



The Fight for Gender Self-Determination

- **Fight mass surveillance.** With some of these laws mandating that school officials “out” trans and queer kids to their parents, the already troubling expansion of intrusive surveillance technologies into school programs can have especially frightening consequences for LGBTQ youth. Educate yourself and your community about privacy technology and ways to prevent software from tracking your online activity. If you’re part of a community space, offer anonymous computer access so people can check out resources and connect with others in ways they may not be able to on personal or school devices.
- **Fight transphobia.** For non-trans radicals who want to take part in this fight, educate yourselves on respectful ways to address and engage with trans and non-binary people. Interrogate your own assumptions about gender. Take other people’s experiences seriously even when they differ from your own.

TOGETHER, we can prevent the courts from ruining young people’s lives and take another step towards a world in which all are free to fulfill their potential on their own terms. Against patriarchy and state violence—for anarchy and freedom.

About CrimethInc.

CrimethInc. is a rebel alliance—a decentralized network pledged to anonymous collective action—a breakout from the prisons of our age. We strive to reinvent our lives and our world according to the principles of self-determination and mutual aid.

We believe that you should be free to dispose of your limitless potential on your own terms: that no government, market, or ideology should be able to dictate what your life can be. If you agree, let’s do something about it.

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Confronting the Assault on Trans People

OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, A WAVE of anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ legislation has swept the United States. Proposals in dozens of state legislatures have aimed to stop schoolteachers from discussing gen-der or sexuality—to prevent kids from using bathrooms or playing on sports teams as their self-determined gender—to force school officials to “out” trans kids to their parents—and to make it illegal for trans kids to get appropriate medical care.

These initiatives target a vulnerable population with no political voice that is already suffering disproportionately high rates of suicide, houselessness, and violence—all of which will be exacerbated by these laws. At the same time, the Supreme Court is in the process of facilitating an assault on reproductive freedom that will also have a disproportionate impact on trans people. Understood as a whole, these laws constitute a concerted attack on the rights to gender and sexual self-determination that LGBTQ movements have struggled to achieve for decades.

Why is this happening now? What does it mean in a global context?

And what can we do to resist?



They only gave us rights in the first place because we gave them riots.

From Trans Rights to Gender Self-Determination

TO CONFRONT THIS WAVE OF GENDER fascism, we need a transformative framework to describe what we're fighting for.

Most advocates use a rights discourse to explain their opposition to this wave of oppressive policies. We propose a different framework: gender **self-determination**. We choose this language for several reasons.

First, it's **expansive**. Self-determination goes beyond just defending ourselves against attacks or securing government guarantees. It means defining what well-being means for us and creating the conditions for it on our own terms.

Second, this framework centers **autonomy**. It doesn't require a state or any other

authority to grant or secure our "rights." Rights are a social construct; they have no power without authorities to enforce them, and there is no conclusive way to resolve differences about which rights people deserve. This is why state-sponsored "freedoms" grounded in supposedly timeless rights often erode over time. By contrast, articulating our goals in terms of self-determination focuses attention on our own desires, capabilities, and agency—and on building the collective power we need to defend them.

Third, it's **inclusive**. Whether you identify as trans, as non-binary, or some other way, everyone's lives improve when each of us is free to determine our own relationship to gender. This does not mean we should de-center the voices and experiences

- **Help create sanctuary space for young trans & queer people in need.** So many trans and queer kids end up unhoused because their homes aren't safe. Set up community networks to ensure that trans and queer kids can have safe housing in an emergency. Be aware of the legal risks, but do what needs to be done to help keep young people housed and safe.
- **Help organize against actual child abuse—and combat right-wing attempts to confuse it with gender-affirming care for young people.** Child abuse—real or imagined—has been an obsession of the right from Anita Bryant's anti-gay "Save Our Children" crusade in 1977 to the conspiracy theories of Pizzagate and Q-Anon today. Yet as those who participate in actual efforts to support survivors know all too well, the institutions where child abuse is most likely to occur include the nuclear family, churches, and sports teams—none of which conservatives have any interest in interrogating. Listen to survivors, learn bystander intervention techniques, make space for young people to speak freely about their experiences, teach active consent practices and healthy boundaries. Learn about the work of organizations like Generation Five that have linked the struggle to end child abuse with other efforts to pursue revolutionary social transformation outside of the criminal legal system.

- **Push back against the politicians.** As anarchists, we're not convinced that lobbying is meaningful or that legislation will solve our problems. But we do respect diversity of tactics. There are a lot of ways to fight oppressive laws—first and foremost by disobeying them! You can also put up flyers, posters, and stickers; protest against the politicians who promote these laws and disrupt their events; and unmask and disrupt the shady organizations like ALEC that are writing and promoting oppressive legislation.
- **Use direct action and mutual aid to provide the resources that politicians aim to deny trans and queer kids.** Help support gender-inclusive self-organized athletic options for kids who have been excluded from school leagues. Share resources on gender identity, sexuality, and other topics that are censored by schools and many parents. Create mutual aid programs that distribute clothing, makeup, toiletries, and other necessities to anyone who needs them, regardless of gender. Include binders, wigs, breast forms, materials for packing, and the like, especially in DIY and easily reproducible formats. Organize self-defense and de-escalation workshops for trans and queer young people who may need to protect themselves from bullying or abuse.

How to Resist

AS ANARCHISTS, WE DON'T LOOK TO LAWS, COURTS, AND POLITICIANS TO SOLVE THE problems they create. The legal advocates from the ACLU, Lambda Legal, and other organizations that are fighting in the courts to block the immediate harm caused by the bills deserve our appreciation. But to address the root causes of the problem—to go from petitioning for trans rights to establishing gender self-determination—we're going to need a systemic approach, not symptomatic treatment.

The problem isn't just *what* these laws tell us about gender; it's that politicians, judges, religious leaders, and other authoritarians have any say over our lives, bodies, and relationships in the first place. We need to address the immediate needs of trans and gender non-conforming young people while building the collective power to resist these attacks and build a world beyond binaries. *Here are some of the things we can do.*

- **Support young people who are organizing autonomously, especially trans and queer kids.** Provide space in your community center, collective house, or other project for young folks to meet. Many anarchists have lots of experience with horizontal organizing, group decision-making, and the like; offer skillshares, literature, facilitation skills, and whatever else they need.
- **Support deschooling.** Transphobic and homophobic restrictions on what young people can learn in school are terrible; but while we're at it, why should politicians get to decide *anything* that we learn, or how and where we have to learn it? Support deschooling, unschooling, homeschooling, and other alternatives to the educational status quo. Projects like the Albany Free School challenge the state's stranglehold over young people's lives and minds; they often provide much more affirming environments for trans and queer kids, too.
- **Support student walkouts.** As *It's Going Down* has reported, K-12 students have organized walkouts and protests against these repressive measures from Iowa and Missouri to Montana. Amplify their efforts; connect them with other rebels walking out of other workplaces. As we've argued, student walkouts can gain power exponentially when they intersect with other social struggles

of trans people in this struggle—on the contrary, trans people are especially well-positioned to know all about the forms of patriarchal violence and repression that are rampant in this society. But this struggle concerns everyone's freedom, not just the freedom of a “minority.” Rather than seeing themselves as “allies” in someone else's fight, those who do not identify as trans should nonetheless understand that their own liberation is at stake here, too. Just as the assault on abortion rights will not stop in Texas and Mississippi, anything that the bigots can get away with doing to trans people they will do to other LGBTQ people next—and then it will turn out that some heterosexual people aren't heterosexual enough for them, either.

Finally, this approach is **resonant**. This framework articulates our aspirations in the terms used by many other oppressed communities and radical movements. Understanding ourselves as rooted in

a story much bigger than ourselves will help us to draw inspiration and knowledge from other struggles across the globe and throughout history.

By shifting the discussion from the *limits* of rights to the *horizon* of self-determination, we propose a radically different world, in which no authorities—neither governments, religions, nuclear families, nor anything else—can confine us within their narrow visions of who we should be and who we can become. This is critically important in a moment in which **reproductive self-determination** is under attack, too, with a wave of anti-abortion laws surging into effect and the Supreme Court about to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

“Choice” and “rights” are not enough. It's *freedom* that we need, and it is eminently clear that we can't look to those who were supposed to protect our *choices* and *rights* for that.

Transphobia and Gender Fascism

THE MEASURES THAT LEGISLATORS AND other bigots are taking to repress trans people across the United States today reflect hatred of a marginalized and scapegoated group—but they go beyond that. In tandem with the wave of new laws restricting reproductive autonomy, they represent an effort to extend gender-specific state control over every aspect of

our bodies, our sexuality, and our daily lives—what we could call gender fascism.

Alabama illustrates what *gender fascism* looks like. One recently passed law makes it a felony punishable by up to ten years in prison to provide gender-affirming care to young people in need. Previously, the Arkansas legislature

had introduced the only other gender-affirming care ban last year, but it was immediately blocked in court. Alabama SB 184 also forces educators who learn of a student's identity to "out" the student to their parents. Another law, HB 322, bans K-12 students from using bathrooms and school facilities consistent with their gender identity. That law also bans discussions about sexual orientation and gender identity in classrooms for grades K-5.

Bills like these have passed or are pending in dozens of states, ranging from Florida's notorious "Don't Say Gay" bill that debuted the now popular Republican strategy of calling LGBTQ advocates "groomers," to Arizona's spate of laws banning trans youth sports participation, gender confirming surgeries for minors, and abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy—all of which were signed in a single day.

As she signed these bills into law, the governor of Alabama declared, "I believe very strongly that if the Good

Lord made you a boy, you are a boy, and if he made you a girl, you are a girl."

The state's highest elected official denies the very *existence* of trans people. This rhetoric is not just regressive in 2022. It would have been regressive in the 1950s. Trans people have been seeking and receiving gender-affirming medical interventions in the US for over a century now, including young people. According to Jules Gill-Peterson in *Histories of the Transgender Child*, young trans girls were documented living as their self-determined gender in public schools—including bathroom accommodations—without incident in the rural United States as early as the 1930s.

Yet in Alabama today, it is the Republican governor—with her ventriloquist's dummy, "the Good Lord," to legitimize whatever she says—who gets to decide what your gender is. And if you feel differently, you could end up in jail—along with your doctor and your parents and your teachers, should they decide to support you.

It is no exaggeration to call this *gender fascism*.

A White Supremacist Agenda

ALTHOUGH NONE OF THESE LAWS SAY anything explicit about race, don't be fooled. All of these attacks on trans people are linked to white supremacist currents in the halls of power in our society.

This assault is the latest incarnation of a discourse about "protecting children" that has a long and racist history, with roots in the Jim Crow era.

From Dr. Marie Equi, the radical doctor, IWW orator, and feminist, to Eve Adams, who sold anarchist publications and operated a lesbian speakeasy in Greenwich Village, same-sex-loving women comprised a vital part of the early twentieth-century anarchist movement. Gay anarchist poets pushed the edges of cultural and political resistance—from Robert Duncan, leading light of the San Francisco Renaissance, to Charley Shively, founder of *Fag Rag* and gay liberationist par excellence. The leading anarchist intellectual in the mid-20th century US, the bisexual Paul Goodman, wrote extensively on sexual liberation in anarchist periodicals and more mainstream writings, presenting a radical voice in the pre-Stonewall gay and lesbian movement. Twenty-first century queer anarchists from Queerupt to Bash Back! are part of a legacy extending over a century of fierce anti-authoritarian resistance to sexual and gender norms.

At the turn of the century, many anarchist circles offered little trans or queer visibility. Only in big cities and at mass mobilizations where "pink blocs" or other radical queer formations assembled did trans and queer anarchists find ourselves with something like a critical mass. The landscape has changed dramatically over the interceding decades. A great proportion of those drawn to anarchist ideas today are trans and queer; materials that address gender and sexuality are in high demand. Many young trans and queer people are seeking out anarchist ideas as a pathway to gender and sexual liberation and many young anarchists are challenging gender and sexual norms.

This makes it crucial for anarchist movements to confront this wave of anti-trans oppression. It's an opportunity to support a targeted population, to connect gender and sexual liberation with other struggles, and to mobilize around an issue that speaks to the priorities and needs of young radicals.



Anarchists and Trans/Queer Liberation throughout History

ANARCHISTS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR sexual and gender freedom for well over a century, starting long before leftists or liberals. That gives us an additional interest in this fight and a longer heritage of resistance to draw upon.

Anarchists were the first activists in the US to discuss homosexuality in a political context, speaking up in defense of Oscar Wilde after his conviction for “gross indecency” and insisting on humane and rational approaches to human sexual diversity. In 1916 and 1917,

Emma Goldman delivered sympathetic lectures on homosexuality to audiences across the country, changing the lives of hundreds of people we now might call queer who had never heard their experiences and desires publicly discussed with compassion. One of them, Dr. Alan Hart, was so inspired by Goldman’s anarchist and pro-queer ideas that he took a previously unprecedented step, securing what was likely the first gender-confirming surgery to take place in the US and living the rest of his life as a man.



Dr. Alan Hart.



These attacks are another facet of the campaign to shut down discussions about race and racism in the United States. These laws are appearing alongside (in some cases, in the same bill as) laws banning teachers from speaking about “critical race theory” in state schools. One of the key architects of the anti-LGBTQ bills, Christopher Rufo, rose to prominence consulting with President Trump about legislation prohibiting discussion of racial inequality. While most of these politicians obviously have no idea what exactly it is they’re banning in going after what they call “critical race theory,” these laws are part of a broader backlash against the Black Lives Matter movement, the 1619 Project, and other efforts to acknowledge and challenge the structural white supremacy in American institutions.

The governor of Tennessee justified a law against speaking out on the racist roots of the United States by claiming,

“Critical race theory is un-American. It fundamentally puts groups of people above the sanctity of the individual which is a founding principle of this nation.” This sets out a logic to justify targeting groups that stand in the way of constructing “the individual” in a way that preserves capitalism, white supremacy, and patriarchy.

The bigots behind this legislation see the preservation of white supremacy and the assault on trans people as interlinked fronts in their culture war. As Christopher Rufo recently put it, “The reservoir of sentiment on the sexuality issue is deeper and more explosive than the sentiment on the race issues.” These demagogues see both racism and transphobia as fuel to drive their quest for power. For them, hatred is a propellant that will help them push social conditions in this country back a hundred years or more.

Ageism and Youth Oppression

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE THAT THESE LAWS primarily target youth. Young people have been leading the charge towards more expansive and self-determined ways of understanding gender. Just as conservative parents have sought to prevent their children from getting COVID-19 vaccines, anti-trans laws have nothing to do with safety and everything to do with control.

Perversely, Alabama's trans-bashing law SB 184 was titled "The Vulnerable Child Protection Act," even as it criminalizes medical care that can save lives. Alabama Governor Kay Ivey declared as she

signed it, "We should especially protect our children from these radical, life-altering drugs and surgeries when they are at such a vulnerable stage in life. Instead, let us all focus on helping them to properly develop into the adults God intended them to be."

On the contrary, nothing is more dangerous to young people than repressive essentialist frameworks aimed at forcing them into roles that do not fit their needs. Legislation and state violence would not be necessary to impose these norms on young people if the norms were really "natural."

The Global Context

THE LEGISLATION IN THE UNITED States is just the local manifestation of a global wave of reactionary violence and state repression. Struggles for LGBTQ liberation are not just marginal "identity politics"—they confront narratives and operations that are central to the strategies of authoritarian power in the twenty-first century. Witness Vladimir Putin's efforts to legitimize the invasion of Ukraine by connecting it with an explicitly homophobic "defense of values."

Anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans laws are proliferating across the world. The policies of governments in Africa and the Middle East have received the most press, thanks to the racism and Orientalism of US and European commentators. But Hungary recently passed an anti-trans law and prohibited adoption by same-sex couples, while in Poland, the lower house of parliament passed a sweeping anti-LGBT "propaganda" law and several municipalities have declared

themselves "LGBT-free zones." Though Western European governments usually position themselves as staunch defenders of LGBTQ rights, France and Italy are strongholds of the so-called "anti-gender movement," a front in the global backlash against trans inclusion.

These anti-LGBTQ campaigns do not always align along a traditional left/right axis. In Brazil, Poland, and Russia, the laws have emerged from right-wing authoritarian regimes; politicians there link them with law-and-order policies, nationalism, and conservative policies generally. Yet in other contexts—notoriously Israel, but also parts of Western Europe—politicians articulate their *defense* of LGBTQ rights alongside anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, militarist, and nationalist policies, in what activists describe as pinkwashing

and homonationalism. Donald Trump has notoriously utilized both of these approaches: he responded to the Pulse massacre with opportunistic claims that he would support the LGBTQ community by targeting Muslims and immigrants, but also pandered to his conservative base by taking steps to re-exclude trans people from the military.

In short, while anti-LGBTQ initiatives are always reactionary, not all initiatives that purport to defend LGBTQ people promote liberation. Supporting gender self-determination and queer liberation requires an intersectional approach aimed at *total liberation*. We must understand these struggles not just as a means to improve conditions for a particular group, but as a vital front on a linked struggle for freedom against all systems of oppression.



"The family is the foundation of society." A poster in Vichy France during the administration of Philippe Pétain, the ally of Hitler's Nazi Germany.