

KENDALL CIESEMIER: [00:00:01] From the ACLU, this is At Liberty. I'm Kendall Ciesemier, your host.

The ACLU is tracking 452 anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S. this legislative session. Now, of those 452, 118 are trans healthcare bills. Then, there are a slew of trans athlete bans, public accommodations bans, drag bans and education gag orders about gender identity, sexuality and expression. We're experiencing an unprecedented surge in attacks on trans people in particular, and trans kids, most specifically.

In Missouri, the attorney general announced new restrictions on trans healthcare that are the first of their kind, limiting care for both kids AND adults. The rule is currently scheduled to take effect Monday and while the ACLU of Missouri and their partners have filed a petition to seek a temporary restraining order to block implementation of the rule, we haven't heard back yet. It's still pending in court.

So many attacks are being levied at once against trans people all across the country. It's hard to keep up. The speed and viciousness are at a level beyond what we've witnessed in our history. So today, we're getting an update from Chase Strangio, the ACLU's Deputy Director for Trans Justice with the LGBT & HIV Project, because losing track of what's happening or losing energy in the fight against these attacks, is simply not an option.

Chase, welcome to At Liberty and thank you so much for joining us.

CHASE STRANGIO [00:01:49] Thank you for having me.

KENDALL [00:01:51] So I want to start our conversation by talking about the latest in Missouri. What can you tell us about this ban? And do we expect this rule to get held up in court soon?

CHASE [00:02:03] Yeah. So, I mean, I think it's really important to situate what's going on in Missouri in the context of all of these bills that that you mentioned. So what we have in Missouri is the attorney general issuing what he is calling an emergency regulation that, in effect, bans gender

affirming care for people of all ages. And this is a very clear escalation of what from what we have been seeing, which are bills, legislative attacks, to restrict care for minors. But, of course, trans people have been saying all along that this is never going to stop with restrictions on youth. So it is an escalation, but it's one that we predicted would happen. And so here we are in Missouri with the attorney general acting what I would say is far outside the scope of his authority to restrict and in essence, ban care for people of all ages. We are in court to challenge this action by the attorney general in particular, because as the attorney general, he does not have the authority to issue this type of broad based assault on medical care, particularly while the legislature, the body that is charged with passing laws, is in session proposing legislation to restrict access to health care for trans people. That said, we, of course, of course oppose that legislation as well. But I think there's the additional reason to oppose what the attorney general is doing because he is going outside the scope of his authority. I expect that we'll be able to block this in court. That said, this type of escalation, both in rhetoric and in policy making, is very scary for trans people who have been predicting it, and yet being prepared for it as a practical matter is really terrifying.

KENDALL [00:03:44] Yeah, I was going to say, I mean, I guess it seems particularly jarring even in the climate that we're already in, because we're already definitely in a climate that is deeply, deeply devastating and concerning and horrifying. But it represents this new frontier and the effort and the speed with which is escalating. Would you have predicted that speed based on what we had seen even at the beginning of the year?

CHASE [00:04:08] I do think it is really jarring to sort of contend with the speed and I'm a pessimist. I'm someone who's constantly raising alarms about things that are coming down the pike that we should be concerned about. And even with that, this has been so unbelievably fast and it got caught up to us so quickly. And when I think about looking at the clear parallels between the attacks on access to care for trans people and the

attacks on access to care for abortion, if you look at sort of what the assault on *Roe* and the assault on abortion access accomplished, they did so over the course of like 50 years, slowly chipping away at access. But in the context of abortion, there was a little bit of a buildup. People were starting to get prepared. We are in a situation where basically in a matter of three months care is being totally and completely cut off, and it's really hard to then account for that practically when it happens at such a significant speed. And then when you add on top of that these new types of restrictions on care for adults, it is really scary to think about what does this mean practically. Where are people going to get care? And what people need to understand about that trans health care that's being banned, not only is it evidence based, it's supported by every major medical association, it's also ongoing treatment. You know, this is not something where you can just like hop over one time to another jurisdiction and then come back home. This is care that you need, you know, for potentially your entire life. And so when you think about a trans adult in Missouri right now who's maybe been receiving the same medication for 25 years, all of a sudden not knowing where this is going to come from, what is going to happen, this is a huge disruption in people's lives. And there's all of the mental health consequences of cutting off people's treatment. But there's also physiological consequences if you just instantaneously take away a hormone that's dangerous on many levels. And that's what we're contending with this completely dangerous and counterfactual set of demands by an attorney general who is acting well outside of his authority.

KENDALL [00:06:13] It almost feels like it being dangerous is kind of the point.

CHASE: Yeah

KENDALL: That's how I feel about everything that we've seen, both with LGBTQ bus bans, specifically targeting trans health care and with bans

around abortion. We've been clear that these things will hurt people physically, not just emotionally, physically. People will die. Kind of gets to a level of brutality that I, I just can't reconcile. So, you know, it's not just trans health care bans that we're seeing. We're seeing bans on sexuality and gender in schools requiring schools to notify parents about changes in pronouns that do not conform to the student's biological sex, requiring plans for detransitioning for certain youth who are under gender affirming care, bans on trans athletes at all levels. It's a lot, and it is really wide— broad, sweeping. How are you thinking about this dystopian game of whack a mole and, you know, how do you even parse through where to put your effort first in fighting against these bans?

CHASE [00:07:20] Yeah, I mean, we're obviously facing a broad based assault on every aspect of life and ways that not only has these deeply dignitary harms for people, but then has these really catastrophic material consequences that, you know, play out in a multitude of ways in people's lives. I, you know, I sort of approach it from the perspective of we have to look at it in this broad based way and continue to raise the alarms publicly that this is not about anything they're saying it's about. That there is this impulse to eradicate. There is this overarching theory behind these bills, which is that being trans is bad, being trans is wrong, and that the state should come in and disrupt people's ability to be trans. Obviously, their theory is if you take people off there, if you cut people off from medical care, if you forcibly out them, or if you prevent them from participating in activities that will make them not trans. Of course, that's untrue. That just makes them trans and hurt. The only way to obviously make someone not trans is to kill them or to prevent them from surviving, which of course is the impact of many of these laws. And if you sort of take them to their logical conclusion. If every state in the country does what Missouri is doing, and there's no trans person who can access medical care, that is a serious, massive public health crisis for the trans community. We're already existing in a public health crisis. And to be

clear, like all of these bands are being passed on top of a precarity in access to health that already existed everywhere. Trans people were not accessing health care like most people in the ways that they needed. That's particularly true for people who are homeless or people of color, for people who don't have access to health insurance. There's a million ways that health is so compromised, and these are just an overlay on top of that. In terms of then what do we do? So we draw attention to that, and then from my perspective, we use every tool in the toolbox to try to push back. And we do sort of have to attack the ones that are causing the greatest harm in the most significant ways, which is why taking on the health bans has been the most significant priority of the ACLU, both in terms of our lobbying in 2023, as well as our litigation planning, because if the state is able to, to this extent, cut off health care for a group of people in this way, and this is you know, we're seeing it in abortion, we're seeing it in all of the ways that healthcare is cut off, this targeted set of attacks, you know, that is just going to open the door to the next incursion into our bodily autonomy, into our material survival. And that is why I think taking these on as aggressively as we can is so critical.

KENDALL [00:10:05] Thank you for that. I I'm wondering if we could just sit here for a minute and talk about the scope that we're seeing, right. You know, between the health care bans, the bans on trans kids and sports, banning drag, winning education in gender and sexuality in schools. Could you walk us through kind of the range of states that are doing those things like where are we, for example, just on trans health care bans for children?

CHASE [00:10:32] Yeah. So what we're seeing is, you know, obviously the breadth of the bills themselves is so startling, but then the numbers is so scary because not only are the 452 bills being introduced, but they are being prioritized in legislatures. So we're not just saying, oh, these bills were dropped symbolically. No, they're getting hearings. They're passing through through chambers and they're getting signed into law. So when

we look at the health bans in particular, you know, we have over 100 health bans pending. That's there's 50 states in this country. What are they doing? You know, it's obviously where, you know, some states have 21 bans on health care. I mean, how many times are you going to be on the same thing? They really want to do it. And then in terms of what is passing, you know, in prior to 2023, we had two states that had legislatively banned care in this sort of more categorical sense. That was Arkansas in '21, Alabama in '22. Texas had done the executive action through Abbott and Paxton to deem that care child abuse, which was an effective ban. So you had Florida and Texas acting through the executive. There were four states starting in 2023. We now have Utah, South Dakota, Indiana, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Missouri, I mean, and North Dakota just passed a bill and send it to the governor. We are talking we're at Montana. Idaho. It's a lot of states. We're now in a situation where statutory bans are going to be up in between 15 to 20. That's we're getting close to half the country. And so I think that that is important to also contextualize for people, because this means that everybody people who's already had a lot of trouble accessing health care now has no access to this critical form of health care. And, they have to get the health care from somewhere, you know, so so we have to help people get that care. But if you think about a state like Tennessee, where I would estimate around 1000 people under 18 are currently receiving the gender affirming care that's now going to be banned, they have to go find another place to get the care. But a lot of the states around them are restricting the care or may restrict the care. So then they have parents frantically calling clinics. And in Minnesota, for example, there's over a year waiting list for their clinic to get the care. And and this is care— you cannot wait for it. And so that practically means that even though it's maybe 20 states that the burden then on the states that do provide care becomes so significant that that care is then compromised nationally. And this very similar thing that we're seeing in the context of abortion, where,

you know, providers of abortion in states like New York are burdened by the influx of patients from other states that have previously had access to care but no longer do.

KENDALL [00:13:20] Okay. So that's healthcare bans. Where are we on bans on trans athletes?

CHASE [00:13:26] You know, bans on trans athletes, the previous three years, there had been a significant emphasis on banning trans girls from sports. And, you know, keeping in mind too, this is largely targeting K through 12 students in a variety of contexts, including what we, many people would argue are distinctly non-competitive sports environments that are designed to be supportive of people's peer relationships and social development. Like as a parent of a ten year old, I'm like, yes, there are people who are competitive at age ten. A lot of people are just out there having fun. These are incredibly broad and restrictive laws that get at very young athletes in a variety of contexts. And even when they get at collegiate athletes, for example, they also ban club sports, intramural sports. Nobody's getting a scholarship to graduate school because they're playing intramural frisbee in college, like this, that we have to again, take down the rhetoric and actually think about what we're talking about. So all that to say over the past three years, this has been a huge rhetorical emphasis of the right, very successful legislatively. We have 21 states that ban trans girls from sports, and we have a bill pending in Congress that would federally ban trans girls in sports. And, you know, this this is, again, something that has a significant impact for two reasons, at least two reasons. One is that we're telling young people that they don't deserve equal rights and equal opportunities to their peers, and that is in and of itself damaging. But then if you think about what it actually means, the majority of trans young people experience such high rates of discrimination in school that one in ten dropout of school altogether. So we're talking about a group of people that is already so precariously situated in school. The numbers that are participating in athletics is so low



that in some of the states where there's bills are pending, there are more bills that would ban trans kids from sports, than there are trans kids playing sports in the entire state. And they know that, they can't find any trans kids in most of these states. And so what that means is that for the very, very, very rare young person who is trans, who has found a home in athletics, they are cutting off perhaps their one and only lifeline in a social context. And that is so painful, like the story of Fischer Wells in Kentucky always sticks with me because she started a field hockey team at her school. She you know, this was a place where she was having a lot of fun. It was a place where she created the space for many girls to participate in field hockey. Kentucky passes a ban. The governor vetoes that. The legislature overrides it because this is apparently such a significant problem and the only person affected in the entire state, at least at the outset, is Fischer Wells, who can no longer participate on the field hockey team that she founded. And this what we're talking about, we're talking about middle school kids not being able to play field hockey with their friends.

KENDALL [00:16:23] I mean, notably, we saw the Supreme Court weigh in on an effort to have an emergency ban on a 12 year old trans girl from competing on her middle school girls sports team in West Virginia. While this, like broader lawsuit over state bans continues.

CHASE [00:16:40] I also think it's important to zero in on the facts that that that this just highlight how ridiculous this is. That case at the Supreme Court, *B.P.J.* out of West Virginia. She's 12. She's running cross-country because she loves it. She came in 55th out of 57 runners. And the other side argued that the injury was that the people who came in 56th and 57th were injured by the fact that a trans girl displaced them from their, like, noncompetitive middle school cross-country ability to come in 55th. And and and we we are living in a time when there are a lot of crises and can if we can just think about the resources that went into telling the Supreme Court to stop a 12 year old from running. It's truly staggering.



KENDALL [00:17:24] I mean, it's just it's mind numbing to me to have the Supreme Court of the United States weigh in on a 12 year old girl participating in cross-country. I ran cross-country in middle school after I had two liver transplants, and I came in 55th out of 57 people. Let me tell you, it's just you're just doing it for fun. No, one in 55, 56. 57. We're not competing. We're not. We're just trying to finish. Like it's not a big deal. It really is not.

CHASE [00:17:58] Which means that what they're trying to stop is a trans young person's sense that they can be a part of anything. And that is so just cruel.

KENDALL [00:18:08] Right. It's. It's cruelty upon cruelty. It's just senseless.

CHASE [00:18:15] And I think to do in this sports context, it's deeply frustrating because one of the only national conversations we've had about women's sports and athletes in women's sports has been about banning trans women and girls from sports, which has taken up all the oxygen from any other equitable engagement around how to improve the nature of sports for women and girls. And so I think if you listen to like athletes, you know, a lot of athletes are speaking out against these bans because they're like, listen, as athletes in women's sports, we know about the real problems. There's a lack of pay equity, lack of investment in women coaches, lack of physical training to protect our bodies, really poor conditions when compared to the men's side. And you are literally paying attention to none of that, claiming you care about women's sports and then banning a 12 year old from running.

KENDALL [00:19:00] Yeah, it's it's such a slap in the face. It's like you cared about women's sports as of literally yesterday. So very, very telling. I want to move on even though we're all riled up about this. We did at the very beginning of the year talk about the drag bans across the country. And I was wondering if you could give us a little bit of an update on what we're seeing on drag censorship?

CHASE [00:19:26] Yeah, I mean, I think the context of of these both legal and extralegal attempts to restrict drag is really important to connect to all of the attacks on trans people, because what we're seeing, obviously drag performance is distinct from trans existence. But the commonality is that the government is attempting to control and punish anything they perceive as a threat to the sex binary, and that includes, you know, access to reproductive autonomy in the context of abortion, access to gender affirming care, access to performance that celebrates diversity of gender, including in the context of drag. And in some of these bills. It's just in the context of trans people performing. They're so broadly written that, you know, if I if I were a singer, which I'm not. But if you know, any trans singer would almost be could be punished under some of those proposed pieces of legislation by just being someone who is, quote unquote, a male or female impersonator, which is just defined under a lot of these statutes as expressing a gender different than your assigned sex at birth. Arguably, like most people could do that and be that at any moment and performing for an audience of some kind. And so, you know, being a trans person performing would meet the definition of criminally prohibited drag. Now, that's the legal ways in which these have manifested. There's also, of course, and I think it's important to account for all of the extralegal attacks on drag performance when we're seeing white supremacist groups show up armed at drag queen story hour or and other spaces where there will be public drag performance or even public pride celebrations. And that, of course, has an impact on people's ability to feel safe and free to exercise their expressive rights in in public. And that is another thing that we have to think about this context, which is not only are these legal attacks escalating, but the extralegal violence is also escalating and people are feeling more scared, more under threat, less able to move freely in their communities and in the country and in the world. And that is very significant. A lot of the-that the bills themselves and the drag conduct have been neutralized in one way or another. And if

they've passed, they've passed with amendments that make them less broad in their, you know, at least facially and what they reach. That said, we, of course, live in a context where laws are enforced by human beings that carry biases in the context of deeply biased government structures. So it is very likely that many of these, as with existing laws, will be used to punish drag performance, will be used to police trans people existing in public. And of course, that's already true. If you think about laws like loitering for purposes of prostitution, for example, are already weaponized to police the bodies of trans people, particularly trans women of color. And so I think what we should be concerned about is not only the introduction of these laws and this broad attack on drag performance, on gender variance, and existing in public as trans people, but then also the ways in which our existing laws and these new laws are going to be used in discriminatory ways to target trans people, queer people, drag performers for being, performing, and existing in public.

KENDALL [00:22:41] Okay. And then the last category I want to talk about is the education gag orders that we're seeing in states like Florida.

CHASE [00:22:49] Yeah, we see a lot of both efforts to restrict curriculum as it interfaces or engages with LGBTQ people at all. And then, of course, the broader bills, like the ones that we've seen in Florida over the last two years that don't say LGBTQ bills that prohibit any mention of LGBTQ people. And Kentucky has a similar piece of legislation like that, which, of course that are defended on the grounds that talking about certain subject as quote unquote "inappropriate for a youth of certain ages." But these laws are written as such that you can't mention gender identity or sexual orientation in certain classrooms. And that is preposterous because if you're talking about relationships of any kind or people's existence of any kind and you mentioned, say, their gender, that is talking about gender identity, that is talking about the fact of different gendered categories of people, that is actually what we do in the younger grades. People talk about their families, people talk about their experiences.

People start to learn about and then sort and sort the world. And in so doing, we talk about and reference people's, you know, romantic relationships. People talk about spouses, they just only want them to talk about heterosexual spouses in the context of these classrooms. I think it goes, you know, there's a long history, of course, of deeming any mention of or the existence of LGBTQ people as inherently obscene or inappropriate for children. Then, of course, that empowers the state to police LGBTQ people's existence. And when you think about kids in my K through three grades, for example, it means that kids who have LGBTQ parents can't talk about their families and are then through the enforcement of these types of ideas by the state made to feel stigmatized and ashamed. It means teachers can't be publicly LGBTQ in classrooms. You know, it should mean, based on how these are written, that people that teachers can't be any sexual orientation. So no one talking about their, you know, different sex vows either. But of course, that's not what these laws are about. They're about targeting particular people. They're about trying to enforce particular ideas that people should be ashamed of, who they are and of their families. And that is what we're seeing across the country.

KENDALL [00:25:06] I want to talk about why this is all happening, where this is all coming from. You picked up the point about parents rights that I think has been really, really over utilized and also false in a lot of ways because it's like whose parents get rights? I want to talk about the very loud way that this anti-trans movement, these organizations, are intentionally scaring parents. And why? Why do you think it's working even for, quote unquote, "well-meaning parents"?

CHASE [00:25:43] Yeah, I mean, so-so why this is happening? I mean, it's- it's interesting because The New York Times just ran this investigative piece or larger reported piece saying, oh, it's caught everyone by surprise, after marriage equality, all the money went into attacking trans people. That caught no trans person by surprise. I've been writing about that

since 2016, since immediately after, basically, *Obergefell* was decided at the Supreme Court. You have a huge, well-funded right wing movement that lost at the Supreme Court around marriage equality and very quickly started moving all of these resources into attacking trans people. And they did that for two reasons. One is that many of them are sort of true believers and in one, construction of sexuality, of gender and of family, the-the, you know, heterosexual Christian nuclear family is the centerpiece of how they organize society. And the other is that they had for years been using attacks on gay people getting married as a political tool to mobilize voting bases in the lead up to elections. And so trans people become the new center point of these attacks beginning in 2016 and of course, stretching back way before that. But if we think about this contemporary set of attacks, this is a buildup very strategically over the last seven years that is weaponized and escalated around high stakes elections. And the right, you know, broadly defined and defined in multiple ways is looking for ways to turn out voters and a way to cultivate a sense of anxiety that people need to act based in fear about change they can't control. If you think about, you know, what was going on in 2014 and 2015 with attacks on, quote unquote, "waves of immigrants coming in" and people's loss of identity. This whole idea that there's a contagion of trans people, you're losing your children and the world that you understood, you need to vote for us so we can enforce controls that are familiar. That is exactly what's happening now, I think, for sort of two fundamental reasons. One is that the sex binary is one of the central organizing structures of society, both in the United States and around the world. And so, not understanding that or feeling like it's less clear, it is something that people are just instinctively anxious about. And then I think the second reason which is related to that one is, I mean, there's a million reasons, but just that I want to highlight, and this is really important to me, is that I genuinely think that the freedom that trans people represent, the freedom that not everything is as fixed and as static

and as told to you by your parents or the adults in your life at age two, as you thought is scary for people, and that there is this sense that, oh, well, have I have I not made enough choices? Have I just, you know, ceded it to a narrative of who I am that was not of my own choosing? I do think there's this anxiety that's permeating a lot of this and people's reaction is instead of sitting with themselves, instead of asking themselves hard questions, is to say those other people are freaks, they're dangerous, they're a threat, and we have to control them. And that, of course, is something that plays out throughout history. And, you know, having various types of scapegoats is often used to justify and legitimize expansions of government power that end up hurting everyone. And so I really think people need to sit with what it means when we authorize the government to intrude upon our autonomy and our freedoms so significantly, if-you know, as to one group, it is completely ridiculous to think that it's only going to impact that one group.

KENDALL [00:29:27] Yeah, I mean, it brings up this conversation about freedom as a principle and a value that is so widely touted by the same people who seek to place these restrictions in the most intimate areas of our lives. It's so contradictory. I do actually really sympathize with the idea of having to re-shape your entire world around new ideas, because these ideas are calling every part of your life into question. Because people who are so entrenched in the gender binary will have to consider every facet of life. I do think that that is a big ask for a lot of people who would rather live their lives in a way that is, you know, quote unquote, "asleep at the wheel." That's a very awake thing to be, to be awake to yourself and awake to the people around you. You know, I think a lot about this and I think a lot about how you help people on that journey in a way that's compassionate, but also not giving up of human dignity or your values. I'm sure you think a lot about this, too. I'm wondering, you know, I'm sure there are a lot of people listening to this who are in

relationship with people who are, like, trying to move along this journey. Do you have any words for people?

CHASE [00:30:55] A lot of times people ask me, well, what can we do in light of this? And in this context, I think one of the single most important things that we can do is this type of engagement in our families and our communities and to changing the norms around what we assume to be true about both our gendered behaviors and our sexed bodies. And so a lot of times people in this moment say things like, “well, you know, I you know how two kids know who they are?” And, “I just feel like I always knew this thing to be true.” And so I’ll just—I’ll sit with people and I’ll be like, okay, let’s—let’s just sit with that one idea. And it’s sort of like, well, you know, when did you know that you were a girl and how did you know? And like, how, like, how did you know that it was your girl-ness that was who you—what your gender identity was? And that, I think just taking that extra step. People are like, “someone else told me” or “I have this body part.” And it’s like, well, okay, but is that a satisfying answer? And then it comes to this sense— and what is actually usually the truth, which is “I just know” or “it was told to me and it felt right,” but “it was told to me and I just took it” - so just because something has always been true, is that enough for us? And so I think what is helpful is to say, “well, no. Like, I do feel something core in myself.” And so then why is it impossible to believe that other people do to other people that have a different experience of the world, other people that whose bodies look different than you would expect? Because actually, it turns out our bodies like look really different, period. Across the board, intersex variation of bodies is wild. And this idea that we’re all reduced to these two things that our parents told us or that have always been true and that should be enough to organize so much of society.

KENDALL [00:32:43] You said something on a recent episode of the Chris Hayes podcast that I thought was really, really interesting, which is that “transness complicates our notion of a body.” And it really struck me. It



hit me so hard. I, like, sent it to people. And I think the reason it did is because, you know, growing up with like an abnormal disabled body myself, I've always felt that bodies were complicated. I've always felt my body was complicated. I always felt my body was different or othered in a lot of different contexts, right. And I do think people have a really hard time thinking, even with their own bodies, thinking of them outside the norm. Like everything is telling us to be within this quote unquote "norm," when the reality is no one fits that norm. Like it doesn't exist. It actually is not a real thing. And I think that's why I so identify with what you talk about when you talk about bodies and the body diversity is because this is actually something that opens the door for everyone. And I just thought that was such a beautiful articulation of like what transness does for us and can do for our world in a very beautiful, positive and liberatory way.

CHASE [00:34:10] Yeah, I feel that. So I'm like, this is not about one constituency. This is about humans existing in our bodies and challenging the idea that we should assign one single set of meaning to like one body part and let that organize everything. And I've learned so, I mean, so much of my vision of trans justice has been informed by disability justice and this idea that how our bodies interface with society is just such a product of existing power structures. And that rather than telling people to change their bodies, we have to tell people we have to demand that we change the world.

KENDALL [00:34:41] Because this just genuinely is not working for us.

CHASE [00:34:45] Yeah, like who is this working for? We know it's working for like ten billionaires. Like the rest of us are just sitting there hoping that we can be the ten billionaires. But that is the fallacy of at least United States capitalism. Like we have to dream and be better. And I think that and that's because collectively we can change so much if we don't accept these really constrained paradigms for what we can do in the world, how

we conceptualize ourselves and how our bodies live, like our interface with our with us and each other to that.

KENDALL [00:35:15] To that end, we get out of these questions like, "why are so many kids gay now? Why? Why is everyone trans now as everyone non-binary? Like what? Like is it social contagion?" Like, what do you say to people when they express that like, "oh, everyone is non-binary now. What is happening to our world?"

CHASE [00:35:33] It's-I first want to say like what's the why are you asking the question is, is it because you think there is like do you genuinely want to understand sort of how people are experiencing themselves and or do you think there's too many? And so I think that I want to get to because sometimes it's framed as like.

KENDALL [00:35:49] I think some people do, right.

CHASE [00:35:51] Isn't this a quote unquote "explosion" and something to be concerned about? And it's like, well, like no. And why? Why would that be the premise instead of like sort of what are the conditions that we're creating that make people feel more free? I would love to sort of investigate sort of from the-from the entry point of more of any full sense of self is a good thing. How did we get there and how can we continue it? But instead it's really tied up in this way of like, you know, this-this must mean that something that there's some conspiracy going on. And that is what's wild to me is that there are that that the- the impulse is that there's somehow doctors out there who are facilitating this, you know, expansion of transness or parents is trying to make themselves trans-make their, excuse me, make their kids trans, which I'm just like one of the things that just feels so true to me is that in the context of discussions about trans people, people forget everything else they know to be true about the world. Like, how easy is it to get a doctor in this country like you're just walking in to get a specialist? Where? Like, how is like, you know, it takes a year anywhere, even with good insurance, to like, see a

specialist. You know, that these processes are incredibly slow. It's like if you're a parent and all of a sudden your response is, oh, "there's too many trans kids, It must be a product of contagion or kids making them, you know, making other kids this way." Like, what else do you know about parenting? Like, have you ever been successful at making your kid literally anything? Like, I don't understand why this would be your impulse. And I also think we don't want to totally shy away from the idea that being around other people who are full and free helps us imagine things for ourselves like we do go looking for people like us, and we do get drawn to people who are so comfortable with who they are that there's an attraction to that and that that's actually a really good thing, that there's people out there to to find and connect with. And I do think it's really hard for trans people and for any people right now to be in a situation where your desire to connect with people like you is used as evidence that you're not genuinely who that who you are. Like, I personally choose to surround myself with more trans people because I like trans people better. That's just a simple fact. I think we are funny. I think we have a beautiful sense of insight into human beings and ourselves. And so I do choose to surround myself with trans people. That is not because those people are making me trans, it is because, like many of us, I go towards people who make me happy and who excite me and who I don't have to justify myself to at all times.

KENDALL [00:38:28] Absolutely. That's so odd, Chase. I can't even believe that that's how you live your life. Like. (Laughs)

CHASE [00:38:35] I know.

KENDALL [00:38:36] I know that you're like.

CHASE [00:38:37] I just like that. I like that. (Laughs)

KENDALL [00:38:39] That I love you.

CHASE [00:38:40] That understand me? Yeah. (Laughs)

KENDALL [00:38:41] Oh, my God. That's sounds.

CHASE [00:38:43] I mean, super weird.

KENDALL [00:38:45] But, you know. Yeah. (Laughs)

CHASE [00:38:46] Try it sometimes. (Laughs)

KENDALL [00:38:47] (Laughs) Yeah. Yeah. I wanna ask you about this other group of people. I think there's, like, a lot of people, at least in my mind, that are part of this you do you camp, right? I don't really engage in this issue. I don't really care. It's not affecting me. And I also think that the you-do-yous are people that can become people who we absorb into the family of-of caring and fighting for other people that are not themselves. How do you think about the ideas and is there a way that we can collectively work to-to tap into the you do you folks and get them to be "I care toos"?

CHASE [00:39:29] It's a good question. I mean, I think there's probably different versions of this group of people that we're talking about. I think for-for some of them, there is a sense that they're comfortable now and that if they had some personal stake, that there would be drawn to action. And I think for that group of people, what I really want people to understand is that we're very close to very few people being comfortable. Like we are not to many days, months or whatever, years away from some of the ways that those of us who are experiencing direct encroachment into our autonomy and our survival opportunities are experiencing those things, that is that-that's going to be a lot more people. And I think of this in the context of the people who could not imagine *Roe* being overturned when many people were like, It's going to be overturned. And then even then we're sort of like, Well, I live in New York and it's like, okay, well, what happens when there's a federal ban on abortion, then what? And so, it's like, do we only react when it's so catastrophic? And if we don't act now, then we're all but guaranteeing

that. And so, I'm sort of interested in the group of people who come into this with a sense of like, "well, I'm okay." Whether they are saying that explicitly or as just sort of viscerally or emotionally, what's driving them is to sort of help paint a picture for how very soon they may feel a lot less comfortable and if their comfort is what they want to protect, if it's their ability to distance themselves from things, then they have a self-interest.

KENDALL [00:40:59] I love that pitch. And then my last question for you is just want to give you an opportunity to highlight the work that we're doing at the ACLU that you're doing specifically. If there's anything in particular that you want to mention.

CHASE [00:41:12] I can't say enough that, you know, this is a crisis moment and we're meeting the moment as best we can. We're in every state legislature trying to stop the bills. We are filing so many more lawsuits than I've ever seen us pull together in a short period of time. And these are huge lawsuits with a lot of resources and a lot of requirements and just trying to show up every day and doing so in a way, hopefully that is continuing to be in partnership, both with the leadership of groups on the ground in these places and also with the knowledge of how materially impactful and terrifying this is for people right now. We are trying to challenge those narratives in court. We are going to show you that the the lies animating these lies are lies. In the public discourse, we are going to show you what this really is about, and we're going to challenge your conception of what it means to be trans and what it means to be a human being with a body like all of these big concepts, that is a centerpiece of the work and every tool that we're employing.

KENDALL [00:42:13] Beautiful, amazing. We're so grateful to have you. Thank you so, so much for all of your work. I know that it is exhausting and difficult and troubling and personal. I just really appreciate having you at this organization and having you even, you know, just on At Liberty. So I really thank you so much.

CHASE [00:42:37] Thank you so much. It was great to talk to you.

KENDALL [00:42:42] Thanks so much for listening. If you enjoy this episode, please subscribe to At Liberty wherever you get your podcasts and read and review the show. We really appreciate the feedback. Until next week, stay strong.