

Social Responsibility

Community responsibility

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Change is inevitable. Yet change is often met with fear and unease. Moving from one state to another can be and often is terrifying. Change is a part of life. Accepting change and learning to embrace that change can be a positive thing is a concept that evades many individuals who wish for things to remain as they always have. A certain feeling of nostalgia exists in many who are afraid of change. Holding on to memories, traditions, and beliefs of the past is a wonderful way to stay connected with who you used to be and allow yourself to become grateful for where you are. Yet, for some, this feeling can hinder their ability to grow, learn new things, and engage in positive dialogue with individuals who may present differently than they may be comfortable with.

The queer experience is rooted in change. For many transgender individuals, such as myself, this change is embraced with bittersweet tears of mourning and joy. For me, mourning the person I used to be and the life I thought I was supposed to live was instrumental in accepting myself for who I've always been, despite it being drastically different than what I thought. This change was eased by my loving partner and a community of friends who urged me to change and evolve to be my authentic self. However, many queer individuals are not met with such positive regard. In 2019, a study conducted by the National School Climate Survey concluded that nearly 60% of queer students did not feel safe or a part of a community within their school setting (Community Commons). Pew Research concluded that only 10% of trans individuals felt accepted in their community (Mulvihill). In this essay, we will discuss the importance of community, family, and social support in trans and queer lives and what we can do to help get involved to support the queer and trans community.

When I came out to my family, as someone who grew up hyper-religious, I expected the backlash and lack of support. However, despite this, it did not ease the pain of having my mother

condemn my very personhood, citing bible verses and speaking death over my existence.

Unfortunately, I am not alone in the pain that comes with a lack of support. The importance of support for queer and transgender individuals boils down to five main areas:

Community support reduces the risk of suicide. The Trevor Project reports that LGBTQ+ youth are 4x more likely to attempt suicide than their peers, with a key cited reason being a lack of familial and community support (“Facts About Suicide Among LGBTQ+ Young People”). When trans and queer individuals feel support, regardless of whether or not its from their family, their likelihood of attempting suicide diminishes greatly. Trans people need community. The local community thrives on diversity and inclusion. This means the inclusion of trans people.

Community can improve quality of life. [Communitycommons.org](https://communitycommons.org) details how community can diminish judgment and foster an environment of acceptance and belonging in queer and trans people. This sense of belonging can lead to a higher quality of life and lower suicide rates among queer people (Community Commons). A sense of belonging and purpose can improve anyone’s life, and trans people are no exception. Acceptance and belonging are critical for development and quality of life. Trans people need to feel like they are seen, heard, and accepted, especially when so many are rejected from familial life and support. Community input and support is vital to providing safe spaces for trans people to feel seen.

Community support improves resilience for Trans and Queer people. Recently, The Louisville Pride Center hosted an event I attended. This event was dedicated to sharing resources and advice for trans and queer individuals to help them navigate social and political oppression. Many bills presented by local and federal courts are aimed at trans people, attempting to erase them from public life. Not only do these bills negatively affect the mental health of trans

individuals, it hinders their ability to feel community support when these bills are aimed at pushing trans people from community life. At this event, community members (including clinicians, therapists, lawyers, surgeons, and allies) donated their time to educate, inform, and inspire trans people, providing them with encouragement and hope and arming them with defenses and resources to protect their mental health and fight for their right to exist.

Community support allows Queer individuals to raise awareness for social issues.

My partner and I recently attended a rally for the *No King's Protest*. This protest highlighted the importance of raising awareness for minorities. Racial minorities, queer and trans individuals, and migrants were at the center of the protest. Bills have been presented over the last few months that highlight the importance of community involvement in speaking out for those who cannot speak for themselves. Queer individuals are starting to be pushed out of public life. Community involvement and support of marginalized groups is crucial to keeping minorities from being villainized and pushed out of public life.

Community support allows allies to show support for loved ones. Allies are crucial in the support of queer individuals. Allies are any individual who isn't queer, yet wants to express support and encouragement for those who are. Queer support is vital to ensuring the voices of queer people are heard.

These aspects of the queer community are integral to ensuring the quality of life, reduction in suicide attempts, resilience, and support of queer individuals. But what can the local community and allies do to support these important aspects of queer life?

Financial support of local pride organizations, non-profits, and community efforts is vital to ensuring these efforts continue. Organizations like The Louisville Pride Foundation, The

Trevor Project, and Planned Parenthood thrive on donations. These organizations provide support, resources, and medical care for trans and queer people.

If financial support is unavailable, **donating time** to organizations like The Trevor Project, The Pride Foundation, and pride events can help keep these organizations and events running. Financial support isn't always feasible, but for allies and loved ones of queer and trans individuals, showing support to the queer community is vital to ensuring queer people remain seen and foundational to public life.

Writing to local representatives to oppose bills that harm queer people or support bills that support queer people is a crucial step in the democratic process and in ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. In addition, attending rallies and protests to demonstrate our constitutional right to free speech is a great way to be a voice for the voiceless.

Change, while difficult to navigate and adjust to, is important to ensure that queer people have a voice, remain in public life, are safe, and have a shot at living a full, happy life. All queer people want is to exist, have access to the care they deserve, and a community to engage with and be a part of. Change is important, and positive change is vital. Community includes you. It includes me. It includes those we may not agree with, those we may not know, and those we may love. Community isn't about "right" or "left, about religion, or about agreement. It's about change, molding, fitting, and coming together to celebrate our differences and accept our commonalities. The only way to create positive change is to be a part of that change.

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