

the **PROM**

Book & Lyrics by CHAD BEGUELIN

Book by BOB MARTIN

Music by MATTHEW SKLAR

Based on an original concept by JACK VIERTEL

A Dramaturgical Casebook

Director: Robert Mintz

Dramaturg: Liv Fassanella

PLAYHOUSE

ON PARK



Constance McMillen

from womenofachievement.org

Constance McMillen was just a girl who wanted to have fun, like any other high school senior looking forward to senior prom in the spring of 2010. But when she was told by her vice principal, principal, superintendent and school board attorney she would not be allowed to attend her prom – because she wanted to bring her girlfriend – everything changed.

Constance McMillen reported her school to the American Civil Liberties Union which informed the Itawamba County school district that the rule was illegal. Change it by March 10, said the ACLU, or we'll sue. The school's systems response was to cancel the prom on March 10 and issue a press release that generated national and international news attention. Constance's life hasn't been the

same since and that's putting it mildly. "They cancelled prom and I was on CNN the next day!" she says.

The ACLU immediately filed suit. Constance received text and Facebook messages saying she had ruined prom for everyone and that she didn't deserve to go to that school. Her best friend, who had been like a sister to her, stopped talking to her on March 10 and they have not spoken since.

In court a few days before the April 2 prom date, school officials testified there would be a prom privately hosted by parents and that Constance and her girlfriend could go. But when she went to get a ticket, she found it had also been cancelled. Eventually it seems that officials and parents decided to have two proms — most students attended one held in another community and Constance was able to get tickets to one where only six students showed up.

Constance let her lawyers know. She had originally filed for only a dollar in damages but after the fake prom, the publicity – and the duplicity – she was harassed and had to move in with a family in Jackson, Mississippi, five hours away, to finish high school.

A federal judge ruled that Itawamba Agricultural High School in Fulton, MS, violated Constance's First Amendment rights. She filed for damages and settled out of court for \$35,000 with a promise from the school system to change their sexual orientation and gender identity policy.

"It wasn't about the money," Constance says, "as long as they changed their anti-discrimination policies. Still, they were trying not to change it, but we got onto 'em and told 'em if they didn't, we would file for contempt of court, so eventually they changed it."



Constance, who lives with her paternal grandmother in Fulton, got connected to the ACLU and gay activists through her mother, a lesbian who lives near Biloxi. "She just tries to live and do what she's got to do, but she didn't think it was right," Constance said.

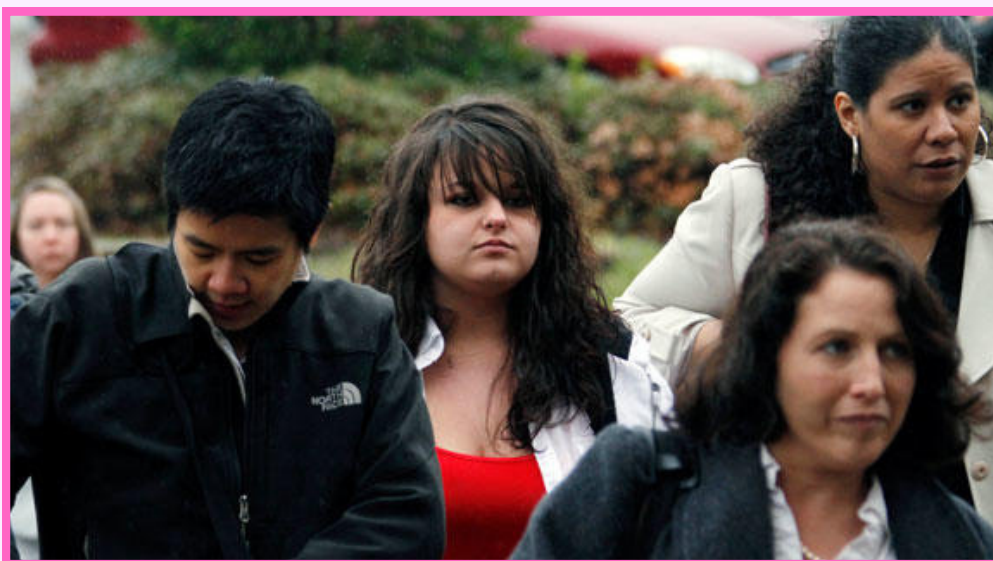
Constance is majoring in psychology at Northeast Mississippi Community College.

Invitations to speak on panels and at rallies come from all over. Constance has been interviewed by Ellen DeGeneres who also gave her a \$30,000 college scholarship. She has been honored as a Woman of the Year for 2010 by Glamour magazine. She has led gay pride parades in New York City and California, has met President Obama at a White House reception and lobbied Congress.

People are asking her to tell her story and why she chose to be out front. The ACLU reported fewer calls this year from students needing support around prom season – and that several kids called to say that their school officials had heard of "that girl in Mississippi" – and so they said, "sure, you can take your girlfriend."

What's the best thing to come from all this? "That it changed things for people," Constance says, "first at my school and then over the country. It was already illegal, really, but since this was in federal court, now it's in black and white that no school can do what they did to me. It is illegal to stop someone from going to prom based on their sexual orientation."

Constance took an enormously heroic step for a young woman who was raised hearing that gay people can't go to heaven. She has become a spokesperson for gay rights and hopes her studies lead to a career as a psychoanalyst so she can scientifically study the hostile effects on overall health on individuals forced into the closet.



Constance McMillen, center, walks to the federal courthouse in Aberdeen, Mississippi (Associated Press)

Prom's Big Queer Takeover: How LGBTQ Youth Took Over Prom, One Dance at a Time

by Heather Dockray

Al Belmont just knew it in his gut: he was going to become prom king.

Belmont is 17 and a student at North Central High School in Indianapolis, Indiana. He's also transgender, a part of his identity he would have likely had to hide or "correct" if he had wanted to attend prom at pretty much any other point in history besides this one.

As Indiana's first transgender prom king, Belmont hadn't even seen a trans person be nominated at his school. This year, he joined a growing list of LGBTQ youth who've not only attended prom, but captured prom nominations and won.

Millennials are the most queer and trans-friendly generation in history, and that energy appears to have trickled down to one of the institutions most hostile to it: the prom. Still, advocates stress, President Trump has helped cause a spike in bullying against a population already vulnerable to it. The demand for separate LGBTQ proms and more inclusive school ones has grown both because of increased visibility and aggravated harassment.

"The President made it his business to rescind a directive that supported trans youth . . . that emboldens [bullies] to act," Jabari Lyles, Director of GLSEN-Baltimore, told Mashable, referring to Trump rescinding Obama-era protections (opens in a new tab) for trans students to use the corresponding bathroom to their gender identity. There are more queer and trans-friendly proms than ever before, precisely because it started at, um, zero.

Prom's Long History of Being the Worst

In 2017, prom remains a rite of passage for pretty much everyone, regardless of how goth we see ourselves. It's the tradition that marks young people's passage into adult relationships and sexuality -- and is therefore, by design, alienating to people who don't follow the conventional gender journey.

Prom began in the late nineteenth century as a formal co-ed banquet for graduating classes at elite universities. By the 1920s, the tradition trickled down to the American high schools in the form of a "democratic debutante ball." The ball excluded students of color because of Jim Crow, as well as queer and trans youth by default, who were decades away from emerging as a definable demographic.



Students dancing at the Mariemont High School prom in 1958

FRANCIS MILLER/THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

The tradition became mainstream by the end of the super blah 1950s, and it wasn't until 1979 that the first openly gay couple came to prom in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Classmates threatened the couple with tar and feathering, in typical 1779 fashion.

The first "gay prom" happened almost 20 years later in Los Angeles, California. Teens from 30 high schools all gathered to "Live to Tell" organized at Los Angeles Hilton and Towers Hotel, while terrible humans picketed outside with "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!" signs.

It wasn't until 2010 that America appointed its first openly transgender prom queen, Corey Rae of New Jersey.

Over the past seven years, more and more trans students have been nominated to be prom queens and kings, but the numbers trickle in slowly. Indiana just had their first this year. Maryland, one of the most progressive states in the nation, elected their first transgender prom queen in 2014.

That's a huge improvement from when we were in tar and feathering times -- and a sign that high schools still have so far to go.

The law is supposed to protect LGBTQ youth at prom. It doesn't.

In 1980, *Fricke v. Lynch* prohibited public high schools from discriminating against students who want to bring other students of the same sex to prom. Other cases have since ruled that schools cannot mandate restrictive sex-specific dress codes, like tuxedos for boys and dresses for girls.

Of course, the law can only go so far, especially when your attorney general is Jeff Sessions. Transgender students might be able to attend the prom wearing the outfit of their choice, but that doesn't mean they can use the bathroom of their choice while at the prom.

And the law has limited reach. *Fricke v. Lynch* currently only applies to public schools. Private, religious schools don't have to follow all the same guidelines that public schools do, including sex-based Title IX requirements. At St. Petersburg Catholic High School in April, 17-year-old Paula Goodgame was told she couldn't bring her girlfriend to prom. After reaching out to her guidance counselor, she received this answer in response:

Hi Paula,

Students are not allowed to bring people of the same sexes their date. However, if you could have one of your male friends ask her as his date that would probably work. If you have any other questions about what is allowed, let me know :)

LGBTQ youth advocates stress that the obstacles youth face are often more social and psychological than they are legal. Educators just don't have the knowledge (or sometimes, the desire) to work with LGBTQ youth, particularly trans and gender expansive youth.

"A couple of years ago, there was a big mystery about how we can support youth who identify as gay and lesbian," Lyles said. "Now the number one request is: how we support transgender and gender nonconforming youth . . . There is so much education to be done. Being trans and gender nonconforming is not new. What is new is the language and our ability to talk about it."

The law often doesn't trickle down to practice. According to the National School Climate Survey([opens in a new tab](#)), 26.5 percent of students reported that their schools prevented students from attending a school dance with someone of the same gender. Add 71.5 percent of LGBTQ students now avoid dances like prom often or frequently.

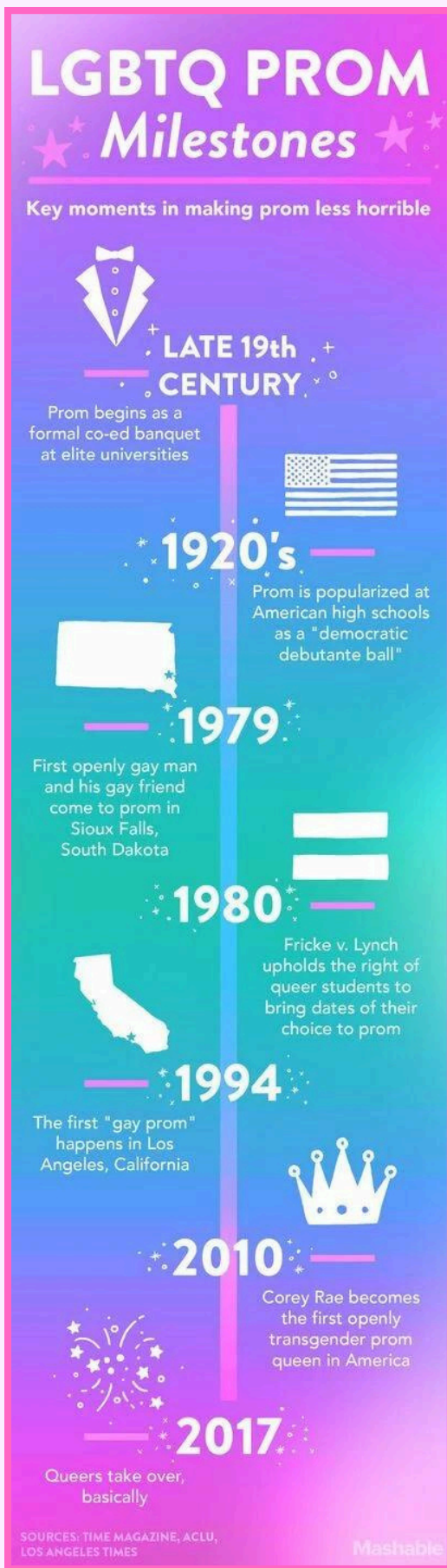
53.8 percent of students said that their proms still had sex normative categories like king and queen -- a title out of reach for gender expansive youth.

For Belmont, that data mirrors his own story. While his school has a "huge community" of queer kids, he "didn't even know what the word trans meant" until his sophomore year in high school.

Belmont was always legally able to go to his prom. Anxiety about the prom itself -- wearing non-gender normative clothes, or bringing a same-sex date -- is what prohibits many other youth from going, especially when nonconforming behavior can result in punishment.

"My high school was queer friendly but they still had bias -- just not openly. When, I was dancing with my girlfriend at prom we got too 'touchy' and were told it was inappropriate, even though other [straight couples] were grinding with each other," Carleigh Sherman, who serves on the Spectrum Alliance at Troy University, told Mashable.

For so many of these students, case law is intangible. It's the people around them -- the teachers and parents who set the tone and shape school culture -- who really make a difference.



When schools fail, people step up

Even though LGBTQ youth still struggle at prom, that doesn't mean we haven't seen improvement. National reporters have largely stopped covering same-sex couples who attend prom because there are now so many of them. There are now dozens of proms held every year outside of traditional school districts for kids who feel uncomfortable going to their own prom.

At Troy University in Alabama, members of the Spectrum Alliance now hold a "Second Chance" prom for kids who weren't able to attend their own because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

"Particularly in Alabama, we've had so many students who weren't able to take their partners to prom," Julian Erroll, a member of The Spectrum Alliance, told Mashable. "Or they just didn't have a very good prom experience independent of being queer! We wanted to give them a chance at the high school prom experience everyone wants."

Lyles, who holds a city-wide prom in Baltimore, reports that he's seen a spike in attendance in recent years:

"130 people showed up in the first year. 400 youth registered a show up this year," Lyles said.

Traverse City, a district in red northern Michigan, is having their first queer prom this year. Even BuzzFeed is throwing their own queer prom this year.

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Lyles, who holds a city-wide prom in Baltimore, reports that he's seen a spike in attendance in recent years: "130 people showed up in the first year. 400 youth registered a show up this year," Lyles said. Traverse City, a district in red northern Michigan, is having their first queer prom this year. Even BuzzFeed is throwing their own queer prom this year. More LGBTQ kids appear to be coming out and showing up to prom than ever before. And as much as we want to relentlessly mock the tradition, it still plays a critical symbolic role in American culture. The institution built, by unconscious design, to exclude LGBTQ youth is now being transformed by them. Prom may never not be embarrassing, but it can get better. The last few years are proof.



Students at the Second Chance prom at Troy University in Alabama
ZENITH SHRESTHA

STONEWALL AT 50. ACLU AT 100.

A LEGACY OF FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY.

from aclu.org

The ACLU's first LGBTQ rights case was 33 years before trans women of color led the riot against police brutality and anti-LGBTQ harassment at Stonewall.

We look back at some of the pivotal moments in the ACLU's work to advance equality and justice for LGBTQ people and the work that remains today.

1936

Defense of The Children's Hour against censorship for lesbian content

Lillian Hellman's stage play *The Children's Hour* was nearly banned in Boston because of 'lesbian content.' The ACLU's challenge of the attempt to ban the play sparked public conversations about LGBTQ people in public life and led to future victories.

1956

Defense of San Francisco Bay Area gay bar Hazel's Inn raided by police

A decade before Stonewall, 87 people were arrested for being "lewd and dissolute" at a bar in Pacifica. Local council of the ACLU appeared on behalf of some of the people in court.

1965

First court win in an LGBTQ employment discrimination case

The ACLU filed *Scott v. Macy* on behalf of Bruce Scott, a federal worker who was forced to resign under the suspicion that he was gay. In 1965, a federal appeals court ruled in his favor.

ACLU successfully challenges police raid on San Francisco LGBTQ event

The San Francisco Police Department tried to shut down a New Year's Eve 1964 fundraiser dance for the newly-formed Council on Religion and the Homosexual, one of the nation's first faith-based LGBTQ rights groups. Police attempted to scare patrons away with floodlights and cameras and multiple "fire inspections" and

when event organizers asked to be shown a warrant police responded by arresting them. The ACLU defended the organizers at a trial, where the jury took only 10 minutes to return a unanimous verdict of not guilty. The raid, the surrounding publicity, and the subsequent trial led to unprecedented changes: the appointment of a special liaison between the police department and the gay community and the formation of an LGBTQ community hotline to report police abuse.



Demonstrators carry signs calling for protection of LGBTQ people from discrimination (Associated Press)

1967

ACLU opposed Los Angeles ordinance targeting transgender people and LGBTQ clubs

In the early fall of 1967, the Los Angeles police cracked down on the performances of Sir Lady Java, a Black trans woman from Louisiana, at the Redd Foxx Club. Invoking Rule No. 9, which made it illegal for performers to “impersonat[e] by means of costume or dress a person of the opposite sex,” the police threatened to arrest the owner of Redd Foxx if Sir Lady Java ever again got up on the club’s stage. The ACLU threatened to sue over the rule but the club owner was unwilling to be a plaintiff. Sir Lady Java continued to publicly protest the rule and ultimately another lawsuit declared the rule unconstitutional.

1970

ACLU files the first ever legal challenge to the military ban on gay servicemembers

While “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” wouldn’t be repealed for another four decades, the ACLU first challenged a ban on gay service members on behalf of Richard Schlegel in *Schlegel v. U.S.*

First challenge to law restricting marriage for same-sex couples

A same-sex couple in Minnesota, Richard Baker and James Michael McConnell, applied for a marriage license and were denied by county officials. Their challenge, *Baker v. Nelson*, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court but was dismissed “for want of a substantial federal question.”

1986

Launch of National ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project and AIDS Project

Leaders of the modern LGBTQ rights movement, including philanthropist and first openly-gay U.S. ambassador James C. Hormel, formed what has become the LGBTQ & HIV Project. One week later the Supreme Court upheld Georgia’s sodomy law criminalizing consensual sex. The loss in *Bowers v. Hardwick* did not stop founding director Nan Hunter from fighting in the courts and in communities for LGBTQ people and those living with HIV.

1989

Supreme Court recognizes trans women in prisons should be protected from sexual assault

On August 21, 1989, Dee Farmer, a Black trans woman, sued prison officials after being raped in a maximum security men’s federal prison. On June 6, 1994, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Farmer v. Brennan* that Dee Farmer’s case against the prison could move forward. Tens of thousands of subsequent court decisions have cited Dee’s case and the legal standard it established.

1996

Supreme Court delivers victory for civil rights laws protecting LGB people

The ACLU, along with Lambda Legal, blocked a Colorado constitutional amendment that would have stripped lesbian, gay and bisexual people of civil rights protections. The decision in *Romer v. Evans* is the first victory for LGB nondiscrimination protections at the Supreme Court.

1997

Supreme Court strikes down law restricting LGBTQ materials on the Internet

The rise of digital speech created new opportunities for government censorship. In *ACLU v. Reno*, the Supreme Court struck down a law that could have prevented LGBTQ people from being represented on the Internet.

2009

Federal court rules that discriminating against someone for being trans is sex discrimination

Diane Schroer was a retired Army Colonel who was denied a position with the Library of Congress after her future supervisor learned she is transgender. The victory in *Schroer v. Library of Congress* has meant that trans people are protected from discrimination in the workplace under federal law.

2010

Mississippi judge says schools must allow same-sex couples to attend prom

Constance McMillen and her girlfriend wanted to attend prom together and wear tuxedos. After the ACLU sent a letter to the school, the district canceled prom and created an alternative event for every student but Constance. Ultimately, the school district settled the lawsuit, *McMillen v. Itawamba County School District*, and changed their policies.

A Florida court overturns that state's anti-gay adoption ban

After 33 years and four court challenges, a court ruled (*In re: Gill*) that Florida's ban on adoption by gay people was unconstitutional, allowing our client Martin Gill to adopt the foster children he had been raising for years.

2013

Supreme Court strikes down the so-called "Defense of Marriage Act"

Edie Windsor and Thea Spyer shared their lives together as a couple in New York City for 44 years. On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court ruled in *U.S. v. Windsor* that it was unconstitutional for the federal government, under section three of the so-called "Defense of Marriage Act," to treat married same-sex couples as though they were unmarried for purposes of over 1,100 federal programs and protections.

2014

Gavin Grimm challenges Gloucester County School Board anti-trans policy

Gavin's lawsuit against the Gloucester County School Board for adopting an anti-trans bathroom policy helped spark a national conversation about trans people in public life. Now graduated, Gavin still waits for a decision in his case, and for his school to treat him as the man he is.

2015

Supreme Court makes freedom to marry the law of the land

Jim Obergefell spent 22 years of his life with John Arthur. When John died, Jim was handed a death certificate with no surviving spouse listed. His fight to have his marriage recognized struck down state bans on marriage equality across the country when the Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

2016

Federal challenge to North Carolina's anti-trans "bathroom bill" HB2 filed

The ACLU's fight, along with Lambda Legal, against anti-trans bathroom policies continues in *Carcaño v. Cooper*. The notorious law was replaced by HB 142. A settlement in this case was approved in July, 2019.

Aimee Stephens challenges her firing for being trans

Aimee Stephens worked in funeral services for nearly three decades when she told her employer that she is a woman. A federal appeals court ruled in 2018 that her firing was unlawful sex discrimination. This fall, the Supreme Court will hear Aimee's case and decide whether or not to roll back critical protections for LGBTQ people.

ACLU challenges transgender military ban

Six transgender service members, as well as six individuals who want the opportunity to serve in the military and are transgender are challenging the Trump administration's military ban in *Stone v. Trump*.

2018

Supreme Court upholds Colorado nondiscrimination law in Masterpiece Cakeshop

David Mullins and Charlie Craig were turned away from Masterpiece Cakeshop because they are gay. While ruling for the bakery due to concerns specific to the case, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the core principle that businesses open to the public must be open to all in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*.

Wisconsin jury awards \$780k to transgender women denied health care coverage

Alina Boyden and Shannon Andrews are two state employees who were denied medically necessary care because they are transgender. A Wisconsin jury sent the state a bill for discriminating against Alina and Shannon.

1,829,689 people in Alaska and Massachusetts voted to uphold transgender nondiscrimination protections

With financial and on-the-ground support from the ACLU, voters in Alaska and Massachusetts rejected transphobia and voted to keep nondiscrimination protections for transgender people.

2019

Supreme Court allows school policies supporting transgender students to stand

In a victory for transgender students, the Supreme Court declined to hear *Doe v. Boyertown Area School District*. With the action, the court allowed school districts to support transgender students by allowing them to use the restrooms that match their gender identity.

Aimee Stephens Takes First Case Involving Trans Civil Rights to the Supreme Court

Aimee Stephens was fired from her job as director of a Michigan Funeral Home because she is transgender. On October 8, 2019, her case was heard before the Supreme Court.

U.S. House passes Equality Act

In May, the U.S. House of Representatives passed landmark civil rights legislation advocated by the ACLU, the Equality Act. This bill would provide LGBTQ people with comprehensive, explicit protection against discrimination. This vote marked the first time in U.S. history that a chamber of Congress had passed comprehensive civil rights legislation for LGBTQ people.

2020

Supreme Court rules the Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ people from discrimination

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of ACLU clients Aimee Stephens and Don Zarda, as well as Gerald Bostock, in saying that it is unlawful to fire someone for being LGBTQ. Sadly, Aimee Stephens and Don Zarda did not live to see this victory.

Idaho Passes Ban on Trans Students in Schools Sports

Shortly after Idaho became the first state to pass a law banning trans student athletes, Boise State student Lindsay Hecox sued the state. In August of 2020, a federal judge blocked Idaho from implementing this discriminatory law.

ACLU Releases Analysis of 80 Studies on Sex Work Decriminalization

In October of 2020 the ACLU released "Is Sex Work Decriminalization the Answer? What the Research Tells Us" as part of a growing campaign to decriminalize sex work nationwide. The analysis reflects what transgender women and sex workers have been saying for decades: laws criminalizing sex work hurt public health and public safety.

2021

Ban on Transgender Military Service Lifted

President Biden revoked President Trump's ban on transgender people from serving in the military within a week of taking office. On day one the Biden administration also issued an executive order fully implementing the decision in Bostock in all areas of the federal government.

ACLU Launches "They The People" Campaign

The ACLU launches a campaign asking the Biden administration to issue an executive order to make it easier for trans and non-binary people to have accurate federal IDs. The ACLU's campaign includes the ACLU's largest-ever advertising campaign on transgender justice and largest ad campaign targeting the White House on an LGBTQ issue.

Naming of the Jon L. Stryker and Slobodan Randjelović LGBTQ & HIV Project

The ACLU's work will continue for generations to come thanks to a generous contribution from Jon L. Stryker and Slobodan Randjelović. Located in the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Center for Liberty, the Stryker and Randjelović LGBTQ & HIV Project will continue the ACLU's work for LGBTQ rights in courts and communities around the country.

Supreme Court Will Rule on Discrimination in Taxpayer-Funded Programs

In June 2021, the Supreme Court again ruled there is no constitutional license to discriminate. The court did say that Philadelphia violated the rights of a taxpayer-funded foster care program when it refused to renew a contract due to specific language in the contract. The agency, Catholic Social Services, sought a ruling that would have allowed taxpayer-funded agencies to turn away not just LGBTQ people but people who are Jewish, Muslim and Mormon as well.

Teenagers Are Here, Queer and Bringing Pride to Prom

By Maya Salam, June 22, 2018

Dear readers,

It is prom season, and also Pride Month, a calendric coincidence that has always felt problematic. After all, is there a more traditionally heteronormative event in an American teenage life than the high-school prom?

But in recent years, students who see themselves outside the binary have begun to challenge the straightness of it all, turning prom on its head by attending openly.

"Because straight is the default, you get a lot of people double-checking if they really just saw two boys holding hands," said Ishan Merkel, 18, who went to prom in Bethesda, Md., with his partner, Melvin Lewis.

"It seems like prom itself has changed," he added. "The idea that you need a date to attend has dissolved, and with it, the strictness of male-female rituals. We actually had a lot of fun with traditions, like how to match two suits!"



Melvin Lewis, 18, left, and Ishan Merkel, 18, of Bethesda, Md., dressed up for this year's prom.

"Since I transitioned from female to male three years ago, I'm not sure how many people outside of my friend group actually recognize me as a boy," Melvin recently said. "On prom night, though, I didn't think about that much. I had a great time dancing with Ishan." Credit...Theo Chen

Jonathan Zimmerman, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said that similar dynamics drove this phenomenon as those that propelled same-sex marriage. While the primary argument was usually about rights and benefits, there was also a more emotional aspect that Professor Zimmerman summed up as, "If there's a tradition, we want in."

"It's a demand to be included, and it will win for exactly the same reason same-sex marriage won," he explained. "Because the tradition itself is so deeply inscribed."

Seeing prom pictures like Ishan and Melvin's, and all the limos and sequins around lately, I can't help but think back to my own high school days, as a lesbian in 1990s Kentucky.

I went three years in a row, and the prospect of bringing a girl on my arm was never even a fleeting thought. The guys I went with were kind, but it was ultimately an inauthentic, hollow experience. I was playing at womanhood like I'd played house as a child.

Looking back, I wonder: if I'd been out at prom, would I have enjoyed the spectacle, instead of feeling like I was viewing it through glass?



Magnolia, Loreal and Nathan all attended a prom hosted by the Chicago Gay and Straight Alliance last month. Adam Jason Cohen for The New York Times

In a New York Times opinion piece in May, Ara Halstead of Olympia, Wash., reflected on the dilemma over whether to attend:

"Maybe I needed to break the habit of isolating myself and recognize that I might not be as misunderstood as I thought. Maybe going to a function so centered on gender roles as an unapologetically gender-fluid student was the best way to make people like me visible to the rest of the school.

I know there are other L.G.B.T.Q. students out there who have thought that prom isn't for them. But I'd encourage those who are out and comfortable to think about it. I believe the big fights for equality around L.G.B.T.Q. issues, such as hate violence, homelessness and economic fairness, can't be won unless we fight the smaller ones along the way."

Professor Zimmerman, who wrote a piece titled "The Prom: An American Relic" for The Boston Globe in 2013, told me that when prom first spread from elite colleges to high schools in the 1920s, it was "a radical act" as it allowed boys and girls to take off in a car and escape a parent's purview.

Now, he said, "in an era of allegedly greater gender equality, greater gender awareness, I would say the prom is rather retrograde." He added: "It's a time we pretend we live in a different era."

For a majority of American teens, he is right: Under the gymnasium's disco ball, time has stood still. But one might say that the queer students who are openly attending proms — or organizing alternative events in safe spaces outside of school — are making it a radical act once again.

"Prom lies at the heart of the American high school experience," Professor Zimmerman noted. "If we want to maintain those traditions, we're going to have to let everyone in."

Happy dancing,

Maya

Reading/Watching List

Check these out if you loved THE PROM!

Movies/TV

But I'm a Cheerleader (1999)

Alex Strangelove (2018)

Booksmart (2019)

Love, Simon (2018)

Saved! (2004)

Everybody's Talking About Jamie (2021)

G.B.F. (2013)

Heartstopper (2022-present)

Love, Victor (2020-2022)

Camp (2003)



Books

Heartstopper by Alice Osman

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

They Both Die in the End by Adam Silvera

Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic by Alison Bechdel

Imogen, Obviously by Becky Albertalli

The Black Flamingo by Dean Atta

The Redemption Of Daya Keane by Gia Gordon

You Should See Me in a Crown by Leah Johnson

