



Sex Ed as Resistance

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As someone who is a passionate advocate for high-quality, comprehensive, and inclusive sexuality education, my frustrated sighs are heavy and often. Keeping current on which rights have been stripped away from whom and which restrictions are active where is a full-time job. In one monthly meeting, there is barely enough time for the leaders to keep us up to date with all the ways people are finding to rescind access to information and services.

Medical care for thousands of folks has been eliminated or restricted, creating an exodus to states where gender affirming care is still legal and available. Some states are revoking basic identification in the form of driver's licenses, which not only impacts driving, but also identification needed to obtain employment, rent or buy a home, apply for loans and college, and more. It has become illegal to teach children about basic bodily functions and about some of their family configurations, and [states](#) and the federal [government](#) are increasingly banning pride flags ([though Boise, ID got creative](#)).

Comprehensive sexuality education is about so much more than sexual behavior. It is about dismantling shame and stigma about bodies and relationships, which is lifesaving. We know shame and stigma can be fatal. [There is extensive research showing](#) the harm of efforts to change a person's sexual orientation and gender identity ("conversion therapy"), which include higher levels of depression and suicide attempts.



works, and ways to keep it safe and healthy are important. This type of information provides protective factors against abuse and empowers young people to make better decisions.

Outlawing diversity does not vanquish it from existence. Families love each other in all kinds of ways—some with grandparents or other relatives doing the parenting, others with single parents, many with robust bonus parenting structures, and lots with one or more parent who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, nonbinary, or intersex. Shaming and stigmatizing these families does not promote health or safety, nor does it make them vanish.

I find hope in knowing that the work we do with the Our Whole Lives ministry creates belonging for LGBTQIA+ people, their families, and friends. Authoritarian regimes work to destroy those populations, but we have the ability to provide robust communities of care through our work as faith communities offering sexuality education that is inclusive.

In addition, this work has always promoted bodily autonomy and reproductive justice, which also come under fire in authoritarian systems. By offering faith-based education rooted in the principles of reproductive justice and honoring bodily autonomy and moral agency, we also teach people to work for and expect more just systems than current governmental leadership provides.

Now, more than ever, we need ways to provide community care in our churches and in our society. Now, more than ever, we need creative ways to continue to educate about self-worth, justice, and the beautiful diversity of creation. Now, more than ever, we need to work together. Now, more than ever, we need Our Whole Lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Amy Johnson serves as the Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ.

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