Transgender Rights are Human Rights

Description

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The *Santa Fe New Mexican* recently published two rebukes to the transgender community. One article claims that Democrats are disillusioned with defending transgender rights (â??Trans activists question confrontational approach,â?• Nov. 27). In the other (â??How to navigate Republican trap on trans rights,â?• Commentary, Nov. 24), the author instructs Democrats how to navigate the Republicansâ?? â??trapâ?• on trans rights. His prescription? Acquiesce and follow Republican rules.

Perhaps this is sage advice for Democratic politicians who must win elections (though logic and experience suggest otherwiseâ??what voter would trust politicians who abandon their constituents at the first sign of trouble?). What is certain, though, is that this answer is dead wrong for Americans who care about protecting the rights of their fellow citizens.

The transgender â??trapâ?• relies on the fact that many Americans of a certain age are perplexed by what appears to be a sudden surge in transgender identity. Their own experiences did not prepare them to understand that transgender people have always been present in their own lifetimes, as in all societies throughout human history. Their bewilderment makes them susceptible to opportunistic, bad-faith actors who exploit their discomfort to persecute vulnerable populations for political gain.

Transgenderism is nothing more than knowing oneself as belonging to a gender that is different from the category assigned at birth based on external anatomy. In the United States, it is estimated that there are over two million transgender people, of every age and every walk of life. These numbers should surprise no one.

The biology of sexual differences is far more complicated than secondary reproductive organs alone. Genetics, neurobiology, endocrinology, and environment interact throughout the developmental process beginning with the newly fertilized embryo and continuing through puberty and adulthood. The outcome is a diversity of sexual identities, including some whose identities do not correspond to each physical trait associated with the binary categories of male and female.

The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Endocrine Society have all found age-appropriate gender-affirming care to be both evidence-based and medically necessary. Without such care, those who are transgender suffer from high rates of suicidality, depression, and self-harming behavior. With appropriate care, they can attain the well-being that is their birthright.

Yet these vulnerable and already marginalized people are the targets of a massive, highly organized campaign to deny not only their right to medical care, but ultimately their right to exist. This campaign is organized and funded by a network of extremist religious organizations, including the Alliance Defending Freedom, Liberty Counsel, and the Family Research Council â??all designated as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Recent years have seen an avalanche of bills targeting the transgender community, many of which have succeeded in becoming law. These bills deny access to basic healthcare, prohibit participation in school activities, prohibit discussion of gender identity, and prohibit the expression of oneâ??s own fundamental identity.

This persecution of an embattled minority is a flagrant violation of settled standards of fair treatment under law. Similar laws passed by Viktor OrbÃ¡nâ??s far-right Hungarian government were declared to be incompatible with international human rights standards by the Venice Commission. The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has called the anti-trans movement â??a totalitarian and genocidal social force that targets not just transgender people, but also all the institutions of democracy that protect individual and collective human rights.â?•

Those targeting transgender people count on the support of those who urge the victims to surrender for the greater good, and on the acquiescence of citizens who fail to intervene from indifference or confusion. Nothing could be more dangerous at this moment, nor more wrong.