



A public education and mobilization campaign

A STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY AND CALL FOR JUSTICE

RIP Nex Benedict

Speak Out to Defend Trans Lives and Demand Justice!

Nex Benedict, a nonbinary student from Owasso, Oklahoma, died on February 8, 2024, two days after being severely beaten by three older female students in a bathroom at their high school. The official cause of death has not yet been determined, and police are investigating. We add our voice to a groundswell of collective grief and a demand for justice to investigate the circumstances of Benedict's death, a young teenager bullied for being nonbinary. Their death highlights the backlash against nonbinary and trans lives in Oklahoma and the US being led by right-wing groups.

Nex Benedict's death is a tragedy – not only a personal one for their family, but for everyone who cares about having the freedom to express their gender in any way they wish to, and to receive appropriate gender-affirming care.

Unfortunately, the recent trend in the US has been to **restrict** that freedom. Oklahoma, Nex's home state, has declared legislative war on trans and nonbinary people. We see a clear connection between this hateful anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and the bullying of trans and nonbinary people. Legislation that restricts the freedom and legitimacy of trans and nonbinary people gives permission for others to attack. Here are some examples of that:

- In May 2022, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt signed a bill that forbids youth to use restrooms that match their gender identity.
- In March 2022, Stitt signed a bill banning trans women or girls in public schools from competing on sports teams consistent with their gender.
- In May 2023, Stitt signed a bill banning gender-affirming care for anyone under 18.
- Oklahoma's Superintendent of Public Schools also appointed Chaya Raichik – a well-known social media influencer who spreads anti-trans rhetoric – to a state library advisory board.

Other states have passed similar legislation, and many more are trying to do so.

Unfortunately, this is just the beginning of what the right wing wants to do. That is also why we launched our new public education and mobilization campaign, Stop The Coup 2025 -- to sound the alarm about the right-wing's threat to further harm transgender Americans.

Project 2025 is a nearly 1000-page conservative party electoral blueprint released by the Heritage Foundation that calls for the systematic dismantling of the federal government and for giving unprecedented power to the President, ending our system of checks and balances. It is a blueprint for autocracy. Project 2025 also seeks to turn US into a



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white nationalist theocracy, ruled by the Bible, not secular law and our Constitution. **Project 2025 takes aim at trans and other LGBTQ people who are criminalized in their extremist plan to remake America and ‘purify’ it.**

- In the name of “protecting children,” Project 2025 wants to cleanse school libraries of any reference to trans or LGBTQ+ people – and punish teachers and school librarians who don’t obey.
- Project 2025 labels “trans ideology” as pornography, and plan to imprison those to produce or distribute it.
- Project 2025 says parents or physicians who reassign the sex of a minor are committing child abuse.
- Project 2025 argues that sex is only binary – the authors call that a “biological reality” assigned at birth – and refuse to recognize anyone who doesn’t fit in the binary box.
- Project 2025 states that schools will be forbidden to use any name not written on a student’s birth certificate.
- Project 2025 would no longer allow transgender Americans to serve in the military.

The extremist right wing of the US conservative party has united behind Project 2025: already 100 groups are listed as advisors. Their goal is to roll back the critical rights and freedoms we have gained for Black and Brown Americans, for LGBTQ people, and for all Americans who believe in our Constitution, and the separation of Church and State, and our hard-won freedom to express our gender in any way we wish.

Nex Benedict’s tragic death reminds us that words are weapons when fueled by hate. They are behind policies that are fostering hate against LGBTQ+ people in Oklahoma and across America. We must oppose that hatred.

As we join millions to express our sorrow at their death, we call on America to oppose the plans of right-wing groups who view nonbinary and trans lives as criminal and not worth protecting. We invite them to sound the alarm about Project 2025 and oppose the GOP’s vision of an America that would strip LGBTQ Americans of the right to equality and safety and the same federal protections and guarantees as others.

Demand justice for Nex Benedict! Demand an end to state-sponsored attacks on LGBTQ lives!

In solidarity with nonbinary and trans lives,

Stop The Coup 2025

Sources:

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