

Speak Out about What Matters

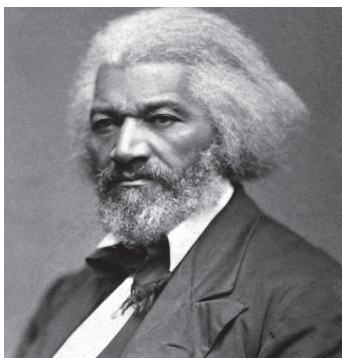
Hannah Dodge

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Share what you know about the people in the pictures below. What did they speak up about?
2. Note that LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. People who are transgender or queer may not identify with a certain gender (male or female) and/or they may not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

The quote “Speak the truth, even if your voice shakes” means to stand up for what you believe in (even if things could go wrong or you’re scared to speak up about it).

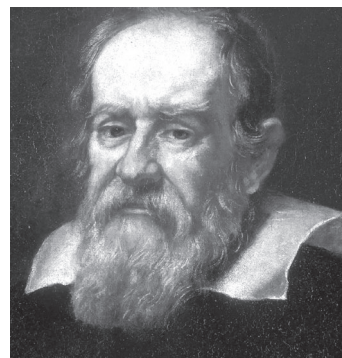
Throughout history, many have spoken up about the truth and made a difference in the world. Take the famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, who spoke up about the rights of enslaved people. Or the famous suffragist, Susan B. Anthony, who spoke up about women’s voting rights. Going way back in history, there was the famous astronomer Galileo Galilei who discovered the Earth revolves around the sun, rather than vice-versa. He spoke up about it, but no one believed him. He ended up under house arrest for committing heresy because the church thought the Earth was the center of the world and did not move.



Frederick Douglass



Susan B. Anthony



Galileo Galelei

One time, I spoke up about an issue that matters to me. I wrote a letter to the editor of my local paper about how we need to protect the voting rights of LGBTQ people. (See next page.) In the letter, I wrote about how when you register to vote, you are required to identify your gender. If you are transgender, your gender might not match what you put on your voter registration card, and so you might not be allowed to vote.

My letter was published in the *Ellsworth American* newspaper, which covers my home county in Maine. Writing this letter was a small step toward making a difference about something that I think is important. It made me feel vulnerable and nervous to see my letter published in the newspaper. It was scary, and I wasn’t sure what would come of it, but it turned out all right.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Did you ever “speak the truth, even if your voice shook”? How did it turn out for you?
2. Read Hannah’s letter on the next page.
3. What other groups (besides African Americans and women) have had to fight for voting rights? How did they do it?

Source: <www.aclu.org/blog/lgbt-rights/transgender-rights/voting-rights-lgbt-rights-fight>

The Ellsworth American.

Dear Editor:

Did you know LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and other) people are paid less than cisgender (the gender you were born with) heterosexual people? Did you know that the current administration's position on transgender people in the military is discriminatory? Did you know that, according to Bernie Sanders, "Today LGBTQ+ people are more than 4.5 percent of our population but only hold 0.1 percent of elected offices?"

If these things bother and/or disturb you, there is one thing you can do – vote (especially if you are between the ages of 18 and 24)! People in this age group tend not to vote and do not realize they have the power to make changes affecting the LGBTQ+ community in the United States.

It is difficult for LGBTQ+ people to register to vote in some states because applicants are required to identify their gender status. While states like Maine do not require gender identification on their registration application, states like New Jersey do. If LGBTQ+ citizens in New Jersey attempt to complete the voter application, they're stopped in their tracks by question number 11 (there are only two boxes to check – male or female.) This is discouraging to LGBTQ+ citizens because their gender status is not represented.

The solution to this problem is to eliminate the gender question altogether. More people would vote and all segments of our society would be represented in the next state and national elections.

— Hannah Dodge, Franklin, Maine

Source: <<https://twitter.com/BernieSanders/status/1113178745244971010>>.

Reprinted from: <www.ellsworthamerican.com/opinions/letters-to-the-editor/lgbtq-voting-rights/#>



How Mighty is the Pen?

There is a saying that “the pen is mightier than the sword.” What does this quote mean to you? Discuss.

Read some letters to the editor published in your local newspaper. Identify a few qualities that make a letter effective.

Write your own letter to the editor and consider submitting it to your local newspaper.

Hannah Dodge is a student at RSU 24 Adult Education in Sullivan, Maine. She is a bisexual girl who is just trying to make a positive difference in this crazy world. And she loves cows!



Hannah Dodge