



Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals are being deprived of certain rights granted to others and are subjected to discrimination both legally and personally.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Marriage is not just a religious ceremony. It is also a contract between two individuals that grants numerous state and Federal rights to the married couple. Extending marriage to same-sex partners is not “redefining marriage,” but is simply extending equal rights under the law to all persons. Although several states have now extended marriage rights to same-sex couples, even those who are legally married in those states are still denied over 1,000 Federal rights because of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). DOMA ensures that the Federal government does not recognize legal marriages of same-sex couples, which, among other things, denies citizenship for bi-national couples, and makes the benefit of joint Federal tax returns unavailable for same sex couples. Until DOMA is repealed, there are truly no same-sex marriages where the couples can enjoy the same rights as opposite-sex married partners.

BULLYING/VIOLENCE

LGBTQ individuals are frequently the victims of bullying and physical violence. Every year, many gay teens commit suicide as a result of bullying by peers. Even in progressive areas of the country, hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals are common. Unfortunately, society continues to revolve around hetero-normative and gender-normative stereotypes, which often lead to violence against those who do not conform to what society considers “normal.”

JOB/HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

In many parts of the country, it is still legal to discriminate against LGBTQ individuals in employment and housing. In many places, it is still legal to refuse to hire someone based on sexual orientation or gender identity, or even to fire the person. It is also legal in many areas to deny housing to LGBTQ individuals or evict them solely on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

“CONVERSION” THERAPY

“Conversion” therapy refers to any practice that attempts to change one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. These so-called “gay-to-straight” programs operate across the country and are practiced by both licensed practitioners and religious organizations. They rely on myths and misinformation to “convert” the individuals, and nearly every legitimate authority on mental health, including the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association, has condemned this practice as harmful, ineffective and psychologically damaging. In recent times, some states have begun to pass laws to ban “conversion” therapy. However, these types of legislation often exclude religious organizations and only apply to minors.

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TRANSGENDER ISSUES

Transgender individuals still bear the brunt of oppression in the LGBTQ community. They face some of the highest rates of discrimination, violence, and suicide. In addition, many of the protections that are now being enacted to protect individuals based on sexual orientation often do not touch on issues surrounding gender identity. Transgender individuals face many challenges when it comes to equality and many face issues regarding official recognition of their sex, using public restrooms, and many other forms of discrimination.

LINKING OPPRESSION

PAN is aligned with LGBTQ equality because we see a connection among all oppressive systems, violence, and hatred, whether rooted in racism, sexism, heterosexism, or speciesism. LGBTQ equality is a legitimate social justice concern that needs to be addressed. Discrimination against LGBTQ individuals is rooted in ignorance and often results in violence. PAN believes that all oppression needs to be confronted. For this reason, PAN will continue to address LGBTQ equality, just as we address the oppression of all other groups, human and non-human.

THE SOLUTION

Each of us can take a stand against oppression. Although the LGBTQ community has made great strides in recent times, it has not been without the help of allies. We must stand up and step in when we witness injustice. Individuals hold the power to become an active part of the LGBTQ equality movement and help to fuel it forward. It's important to be aware of the numerous societal and legal concerns surrounding these issues, to educate others about these issues, and to advocate for equality for all.



For more information about PAN's projects or to donate, please visit our website: www.peaceadvocacynetwork.org

PAN promotes a peaceful existence through veganism, social justice, and respect for the Earth's inhabitants and resources. Donations to support the PAN's efforts are accepted through our website or can be mailed to

Peace Advocacy Network, PO Box 7624, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

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