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Latrinalia Essay

Since the start of mass human congregations, there was always one problem; finding somewhere to take a ... Bathrooms were a relatively advanced concept for early human civilizations, as our natural way was previously so simple. Now, people would have to engineer a place where the whole population can use, without knowing about possible health risks or environmental risks. Somehow, millenniums later, the human race managed to come up with an efficient and acceptably sanitary system which we call; the bathroom. This place we had now invented, was a new place where everyone, no matter social class, would end up using.

Although almost no one may feel comfortable in the bathroom, people whose gender is ambiguous may feel this times fifty. Due to gender segregation in bathrooms as well as locker rooms, the bathroom has become an enforcer of gender roles and stereotypes. The metrosexual man might change his attitude when entering the restroom, putting up his chest, establishing some sort of dominance alongside impersonal behavior. Now, what happens when the man is perceived by others as not fitting these tight guidelines? From personal experience, the other men either stare with disgust, or ask you if you are in the wrong bathroom. This is if things go smoothly. Unfortunately for us, we face people who discriminate against others for their appearance and often times physically take action on their beliefs. As of November last year, 25 transgender people were murdered for being who they are[[1]](#footnote-0). The debate about where transgender, non-conforming, or simply non-heteronormative people should be allowed to use the restroom has sprung up violence in anti-gay and anti-trans movements. These movements are responsible for not only the killings of innocent lives, yet also for establishing fear in all individuals that may fall under the same categories as the victims. Today more than ever, hate crimes have skyrocketed, with “6,100 reported incidents of hate crimes in 2016, up from more than 5,800 [the year before](https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015/topic-pages/incidentsandoffenses_final)”[[2]](#footnote-1). With growing violence, it’s no mystery why androgynous people feel vulnerable in public restrooms. This has instilled fear in the community, as “60 percent of transgender Americans have avoided using public restrooms for fear of confrontation”[[3]](#footnote-2).

Public bathrooms no matter their geographic location, all share one characteristic: latrinalia. The earliest written proof of the existence of bathroom art sprung “sometime in the early 18th century”[[4]](#footnote-3), when the word for public restroom was still Boghouse. This strange idea of writing and drawing on the walls of the bathroom, later defined as “latrinalia”[[5]](#footnote-4), was the world’s first kind of public forum. The behavior of humans in public bathrooms can be an explanation as to why latrinalia ever began. As studies have shown, people in bathrooms tend to act very unusual toward one another as treatment is impersonal. Men especially, have shown “nonperson treatment” even when running into friends in bathrooms, as any form of socializing is unreasonably “inappropriate” [[6]](#footnote-5). Bathrooms can have a complete change of atmosphere with art that can be appreciated and even laughed at as “they provide a measure of quiet and isolation from crowded areas”[[7]](#footnote-6).

Aside from social interactions, latrinalia in general has been a form of art that has been largely overlooked in its place in society. Bathroom graffiti has been a type of graffiti that has allowed virtually anyone with the need to express a thought to jot it down for strangers to experience later. In this way, public bathrooms were essentially the first form of tweeting. It presents a less daunting form of vandalizing as it is nearly impossible to get caught doing and relatively easy to do. “Intimate, anonymous, accepting, it’s a necessary space, a place to say anything, to say what can’t be said anywhere else”[[8]](#footnote-7), Lightsey Darst explains. She continues to describe how bathroom art and graffiti have become an outlet for everyone, especially those who feel socially excluded.

Recent decision making has allowed for the ending of the issue in some cities of the country, including New York City. The city’s Department of Education claims that it is “especially important for trans students now, following President Trump's decision to [lift protections for gender-nonconforming students](http://www.refinery29.com/2017/02/142254/trump-trans-student-bathrooms) in school bathrooms”[[9]](#footnote-8).

The essence of latrinalia was to break the tension in the bathroom, but over time its use grew into two variations that never included everyone. The bathroom is a place where we are, by nature, forced to enter daily. Not identifying or feeling welcomed in a space where you are openly being yourself is exhausting. This is partly the reason why some conform, because it is easier. As today’s bathrooms have become a battlefield to those who do not seem to belong, my intent lies in deconstructing the hostility and building trust between all individuals.

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(pic)

Printed image that contains statistics about how trans people feel about bathrooms and how often they avoid them..

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