

**Published September 7, 2016 in the [Wakefield Daily Item](#) of Wakefield MA.**

(As noted at the end of this letter, this same letter can also be found in the more comprehensive post on wendellsden.com titled “When Men Were Men? Setting Things ‘Straight’ in the Burbs of Boston”)

To the Editor:

While this letter is predominantly in response to statements about transgender people made in opinion pieces, I would like to start by asking that the Item adopt and/or consistently enforce a policy that all letters to the editor be published as signed by the specific person or people who wrote the letter rather than by just the organization the writer(s) represent. Letters published on August 23 and August 30, 2016 with Wakefield Civic League as the signer are recent examples.

As to statements referring to transgender folks, I am writing in response to two instances of such, one made in the August 31 Comments column, and one in an opinion piece published on September 1.

In the Comments column, the unknown writer states, “In the past, people were clear about their sexuality. They were either male or female, and that’s how they lived their lives. Some folks may have been confused but they kept it to themselves if they were dealt an alternative hand. Not anymore. Everything is in the open now, thanks to social media.”

Never mind that these words, while appearing to refer only to those who are transgender, also insult all LGBT and related folks, the statement has no basis in fact. In particular, the second sentence shows no sense of understanding or empathy for the issues faced by those who are not heterosexual.

One only needs to do a little research to find that there was never a time when folks didn’t act on their sexual identity, and in fact, it was or still is accepted as a valid way of being in many cultures. The big difference today is that our country, as a whole, has been shifting to the realization (starting even before “social media”) that that being heterosexual is not the only valid way of being in a sexual or otherwise relationship and that there are actual biological/genetic reasons that cause a person to be transgender.

The other statement was written by Mark Sardella in his September 1 column titled “Voter Fatigue.” I suspect he has been counting the hours until someone pointed out this non sequitur at the end of this piece: “We don’t see widespread reports of

transgender discrimination either, but we still pass laws to prevent it.” Again, a bit of research (never mind the inclusion of this statement in a column about voter fraud) will show that there is indeed widespread discrimination.

I would like to suggest that the Item take great care in what is written in the Comments column, and also start introducing any opinion column, as well as the Letter to the Editor section, with a disclaimer such as:

“The opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints expressed by the author(s) do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints of the Wakefield Daily Item or official policies of the Wakefield Daily Item.”

But, most important, I am hoping that the Item will adopt a policy in which it will refuse to publish any letters or other opinion pieces that present as bigoted, discriminatory, or prejudiced and thus support ignorant, hurtful views.

Please note that, in using the word ignorant, I am doing so with this definition in mind: Lacking knowledge, information, or awareness about something in particular.

For handy links to a number of sources that back up my statements in this letter, see the post titled “[When Men Were Men? Setting Things ‘Straight’ in the Burbs of Boston](#)” on wendellsden.com.

To start, see:

[https://www.umass.edu/stonewall/sites/default/files/Infoforandabout/transpeople/genny\\_beemyn\\_transgender\\_history\\_in\\_the\\_united\\_states.pdf](https://www.umass.edu/stonewall/sites/default/files/Infoforandabout/transpeople/genny_beemyn_transgender_history_in_the_united_states.pdf) and <http://www.hrc.org/resources/discrimination-against-transgender-workers>

Sincerely,

Wendy Dennis