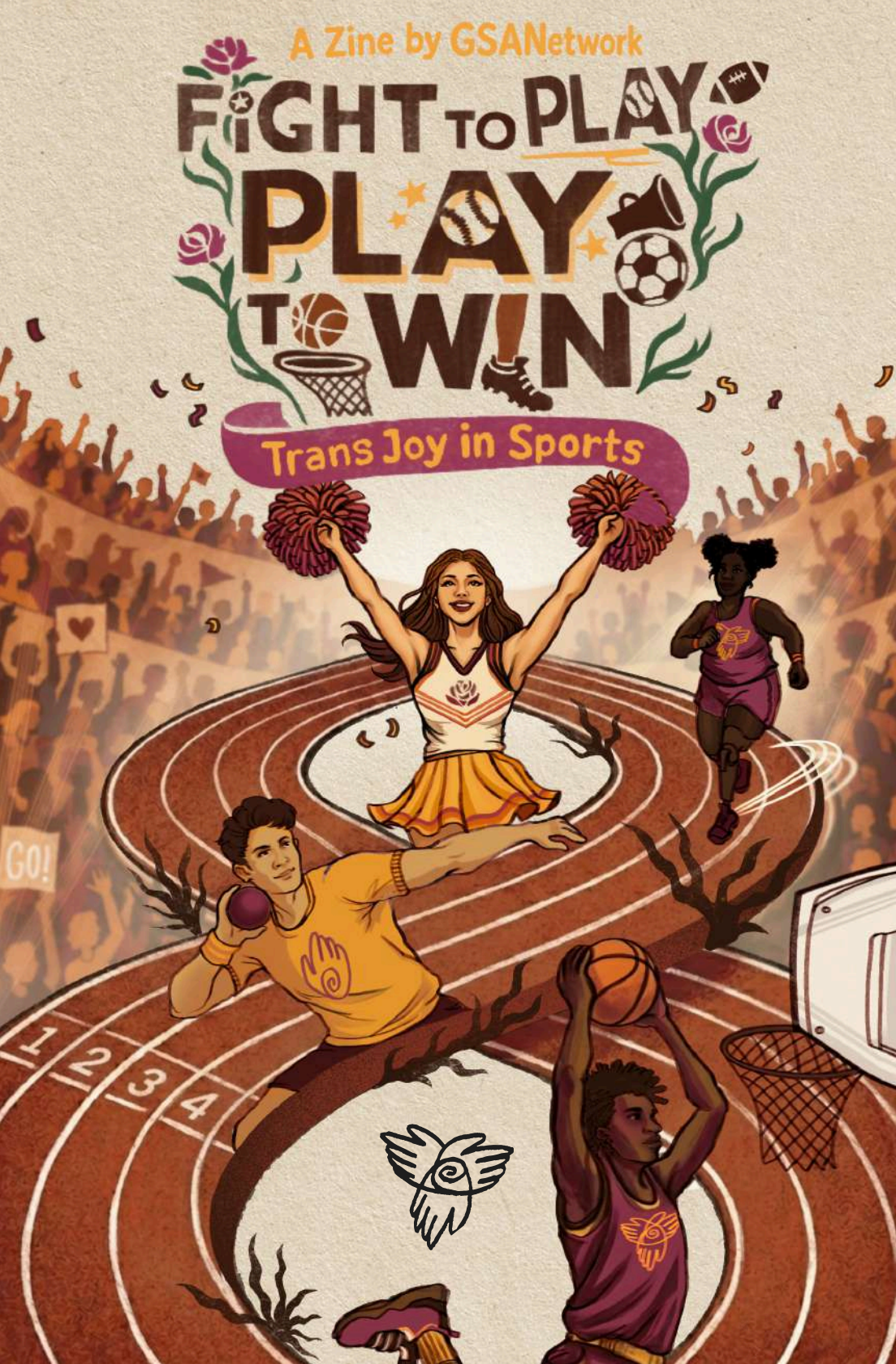
A Zine by GSANetwork

# FIGHT TO PLAY PLAY TO WIN

## Trans Joy in Sports



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# Who We Are

Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a next-generation racial and gender justice organization that trains trans, queer, Two Spirit, and allied youth leaders to organize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities.

Youth-rooted and following the lead of our membership base, GSAs are spaces to explore identity, build solidarity, and practice the world we're creating together. Across the country, young people connect to our network to build power, shift culture, and organize communities for justice. Whether in schools, libraries, parks, online, or anywhere else, GSAs are political homes for the next-generation of world leaders.



# What's At Stake?

We are witnessing an attempt to erase transgender folks from public life, particularly from sports. In January 2026, the Supreme Court heard two cases attempting to ban trans youth from sports that align with their gender identity under the guise of "promoting fairness and protecting girls."

***West Virginia v. B.P.J.:*** Becky wanted to participate in cross-country and track & field with her friends. West Virginia passed HB 3293, banning trans girls from participating in all school sports.

***Little v. Hecox:*** Lindsay is a college student at Boise State University. She wants to try out for the track team so she can form friendships with other girls. Idaho's HB 500 would ban her from doing so, because she is trans.



***When trans youth are scrutinized, ALL youth are scrutinized.*** This type of body policing results in all girls, trans or cis, potentially being subjected to invasive examinations, harassment, and sexism.

Participating in sports teaches important values like perseverance, dedication, self-assurance, and teamwork. We should want more young people to play sports, but a blanket ban on transgender athletes would invite anyone to call for a "gender check" on any girl who wants to play sports, particularly Black and brown girls who face heightened scrutiny based on racialized stereotypes of gender.

That's why we created the Trans Joy in Sports zine. Whether it is the thrill of competing with peers, the benefits of being part of a team, or the growth that is experienced during the season, **trans youth thrive when they compete as their authentic selves.**



# Acknowledgments

For the safety of our youth, we have only included their first names, pronouns, and ages. However, we would like to acknowledge the breadth of different identities that are held within this zine that make these stories so powerful.

These youth athletes span from all over the nation: CA, FL, IL, KY, NY, OR, PA, and SC. Between the ages of 16-26, youth captured their transness with labels like trans man, transmasc, trans woman, transfem, Two Spirit, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, and genderfluid. The majority of youth identified as Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino/a/e/x, with additional youth consisting of Native American or Indigenous and white identities. Sexualities ranged from lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, asexual, and straight.

Their perseverance, on and off the court, is truly admirable, and we are forever grateful for their trust in sharing their stories with us and the world.

This zine was designed in partnership with Dexter Komakaru, a talented alum of GSA Network's Gender Justice Leadership Programs. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to ACLU, Lambda Legal, and Transgender Law Center for making this zine a reality and for our work together as a lead team!

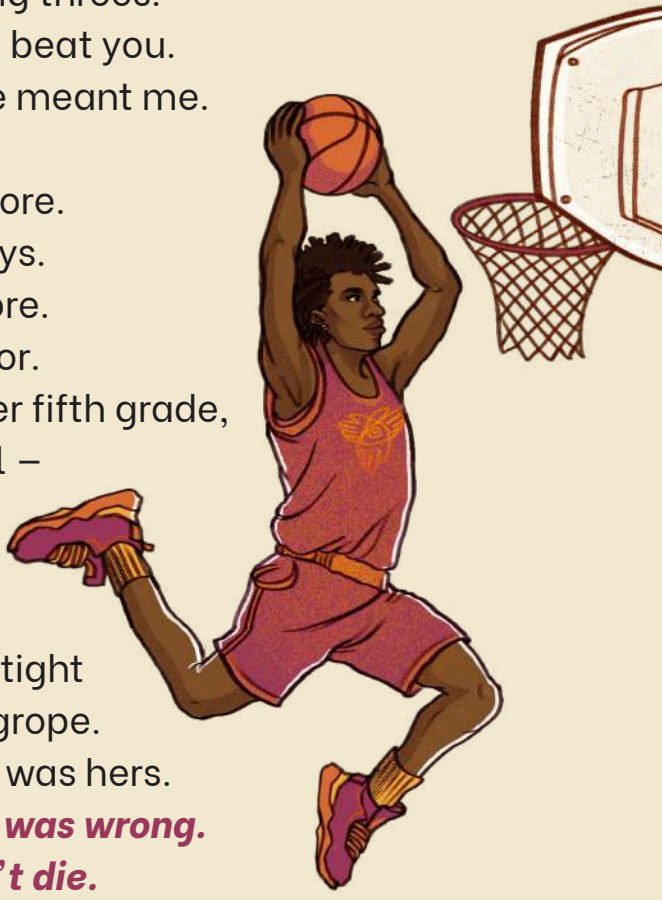
## Annie (She/Her) 17 Years Old

I'm a Black pansexual, transgender female and I've been running track since I was 12 years old, which is when I came out. I believe that it's very mandatory that I tell my story because I can represent the whole of the group since there are others who are scared to speak their truth in a judgmental place like South Carolina. I always felt like an outsider, but my team is feeling more like home. The laws in South Carolina still have me on the boys' team. The boys don't even see me as a human along with the coach on the team, but the girls are my biggest support system ever. They include me in their warmups and respect me in every single aspect possible. ***Our bond is stronger than the laws that try to separate us.***

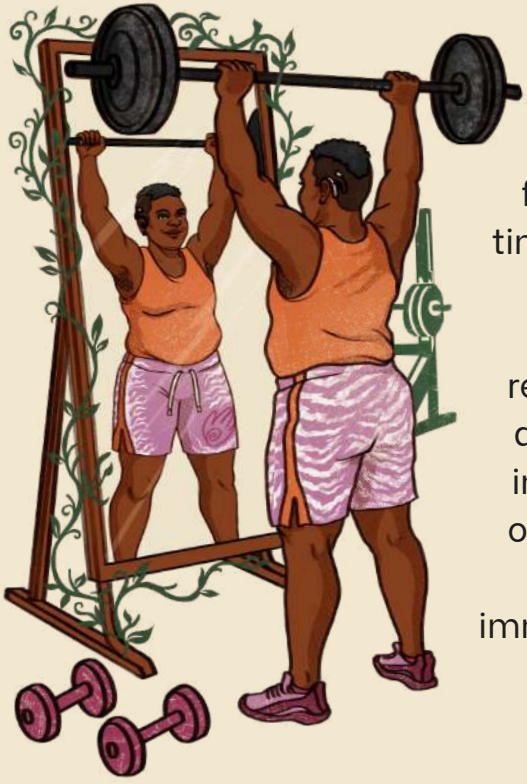


## Oxagen (He/They) 18 Years Old

The steps spiraled.
First step: weave, skirts, she and hers.
Are you a boy or a girl? Conformity.
Identity – uncured.
I ascended with flicking wrists,
layups and shooting threes.
You're letting a girl beat you.
They couldn't have meant me.
I wasn't the she.
I wore what they wore.
Played with the boys.
Only looking to score.
I belong on this floor.
For eight years after fifth grade,
I played basketball –
on a hers team.
Medically.
Mustache poking.
Sports bras pulled tight
to quiet eyes that grope.
They said the floor was hers.
***They said my body was wrong.***
***But the spark didn't die.***
***I did not jump. I rose.***
Stepped off their court and built my own.
Every stair I climb is mine.
I am still ascending.



## Mak (He/They) 21 Years Old



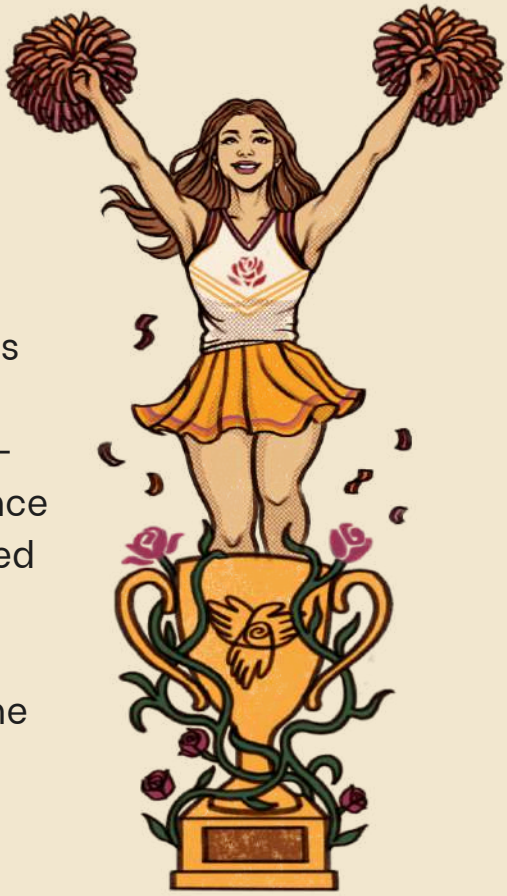
As a Black transmasc person, the weight room felt intimidating. The first time I tried bench pressing, the clanging of weights, the grunts of effort, the reflection of the mirror - it all seemed to amplify the insecurities I was trying to overcome, and frustration quickly hit hard with no immediate results. I wanted to quit. But something pulled me back.

Focusing on consistency over quick gains, things slowly changed. A bit more weight, a slightly more defined muscle. These small wins ignited a fire, and I realized I could shape my body. That's when I fell for bodybuilding. It wasn't just physical, but mental. It became self-discovery, sculpting my body and confidence. Each lift was self-love, proving consistency's power. ***The weight room transformed into a sanctuary, a place where I could build not just muscle, but also the body I wanted to see and love in the mirror every day.***

## Donna Jo (She/Her) 23 Years Old

I've always been a cheerleader. Long before I ever stepped onto a college campus, cheer was my passion, my discipline, and my joy. But growing up in Kentucky, living fully as my true self didn't feel possible—physically or emotionally. I learned how to perform strength before I ever felt safe embodying it. College didn't introduce me to cheer; it gave me the freedom to be me.

***The first time I put on the women's uniform as my authentic self was one of the most gender-euphoric moments of my life.***



It wasn't just fabric—it was affirmation. That year, I became a First-Team All-American and a Conference Champion. I didn't succeed despite being trans. I succeeded as a trans woman. So when someone says we can't, I smile—because I am living proof that we absolutely can.

## Carter (He/Him) 21 Years Old

I came out as a transgender man my Freshman year of high school. I was under the belief that I had to pick between transitioning and competing in Cross Country and Track & Field. I talked to my parents and coaches about this. I ended up starting socially and medically transitioning while competing, throwing the shot put and discus for the next three years on the women's team. ***I worked hard to set personal records and do the best I could.*** I spent one year at community college before transferring to a four-year college after high school. I was hesitant to ask about joining the track team as I didn't know if I was good enough or if I was even allowed to compete. I reached out anyway. The coaches and team welcomed me with open arms, and I am still competing on my college's Track & Field team.



## Lee (He/They) 20 Years Old

“Gym” smell disgusts some. For me, it’s home. I grew up wrestling; I know how to move, what to (and importantly not!) say. Wrestling practice is my sacred place: throwing someone to the mats and reaching out to pick them up again is my meditation. When I came out as transmasc, I lost that. My first day of practice, the team captain called me a slur–I left, tearing an unhealing hole in my heart. When I heard of a transmasc wrestling event, I leapt. ***Time and disability changed my body, but on the mats– surrounded by trans folks throwing each other down and picking each other up– nothing changed.*** I was in heaven: dead tired, but I loved the community we built. My story isn’t about finding trans joy in cis spaces. We build our own joy, in our own spaces, with so much more love than cis ones hold.



## Seamus (He/They) 22 Years Old

Rock climbing is one of those sports I've been told are for cat like people, and that's a truer sentiment than most.



But just like cats, the community can be distant, wanting to remain in its own business; conversely, it can be warm, and loving, and gentle. As a trans-gender fluid person, I've been nothing but accepted. I am surprised by the people I meet, and how wrong I am in assuming that there is bigotry afoot. ***There's also just so many trans and queer friends I've made through climbing.*** While climbing is a personal journey of failure and slow growth, I find there is always someone there to give me support. If you haven't already found a sport, try climbing- trust me it's worth it.

## Mick (They/Them) 23 Years Old

***Playing soccer has always been a safe space for me.*** It was where I was embraced for being strong, competitive, and a "tom-boy". As I went through my teen years, playing sports started to become more difficult as team locker rooms became the norm rather than showing up in uniform. People would think that I was staring at them because of being a lesbian, and I was uncomfortable with my changing body. Eventually, in high school, I stopped playing. Coming to college, I did not think that I would play competitive sports again. I walked on to my college's division three team and even ended up starting every game my senior year. Whilst the team is technically gendered, playing has let me reconnect to my body. Locker rooms are still definitely a struggle, but I have come to appreciate how my body lets me kick ass on the field.



## Ari (They/He) 26 Years Old

The routine was always the same: each fencer put on their uniforms before they received private lessons and participated in friendly sparring to improve their skills no matter your league. I gained a reputation of always winning my sparring matches among peers, coaches, and professional athletes that stopped by and practiced. I distinctly remember my first uniform experience. My coach explained how because I was too small for a women's chest plate but still l required one legally to fence, I was issued a boy's chest plate.



My coach was extremely apologetic and insisted I would grow into awomen's chest plate, but deep down I was so excited to see my chest low.

***My gender expression was born in that chest plate, and my identity was carved in my sportsmanship and pride as a little Black, Latina girl who sparred anyone and won in a boy's chest plate***

## Nayela (He/They) 16 Years Old

As I dive in the water, I feel the instant rush of adrenaline in my veins. ***It feels good to be back in the water, back with my teammates; it feels like home.*** Whenever I'm underwater, everything goes silent. I don't have to worry about snide remarks made behind my back or invasive questions asking "exactly what are you?" While I'm swimming, all I have to focus on is the even movement of my arms and angling my flip turns just right. I feel the most powerful when I'm swimming, I feel like I could do anything, I feel like I am luminary. Underwater, I am weightless, I don't feel the weight of my chest nor do I see my too-girly face. Underwater, I have no reason to look down at myself in embarrassment. Whenever I swim for my team, I am truly free.



## Maria (They/Them) 19 Years Old

I was 16, that was three years ago, when I first stepped onto the pitch as part of the cheering squad. My heart was racing, not just from nerves, but from the fear of not being accepted. But the moment I joined my team, everything shifted. They were warm, welcoming, and made space for me without hesitation. Then the music hit. We moved as one, and when the crowd erupted, something inside me clicked. The cheers weren't just for the performance, they felt like they were for me, too.

***For the first time, I didn't feel out of place. I felt seen. Wanted.*** Every chant, every routine, every laugh during practice built something deeper than just school spirit, it built belonging. In that moment, under the lights and surrounded by my team, I wasn't questioning who I was. I was celebrating.



## Lucas (He/Him) 18 Years Old

I distinctly recall the harsh smell of chlorine and the slippery, soaking wet floors of our P.E. swim class locker rooms; ***swimming was the first sport I'd learned as a child, and having recently come out, I felt overjoyed to swim again as my true self.*** My joy didn't falter until leaving one afternoon, when I heard someone loudly ask a friend, "Was that a girl in here?" My heart barely dangled from my chest, but while doubt could have sidelined me, I knew I had to redirect.



I embraced being stubborn, and finding my footing in the pool again gave me the courage to step onto the court and try tennis. The resilience I built in the water manifested in finally winning my first tennis match, and I was reminded of that day. I enter arenas I belong in, and if you're still curious, let's play a set!

## Sebastian (He/Him) 23 Years Old



I never thought, I'd return to a sports team after I quit years ago, always being told to play for the team of my biological sex- Only for me to join a new sport in a new city. ***The Men's Rugby Club welcomed me with open arms as a transgender man.*** I came halfway into the season, knowing nothing about the sport. Since day one, they have supported and guided me on this new journey.

I'm always looking forward to practice and games. It's the highlight of my week. I've never felt this excited and motivated to play a sport. Getting to know the guys on and off the field has been great. I can say I have found my community and made friendships along the way. For once, I'm seen for who I am by a team I'm a part of. ***I can't wait to continue this journey.***

## Kio (He/They) 18 Years Old

When I was part of my school's foil fencing team, I was really nervous to join the men's team. Even though there were no legal restrictions to me joining on a high school level, I was afraid I would be ostracized and mocked for even considering it. But when I put on the flat chest plate instead of the one shaped to fit a woman's chest, when I celebrated getting my first hit, when I won my first real match, and watching my teammates and our allies cheer me on, I knew I made the right decision to join the team I felt most comfortable with.



***The euphoria I felt when I realized your sex at birth truly didn't matter in the grand scheme of the sport was indescribable.*** Whether or not I was born female didn't matter; all that mattered was that I tried and put up a fight until I won.

# Resources

***GSA Network's BPJ & Hecox Zine:***

bit.ly/bpjzine

A short, but comprehensive zine educating folks about the B.P.J. and Hecox Supreme Court cases, explaining what's at stake, and inspiring action with an opportunity to contribute to our story-banking efforts.

***Lambda Legal Help Desk:***

lambdalegal.org/helpdesk

Lambda Legal's Help Desk is a national resource that provides free, confidential legal information and resources related to discrimination and legal issues affecting LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV, including matters involving sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and HIV status.

***Transgender Law Center Help Desk:***

transgenderlawcenter.org/get-help/

A resource providing basic information about laws and policies in the United States that affect transgender people across many areas, including employment, health care, housing, civil rights, immigration, prisoners' rights, and identity document changes.

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# We Will Thrive

Regardless of the Supreme Court's decision, ***GSA Network stands firmly in the belief that our existence and power are not determined by the state or the courts.*** No matter the outcome, this zine will serve as a reminder that ***trans youth will not be erased from public life, and their joy will not be overshadowed or stopped.*** We will continue to exist, persevere, and thrive as the people we were always meant to be! **Today and every day, we stand alongside trans youth as they fight to play, and play to win.**






GSA NETWORK

Designed By:

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