

# A Recipe for Changing Gendered Spaces

Our culture assumes that all people are comfortable with the gender binary – the idea that there are only two genders, male and female. That assumption is one of many that are harmful to trans people. In an ideal world, we would open our arms to people of all gender identities. We would honor those who are men, those who are women, and those who don't identify as either. To push for this change, I started with de-gendering bathroom facilities that were designated for men or women, because they enforce the gender binary. With the help of a team, I replaced the old signs with all-gender signs on every bathroom in every academic building on campus overnight. We continued the conversation the next day by setting up tables in the dining hall to explain the issue, action, and solutions.

## About the Chef

I'm Cash. I'm a dog lover, a sister, and a daughter. My biggest aspiration in life is to become a graphic novelist and let my art tell my story. I want to incorporate a lot of my politics into my work to make these issues accessible. I am currently organizing on campus because I am passionate about building a movement by the people for the people. Learn more about my action and my work with Breakthrough [here](#).



## Ingredients

- ◇ **Images for signs:** I used a design that didn't resemble either of the generic "male" or "female" signs – instead, I used images associated with bathrooms, like toilets and rolls of toilet paper.
- ◇ **Messaging:** Come up with some clear, focused language to put on your signs and flyers. Think: short and to the point.
- ◇ **A team:** You'll need to pull together a group of people who are committed to the cause. Reach outside of your inner circle and compile a list of people you think would be interested in this.
- ◇ **Accessible space:** Find somewhere central on campus for everyone to meet to plan your action.
- ◇ **Outreach:** Network! Do you know anyone who can help you connect with faculty, administration, student media, and other student groups?
- ◇ **Online campaign:** Use social media to get the word out about your work. Choose a catchy or memorable hashtag so people can easily find and participate in your action.
- ◇ **Videos/photos:** Take plenty of photos - during the planning, while you're hanging signs, and as people encounter them. If someone on your team has video editing skills, consider video too – it's a great way to share your work after the fact.
- ◇ **Get people involved:** An online campaign is a way to get other people to engage with, reflect on, and amplify your work. Don't forget to interact with people who are participating online as well as on the ground!



## Prep time

My team and I pulled together this action in about two weeks. We decided to speed up our process when Donald Trump revoked Obama's Title IX guidance around letting trans students use the restroom that corresponds with their gender. It was important for us to leverage that moment, so we moved the date of our action up in response to this attack on trans rights. I would suggest taking more than two weeks if you can, as we had initially planned!



## Cooking time

At Bates, this action took us about two hours late at night. You can determine how long it will take you based on the number of buildings you want to cover, the number of volunteers you have, and how spread out your campus is. We targeted all of the bathrooms in all of our academic buildings. Act strategically. Think about what bathrooms are the most visible, and where your action will have the most impact. Then be realistic about how many buildings you can actually cover. Dream big—but set yourself up for success!

We followed up the next day by tabling in our school's dining hall to answer questions, talk about what's at stake, and take photos of people showing their support for our campaign. We did this for an hour, but you might want to table for more time based on your team's capacity – and how long you have permission to use the space.

## Recipe:

1. **Recruitment.** Organize a team of people that will invest their time in this action. Create a timeline so that you meet personal deadlines. This will help you hold others accountable for their responsibilities.
2. **Set your goals.** Are you hoping to educate other students in order to create a more welcoming campus? Are you taking on a policy and you need to mobilize the student body? Are you reacting to an incident? Setting goals will keep you focused. Refer back to them and make sure every decision you make furthers your goal.
3. **Collaboration.** Meet with your team to develop a strategic plan. You'll need to decide what to put on your signs, how you'll print them, which buildings you want to cover, and when you'll take action. You'll also want to figure out talking points, answers to difficult questions, and how you'll communicate with the community beyond those signs.
4. **Gather your supplies.** You'll need enough new signs, and whatever you're using to stick them up with, to cover all the bathrooms you've decided to target. You might also want to create additional materials to hand out around campus or while tabling, or even talking points or messaging for your team to make sure everyone's on the same page. Are there floorplans for the buildings available? Print those too - you can use them to make assignments and be sure you've covered every bathroom.
5. **Replace the bathroom signs!** My team met in one of the biggest academic buildings on campus, and split the work from there. We met around 10pm, and spent two hours covering signs in every bathroom in every academic building.
6. **Follow through.** Your action isn't over when you've put the last sign up. Now it's time to continue and guide the conversations you've just sparked. We continued our campaign by tabling in the dining hall and getting people to take photos showing their support for de-gendering restrooms. That also meant we were available to answer questions about our action.
7. **Take it to the next level.** Who do you need to work with on your campus to make all-gender restrooms a long-term reality instead of a one-time campaign? After you've taken action, reach out to the appropriate administrators and see if you can work together to make this change permanent.

## Substitutions:

- ◇ Don't have access to floorplans for the buildings? Map out the facilities on your own before getting started.
- ◇ Can't get access to academic buildings late at night? Try early morning – or build a big team that could cover every bathroom in a short time period mid-day. FYI: We did this action on a Sunday night, so it would be seen first thing Monday morning.

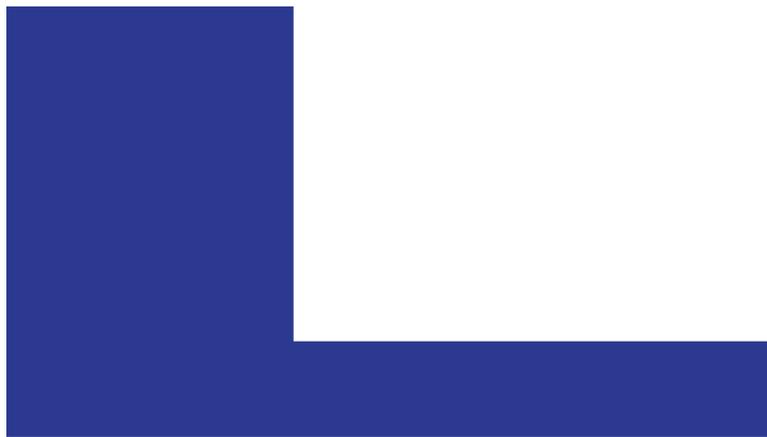
## Helpful Hints:

- ◇ Be *responsive*. My original timeline for this action was more spread out. When Trump stripped legal protections for trans youth in February 2017, we changed the timeline to seize the political moment.
- ◇ It's okay to *take up space* when working an issue that is very close to your heart. Make people listen. Make people care. Make people uncomfortable—that's how change happens. Letting people see how much it matters to you is powerful—and they will take you seriously.
- ◇ Think of creative ways to *raise funds* for printing and other costs associated with this action. Maybe you're part of a student group with funding, or maybe you can pool together some printing credits from people in your network, or even find someone in the local community willing to help out.



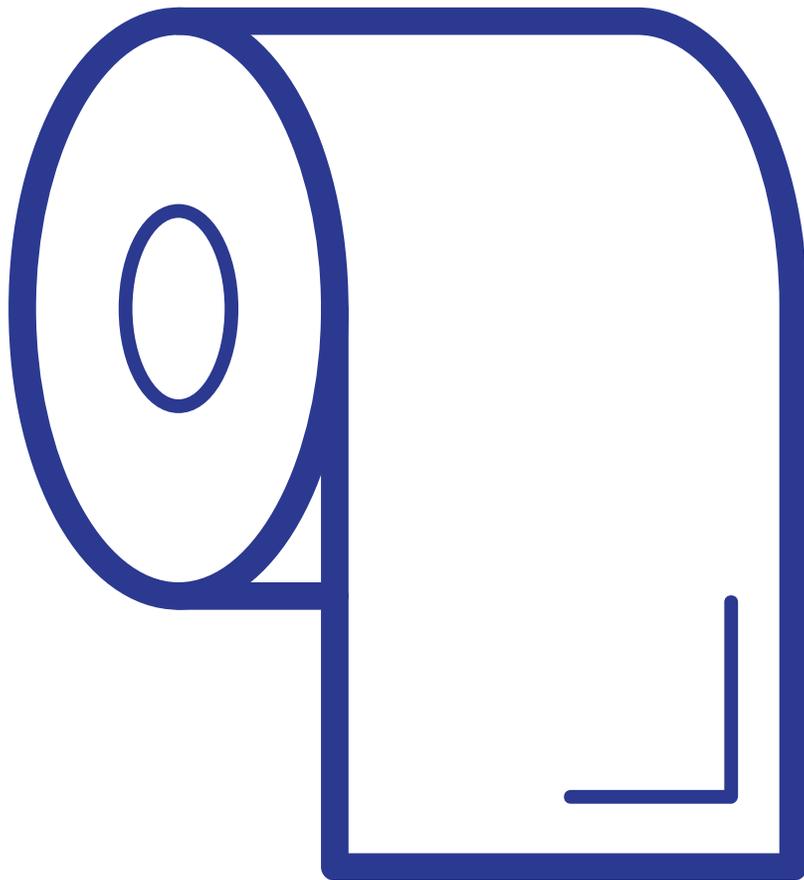
- ◇ Know *what you're up against*. Is the administration at your school open to listening? Are any administrators your allies? Try and bring them in on your action. If they're not, find a way to get their attention and put pressure on them. For example, you could schedule your action to coincide with admitted students day, or other days when outsiders will see it.
- ◇ Once you've inspired a bunch of new people to join your cause, don't forget to *keep them involved*. This is where an online campaign can be useful: give them ways to continue as allies, and maybe they'll be part of your team in your next action!
- ◇ A challenge I faced was *lack of representation* of people impacted by bathrooms. I could've used more trans voices on this project, But visibility is low on campus. I can't stress enough just how important it is to center trans voices during this action.

# TOILET



THIS BATHROOM IS FOR  
INDIVIDUALS OF ANY GENDER  
[#ProtectTransYouth](#)

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