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Join a Tumblr Q&A on Issues Facing the LGBT Community

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Summary: Join us for a conversation about the Administration's commitment to LGBT equality.



Ed. Note: The live Q&A has concluded. You can check out the full conversation below:

Last week, the Obama administration took important steps toward LGBT equality and fairness. President Obama's [Executive Order on LGBT Workplace Discrimination](#) went into effect -- protecting about 1.5 million Americans from discrimination based on who they are or who they love. The White House also responded to a petition signed by more than 120,000 Americans about [banning the practice known as conversion therapy](#): President Obama agreed.

To continue the conversation about last week's actions and the Administration's commitment to LGBT equality, we hosted a Tumblr Q&A on Friday with:

- [Valerie Jarrett](#), Senior Advisor to the President
- [Dr. Vivek Murthy](#), U.S. Surgeon General

- [Pam Hyde](#), Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Here's the full conversation:

Hello All!! Welcome to our tumblr q and a. Excited to be here to answer your questions. Ask away.



[leikolemons](#) asked:

How do the president and other officials feel about transgender and lgbt equality?

We answered:

We believe everyone should be treated equally regardless of who you love, what your gender identity or sexual orientation is.

[Check out a new video with White House staff](#)

-Valerie

[interesting-mistakes](#) asked:

We all know that being black can make any adverse situation ever harder. There's any step being taken towards protecting black LBGTs? (especially black trans women that have been killed in a large scale in the last couple of years)

We answered:

It's important to address the intersectionality within the LGBTQ community. Just last week, we welcomed for the first time a group of transgender women of color leaders to the White House for a briefing on community challenges and violence. The week before, we hosted 90 Black LGBTQ Emerging Leaders from across the country to discuss leadership and public service. The White House Council on Women and Girls Executive Director Tina Tchen recently [wrote about it on the blog](#).

[kneesocksevelynn](#) asked:

Will any public statements be made about the protection and acceptance of trans people as a sign to other world leaders? Some countries aren't as fortunate as others with the acceptance of trans people and I imagine any public declaration would give precedence to make positive changes elsewhere too.

We answered:

Surgeon General: Great question! I believe we must lead by example, and one of the levers of my office is to be able to help advocate for initiatives and policy that will improve public health which, of course, knows no borders. In the Obama administration we are working to make our opposition to conversion therapy clear not only at home, but also to our friends and allies abroad. [Read more here](#).

Hey, this is the Surgeon General ready to take your questions about Leelah's Law.



[witchxwood](#) asked:

what are your plans on helping the transgender community? since a lot of violence seems to be directed towards them, with trans women of colour being the majority of that!

We answered:

Surgeon General: Being gay is not a disorder. Being transgender is not a malady that requires a cure. If I had been Leelah Alcorn's physician, that's exactly what I would have told her. My plan on helping transgender people - including transgender people of color - is to raise awareness about our opposition to conversion therapy and encourage health care professionals to do our part to educate parents and children confronting these issues.

[saverock-ndroll](#) asked:

Not a question, but I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for supporting people like myself. I hope this trend of support may spread in our country so that none in my lgbtqa family may feel the fear of hatred, discrimination, or death.

We answered:

Thank YOU for making your voice a part of this discussion. Solutions can't just come from government or public health professionals. If we're going to build a stronger and healthier America, it's going to take a concerted effort from ALL of us. Glad you are stepping up! -Dr. Murthy

[gayallianceroc](#) asked:

Transgender people face higher rates of unemployment, suicidal ideation and attempts, health disparities, and more: what is the administration committed to doing to reduce those disparities and substantively improve the quality of life of transgender Americans?

We answered:

We are committed to ensuring that transgender and gender non-conforming Americans are seated squarely within the fabric of American society, like all Americans. Over the last five years, we have taken important steps to ban workplace discrimination for transgender employees, provided resources to prevent bullying in schools based on gender identity, made clear that the protections of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 extend to discrimination based on gender identity, put in place non-discrimination protections on the basis of gender identity in the Affordable Care Act, and continue to appoint a record number of openly transgender Americans to the President's Administration. Our commitment to reducing disparities and supporting the dignity of transgender Americans extends from the White House, to the Department of Justice, to the Department of Health and Human Services, and across the Administration. -Valerie & Dr. Murthy.

[thefoxes-thehounds](#) asked:

If conversion therapy is banned, how will the federal government successfully enforce that?

We answered:

A national ban would require legislation from Congress. In the meantime, we're encouraging actions in the states. California, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia have all banned licensed professionals from using conversion therapy on minors. Since last year, lawmakers in 18 other states have introduced similar legislation. We think action in the states is the best route to progress on this issue.

[syntheticsiren](#) asked:

It's been established for a while now that conversion therapy is not only ineffective, but generally leads to psychological damage to those affected. Does the Surgeon General have the ability to work with the professional organizations in that field to set guidelines for states to follow regarding licensing for therapy and counseling practices? If not, could this be directed so that it is at least not covered under health insurance plans?

We answered:

You make a really great point! In my role, I can work to educate health care professionals, public health officials, community leaders and state and local elected officials. And that's precisely what we're going to do. As you point out, groups like the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics have already raised serious concerns about the use of conversion therapy. I share their concerns. We in the Obama administration are committed to improving our understanding of the potential harmful effects of conversion therapy, especially on minors. -Dr. Murthy

[isaacfhtagn](#) asked:

Do you think that the advancement and widespread use of social media has lead to an increase in accountability and transparency for the government? If so, how has that affected you? Do you think its a good thing?

We answered:

Yes! I think social media is a great way for us to interact and hear from the American people we are privileged to serve. You're helping me prove that point right now :) -Dr. Murthy

[heyimblu](#) asked:

What steps will you be taking to ensure this cruel practice ends? Do you think other laws will be created to help other people in the lgbt+ community? This law bans conversion therapy on minors, but what about adults? Just because they are legally adults doesn't mean those kind of people will stop trying to convert them in forceful manners.

We answered:

The key here – whether we're talking about parents and their children or about adults – is EDUCATION. As America's Doctor, my job is to help raise awareness about sound medical practices and the steps we can take together to improve America's health. Conversion therapy is NOT sound medical practice. Moreover, we all need to work together to build greater understanding and acceptance throughout our society. Doctors can and should be part of that effort. -Dr. Murthy

[fandoms99](#) asked:

How do you feel about the LGBTQ community being treated in such a negative way and do you feel that you (as the government) can do to make them be seen in a more positive light or be accepted?

We answered:

Every day, I read heartbreaking letters and stories from LGBTQ people across the country facing serious adversity. I want my daughter and future grandchildren to live in a world where everyone is treated equally and fairly, and discrimination of any kind has no place in our country. And we all have to work together to create that more perfect Union. -Valerie

[jorjor08](#) asked:

(1/2) I don't have a question so much as a thank you. A thank you to the one president who was willing to be a voice for LGBT+ individuals. I have spent the better part of the past 6 years that President Obama has been in office doing exactly what the quote posted on Tumblr described. In the past 2 years however, I have come to an acceptance of myself and come out to my family and friends. While some reacted to the news better than others, every day it gets better.

We answered:

Thank YOU for your comment and for your courage in learning to accept yourself. You know, in her suicide note, Leelah Alcorn wrote, "People say 'it gets better' but that isn't true in my case. It gets worse. Each day I get worse." Here's the thing you and I know: It DOES get better... but only if we all work together to MAKE it better. That takes families and community leaders. It takes elected officials and health professionals. And it takes people like you. By coming out to your family and friends, you are changing America for the better. So, seriously. Thank you. -Dr. Murthy

[gaudiiart](#) asked:

How are you ensuring young LGBT people are not discriminated in school?

We answered:

In 2010 we hosted the first ever White House summit on bullying and President Obama recorded an "[It Gets Better](#)" video. Since then, we've worked with the Department of Education to create [StopBullying.gov](#) and create resources to support LGBTQ young people in schools. With the work of of Gay-Straight Alliances, supportive administrators and teachers, and brave young people, we hope to continue to make schools safer and more welcoming for every student. -Valerie

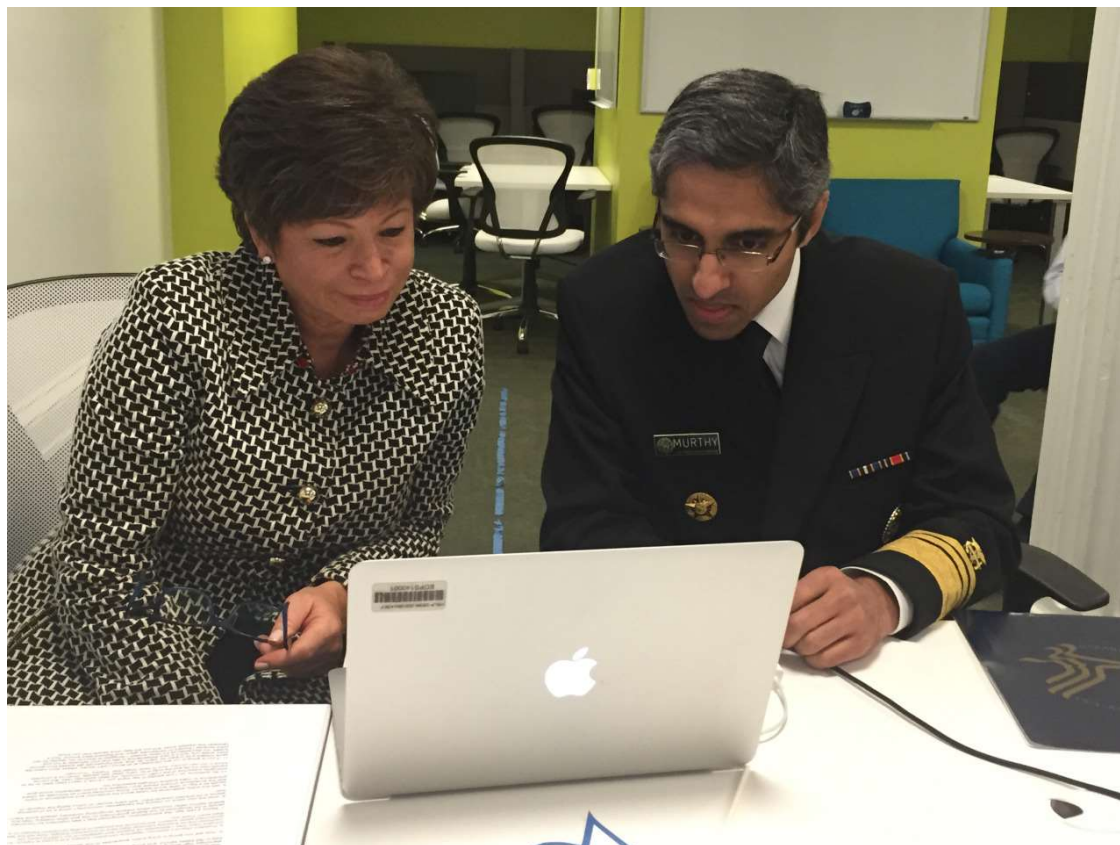
[fancyduckie](#) asked:

Can we please make conversion therapy illegal at the federal level? States that still think that this is a good idea/legitimate form of therapy will not change their laws just because the President said it should be so. You should also note that this type of "therapy" INCREASES risk of suicide and other mental health issues, which is already alarmingly high among LGBTQ+ youth. Without a federally mandated law, you're leaving kids in red states behind, and some won't make it out alive.

We answered:

Thanks for your question. This is an issue that is personal to me. When I was young, I lost an uncle to suicide because of an untreated mental illness. One of my priorities over the next four years is to bring a greater focus on mental health and emotional well-being. My predecessor, Dr. David Satcher, issued the first [Surgeon General's report on mental health](#) in 1999. We need to advance that work and I am committed to doing so over the next four years while I am in office. -Dr. Murthy

Thanks so much for joining us for today's Tumblr Q&A. Let's continue to lift up the stories of brave young people who are working to change our nation. Until next time! -Valerie & Dr. Murthy



[notasammich](#) asked:

What do you mean when you say you will "support" the effort? What steps will you actually be taking?

We answered:

Often, lack of support for LGBTQ identity, which young people experience as rejection, is really the heart of the matter. Working to help parents and families understand how to support their LGBTQ children is some of the most important work that we can do in ending the significant distress so many young LGBTQ people are experiencing. [You can find more information here](#). Additionally, this year, a panel of national behavioral health experts will convene to discuss the issue of conversion therapy, and SAMHSA will produce a report on the topic. We hope this will inform future efforts in the area. -Pam, SAMHSA Administrator

[franiel32](#) asked:

*No questions, lol. I just wanted to say thank you. I know it hasn't been easy to be so forthrightly supportive of the LGBT community. It's been politically risky. But you've transformed my life and the lives of so many other Gay people. Given us a complete future in our own country. And I'll never forget that. Thanks. *huuuugs**

We answered:

Thank you for your support. We are proud of the Administration's stance on this issue. SAMHSA has long recognized that discrimination, negative perceptions, stereotypes, and a lack of acceptance are some of the main reasons that more LGBTQ individuals are affected by behavioral health issues than their non-LGBTQ peers. -Pam, SAMHSA Administrator

[acidangel1998](#) asked:

If you're going to run any campaign at all about LGBT issues, please don't make the same mistake a lot of them do. Demi, Bi, Ace, and Pansexuals get erased from almost every single one, and it is very disheartening to see that your sexuality is not only erased, but discredited as if it never existed. I struggled to discover my identity for two years because I thought on transexuals, gays, and lesbians were around. Run a campaign that displays those, and you will help more people than you know.

We answered:

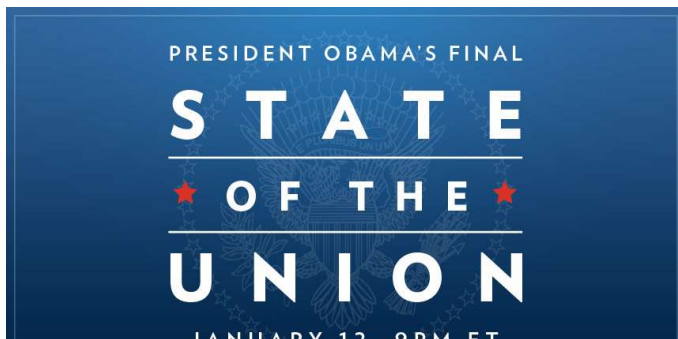
At SAMHSA, we have Pride in our progress and we remain committed to addressing the behavioral needs of all sexual and gender minorities. [Learn more about SAMHSA's efforts to support these populations](#). -Pam, SAMHSA Administrator

Learn more:

- [Read the "We the People" Petition Response on Conversion Therapy.](#)
- [Learn more about President Obama's Executive Order on LGBT Workplace Discrimination](#)

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