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## Voting shouldn't be made onerous for transgender people

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By Kalil Cohen, October 26, 2012



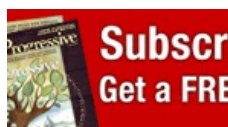
The new voter ID laws in many states may pose additional obstacles to transgender people.

Many transgender individuals do not appear to be the gender typically associated with the name listed on their ID, or may be wearing clothing of a different gender than that listed on their ID. This may cause poll workers to scrutinize transgender voters unfairly, even though a

discrepancy in appearance is not a legal reason to deny someone the right to vote.

As long as the poll worker can identify the individual from their photo, appearing as a different gender than that of one's ID is not a reason to be denied the right to vote in any state.

Many transgender people cannot update their ID to reflect their gender identity or appearance because of state policies and laws. High rates of poverty, unemployment and homelessness are additional barriers to obtaining or updating an ID, as is the fear of disrespect and discrimination.



For transgender voters, the National Center for Transgender Equality recommends updating your photo and gender marker on your ID if possible, voting absentee or early if possible in your state and/or verifying your ID with your local election office before the election.

As voters at the polls, we can all look out for each other by knowing the current voter ID laws in our state and standing up for the rights of those around us to vote.

If you know anyone who does not have an ID or one with up-to-date information, please help that person get a new or updated ID. You can also check your own voter registration status at <http://canivote.org>.

With the election around the corner, now is the time to educate ourselves and our communities to ensure that everyone has the right to vote on Nov. 6.

**Kalil Cohen** is an educator, activist, and filmmaker. He is the



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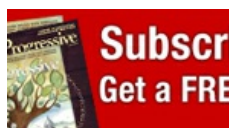
JULIA ALVAREZ | These are my nightwatchmen.

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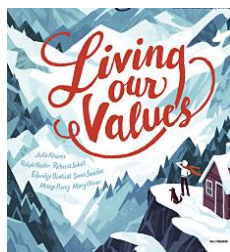
founding director of the LA Transgender Film Festival, bringing films by transgender filmmakers to audiences in Southern California for the past four years. He can be reached at [pmproj@progressive.org](mailto:pmproj@progressive.org).

You can read more pieces from The Progressive Media Project [by clicking here](#).



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*The Progressive* is fortunate to have some of the best writers in the country grace its pages, including Wendell Berry, Edwidge Danticat, Barbara Ehrenreich, Jim Hightower, Eduardo Galeano, Luis Rodriguez, Terry Tempest Williams, and Dave Zirin. The magazine also provides comic relief with columns by humorists Kate Clinton and Will Durst.

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Kate Clinton  
Edwidge Danticat  
Will Durst  
Barbara Ehrenreich  
Eduardo Galeano  
Jim Hightower

### EDITORS

Matthew Rothschild  
Ruth Conniff  
Elizabeth DiNovella  
Amitabh Pal

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