

---

## Transgender Rights As Human Rights

Today, one of the most penetrating global issues talks about gender equality. Majority knows that gender equality is human right, but why is it that our world still faces a persistent gap in accessing opportunities and decision making for men and women? We can't disagree that there are still few people who cannot really accept the fact that they truly exist in our community, for the reason that we all have our own belief and different way of thinking and understanding. Most lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) members are struggling due to this barrier. Some of them couldn't find jobs easily or experience discrimination wherever they go. Our country has an overwhelming numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) members.

Hence, it is not uncommon for us to hear issues of a LGBTQ+ member that is being discriminated. Here in the Philippines, the most latest and trending issue related to a LGBTQ+ member being discriminated is the issue of a transgender woman named Gretchen Diez who was arrested after being forbidden from using the women's restroom in a Cubao mall in Quezon City. It is not common to see transgender woman in public restrooms for women. Transgender women are women. They are not like some men who want access to women's public restrooms to sexually assault women, though many people still hold the belief that transgender women are threat to women's public restrooms, a belief that is a product of a baseless fear around sexual victimization. It is a bit complicated and unfair to think that a transgender woman should be forbidden from using women's restroom just because they are men who would go as far as wearing dresses, high heels and make up only to sexually assault woman. It sounds so illiberal and unfair, right?

A number of people had already stated their opinions for the construction of gender-neutral restrooms in public spaces to provide a safe haven for transgender and gender nonconforming people. Legions of people had agreed to the construction of gender-neutral restrooms. For them it would help prevent members of LGBTQ+ community from running into "unnecessary risks". They believe that gender-neutral restrooms would be a progressive step towards gender equality because this would (1) solve the problem of space equity between men and women's restrooms, which is the cause of women waiting in longer restrooms lines than men; (2) regularize gender as a non-binary concept and insist that public spaces should not be gendered; and (3) give the inclusion of people of all SOGIESCs (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics). LGBTQ+ member can also experience taunting, threats, and even violence for using the wrong restroom, but if gender-neutral restrooms were to become the norm, this would no longer be a problem.

Having gender-neutral restrooms will create a space that does not discriminate, but is rather inclusive of its entire user. They also think that having gender-neutral restrooms would be fair for both liberals and conservatives. On the other hand, there are still some people who oppose to gender-neutral restrooms construction. They have lots reason in their minds, one is that it may result to an increase of sexual assault cases. Having gender-neutral restrooms would mean that if a man sees a pretty girl walk in a restroom, he can easily follow her inside without anyone stopping him. Having restrooms where anyone can walk in would defeat the purpose of helping women feel more safe and comfortable. Indeed, it would really be a big help to the

---

members of LGBTQ+ community to feel safer and comfortable but you have to look at the cost. The cost would be that lots of people would not feel safe from danger or harm using gender-neutral restrooms.

The gender neutral restrooms could potentially cause two things. Either people will begin holding in their waste, which can cause harm to their health, or will begin to refuse to enter. They think that LGBTQ+ community has nice intentions, but it is very important to remember to be realistic and realize that not all of us have good thoughts. For those people who oppose to the construction of gender-neutral restroom, it is always way better to feel safe, rather than sorry. As a senior high school student, I stand tall in strong and loyal support for all the members of LGBTQ+ community and for the construction of gender-neutral restrooms. The experience of Gretchen Diez is a sign that the SOGIE equality bill in the country should be passed now. The purpose of SOGIE bill is to prevent several economic and public accommodation that is an act related with the discrimination against people based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, or expression. I'm sure that majority had already realized how vulnerable LGBTQ+ community members are to commit suicide and violence simply for living their truths.

We should all admit that we all share the moral responsibility of allowing members of LGBTQ+ community to use the public restrooms that matches their gender identity, because this is part of protecting them from violence. Having gender-neutral restrooms is really a great idea, because why build restrooms with different categories when our restrooms at home are not even categorized according to gender identity? We should all help to make the world a better place and we can do it by simply treating each other like our own family and by accepting other's peculiarity. Majority of us knows the cold hard fact that not all of us have a good thought, but shouldn't human rights take precedence in all situations? And everyone deserves a second chance to be a better one. Think of what Mahatma Gandhi had once stated, 'You must be the change you want to see in the world.' In other words, although life changes are inevitable, we can also establish an authentic personal change so we can accelerate to the challenge and become a bigger and better person as a result.

To sum it up, the experience of Miss Gretchen Diez is a call for the member of LGBTQ+ communities and our allies to be more vigilant and proactive in advocating the SOGIE equality bill because the LGBTQIA+ individuals do not need tolerance, they need acceptance. They need civil rights. Put in mind that the transgenders' rights are human rights and human rights are transgenders' rights! **THE SOGIE EQUALITY BILL SHOULD BE PASS NOW!**