

Civil rights clash: Tempers flare at transgender rally

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ALTON - Tempers flared, but no one was harmed during a rally held Saturday morning at **Lincoln-Douglas Square**.

The rally was organized by two local pastors, **Danny Holliday** and **Ralph Blake** under the umbrella group, "**Citizens for Child Safety**." The purpose of the rally, the pastors said, was to bring awareness of a new law allowing students to use the bathroom based

on the gender with which they most identify. The flier for the rally, which could be found around the River Bend, said the law was putting children in danger.

“They could be... forcibly exposed!” It warned. “They could be... sexually harassed! They could be... traumatized! They could be... sexually molested!”

The ominous tone of the flier carried to the rally. During the rally, Holliday said the “founders of the transgender movement” were “pedophiles and enthusiasts of bestiality and group sex.”

These comments received boos and cries of expletives from a group of transgender activists and allies who had gathered at the square as well. The opposition group often interrupted Holliday, Blake and the other speakers talking on their behalf. Holliday told the transgender activists he would be happy to debate them and would like to speak with their leader and arrange such a debate.

Lesleigh Robins, a board member of **Metro Trans Umbrella Group (MTUG)** said she heard about the rally via social media. As far as she knew, it was the first rally against the new legislation, which takes effect this coming school year, in the entire St. Louis Metro Area. She said her children's school district has had no problem with the issue.

“The school has no issue with me,” she said. “I use the unisex bathroom when I go to visit.”

During Blake's speech, he said he was worried children could be traumatized at young ages by seeing genitalia not matching theirs while using the bathroom. He also raised concerns about children being easier to sexually assault and molest upon the passing of this law, a concern Robins said was without foundation.

“There has not been one issue with trans people molesting someone in the bathroom,” she said.

Robins said she was promised by the pastors they would not use “hate speech,” but said they did not keep to their end of the deal when they compared transgender people to pedophiles, specifically **Dr. John Money**.

Dr. John Money was a sexologist credited with distinguishing the difference between biological sex and gender who decided to raise a person born a male as a female after a botched circumcision. During the child's formative years, Money forced the child into unethical experiments, which were nothing short of sexual abuse. Once the child came

of age, he identified as a male, and later committed suicide, partially due to the trauma of Money. Holliday invoked Money's name during his speech as a figurehead of the entire transgender movement.

Two transgender allies from Edwardsville, who identified themselves as Jimmy and Ella, said the assertion the transgender movement has figureheads and founding fathers was incorrect.

“How can a movement have modern founders if the concept has been around for thousands of years?” Jimmy challenged.

Jimmy and Ella also said the rally's assertion it was to defend the rights of children missed the mark as well.

“They don't understand the difference between special rights and equal rights,” Ella said. “They said they want equal rights for everyone, but not for our kids.”



Holliday described the numbers of transgender students as less than one percent. He said catering to less than one percent of people at “the cost” of everyone else was not fair. He said he would defend children through this mission, and asserted he would not stop until the law was repealed.

“If I was strong enough to fight for our country in the United States Marine Corps, I am strong enough to fight for our children,” he said.

During Holliday's speech, transgender activist **Amy Jade** danced, yelled and used obscene hand gestures to show her disgust with the words he was saying. She said she wanted to stand in solidarity peacefully, but lost her cool at some of the pastor's remarks.

“I wanted to be a lot more calm, until the word pedophile was used against us,” she said.

The conclusion of the rally was not the end of the Citizens for Child Safety's agenda, however. On the back of the flier, the group listed the dates of upcoming school board meetings for Alton, Bethalto, East Alton Wood River and Roxana School Districts. Their presence at school board meetings may bring their opposition as well, Robins said.

Robins expressed her concern about transgender students in those districts who may already be going through the typical rough times, which are a part of childhood, adolescence and school. She worried these demonstrations and “hate speech” may negatively affect transgender students within those districts even further.

One thing both groups seemed to agree upon, however, was the suicide rate for transgender people is nearly 20 percent. The transgender people gathered blamed that on the hate speech. The rally organizers blamed it on having a “sick mind.”

The rally concluded with a prayer from Holliday asking for “peace” to come to the transgender people and for them to realize “they are loved, even if we disagree.”