



# The SAGE Encyclopedia of Trans Studies

## History

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Although transgender is a contemporary term, individuals who identified and often lived their lives as a gender different from their sex assigned at birth have long existed in the United States and throughout the world. The existence of genders beyond the binary in the United States can be traced to before it was a country, as many Indigenous cultures recognized more than two genders. White colonial societies saw birth-assigned sex as immutable and punished what they saw as gender transgressions, and this remained the dominant framework in the country for more than 300 years. Trans people have succeeded in building communities and gaining recognition and rights in more recent decades, but they continue to face oppression from large parts of society.

### **A Framework for Identifying a Trans History**

Writing trans history is complicated by how perceptions of gender vary by time and place and by the ways we bring our own perspectives into considerations of gender in different eras and cultures. In contemplating whether female-assigned people from the past who presented as male might have been individuals whom we would call trans men today, anthropologist Jason Cromwell offers three questions to consider: whether the individuals indicated that they were men, whether they attempted to modify their bodies to look more traditionally male, and whether they tried to live their lives as men, keeping the knowledge of their female bodies a secret, even if it meant dying rather than seeking necessary medical care. Using this framework, Cromwell argues that jazz musician Billy Tipton would be best categorized as a trans man, since he lived as a man for more than 50 years, kept knowledge of his anatomy from sexual partners by using a prosthetic device, apparently turned down what could have been his big break in the music industry for fear that the additional exposure would out him, and died from a treatable medical condition in 1989 rather than risk disclosure.

Cromwell's questions can apply equally as well to individuals assigned male at birth who presented as female to determine if they were likely trans women. Such instances are significantly less documented in Western cultures, in part because of the difficulty of being read as female before the advent of hormone therapy and permanent hair removal techniques. One well-known example is Jenny Savalette de Lange, a member of Parisian high society who lived as a woman for at least 50 years and who was not discovered to have been assigned male at birth until her death in 1858. She had obtained a new birth certificate that designated her as female and had been engaged to men six times but never married, seemingly to avoid her sex assignment from being discovered.

Cromwell helps us distinguish individuals like Tipton and de Lange, who we would now call trans men and women, respectively, from cis people who presented as a gender other than their sex assignment for economic, social, or sexual reasons but who did not seemingly identify as that other gender. But his questions do not speak to the differences between trans women and men and individuals we now refer to as nonbinary. To make this distinction in regard to historical figures, two other questions can be used: if the individuals continued to present outside of their assigned sex, such as through crossdressing, when it was publicly known that they did so, or if they did so consistently but only in private and thus no one else knew, except perhaps their families. In either case, the important demarcation is that the person did not receive any privilege or benefit from their gender expression other than their own comfort and satisfaction.

### **Gender in Indigenous Cultures**

Cromwell's framework assumes that individuals who might be considered a part of trans history had to hide their gender difference to avoid censure and possible punishment. But some non-Western societies welcomed and had recognized roles for individuals who assumed behaviors and identities different from their sex assigned at birth. Many Indigenous cultures in North America at the time of European conquest enabled male-assigned individuals and, to a lesser extent, female-assigned individuals to dress, work, and live, either partially or completely, as a different gender.

Within most of these Indigenous cultures, male- and female-assigned individuals who assumed different genders were not considered women or men; rather, they constituted separate genders that combined female

and male elements. This fact is reflected in the words that Indigenous societies developed to describe multiple genders. For example, the terms for male-assigned individuals who took on female roles used by the Cheyenne (heemaneh), the Ojibwa (agokwa), and the Yuki (i-wa-musp) translate as “half men, half women” or “men-women.” Similarly, the Zuni called a female-assigned individual who took on male roles a katsotse, or “boy-girl.”

Some Indigenous cultures apparently considered these individuals to possess supernatural powers and afforded them special ceremonial roles; in other cultures, they were less revered and viewed more secularly. In these societies, the status of individuals who assumed different genders seems to have reflected their gender role rather than a special gender status. If women predominated in particular occupations, such as being healers, shamans, and handcrafters, then male-assigned individuals who took on female roles engaged in the same professions. In a similar way, the female-assigned individuals who took on male roles became hunters and warriors.

### **A Public Presence in the Dominant Society**

The cultural inclusion of individuals who assumed nonbinary genders in many Indigenous North American societies stands in stark contrast to the condemnation of gender nonconformity as unnatural and sinful in the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries. Seemingly because gender-nonconforming individuals faced societal condemnation, many hid their gender difference, and relatively few instances of gender nonconformity are documented in the colonial and postcolonial periods. A number of the cases that became known involved female-assigned individuals who were discovered to be living as men only when their bodies were examined following an injury or death, like Billy Tipton in later times. Many male-assigned individuals seemingly had less ability to present effectively in public as female because of their facial hair and physiques, so likely did so mostly in private.

The lack of a public presence for individuals who assumed different genders began to change in the mid-19th century as a growing number of single people left their communities of origin to earn a living, gain greater freedom, or simply see the world. Able to take advantage of the anonymity afforded by new surroundings, these migrants had greater opportunities to fashion their own lives, which included presenting as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth. Some headed out West, where crossdressers were a part of life on the frontier. Others moved between small towns or from rural to urban areas, which enabled them to meet and socialize with others like themselves.

In large cities, individuals who would be referred to today as gay men, trans women, and female-presenting crossdressers began to organize public drag balls in the late 19th century. These balls grew to include hundreds and sometimes thousands of Black and white participants and spectators by the late 1920s and early 1930s in cities such as New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Organizers would typically obtain a license from the police to prevent participants from being arrested for violating ordinances against crossdressing.

### **Sexology Considers Gender Nonconformity**

The enactment of laws in many U.S. cities beginning in the 1850s that made it a crime for a person to appear crossdressed in public reflected the increasing visibility of individuals who assumed gender behaviors and identities different from their assigned sex, as well as the resulting efforts to contain them. Another indication of the growing presence of such individuals in the late 19th century was the interest that U.S. and European physicians began to show in their experiences. The sexologists, as they came to be known, largely pathologized individuals whom they saw as “gender inverters”—that is, having a gender inverted or opposite of their assigned sex—and did not distinguish them from individuals who pursued same-sex sexual relationships.

German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld is credited with bringing a more normalizing view of gender nonconformity to the medical literature and for recognizing it as a separate phenomenon from same-sex sexuality in the early 20th century. In his epic 1910 work *Transvestites*, Hirschfeld coined the word

transvestite—from the Latin *trans* or “across” and *vestis* or “clothing”—to refer to people who presented as a gender different from their sex assignment. In today’s nomenclature, his definition included both crossdressers and trans women and men.

### **The Development of Gender-Affirming Surgeries and Hormone Therapy**

Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexual Science, the world’s first institute devoted to sexology, also performed the earliest recorded genital transformation surgeries. The first documented case was that of Dora Richter, a female-identified individual who completed her transition with a vaginoplasty in 1931. The institute’s most well-known patient was the Dutch painter Lili Elbe. She was also one of its last, as the Nazis destroyed the institute in 1933, holding a public bonfire of its contents.

Although opportunities for surgical transition diminished with the destruction of Hirschfeld’s institute, the development of synthetic testosterone and estrogen in the 1930s enabled hormone therapy to become more affordable and, over time, more widely available. The first female-assigned individual known to have taken testosterone for the purpose of transforming his body was the British physician Michael Dillon in 1939. In addition, he underwent more than a dozen operations to construct a penis, beginning in 1946. His were the first recorded female-to-male genital surgeries performed on a non-intersex person.

In 1946, Dillon also published *Self: A Study in Ethics and Endocrinology*, a book that focused on the need for society to understand people who were a gender different from their assigned sex. Dillon was especially critical of the psychologists who believed that they could change the sense of self of gender-nonconforming individuals through therapy, when what their clients really needed was access to hormones and genital surgeries. Making an argument that would become commonplace in the years that followed, Dillon reasoned that since the mind cannot be changed to fit the body, the body should be altered where possible to fit one’s gender identity. *Self*, though, was not widely circulated, and Dillon sought to avoid public attention, even going into exile when he was outed by the media.

### **The Rise of the Concept of Transsexuality**

Instead of Dillon, the leading advocate in the 1950s and 1960s for providing hormones and surgeries to gender-nonconforming people became U.S. endocrinologist Harry Benjamin. He began prescribing hormones to them and suggesting surgeons abroad, as no U.S. physician at that time would openly perform gender-affirming operations. Along with U.S. physician David O. Cauldwell, Benjamin referred to those who desired to change their sex as “transsexuals” in order to distinguish them from “transvestites.”

While Benjamin raised awareness of transsexuals among medical professionals, it was his patient Christine Jorgensen who educated society. Through the publicity given to her 1952 transition, Jorgensen brought the concept of “sex change” into everyday conversations, served as a role model for many other binary trans individuals to understand themselves and pursue medical treatment, and transformed the debate about the efficacy of providing hormones and gender-affirming surgeries to individuals who identified as a gender different from their assigned sex. Following the media frenzy over Jorgensen’s transition, much of the U.S. public began to recognize that “sex change” was indeed possible.

Although hearing about Jorgensen helped many trans women in the United States understand themselves and offered a sense of hope that they too could change their sex, few were able to do so. Most continued to have to travel to other countries for gender-affirming surgery through the mid-1960s. However, this situation changed in 1966, when the Johns Hopkins University opened the first gender identity clinic in the United States to diagnose and treat binary trans individuals and to conduct research related to transsexuality. Similar programs were soon established at other leading universities, and within 10 years, more than 40 university-affiliated gender clinics existed throughout the United States

The sudden proliferation of health care services for trans individuals reflected not only the effect of Benjamin’s work and the influence of a prestigious university like Hopkins on other institutions but also the behind-the-scenes involvement of millionaire philanthropist Reed Erickson. A trans man and a patient of Benjamin,

Erickson created a foundation that paid for Benjamin's research and helped fund the Hopkins program and other gender identity clinics. The agency also disseminated information related to transsexuality and served as an indispensable resource for the trans community.

The establishment of gender identity clinics at leading universities called attention to the health care needs of binary trans people and helped to legitimize gender-affirming surgery. At the same time, though, the clinics also institutionalized a model of transsexuality that excluded many from the definition of transsexual and denied them access to hormones and surgery. To qualify for surgery, someone had to have felt that they were in the "wrong" body from their earliest memories and be attracted to individuals of the same birth sex but as a member of the "other" sex (i.e., be heterosexual after transition). The clinics also expected trans people to conform to stereotypical gender norms, and the likelihood of passing as one's desired sex was a main criterion in gaining access to surgery. Unable to meet these narrow and biased criteria, the vast majority of trans aspirants were turned away from the clinics.

### **Organizing Among Crossdressers and Drag Queens**

The first enduring trans organization in the United States was started by female-presenting heterosexual crossdressers, or "transvestites," as they were then known. In 1952, a group of crossdressers in Los Angeles led by Virginia Prince quietly created a mimeographed newsletter, *Transvestia: The Journal of the American Society for Equity in Dress*. Although its distribution was limited to a small number of crossdressers and it lasted just two issues, *Transvestia* was apparently the first specifically trans publication in the United States and served as a trial run for wider organizing among crossdressers. In 1960, Prince relaunched *Transvestia* as a bimonthly magazine, and by the mid-1960s, it had more than 1,000 subscribers from across the country. Prince also established an organization for heterosexual crossdressers and their wives and partners in 1961. Known today as the Society for the Second Self, or Tri-Ess, it is the oldest national trans organization.

As the word crossdresser slowly replaced transvestite as the preferred term among most members of the community, it also began to be applied only to heterosexual men. Gay and bisexual men who presented as female increasingly referred to themselves as drag queens and carved out spaces for themselves in bars, restaurants, and other venues in large cities that catered to (or at least tolerated) them, despite regular police crackdowns. One of the most famous drag queens in the 1950s and 1960s, José Sarria, performed at San Francisco's Black Cat Bar and helped turn it into a social and cultural center for the city's drag community, until harassment from law enforcement and local authorities forced the bar to close.

By the late 1960s, Black drag queens were organizing their own events. Continuing the tradition of drag balls, these more contemporary balls began in Harlem and initially focused on extravagant feminine drag performances. As the balls attracted larger and larger audiences, the competitions became fiercer and more varied, with performers "walking" (competing) in a number of categories. The many individuals seeking to participate in ball culture in the mid-1970s led to the establishment of "houses," groups of Black and Latinx "children" who gathered around a "house mother" or less often a "house father." Given that many of the competitors were youth who had been thrown out of their homes for being gay or trans, the houses provided a surrogate family and a space where they could belong. The ball culture spread to other cities in the 1980s and 1990s and achieved mainstream visibility in 1990 through Jennie Livingston's documentary *Paris Is Burning* and Madonna's megahit song "Vogue."

### **Trans Power!**

The 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City were not a unique event but the culmination of more than a decade of militant opposition by poor and working-class LGBTQ people in response to discriminatory treatment and police brutality. Much of this resistance took the form of spontaneous, everyday acts of defiance that received little attention at the time, even in LGBTQ communities. For example, historian Susan Stryker recounts two confrontations with the police that, until the 2000s, were largely unknown. One night in May 1959, two Los Angeles police officers went into Cooper Do-nuts—an all-night coffeehouse popular with drag queens and gay male hustlers, many of whom were Black and Latinx—and began harassing and arresting the patrons in drag. The customers responded by fighting back, leading the police to retreat and call in backup. In the

melee, the drag queens who had been arrested were able to escape.

A similar incident occurred in San Francisco in 1966 at Compton's Cafeteria—a 24-hour restaurant that, like Cooper's, was frequented by drag queens and male hustlers, many of whom were people of color. According to Stryker, the management called the police one August night, as it had done in the past, to get rid of a group of young drag queens. When a police officer tried to remove one of the queens forcibly, a riot ensued. Vastly outnumbered, the police ran outside to call for reinforcements, only to have the drag queens chase after them, beating the officers with their purses and kicking them with their high heels. The incident served to empower the city's drag community and motivated many to begin to organize for their rights.

Three years later, the Stonewall Riots inspired gender-nonconforming people across the country to activism on an even greater scale. As with the earlier confrontations in Los Angeles and San Francisco, the immediate impetus for the Stonewall uprising was oppression by the local police. But the events that began on June 28, 1969, also reflected long-simmering anger against anti-LGBTQ discrimination.

The police raided the Stonewall Inn, an unlicensed, multiracial bar, and, as usual, began arresting customers who did not have identification and those who were crossdressed. Unlike in the past, the other patrons did not scatter but instead congregated outside and, with other LGBTQ people from the neighborhood, taunted the police as they tried to place the arrestees into a patrol wagon. As the crowd grew, so did their anger toward the police for their rough treatment of the drag queens and at least one butch lesbian. People began to throw coins at the officers, and when this failed to halt the brutality, they hurled whatever they could find, including bricks from a nearby construction site. Even the arrival of a riot control unit could not immediately quell the uprising. The police eventually succeeded in dispersing the crowd but only for the night. The rioting was similarly violent the following evening—some witnesses say more so—and demonstrations continued for the next several days.

The effects of the Stonewall Riots were both immediate and far-reaching. LGBTQ youth, in particular, felt a sense of empowerment and were unwilling to remain in the closet. At the time of the Stonewall Riots, gay rights groups existed at just six U.S. colleges, almost all of which were large universities in the Northeast. By 1971, groups had been formed at hundreds of colleges throughout the country. Reflecting the sense of militancy that had fueled the uprising, many of the new groups called themselves Gay Liberation Fronts (GLFs) and typically had a more radical political agenda than the earlier student organizations. Many of these groups were also initially more welcoming to trans people than the pre-Stonewall groups, and a number of trans people helped form GLFs.

Trans people also established their own organizations in the immediate aftermath of the Stonewall Riots. Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, two trans women of color who had been involved in the riots, founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in New York City in 1970 to support and fight for the rights of the many young trans people who were living on the city's streets. Rivera and Johnson also opened STAR House, a place where the youth could receive shelter, clothing, and food. The house remained open for 2 or 3 years and inspired similar efforts in Chicago, California, and England. Also, in New York City in 1970, Lee Brewster and Bunny Eisenhower founded the Queens Liberation Front and led a campaign that decriminalized crossdressing in New York. Brewster also began *Drag*, one of the first politically oriented trans publications, in 1970.

### **The Anti-Trans Backlash**

Despite the central role of gender-nonconforming people in the Stonewall Riots and their involvement in the political organizing that followed, much of the broader movement soon abandoned them in an effort to appear more acceptable to mainstream society. Six months after the riots, a group comprised mostly of white middle-class gay men formed the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) in New York City to work solely for gay rights. The group did not consider trans people to be relevant to its mission, and they were discouraged from joining. Similar gay groups that excluded trans people subsequently formed in other cities.

Trans women also faced rejection in the 1970s from some lesbian feminists, who viewed them not as women but as "male infiltrators" and sought to exclude them from "women's spaces." One of the first victims of this

prejudice was Beth Elliott, an openly trans lesbian activist who was pushed out of the organization Daughters of Bilitis in 1972 and then forced to leave the 1973 West Coast Lesbian Conference, which she helped to organize, because of hostility from some attendees. Another target was Sandy Stone, a sound engineer who, as part of the all-women Olivia Records, helped create the genre of women's music in the 1970s. Stone had disclosed her transsexuality to the record collective and had its support, but when her gender history became widely known, Olivia was deluged with threats of a boycott and even violence if Stone was not fired. Fearing that they would be put out of business, the collective reluctantly asked Stone to resign, which she did in 1979.

Arguably the most vitriolic and influential attack on trans people was Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, published in 1979 and reissued in 1994. Raymond fomented the witch hunt against Stone and effectively made trans women pariahs in many lesbian feminist communities. For Raymond, trans women were not women but "castrated" men who were a creation of the medical and psychological specialties that arose in support of gender-affirming surgeries—the "transsexual empire" of her title—to undermine feminism. To thwart this supposed plot, Raymond advocated for a drastic reduction in the availability of gender-affirming surgeries and recommended that trans individuals instead undergo "gender reorientation" (Stryker, 2017, 135).

But far from being a "transsexual empire," the medical establishment largely shared Raymond's prejudices, seeing trans people as needing mental and not physical intervention. Facing an anti-trans backlash, the gender identity clinics performed even fewer surgeries and began to shut down altogether, starting with the Johns Hopkins program in 1979. The following year, the idea that trans people were mentally ill was codified into the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). Transsexuality continued to be listed as a psychological disorder in subsequent editions, despite the efforts of some trans activists and allies to remove the diagnosis (just as "homosexuality" had been removed previously). The 1994 version of the DSM replaced the category "Transsexualism" with "Gender Identity Disorder," but the diagnostic criteria remained largely unchanged. The 2013 edition of the DSM helped destigmatize transsexuality by replacing "Gender Identity Disorder" with "Gender Dysphoria," which was described as emotional distress resulting from incongruity between one's gender identity and assigned sex. However, this version still largely pathologizes gender nonconformity among children.

### **Trans Activism in the Late 20th Century**

The 1970s and early 1980s can be considered the contemporary nadir for trans people. However, the period did have a few bright spots. For example, this time marked the beginning of a steady stream of trans autobiographies, including Jan Morris's *Conundrum* (1974), Nancy Hunt's *Mirror Image* (1978), Renée Richards's *Second Serve* (1983), and the first full-length narrative by a trans man published in the United States, Mario Martino's *Emergence* (1977).

More trans people also began to turn to activism at this time to counter the stigma and hostility they experienced. For example, the first trans male support groups were started in the 1970s and early 1980s, including ones in Los Angeles, New York City, and Toronto. The first trans male educational and support organization in the United States, which was called simply "FTM," was begun in San Francisco in 1986 by Lou Sullivan. As the group grew to become the largest trans male organization in the world, it changed its name to FTM International.

The larger trans rights movement also expanded significantly in the 1990s, facilitated by the increasing use of the term transgender to encompass all individuals whose gender identity or expression differed from their sex assignment. This understanding became most strongly associated with writer and activist Leslie Feinberg, who called on all people who face discrimination for not conforming to gender norms to organize around their shared oppression in hir 1992 pamphlet *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* and in hir subsequent books, *Transgender Warriors* and *Trans Liberation*. The expansive meaning of the term was further popularized by writers such as Kate Bornstein and Martine Rothblatt, and this usage became commonplace by the late 1990s.

The broad-based political movement that Feinberg envisioned came to fruition in response to continued acts of discrimination and violence against trans people. Reflecting the persistence of anti-trans bias among some

lesbian feminists, trans men were often labeled traitors and exiled from the lesbian feminist movement, and trans women were frequently prevented from joining it. Trans women were banned from the National Lesbian Conference in 1991, and a trans woman, Nancy Jean Burkholder, was expelled that same year from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. The growth of an out trans community over the course of little more than a decade is demonstrated by the different responses to the expulsions of Stone and Burkholder from lesbian-feminist cultural institutions. While few spoke publicly in Stone's defense in 1979, the ouster of Burkholder in 1991 was widely denounced and led to protests at "Michigan" itself, with trans activists and allies creating "Camp Trans" across from the entrance to the festival.

It was not only lesbian feminists who discriminated against trans people in the early 1990s. When lesbian and gay leaders were planning to hold a march in Washington in 1993, trans activists and supporters sought to have transgender people added to the title of the event, but the march's national steering committee voted to name it the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. Like their banishment from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, their exclusion from the title of the march prompted many trans people to become more politically active and for the trans community to become more organized.

Another major incident that mobilized a large number of trans people was the murder of 21-year-old Brandon Teena in rural Nebraska in 1993. Members of the direct action group Transexual Menace held a vigil outside of the courthouse where one of the murderers was standing trial in 1995. The event was a turning point for trans activism because it was the first highly visible national demonstration organized by trans people and helped draw unprecedented media attention to an anti-trans hate crime.

In addition to Camp Trans and Transexual Menace, a number of other trans institutions and groups were established in the early and mid-1990s. Dallas Denny created the American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS) in Decatur, Georgia, in 1990 to disseminate information about trans people. One of the largest annual trans events, the Southern Comfort conference, began in Atlanta in 1991, and the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, a yearly meeting to discuss strategies for creating trans-supportive laws, was convened by attorney Phyllis Frye in Houston from 1992 to 1997. In 1995, Riki Wilchins began the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC), a national organization whose accomplishments included producing the first report on hate crimes against gender-nonconforming people and holding an annual National Gender Lobbying Day to urge members of Congress to address gender-based violence and discrimination.

The 1990s also saw the highly visible, direct-action tactics pioneered by radical groups like ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and Queer Nation begin to infuse the trans movement. The first trans organization to reflect this new queer activism was Transgender Nation, a subgroup of San Francisco's Queer Nation chapter, which was formed in 1992 by Anne Ogborn to fight anti-trans prejudice. Soon, Transgender Nation chapters were established in several other cities. Although it was short-lived, Transgender Nation helped inspire the trans movement to become more visible and confrontational.

But the most significant factor in the development of a national trans movement may have been the rise of the Internet, beginning in the 1990s. Being able to go online enabled many trans people to understand and accept themselves more easily and quickly, connect with others who shared their specific gender identity, and organize trans groups and political actions.

### **Contemporary Trans Activism and Visibility**

The 2000s have witnessed a tremendous increase in trans rights laws and policies, which reflects the successful advocacy of many national trans organizations, including the National Center for Transgender Equality, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and the Transgender Law Center. In addition, a number of national LGBTQ and trans-supportive legal organizations have extensively worked on trans issues, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), GLAAD, the National LGBTQ Task Force, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Lambda Legal. These and other groups have called attention to the widespread mistreatment of trans people and have sought to change public perception and the political and legal climate.

One visible response to anti-trans violence and discrimination has been the Transgender Day of

Remembrance, an event held every November 20th to memorialize those who have been killed in the past year because of their gender identity or expression. Begun as a candlelight vigil in San Francisco in 1999 to honor Rita Hester, a Black woman murdered in Allston, Massachusetts, the Day of Remembrance is marked around the world today. Reflecting the intersections of racism, misogyny, and transphobia, most of those killed each year are Black and Latinx women.

The 2000s have also seen a dramatic growth in the number of young people who identify as trans and, along with it, a proliferation in how they characterize their gender identities. Whereas trans individuals before the 1990s were largely limited to identifying as a “transsexual” or “crossdresser,” those who understand their gender to be different from their assigned sex today have a seemingly limitless number of words with which to describe themselves, fueled by the ability to coin and circulate terms on social media. Much of the new language is used to characterize nonbinary gender identities, including individuals who identify in various ways as genderqueer, gender fluid, and agender.

As the number of individuals who come out as trans or gender nonconforming in various ways continues to grow, it is likely that the crossing and blurring of gender lines will become even more common and accepted. The increasing visibility is also likely to lead to much greater support for trans rights, as many cis people will find that individuals they care about—friends, coworkers, and family members—are trans. In the past two decades, trans activists and allies in the United States have succeeded in advocating for trans-supportive laws and policies in a growing number of states, municipalities, schools, and corporations; the years ahead should see even more progress made toward the recognition and full inclusion of people of all genders.

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See also [Activism](#); [Autobiographies](#); [Ballroom](#); [Crossdressers as Part of the Trans Community](#); [Crossdressing, History of](#); [Indigenous People](#); [LGBTQ Movement](#); [Trans Inclusion In/Exclusion From](#); [Nonbinary Genders](#); [Trans Men](#); [Trans Women](#); [Women’s Movement](#); [Trans Inclusion In/Exclusion From](#)

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