

Recently, there has been a string of teen suicides and hate crimes in the LGBT community. More and more teenagers are going through the process of discovering their sexuality, and many are facing the harsh reality of backlash and hatred for something they cannot control. As more and more fatalities come into the media spotlight, teenagers have been able to leave their legacies behind for others to learn from.

One of the most recent cases of transgender teen suicide has been Leelah Alcorn, a transgender teen in Ohio who recently committed suicide after many years long battle with depression resulting from her parents' dismissal and unwillingness to accept her transgender identity. Her suicide note, left on Tumblr, detailed her years of struggle and her eventual decision as death for a way to escape the oppression she felt. Leelah Alcorn begged for her death to not merely be a statistic, but to signify a growing number of unfortunate tragedies for the trans teens. Justice to Leelah should not be a mere memorial, not a short-lived media frenzy. Her death, as she wished, should be a legacy dedicated to helping the LGBT movement towards legislation and social acceptance.

My idea of my community is my school. There isn't a huge LGBT community at my school, but our student culture doesn't stigmatize it either. It's mostly "Live and let live." Although I think that this atmosphere is better than one that openly denounces homosexuality as a group, I believe that "live and let live" can be dangerous. This stance of neutrality leaves the LGBT teenagers confused as to whether they can turn to their school community for help. Our silence on the topic doesn't create a comfortable environment for those who can be struggling with their identity behind closed doors, just like Leelah did. Although we consider ourselves a mostly liberal school with a GLASS (Gay Lesbian and Straight Spectrum) club, we only see a faint LGBT presence during LGBT History Month in October. Most students are probably unaware that we even have a GLASS club at all. We don't devote much of our student culture and student body attention on LGBT rights, despite it being a significant issue in recent news. Leelah committed suicide because she wasn't able to find any source of help around her; we need to learn from our mistakes and prevent another death like Leelah's. Talking to adults at school can be an intimidating task-- I know this because I never went to my counselors for help on problems I had outside of school. I want to make sure that nobody, especially from the LGBT community, feels the same uncomfortableness that I felt. They should know that school officials will be willing to help them with any of their problems, and offer support no matter the family situation. My goal is to collaborate with GLASS to host frequent events and promote awareness for the LGBT community that will allow every student at our school to learn about the issues surrounding it. The events will be a constant reminder to the student body that just because most of us are not directly affected by LGBT-related incidents, we should try to sympathize or empathize and understand the detrimental effects they cause.

My idea of justice for Leelah and the rest of the trans community would be to create a comfortable learning environment for students to openly come out as gay, lesbian, trans, or anything else. While it is true that legislation will enforce and protect LGBT people under the law, it doesn't change the social stigmatization and bullying that these people face daily. I want to make change on a local level, and start with my school, where I spend most of my

time. I believe that soon, this change will turn into something much more, expanding to the local level and into the rest of the city.