

PEOPLE ARE MYTH-TAKEN ON TRANSGENDER ISSUES

► staff writer elizabeth panter

Imagine you're on Netflix and you decide to binge-watch *Glee*. While watching the show, you are probably concentrated on the crazy drama or awesome performances instead of political progression. But let's just say you focus on the latter. What contrasts *Glee* from a television show in the 1960s? LGBT+ characters, and lots of them. Homophobia in America is slowly decreasing, with younger generations becoming more accepting towards sexualities and genders, aside from heterosexuality and cisgender. Still, many Americans see the LGBT+ community as a foreign notion: something millennials invented with to feel unique. Multiple sexualities and genders have existed long before today's age; but now that they are welcomed instead of despised, more people feel comfortable revealing this truth about themselves. A Gallup poll agrees, finding the percentage of LGBT+ Americans was 7.3 percent in 2016, having risen from 2012's 5.8 percent. Countless myths concerning the LGBT+ community are targeted on the trans community. These myths are harmful and degrading towards the trans community, and need to be confronted. While not all are mentioned, here are some of the most infamous myths.

MYTH #1

The Only Kind of Trans People are Men and Women

Not all trans people follow binary genders. There are multiple types of gender identity; but some are as follows:

Non-binary people, also known as genderqueer, do not identify as any gender; typically using they/them pronouns, but not always. Agender is another term for not associating with any gender; which some non-binary people choose to use. Genderfluid people shift between what gender they associate as, sometimes a woman but later a man, both or neither. Not all genderfluid people are the same, so ask for someone's preferred pronouns. Bi or tri-gender means a person identify as two or three genders. One of those genders might be non-binary, but it all depends on the person.

MYTH #2

Trans people are mentally ill.

Gender dysphoria is not a mental illness. Gender dysphoria is a diagnosis that allows transgender individuals to receive treatment for their experience of gender incongruence. Some trans people cannot come out due to safety reasons, and thus cannot be officially diagnosed, yet they still might feel gender incongruence. Gender incongruence is when people's genders do not match biological sexes, resulting in unease and embarrassment. Trans people receive discrimination which often results in mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. Though not everyone agrees with the term "dysphoria."

"I personally do not believe 'gender incongruence' should be categorized as a 'dysphoria' or mental illness," Upper School Guidance Counselor Lauren Powell said. "Transgender people sadly suffered from social and emotional stigma that can impact them at every level."

The amount of gender congruence a trans person experiences varies on the individual.

The LGBT+ community suffers from much abhorrence and hatred, with a lot of it coming from sheer ignorance. Would these myths cease to exist if the government stepped up to help these people with education?

"These myths are too deeply rooted to be corrected just in schools," SA Speech and Debate teacher Jharick Shields said. "Teaching awareness and acceptance of the identity spectrum would certainly help but change will be slow. Parents, religious organizations, social influences, and the media will take a long time to adopt inclusive attitudes about these subjects."

Communities, especially including students, should educate on these topics and issues so less ignorance would exist. If people were made more aware from a younger age, less hatred and more acceptance would be seen.

Junior Patrick Marcus said, "I feel like when people are more educated they're less prejudiced against it. A lot of times we have the pre-conceived notion of gay people being, you know, flamboyant and only wearing rainbows, when in reality they're just normal human beings."

No matter what your views are on who LGBT+ people are, at the end of the day, they're here and are not going anywhere. Everyone needs to embrace their differences and band together as a country, instead of letting hate separate us. Recall the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Those racists let fear and detestation divide the country from other human beings. LGBT+ people are different from heterosexual cisgender people, but why should that divide a country? America has been loathing of differences for centuries, and it is time to make America a loving country.

MYTH #3

Transgender People Are Lying to Themselves:

Transgender people are people who don't identify as their biological sex, whereas majority of people are cisgender, meaning they agree with their biological sex. Many cisgender people do not understand why someone who is born a girl is truly a boy. This thinking comes heavily from the idea that genders only have one specific genitalia. But your genitalia does not determine your gender.

A *CNN* article by Emanuella Grinberg and Dani Stewart said, "A child's parents and environment are more likely to influence their gender expression than the body parts they were born with."

If a cisgender male is in a car wreck and must have his genitalia removed, would he still identify as a man, or is he not a man simply because of his lack of genitalia? No matter what your genitalia is, the only person who can determine your gender is *you*.

MYTH #4

Trans People Are Dangerous in Public Bathrooms

People are under the impression that trans people would assault innocent victims if they were allowed to use the bathroom of the gender they identify as.

Grinberg and Stewart said there has been no evidence of assaults caused by trans people using their true gender's bathroom (as opposed to their biological sex bathroom).

"[T] here is a lot of anxiety associated with this issue, but it seems to be based on fear rather than facts," Amy Sneirson, Executive Director of Maine Human Rights Commission, said.

Maine has protected gender identity in its laws for over a decade, with no bathroom crime mentioning a trans assaulter.

8 percent of surveyed students did not know terms from Myth #1, but nearly 60 percent knew two or fewer of the terms' meanings.

