

# TRANSGENDER RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

## A SHORT INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO MAKING CHANGE

### BE AN ALLY EVERY DAY

**Trans people are disproportionately victims of violence and social ostracism. They face discrimination and harassment in housing, education, health care, employment, and daily life.**

### BE A GOOD HUMAN

- ➔ **Use your privilege for good!** Stand up for us; call people on their remarks and jokes.
- ➔ Remember that transgender women are women and transgender men are men.
- ➔ Remember some people prefer to exist somewhere in between or outside of the gender binary.
- ➔ **Don't assume anything** — gender, pronoun, orientation, bathroom preference, surgical plans, legal matters, etc.
- ➔ Work in your practice to make room for all genders, in space and in language.
- ➔ Include trans people in crafting policies that affect them.
- ➔ Respect privacy and safety! Someone's trans status is not your news to tell.
- ➔ **Educate yourself.** (Google it!)
- ➔ Recognize barriers.
- ➔ See trans people as people rather than as objects or oddities. It is not a trans person's job to explain themselves to you.

**ACCEPT TRANS PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY SAY THEY ARE, including their name and pronoun, and if you don't know, respectfully ask.**



### TRANS INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE

### A TO-DO LIST

**Unions have special obligations to protect members, and solidarity includes EVERYONE!**

- Use appropriate pronouns.
- Create accessible offices and activities.
- Give someone their privacy and show them respect.
- Don't require legal name changes before you will use a person's name.
- Don't ask about sex or gender on forms.
- Don't charge an unnecessary user fee, announce people's names, or require a key or ID for access to basic services.
- Change workplace policies to make:
  - ✓ spaces more accessible,
  - ✓ signage more inclusive,
  - ✓ gender-neutral language standard,
  - ✓ gender-segregated spaces (bathrooms, change rooms) into all-gender spaces.

## OTHER INCLUSION EFFORTS THAT START WITH THE UNION

- Describe union activities without gendering them.
- Include trans women explicitly in women-activist committees and events, and elect them to positions for women's officers.
- **Don't assume any member's gender.**
- Hold trans Day of Remembrance events each year on November 20.
- Organize International Day against Homophobia & Transphobia actions each year on May 17.
- **Support legislative change to protect trans workers.**
- Pay an honorarium rather than expecting a trans person to provide free education such as workshops.
- **Hold employers accountable for including trans workers.**
- Bargain more inclusive collective agreements. (See CUPE's checklist for inclusive collective agreement language: [cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/checklist\\_bargaining\\_lgbtti\\_rights\\_en.pdf](http://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/checklist_bargaining_lgbtti_rights_en.pdf))

**SUPPORTING A MEMBER:** You are a shop steward. A member approaches you for help: "Michael" would like her boss to call her Melanie, and she would like to change in the women's change room. How would you help Melanie?

**ELECTIONS AT YOUR LOCAL:** Your union has a women's representative, and elections are happening at your next meeting. Pavan, a member who has served as treasurer for the last two years, asks you if you will nominate them for the position. You think they would do a great job, but you are not sure whether they count as a woman. What do you do?

### Some Scenarios to Think About

With thanks to Adrienne Smith and the CLC for allowing us to excerpt and adapt the above material from their presentation *Solidarity Includes Everyone*.

## IT ALL STARTS WITH THE LANGUAGE WE USE

- Ask someone what their pronouns are. (See this video by CUPE BC featuring Adrienne Smith: [cupe.bc.ca/cupe\\_bc\\_launches\\_video\\_on\\_appropriate\\_pronoun\\_use](http://cupe.bc.ca/cupe_bc_launches_video_on_appropriate_pronoun_use))
- If you misgender someone, apologize gracefully and graciously.
- Instead of saying "born a boy" or "born a girl," say "**assigned male or female at birth.**"
- Don't use offensive terms or prefixes such as "real" or "biological" when describing someone who is not trans. Although trans people may use these terms in self-reference, cisgender people should avoid this language. It's best to use the prefix "**cis**" when needed.
- **If you don't know, respectfully ask.**
- Instead of using gendered language use gender-neutral alternatives such as these:
  - ✓ Instead of the pronouns "he/him/his" and "she/her/her" use "**they/them/their**" to refer, in general, to a person in the singular. When speaking to or about a particular person, ask them what their pronouns are.
  - ✓ Instead of "brothers and sisters" or "ladies and gentleman" use "**everybody**" or "**folks**" or "**friends.**"
  - ✓ Instead of "Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms" use "**Mx**" (usually pronounced "Mix" or "Mux").
  - ✓ Instead of "Latino/Latina" use "**Latinx**" (usually pronounced "La-teen-ex").
  - ✓ Instead of "waiter/waitress" use "**server,**" and so on, when referring to job titles.

*\* English is moving away from gendered language and towards gender-neutral language, but since language is alive and always in flux, remember the above terms represent just some of the possibilities and will likely change, too.*

# MINI-GLOSSARY

## CISGENDER

Someone who is cis or cisgender identifies with the gender that they were assigned at birth. Typically, cis men are men who were assigned male at birth and feel that the words “man” and “male” accurately describe their gender. Likewise, cis women are typically women who were assigned female at birth and feel that the words “woman” and “female” accurately describe their gender. (AVP)

## TRANS/TRANSGENDER

This term has many definitions. It is frequently used as an umbrella term to refer to all people who do not identify with their assigned gender at birth or the binary gender system. Some transgender people feel they exist not within one of the two standard gender categories, but rather somewhere between, beyond, or outside of those two genders. (AVP)

## GENDERFLUID/GENDERQUEER/GENDER NON-CONFORMING/GENDER VARIANT

Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories “boy/man” and “girl/woman.” People who are gender non-conforming may or may not identify as trans. (519)

## TRANSITION

Refers to a host of activities that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming care, gender-confirming surgeries or other procedures. There is no checklist or average time for a transition process, and no universal goal or endpoint. Each person will decide what meets their needs. (519)

(For many trans people, medical or surgical transition is not accessible or desired.)

## GENDER BINARY

The most common classification system used in our society to categorize sex and gender. The model asserts a binary in that there are two distinct and opposite labels (female/male), qualifiers (vagina/penis), and behavioural expectations (e.g., caretaker/provider, emotional/rational). (AVP)

## TRANS MAN (FTM)/TRANS WOMAN (MTF)

A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies as a man may also identify as a trans man (female-to-male, or FTM). A person whose sex assigned at birth is “male” and identifies as a woman may also identify as a trans woman (male-to-female, or MTF). (519)

## LGBTQIA2S+

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, with the + referring to many more ways people choose to self-identify. (You may see variations of this acronym. Individuals and organizations may change the order within the acronym or insert different letters depending on, for example, whom they wish to foreground.)

## TWO-SPIRIT

A word for non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender Indigenous people that is used to refer to identity, roles, and responsibility. Not everyone chooses to use this word and instead chooses to use words like gay, lesbian, trans, queer, genderqueer, gender-fluid, gender creative instead, or in combination. (For more information see [twospiritmanitoba.ca](http://twospiritmanitoba.ca)). This word is not for non-Indigenous folks to use. (AVP)

## TRANS BIPOC/QTBPOC

Black and Indigenous people and other People of Colour who are trans. The acronym “QTBPOC” refers to those who are trans and/or queer.

Where noted, the definitions above, which are just some of many valid ways of interpreting these concepts, were developed by folks at the 519 Community Centre (519) in Toronto or by folks from the Anti-Violence Project (AVP), the on-campus sexual assault centre at the University of Victoria. Thanks to Rebecca Rose for pointing us to these resources. You can find more great info online at [antiviolenceproject.org](http://antiviolenceproject.org) and [the519.org](http://the519.org).