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Foundations of Social Justice:
Diversity, Power, and Oppression
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The Social Impacts of Discrimination on Transgenders

The word “transgender” or “trans” describes individuals who identify themselves as a certain gender opposite or contrary to the assigned sex given at birth (for example a transman is born female but identifies himself as a man). Making this choice has become difficult for transgenders as it has brought issues of being properly defined by the identity they feel. Though conversations surrounding transgenderism seems to be more apparent today, activism for transgender rights have existed since the mid 1980’s on both the social and political level (Hill, 2007). Today, much of the impacts of said activism and protests have influenced many states to consider and pass nondiscriminatory laws protecting transgenders civil rights including their freedom of expression and identity. The movement of the LGBTQIA has impacted greatly impacted and reconstructed how it is that we define concepts like sex, a biological construct defined by the physical anatomy and determined by genetics and exposure to hormones, and gender, a social construct where sets of traits are linked to form gender on the basis of masculinity and femininity (Darity, 2008).

Such success include the assistance and support of the World Professional Associate for Transgender Health (WPATH) to access specific care to meet their transformation goals that reflex their gender expression including hormone replacement treatment (HRT), gender confirmation surgeries, genital tucking, etc. (Adams 2020). Much of these changes, however, are not openly received by the general population as many transgender people continue to face contentions and social justice issues. Such evidence is true especially for people of color. In a

2015 survey study by the National Center for Transgender Equality, people of color were three times as likely as the U.S. population to experience poverty. (James, Herman 2016).

The transgendered population is impacted by an array of social justice issues including healthcare, equality, education, law reform, and hate crimes. Within the healthcare system, transgender peoples face issues of proper identification by healthcare professionals as well as decreased quality of care from providers who do not have full knowledge of their health concerns (Manzer 2018). Medical providers may discriminate against transgender people using religious exemptions that allow them to decline providing them with services with no retribution for their beliefs (James 2020). Transgendered people also will face discrimination in securing health insurance coverage for their care and treatment. With this transgenders will likely face economic hardships and attempts to cover the cost for their treatments (Adams 2020). Outside of the healthcare system, transgenders will face great difficulties in regards to violence that includes domestic violence, hate crimes, and maltreatment and abuse from law enforcement. The rate of hate crimes committed against transgenders have steadily increased over the last few years. Crimes against transgender was formally added to the FBI database for hate crimes in 2013 (Adams 2020). Despite records of crimes listed, hate crimes against transgenders also goes underreported due to stigma, misgendering of victims, fear of police, and lack of trust in law enforcement for victims (Bukhari 2016) with such levels of distress and oppression, it is no surprise that many transgender people face mental health issues including anxiety disorders PTSD, bipolar, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and autism (James 2020). In the National Center for transgender equality study, at least 39% of participants have faced psychological distress and 40% have attempted suicide in their lifetime. Much of the psychological issues faced are due to the impact of attitudes transgenders are faced by the general population that do not seek to

understand their position. Lack of legal provision for transgender-rights continues to fuel violence and discrimination with no retribution or punishment given in certain parts of the United States and the world (Bukhari 2016). Transgenders have most recently faced the impact of their inability to serve within the military as recent as 2016. The infringement was banned, however, in June 2016 by Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter. Transgender youth may face discrimination with the school system that may foster attitudes of transphobia through sporting discrimination, bathroom policy that lead to bullying and misinformation regarding transgenderism (Khan 2017). In certain education spaces, students are only allowed to participate in sporting events as reflections of their sex given at birth. Similarly, trans teens will also deal with school board and parenting groups that are opposed to their using sex-centered bathrooms to which some schools now create bathrooms for transgendered teens (Khan 2017). Housing and identification are also presented as an issue for transgenders and it's survey study, the national Center for transgender equality reports that 30% of its respondents have experienced homelessness in their lives (James, Herman 2016). Transgender peoples often run into problems requiring identification that reflect their gender identity to which the National Center for transgender equality reports that 68% of its participants reported that none of their IDs had their preferred name or gender listed.

An experience that I have come in to knowledge concerning transgender peoples are from stories that I have heard from my sister who is a case manager. My sister works with a variety of people with serious mental illness, medical disparities, races and sexual orientation. My sister has often shared her difficulties in being able to assist one of her clients who is a bipolar transman in connecting him to housing. This client had been homeless for more than 5 years after being ostracized by his own family. Despite his being a transman, the client was

forced to attend a women's shelter since his state ID identified him as a female. These moments proved difficult for her client as he was often at odds with the other women in the shelter system while also taking hormone shots. Her client also had a history of suicide attempts and suicidal ideation which was effected most by his lack of social support. Her client faced many instances of oppression while in the womans shelter as well as in public by others who often mocked or ostracized him when it was known that he was transgender. Finding housing also proved difficult as her client had to go through the process of receiving public assistance and social security to provide funding for him before he could find any affordable housing. Though her client is finally living in an apartment of his own, it is sad to say that it took more than 5 years to get him there. Some of the biggest impacts that have assisted her client is his connection to mental health services to ensure that he is connected to individuals that could support him mentally and emotionally as well as care management agencies like my sisters to assist in any services he needed.

With all that transgender people face on an everyday basis, it is disappointing to see that those even within the Christian church have turned their backs on this population. Several scriptures can be seen within the Bible that highlight the necessity for us to see community with all those who need to be embraced by the love of God. those such as:

Ephesians 2:4-5

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Romans 3:38

“nothing can separate us from the love of God,”

and **Acts 10: 28**

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

which show us that all of us deal with the impact of sin and that any disparities made do not reflect the heart of Christ that is meant to be shared as the Gospel is spread. The Bible also highlights one of the first individuals baptised by the apostles as an Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27 showing that there is no discrimination to those who seek to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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