

Trans Rights and Documentation After the Election

By Damon Holotanko

As a transgender person, the election of Donald Trump has left myself and thousands of others feeling hopeless and fearful, as the incoming administration stands to endanger our already vulnerable community. The trans population faces enormous rates of violence, unemployment, and suicide, making any threat to the few civil rights protections gained in recent years devastating. To combat the distress felt by so many, the trans community and its allies are responding with resilience and solidarity, offering emotional, legal, and financial support in preparation for a Trump presidency.

When the results of the election were announced, my partner and I cried in our living room. I called an LGBTQ crisis hotline in a moment of despair, and was put on hold for 20 minutes due to the number of callers following the election. The counselor told me they were understaffed and struggling to support the influx of people, especially trans youth, who felt they had lost their last bit of hope. In the uphill battle for trans liberation, it felt like the mountain we were climbing had gotten that much taller.

Around me, trans loved ones wept, panicked, and retreated into their homes out of fear that transphobic violence, already so widespread, would increase. In my hometown in Florida, a trans queer couple were harassed by an emboldened Trump supporter, who nearly ran them down in his truck. My partner, who works with trans and queer students of color, struggled to support the many teenagers who were now afraid to come to school, or even go outside. While violence against the marginalized is nothing new, the rise in hate crimes following the election brought heightened terror to vulnerable communities.

To better understand the challenges facing trans people, we can look to the results of the 2015 U.S. Tran Survey (USTS), the

largest survey of trans experiences ever recorded at the national level. The results, published this past December, are disheartening: Nearly half of trans people polled have attempted suicide, which is almost nine times the rate of the general population.

Half of trans people have experienced sexual violence and verbal harassment, and one in ten have been physically attacked because of their gender identity. Financially, one-quarter of trans people have been fired or denied a job because of their identity, with one-third experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives. In such an at-risk community, any new barriers in



the struggle towards equity can be devastating.

One of the biggest sources of affirmation for trans people comes from changing one's legal name and gender marker to match their identity. According to the USTS, more than two-thirds of trans people have not had their names and identification updated. Trans people who have not updated these documents are at increased risk of violence, as they are often "outed" as trans in public spaces. Because of the emotional toll of being misgendered on a daily basis, the risk of suicide also rises dramatically. While Donald Trump has not given an official stance on trans issues, his running mate, Mike Pence, is known for supporting oppressive anti-LGBTQ measures. Trump's cabinet as a whole, as well as the Republican-controlled House and Senate, has a history of opposing civil rights.

Since the election, trans people have been scrambling to update their identification, should Trump introduce legislation to make this process more difficult. Of particular concern are passports, which fall under federal jurisdiction and would be the most likely to face changes under his administration. Using the hashtag #TransLawHelp, trans people and allies have taken to



may bring much-needed peace of mind to trans people in the wake of his presidency.

Months after the initial hopelessness, I felt following the election, I have found renewed strength in my loved ones, and even strangers, who also inhabit marginalized identities. I've reached out to trans friends who I had been neglecting, and we reaffirmed our support for each other. We check in more often now, even if it's a simple text or email. I've gotten more involved in my community, which has reminded me of the strength that exists among vulnerable groups. As trans people, we can take comfort in our resilience; we have survived so much and will continue to do so.

Moving forward, I would like to urge my fellow white people, trans and cis alike, to commit themselves to the struggle for racial justice. With all the challenges that lie ahead for the trans community, it is the multiply-marginalized, especially trans women of color, who will be most affected by anti-LGBTQ legislation in the coming years. We must support our trans siblings of color emotionally, and when possible, financially, to compensate for workplace discrimination. We must talk to other white people about racism, and get involved in local organizations that are fighting for racial equity. In doing so, we will foster a community that is resilient and unified, which no president can truly wound.

Bio: Damon Holotanko is a trans, queer writer and activist studying at Arizona State University who likes to tell trans stories (real and fictional) and advocates for mental health awareness.

Twitter to offer free legal counseling and financial assistance to those looking to update their passports. The Twitter campaign has led to the creation of a website, TransLawHelp.org, where trans people are matched with a donor to help fund their documentation changes.

For more information on changing legal names, passports, driver's licenses, immigration documents, and birth certificates, the National Center for Transgender Equality (TransEquality.org) maintains a database of each state's policies. To change one's name and gender marker in the state of Texas, an applicant must petition the court. However, these requests may be denied, as state judges are inconsistent in their handling of trans documentation issues. While it's impossible to tell whether trans documentation laws will change under Trump, taking this step

For more information on this topic or to contribute to the Go Fund Me campaign to purchase passports, please follow these links

National Center for Transgender Equality 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey <http://www.ustranssurvey.org>

Ouija Hadid's Go Fund Me Passport Fund Campaign http://bit.ly/trans_gofundme

BUENA  GENTE

Lynn Marie Watson

Lynn Marie Watson, born August 18, 1959, passed away unexpectedly on January 8 at home in San Antonio.

Together with her husband Sheldon, she built a house and had many adventures with their children, Lee and Sarah, joined by Samheet of Lee's marriage. A kind, generous spirit, she was accepting of all and caring for each. The Esperanza Center was lucky to have had Lynn's constant care throughout the fall, spring and winter of 2016. She made a great difference in preparing for events, calling

buena gente and assisting with exhibits and special projects such as the *tapete* that was designed for Dia de los muertos. She was indispensable and will be greatly missed. RIP, Lynn.



Sam Rodríguez

Sam Rodríguez, buena gente of the Esperanza, was tragically struck by a car in his beloved Westside. He

died on the 2nd day of the New Year. Sam was active with community organizations: San Anto Cultural Arts Center, the Esperanza and Inner City Development. He graduated from San Antonio Technical and Vocational School in 1961, now Fox Tech. Sam was a veteran of barrio warfare and Vietnam and had many stories to tell. He developed an addiction while serving that never let him live a full life. Nevertheless, he

was beloved by family, friends and spent his days trying to make the Westside a better place to live by simply picking up trash or being part of Esperanza's Westside programming. Rest in power, querido Sam.

