



Reforms such as being able to legally change one's gender will

Never Save Us,

or at least not those of us who are most oppressed.

The only thing that can save us is abolition - abolition of the entire system of identification and classification as a tool of control, and abolition of every form of dominion that oppresses us. We shouldn't settle for anything less."

Cover & Formatting: Curd Nerd  
Written by: Blahaj Bomber

# DESTROY

## THE



# GENDER

# MARKER

# Destroy the gender marker

I wake up and feel the weight of the outside world crushing my room's walls. The walls inside are decorated with pride flags, posters, and stickers, but the city outside is designed for social control and conformity. The city outside and my state's government is slowly killing me. My existence is inconvenient for its functioning. I put on some clothes, making the decision to mask my newly developed feminine frame as much as possible. It's an increasingly futile goal.

I go to the doctor. I've been avoiding the cold, sterile space as much as possible, but I'm too sick to put it off any longer. The doctor looks at my file and the "M" it's marked with, then looks at my breasts and my long hair. I'm waiting for them to see past my attempts to hide my transness and tell me that my illness is because of my "lifestyle choices". I'm waiting for them to say that the cure to all my ills is to get off hormones, become normal. It doesn't matter if trying to suppress my transness nearly killed me, or

I have dreams of another world. A world where I'm healthy, happy, don't need to struggle to survive. I can get the care I need without it being locked behind a hostile system. I spend my time helping those I love, instead of as a cog in the machine oppressing me. I can go out at night alone, dressed however I please, and I don't have to look over my shoulder for any men approaching me. I know I'll wake up, and I'll still be surrounded by oppression. The day after that, and the next day, and every day for probably as long as I'm alive, I'll have to put up with the same bullshit. At best, the bullshit will have taken a new form. I've given up hope for reaching my dreamland, but I haven't given up fighting for it. I'll carve up space away from control wherever I can, I'll fight for myself and who I care about, and I'll be who I am. No doctor or politician or boss can take that away. I'll wake up, and I'll be in my friend's arms. I'll support her and she'll support me, and together we're unstoppable.

community around you provides everything you need? What if we broke down every bar that cages us, every chain that binds us, every whip wielded by our oppressors? How much materially better off and safer would we all be if we stopped giving a shit about equality and acceptance and focused on real liberation?

Destroying the gender marker means expressing solidarity with each other and with every other oppressed community. It means complete abolition and anarchy. It means refusing to recognize or support institutions that force us into their systems of control, and that claim to recognize us when true recognition can only come from ourselves. This isn't an easy goal to reach, but it's the only goal left for us. The choice is simple, can fight for freedom or accept domination.

## A Day in the Life

I pick my friend up from jail. Fortunately, my city has a new trans unit to keep her safe. That didn't seem to stop the bruises, or from her losing her job for missing work. I can still see the marks of the handcuffs on her wrists. We go to a park, do some poppers, and hold each other. The park is cold and hostile, but we keep each other warm. We fall asleep wrapped up in each other's arms.

that my medical problems have nothing to do with my transness, my existence is inconvenient to the system the hospital's rooms enforce. My doctor is meant to treat the social contagion of degenerates like me before they treat my illness.

I go to a job interview. It's at a cafe I go to a lot, they've seen me-the real me- in ratty clothes and shitty makeup. I wasn't sure whether to boymode again or femme it up. I decide to put on the best dress I could shoplift and look as presentable as I can. I'm branded with the same "M" that follows me everywhere. Even if I wasn't, even if I got the "F", I'm still a tranny and there's no hiding that. In this climate, that's too much of a liability. I struggle through the interview, using my girl voice that I know sounds faggy and off putting more than anything. I leave the interview, but I don't need to check my email to know I didn't get the job. I've been through the motions before, and each time it leaves me wondering what the point in this is. I'm stuck jumping through hoops I don't enjoy to get a job doing something I'd hate making money for some

asshole that wants to see me dead just so I can survive. I could always try sex work to pay the bills, until a client kills me and the pigs label my murder as "no human involved".

I've been trying to avoid my phone today. My state's Attorney General is apparently making a list of everybody who's legally changed their gender. I know my friends' names are on that list, if I think too long about what that list could be used for I'll just get depressed. Fortunately for me, the world around me keeps going on like normal, and I know that tomorrow nobody will be talking about it. We're forgotten about until the next piece of legislation, next murder, next flash in the pan headline. I wonder why none of the people signaling support for trans lives will just give me a fucking job.

if you travel to plenty of other countries, they'll find the idea of including race on an ID, as well as our entire system of racial classification, to be ridiculous. What is a gender marker really needed for? Let's get rid of them, and make our genders irrelevant to services and our daily lives unless we choose to disclose it.

This reform would be a step in the right direction, but it wouldn't be enough. No reform will ever be enough. Even if we remove gender from IDs, that still leaves every other bar in our social prison intact. What we really need is to dismantle every system of oppression in order to save ourselves. What we need is trans liberation.

Let's think about what the struggle for trans liberation would look like without being sidetracked by working towards an equality that will never come. What if all the time and effort spent progressing towards equal rights and acceptance in a society that's hostile towards us to its core was spent differently? What if, instead, it was spent setting up healthcare outside the state to address our needs from within our own community? What if it was spent setting up housing so we don't have to sleep on the streets? What if we started bashing back against those who oppress us, instead of begging them to see our humanity? What if we strengthened the systems of care and solidarity that define the trans community? What if we made it so that you don't even need an ID, because the

situation, there's no real option the system has laid out for us. We either accept the violence of misgendering, or risk the violence of whatever is to come whenever things heat up and any legally trans people are targeted. The only option left to us, then, is to destroy the system.

## **Destroy the Gender Marker, Destroy Society**

The only way to end the violence of classification is to destroy the system, not just for trans people, but for every group where classification means violence, and those on the intersection of these groups. This may seem absurd, but is it? Is it any more absurd than having to wave around a piece of paper with every detail about you just to prove you need healthcare? IDs aren't some unchangeable part of human existence, they were imposed on us by governments. They don't give us more rights and freedom, they lock away services they've monopolized and kill those with the wrong piece of paper.

If you want a reform to advocate for and work towards, then let's remove gender markers from IDs. My gender isn't the government's business, and it has nothing to do with whether I need access to healthcare, housing, or a job. It isn't as impossible as it sounds. Race is also logged on all our IDs, yet

The trans community is currently facing collective whiplash from how quickly things have gone to shit. For years, we've been used to gradual progress of our rights and gradually increasing social acceptance. Sure, things sucked a lot of the time, but they were getting better. Now, in the span of a couple years, our existences have become under attack, we've begun facing genocide, and our extermination has become a rallying cry for fascist politicians. In this climate, it's tempting to find comfort in existing reforms and to wish for their expansion. One of the most crucial reforms for trans rights is the ability to legally change one's gender on government documents and IDs. However, by looking at the ability to change one's gender, we can see how the idea of a "trans community" collectively experiencing gradual progress is a lie, and that fights for reforms like this inevitably leave behind those excluded by the system it's trying to change. It should be especially noteworthy now, as trans people face genocide in much of America, that classifying members of a marginalized group as an "other" and forcing them to obtain IDs showing this othered status is a common stage in genocides. In this current genocide, that list of state targets was kindly compiled by well meaning reformists who've given us the "right" to change our genders. Reforms such as being able to legally change one's gender will never save us, or at least not those of us who are most oppressed. The only thing that can save us is abolition- abolition of the

entire system of identification and classification as a tool of social control, and abolition of every form of domination that oppresses us. We shouldn't settle for anything less.

The allure of the right to change our gender on legal documents is understandable for trans people. Many of the struggles we face come from institutions treating us as the gender we were forced into at birth instead of our real gender that we choose to freely express. Outside of the ways this can cause dysphoria and discomfort, which are very real issues and struggles, it also causes material harm. Having the wrong gender on documentation can reduce your access to services like healthcare or housing. It can also force you back into the closet when you have to interact with government institutions. If you "pass" as another gender, having an "M" or "F" on your ID will either out you as trans or lead to accusations of using a fake ID. It's understandable, then, why changing your legal gender is seen as a crucial step in a lot of people's transitions - the material benefits and ways it tangibly improves your life are clear.

As a result of this need, calls for the ability to legally change one's gender have become the center of many discussions around trans rights. Organizations are created to change laws around legal recognition of gender. Legal clinics are set up to help trans people legally change their genders. Often, government policy on gender change is used as

people(usually those privileged from their race, class, or from being able bodied) get to rise to the ranks of those keeping the rest of us down. It's no different for trans people. We still get denied medical treatment, forced on the streets, harassed, and murdered- especially if you're not the rich white ideal of a trans person that society finds more acceptable. The idea of progress in a system founded upon white supremacy, colonialism, and patriarchy is an oxymoron. The state will never care about us outside of how it can use us to perpetuate oppression against others and to strengthen its own legitimacy to control others. The systems that oppress us never go away because of reforms and equal rights, they just become more insidious.

The failures of equal rights and progress feels clearer than ever as I write this, as a trans person in the state of Texas. Our attorney general requested a list of everybody that's legally changed their gender in the past two years- a list that contains the names of many people I know and love. There's no telling what that list is for, but considering every other attack against our existence we've had to sustain, it's undoubtedly nothing good. And that list of state targets was kindly compiled by well meaning reformists who've given us the "right" to change our genders. This isn't progress, this isn't equality, this is a fucking genocide, and playing this game of respectability politics will get us all killed. For me and every other trans person in my

discriminate against you. What reason would the government have to maintain the bureaucratic system around identification and documentation if it wasn't for these purposes? Civilization has changed a lot from the days of kings keeping records of who's given up their portion of the harvest as a tax, but the same system of exploitation and extraction still serves as the basis of the state.

This form of social control, just like the bars that separate those labeled criminals from the outside world, is not a natural, unchangeable aspect of our lives. They were created by people seeking to exploit others, and they can be destroyed by people seeking their own liberation. I dream of a world where every prison is burned down and every government ID is shredded, a world free from the state's system of classification and control where we can all live freely.

## **Progress Will Never Be Enough**

The fight for acceptance and equal rights is a process every marginalized group goes through. Women get the right to vote, Jim Crow laws end, the ADA gets passed, gay people get the right to marry, and we can all go back to brunch because equality has finally been achieved. Yet what really changes? Women still get catcalled on the street, Black people still get harassed by police, disabled people still live in poverty, and queer youth live on the streets in hugely disproportionate numbers. All that equal rights really means is that a few

shorthand for a given society's acceptance of trans people. It's taken for granted that the right to change one's gender legally is a universal goal in one's transition, and a crucial step in the endless march forward to a more progressive society.

If there's one thing that queers are good at, though, it's questioning everything in society, so let's question this goal and the process to reach it. The most obvious objection to reformist efforts towards changing gender markers is that of accessibility. Even if you legally are allowed to change your gender, it doesn't mean much if you can't do so due to other barriers. The process to change your gender is long and bureaucratic, and requires extensive documentation and, a lot of the time, money. For many of the most marginalized trans people, this makes it inaccessible. There's also the question of what to do for those who fall outside the gender binary. For both these issues, reformists do have answers. Legal clinics exist to assist with the change, even for those that normally couldn't afford it, and some states have introduced "X" gender markers for people who aren't men or women, or don't want their gender to be identified. Even with these added reforms, gender markers are still inaccessible or undesirable for many. In this vision of a state that allows people to change their gender on their IDs, where do undocumented people who don't have valid IDs fit in? What about people for whom interacting with our legal institutions like courts is a threat to their safety,

like those with warrants for their arrest? What about people that don't think their gender is the government's business? What about indigenous people who have had their land stolen and are forced to abide by the rules of an illegitimate state? No matter how you cut it, ideas of a more inclusive, accommodating state will always leave some people out, and almost always will exclude those who are already marginalized for other reasons. It's a reform for those who are already more privileged, and not the most oppressed trans people that form our community's backbone.

## **Against Gendered Prisons**

Another common reform advocated for by some is the ability for trans prisoners to be housed with others of their gender, instead of the gender imposed upon them, or in their own separate units. On its surface, this is a great thing. It recognizes trans people as their gender, and ensures their safety, especially for trans women who would otherwise face extremely high rates of violence and assault in a male prison. At the end of the day, though, they're still locked behind bars. No matter how nice they make the bars, and how affirming they are, you're still locked up and have your every waking moment controlled by a state that wants to see you dead. In the prison industrial complex, this reform just becomes another way for the state to control you. Our goal shouldn't be to make prisons

nicer, but to destroy prisons, and destroy every system that strips people of their autonomy. We should view the text of government documentation the same way as we view the bars of prisons- as something to be destroyed, not something to make nicer, inclusive, and more all-encompassing.

Obviously, there's a huge difference between prisons and government identification, but as many prison abolitionists note, "prison" is not just a physical location, but a spectrum of methods of state control and oppression. The logic of prison, its control over prisoners' lives, its forceful regimentation and categorization, and the surveillance of inmates all creep into our lives to varying degrees, regardless of what side of the prison bars you're on. Government IDs are one of the tools used for this control. They're a way to reduce your humanity and complex experience into data on a government database. To some, claiming that IDs and documentation are a form of control seems silly and extremist- they're just a normal fact of life, right? To others, their lived experiences intuitively tell them why requiring IDs is a form of violence. IDs separate good, upstanding citizens from those that the state views as undesirable, like immigrants and unhoused people. IDs are also used to track you and force you into certain categories. For those with a criminal record, carrying an ID permanently brands you as undesirable, and all that cops, healthcare providers, or jobs have to do is run a background check to