

# The Northwest Network

of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse

A statement on surviving beyond walls, borders and separation.

The Northwest Network believes all people should have lives free of violence and oppression. We dedicate our work to supporting the self-determination of LGBTQ survivors of violence, and have a vision of healthy, inclusive, accountable, loving communities for all – across all borders and identities. A vision of liberation. Communities where human rights are respected and honored, where we can be our full selves. The treatment of immigrants and survivors beyond and within US borders is unacceptable. The constant dehumanization of marginalized communities and polarization of the political atmosphere attempts to justify the violation of our collective and individual rights.

Human rights are universal and inalienable. Universal means everyone is entitled to these basic rights, regardless of their identity. It should not matter if people have absolutely no pathway to an immigration status, or have a criminal history. It should not matter if we broke all the "rules" of an unjust game, or jumped all the forbidden fences. We still are entitled to these basic rights, no matter what "rules" we break - that is what inalienable means. This is the utmost basic standard that tries to protect our collective and individual humanity. Without them, we have nothing.

We should not have to leave our home(land)s to be safe, to have the hope of a future, to survive. Choosing between your home or the safety of you and your loved ones is an impossible choice. Immigrants and survivors are being criminalized and incarcerated for trying to survive many impossible, unjust choices. This specific instance and scale of cruelty seems unprecedented, but we must recognize that this is not new. Our present is a legacy of the colonial violence that indigenous, black, POC, LGBTQ and disabled communities have endured. Systems of oppression have isolated us from each other and from ourselves through generations of violence. Punishing people who are escaping from violence exposes them to even more harm – while the toxicity of isolation severs all of us from healthy social connections, dehumanizing us, and robbing our communities of agency.

The tactics used by individuals to control, coerce and objectify a partner parallel the tactics used by the state: controlling access to care, limiting self-determination, sexual violence, leveraging children, avoiding responsibility, isolation, interruption of community support. Shock and unpredictability have often been used as tactics to gain control over others and the narrative of what is happening. The state aims to control which families are valid and whose humanity is respected, in the same ways people causing harm attempt to control who survivors get to be. Violence is such an effective tool because it leaves physical, biological, emotional, and psychological marks the individual, on the social fabric that weaves us together, and on our future generations.

This is a moment within a lifetime of need for action. We must not be deterred, appeased or distracted by inconsistent, incompetent and cruel leadership. This type of messaging will have us trying to settle for anything less than our humanity, to give up our dignity. We must continue to draw strength from those who have survived before us. We must actively resist our dehumanization, come together to break the barriers of isolation and take a stand in solidarity with resisting communities.

We ask ourselves what solidarity can look like beyond a statement and remember that queer people have always transcended borders to define who we love and how we identify freely. Walls, bans, and frivolous rules have not and will not stop us from clutching chosen family closely in times of need and organizing ferociously for a greater love, state, nation and world.