

LGBTQ community fights HB2

After the anti-HB2 rally on Franklin Street, transgender people speak out.

Mary Cox
Staff Writer
Carrboro Commons

North Carolina's newest legislation—known as HB2—reverses a Charlotte ordinance, which extended rights to people who are gay or transgender. Carrboro's LGBTQ community plans to fight this bill until laws are changed.

On Feb. 22, Charlotte passed a law that granted protection to LGBTQ people in places of public accommodation. In response, on March 23, North Carolina's General Assembly proposed and passed the House Bill 2. Gov. Pat McCrory signed the bill into law that same night.

"It passed quicker than it took me to write most of my papers in college," said JP, a transgender person in the community.

JP volunteers at the LGBTQ Center and is dedicated to fighting homophobia and heterosexism, transphobia and transmisogyny, and cissexism. Their fight will not end with this "shameful, heinous, and blatantly discriminatory" law, JP said.

The bill has gained the popular name "the bathroom bill," but JP explains that HB2 goes beyond bathrooms, which has been the public's main focus for this legislation. The bill also includes restrictions on local minimum wage standards and bringing discrimination claims to court.

Last week, members of the community rallied on Franklin Street for hours to protest the new bill.

"It was fantastic, it was cathartic, it was loud," said JP, who attended the rally. When asked if progress was made for the LGBTQ community, they said, "Is 1,000 people shutting down the most well-known intersection in this side of the Triangle not progress?"

Mitch Xia was one of the organizers of the rally on Franklin Street. They have been organizing around LGBTQ issues since high school when Amendment One was on the ballot. Mitch realized they were



Immediately after HB2 is passed, restricting the freedoms of LGBTQ people, Carrboro flies rainbow flags on Main Street (Staff photo by Mary Cox)

"some variety of not straight" early in high school, but was silenced by their "not super queer-friendly family."

At the anti-HB2 rally on Franklin Street last week, Mitch's parents saw them on the news as a leader in the protest and confronted them about their active involvement with the LGBTQ community. Mitch finally came out to their parents.

"It was the hardest conversation I've ever had, and my heart goes out to absolutely everyone who goes through it, whether they receive

acceptance and understanding or disapproval and rejection," Mitch said.

As a queer, non-binary person, Mitch does not feel threatened by HB2 and believes the bill was not written to target AFABs, or Assigned Females At Birth. Rather, it continues lawmakers' trend of specifically targeting and scapegoating "non-passing" women, or transgender women who are not yet accepted as female, Mitch explains.

A concern of those who support HB2 is that it is unsafe to allow persons of one gender to use the restroom of the opposite gender. This is a concern of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, and it is encouraging the legislature to overturn local ordinances that allow this.

In response to this argument, JP said, "These ignorant people ignore a simple, well-documented fact: there is not a single recorded instance of a

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"These ignorant people ignore a simple, well-documented fact: there is not a single recorded instance of a trans person intentionally causing harm in a space that corresponds with their gender identity."

trans person intentionally causing harm in a space that corresponds with their gender identity. We are, as the hash tag says, just trying to pee.”

Mitch believes that the solution for a nondiscriminatory legislative system goes beyond voting them out.

“The entire legislative system is set up against queer and trans, black and brown, working class people,” said Mitch. “The whole damn system has got to go.”

Genet Girmey is a straight woman, but has many friends who are gay, queer, and trans who will be affected by HB2. Girmey believes HB2 is a step back socially for North Carolina. She thinks the state legislator did not consider the economic backlash that would ensue with passing the bill.

“The NBA has threatened to move the All-Star game from Charlotte, and Broadway Composer has banned three shows from coming to North Carolina,” Girmey said.

Businesses and government officials have, and continue to, join forces with the LGBTQ community to speak out against HB2. Among those opposed are Apple, Facebook and America Airlines.

More than 100 top executives from major companies, including major Charlotte employers like Bank of America, have signed the petition opposing HB2. Many states cities are banning government-funded travel to North Carolina.

This gives JP hope. “Thankfully it’s easier to change legislation than it is to change the minds of those who write these bills.”