

Personal pronouns are not a negotiation



Your Turn
Hannah Myers
Guest columnist

Three months ago, my sibling, RJ, came out to me as non-binary.

For them, it means that they don't feel as if they fit into society's roles as male or female, and they have come to terms with the fact that their biological sex doesn't have to match their gender. RJ has had a number of discussions with me about how people not using their correct pronouns gives them a lot of anxiety, and they feel as if they simply must deal with it.

This comes into play at work and within our family, and they worry that this may be an issue when they begin college in the spring.

This also affects how they will navigate certain future relationships with partners. How will people react when they find out that RJ is nonbinary? This is the source of a lot of stress and anxiety for my sibling.

My question is this: what makes people think that someone else's chosen pronouns are their decision? I understand that the use of "they" to describe an individual requires an adjustment

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period, because I still slip up. RJ and I live together, and they have been using gender neutral pronouns for three months and I still struggle not to call them my sister sometimes. However, the difference is that I try every day to make sure I am not mis-gendering them. Because RJ still often likes to dress femininely, they get mis-gendered often as well.

In these cases, RJ understands but still corrects the individual and continues to move about their day.

Yet, this sometimes leads to a series of questions and inappropriate comments such as, "That's not a real thing, you're lying," or "Okay... but what's in your pants?" In what situation does someone deem it appropriate to ask what is in someone else's pants?

The lack of respect and personal

boundaries that some people exhibit astounds me. While I know that the concept is foreign to some, it really is as simple as trying.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are unsure of someone's pronouns, you have several options.

For starters, try to stop yourself from making assumptions. Assuming someone's gender based off of their appearance is the default for most people. Because of RJ and because I am involved in the LGBT community, I have made a daily effort not to assume anyone's gender or sexuality just by the way that they look or dress. Another simple habit to make is to start introducing yourself to others by using your pronouns.

For example, I would say, "Hi, I'm Hannah and my pronouns are she, her, and hers." For some people this may not

mean anything, but to those who are transgender, non-binary, or another part of the LGBT community, they will likely understand and greatly appreciate you introducing yourself with your pronouns as well. This opens up the idea of someone responding with their own pronouns, and then you are not left wondering which pronouns to use for a certain individual.

If this fails, simply ask someone for pronouns. It is considered insensitive to ask the individual directly, but if you have mutual friends or acquaintances it may be in your best interest to ask them.

At the end of the day, we all must remember to do two simple things. First of all, listen. Listen to what people tell you when they discuss their pronouns, and their anxiety. How is your habit going to affect their lives?

In addition, and probably the most important thing to remember is to have compassion.

Nobody is any different than you, and their pronouns have nothing to do with how true that is. Use correct pronouns for people. It may simply make somebody's day.

Hannah Myers is a Senior at East Carolina University studying Communications and Political Science.

Dogwood Trust board has enough diversity

Mission Health Board Foundation Planning Committee

As members of the planning committee who helped to create the Dogwood Health Trust (Dogwood), we know well the unprecedented opportunity Dogwood offers to dramatically improve the health and wellbeing of all people and communities in western North Carolina. Our region's residents are poorer, older, sicker and less likely to be insured than elsewhere in North Carolina and across our country. Dogwood is our best opportunity to attain exemplary health and wellbeing for our region.

The Mission Health Board has the legal and fiduciary responsibility for setting up a conversion foundation, now named Dogwood Health Trust. Given Dogwood's importance and because it will be created from non-profit assets, our community should understand how we chose these individuals to serve in this capacity. The Mission Health Board, acting upon its fiduciary responsibility, created a diverse subcommittee to establish a conversion foundation, including making initial appointments as a required part of the transaction process. The subcommittee's selections (six total) were approved by the full Mission Board.

Why these six individuals? Each had served as chair of the Mission Health Board during the generation in which our local hospital in Asheville became the system we now know as Mission Health. While these individuals led the board, Mission sustained and enabled health care services throughout the rural region. Mission Health serves the 18 counties that will be the service area for Dogwood. Our state and national recognition of high quality health care is due, in part, to the strategic and selfless board leadership of the initial six members we chose as Dogwood's founding board.

Simply put, there is no better group to serve in this early period. Each has impeccable credentials, a track record of philanthropy, experience with health-care services and operations, and notably, direct knowledge with care gaps and unmet needs across our region. Each is a local member of our region, many having been born, raised and spent most or all of their lives here. Among them are individuals with exceptional experience in law, medicine, banking, finance and investments.

These initial six Board members communicated with the Attorney General's office and then selected three additional members. These three bring additional regional and inclusive perspectives to Dogwood. The Dogwood Board has made very clear its commitment to geographic, gender and ethnic diversity along with the willingness and capacity to serve the entire region, regardless of any Board member's current county of residence.

Dogwood Health Trust made an intentional pledge to the entire 18-county region of Western North Carolina. The Board is and will continue evolving to more closely reflect, fully understand, and meaningfully serve the region. According to 2017 US Census Bureau data:

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15 percent of the overall regional population of Western North Carolina is non-Caucasian.

More importantly, of our region's vulnerable population (adjusted for inequities in income and associated poverty reveals):

- 14 percent are our neighbors who describe themselves as Latino/ Hispanic alone

- 7.4 percent are Black/African American alone; and

- 4.4 percent are Native American.

We chose to create a board size small enough to function optimally and large enough to bring together optimum talents, perspectives and experience. Even once complete, the initial Dogwood Board will have staggered terms of one, two, or three years resulting in significant shifts in Board composition over time. Recently, Dogwood's Governance and Nominating committee began working toward the selection of three additional board members. Consistent with their previously stated goal, they are focused on women and people of color. Additional areas of expertise will also be sought for the board. For example, Dogwood has one national expert on the founding board and would seek one or two more in the years ahead.

Perhaps most important, we want to say publicly that we appreciate and trust these people who have put their personal interests aside and already dedicated extraordinary amounts of time to this important initiative. They have been among the donor and Board rosters of so many of western North Carolina's non-profit organizations. These extraordinary leaders have repeatedly demonstrated that they care deeply about the region, which is why more than 30 nonprofit organizations across the region wrote the Attorney General to express support of the transaction and/or Dogwood Health Trust and its Board. They understand and are committed to serve as a diverse, engaged, thoughtful and strategic Board.

We invite the community to join us in our gratitude for the volunteer service of these individuals on the founding board of Dogwood Health Trust, and we hope they can soon begin to fulfill its mission, "to dramatically improve the health and wellbeing of all people and communities in Western North Carolina."

Signed by the following Members of the Mission Health Board Foundation Planning Committee: John W. Garrett, MD; Anne Ponder; Thomas A. Maher and Robby L. Russell.

Teachers have become cons in a political con



Your Turn
Carl Mumpower
Guest columnist

Do Some Teachers Lie?

Several weeks ago, the Buncombe Republican Party posted this question in the "news" section of our web site - BuncombeGOP.org. We raised the inquiry in response to the latest in a parade of one-side media supported declarations that Republicans don't care about education or educators.

Facts affirm the opposite and efforts by liberally-biased NC educator lobbies to seduce voters with deception merit challenge.

May we start with our own declaration? Yes, apparently some teachers do lie - and the recent ACT op-ed by the President of the Buncombe County Association of Educators regrettably offers example.

Affirmation begins with the orchestrated May school day march on Raleigh by 25,000 teachers. With few exceptions, their complaints centered on money - specifically their money and the fact they wanted more and felt Raleigh's Republican majority was getting in their way.

May we suggest this was not a spontaneous uprising of starving teachers? It was a planned event sponsored by NC's teacher labor union and other liberal-progressive political groups attempting to discredit the opposition.

Spoiler alert - angry teachers looking for a shorter drive and more legitimate target would be better advised to raise questions about the annual \$600,000 in "extra-duty pay" for Buncombe school administrators. That's on top of their already generous salaries, supplements and benefit packages. It won't happen because liberal-progressives control the school boards and administrations of our city and county school systems.

Our antagonists are correct on one count. Republicans are the opposition of any special interest body seeking to rob taxpayer pockets - including teachers unions like the North Carolina Association of Educators and local branches like the BCAE. Mr. Webster affirms those credentials, "Labor Union: An organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions."

Imagine taking time off from your job to protest the fact you received raises in five of the last five years. The 5th was the 6.2 percent in next year's budget, and they knew it was coming out of Raleigh before they went to Raleigh.

In recent years how many of us have had anything approaching that kind of pay consideration? Wage stagnation has been a decades long concern for almost every working person in the state.

Commendably, on taking leadership after 100+ years of Democratic control, Raleigh's Republicans imme-

diately began to right wrongs with education. In a 2018 US News & World Report study using 2016 statistics to measure how well states educate their students, NC ranked 23rd in Pre-K through 12th grade and 10th in higher education. That's progress and we've gone up a notch since then.

When you hear teachers complaining about their financial status, keep three things in mind - (1) Your own history of pay increases (2) The fact NC's other government employee increases have been half of that of educators and (3) The teaching profession has never been a vocation one pursued for money - at least until the left corrupted the model.

Though the NCAE long ago lost its connection to such, teaching is about public-service vs. self-service. Thank goodness most people become teachers for the same reason they become law enforcement officers, nurses, firefighters, daycare workers, and a host of other professions devoted to uplifting and protecting others.

For further insight on our question, "Do Some Teachers Lie," take a moment to peruse our two web site articles on this subject. The second was devoted to responding to a clearly organized swarm of antagonistic comments by "offended" teachers. We think you will find their comments and our responses very educational. With few exceptions, the persisting references were devoted to pay and teachers as victims. The needs of our children as students were extraordinarily absent - a good illustration of our contention "the best liars lie to themselves first."

The facts support the reality too many of NC's teachers have become pawns in a political con that betrays everything education is about. NC's Republican leadership is being publicly attacked for attempting to right wrongs with teachers and inefficiencies in our classrooms that have existed for decades under persistently unchallenged Democratic leadership. That's about power politics, greed and voter manipulation, not truth, students or healthy preservation of the service-oriented teaching profession.

To do the latter we have to responsibly pay our teachers, but the education success equation is less about money than a return to serving kids. Putting teachers versus centralized administrators in charge of classrooms; rewarding successful teachers; returning to the tenets of a liberal arts education versus educating our kids to be liberals; and classroom sanity and safety represent low hanging fruit largely ignored by political money-power grabbers masquerading as benefactors. The latter's misguided mission should not be rewarded by advocacy journalism or voter loyalty.

Do some teachers lie - yes, and in the case of a UNC-A educator, an eye witness account and photos - apparently, they also steal. Thankfully, as Republicans, we know that most teachers operate from a better heart. They became teachers to lay a positive hand on the world - and should be fairly paid for that grace.

Carl Mumpower is the Chair of the Buncombe County Republican Party.