Given the outcome and aftermath of the recent presidential election, you might expect that to be the focus of this column. I will address the moment we are in, but in an unconventional way, by starting with why more than half of the articles in this edition of American Educator concern LGBTQ issues in schools. It’s not uncommon for this journal to publish multiple articles focused primarily on a single theme, but why LGBTQ issues, and why now? Because the country is at an inflection point. The last 10 years, culminating with the marriage equality decisions in the U.S. Supreme Court, have seen a tidal wave of changes in public opinion in this country, from vilifying to affirming people who are gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning.

These victories and protections for LGBTQ people, including students, tragically but perhaps predictably have been met with a backlash, notably the rash of so-called bathroom bills restricting the rights of transgender and gender-nonconforming people. And we stand at the outset of a new presidential administration, about which many supporters of LGBTQ rights have grave concerns.

Our obligation as educators is to make schools safe and welcoming places for every member of the school community—whether for LGBTQ students and staff, immigrants and refugees, students with special needs, or any other student who for whatever reason feels vulnerable. I feel that very personally. While I am a lesbian who is openly gay and now leads a major labor union, the American Federation of Teachers (and the United Federation of Teachers before that), I was quite closeted as a child and young adult. We must build on the progress we have made toward recognizing and protecting the rights of all people, and that is even more important given the results of the presidential election.

As Michael Sadowski writes in this issue, educators and policymakers must do more than simply ensure that schools are safe for LGBTQ students and staff. The school environment should also be such that everyone feels affirmed and respected. The articles in the following pages about Gay-Straight Alliances and other forms of faculty and peer support show effective ways schools can promote the social, emotional, physical, and academic well-being of LGBTQ students. Public schools often lead the way for the broader society in modeling inclusiveness and pluralism.

We cannot mandate or legislate tolerance and acceptance. But we can pass laws and policies that prohibit discrimination, and, as history has shown, attitudes will begin to shift. The Office for Civil Rights in President Obama’s Education Department has urged schools to extend antibullying policies to cover LGBTQ students. The office cited Title IX, the federal law that prohibits discrimination based on gender, to protect the right of transgender students to use the bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond to the gender they identify with. The Supreme Court ruling that the Constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage stated that “No longer may this liberty be denied” to gays and lesbians. But they are denied other liberties, and comprehensive federal nondiscrimination protections still must be put in place.

Many people are worried that recent progress could be reversed in Donald Trump’s administration. While Trump is not known for personal antipathy for gay people, others in his administration have expressed antigay views. Indiana Governor and Vice President-elect Mike Pence last year pushed through legislation that allows businesses to refuse to serve gay customers and enables corporations to deny insurance coverage to LGBTQ people. Trump’s choice to head the Education Department, Betsy DeVos, and her family have given

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