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# Creating Gender Inclusive Learning Environments for Transgender and Nonbinary Student

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Andrea Bowers, *Trans Liberation: Building a Movement*  
(CeCe McDonald), 2016, ink-jet print, 95 × 57 1/4".





## What You Want To Know

- 1.** How to best approach gender fluidity (pronouns may change over time, e.g. she/they, he/they)
- 2.** Etiquette for non-binary genders (e.g. so-called xenogenders, which do occur albeit infrequently, or neopronouns)
- 3.** How can we get faculty, particularly older faculty, to become invested in creating more gender-inclusive learning environments?
- 4.** What are good strategies to set an inclusive tone for a course at the beginning of lectures or smaller sections? (e.g. should we have students verbally introduce themselves, have them fill out notecards with information, or other options?)

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**What is the life expectancy  
of transgender people today?**

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# Factors

- **Political** (Wedge Issue)
- **Legal** (Narrow vs. Broad Definitions)
- **Medical** (Lack of Research)
- **Culture** (Social Construct)

March and Vigil for Black Trans Lives,  
*Boston University Daily Free Press*, 2021



## Developmental Stages of Transgender Identity Development

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Challenges/tasks</b>
Pre-coming out	Feeling different; stigma; early resilience or concealment
Coming out	Acknowledgment to self and others; taking calculated risks
Exploration	Experimentation; stereotyped notions of femininity and masculinity; personal attractiveness and sexual competence; transforming shame into pride
Intimacy	Desire for intimacy and first relationships in preferred gender role; facing fear of abandonment; sexual orientation identity
Identity integration	Grief; less preoccupation with identity labels; tolerance of gender ambiguity

Bockting & Coleman, *Adult Development and Quality of Life of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People*, Current Opinion in Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Obesity (2016).



## Gender Identity

The gender(s), if any, with which a person identifies. Gender identity can be the same or different from an ascribed sex.

—GSC and WGS at Brandeis University



Fun fact: The transgender flag was created in 1999 by Monica Helmes in Arizona.

## Gender Expression

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

—The Human Rights Campaign



## Transgender

A person whose gender identity does not correspond to an ascribed sex. A transgender person may take social, medical, or legal steps to transition from ascribed sex to identified gender. A person may identify as transgender before or without taking any steps to transition, as gender is self-determined and not based on social, medical, or legal recognition.

—GSC and WGS at Brandeis University

## Nonbinary

A person whose gender identity rejects the gender binary of woman and man. Nonbinary people may identify as agender, genderqueer, Two Spirit, or gender nonconforming.

—GSC and WGS at Brandeis University



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## Jacob of Melrose





# Pronouns



- Personal pronouns
  - First Person: Referring to the speaker (I, We, Us)
  - Second Person: Referring to addressee (You)
  - Third Person: Referring to a third party (He, She, They)
- They, third person personal pronoun, singular:

"Used with reference to a person whose sense of personal identity does not correspond to conventional sex and gender distinctions, and who has typically asked to be referred to as *they* (rather than as *he* or *she*)."

—Oxford English Dictionary

# Lived Names

- A lived name is a self-chosen personal or preferred professional name used instead of one's legal name.
- Lived names are to be used whenever possible in the course of university business and education.
- To change your name legally as an adult in Massachusetts, you need to go through a court name change proceeding.
- GLAD Transgender ID Project at [glad.org/id](http://glad.org/id).



## Pronouns

Instead of:

- Assigning a person a personal pronoun based on appearance or other assumptions

### Try:

- Putting your pronouns next to your name on your email signature
- Sharing your pronouns when speaking to a new person
- “How should I refer to you?”

## Lived Names

Instead of

- Reading names out loud or publishing a list of names without asking each person

### Try:

- Wear a name tag when in large gatherings
- Share your name when speaking to a new person
- “What is your name?”



# I made a mistake. What do I do now?

Remember that you are not defined by your mistakes. If you make a mistake, fix it and learn.

If you made a mistake:

1. "Oops. I'm sorry I used the wrong pronouns."
2. Use the correct pronouns.

If somebody else makes a mistake:

1. "I think they use he/she/they pronouns."
2. Use the correct pronouns.

## **Remember:**

Gender identity and expression is a protected category. Repeated use of incorrect pronouns or neglecting to correct the behavior of others, could result in a violation of the institution's nondiscrimination policy and state or federal laws.



## Case Study



Ari is an upper-class student at Brandeis. Ari calls you, the coach, to tell you that Ari is feeling disrespected by a teammate, who keep calling Ari by the wrong pronouns in front of the entire team. Ari is transitioning and this feels like a lot to go through alone. It's the beginning of the semester and showing up to practice is challenging because it feels to them like nobody cares about trans people. Ari wonders what could be done to help the teammate understand the wounding that is being caused.

What would you do?