



**TRANS  
FORMING  
INCLUSION**  
AN ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDE

# TransForming Inclusion: An Organizational Guide



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SECTION 1: Why Transform Inclusion?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SECTION 2: Best Practices &amp; Additional Resources</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>SECTION 3: Organizational Transformation in Practice</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SECTION 4: Glossary</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>30</b>

# INTRODUCTION:

This guide is designed for our colleagues in the fields of philanthropy and arts and culture, and organizations committed to feminist practices and supporting LGBTQ communities. In recent years, we have found that many of our colleagues are interested in or currently on a journey toward structural support and affirmation of trans and gender-nonconforming individuals, providing trans- and gender-nonconforming-specific services or programming, or adapting an organizational mission to address and support gender self-determination and transgender justice as key values.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Over the course of 10 years, dedicated Leeway staff members, board members, interns, and volunteers have assembled versions of these materials. The guide began as an internal document for Leeway panelists to use in aiding their decision-making processes in awarding grants. Initially this document focused on Leeway's journey to becoming trans-inclusive in its mission, vision, and organizational practices. In this version, we hope to publicly share some of what we have learned over the years as we have embraced trans justice and gender self-determination as key organizational values.

Because Leeway is not focused solely on trans and gender-nonconforming communities, we recognize that this guide and associated opinions, suggestions, and comments come from our own (often imperfect) experiences. We are, however, committed to continuing to work toward trans affirmation as an organization, and to serving as a resource for other organizations interested in structurally transforming their mission, vision, and work to benefit trans and gender-nonconforming people.

## OVERVIEW OF SHARED LANGUAGE

We hope that this guide will be useful for a range of organizations, including those who have yet to begin any process of structural change, those who are in the midst of shifting organizational work, and those who have undergone important changes and want to share and explain their process with their constituencies.

In order to make this guide as accessible to this range of people as possible, we begin with a few terms that guide our analysis. We understand that these terms are fluid — and their specific definitions may change among different individuals, communities, and situations — but we begin with this overview of shared language to ensure that we all start with a similar knowledge of basic concepts.

### ***Who are trans and gender-nonconforming people?***

We use the phrase “trans and gender-nonconforming” (used interchangeably with “TGNC” throughout this guide) to encompass transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, two-spirit people, and more generally, anyone whose gender identity or gender expression is nonconforming or different from their gender assigned at birth.

### ***What do you mean by “gender assigned at birth?”***

“Gender assigned at birth” refers to the assumptions that are made about an infant’s gender from the appearance of genitalia at birth, or even in ultrasound scans and other technologies before birth. Medical professionals, parents, and other individuals often ask the question “Is it a boy or a girl?” and mark “male” or “female” on a birth certificate. In each of these cases, gender is decided and assigned by medical systems or by people in positions of authority or relative power. We challenge the assumptions that all individuals can and should fit into one side of a male/female binary, and recognize that people can identify differently from how they might be told to identify, how they might dress, or how their bodies might appear to others.

### ***How do we understand gender outside of a male female and masculine/feminine binary?***

We believe that organizations that seek to affirm and support trans and gender-nonconforming people must recognize the premise that gender is not solely based on whether a person is understood to be “male” or “female,” or “man” or “woman,” based on their body or how they dress. Rather, gender is a spectrum that encompasses a range of identities, expressions, presentations, likes/dislikes, values, and experiences. “Masculinity” and “femininity” are categories that have been constructed for us to make sense of our experiences, but many people — who may or may not identify as trans or gender-nonconforming — may feel like they relate to some or all of both categories, or like they do not identify with either category at all. Adopting the perspective that gender is a spectrum of experiences can allow us to embrace and affirm experiences of all genders.

### ***What is gender self-determination?***

Leeway Foundation is committed to self-determination, or the rights of individuals and communities to be empowered in their own lives. We live under complex legal, medical, social, and state systems that restrict gender expression and privilege some genders and gender expressions over others. Such restrictions can lead to barriers to accessing care and services. When health care, housing, and legal services are not affirming or even knowledgeable about trans and gender-nonconforming people and experiences, TGNC people may not feel comfortable or may be directly excluded from accessing these services.

Gender self-determination thus necessarily includes access to and control over health care, holistic mental and emotional support, fashion and self-expression, gender-affirming housing, education, bathrooms, and social services; freedom from violence, harassment, and incarceration; and all the tools we need to be fabulous, empowered, and safe in how we live in our bodies. Embracing gender self-determination as a value at the organizational level allows all employees, service recipients, volunteers, and community members, regardless of gender identity or expression, to have more agency in their own lives.

## ***What is trans justice?***

Leeway Foundation shares a vision of trans justice as articulated by the Trans Justice Funding Project: “We see trans justice as a commitment to creating a world where trans and gender-nonconforming individuals and communities have the freedom to self-define and express their genders without fear of violence, discrimination, or harassment. A world where we recognize and honor that our communities have knowledge and expertise in matters relating to our own lives that no one else will have.” Leeway is thus committed to centering and honoring the voices and experiences of trans and gender-nonconforming artists committed to social change.

By using these definitions as a way of thinking about and addressing organizational policy and culture, we hope that this guide will assist you and your organization in becoming more inclusive and affirming toward all people, regardless of gender identity or expression. We also include a glossary at the end of the guide, which explains particular terms in greater detail.

## ***About the Sections of the Guide***

The rest of the guide is broken up into the following four sections:

### **Section 1: Why Transform Inclusion?**

In this section, we address the shift in the analysis of power that organizations must undergo in order to become more affirming of trans and gender-nonconforming communities. By talking specifically about **trans-inclusive feminism**, we address the politics at play in incorporating trans and gender-nonconforming communities into feminist organizational values and mission statements. We also talk a bit about the language shift away from “inclusion” and toward “affirmation,” and the implications this shift can have for trans and gender-nonconforming communities.

### **Section 2: Best Practices**

In conjunction with a larger shift in an organization’s mission, vision, and analysis of power, there are a number of specific changes that your organization can make in order to be more affirming of trans and gender-nonconforming people, and to more actively embrace gender self-determination as an organizational value. Among these suggestions for best practices are the following:

***Institutional language*** — addresses the language shifts that your organization should consider making in forms, on websites, and in everyday practice in order to be more affirming and welcoming of trans and gender-nonconforming staff, clients, grantees, or service recipients.

***Pronoun etiquette*** — provides some general tips on how to be affirming in addressing people’s pronouns in organizational and community settings.

***Hiring and affirming TGNC folks in your organization*** — looking to diversify your organizational staff or volunteer base? This section highlights some best practices for hiring and other institutional changes to make sure TGNC-identified people feel welcome and affirmed working in and alongside your organization.

This section also includes additional reading and resources to help your organization develop trans-affirming policies and practices.

## Section 3: Organizational Transformation in Practice

In this section, we provide examples from cultural, philanthropic, feminist, and/or LGBTQ organizations and advocates that have engaged structural-level questions of inclusion, affirmation, and self-determination for transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals.

**Leeway Foundation** supports women and trans artists and cultural producers working in communities at the intersection of art and social change. In its 25-year history, Leeway has shifted from funding women artists to having a more expansive definition of gender that allows all communities who have been marginalized or oppressed on the basis of gender to apply for grants.

**Girls Rock Philly (GRP)** is a volunteer-based nonprofit music and mentoring organization that works with girls, young women, and trans and gender-nonconforming youth in Philadelphia. Although working from a larger national organization focused primarily on “girls,” GRP has expanded to honor gender diversity as a core part of its mission and vision.

**Therapy Center of Philadelphia (TCP)** offers therapy and healing services to people from a diversity of experiences and identities in the Philadelphia area. Founded in 1972 as the Women’s Therapy Center, TCP underwent an important transformation beginning in 2015 to become an explicitly trans-affirming service agency.

**Third Wave Fund** supports youth-led gender justice activism to advance the political power, wellbeing, and self-determination of communities of color and low-income communities. The organization works from a broadly defined understanding of gender justice, which works to end patriarchy, transphobia, and homophobia.

**William Way Community Center** offers service, recreational, educational, and cultural programming for sexual and gender minorities in the greater Philadelphia region. In the last 10 years in particular, William Way has made numerous efforts to more specifically support, affirm, and empower trans and gender-nonconforming people in Philadelphia, particularly TGNC people of color.

## Section 4: Glossary

In this section we address more of the ever-evolving terms that Leeway Foundation and other organizations use to describe trans affirmation and experiences.

We hope that this guide will help to provide you with new and useful perspectives on the necessity of trans justice and gender self-determination and how your organization can move forward on the journey toward fully affirming TGNC people.

# SECTION 1: Why Transform Inclusion?

If your organization is looking to include and affirm transgender and gender-nonconforming communities, an important step in this process is taking a look at how your mission and vision statements approach questions of power. In this section, we address these questions by focusing on why and how feminist practice includes and affirms TGNC people as well as the ways that your organization can transform from a model of inclusion toward active affirmation of trans and gender-nonconforming people.

## FEMINIST PRACTICE

Trans inclusion needs movements to engage interconnected justice frameworks to address the deepest forms of inequity. True inclusion comes from movements that explicitly dismantle the interrelated harms of gender discrimination, sexism, economic barriers, violence, and other systemic abuses that compound one another, leaving trans people perpetually at the margins of society.

— **Zavé Martohardjono & Rye Young**, *“Toward Transfeminism: Moving Beyond Inclusion”*

Trans feminism is rooted in this idea that there are multiple forms of sexism that often intersect with each other, and with other forms of oppression.

— **Julia Serano**,

*Excluded: Making Feminist and Queer Movements More Inclusive*



**CeCe McDonald and Joshua Allen.**  
Photo by Victoria Ford.

“Feminism” has historically had numerous definitions, from including only cisgender (predominantly white) women to including a range of gender identities and expressions, and people from different class, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. For organizations working to embrace values of trans justice and gender self-determination, it is increasingly important to embrace a form of feminism that recognizes and respects the individual right to gender self-determination. This means accepting and embracing people at all places along the gender spectrum, whether they are genderqueer, nonbinary, transgender, or reject gender categories altogether.



## SHIFTING ANALYSES OF POWER

Trans-affirming policies and practices must recognize the ways in which multiple forms of power intersect and interact. Rather than seeing sexism as a system where one gender has power over another, we encourage organizations to think about how sexism interacts with and is influenced by other forms of oppression — i.e., racism, classism, and transphobia. For example, the identities and experiences of a Black cisgender queer woman from a working-class background differ from those of a white transgender woman with class privilege. While they both experience misogyny, they will have very different experiences of how and in what specific contexts this and other forms of oppression will manifest. Recognizing how these differences play out requires looking closely at the intersection of different forms of power. Such a shift requires centering the question of who is most marginalized in a given context or scenario and asking how intersecting forms of power influence all of our lives and experiences.

Thinking about intersecting forms of power requires recognizing the prevalence of transmisogyny, which refers to the intersection of transphobia and misogyny, the hatred of women and characteristics associated with women and femininity. The experience of overlapping oppressions for people on the transfeminine spectrum is another important reason why feminist movements, in their work to combat misogyny and other connected forms of oppression, should consider and even prioritize the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

In shifting organizational analyses of power to recognize the intersecting forms of oppression that affect those most marginalized, trans-affirming organizations must understand that there are many differences among specific trans experiences. One important difference is between individuals who identify as trans men or transmasculine versus those who identify as trans women or transfeminine. Because of their feminine gender expression and/or female gender identities, people on the transfeminine spectrum face heightened levels of fascination, demonization, violence, and discrimination. In contrast, those on the transmasculine spectrum have largely remained invisible and under-recognized; while they can and often do experience discrimination and violence, they often receive different levels of fascination, attention, or demonization than do those on the transfeminine spectrum.

Perhaps the most important manifestation of transmisogyny is the violence committed against transgender women and transfeminine individuals, particularly those who are also people of color. Recognizing the prevalence of transmisogyny means expanding analyses of sexism and gender discrimination to consider how characteristics associated with women and femininity are societally devalued on all bodies, whether they are cis- or transgender. This is, of course, exacerbated for women of color, whose bodies are often stripped of agency and value through systems of racism and sexism, and, where relevant, histories of slavery and state-sponsored oppression. Organizations that fully embrace and affirm trans-inclusive feminist practices must note the intersection of gendered violence, transmisogyny, racism, and other forms of oppression that leads to attacks, negative views, and mistreatment.

## FROM INCLUSION TO AFFIRMATION

At Leeway Foundation, an important part of our process has been to address our language with regard to “inclusivity” and “affirmation.” As with other parts of this guide, it is a work in progress. We hope, however, that sharing our process and the processes of some of our community partner organizations will help organizations embarking upon a similar process of transformation. For Leeway, which began as a woman-focused organization coming out of second-wave feminism (see Section 3), the language of “inclusion” initially referred to the expansion from “women artists” to “women and trans artists.” With the language of “affirmation,” we aspire to move beyond inclusion toward a structural shift at all levels of the organization to address power in more intersectional and nuanced ways.

The shift toward affirmation involves active participation of trans and gender-nonconforming people at all levels of the organization, including the board, staff, volunteer, grantee, and community partners. It also involves a change in mission and vision that goes beyond addressing the gender-based oppression (and related racism, classism, and other forms of oppression) that women, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people face.

With trans affirmation as a goal, organizations can more actively acknowledge and support people in their autonomous gender self-determination. In the following section on best practices, we offer some examples of how to begin the work of trans affirmation.



*Sisterly LOVE at RELEASE, 2015.  
Photo courtesy of Leeway Foundation.*

## FURTHER READING

**Emi Koyama, “The Transfeminist Manifesto”**

<http://eminism.org/readings/pdf-rdg/tfmanifesto.pdf>

**Julia Serano, *Excluded: Making Feminist and Queer Movements More Inclusive***

**Laura Kacere, “Why the Feminist Movement Must Be Trans-Inclusive”**

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/02/trans-inclusive-feminist-movement>

**Zavé Martohardjono and Rye Young, “Toward Transfeminism: Moving Beyond Inclusion”**

<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/03/02/toward-transfeminism-moving-beyond-inclusion>

# SECTION 2: Best Practices

In this section, we provide some key points and suggestions for implementing trans-affirming practices and policies in your organization or institution.

## CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE

One of the most important — and often one of the easiest — shifts that your organization can make to be more actively affirming of trans and gender-nonconforming communities is to change the language that your organization uses. Take a look at all of your institutional documents such as websites, application and bureaucratic forms, and email signatures and see how your language can welcome and affirm people across the spectrum of gender. Here are some specific suggestions:

- **Make changes in how you refer to groups of people.** When speaking or writing about (gender) diversity in your organization, refer to “all genders,” rather than “both genders” or “men and women.” This language allows room for people who identify across or outside of gender categories to feel affirmed and included. Other language to avoid includes “guys” and “ladies and gentlemen” to refer to groups of people (try “you all” or “folks” as alternatives), or “moms” when talking about parents.
- **Rethink how “gender” works on institutional forms.** On grant applications, forms for service recipients and clients, and other forms, consider when and where identifying gender is necessary. What do you need to know about individual applicants or clients? Rather than have options such as “male,” “female,” or “other,” which can marginalize gender-nonconforming people, consider providing a fill-in-the-blank space for “gender identity” or simply for “pronouns.” Where relevant, explain why you are asking for this information as well.

*Taken from Leeway’s Art and Change Grant Application:*

### Artist Information

Artist name or preferred name (to be shared publicly if you receive a grant)

Legal name

As a trans-affirming organization, we offer applicants the opportunity to indicate their pronouns. Providing this information is optional. If you do not provide your pronouns, you will be referred to by your name in all Leeway materials.

I wish to be addressed as:

She/her    He/him    They/them    \_\_\_\_\_

**Provide a guide to “shared language” for your constituents.** A guide can provide people (grantees, donors, board members, clients, etc.) with a general sense of what you and your organization mean when you use terms such as “transgender,” “gender-nonconforming,” and “gender justice.” This will allow people in your community from different backgrounds — those who identify as cisgender and who identify as transgender or gender-nonconforming — to recognize that gender self-determination and trans affirmation are core values for your organization.

## PRONOUN ETIQUETTE

People often wonder how to be polite when it comes to using correct pronouns. Here are some general tips:

- **Ask people to identify their pronouns when entering your space.** When facilitating a group discussion or holding a group event, ask people to identify their pronouns when they go around making introductions. You can also ask individuals to put their pronouns on their nametags or provide buttons that have pronouns on them, which can help with one-on-one conversations or if a group is too large to do a round of introductions. This practice will allow people in the room a chance to self-identify and to get one another’s pronouns right from the start. It will also reduce the burden on anyone whose pronoun is often misidentified, and may help them access the discussion more easily. Because cisgender people often do not experience being misgendered or misidentified, asking all people in the space to engage in this process can challenge many of the assumptions that people make about gender.
- **If you are not sure about a person’s pronoun, ask.** One way to do this is by sharing your own — e.g., “I use he/him pronouns. I want to make sure to address you correctly. How do you like to be addressed?”
- **If you make a mistake, correct yourself.** Going on as if it did not happen is actually less respectful than making the correction. This also saves the person who was misidentified from having to correct an incorrect pronoun assumption, which can often influence other participants in the conversation who heard the mistake.
- **If someone else makes a mistake, correct them.** It is polite to provide a correction, regardless of whether the person whose pronoun is misused is present, in order to avoid future mistakes and to correct the mistaken assumption.



*Pronoun pins from New York Toy Collective.*

## HIRING AND AFFIRMING TGNC FOLKS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

In moving toward structural trans affirmation, where transgender and gender-nonconforming people are actively participating at all levels of the organization, we offer the following suggestions:

**Assess your organization's competency.** Advocate, educator, and author Willy Wilkinson provides a scale from “hostile” to “welcoming” for TGNC staff, clients, and constituents in *Born on the Edge of Race and Gender* (2015). We have adapted it below so that you can begin to assess how much work your organization has to do to become welcoming.

<b>Hostile</b>	TGNC people feel like the organization is antagonistic toward them.
<b>Don't ask, don't tell</b>	The organization makes assumptions about constituency and staff regarding gender, and there is no acknowledgement of TGNC issues.
<b>Naïve</b>	The organization has some understanding of TGNC people, but it is limited, and issues facing TGNC communities have not been explicitly addressed.
<b>Tolerant</b>	Some staff may support TGNC communities and issues, but conversations are limited to the TGNC-identified folks involved, and maybe a few other advocates. There are no specific policies or programs in place to support TGNC communities.
<b>Sensitive</b>	There are some programs in place for TGNC communities, but there have not been policies, programs, or changes made for the organization more broadly. This may look like a couple of structural changes (gender-neutral restroom access, discussion of pronouns), but only addressing these explicitly when in conversation with and about TGNC communities.
<b>Welcoming</b>	TGNC people receive cues that they are welcomed; policies, programs, and staff all reflect a thorough commitment to creating a welcoming and affirming environment for TGNC people. There are TGNC people at all levels of leadership who can speak to the environment being affirming.

### **Create intentional plans for outreach and/or mentorship.**

If your organization has worked to alter its mission and vision, have you made this process visible to your constituencies, and/or to TGNC communities specifically? If your organization is invested in including, welcoming, and affirming TGNC staff, volunteers, and constituents, consider implementing intentional plans for outreach and mentorship for TGNC communities.

- **Use visible signs** (on website, flyers, brochures, posters, etc.) that indicate that your organization is welcoming and affirming of TGNC people. This can be through the publication of a new diversity/nondiscrimination statement or policy (see below) or through flyers that use the language of TGNC affirmation.
- **Reach out to local organizations** that already have connections to TGNC communities, whether they are LGBTQ organizations or other cultural organizations or foundations. Consider partnering to conduct information sessions or handing out brochures and flyers in those spaces. If you will be requesting another organization's resources or time, make arrangements to provide them with payment to ensure an equitable collaboration.

**Find ways to provide a structure of mentorship for TGNC volunteers or staff.** Rather than bringing in one person who may be looked at as an "expert" on TGNC issues, consider bringing in more than one TGNC-identified staff member, volunteer, or intern to provide multiple perspectives. If you already have staff or board members who identify as TGNC, inquire whether they might be interested in mentoring incoming staff. Again, if it is possible to provide resources or payment for this labor, we encourage you to consider that as well.

**Address and change structural and space issues.** Before or as you set out to hire and include TGNC employees, volunteers, and constituencies, work to ensure that your space is as affirming as possible. There are a number of ways in which this structural and spatial work can happen. Here are a few examples:

- **Nondiscrimination policies.** Your organization should have clearly written policies that state that discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity, or gender expression will not be tolerated. Make these policies public so that potential employees and constituents can see how your organization prioritizes TGNC communities and justice.

Other important policies that your organization can implement and make evident for employees and prospective employees are the requirements for a change of name and gender on official records, the support available from management and/or HR (if relevant) for employees and volunteers who transition, databases that can safely secure and keep private legal names, and policies regarding access to trans-related health care through employment.

- **Identification materials.** Does your organization require an identification badge to enter the building? Does your building require people to show an ID or sign in? Gauge the institutional process for allowing people to use their preferred name and gender on organizational ID badges or in signing into a particular building. Speak with building management staff about ID requirements so that TGNC people can feel comfortable entering or working in your organizational space.

- **Restroom access.** We encourage you to ensure that all employees have access to a restroom that is congruent with their gender identity and expression. For many organizations, this means installing or providing access to a single-stall, unisex restroom, or changing your restrooms to become gender-neutral. Provide your constituents — staff, board, volunteers, visitors to your space — with necessary information about why this is an important access consideration for TGNC people.

**Reconsider job requirements.** When conducting a job search in your organization, take a look at what the requirements are in terms of degrees or job experience. Because many marginalized communities, including trans and gender-nonconforming communities (see Section 1), may not have access to formal higher education or have particular kinds of job experience, it may be useful for your organization to reconsider what is necessary for a job. Can you reframe a job listing in terms of skills required, or use alternate language to provide a broad range of possibilities for job experience? An intentional shift in a job listing will likely diversify your pool of candidates.

- **Set priorities in your hiring process.** For organizations looking to hire more TGNC staff, set priorities for how you want a particular kind of job search to go.

**Address questions of decision-making power.** In shifting your organization's analysis of power (see Section 3), consider the following when bringing TGNC people onto your organizational staff or board: Are TGNC people (particularly people of color) in positions of power in the organization? Do they have a role in making major decisions about the organization's vision, mission, and direction? Addressing these questions can be crucial for ensuring that your organization is trans-affirming in mission, vision, and everyday practice.

## ***Additional Resources***

### **TRAINERS**

The following trainers provide assistance to organizations, schools, corporations, and other institutions to help you and your staff develop trans-affirming policies and practices in your organization.

- **Heath Fogg Davis, PhD:** <https://heathfoggdavis.com>  
Davis is also the author of *Beyond Trans: Does Gender Matter?* (2017), which offers practical guidance on how individuals and organizations can develop trans-affirming administrative policies that are institutionally smart. The book provides a “gender audit” exercise, complete with worksheets, to help organizations critically evaluate when, where, and how “sex” and “gender” may or may not be relevant to organizational goals.
- **Willy Wilkinson:** <http://www.willywilkinson.com>  
Wilkinson conducts cultural competency trainings on LGBTQ ACCESS (advancing cultural competency and equality in services and systems) and is the author of *Born on the Edge of Race and Gender: A Voice for Cultural Competency* (2015).

- **The Transgender Training Institute (TTI):** <http://www.transgendertraininginstitute.com>  
TTI provides trainings and consulting services across the United States on a wide range of topics, including trans-related professional development trainings, facilitation trainings, and creation of customized curricula.

## PHILADELPHIA-SPECIFIC COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- **TransWork:** <http://transwork.org>  
A program of the Independence Business Alliance, TransWork connects businesses with trans and gender-nonconforming advocates and communities. The program will help employers to become trans-affirming and hire more trans and gender-nonconforming employees.
- **Naiymah Sanchez, ACLU of Pennsylvania:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/ProudTransLatina>  
Sanchez is the Transgender Advocacy Coordinator for the ACLU of Pennsylvania, which is based in Philadelphia. She brings years of trans and gender-nonconforming advocacy, specifically with people of color, to trainings and programming.
- **QSPACES:** <https://www.qspaces.org>  
QSPACES provides training for health care providers on LGBTQ-accessible and -affirming health care.



*Photo courtesy of JD Stokely.*

## DIAGRAMS

Transgender and gender-nonconforming people are much more susceptible to disproportionate incarceration, deportation, and poverty. These diagrams- originally created by the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and re-designed by Leila Abdelrazaq- illustrate how various factors make up an interlocking system that keep many trans and gender-nonconforming people in vulnerable and inequitable situations.

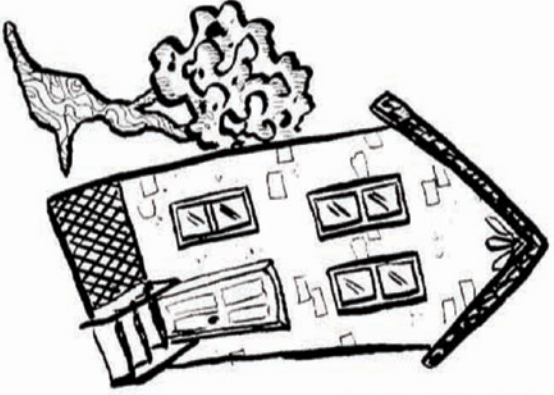


# TRANSGENDER YOUTH & THE PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

## HOME

Get kicked out of the house for being transgender or gender variant

Leave home because they can't express themselves, and/or are being abused by parents or other family members



## HOMELESSNESS

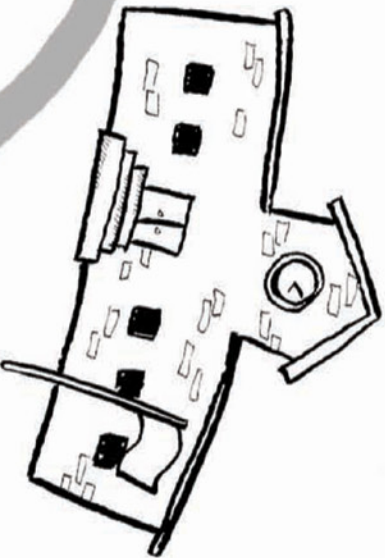
Living on the streets leads to increased police harassment

Arrest for "quality of life" crimes like sleeping on the street and turnstyle jumping

## SCHOOL

Drop out due to severe harassment and discrimination by peers, teachers, and school safety officers

Don't graduate high school, go on to college, or get GED so it's harder to get jobs with livable wages



## SHELTER/FOSTER CARE

Denied from gender-segregated shelters  
Not allowed to express themselves in foster care/group homes

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Gender identity discrimination leads to lack of jobs, leaving jobs, or getting fired  
Arrest for committing survival crimes like sex work or selling drugs for income

## JUVENILE/CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Subjected to physical, sexual, verbal abuse based on gender identity during searches and intake procedures, and are often put into the wrong gendered facilities based on genitalia

Denied access to hormone and other necessary treatments  
No statistics on trans youth in the system, so they remain invisible



fierceny.org

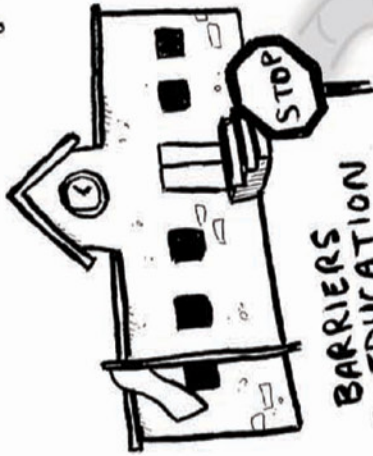


leeway foundation

leeway.org

Illustrated by Lelia Abdelrazaq  
lalalella.com

# SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY: POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS



## BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Drop out due to harassment, violence, and/or discrimination at school; lack of supportive GED programs

Can't apply for school or access higher education due to lack of I.D., or because their I.D. doesn't reflect their correct name or gender; school records often hard to update and correct

Transgender and gender non-conforming people are much more likely to be poor or homeless than cis-gender people.

Discrimination in hiring and workplace because few laws prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of gender identity; trans-aware legal assistance is hard to find and discrimination is difficult to prove

Unequal access to benefits because benefit applications require I.D., which may show an incorrect name or gender; if cut off from public assistance illegally, trans-aware legal help is hard to find

Can't apply for jobs or access good employment due to lack of I.D. or because their I.D. doesn't reflect their correct name or gender

## BARRIERS TO INCOME



Persistent and severe medical problems; transphobic violence leads to mental and emotional trauma

No access to healthcare: trans people are often denied treatment or are afraid to seek care due to past mistreatment

Trans-specific physical and mental healthcare needs are often not provided or covered even if insured; shortage of knowledgeable healthcare professionals who can provide trans-specific care

Bias, discrimination, and ignorance in medicine; inappropriate and harmful treatment, including institutionalization; damaging, incompetent medical procedures; and common disregard of trans people's complaints

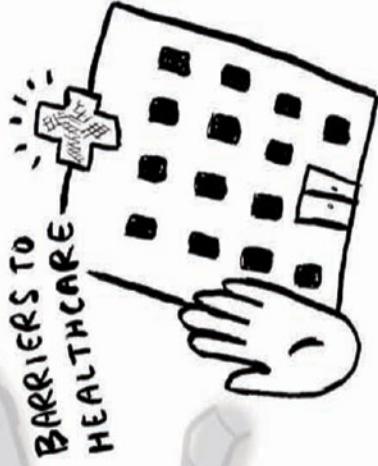


## BARRIERS TO HOUSING

Permanent housing is inaccessible due to housing discrimination in private housing market; low-income housing options are often gender-segregated and trans people are rejected for placement

Many trans youth are disowned and kicked out of the home by abusive parents and foster parents; trans youth are not allowed to express their gender identity in gender-segregated group homes and are denied access to affirming clothing and support

Temporary housing is inaccessible due to frequent rejection from gender-segregated shelters, being placed into the wrong shelter, or facing harassment and abuse from other clients or untrained staff



## BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE

# SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY: IMMIGRATION

Trans and gender non-conforming people are disproportionately subjected to deportation and detention

## BARRIERS TO IMMIGRATION STATUS

Bars imposed by undocumented history or criminal records: most convictions and some arrests make immigrants deportable, even if they have status

Job discrimination decreases likelihood of employment-based immigration

Rejection from family members lowers opportunity for family-based immigration; legal officials often don't recognize chosen or extended family members

Limited immigration claims available due to lack of access to trans-friendly legal help, few connections with immigrant communities to get information, combined with strict time bars, bias, and harassment from immigration officers

## CRIMINALIZATION OF TRANS PEOPLE

Profiled by police as violent or prostitutes

Falsely arrested for lack of proper identity documents or for using the "wrong" bathroom

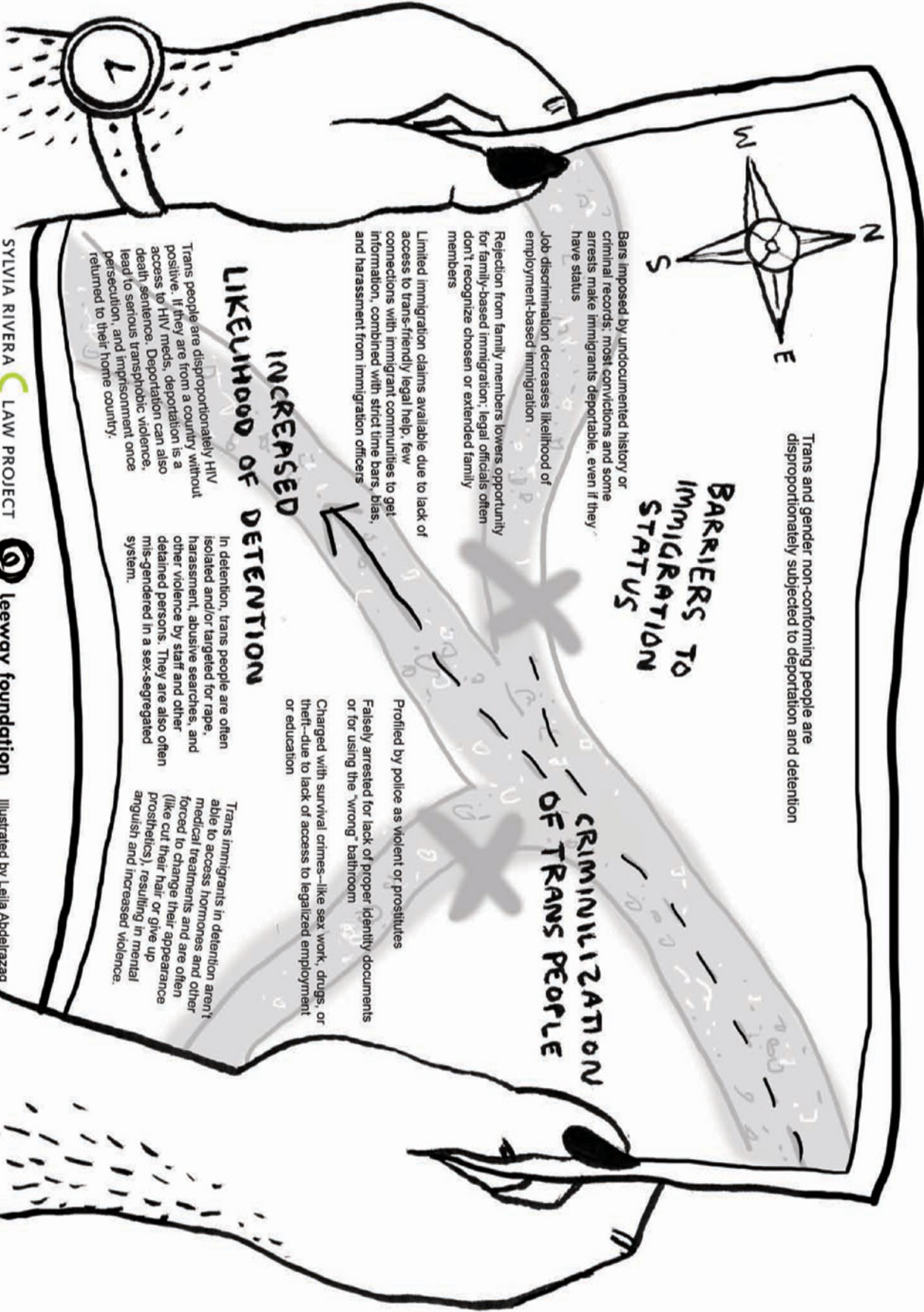
Charged with survival crimes—like sex work, drugs, or theft—due to lack of access to legalized employment or education

## INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF DETENTION

Trans people are disproportionately HIV positive. If they are from a country without access to HIV meds, deportation can also mean death sentence. Deportation can also lead to serious transphobic violence, persecution, and imprisonment once returned to their home country.

In detention, trans people are often isolated and/or targeted for rape, harassment, abusive searches, and other violence by staff and other detained persons. They are also often mis-gendered in a sex-segregated system.

Trans immigrants in detention aren't able to access hormones and other medical treatments and are often forced to change their appearance (like cut their hair or give up prosthetics), resulting in mental anguish and increased violence.



# SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY: CRIMINAL "IN"JUSTICE

POOR & HOMELESS  
PEOPLE ARE...

...subjected to profiling and excessive police presence in their communities

...charged with survival crimes—like sex work, drugs, or theft—due to lack of access to legalized employment or education

...charged with "quality of life" crimes—like sleeping outside, turnstile jumping, or loitering—due to lack of money or housing resources

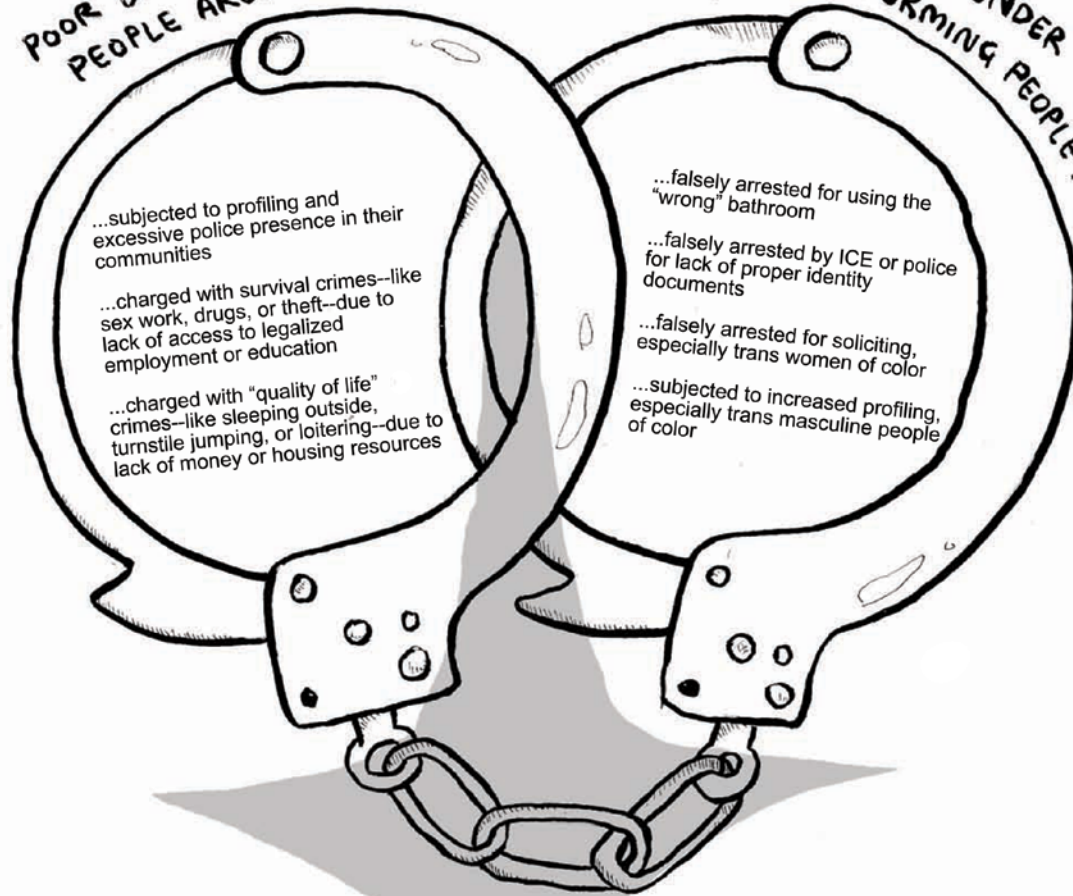
TRANS & GENDER  
NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE ARE...

...falsely arrested for using the "wrong" bathroom

...falsely arrested by ICE or police for lack of proper identity documents

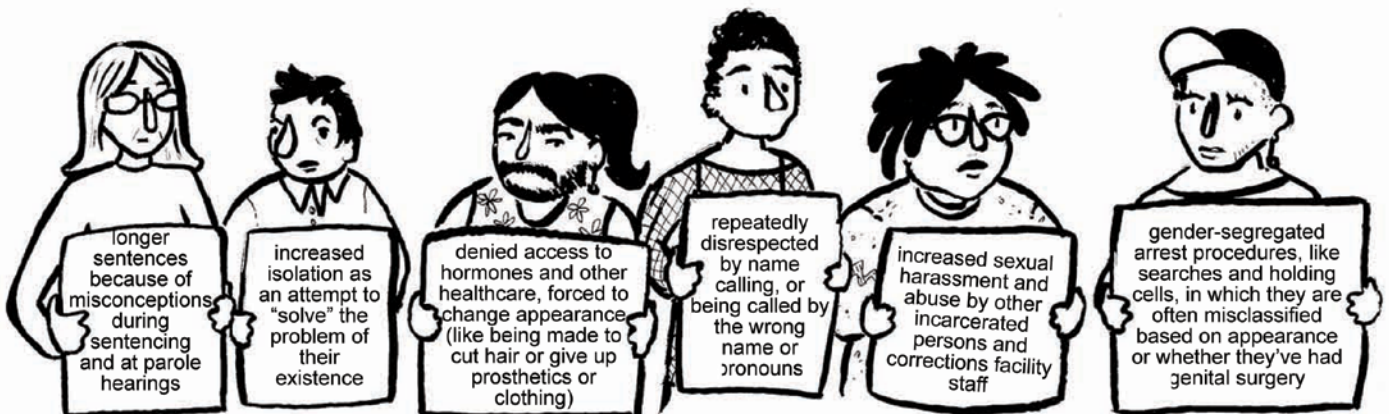
...falsely arrested for soliciting, especially trans women of color

...subjected to increased profiling, especially trans masculine people of color



Poor and homeless people and transgender and gender non-conforming people are both criminalized, profiled, and over-policed, which leads to a disproportionately higher risk of arrest, police harassment, violence, and incarceration for low-income trans people.

Poor trans people face additional struggles while incarcerated. These include:





*Mesopotamia LaFae by Emily Smith Satis.*

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## FURTHER READING

- **Dos and Don'ts of Pronoun Etiquette (web comic):**  
<https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/11/pronoun-etiquette>
- **Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, Learning Center:**  
<http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=lib-00-02>

In the section that follows, we describe a few organizations that have implemented some of these best practices in order to be more welcoming, inclusive, and affirming of TGNC communities.

# SECTION 3: Organizational Transformation in Practice

Here are a few stories of organizations that have grappled with important questions of gender justice, trans inclusion and affirmation, and related questions of feminism and/or LGBTQ rights and justice. Each of these organizations has undergone important structural shifts to become more directly trans-affirming. The changes that these organizations have made — in mission, vision, or naming of particular values — provide important insights for cultural organizations, foundations, community groups, and service providers.



*Black Excellence Tour attendees with CeCe McDonald and Joshua Allen.  
Photo by Victoria Ford.*

# Leeway Foundation

**Arts & Culture | Foundation | Feminism | Racial Justice**

## MISSION

Leeway Foundation supports women and trans artists and cultural producers working in communities at the intersection of art, culture, and social change. Through grantmaking and other programs, Leeway promotes artistic expression that amplifies the voices of those on the margins, promotes sustainable and healthy communities, and works in the service of movements for economic and social justice.

## JOURNEY

Leeway was founded as a woman-artist-focused organization. This vision of what makes a “woman” has always been open-ended, according to Lee Alter, the founder of Leeway. Founded with a second-wave feminist lens, the organization initially catered primarily to cisgender women artists in traditional disciplines. In the early 2000s, the organization shifted its focus to women artists who worked at the intersection of art and social change. Soon after this shift, the organization began engaging in conversations about rethinking Leeway’s definitions of “gender” and “gender justice.” These conversations included community outreach to local LGBTQ organizations and trans and gender-nonconforming community members, who were paid to provide their opinions and feedback on the process. Staff and board members worked closely with local community and organization representatives to shift Leeway’s mission, vision, and materials, and to ensure that local community members were aware that Leeway grants and programs could be a resource to TGNC communities. Today, Leeway is known among queer and TGNC-identified artists in Philadelphia as a crucial resource for personal and artistic support.

## IN THEIR WORDS

**From Denise Brown, executive director (10/24/17 interview):**

*“I kept saying, you know, you gotta be really clear that you want to do this. This is really going to shift the organization in a lot of different ways. And if you’re not really serious about it, you shouldn’t engage it.”*

*“How do we not continue to marginalize folks? That became part of the process, and it had to be more than saying that this constituency can apply for a grant — like, how do we create the same space for everyone? And also ... Leeway is not a trans organization. I guess we could say it’s a feminist organization that funds women and trans artists. And so holding that as well, the work becomes about how to build community from those constituencies.”*

*“We have a responsibility to hear all of the voices of our constituents, of which trans communities are a part.... But the underlying intent is that members of all those constituencies are welcomed and honored and respected.”*

*“I think people don’t realize that somebody actually has to get out of the chair. And so, I think sometimes part of the reason why people want me to be a part of this conversation is that I’ll often say that somebody had to get out of a chair in order for me to be in it.”*

# Girls Rock Philly

## Arts & Culture | Feminism | Youth

### MISSION

Girls Rock Philly (GRP) is a youth-centered music organization dedicated to building an intergenerational community of girls, women, and trans and gender-nonconforming people. Through the practice of fearless expression, artistic experimentation, and collaboration, GRP builds the confidence and leadership skills needed to transform selves and communities.

### JOURNEY

GRP formed in 2006 as part of an emerging group of like-minded nonprofits across the U.S. and internationally, responding to a gap in music mentorship and healthy development opportunities for pre-teen and teenage girls. The Philly chapter of Girls Rock has been one that has remained committed to welcoming volunteers, campers, and staff who identify as female, transgender, and gender-nonconforming. Most recently, after undergoing a strategic planning process between 2016 and 2017, GRP altered its mission statement to reflect the organization's commitment to social change through music.

### IN THEIR WORDS

#### From the GRP diversity statement:

*"Girls Rock Philly honors the diversity of gender expression and supports self-identified female, transgender, and gender-nonconforming individuals to join us in our work. We acknowledge that gender is an ongoing issue and are always open to further discussion surrounding this topic."*

Girls Rock Philly seeks to honor and celebrate the diversity of gender expression. We also acknowledge that this is an evolving and shifting conversation. We strive to grow as an organization and are committed to consistent discussion surrounding this topic.

We also believe that someone's gender intersects and is informed by many different backgrounds and identities. At GRP, we welcome these identities, and affirm them in our space.

**APPLY TO LRC**  
GIRLS ROCK PHILLY'S ADULT ROCK CAMP

**APPLY ONLINE**  
BY NOV 8

**FRI 12/1- SUN 12/3**  
@ MASTERY CHARTER SCHOOL- THOMAS CAMPUS

**NO MUSIC EXPERIENCE NECESSARY.**  
**SLIDING SCALE.**  
**CHILDCARE AVAILABLE**

LRC IS A WEEKEND LONG CAMP FOR WOMEN, TRANS, AND GENDER VARIENT ADULTS 19+ WHO ARE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING AN INSTRUMENT OF CHOICE AND COLLABORATING IN A BAND! INSTRUMENTS INCLUDE GUITAR, BASS, DRUMS, KEYS, AND VOCALS.

**GIRLS ROCK PHILLY 215 776 5246**  
**CAMP@GIRLSROCK-PHILLY.ORG**



# Therapy Center of Philadelphia

## Service Provider | Feminism

### MISSION

Therapy Center of Philadelphia (TCP) has offered a space for healing and transformation since 1972. We are committed to maintaining the diversity of experience and identities in our staff across clinical orientations as well as race, age, class, gender identity, culture, immigration status, and sexual orientation.

### JOURNEY

TCP is a historically women's and feminist nonprofit in Philadelphia that decided to address the issue of becoming fully trans-inclusive and -affirming. In a "transgender transparency report" published in 2016, TCP highlighted the key areas of accountability and change for the organization in the process of trans inclusion. This document openly describes the organization's process to include transgender and gender-nonconforming clients. It also identifies key organizational areas to focus efforts in building a trans-affirming agency: organizational structure and leadership, outreach and marketing, intake and screening, clinical services, physical space, accountability and feedback, and community involvement and advocacy. One significant development that emerged from these focus areas was changing the name of the organization from Women's Therapy Center to Therapy Center of Philadelphia in order to be as safe, inviting, and welcoming as possible to trans and gender-nonconforming populations. Throughout the process, TCP leadership and staff engaged in dialogues with community members and constituents in order to make sure the organization was remaining accountable to community members.

### IN THEIR WORDS

**From Alison Gerig and Eli R. Green, Therapy Center of Philadelphia 2016 Transparency Report:**

*"We are also aware that within movements of trans-inclusion, that inclusion is often done in name only or is done in a way that does not fully honor transgender people and communities. At TCP, our end goal is making sure that all transgender people are fully represented, included, valued, and honored at all levels of the organization (clients, staff, and leadership). We use the phrase 'fully trans-affirming' to represent our commitment to this goal."*

**From Alison Gerig, executive director (11/7/17 interview):**

*"I tend to say [to other organizations interested in making similar shifts]: You will grieve. There is a shift. You have to not be afraid to lose people, who are both privileged and marginalized."*

*"We are always striving to be trans-affirming; we are not fully trans-affirming."*

## Third Wave Fund

### Foundation | Feminism | Racial Justice

#### MISSION

Third Wave Fund resources and supports youth-led gender justice activism to advance the political power, well-being, and self-determination of communities of color and low-income communities. Third Wave defines gender justice as a movement to end patriarchy, transphobia, and homophobia and to create a world free from misogyny.

#### JOURNEY

Third Wave Fund was born out of conversations in the mid-1990s that focused on questions of access and lack of funds for women and girls, specifically emergency abortion funds, scholarships, reproductive rights organizations, and young-women-led groups and projects. As Melissa Meade and Rye Young write in “Queering the Feminist Dollar,” Third Wave was explicitly feminist in its inception, but was always implicitly queer. Rye Young, current executive director, says that conversations about trans and gender-nonconforming communities were always “in the air waves” or “unofficially in the parking lot.” Beginning in the early 2000s, the organization’s board and staff underwent an important shift to focus primarily on gender justice, producing a “gender justice plan,” which involved internal trainings and discussions with foundation peers, along with plans to produce a comprehensive report that documented the process in its entirety. This process led the organization to focus all grant making on gender justice, which allows Third Wave to support issues such as environmental justice, prison reform, living-wage campaigns, trans justice, and more traditional issues such as reproductive rights. Today, over one-third of Third Wave’s total funding goes toward trans-led grassroots organizing.

#### IN THEIR WORDS

**From Melissa Meade and Rye Young, “Queering the Feminist Dollar” (2017):**

*“We have done away with issue areas ... because funding based on issues has often been a way of creating divisions between communities and needs. It artificially separates the ways in which oppression and hierarchies are woven together, so that funders become ‘feminist,’ or ‘queer,’ or ‘anti-racist,’ but not necessarily all together, all at once. Tactics of oppression are always changing and we want to set up our funding structures to be responsive to the changes. We start with communities.”*

**From Rye Young, executive director (10/30/17 interview):**

*“When communities that we know are being impacted by our issues are not being reached, we have to change. It’s not just about getting the word out.... There’s something that’s keeping us from accessing [these communities], and it’s more nuanced and deeper than ‘we just need to do some outreach.’”*

*“When we made the shift to becoming more focused on community-led solutions, it really did open the door to supporting more trans-led work, also work that was coming from more of a solidarity model that included more trans- and cis-identified folks.... So, it’s been a journey, and it’s been helpful to our grantmaking to be more accessible overall.”*

# William Way LGBT Community Center

Service Provider | LGBTQ Justice | Community Center

## MISSION

The William Way Community Center encourages, supports, and advocates for the well-being and acceptance of sexual and gender minorities in the greater Philadelphia region through service, recreational, educational, and cultural programming.

## JOURNEY

The William Way LGBT Community Center was initially founded as the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Philadelphia in 1974, and since its founding has undergone a number of shifts and changes to include and support TGNC people and people of color in Philadelphia. In the organization's growth, key staff and board members as well as Philadelphia LGBT leaders have pushed to diversify the staff, board, and resources so as to be reflective of the diversity of communities in Philadelphia. In this growth, William Way has continued to offer a great deal of programming for TGNC communities, including support groups, employment training and resources, and senior groups. Most recently, William Way has made important efforts to recruit a diversity of TGNC-identified board and staff members and to diversify the John C. Wilcox Archives at the Center to tell more TGNC stories.

## IN THEIR WORDS

**From Chris Bartlett, executive director (10/23/17 interview):**

*"The most important thing is to have the people with the right skill sets on the board, and then to make a really conscious effort to recruit for diversity within those skill sets, and that keeps you from tokenizing. It also means you end up having the right people on the board to meet the different needs."*

*"I actually got a lot of advice from [executive director of Bread & Roses Community Fund] Casey Cook about things that I just didn't know about recruiting, like that it really helps not to exclude people based on educational qualifications. So we did that, and low and behold, we got a much broader range of responses.... If you're looking for equity, why not just leave out job qualifications?"*

*"I was really intent that we were not going to hire unless we had finalists who were people of color and trans people. And then once we had finalists, I would let the cards fall where they would based on who the best qualified people were.... We have to challenge the standardized way of thinking about things, and on the other hand, we don't want to tokenize. That's why, for me, the standard was having a really good pool of finalists. Because I knew that if we didn't, we hadn't done a good job in the recruitment."*

*"[A big part is] thinking about how we invest resources in trans culture here — whether that's having trans artists on the walls, which we've done quite a bit, having trans musicians perform, or having the archives reflect trans people.... And ideally, when all kinds of people are telling their stories through the archive — we've had black gay histories, Latino gay history tellings, lesbian history — they would have an intersection with trans history in every case."*

# SECTION 4:

## Glossary

In what follows, we provide some definitions for terms used throughout this guide. We recognize that the terms involved with identity, gender, and trans and gender-nonconforming experience are always evolving, and we therefore recognize how these terms may not reflect all people's experiences or may become outdated or unused at a certain point.

**Ally:** Someone who recognizes the unearned privilege they receive by being a member of a dominant group, and takes responsibility to bring change to such injustice. Allies include men who work to end sexism, white people who work to end racism, heterosexual people who work to end heterosexism, able-bodied people who work to end ableism, and so on.

**Binary gender system:** Refers to the division of human beings into two mutually exclusive categories of man and woman. Each is assumed to have its own biological and social characteristics. While society generally recognizes that individuals have both masculine and feminine characteristics, women and men are expected to express predominantly those gender characteristics considered appropriate to their medically assigned sex.

**Cisgender:** A term for those who do not identify as transgender. It is used as a way of drawing attention to the unmarked norm, against which trans is identified, in which a person feels that their gender identity matches their body/sex.

**Drag:** A form of performance involving gender. Historically drag has played a role in queer communities and cultures, ranging from drag balls in the African American community dating back to the 1920s to contemporary performance within and outside the queer community.

**FTM:** Refers to "female-to-male." Some people resist the terms FTM and MTF as too "directional" (i.e., you wouldn't call someone who identifies as a lesbian "heterosexual-to-lesbian"), but these terms are still often used among TGNC people. Other acronyms that have become popular as of late are AMAB and AFAB ("assigned male at birth" and "assigned female at birth," respectively) to point out the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender pronouns:** The pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. At times people mispronoun or misgender others by calling them by incorrect pronouns and assuming a person's gender. This can be intentional or unintentional. When it is intentional this is a form of harassment. When it is unintentional it is important to hold ourselves accountable. Please refer to the Pronoun Etiquette section of this guide for more information.

**Genderqueer/gender-nonconforming:** Terms commonly used to describe a person's gender identity that does not fit into the socially constructed gender "norms." These individuals may feel that they are both male and female, neither male nor female, in between genders, on a continuum, or outside of the binary gender system altogether. Other identities may include androgynous, bigender, gender-fluid, gender-neutral, gender-variant, nongendered, pangender, two-spirit, and many more.

**Intersex:** A general term for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive, sexual, or chromosomal makeup that does not seem to fit typical definitions of female or male. Though we speak of intersex as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy does not always show up at birth.

**MTF:** Refers to “male-to-female.” Some people resist the terms FTM and MTF as too “directional” (i.e., you wouldn’t call someone who identifies as a lesbian “heterosexual-to-lesbian”), but these terms are still often used among TGNC people. Other acronyms that have become popular as of late are AMAB and AFAB (“assigned male at birth” and “assigned female at birth,” respectively) to point out the sex assigned at birth.

**Medical transition:** Medical options for transitioning are available, such as various gender affirmation surgeries and hormone therapies. These options are usually expensive and often specifically excluded from health insurance coverage. Whether or not people decide to undergo medical procedures related to gender identity is always a personal decision and process.

**Nonbinary:** Refers to people who identify outside of a traditional gender binary (“male” or “female” / “masculine” or “feminine”). Nonbinary identities can include people who identify with no gender, both binary genders, or all genders. As with all of the identity terms described here, there is no one unifying nonbinary experience.

**They/them:** Frequently seen in Leeway grant applications, some people use these as singular gender-neutral or nonbinary gender pronouns. Other gender-neutral pronouns include zi, hir, and many more.

**Trans:** Leeway Foundation uses the term “trans” in its most inclusive sense, as an umbrella term encompassing transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, two-spirit people, and more generally, anyone whose gender identity or expression is nonconforming and/or different from their birth-assigned gender.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to trans men, trans women, FTMs, MTFs, transsexuals, genderqueers, and gender-nonconforming people.

**Transition:** There are many different ways that a person can transition in terms of gender identity. Some people choose to change their names and pronouns, have surgeries, and take hormones, while others do some, all, or none of those things. Transition refers to a movement, development, or evolution — individuals may see themselves as always transitioning, or may view and reject transitioning as a process that enforces the gender binary system.

**Two-spirit:** A contemporary term that came into being at the 3rd Annual International Gay and Lesbian Native Gathering in 1990. The attendees at the gathering organized a talking circle and came up with the term “two-spirit.” They wanted a term that “reflected the combination of masculinity and femininity which was attributed to males in a feminine role and females in a masculine role” (Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures*, 1998). Two-spirit also reflects a longer history of indigenous gender traditions.

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