and staff?

What might you advocate for in a new policy?

How do you use this issue as an organizing issue?

Scenario #3

You are the UniServ Director in a relatively conservative area. A number of parents have attended the School Board meeting and have complained about the inclusion of material in the curriculum and in the library that is indoctrinating their children. Parents say that the materials are hurtful and confusing to their children and are divisive to a democratic society. They also claim that some of the images are pornographic and want the School Board to remove the books from the school Library. The parents have formed a Protect our Children Group (PCG) who have been emailing the school Librarian and Paraeducator accusing them of grooming children.

They have put forth the following resolution to the school board and are asking for adoption: *The Citizens of Raymond hereby declare, from this point forward, that the elementary children's library in the Dudley School will be free of any books with content containing nudity, gender identity, gender expression, sex or sexual references in writing or illustrations.* The Board has taken it under consideration and will have to take a formal vote on it by the last meeting of the Fiscal year (June).

The school board offers a half hour of public comment at every meeting which is held every month. The PCG has a speaker at every meeting. They focus on protecting children and how pornography traumatizes children and makes them criminals and delinquents.

The local president has tried to address the situation and has spoken to the principal at the elementary school about the emails from the parents. The president has been told that parents have a right to email staff at the school and that there is no policy to stop the communication. The local president does not know what to do and needs help.

The librarian is new and is afraid of being terminated. The paraeducator has been employed for over 20 years and is well respected in town. She is also a part-time employee at the Community Library and a member of the Historical Society.

What might you advocate for in a library policy?

How would you frame communication be used for the staff? for the community?

How can this issue be one that unifies versus dividing the school/parents/community?