

A Public Condemnation of Transphobia

Recently, the UCLA campus was ranked the sixth friendliest campus for LGBT+ students in the United States. However, in that same week a group of UCLA students employed Facebook to espouse transphobic, dangerous and dehumanizing rhetoric: “Transgenderism is a mental illness,” “There are only two genders,” “Keep your agenda out of our bathrooms.”

The attribution of mental illness to a group has long been used as a vehicle of social control, punishment, and marginalization. It was precisely the conception of “homosexuality” as a mental disorder that historically legitimized state sanctioned and private violence and discrimination against lesbians and gays and facilitated so-called “conversion therapy.” At this very moment that this nation is repudiating that disreputable history, some Bruin Republicans are repackaging the mental illness trope and applying it to an even more marginalized group--trans people.

What’s particularly disturbing about the invocation of mental illness in this context is that it reveals the lack of regard some Bruin Republicans have for people who do struggle with mental disabilities. Mental illness is a very real social problem--at UCLA and elsewhere. That some Bruin Republicans would so casually invoke the social vulnerability of disability and attribute it to trans people as a group shows not only their insensitivity to trans people but their lack of regard for people with disabilities.

The claim that there are “only two genders” is analogous to the claim that there is only “one sexual orientation.” It is merely another way of controlling people’s sexual and gender identity and forcing people to hide who they really are.

Finally, the imperative that trans people should “Get your agenda out of my restroom” reveals the exclusionary impulse that motivates some Bruin Republicans. The “my restroom” is another way of saying that UCLA restrooms are “No trans zones.”

It’s hard not to read the foregoing words as not reflecting antipathy for, if not hatred of one of the most marginalized groups in society: transgender, gender nonconforming individuals, and other individuals who are not in the gender binary.

It bears emphasizing that, according to the *National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, up to 41% of Transgender people have attempted to end their lives. Moreover, trans people are also vulnerable to physical violence, sexual violence, constant surveillance by the police, and rampant explicit employment and housing discrimination --all simply because they are trans. Black trans women in particular are saddled with the foregoing social disadvantages. The vitriol espoused by some Bruin Republicans creates a climate that furthers the marginalization of trans people and makes them even more vulnerable to discrimination and violence. More than that, the negative and demeaning claims that “Transgenderism is a mental illness”; that “There are only two genders;” and that trans people should “Get your agenda out of my restroom” makes trans Bruins less safe and presumptively outsiders in a space where they have a right to be and should feel welcomed and at home: UCLA.

We should all expect better from members of our Bruin community. People should not invoke free speech to justifying rhetoric that demeans a group, further marginalizes a group, and renders a group vulnerable to various forms of violence. We encourage Bruin Republicans to say “not in our name”; UCLA students at large to say, “not on our campus”; and queer students in particular should say, “trans justice is our justice.”

There will be a Trans and Nonbinary Community Healing Space today from 4:30-6:00pm at the UCLA LGBT Campus Resource Center's Rae Lee Siporin Library. For more info visit: <https://www.facebook.com/events/585609474948501/>

Signed,

Queer Alliance at UCLA, Fluid at UCLA, BlaQue, Delta Lambda Phi - Gamma Chapter, Gamma Rho Lambda - Zeta Chapter, Project 1, La Familia de UCLA, UCLA Pride Admit Weekend, QOM.