



Advancing LGBTQ+ Justice and Transgender Advocacy



Participant Handouts

UniServ Directors 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

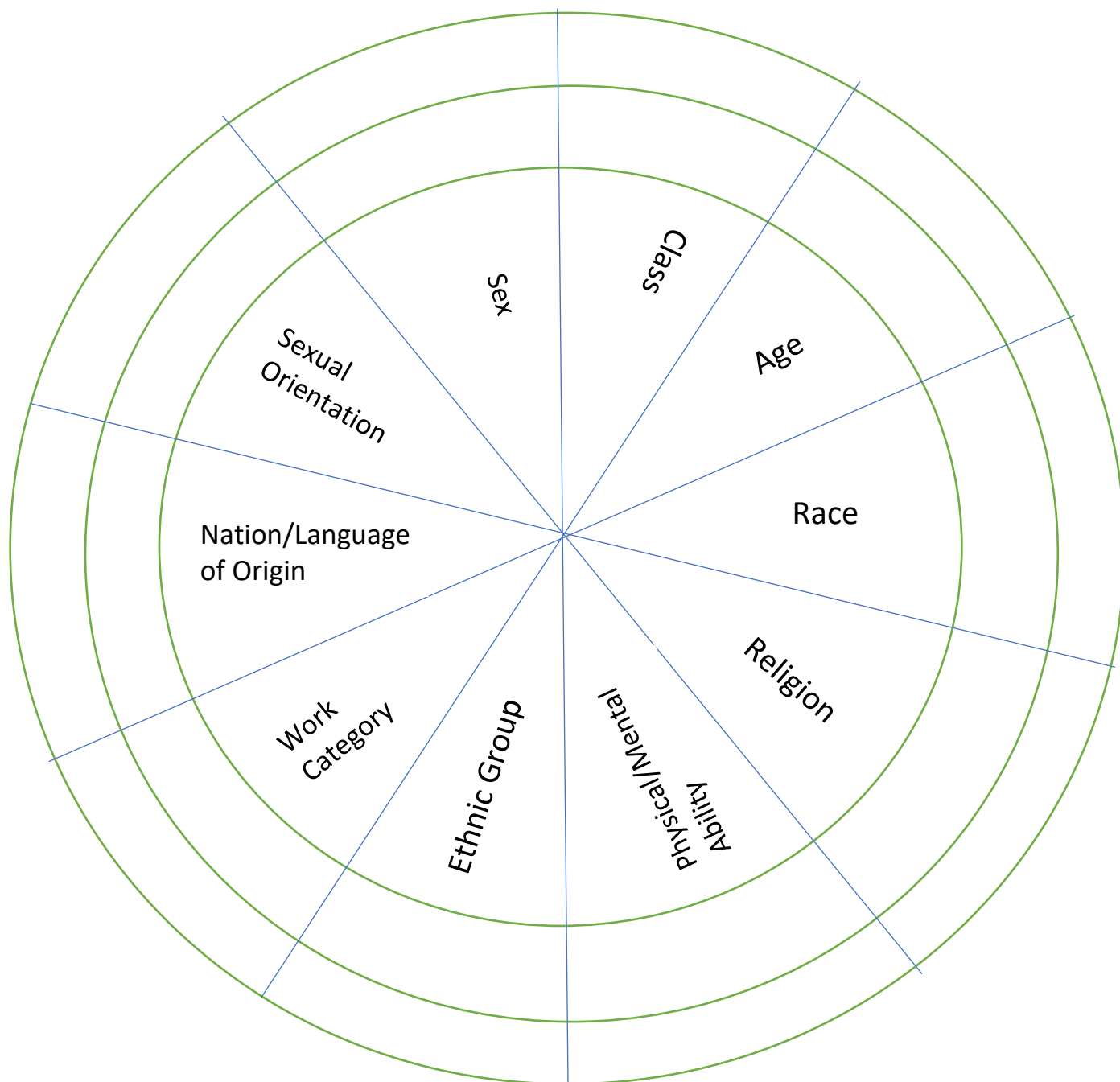
Over the last few years, the transgender community has asked allies to help normalize offering pronouns during introductions, in education, and the workplace to indicate an understanding of trans identities and show that they are a safe person. As gender identity and gender expression do not always align, 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.

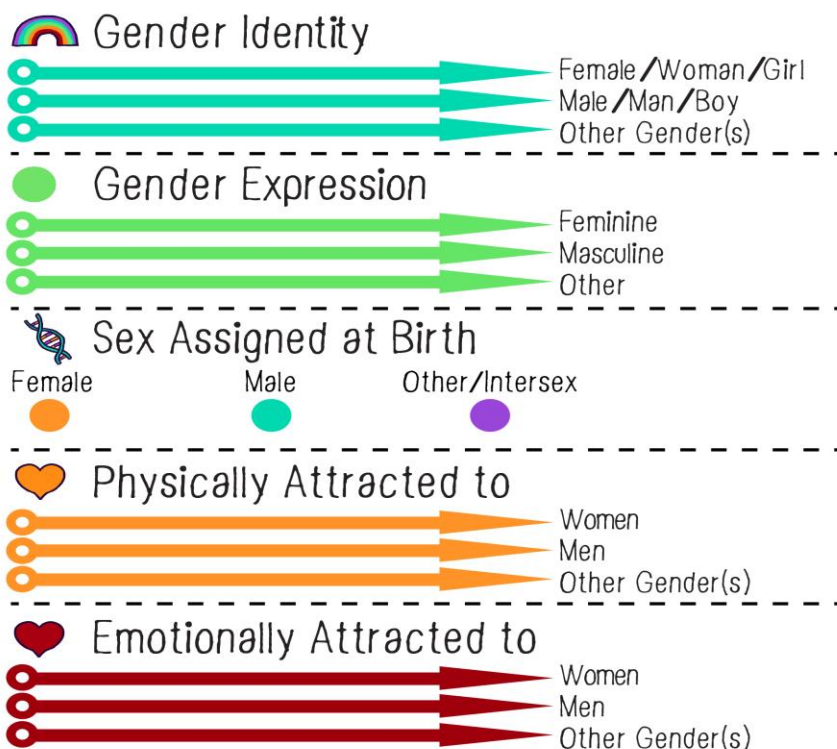
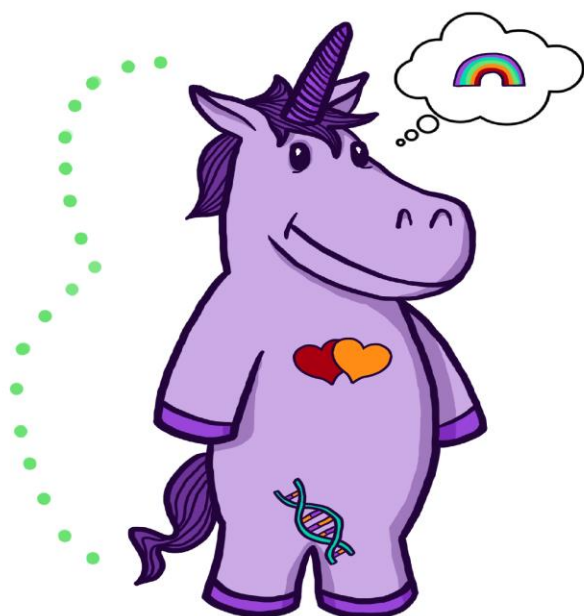
For more information on pronouns and additional LGBTQ+ Resources, please visit the following:

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



The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

Gender Unicorn Definitions



Gender Identity: *How I identify.*

One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). For transgender people, their own internal sense of gender identity and their sex assigned at birth are not the same.



Gender Expression/Presentation: *How I look and express myself.*

The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. Most transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth.



Sex Assigned at Birth: *The sex classification that I was assigned at birth.*

The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes. This is usually decided at birth or in utero, and is usually based on genitalia.



Physically Attracted To: *Whom I am physically attracted to.*

The group of people or genders to which a person can become physically attracted to, if at all.



Romantically/Emotionally Attracted To: *Whom I am romantically/emotionally attracted to.*

The group of people or genders to which a person can become romantically, emotionally, or spiritually attracted to, if at all.

Examples of Genders: We included "other genders" to indicate the many genders that other people might identify as, express themselves as, and be attracted to. Examples of these genders include: Agender, Bigender, Genderfluid, Genderqueer, Transgender, Non-binary, Gender Non-Conforming and Two-Spirit.

Interactive Gender Unicorn

Name: _____

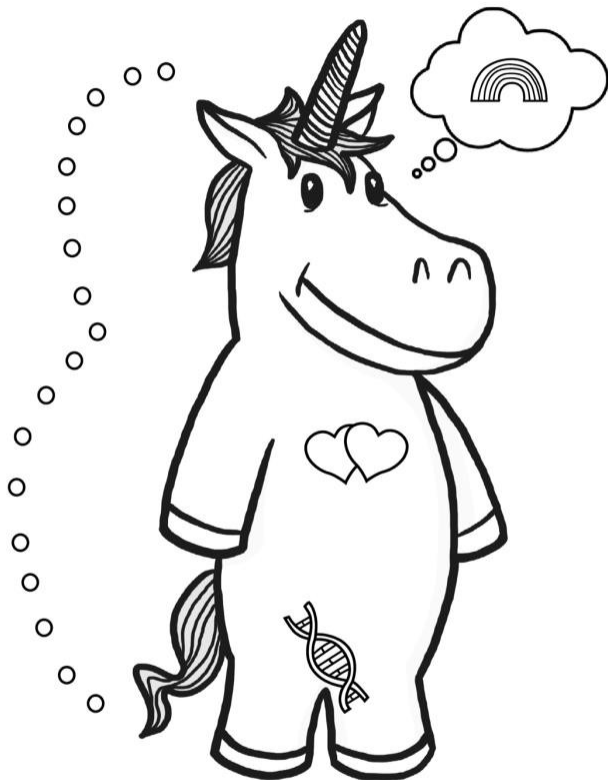
Your pronouns: _____

Use your coloring tools to fill in the meters to where they belong for you in each category. You may wish to color in multiple meters in any category and/or may wish to leave some meters blank.

Feel free to make additions or corrections to the sheet.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Gender Identity

_____ Female / Woman / Girl

_____ Male / Man / Boy

_____ Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression

_____ Feminine

_____ Masculine

_____ Other

Sex Assigned at Birth

Female Male Other/Intersex

☐ ☐ ☐

Physically Attracted To

_____ Women

_____ Men

_____ Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted To

_____ Women

_____ Men

_____ Other Gender(s)

To learn more go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan
Illustration by Anna Moore

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 policy 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. 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?

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.

Messaging Guide

Transgender Youth and the Freedom to Be Ourselves

Building Our Choir with a Race Class Gender Narrative



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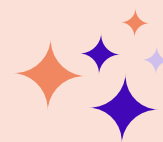
INTRODUCTION

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"

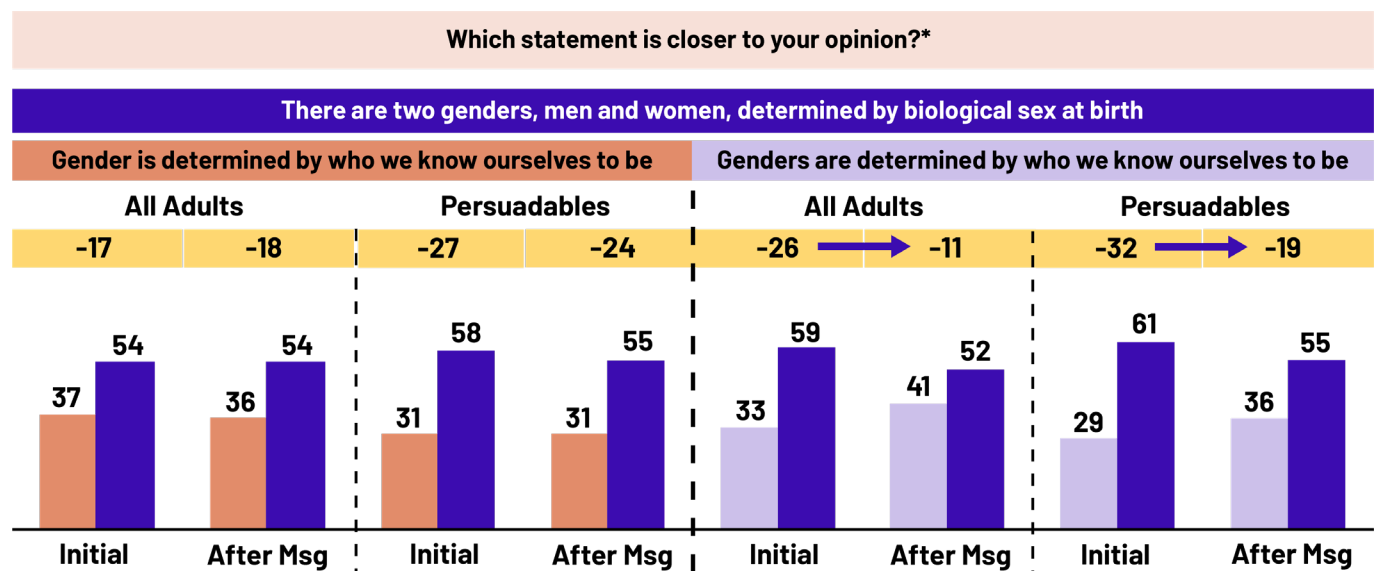
Evoking a sense of personal connection to an issue is critical to driving engagement and action. Without that, we can at best elicit sympathy, a passive and often patronizing attitude that alienates our base and fails to generate sustained interest from persuadable audiences. Moving people towards empathy – 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.



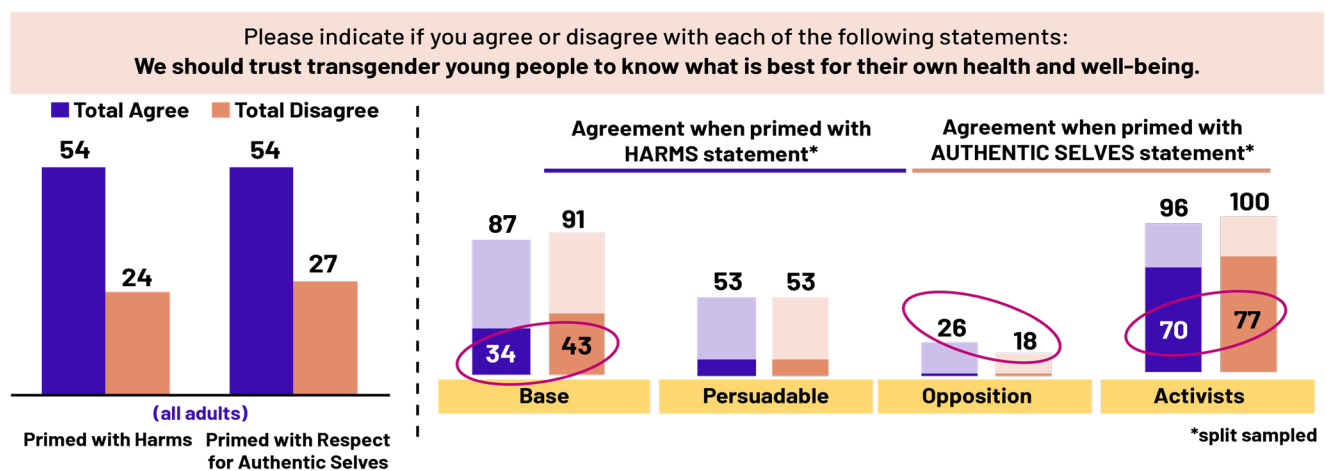
These statements were split-sampled. This data does **not** represent shifts in individual opinion.



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.

