



## **Becoming Whole: A New Era for LGBTQ+ America**

### **Summary**

To be LGBTQ+ in America today is to enjoy freedoms hard-won by trailblazers who came before and to feel the urgency of an unfinished promise of full equality under the law. We are here thanks to the struggle of activists like Henry Gerber, Del Martin, and Phyllis Ann Lyon, who founded some of the first LGBTQ+ rights organizations in the country when it was still illegal for LGBTQ+ people to congregate in public or private. Fifty years ago, a resistance at the Stonewall Inn—primarily led by transgender women of color like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, and lesbian activist Stormé Delarverie—galvanized a movement. As hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ people lost their lives to the HIV epidemic, activists and organizations like ACT UP dramatically changed the visibility of the community and fostered positive changes in our health care system that have gone well beyond the treatment of this disease. And leaders like Essex Hemphill, who famously declared in *ESSENCE Magazine*, “I love myself as a black man and a homosexual,” thereby confronting racism and discrimination across the LGBTQ+ and Black communities head on. LGBTQ+ people haven’t just been present in American history—they have been drivers of it.<sup>1</sup> They have pushed our country to be what it has promised to be all along: a more perfect union.

As a result of these heroic efforts, the movement for LGBTQ+ equality has made profound strides forward. In the last decade alone, advocates successfully pushed for the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, ending a policy that forced service members to choose between the person they loved and the country they loved and helped make marriage equality the law of the land. We now have medications that make HIV manageable and can help prevent individuals from being infected. Decades ago, there was no place where someone could worship as an openly LGBTQ+ person. Today, many major religions and sects in the United States, representing millions of people, perform LGBTQ+ marriages and majorities of every major religious group support LGBTQ+-inclusive nondiscrimination laws.<sup>2,3</sup>

Twenty years ago, an awkward teenager at St. Joe High School in South Bend, Indiana, who didn’t know a single out LGBTQ+ student there, never would have imagined how far we would come as a country. But what does our country look like to a teenager in 2019, just starting to realize who they are? What future do they see for themselves?

They see an administration that has unacceptably deemed people who risk their lives for their country as unfit for service because they are transgender.<sup>4</sup> They see a government that is allowing clinicians to refuse to treat patients who are LGBTQ+.<sup>5</sup> They see a President who, when asked about LGBTQ+ rights by a

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<sup>1</sup> Bronski, Michael. “A Queer History of the United States.” Beacon Press. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Riess, Jana. “[Same-sex marriage garners support among most American religious groups, study shows](#)” Religious News Service. May 1, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Greenberg, Maxine Najle, PhD, Oyindamola Bola, Robert P. Jones, Ph.D. “[Fifty Years After Stonewall!](#)” Public Religion Research Institute. March 26, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Chung, Andrew, Jonathan Stempel. “[U.S. court lets Trump transgender military ban stand, orders new review](#).” Reuters. June 15, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Sanger-Katz, Margot. “[Trump Administration Strengthens ‘Conscience Rule’ for Health Care Workers](#).” The New York Times. May 2, 2019.

reporter, joked of his Vice President: “Don’t ask that guy—he wants to hang them all!”<sup>6,7</sup> They see more states covering gender-affirming procedures, but they also see schools refusing to allow trans students to use the bathroom of their current gender.<sup>8</sup> They see people with HIV living vibrant lives, but they also see people who cannot afford the treatment they need. They see gay nightclubs opening up across the country, but they can’t forget Pulse. They see transgender people, primarily Black transgender women, murdered at alarming rates. They see a country where they are still not fully free or safe and one in which they still don’t feel like they fully belong.

In the past week alone, four out of five LGBTQ+ youth felt down or depressed, more than two out of three reported feeling worthless, and last night, almost all had trouble sleeping.<sup>9</sup> This past year, LGBTQ+ Americans were twice as likely to suffer from mental illness as their straight peers, and almost one in two transgender people considered suicide.<sup>10</sup> Across much of our country, discrimination and the ever-present fear of it continue to govern aspects of LGBTQ+ people’s lives. Can I be who I am and keep my job? Can I hold the hand of the person I love in public? Which bathroom can I use safely? Will I be able to raise a family or not be harassed at school? Can I live here and be happy? Will I ever be accepted?

When I’m President, I hope these questions will start fading away. We will share solutions big enough to meet the challenges the LGBTQ+ community faces while bringing the American people together to understand that our freedoms are bound up in each other.

For LGBTQ+ people, like for other marginalized groups, the political has always been extremely personal. This is why our policy is inspired by LGBTQ+ people’s stories: by the war that breaks out in the heart of a young person when they realize that a basic fact about them makes them more likely to be feared, and the immense joy that comes with finally knowing with certainty that you belong. Below we share the stories of some of these brave people.

Each of us has our own story. And when I’m President, I will use the power of the presidency to tear down the walls that have excluded far too many LGBTQ+ people for far too long.

## **Major policies**

### *Equality*

- Pass the Equality Act, so that LGBTQ+ people can no longer be denied a job or housing.
- Ensure that the freedom of religion is not the freedom to discriminate.
- End the blanket ban on blood donation for gay and bisexual men and replace it with a science-based approach.
- Protect and respect the rights of intersex people’s bodily autonomy, including banning medically unnecessary genital surgeries on intersex infants and children.

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<sup>6</sup> Massie, Chris, Andrew Kaczynski. “[Trump judicial nominee said transgender children are part of ‘Satan’s plan,’ defended ‘conversion therapy.’](#)” CNN. September 20, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Mayer, Jane. “[The danger of President Pence.](#)” The New Yorker. October 16, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Balingit, Moriah. “[Education Department no longer investigating transgender bathroom complaints.](#)” The Washington Post. February 12, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Campaign. “[2018 LGBT Youth Report.](#)”

<sup>10</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness. “[LGBTQ.](#)”

### *Health*

- Guarantee that every LGBTQ+ person has access to affordable health coverage through Medicare for All Who Want It.
- End the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030, which is disproportionately affecting gay men of color and transgender women.
- Pass the LGBTQ+ Suicide Prevention Act to address key risk factors for deaths by suicide.

### *Youth and families*

- Prohibit violence, bullying, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and ensure that all students can learn in safe, supportive environments.
- End “conversion therapy” for good.
- End youth homelessness as part of a comprehensive housing agenda.
- Pass the FAMILY Act so new parents, including LGBTQ+ parents, get time off from work to take care of family, including chosen family.

### *Community*

- Launch a “We Belong National Mentorship” program modeled on My Brother’s Keeper and other successful peer-to-peer mentoring efforts, and focused on supporting LGBTQ+ youth.
- Increase funding for community-based programs that support the LGBTQ+ community.

### *Justice*

- Ensure the safety of all LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender women of color, by vigorously enforcing the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act and training law enforcement to provide respectful, appropriate and equitable treatment to all.

### *Honor*

- Honor the contributions of the LGBTQ+ veterans and service members, starting by rescinding the transgender military ban.
- Review and restore honorable discharges and appropriate benefits to veterans discharged solely based for being LGBTQ+.
- Fund and promote the ongoing documentation and celebration of LGBTQ+ arts, history, and culture.
- Increase the representation of LGBTQ+ people and history in our National Parks System.

### *Leadership*

- Become a global leader on LGBTQ+ rights, including by strengthening protections for LGBTQ+ immigrants and refugees.
- Recognize the right to refugee status and asylum in U.S. for individuals being persecuted for being LGBTQ+.
- Lead against persecution and discrimination of LGBTQ+ people on the global stage, and encourage our ambassadors to be spokespersons for LGBTQ+ rights as human rights.
- Build an Administration that reflects the diversity of America, including LGBTQ+ Americans.