At the roots of our modern American society are ever evolving gender roles and definition. As America progresses as a nation, so does its people. New ideas, new acceptance, and sheer progressivism is embraced. In America, gender defines much more than which restroom you choose. Gender defines your employment, how much you're paid at said employment, your expectations as a member of society, and how society will treat you based on their presuppositions purely of your gender. As we evolve as a modern society, so do our people and our ideas. The value of tolerance and acceptance are key to a well
functioning, well diversified, coherent society. I chose to analyze a photo of Kelly Lauren, a transgender woman using the men’s restroom following the failure of Houston’s Equal Rights Ordinance to pass. This seemingly candid photo of a transgender woman challenges our modern perception of gender by empirically displaying two genders in the same restroom.

This photo represents the current debate of transgender people and their rights and roles in American society. In this mostly dark lit restroom, Kelly is the most illuminated figure making her clearly the focal point of the photo. Given the mostly dark colors worn by the other men and the black walls, Kelly’s bright red dress is another indicator that the viewer’s eyes should be on her as she swims through the crowd out of the bathroom. Additionally, we can see the vectors created by the eyelines of the two other men in the restroom. These men both appear to be examining Kelly’s posterior. Spatially, Kelly makes herself the biggest figure in the room by having her arms spread from one wall to another while the rest of the occupants stand straight in their urinal spaces, another clue that Kelly is the focal point of the photo. Another noteworthy vector is Kelly’s eyeline which appears to be looking into the urinal space of the first man, this is noteworthy as it provides a contradiction to many of the counterproductive and toxic propaganda spread by the opposition to equal rights legislation. The men appear to notice yet remain unbothered by Kelly’s presence. Furthering the notion of societies move toward acceptance and harmony in a gender divided society. Lastly, the angle of the photo provides a series of vectors most telling of the focus. The lines in the tile all angle toward Kelly, the tops of the urinals all aim her way, and even the lampshades lean toward the center as if everything in this photo is meant for you to see the “elephant” or “woman” in the room, Kelly Lauren. Yet, while the division is clear and emphasized, this photo exemplifies how two genders, free from division, still manage to function effectively. This photo seems to beg the question of how this photo, a seemingly candid shot of a transgendered woman in a men's restroom, challenges our ideas of gender and gender division in American society.
This photo challenges traditional arguments against transgender bathroom rights because it shows a woman in a men's restroom, rather than a man in a women’s restroom. Schilt and Westbrook explain in their article “Bathroom Battlegrounds and Penis Panic,” that the crux of the transgender bathroom policies opposition is not the transgendered people per say but the potential opportunity for sexual predators. These claims can be seen and many are built by anti equal rights propaganda. These media items often include a dingy man peering over the stall at an innocent young girl. Society has taken this out of debate for acceptance of genuine gender fluctuation and made it a bill to support predators. This mischaracterization is part of the marketing machine directly fostering this notion of the necessity of gender division in American society. Opposition to such legislation is often quick to assume that women are weak and need protected, Schilt and Westbrook point out. The photo contains a transgender woman who is forced to still use the mens restroom, while most opposition to these policies are aimed to protect the women, the photo is a glimpse at the exact opposite. Schilt and Westbrook also explain that the argument centers around physical gender rather than identified gender; the scare is from penises in womens restrooms rather than men. These presuppositions are toxic for progression and greatly hinder the ability of society as a whole to progress and develop a more accepting and frankly functioning society.

Stereotypes that genders face in American society are the roots of the gender division phenomenon. From a young age it is ingrained that girls like pink, have long hair, and are expected to participate in certain activities such as dance or gymnastics. Devor utilizes the example of young children to show that initially our ideas of gender are somewhat fluid, however as we age the division and significance of gender roles grow. Devor’s article serves as evidence of these gender divisions and the ostracisation of others as society “progresses”. Consequently, even at the elementary level boys and girls are taught that there is some sort of empirical difference between them and this creates the lifelong division.

Beyond the argument of ‘boy or girl’ comes the argument of gender. Gender is not sex. Callahan’s article focuses first on defining what it means to be transgender. Callahan explains the
difference between a postoperative and intersex individuals and defines transgender as “any person who finds conflict between his or her gender and a sense of self” (1). This is to say that gender is in fact a decision, while sex is on a cellular level. Westbrook and Schilt conclude their article by writing about bathrooms and their role in the transgender debate. The authors note the importance of genitals over gender in most arguments of this matter and ultimately pose the notion that the idea of gender is slowly evolving like our society. Next, Callahan writes about transgenders struggle with acceptance in the public eye and and the ostracism transgenders experience on a daily basis from both family and society. Callahan brings to light the American prejudice placed on the transgender population. She is able to demonstrate how in large part transgender people are demonized by society and often categorized as “freaks”. Callahan examines how the decision to be transgender creates division in society as well as family. As a direct result of such deeply rooted gender roles, families are prone to be unaccepting and unsupportive of transgender members. Simply due to backwards public perception, many people place a greater importance on societal norms than the love of their own family. Lastly, Callahan presents a sort of call to action as she compares the gender division issue to the race wars of the early 20th century. The racial division in the early 20th century, Jim Crow laws, segregation, hate groups, are the same sort of obstacles transgender people experience daily regardless of race. Callahan believes that we as a society should and eventually will live in harmony, however for the time being she would like to make a call to action against the oppression and mistreatment in today's world in hopes to make a change in tomorrow's world.

This seemingly candid photo challenges our modern ideas of gender, gender division, and common concerns regarding equal legislation by showing two empirically different gendered people in the same restroom. Additionally, this photo addresses the struggles experienced by transgender people on a daily basis as a result of faulty legislation. The gender division American society experiences is not different than Ford’s Android versus Apple theme. Like the two phone brands, people have deeply rooted and often unfounded ideas of gender roles like phone producers. People are quick to presuppose ideas
about each phone as they are about genders. This image is a human who clearly identifies as a woman however is forced to still use the mens restroom. If this division were as simple as that of phone brand, it would be a semi comical article posted on Medium by a guy like Ford. However, these are human lives. As humans, the transgender population experiences unacceptance and segregation in all aspects of their lives both at home and in public. As a result of a lack of action, compassion, and tolerance, the injustice of transgender people has evolved into a humanitarian issue. It is time as a society, to promote equal legislation, promote acceptance, and generate love.
“Kelly Lauren, a Trans Woman from Illinois, Photographed in Mens Restroom Following the Failure of Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance to Pass.” PinkNews, 7 Nov. 2015, www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/11/07/this-trans-woman-expertly-shut-down-questions-about-which-bathroom-she-should-use/.


