

Open Letter: A response to The National Post article titled, "Living in a country where you daren't be anything but gay friendly" by Christie Blatchford

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Dear Editor at the National Post,

At the heart of this article and the position taken by Christie Blatchford is the notion that “there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation” as stated by Pierre Trudeau in 1967. This statement is representative of a major step forward in Canadian history and for LGBTQI2S people in Canada.

However, what the author of this opinion-centred article fails to understand is that the oppression and discrimination faced by the LGBTQI2S community in Canada is not so simply related to the goings-on in the bedroom, that would require us to step back prior to decriminalization in Canada, of which we will soon be celebrating the 50th anniversary. To tie equity and equality so unintelligibly to the activities that take place behind closed doors is absurd and neglects the facts that we know to be true as well as disregards the progress that the LGBTQI2S community has made.

The issues we are striving to seek progress on affect every aspect of life for LGBTQI2S people in Canada, from the workplace and schools, to barriers within the healthcare system, access to basic services, issues around LGBTQI2S youth homelessness, systemic discrimination faced by LGBTQI people of colour, Indigenous and Two-Spirit individuals, services for LGBTQI2S seniors and so much more. Most, if not all, of this requires steps to be taken by the Canadian government on policy and legislative reform.

Research on workplace inclusion in Canada for example, shows us that 30% of LGBT employees report experiencing discrimination in the workplace compared to only 3% of non-LGBTQ employees. Where research undertaken by Egale Canada shows that discrimination and oppression of LGBTQI2S people in Canada, especially youth continues to be a pervasive issue across the country. More than 1 in 5 homeless youth across the country identifies as LGBTQI2S, an incredibly high ratio when compared to the overall number of youth who identify as part of the LGBTQI2S community.

Hate crimes against the LGBTQ community are the most violent of any hate crime committed. Egale's report, [Every Class in Every School](#) shows that even within our schools homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are extremely pervasive. Some of the key findings showed that 74% of trans students, 55% of sexual minority students, and 26% of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression. While a separate study that focused on trans individuals showed that 69% of older trans youth had seriously considered suicide, while 37% had attempted it at least once.

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LGBTQI2S people across Canada face obstacles to employment, health care, education and basic services – routine systemic discrimination is at every conceivable intersection. In order to create change, support from the Canadian government is not only required, but essential Especially with the passing of [Bill C-16](#), it is now more arguable than ever that the Canadian government does indeed have a duty to uphold the rights of LGBTQI2S people. It is only by working together that we will be able to break down systemic barriers of bias and prejudice for the LGBTQI2S community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Helen Kennedy