

OPINION: Transgender bathrooms: No easy answer

For liberals, there are causes that are so patently obvious and deserving of equal rights and protections, that the mere existence of opposing views seems absurd. From race relations to women's rights to equality for homosexuals, progressives everywhere feel as though they are launching arguments from the egalitarian high ground. At the bottom of these positions is the notion that equality for marginalized groups does not impact the the opposition. How could an improvement in the lives of some have a deleterious effect on others? Simply stated, there are no good arguments aside from the most specious rationale—typically involving “deeply held beliefs.” This is why liberals often feel as though they hold not only the moral advantage, but also the rational one.

However, the recent progressivist hurdle of transgender rights presents a conundrum that is difficult to defend and rationalize. North Carolina recently passed a bill which prohibits transgender individuals from using the bathroom for the gender with which they identify. This controversial edict has been met with acrimony from leftists everywhere, even prompting several high profile boycotts in N.C.

But here, the reflexive condemnation of anything other than overwhelming support is problematic. To voice a concern is, in the eyes of many liberals, bigotry. Liberalism, which often prides itself on rationality, is doing itself an injustice by failing to acknowledge the legitimacy of any counterarguments.

First, it must be difficult for transgender individuals to thrive in a world that is dichotomized rigidly along gender lines. If a person has adopted the opposite gender (save physical reassignment), clearly they would be comfortable using the bathroom that reflects that change. In that respect,

supporting autonomous bathroom selection appears justifiable.

The problem, however, is that—unlike the aforementioned issues—this situation does impact the lives of others. It is not unreasonable for a person to be trepidatious about the obscuring of gender lines as it pertains to personal areas like bathrooms or locker rooms.

People with young children are rightfully concerned about this potential development. Now, no one is insinuating that gender dysphoria is a precursor to sexual deviance, but—and this is no slippery slope—this could erase all demarcations around bathrooms and locker rooms, creating complicated and inappropriate situations.

Consider: today, there is a growing level of gender ambiguity and sexual fluidity. This, in and of itself, is not a problem, but it is possible for a heterosexual man to identify as a woman and still dress like a man. That means there could be a male who looks like he belongs on Duck Dynasty, but considers himself a woman and is attracted to women. With a new bathroom policy, he would be able to use a woman's locker room with impunity.

And who would be able to tell him/her that he/she was being disingenuous? Essentially, every combination would be possible, making it feasible for any nefarious individual to gain access to any bathroom at any time. It would be impossible to police this situation; there would be no way to tell whether a person's claim of gender identity was genuine.

These are not baseless concerns, and to voice these thoughts is not bigotry.

People everywhere have the right to dress or behave however they choose. But others, for a number of reasons, could be uncomfortable. Sure, in many—perhaps most—instances they might not be aware that they are in the presence of a transgender individual. But that does little to assuage the potentiality

of some inauspicious circumstance.

There needs to be a discussion about this contentious topic. It can't be in the form of, "You disagree? You're a bigot." And it also can't be along the lines of, "If you have a penis, you're a man!! Get over it." This revolutionary ground needs to be treaded cautiously, with all points considered. As a liberal, I want everyone to have equal rights. As a father of young children, I understand the objections to an open bathroom policy. If there's a middle ground to be found, I'll be the first to explore it.

Liberals everywhere—and I count myself among them—need to realize that disagreement is not tantamount to bigotry, and unlike past movements, the issue of transgender bathroom usage is not a no-brainer.