

# They Just Want to be Heard

Students speak about their experience as a transgender youth

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Editor-in-Chief

Walking in to school on the first day sophomore Rylee Stone walked to the courtyard to reunite with friends with a new short haircut, bleached hair and a binder on his chest. This would be his first year identifying as a boy on campus, joining a handful of other transgender students at school.



“Even though this is my first year being a guy it’s not the first year being on my mind,” Stone said. “When I was in seventh grade I remember having a conversation with my mom saying I don’t feel like a girl. It was super late and super emotional and I kind of remember her dismissing it.”

In the past few years the transgender community has seen a rise in appear-

“If someone you know decides that they are trans, non binary, anything that falls under LGBTQ+ you should be respectful of it.”  
-Rylee Stone, sophomore

ance in popular culture. Such a rise can be seen in creation of television series, including “I am Jazz”, a reality show on TLC that highlights the life of a transgender teen, in addition to featured roles such as trans-gender woman Laverne Cox, who stars in the Netflix series, “Orange is the New Black”.

Plant has also seen a rise in its transgender population, “My first year here to my knowledge there were none, my second year one student came to ask me what bathroom to use then that grew to 12 or 13 students,”

Leland Schardt, the school’s social worker said.

“My high school experience has been more difficult, especially with the name situation and bathrooms-like having to go out of my way to tell teachers about my name,” Matt Hammerberg, sophomore and transgender boy said.

Similarly, Jayson Bickel, junior, who identifies as a non-binary boy said it’s the simplest things that become harder, “You wouldn’t really think of it like that, even just having a substitute teacher you have to go up to them and explain and come out to them too so they don’t deadname you,” Bickel said.

Plant has made its own contributions to accommodate students such as the implementation of universal bathrooms which according to Kat Jackson, a senior who identifies as non-binary, “make me feel a thousand times safer, when Mr. Nelson institut-ed them I was shocked, I was told by Ms. Schardt on the first day of school and honestly I didn’t believe it, I was ecstatic.”

Everyone’s experience is different, in the words of Emery Gorder, sophomore transgender boy, “A transition is a transition, it’s not only physical, but emotional and mental. In my head I was still so used to being called a girl and “she” and ‘oh look this is my daughter’ and it’s hard to make the switch. Everything is a transition you still have to go through change. When I first started asking people to call me by my name and pronouns it was something I had to ingrain in myself. Thinking about it is great but thinking about it too much makes you start to overwork yourself



“I request that people use they, them pronouns because I’m coming out now or educate themselves more if they are interested.”  
-Kat Jackson, senior

and overthink,” Gorder said.

Being born in the wrong body has a strong impact on the day to day life of these high school students. “It’s given me more anxiety, with other students there is always a fear of being bullied,” Hammerberg said.

For Jackson their high school struggle has been similar, “Dysphoria, it’s like a feeling of discomfort or like your body is wrong or the way people see you or address you is wrong, and so dysphoria has really impact-

ed my mental health throughout my time at school and it’s made things a lot harder like meeting and interacting with new people really difficult. Especially if I don’t feel safe with them.”

Stone echoes such a school experience, “At school I was kind of nervous, kind of excited to see myself for the first time. The only person who asked about my gender was this one guy who would only look at my boobs,” Stone said, regarding his first day.

Many faculty have attempted progressive movements. “In the theatre department they allow me to audition for and play male roles and teachers always use my preferred name, pronouns are a different story for the most part,” Bickel said.



“Just Don’t be a poophead. Just try your hardest, even if you don’t care. Try and use people’s pronouns, try to be nice.”  
-Emery Gorder, sophomore

## Words to Know

**Non-binary:** a gender that is not exclusively male or female

**Gender Fluid:** a gender identity which refers to a gender which varies over time

**Deadname:** the act of referring to a transgender person’s birth name instead of their chosen name

**Cis:** a person whose self-identity conforms with the gender that corresponds to their biological sex

**Dysphoria:** where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there’s a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity

**Binder:** constricts the breasts into a more flat chested appearance; a way to curve dysphoria

**Misgendering:** using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which one identifies

Compiled by Savannah Lowry, Editor-in-Chief



“I wish they would see us as more than just being trans, that we’re people too and it’s not just all that there is to us.”  
-Jayson Bickel, junior

definitely led me to want to help other trans kids that are going through the school system and don’t feel supported or safe and I would like to do something with my life that helps them so being an activist of some kind would be nice, I’ve definitely been impacted by my own experiences to make other kids have better experiences,” Jackson said.

Despite Plant’s efforts there can only be so much to do in a world where being different is still regarded as a fragile topic.

“There’s a difference between being in public and being at school. It’s always a bunch of strangers but at school it’s strangers who you might have to be friends with. It’s a lot of emotions,” Stone said.

“For the most part I feel supported by Plant, obviously there are those kids who don’t support it, but they’re everywhere,” Bickel said.

And following that statement up in regards to Plant support Jackson said, “Yes and no, it really depends on the faculty member and the student.”

To make Plant as supportive and accommodating of an environment as possible, “We’re working on it by having a support group that meets, universal bathrooms and having trainings for teachers for having transgender students in the classroom,” said Schardt.

Gender does not equal presentation, and sex does not equal gender.

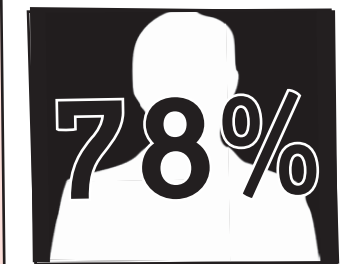
“I wished high schoolers would recognize that the trans community exists, and be more informed.”  
-Matt Hammerberg, sophomore

What’s being established now in high school is the rest of these students lives, “I’m still in the process of coming out, it never ends. I still want people to see me as trans not just a cis male because its not my whole identity,” Gorder said.

“My high school career has

## When the Bell Rings...

National statistics on school life for transgender students



Have been harassed in school



Have been physically assaulted in school



Were harassed so severely they dropped out of school

Based on The National Transgender Center for Equality’s survey on 6,450 transgender individuals in the U.S.  
transequality.org

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