

I am transgender. When I was in high school, I was relentlessly bullied because of that. This behavior ranged from verbal harassment, to stalking, cyberbullying, and death threats and threats of physical violence. The harassment I experienced landed me in the psych ward for suicidal ideation three times over the course of my teenage years.

And why did my peers treat me like this? Was it because it was a natural punishment for my existence? Because I had done something wrong? No. It was because the world we live in, the one created by conservative lawmakers and immovable minds and controlling school boards, told them that I, and people like me, were acceptable targets for hatred. Not poverty, not wars, not any sort of human suffering; they couldn't care less. But fellow kids, whose only crime is existing in the "wrong way?" That, my peers were told, is where they should direct their anger.

The real emergency isn't people like me; it is the hatred within your hearts. Even though I was relentlessly bullied throughout high school, I continued to live as myself—as transgender—because the other option, living as a dead shell I outgrew years ago, was even worse than the bullying. Hating us, declaring us a plague, is not going to make us go away. It's just going to make more children who are in the same position I was in miserable, and lead to more traumatized transgender adults who will struggle to recover from the harassment they experienced. I hope you all can make the right decision, and learn to love the transgender children in your communities instead of continuing to criminalize their existence.