**THE MISSION**

This paper is created and written completely by transgender and gender non-conforming youth. Our mission is to advocate, celebrate and educate transgender youth and allies. We want to empower our community through visibility and educate others. We thank you for reading and want to encourage you to think openly and love unconditionally.

Contributors. Rain Dehel (Age 18), Seasson Rosenfeld (Age 13), Eden-Aksel Pratt (Age 17) Grey Logdowski (Age 16)

**WHO WE ARE**

**THE COMPLEXITIES OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**BY RAI N DEHEL (HE/THEY)**

Mental illnesses often exhibit many similar and overlapping symptoms. This makes it more difficult to diagnose the root cause of problems based on how issues might appear on the surface. This issue disproportionately impacts LGBT+ individuals as they experience mental illness at a rate far higher than that of cisgender and heterosexual individuals. Combined with a number of other factors, transgender people are left with a long and complicated mental health journey. A notable overlap that transgender people often experience is between that of gender dysphoria and depression. Transgender people are diagnosed with gender dysphoria as a medically definable condition that can be confirmed and requires further action, in this case, transitioning. (Though, it is worth noting that this does look different for everyone.) Having to work through this dysphoria is draining in itself, but in addition, transgender people are significantly more likely to have depression than a cisgender person. As both dysphoria and depression may cause considerable hopelessness, overwhelming dread, or the general desire to seclude oneself, it is difficult to determine where one ends, and the other begins. Navigating coming out with a trans identity and coming out can be very stressful. Compounding a trans identity with mental health issues, makes diagnosing mental illnesses even more difficult. (cont pg 2)

**SONG REVIEW**

**BY EDEN-AKSEL PRATT (HE/HIM)**

The song “Coming Clean” by Green Day - As stated by Billy Joe Armstrong himself, the song is about his struggles with his bisexuality. “Coming Clean” was Armstrong’s way to come out to fans. As Armstrong himself stated, even the first line contains the not so subtle hint of questioning and being uncomfortable with his sexuality. Within further lyrics, he states that he’s “found out how to be a man,” meaning that he’s come to terms with going against the stereotypes for men. In the line “Well, mom and dad will never understand,” Armstrong may be referencing his parents’ relationship with the LGBTQ+ community, as misunderstanding and unsupportive. This song is a great recommendation to anyone who is thinking about coming out or anyone who is struggling with their identity.

**COMING OUT**

**BY SEASSON ROSEN Feld (HE/THEY)**

Coming out is difficult for all members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially for trans people, as we are generally less socially accepted compared to other queer folks. Here is a coming-out story from one trans individual called Steve. “I was in fifth grade, and I guess I was feeling... sad,” says Steve. “My mom invited me to go on a walk with her.” Steve was asked what was wrong. He responded with, “Sometimes I don’t feel like a boy or a girl.” He was told he should just be comfortable with the body he has. He didn’t feel comfortable labeling himself as trans or giving his preferred name at the time, as he knew his mom thought he was too young to know anything about what transgender even means. Steve states that he now identifies as male, and speaks to his mom more often about gender identity, though she still can barely comprehend and often invalidates him. Steve’s mom’s reaction is an example of a negative communication towards a transgender person. This shows them that you’re not supportive. A positive communication would be immediately showing unwavering love and support for someone who has come out to you and offering them the resources they need to be their true, authentic self.
ANTI-TRANS BILL DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL IN IDAHO
BY EDEN-AKSEL PRATT (HE/HIM)

In March of 2020, a bill was presented in the state of Idaho that could make it impossible for any transgender or gender non-conforming person from changing the sex marker on IDs, birth certificates, and drivers' licenses. In response to the bill and its effect on the transgender community, trans and nonbinary people protested on the internet, showing anger, sadness, and fear on social media. Several students within the South Eastern Idaho communities were planning a protest when they received the news on August 7th that the bill had lost in court. The bill was marked unconstitutional because an injunction passed in 2018 that prohibited the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare from rejecting a transgender person from changing their name and/or sex marker on their ID and/or birth certificate. A week after the bill was struck down, we came into contact with Makenzie DeLaughder, a Californian who had discovered the bill from an Instagram post. Although there was no immediate effect to them or their friends or family, DeLaughder protested in solidarity of the transgender rights movement and worked with the Davis Phoenix Coalition and Davis LGBTQ+ Youth Group to organize a Trans Lives Matter protests in California, despite the physical distance of the issue. When the bill was struck down, DeLaughder said, “I was just so glad and just... like, it’s hard to put into words... it affects me and the people where I work, even though we don’t live there. It was overwhelming to me.” Today, more and more transgender people find themselves facing state and federal laws such as these. Even in the short past of your life and mine, we have seen bill after bill, laws after laws, reminiscent of the 1960’s before Stonewall. What we need is the voice of the people. When a bill that strikes genuine fear into the people, and controls how they live their lives, we need people to stand up and speak out. The best way to do this is advocacy through protesting, contacting representatives, and helping those in need. It is overwhelming how much support nationwide Idaho residents have gotten. These bills will, unfortunately, continue to come and go, but with people’s advocacy we can defeat them everytime.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL SUPPORT
BY GREY LOGDOWSKI (THEY/THEM)

It is not news that there are many trans youth that are not accepted by their parents. Coming out as a trans during teenage years can be extremely difficult, but it doesn’t always have to be that way. There is evidence that being accepted by parents and close peers is very positive for the mental health of trans youth. Having accepting people in a trans person’s life reduces the risk of suicide in a teen. The suicide rate is monstrous in trans youth. The attempted suicide rate, from a study from the Human Rights Campaign, is over 50% in trans men, 29.9% of trans women and 41.8% of non-binary teens from a survey in 2018. Not only that, but the rate of attempted suicide is higher in LGBTQ+ youth compared to a cisgender person. 21% of trans and non-binary youth say they have attempted suicide compared to 11% of cisgender people according to a study by the Trevor Project.

For all the youth out there reading this who are struggling, be sure to get help. The Trevor Project is a great place to contact if you are considering suicide. And to any parents out there who see this, please please please, if your child comes out to you as trans or non-binary, do everything you can to make your child feel accepted. It could just save their life.

Complexities of Mental Health Continued ...

LGBT+ adults also experience a wider variety of mental health issues than cisgender and heterosexual adults (Reisner et al. 2015). This means that illnesses may show up differently in transgender people and to a greater degree, making mental illnesses even more difficult to pinpoint and manage. This leaves trans people with a number of undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses that may not even be apparent to the individual. Due to the inherent discomfort that comes with being transgender and having gender dysphoria, trans people often unintentionally withhold parts of themselves, and are unable to express the symptoms clearly if they are largely uncomfortable with themselves or depressed at the time of the evaluation. This accentuates the issue of being able to accurately diagnose a mental illness in the individual. It’s not that it isn’t important or even severe, only that they do not feel free enough to express themselves fully without insecurities. Through a combination of treatment options (i.e. transitioning, therapy, etc.) mental illnesses can be properly diagnosed and treated in trans people but it takes time. It is important to keep an individual’s transgender status in mind when diagnosing them and creating this treatment plan as it can impact the experience with mental health and the way they express their symptoms.