

MODERN GENDER

Gender is more than male or female. It goes beyond physical appearance. It goes beyond the genitals.

Younger generations are rejecting centuries of gender norms and existing outside of the strict definitions of gender confined to only a man and woman by embracing their unique gender identities.

Gen Z is overwhelmingly rejecting established systems and institutions including gender. This reluctance to adapt to what has long been accepted has allowed young people to welcome differences and diversity like never before.

Conservatives are trying to turn back the clock to a time when men were men and girls were girls. Gender fluidity is seen as a threat to traditional values. Increasingly heated right-wing rhetoric has led to an explosion of anti-LGBT bills being passed by red states over the past few years.

An aversion to the change and the ability to score easy political points by attacking the widely misunderstood topic in states like Florida and Texas has led to the banning of gender-affirming care for youth.

But it's not all gloom and doom. Lawmakers in 18 states are following California's lead in seeking to offer legal refuge to transgender youth and their families living in states where legislatures are targeting gender-affirming healthcare.

If the proposed bills are passed, trans youth would be protected from being removed from the custody of their parents for receiving gender-affirming care.

Here in California, Gov. Gavin Newsom has thrown his political weight behind protecting trans rights.

"Trans kids and their families should be celebrated - not targeted by the state!" Gov. Newsom said in a tweet. "They are heroes. This order is a direct assault on their wellbeing" • ANI TUTUNJYAN

Targeted by the right Transgender youth are in the crosshairs of lawmakers

By ANGELICA VENTURINA & ANGELINA GEVORGYAN
THE MIRROR STAFF

Across the country, Republicans are increasingly using anti-trans laws as a loaded weapon in the ongoing culture wars.

Across the country, Republicans are increasingly using anti-trans laws as a weapon in the ongoing culture wars.

The politicians leading the charge are Florida Governor Rick DeSantis, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott — both Republicans and both 2024 Presidential hopefuls.

In less than three months, a wave of 238 anti-LGBTQ bills have been proposed by state lawmakers across the U.S., with over half of them targeting people who identify as transgender.

These measures include criminal-

izing healthcare for trans youth and excluding transgender youth from school and sports.

In late February, Abbott ordered state employees, teachers and doctors to report parents who try to access gender-affirming treatments. This executive order was issued after Attorney General Ken Paxton released a nonbinding legal opinion that medical treatments for transgender youth, including hormone injections and puberty blockers, should be classified as child abuse. Parents who try to get that treatment for their kids are then investigated by child protective services.

Families of transgender kids living in Texas have expressed that, in protection and support of their children, they are prepared to move to other states.

Senior Jude Struble, a transgender man, sympathizes with trans youth living in Texas, having experienced the challenges of navigating his own identity.

"I remember what it was like being

so confused about everything and it actually took me a long time to fully realize that I was transgender," Struble said. "I had transgender youth and understood what it meant to be transgender, but there were so many different opinions out there, especially online, about what it means to be a transgender person. I didn't fit the exact criteria I heard online and elsewhere, so I thought that I couldn't belong to that group."

Struble experimented with different names and pronouns before he came out in fall of 2019.

"It was more of a disconnect from the 'feminine' parts of my body and an internal feeling of masculinity despite my outside appearance," he said.

He found that having access to physicians specializing in gender-affirming care was what helped him most in the process of transitioning.

"These kids have nothing, they're just gonna be alone and lost and in this terrible emotional state and anybody who's trying to help them is



ILLUSTRATION FOR THE MIRROR | JERSEY VARGAS

being punished," he said. "That's such a horrible situation to be in."

ASB President Nick Kumar, also a transgender man, feels that the attacks are out of pure ignorance.

"These bills portray extremist ideas that are completely baseless," he said. "Gender identity is developed around the age of three to five years old, and while not everyone realizes they are transgender at that time, it doesn't invalidate any child's identity. Gender-

affirming health care is not pushing kids towards the gay agenda. In reality, it saves lives."

In Florida, Republican Governor Ron DeSantis attacked the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) after transgender woman and swimmer, Lia Thomas, won against Olympian swimmer

and runner-up, Emma Weyant, in the 500-yard women's freestyle swimming championship event.

This isn't the first time DeSantis targeted transgender people. He passed Senate Bill 1028 last year, which would ban transgender student-athletes from participating in girls' and women's sports. The bill went into effect later in July and is still in effect today.

To social science teacher Mr. Robert Docter, these politicians only care

about gaining more votes.

"The goal at the end of the day for these politicians is to get votes, but sadly the tactic in doing so is by attacking and targeting minority groups — groups that instead deserve the civil rights and civil liberties that all Americans should have equal access and protection to," he said.

Although not all anti-trans bills are moving forward, they are being introduced simultaneously, one after another, with similar intentions: to impede trans youth from accessing medication and school sports.

Kumar aims to ensure that trans youth across the country who are struggling to cope, feel heard and understood.

"For all the trans youth out there, I know visibility is a privilege for us, even though it should be a normality," Kumar said. "I want you all to know that I see you and I love you. This journey can be difficult, so please be patient with yourself. You are a beautiful individual who is deserving."

By the numbers Gender identification

The number of anti-LGBT bills filed each year have skyrocketed over the past few years, with nearly 240 filed in 2022 so far. Nearly half of these bills target transgender people.

150,000+

Number of youth ages 13 to 17 in the U.S. who identify as trans youth
SOURCE: UCLA School of Law

35,000+

Number of student athletes in the U.S. who identify as trans
SOURCE: ESPN

62

Number of anti-transgender youth sports ban bills introduced in U.S. state legislatures in 2022
SOURCE: Freedom for all Americans

39

Number of anti-transgender medical care ban bills introduced in U.S. state legislatures in 2022
SOURCE: Freedom for all Americans

THE MIRROR | ANGELA PROCA

FIRST PERSON I'm nonbinary KASSANDRA SOLORZANO

Growing up, I never quite felt like a girl. But I didn't feel like a boy either.

Femininity has always been forced on me by both my family and society itself, telling me how to dress or what length to keep my hair.

And while no one likes being told how to look, it was especially hard for me because femininity just didn't fit me.

I always felt a sense of inauthenticity and self-consciousness.

I didn't feel comfortable in my own body. I came to realize it's because I'm nonbinary which means I'm neither female nor male.

Being a female or male Being nonbinary is a way for me to explore gender non-conformity and truly exist as myself.

While I can't fully express myself as I like because of my family, I do tend to wear more "masculine" clothes because I feel most comfortable in them.

There are days when I'm okay with my chest and days when I have to wear a binder to flatten it to stop my gender dysphoria. People experience gender dysphoria when they feel stressed and uncomfortable due to a desire to be another gender.

Being perceived as a woman by others when I'm not some-



UNDEFINED Being nonbinary allows Solorzano to express themselves on their own terms.

times adds to my dysphoria. One of the hardest parts about being nonbinary is the fear of rejection from loved ones. Sometimes we'd rather let

them keep the image of who they think we are in their heads rather than be true to ourselves. While I'm out at school, I'm not at home and it makes me sad to know I won't be accepted.

It feels like being confined in a box I don't belong in. Conservatives like to label gender fluidity as "trendy" but nonbinary people have existed since the beginning of time.

Egyptian Pharaoh Hatshepsut, "the King Herself," was often depicted in men's clothing and liked to be referred to as king. While no one knows what gender she would identify as today, it is clear she was gender nonconforming.

Native Americans refer to nonbinary people as two-spirits. Two-spirits are Native Americans who identify as having both a masculine and a femi-

nine spirit. They are honored in their culture for balancing and healing their communities.

We see more people identifying as nonbinary nowadays not because it's trendy but because people no longer want to define themselves as only a man or a woman when they are more complex than that. Gender roles are exhausting.

Being nonbinary is about being non-conforming. Nothing belongs to a specific gender. Nothing belongs to boys, and nothing belongs to girls. Nothing is too girly, or too manly. Nothing. Not colors, not toys, and most definitely not clothing.

Society's limits may be suffocating but don't let gender constructs stop you from expressing yourself as you see most true to you.

Get it right A guide to gender terminology

Young people are embracing their unique gender identities beyond the binary of female and male. Here are terms to learn about gender because they are becoming more common. SOURCE: UNITE UK

Nonbinary Someone who identifies outside the gender binary of female and male. Often used as an umbrella that encompasses other gender identities.

Genderfluid Someone who feels a mix of the two traditional genders of female and male but may feel more female one day and more male another.

