In the coming year, a recently passed bill called AB 1266 may come into effect in the state of California. The bill was made to protect the rights of transgender students in the public school system which includes allowing them to use the various school facilities and play on the sports team of their preferred gender. As a transgender woman who has struggled with having my gender identity recognized by my high school, I strongly support the bill because I know it will help better accommodate the needs of transgender students. Only two years ago, most politicians were appalled by the idea of allowing transgender students these rights because many people feared that it would allow “boys who think they are girls” to enter girl’s facilities and harass them without facing the proper consequences. Since then, every study that has ever been conducted on the issue has proven this claim false.

Studies reveal that transgender students such as myself get harassed incessantly when they are forced to use the restrooms, locker rooms, and sports teams that don’t match their gender identity, but hardly ever face conflict when using the facilities of their choice. In high school, I was denied the right to use the women’s restroom despite having been harassed routinely in men’s restrooms to the point that I was threatened if I came back into the restroom I would get gang-banged. Because I was threatened in such a way, I was given permission from the principle to use the single stall men’s restroom in the teachers’ lounge so that I could avoid
the potential threat. I was told though that I would be in trouble if I used the women’s school restroom, so I never stepped foot in one throughout my high school experience.

Many politicians strongly opposed AB 1266 while it was going through the state house of representatives. I along with many friends and allies of the LGBTQ community rallied together and petitioned at the state capital in Sacramento to get politicians to listen to our opinions on the issue. Each of us gave individual speeches about our experiences in high school with bullying and harassment due to transphobia and explained why allowing transgender students to use the restroom of their choice is necessary for their safety and well-being. Our presence at the capital that day helped to prove false many of the misconceptions and entirely false accusations about transgender youth and their experiences in high school. Two months later, California State Governor Jerry Brown signed into effect AB 1266 much to the delight of those that knew it would help thousands of students in the coming decades.

Unfortunately, opposition to the bill has been strong and growing over the months. The Pacific Justice Institute, a conservative legal defense organization known for advocating for civil rights (PJI), has played a huge role in rounding up support to get the amount of signatures necessary to repeal the bill before it takes effect in 2014. Due to a substantial lack of legitimate (or actual) arguments to fight the passing of the bill, they’ve taken to inventing arguments and conflicts to gain mass support. Recently, they’ve targeted a sixteen-year-old transgender girl in Colorado accusing her of harassing and sexually assaulting other girls in the locker and restrooms. Investigations have proved that until now she has not had any problems with using the facilities of her choice and no one has ever complained about her using those facilities until now.

In an article published by the WND news station titled, Transgender Boy Invades Girls’
Restroom, their special guest, Matthew McReynolds, staff attorney at the Pacific Justice Institute, manages to hide the fact that PJI played any part in starting the conflict and that actually, the female students have brought it forth to them as he states,

“... it’s our position that a teenage boy’s presence into the bathroom for teenage girls is inherently harassing... It’s inherently violative of their privacy rights. It’s also intimidating when you have a boy like this, who is not a freshman, going in there with younger freshman girls. They feel violated. They feel intimidated, and that’s been expressed to us...” (WND Radio 1).

As I stated earlier, investigations have proved everything that was stated in the previous quote is false and entirely inaccurate. Also note the title that uses the word “transgender boy” rather than the scientifically correct term “transgender girl.” The use of the word “boy” helps to back their newly-found argument that boys are harassing girls in the restrooms.

Playing off of disproven misconceptions and stereotypes should not be how any station reports news. KDWB radio in Twin Cities, Minnesota mocked the Hmong population in their city by playing off of all the known Hmong stereotypes. The morning show host Steve-O sings,

“No room for a couch
‘Cause we sleep on the floor
One big group of Vangs
Hmong family of twenty-four...” (Collins 1)

By working off these stereotypes, they make the Hmong appear to be dirty because they sleep on the floor, over-crowded because they have too many kids and family that live in the same home, and indistinguishable because they all have the same name, “Vang”. Today, transgender people
are regularly mocked and misrepresented on television and radio broadcasts who attempt to classify them all as transvestites, drag queens, and sometimes pedophiles.

Not surprisingly, PJI’s publicity stunt to gain political support has gained them huge amounts of support from concerned parents who fear for their daughters safety in the restrooms. It is anticipated by some that AB 1266 will be repealed before it gets passed in 2014. I experience a plethora of anger when I think about how my efforts as well as the efforts of many others have been outweighed by lies on top of more lies. WND news and the Pacific Justice Institute have managed to make the girls who they claim “feel violated,” the victims in this case and have singlehandedly destroyed the life of a young sixteen-year-old girl. She was recently put in the hospital for trying to commit suicide.

The only way to combat this mass institutionalized bigotry aside from using violent tactics is to educate yourself and others on what is true about transgender people and learn to identify what is bullshit. Knowing the difference between myself and a pedophile is a good start. That is why I am an active member of UCSC’s LGBT youth task force for transgender rights who strive to educate others on what being transgender is and why other people should support their rights. I also do it because I feel an extraordinary amount of empathy for the girl who has been targeted for the sole purpose of rounding up political support based solely off of lies on top of more lies. I know that if I had actually been allowed by my school to use the women’s restroom, I could’ve easily been targeted as well. In a strange way, I was lucky that the people at my school felt the need to keep me out of the women’s restroom. Maybe they foresaw that I could be put through a tremendous amount of strife stemming from the passing of AB 1266 and the PJI’s need to oppose it by targeting an innocent girl such as myself. Probably not.