



**ROBERT F.
KENNEDY
HUMAN
RIGHTS**

SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

**HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS WHO
ARE CHANGING
OUR WORLD**

**GAVIN GRIMM, ANDREA JENKINS, LAVERNE
COX, SCHUYLER BAILAR AND JACOB TOBIA:
CELEBRATING AND DEFENDING TRANS AND
NONBINARY LIVES**

GAVIN GRIMM

(HE/HIM/HIS)

“ALL TRANSGENDER STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE WHAT I WAS DENIED: THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE SEEN FOR WHO WE ARE BY OUR SCHOOLS AND OUR GOVERNMENT.”



Gavin Grimm came out as transgender in 2014 during his sophomore year at Gloucester High School in Virginia. With his principal's permission, he used the boys' restrooms until some parents went to the school board to complain. A public meeting was held, and one adult after another expressed hateful sentiments. The board voted to ban Grimm from using the boys' restrooms.

With the help of the American Civil Liberties Union, Grimm sued his school. In 2017, his case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. However, it was sent back to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and Grimm won in the lower court in 2019. The school appealed, and in August 2020, the Fourth Circuit ruled that the school board policy that prohibited Grimm from using the boys' restroom violated Title IX and the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution's 14th Amendment.

In June 2021, an even bigger battle was won when the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a petition from the school board to hear the case. The order leaves in place the Fourth Circuit court decision that found the school board had violated his constitutional rights—a decision that features strong language supporting constitutional protections for transgender children.



ANDREA JENKINS

(SHE/HER/HERS)

“IT’S MORE THAN JUST HAVING A SEAT AT THE TABLE. IT’S HAVING A SEAT AT THE TABLE AND BEING ABLE TO SPEAK TO POWER.”

Born in 1961, Andrea Jenkins was raised on Chicago’s West Side by a single mother from a working-class community. She began writing in her mid-teens and has contributed to and authored acclaimed volumes of poetry dealing with issues of race, social justice, sexuality, and gender. At 18, Jenkins moved to Minneapolis for university and lived in male dorms, continuing to hide what she knew to be her true self.

In Minnesota, Jenkins worked as a vocational counselor and on the Minneapolis City Council staff. On November 7, 2017, she won her run for Minneapolis’ 8th Ward on the City Council with more than 70 percent of the vote, becoming the first African American openly trans woman to be elected to office in the United States. She has also chaired the new Race Equity Subcommittee and helped create a Racial Equity Community Advisory Committee consisting of city residents.

In June 2020, on the 50th anniversary of the first LGBTQ+ Pride parade, the online magazine Queerty named Andrea Jenkins among the 50 heroes “leading the nation toward equality, acceptance, and dignity for all people.”

LAVERNE COX

(SHE/HER/HERS)

**“MY LIFE CHANGED WHEN I
REALIZED I DESERVE TO BE
SEEN, TO DREAM, TO BE FULLY
INCLUDED, ALWAYS STRIVING
TO BRING MY FULL HUMANITY.”**



Laverne Cox was born in 1972 in Mobile, Alabama. At age 11, she was being bullied for not acting “the way someone assigned male at birth was supposed to act” and attempted suicide. She appeared in her first film during her senior year at Marymount Manhattan College and, during that time, went from being gender-nonconforming to starting her medical transition and living and identifying as female.

In 2012, Cox was cast as Sophia Burset in the acclaimed Netflix series “Orange Is the New Black.” This breakout role brought her to the attention of diverse audiences all over the world. She became the first openly transgender actress to be nominated for a primetime acting Emmy Award and the first trans woman of color to have a leading role on a mainstream scripted television series.

Cox has continued to break down barriers, appearing in other TV shows, hitting national news, and expanding her presence with groundbreaking roles. Her documentary “Disclosure,” which she executive produced, was named among the 100 best documentaries of all time by Vogue. And she is the first openly transgender person to appear on the covers of Time, British Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Essence, and more.



SCHUYLER BAILAR

(HE/HIM/HIS)

“I REALLY JUST WANT TO BE VISIBLE SO PEOPLE KNOW THIS IS POSSIBLE THAT I EXIST—NOT ‘I’ AS IN SCHUYLER BUT ‘I’ AS IN A TRANS ATHLETE.”

Born in 1996, Schuyler Bailar was swimming in the Junior Olympics by age 10. Five years later, he ranked among the top 15-year-old breaststroke swimmers in the U.S. In 2012, Bailar broke his back in an accident, but he recovered and won all three D.C.-area 100-yard breaststroke championships. A star student at Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C., he was aggressively recruited and eventually committed to swimming for Harvard.

At the end of high school, it became clear that his struggles over body image and self-esteem were linked to his gender identity. He could continue as a possible NCAA champion—on the women’s team—or transition to a man. His decision to be true to himself has been recounted in thousands of media outlets, from The Washington Post and “60 Minutes” to “The Ellen DeGeneres Show.” MTV included his story on their “2015’s Best Moments for the Trans Community in 201,” and BuzzFeed named him one of the “11 Transgender People Who Are Shifting our Views.”

Bailar, the first openly transgender NCAA Division 1 swimmer, was awarded the prestigious Harvard Athletics Director’s Award in 2019. Since graduating, he has been working as a public speaker, advocating for body positivity, and dispelling deep-rooted myths about trans and non-binary people.

JACOB TOBIA

(THEY/THEM/THEIRS)

“THE IDEA THAT GENDER IS CONSISTENT IS A FLAWED PREMISE TO BEGIN WITH. BY RESISTING CONVENTIONAL LABELS AND EMBRACING AUTHENTIC AMBIGUITY, I WANT TO CHALLENGE THE TENET THAT GENDER MUST BE CONSISTENT AND IMMEDIATELY LEGIBLE TO OTHERS.”



Jacob Tobia (they/them) was born in 1991 and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina. In high school, Tobia was president of the Gay-Straight Alliance, and at Duke University they served as the vice president of equity and outreach for Duke Student Government and president of Duke Students for Gender Neutrality.

In 2012, Tobia began blogging for The Huffington Post. Since then, their writing and advocacy have been featured by MSNBC, MTV, The Washington Post, The New York Times, Time, New York, Teen Vogue, Playboy, and Jezebel, among others. In addition, Tobia is a Point Foundation Scholar, empowering promising lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students to achieve their full academic and leadership potential.

Tobia is the author of the national bestselling memoir “Sissy: A Coming-of-Gender Story,” a memoir about what it’s like to grow up not sure if you’re (a) a boy, (b) a girl, (c) something in between, or (d) all of the above. A member of the Forbes 30 Under 30 and the OUT 100, Tobia is dedicated to helping others embrace the full complexity of their gender. They have worn high heels in the White House twice and are likely to do so again.

CELEBRATING AND DEFENDING TRANS AND NONBINARY LIVES

LESSON GRADE LEVELS 9 TO 12

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS, NONDISCRIMINATION, DIGNITY, RIGHT TO LIFE, ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING, SOCIAL SECURITY, EDUCATION, HEALTH, SAFETY

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- **ARTICLE 1:** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- **ARTICLE 2:** Everyone is entitled to all the rights, without distinction of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.
- **ARTICLE 3:** Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.
- **ARTICLE 5:** Right to freedom from torture and degrading treatment.
- **ARTICLE 7:** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.
- **ARTICLE 12:** Everyone has the right to privacy.
- **ARTICLE 25:** Right to an adequate standard of living.
- **ARTICLE 26:** Right to an education.
- **ARTICLE 27:** Right to participate in cultural life.

TIME REQUIREMENT

One to seven 50-minute lessons

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to live and survive as our authentic selves?
- What challenges do transgender and nonbinary individuals face?
- How do we learn about transgender and nonbinary people in the news and our lives?
- Who are human rights defenders from the transgender and nonbinary communities?
- How can we be better allies to the LGBTQ+ community?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Increase their understanding and knowledge of the transgender and nonbinary communities (and be prepared to dispel incorrect notions).
- Research and examine reporting regarding transgender and nonbinary human rights in the United States and by the United Nations.

- Know and empathize with STTP defenders from the LGBTQ+ community.
- Understand how to act as better allies for the transgender and nonbinary communities and be prepared to take mindful action.

STUDENT SKILLS

- Critical thinking
- Comparing and contrasting
- Researching and analyzing information
- Perspective-taking
- Identifying emotions
- Demonstrating empathy
- Demonstrating open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for social problems
- Evaluating impact

CONCEPTS

- Empathy
- Fairness
- Justice
- Equality
- Cultural norms
- Global citizenship
- Interdependence
- Values
- Systemic change

VOCABULARY

- Transgender
- Nonbinary
- Gender-expansive
- Gender identity
- Discrimination
- Respect
- Dignity
- Ally
- Gender binary
- Gender expression
- Gender identity
- Gender spectrum
- LGBTQ+
- Pronouns
- Sex
- Gender

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

- Internet access
- Computer access

MATERIALS

- [“Coming Out: Living Authentically as Transgender or Non-Binary”](#)
- [“Gender and Children: A Place to Begin”](#)
- [“Pronouns 101”](#)
- [“Identities are DOPE! Can you name some of yours?”](#)
- [“Transgender FAQ”](#)
- [“Debunking the Myths: Transgender Health and Well-Being”](#)
- [“Gender Snowperson: Understanding Gender Identity”](#)
- [“Seven Things About Transgender People That You Didn’t Know”](#)
- [“Celebrating the Diversity of the Non-Binary Community for International Non-Binary Day 2020”](#)
- [“Understanding the Transgender Community”](#)
- [“QTBIPOC Mental Health and Well-Being”](#)
- [The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [UN Free & Equal](#)
- [“Combatting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity”](#)
- [“LGBT Bullying as a Violation of Universal Human Rights”](#)
- [“Are LGBT rights human rights? Recent developments at the United Nations”](#)
- [“UN Women hosts first high-level event on gender diversity and non-binary identities at UN headquarters”](#)
- [“Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English”](#)
- [“Living Free and Equal: What States Are Doing to Tackle Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People”](#)
- [“See each other. Save trans lives.”](#)
- [“How can cis people be good accomplices? | Trans Women & Non-Binary People of Color | Cut”](#)
- [“Be an Ally—Support Trans Equality”](#)
- [“Teenagers Discuss Microaggressions and Racism #HatchKids”](#)
- [“Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander”](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign Blueprint for Positive Change 2020](#)

NOTE TO TEACHERS

RFK Human Rights and the HRC recognize “transgender” as an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people who experience or express their gender in a way that does not necessarily align with what they were assigned at birth. It covers many different gender identities, such as nonbinary, gender fluid, agender, genderqueer, trans man, trans woman, or just trans.

This lesson plan will use the phrase “transgender and nonbinary” to try to best capture this broad array of identities. That being said, it is important to recognize that not all people in these groups may identify as transgender or nonbinary. In addition, there may be transgender or nonbinary people whose gender does not fit in any of the terms described above, and we affirm the gender of those people and human rights defenders as valid.

At any time during this lesson, please feel free to share the HRC resource [“Coming Out: Living Authentically as Transgender or Non-Binary”](#) with youth and/or adults for advice and information on safely coming out as transgender and/or nonbinary to loved ones. For other recommendations on creating a gender-inclusive classroom, please review the [“Gender and Children: A Place to Begin”](#) checklist from Welcoming Schools.

ANTICIPATORY SET

- Provide students with one or both of the following prompts: Who is your authentic self? What makes you *you*?
- Ask students to write their names at the top of a page. Then, students should write or draw aspects of their identity/their authentic self. Tell students that these aspects may be ascribed (determined by social or cultural constructions in terms of gender, race, sexuality, etc.) or how students would describe themselves. These could be qualities (ambitious, generous, kind) or experientially defining aspects (a student, an artist, an athlete).
- If students need an example for this activity, consider showing the following [TikTok](#) from the account @wokekindergarten
- Emphasize to students that our identities and authentic selves are made up of our thoughts and emotions rather than what we or our bodies look like.
- Say or write the following phrase for the class: “Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law” (UDHR, Article 6). Tell students that all human beings everywhere are entitled to human rights by law under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This creates a world where all people (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, and queer people) are ensured equality and embraced as full members of society at home, at work, and in every community.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

- Ask students how they would define “gender.” They may share their definition with the class, work in pairs to develop a definition, or write their definition down privately or in an online chat with the class.

TEACHER TIP

Before starting the lesson, verbally state your chosen pronouns to class and/or include them on a physical or virtual name tag. Example: “Today, we will be learning about human rights defenders from the transgender and nonbinary communities. My name is John Smith. My pronouns are they, them, theirs.” Encourage students to verbally share their chosen pronouns, if they want, or include them on their physical or virtual name tag with the name they want to be called in class. Ask students to tell you if they do or do not want their pronouns to be used in front of the class, when contacting parents, or in front of other teachers.

As the teacher or facilitator, always use the students’ chosen pronouns unless you have been asked not to do so for a specific reason (e.g., safety or privacy concerns). If you have students in your school or classroom who are transgender and/or nonbinary, be mindful not to put those students in the position of teaching other children about their identity. It can jeopardize a student’s safety and well-being if they are outed to their peers or non-affirming adults. Try to use inclusive phrases to address your class as a whole, such as “Good morning, everyone” or “Good afternoon, folks.”

Ensure that all students in your classroom are allowed to express themselves freely, regardless of gender norms—or any aspect of their identity that may be considered by other students to be “different.” If a student wishes to change their chosen pronouns, use the new pronoun that the student chooses.

If you or another student misgenders someone in the class, correct the person who has done the misgendering and have them apologize to the person who has been misgendered.

For other guidelines on pronouns, please refer to the HRC’s [“Pronouns 101.”](#)

- After students have had a chance to present ideas, share the following definitions with students on the board or PowerPoint slide:
 - **GENDER** refers to the traditional or stereotypical roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.
 - **SEX** refers to the designation of a person at birth as either “male” or “female” based on their anatomy (e.g. reproductive organs) and/or their biology (e.g. hormones).
- Remind students that, as they discussed in the Anticipatory Set activity, there is so much more to a person’s identity than their sex. Regardless of their gender experience, they are deserving of human rights and opportunities to express their gender in a way they feel is authentic.
- Prompts for small pair share/breakout groups or journaling:
 - What was your earliest memory of realizing your gender? How did this realization come to be?
 - Have you ever experienced discrimination as a result of your gender? For example, have you ever been told not to act or behave a certain way because of your gender? How did you feel and react?
 - Have you ever felt stigmatized because of the way you chose to express your gender? How did you feel and react?
- Ask students if they have heard of the term “gender-expansive.” Allow students to explain to others if they are familiar with this term. Then, share the HRC definition on the board or PowerPoint slide:
 - **GENDER-EXPANSIVE:** A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.
- Tell students that transgender and nonbinary folks are both included under the gender-expansive umbrella because they do not fall within the gender binary.
- Ask students to read [“Seven Things About Transgender People That You Didn’t Know”](#) and [“Celebrating the Diversity of the Non-Binary](#)

[Community for International Non-Binary Day 2020.”](#) In pairs, small groups, or as a full class, ask students:

- What information, if any, was new to you in these articles?
- Were you surprised by anything you learned? How does the information that surprised you compare to assumptions you may have had?
- How did the presented information influence your perspective on trans or nonbinary people?
- Explain to students that trans women are women and trans men are men, and that trans and nonbinary humans are humans. Tell students that individuals from these groups represent all walks of life and racial, ethnic, and spiritual backgrounds. They are parents, siblings, and kids. They are coworkers, neighbors, and friends. There is no one way for people of any gender to act, look, or behave.

ACTIVITY 2

- Divide students into two groups. Ask one group to research how stories about transgender people are reported in the news and ask the second group of students to research how stories about nonbinary people are reported in the news. For their research, students can work in groups or alone. Students can opt to use a newspaper or magazine, or the “News” section of Google.
- Ask students to record their results in a paragraph format or through visual representation, such as a graph that denotes key trends in coverage.
- After students have had time to research and record conclusions, ask the two student groups to present if they found more positive success stories or negative stories related to violence against the transgender and nonbinary communities. Students should compare their findings in coverage, taking into account:
 - The distribution of positive versus negative stories about the transgender and nonbinary communities.
 - Were some stories easier to find than others?

Why do students think that is?

- The sources of the reporting.
- Frequently used themes, terms, or trends in reporting.
- Ask students to present their findings visually in a table, chart, graph, or Poll Everywhere (PollEv).
- Based on student research, discuss the challenges transgender and nonbinary people face. Feel free to share [“Understanding the Transgender Community”](#) to outline challenges including lack of legal protection, poverty, stigma, harassment, discrimination, violence, lack of health care, and challenges with identity documents. After naming the challenges, discuss the effects they may have on individuals’ mental, emotional, and physical health and well-being. For example:
 - Misgendering and inability to access the school bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity may lead to bullying, stigmatization, sadness, anxiety, and emotional distress about attending school. (UDHR Article 26)
 - Gender-policing (attempting to enforce behavioral or cultural norms from the gender binary) or rejection from family could lead to resentment, depression, substance abuse, or homelessness. (UDHR Articles 12, 25)
 - State legislature could allow businesses to use religion as an exemption to not provide services, including health care or legal protection, to people from gender-expansive populations, thus impacting mental, emotional, and physical health. (UDHR Articles 7, 23, 25)

ACTIVITY 3

- If you have not already, share the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#) with students and tell them that gender-expansive people are protected under Articles 1 and 2, which state that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and everyone is entitled to all the freedoms listed in the UDHR, “without distinction of any kind such as race,

TEACHER TIP

If students feel uncomfortable discussing how discrimination and stigmatization have affected their mental health, sharing your own experience with mental health may help others to open up. If youth are in need of resources related to mental health and well-being, please share this [list](#) of resources related to mental health and well-being.

color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.” This means that all people, including transgender and nonbinary people, are entitled to exercise their human rights without discrimination. In other words, to discriminate against transgender and nonbinary folks is to treat those individuals as unworthy of human rights.

- Show students the site and video for [UN Free & Equal](#).
- Ask students to find one article about how the United Nations (UN) is advancing the rights of transgender and nonbinary people (if students have trouble with that, they may select an article from the list below to read). After students have read their article(s), ask each student to share one action that the UN has taken to advance human rights of transgender and/or nonbinary people.
 - [“Combatting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity”](#)
 - [“LGBT Bullying as a Violation of Universal Human Rights”](#)
 - [“Are LGBT rights human rights? Recent developments at the United Nations”](#)
 - [“UN Women hosts first high-level event on gender diversity and non-binary identities at UN headquarters”](#)
 - [“Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English from the United Nations”](#)
 - [“Living Free and Equal: What States Are Doing to Tackle Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People”](#)

- Optional activity for the class: Ask students to discuss and compare the treatment of the transgender and/or nonbinary communities by the UN and the United States (as evidenced either by Activity 2 research or personal experience).

ACTIVITY 4

- Show students the [“See each other. Save trans lives.”](#) PSA from the HRC website. If time permits, feel free to show other videos featuring the people from the campaign.
- Ask students how they participate in their community. They may answer either “popcorn” style in the class or in a virtual classroom chat. Tell students that their answers could include activities, such as going to school, working to put food on the table, enjoying leisure and time with family, etc. Tell your students that these are their guaranteed human rights. For example, school corresponds to UDHR Article 26, working corresponds to Article 23, and leisure corresponds to Article 24.
- Ask students to think about what would happen if they weren’t able to do those things. In other words, what would you do if your human rights were stripped away? How would you feel? How would you survive as your authentic self?
- Suggest that students journal or create art based upon these prompts. While they work, they should consider how these challenges may be compounded or impact those in the transgender and nonbinary communities.

ACTIVITY 5

- Tell students that there are more than 2 million transgender and nonbinary people across the United States, representing all walks of life. In fact, one in five Americans personally knows someone who uses a pronoun other than he or she.
 - *Optional discussion for the class:* With more than 2 million transgender and nonbinary individuals in the U.S., why is our knowledge, understanding, and/or news coverage of them (potentially) so limited?

- In groups or individually, tell students to pick one or more of the STTP defenders for this lesson and explain how they represent many sectors and facets of the human experience (including students, politicians, artists, athletes, entertainers, and activists). Ask students to research their defender(s) of choice, finding articles, interviews, videos, and their social media, and create a presentation about their defender for the class. For their presentation, they should consider:

- What students have in common with these individuals.
- The background of these individuals and their passions.
- How they engaged in advocacy.
- What human rights these individuals are defending.
- Challenges they may be struggling with or have overcome.
- How they survive as their authentic selves.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- Summarize the previous activities and remind students that everyone deserves the opportunity and freedom to do what they love and to live their authentic lives.
- Prompt for the whole class to discuss: What does it mean to be an ally?
- After students have had a chance to discuss, write this definition on the board or PowerPoint slide, or verbally tell students: Allies are people who are not LGBTQ+ themselves but work to advance the cause of LGBTQ equality. An ally can show support for LGBTQ friends, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, co-congregants, family members, and others in a wide variety of ways.
- Show students the video [“How can cis people be good accomplices?”](#) and ask students what was said that resonated with them.
- Discuss how students can be allies and defend the human rights of those in the LGBTQ+ community. This activity could be a full group

discussion or an individual reflective exercise based on the video they just watched, the following strategies, or [others](#):

- **TALK TO YOUR FRIENDS/FAMILY MEMBERS.** Ensure that you and those around you will not tolerate stigma, prejudice, or discrimination against queer, trans, and nonbinary folks.
- **HAVE EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT PRONOUNS, INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE, MICROAGGRESSIONS, TRANSPHOBIC LANGUAGE, AND MORE.** Familiarize yourself with different pronouns. Practice using inclusive language that acknowledges and supports various gender identities, including those who are nonbinary. Be mindful of microaggressions and backhanded compliments that may cause emotional damage to a trans or nonbinary person, even if the person saying them thought that they were being supportive. Some examples of microaggressions and backhanded compliments are:
 - “Did you have the surgery yet?”
 - “I never would have guessed you are trans. You look so good!”
 - “You’re too pretty to have ever been a man.”
 - “I could tell you are trans because of your voice/the size of your hands/your jawline/etc.”
 - “If you were going to look like a tomboy, why didn’t you just stay a boy?”
 - “Are you going to get some work done to look more real?”
 - “Be thankful you don’t have periods. They are so annoying.”
 - “How do you have sex?”
 - “It’s so cool to have a trans friend.”

- For more information, view [“Teenagers Discuss Microaggressions and Racism #HatchKids.”](#) You will probably start to notice transphobic language happening around you, so it’s important to use your voice to interrupt that kind of casual or intentional transphobia. When you speak up, you can become the catalyst that causes others to speak up as well.
- **LEARN ABOUT THE TRANSGENDER AND NONBINARY EXPERIENCES THROUGH YOUR OWN RESEARCH.** Educational books and autobiographies, videos and podcasts, or articles written by trans and/or nonbinary teens and adults for major media outlets allow you to hear a firsthand perspective without putting the emotional burden on one person in your life to speak for a community. Learn about the many ways gender norms have shifted within cultures and through history. Become even more familiar with the differences between sex and gender, gender expression and gender identity, and sexual orientation and gender. Become familiar with current language and terminology used about and within the transgender and nonbinary communities.
- **EXPLORE AND SHARE CONTENT FROM TRANSGENDER AND NONBINARY ACTIVISTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT.**

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Feel free to engage in the “Four Corners” activity or role play the scenarios for allyship listed in the lesson [Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander](#) from Welcoming Schools.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

If students are new to these terms or ideas, consider using or adapting the “[Gender Snowperson: Understanding Gender Identity](#)” exercise from the Welcoming Schools program.

Alternatively, if students are familiar with some of the terms but not others, teachers or facilitators may provide students with some or all of the following list of terms and definitions for reading or matching exercise:

- **ALLY:** Someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ people. The term encompasses straight and cisgender allies as well as those within the LGBTQ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community).
- **ANDROGYNOUS:** Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.
- **CISGENDER (OR CIS):** Individuals whose gender identity or expression aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.
- **COMING OUT:** The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.
- **GENDER BINARY:** The notion that there exist only two genders, each solidly fixed, biologically based, and attached to various expectations for behavior, appearance, and feelings. The binary gender system, while predominant in most cultures, is not the only model of gender that exists; more nuanced, nonbinary understandings of gender have existed throughout history and across cultures.
- **GENDER DYSPHORIA:** Clinically significant distress caused when a person’s assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.
- **GENDER-EXPANSIVE:** A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.
- **GENDER EXPRESSION:** The ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression also works the other way—as people assign gender to others because of their appearance, mannerisms, and other characteristics based on societal conventions, which are continually shifting and vary across cultures, race, and region.
- **GENDER-FLUID:** A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.
- **GENDER IDENTITY:** One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. While most people develop a gender identity aligned with their biological sex, for some gender identity is different from their biological or assigned sex.
- **GENDER-NONCONFORMING:** A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.
- **GENDER SPECTRUM:** Recognition of gender as a complex aspect of self, influenced by a person’s sex, gender expression, and gender identity. Each of these dimensions of gender can be represented as a spectrum, rather than binary. The interaction of these three aspects of one’s authentic self leads to an infinite set of possibilities in how people can understand and express their own gender, and how others experience it as well.
- **GENDER TRANSITION:** The processes by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of their gender with its outward manifestations. Some people might socially transition, by dressing, using names and pronouns, and/or be socially recognized as the “other” gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions. It is also

important to note that many people are unable or choose not to transition medically.

- **GENDERQUEER:** Blurring the lines around gender identity and sexual orientation, genderqueer individuals typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation.
- **LEGAL TRANSITION:** Changing legal documents to align with one's gender identity (and name, if one chooses to change it). This can involve changing a driver's license, Social Security card, passport, or even utility bills.
- **LGBTQ+:** An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and everything on the gender and sexuality spectrum that letters and words can't yet describe."
- **MICROAGGRESSIONS:** Everyday exchanges that are insulting or denigrating to individuals because of their identity, even if there was no malicious intent.
- **NONBINARY:** An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Nonbinary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all nonbinary people do. Nonbinary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender (a person who does not identify themselves as having a particular gender), bigender (a person whose sense of personal identity encompasses two genders), genderqueer or gender-fluid.
- **OUTING:** Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender nonbinary identity to others without their permission. Being outed can have serious repercussions for someone's employment, economic stability, personal safety, or religious or family situations.
- **PHYSICAL TRANSITION:** Changing one's body to align with one's gender identity. This can include haircuts, altering body hair and nails, or the use of makeup. The aspect of physical transition that requires doctors is often referred to as a medical transition, and can include hormone replacement therapy, surgical procedures, hair removal or implants, or many other options. Physical and medical transitions are not just limited to binary transgender people,

as many nonbinary people undergo some form of physical transition as well.

- **PRONOUNS:** Any word that can replace a noun or noun phrase and refer specifically to people who are being talked about. Examples of pronouns an individual may use: she/her/hers, he/him/his, or they/them/theirs. Some individuals use other less common gender-neutral pronouns, such as xe/hir/hirs, or use no pronouns at all. The phrase "preferred pronouns" is being phased out by the community, as it denotes that gender is a choice.
- **QUEER:** Expresses a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have nonbinary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ movement.
- **SEX:** The designation made at birth as "male" or "female" based on an individual's genitalia. Frequently assumed to be the same as gender, a person's sex is only one of the dimensions that constitute an individual's gender.
- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Describes an individual's enduring physical, emotional, romantic and/or spiritual attraction to another person. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity.
- **SOCIAL TRANSITION:** Living one's everyday life as one's true gender, and can include changing one's name, clothing, and/or pronouns.
- **TRANSGENDER:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
- **TRANSITION:** A process that some transgender and nonbinary people go through when they decide to live as their true gender, rather than the one assigned to them at birth.
- **TRANSSEXUAL:** An outdated term that we recommend avoiding.
- **TRANSVESTITE:** An outdated term that we recommend avoiding. Often used as a slur.

BECOMING A DEFENDER

- Write a detailed letter to the president, a government agency connected to the issues, or your U.S. senator or representative to ask them to support the recommendations from the Human Rights Campaign's [Blueprint for Positive Change 2020](#). In this letter, you can both make a strong point and back it up with evidence from class and your own research, or you can raise important questions. Remember to cite sources in your letter and use proper business letter format.
- Write a detailed letter to the United Nations or join a local chapter of the United Nations Association to advocate on behalf of the U.S. for global efforts to advance LGBTQ human rights. In particular, research ways to support efforts of the UN LGBTI Core Group, the Equal Rights Coalition, the LGBTI Core Group of the OAS, the Human Rights Council, and more.
- Advocate for transgender and nonbinary-inclusive trainings for your school or workplace that will teach educators and staff how to treat trans and nonbinary people with courtesy, respect, and professionalism. Help all school staff and students to learn about gender and the ways in which today's students are defining and expressing it. This includes professional development that gives adults language and tools from which to draw as they seek to create a more inclusive school environment.
- Create an LGBTQ+ inclusive affinity group at school to advocate for strong policies that protect all students' rights to a safe and supportive learning environment, and explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression. Explore school policies to see if they account for and support different gender identities and expressions. Update forms and documents that ask for information about gender to ensure that they are gender-expansive. Rethink dress codes that reinforce gender stereotypes or that might cause a nonbinary person stress while getting dressed each day. Update your school's nondiscrimination policy to offer explicit, enumerated protections for transgender and nonbinary students and to specify punitive policies for those who are disrespectful. Ensure that everyone has access to restrooms and gendered facilities that are private or gender-neutral so that all students can feel safe and comfortable.
- Write a letter to a community leader of a faith-based or religious group to which you belong and ensure they adopt gender-inclusive policies and protections. Share your thoughts and feelings about discrimination against the transgender and nonbinary communities on the basis of religion and explain why it must end. Make it relevant to the person/group receiving the letter using information and facts learned from the lesson.
- Join the campaign for the prohibition of the practice of conversion therapy. Conversion therapy includes a range of harmful and discredited practices that seek to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Write to the Department of Education and Federal Trade Commission to prohibit conversion therapy in education and business and speak out against the practice in your local community.
- Support local, national, or international organizations that support the transgender and nonbinary communities. From mental health facilities, suicide prevention, low-income housing or homeless shelters, social services, public transportation, and public safety, show support for the organizations that have done the work to become educated on trans and nonbinary issues and needs.
- Call your elected officials, write op-eds, testify at hearings, collect signatures for petitions or ballot initiatives, and vote to pass nondiscrimination laws at the local, state, and federal level for non-discrimination in public accommodations, health and social services, barriers to legal identification, housing, finance, or education. Additionally, advocate for support for transgender and nonbinary immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and speak out against unequal policing and criminal justice against the transgender and nonbinary communities.

- Understand that intersectional issues affect a large portion of the gender-expansive community; you can show your allyship by recognizing your privilege and using it to advocate for those who are experiencing greater struggles than your own. Educate yourself and speak out for Black LGBTQ people, who face increased discrimination at the intersection of white supremacy, anti-Blackness and anti-LGBTQ attitudes. Write op-eds and support specific initiatives for Black LGBTQ people who face some of the highest risks of violence, workplace discrimination, homelessness, HIV and AIDS, health care disparities, and mistreatment in the United States.
- Join a group to identify and counteract the root causes of anti-transgender violence and develop a plan to implement policy and societal changes. This working group must listen to and collaborate with Black and Brown transgender people before and during the development of solutions, and then maintain communication to determine if the solutions are working and what needs to be changed.



RFK YOUNG LEADERS DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

Through Speak Truth to Power, we provide opportunities for young people to engage with the human rights framework and see human rights activism as a way of life. When youth see themselves as human rights defenders, they actively work to create a more just and peaceful world. The RFK Human Rights Young Leaders defend human rights in a variety of fields (including finance, art, education, technology, law, and marketing) and share a commitment to effecting change in creative and meaningful ways.

MEET YOUNG LEADERS TAKING MINDFUL ACTION IN YOUR COMMUNITIES!

DANIELLA CARTER

(SHE/HER/HERS)

NEW YORK, N.Y.

I'm 100 percent a human rights defender. I started my fight for transformative justice back in 2012. I have been on the frontlines fighting [for] transgender issues, youth in foster care issues, and overall helping to start conversations about intersectionality.

At 14 years old, I made the bold decision to transition into my authentic self (which is from male presenting to female). I faced many obstacles because of this decision: I was kicked out of the home I was raised in, which resulted in homelessness and survival work. I managed to survive and persevere from that reality.

Even when experiencing hardship, I always looked to women of color who are in positions of power and reflect the journey I aspire to. I made sure to connect myself to mentors and industry leaders who could help me build a platform to move the conversation forward about what access and opportunities need to look like to help LGBTQIA+ youth thrive. I [connected with] with my mentor, Janet Mock, in

2013. I reached out to her in an email expressing my yearning to help my community and build the tools to do it. Since the cultivation of that relationship, I have [gone] on to build a number of relationships with many powerful women, from actress Laverne Cox, New York State Attorney General Tish James, top scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, CEO of GLAAD Sarah Kate Ellis, and so many other amazing powerhouse women.

With the help of these women, I have spoken at top universities all over the globe. I have helped to co-found two global foundations. I [have] given three TED Talks. I've also won an Emmy Award, and I have received a lifetime achievement award for my activism. So, what I know is that when you are determined to achieve your goal/mission to uplift a community, you must first build the network and tools. And from there, anything is achievable.

For more information: daniellasguestbook.com

DARIUS LYMORE

(THEY/THEM/THEIRS)
HOWARD UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.

As a marginalized person myself in America, being Black and queer, I have always done what I can to help others in my community. Some of [my actions] include:

- Protesting to address violence against persons of the LGBT community.
- Signing petitions.
- Donating money to help create change in our country on the local and national level.
- Urging lawmakers to label white supremacist groups as terrorist organizations.
- Working with co-workers to provide housing opportunities for homeless LGBT youth living in the Washington, D.C., metro area during the coronavirus pandemic.

In looking at my current efforts to promote positive change, I am happy to know that through my endeavors, I have helped to push for the change I want to see in this world.

DIONTRE JONES

(THEY/THEM/THEIRS)
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
BROOKLYN, N.Y.

I would like to change this year to speak up for my community, especially for Black trans [people]. They're very overlooked with everything going on in the world and there's no respect [for] my fellow sisters and brothers.

I definitely have been fighting for Black Lives Matter and Black Trans Lives Matter, showing my support by donating to different organizations and helping out small Black-owned businesses. The method I've been using is Google to help me figure out what good resources I should be looking up toward Black Trans Lives Matter, helping out with different organizations. My outcome of my activism is that I have learned so much about the Black Trans Lives Matter movement and LGBTQIA+ by standing up for my community and fighting for us.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WELCOMING SCHOOLS

<https://www.welcomingschools.org/>

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Welcoming Schools project offers professional development tools, lessons aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and many additional resources for elementary schools on embracing family diversity; avoiding gender stereotyping and affirming gender; and ending bullying and name-calling. Welcoming Schools is inclusive of the many types of diversity found in our communities, especially in regard to LGBTQ families and people.

MERMAIDS

<https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/>

Mermaids has evolved into one of the U.K.'s leading LGBTQ+ organizations, empowering thousands of people with its secure online communities, local community groups, helpline services, web resources, events, and residential weekends. They also seek to educate and inform wider society on gender identity by helping professionals accommodate and reassure gender-diverse young people.

GENDER DIVERSITY

<http://www.genderdiversity.org/>

Gender Diversity increases the awareness and understanding of the wide range of gender variations in children, adolescents, and adults by providing family support, building community, increasing societal awareness, and improving well-being for people of all gender identities and expressions.

GENDER EXPANSION PROJECT

<http://genderexpansionproject.org/>

This Midwestern program promotes gender inclusive education and awareness surrounding transgender, intersex, and gender-diverse people through evidence-based care, education, research, advocacy, public and private policy, and respect in transgender health and well-being.

GENDER SPECTRUM

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/>

Gender Spectrum provides community information and training to support gender variant children and their families. Also of note is the Gender Spectrum Family Conference, an annual conference for people raising gender nonconforming, gender variant, and transgender children and adolescents.

STAND WITH TRANS

<https://standwithtrans.org/>

Since 2015, Stand with Trans has been dedicated to developing programs, educational events, and support groups to serve transgender youth. Their mission is to provide the tools needed by transgender youth so they will be empowered, supported, and validated as they transition to their authentic lives.

TRANSYOUTH FAMILY ALLIES (TYFA)

<http://www.imatyfa.org/>

TYFA empowers children and families by partnering with educators, service providers, and communities to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected. They have well-trained advocates and provide resource assistance for families experiencing discrimination or other difficulties in schools or other environments.

TREVOR PROJECT

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13 to 24.

SAFE SCHOOLS COALITION YOUTH PAGES

<http://safeschoolscoalition.org/youth/trans-gender.html>

Safe Schools Coalition is an international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth, that is working to help schools in the U.S. and all over the world become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

<https://advocatesforyouth.org/>

Advocates for Youth champions efforts that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. The organization believes it can best serve the field by boldly advocating for a more positive and realistic approach to adolescent sexual health.

CULTIVATING RESPECT: SAFE SCHOOLS FOR ALL

<https://pflag.org/cultivating-respect-safe-schools-all>

This program is a safe schools initiative sponsored by PFLAG, a group of parents, families, and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons who celebrate diversity and envision a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

THE GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE NETWORK (GSA NETWORK)

<https://gsanetwork.org/>

GSA Network is a youth leadership organization that connects school-based gay-straight alliances (GSAs) to each other and community resources. Through peer support, leadership development, and training, GSA Network supports young people in starting, strengthening, and sustaining GSAs

GAY LESBIAN AND STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK (GLSEN)

<https://www.glsen.org/>

GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students.

They provide curriculum ideas and other links such as: No Name-Calling Week.

LEARNING FOR JUSTICE

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/>

Founded by the Southern Poverty Law Center, this organization offers suggestions for promoting respect and teaching about diversity in the classroom.