

UC Berkeley

Recent Work

Title

Military Boots Minus T: A look at the current state and policy of the transgender community in the US military.

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7022c7jb>

Author

Charles, Candese Anise

Publication Date

2019-07-25

Military Boot Minus T

Abstract

Don't Ask Don't Tell- the US policy banning military service by gays and lesbians- was repealed in September 2011. Yet, many transgender service members were STILL either not allowed to serve or were made to serve in silence. In 2015, with the nomination of Secretary of Defense-Ashton Carter, discussions of lifting the ban on transgender service began to ensue. By late July, a six-month review was underway regarding whether or not the ban could be lifted; and, if lifted how the Department of Defense plans to execute the policy change successfully. Announcements were said to be made in January; but as the DOD approaches it's eight month into the review many are wondering what will happen next. This piece looks at this change in policy and the lives that are already affected with interviews by transgender veterans and active duty personnel and research from experts on the issue.

Script

Last year, the Pentagon announced it's decision to make changes to the current transgender policy- a policy that does not allow transgender personnel to serve openly and does not give full health benefits to transgender veterans. As we approach the middle of 2016, a group of military personnel, the DOD chose to make a decision on lifting the ban, is finally on the verge of announcing changes to the current policy. This piece will capture the movement, the political response, and the lives that have and will be affected by the policy.

VIDEO	Time	AUDIO
MS Marching boots with changing vintage to modern American flags. INTV. Stephanie Lily		VO: THERE ARE NEARLY FIFTEEN THOUSAND TRANSGENDER PERSONNEL IN THE MILITARY. MANY, IF NOT ALL, SERVE IN SILENCE It was like I was wearing a mask because it was society wanted it was what my family wanted it was what uncle sam wanted me to be. The feeling of not being wanted or belong is I think what get's me.
Intv. Lily Second camera, CU on hands		INTV. The only thing I want is, I just want to be respected as a person. I just want to be able to go to work like Lily and ya know it's not going to change anything.
Lily's silhouette MS of Lily walking up and combing her wigs		VO: LILY IS HIDING HER IDENTIY IN FEAR OF GETTING DISCHARGED FROM THE NAVY SHE HAS SERVED SINCE SHE WAS 19. SHE'S WANTED TO TRANSTION FOR SEVERAL YEARS BUT HAS KEPT QUIET IN HOPES OF A CHANGE IN POLICY.
Lily CHYRON LILY		INTV: Obviously being in the service you hear a lot of jokes. Because when I came in, 8 years ago, you couldn't be gay and

<u>Production:</u>	TV/DOC	<u>Writer:</u>	Candese Charles	
<u>Client:</u>		<u>Date:</u>	May 2016	Page 2 of 5
<u>Slug:</u>	Military Boots Minus T	<u>Sequence:</u>		

INTV. Camera 2		of bottle myself inside and even at work I still feel really conservative like I try, like how I walk like my mannerisms. I've talked to my doctor he has advised me to just hold on and wait. Change is coming the change is coming. But I just don't want to live my life as a man.
MS of AS walking with military Personnel. CU on AS face smiling to MS of him talking with personnel		VO: IN JULY, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, ASHTON CARTER, ANNOUNCED THE BEGINNING OF A LONG ROAD TO CHANGE THE TRANSGENDER POLICY ALLOWING OPEN TRANSGENDER SERVICE BY JANUARY. CARTER HINTED AT THE POLICY CHANGE DURING THE PENTAGON PRIDE EVENT LAST YEAR.
MS of AS at the podium, to WS of crowd.		SOT: <i>The thing that matters most about a person is what they can contribute to national defense. This is a commitment we must continually renew.</i>
Animated photo of AS with his quote about the policy being outdated. Quote: The Defense Department's current regulations regarding transgender service members are outdated and are causing uncertainty that distracts commanders from our core missions		VO: CARTER LATER STATED THAT THE POLICY- WHICH DISCHARGES TRANS PERSONNEL UNDER MENTAL HEALTH REGULATIONS- IS OUTDATED AND CAUSING DISTRACTIONS.
MS of Robyn holding picture with her military photo and medals. CU on medals		VO: FOR VETERAN ROBYN KUSLITS THE CHANGE IN POLICY WILL HAVE COME TO LATE.
MS of Robyn holding picture with her military photo and medals. CU on medals		NAT SOUND: Cars, wind, talking INTV./VO ROBYN: I was in the Navy and I was a Nuclear Machinist Mate, when I was discharged I was an E6.
ES of Robyn's car pulling into the park Robyn gets out MS of Robyn walking into the park		INTV./VO: Robyn: This idea of transitioning really first started to affect me very early in my military career.
MS of continued sequence of Robyn walking into the park CU on Robyn's face MS on Robyn's face pan to the park area		INTV./VO: But I knew the military's policy at the time. If they had gotten any word of me having any sort of gender incongruences. I would be kicked out and I would lose all of my benefits. So I decided that finishing my contract was more important than transitioning.
MS of Robyn walking down the park away from the camera then out of focus.		INTV./VO: if I could have transitioned while I was there, I probably would have stayed.
Those two shots of MILITARY PERSONNEL RUNNING (last two)		VO: ROBYN IS ONE OF NEARLY 134,000 TRANSGENDER VETERANS FOR SOME THE INNER

<u>Production:</u>	TV/DOC	<u>Writer:</u>	Candese Charles	
<u>Client:</u>		<u>Date:</u>	May 2016	Page 3 of 5
<u>Slug:</u>	Military Boots Minus T	<u>Sequence:</u>		

hands up in salute		TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY IS THE TOUGHEST PART OF WAR.
MCU on picture of Stephanie in uniform to focus on Stephanie CU on certificates		INTV/VO STEPHANIE: I turned 18 at basic training actually. I started off as a cook then 9/11 happened and I was with the 101 st and I had the opportunity to classify as a medical specialist.
MS of Stephanie looking down at the medals INTV camera 1 INTV. Chyron (pops up): Stephanie Paige, VA employee, Medical Specialists INTV. Camera 2		INTV/VO STEPHANIE :We were serving to defend other people’s rights to be free and live free. But yet, we didn’t have the same opportunity our self even though we were the ones that were in the uniform and going into harms way. So it was really troubling for me on a daily basis to think about it.
MS of group of soldiers standing around in circle, SHOES, THEN FACES		VO: THE REASON FOR THE BAN HAS INCLUDED WHAT THE MILITARY CALLS UNIT COHESION. THE COST OF MEDICAL NEEDS FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONNEL AND HOW THOSE NEED MAY AFFECT MILITARY READINESS AND DEPLOYABILITY.
Palm Center paper, flip open to a page with this quote.		RESEARCH DONE BY THE PALM CENTER- AN INDEPENT RESEARCH INSTITUE- ARGUED THAT THERE ARE NO MEDICAL REASONS TO PLACE LIMINATIONS ON MILITARY SERVICE BY TRANS. PERSONS.
STANDUP CHYRON: CANDESE CHARLES, REPORTER		STANDUP: The DOD has just informed me that they have a group of military personnel currently working on the transgender policy. The group has been working together since May of last year. The changes of the policy are still unknown but they are saying that they are close to making a break through.
ES OF NAVAL BASE ENTRANCE, MS of military personnel riding a skateboard		VO: SAN DIEGO HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST MILITARY BASES IN AMERICA WITH OVER NINETY-FIVE THOUSAND MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THE AREA. SOME ACTIVE DUTY PERSONNEL ARE HOPING THESE POLICY CHANGES WILL BE IN THEIR FAVOR.
, aviation mechanic, USMC		
ES of the Center MCU on the Center sign ES of hillcrest MCU on Pride Flag Juno walking into the Center		VO: JUNO LEADS A SUPPORT GROUP FOR ACTIVE TRANS PERSONNEL AND BELIEVES THE DOD WILL MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION THIS YEAR.

<u>Production:</u>	TV/DOC	<u>Writer:</u>	Candese Charles	
<u>Client:</u>		<u>Date:</u>	May 2016	Page 4 of 5
<u>Slug:</u>	Military Boots Minus T	<u>Sequence:</u>		

Intv. Juno Second camera CHYRON: Juno Flag		INTV: The current chain of command, I trust them. They're gonna do the right thing. And I know that they care most about service members and they are gonna take care of the service members.
MS on sign about the military WS of sign MS OF FENCE IN FOCUS TO MMILITARY MEDICAL CENTER IN FOCUS BEHIND THE FENCE		VO: NO ANNOUNCEMENT OR ACTION HAS BEEN MADE BY THE DOD IN OVER EIGHT MONTHS. WHILE ACTIVE DUTY PERSONNEL WAIT IT OUT, VETERANS HAVE BEEN PAYING HEFTY FEES TO TRANSITION.
Zander Kieg USCG, fireman and EMT Clinical Social Worker Board of Director, TAVA		INTV. Zander: Currently the VA does not provide surgeries, specifically for transition that's a policy. It's currently being reviewed but it is not there's no change in that.
ES Zander walking into his home		VO: AFTER SERVICE ZANDER WAS ABLE TO TRANSITION.
Zander intv cam1 Cam 2		INTV: The health care directive for transgender veterans I believe is comprehensive. Although it excludes and restricts surgeries it does guarantee all the other services as far as getting hormones, getting assessed, and getting counseling if it's needed and getting letters for all the surgeries.
Robyn INTV. Cam 2		INTV: Some of the different things I've done that the VA didn't cover is electrolysis. I've had about 350 hours of electrolysis and it's cost me a little over 20 grand out of pocket. I had a tracheal shave surgery back in August and that was 65 hundred dollars out of pocket. This upcoming surgery is 5,000 out of pocket. So all of these things add up and they are really the biggest cost with transitioning. And they are really medically necessary and I don't see why they're not covered. It'd be nice if they were.
WS OF AMERICAN FLAG MCU AMERICAN FLAG MS OF FEET OF GROUP OF SOLDIERS BEFORE THEY RUN OFF		VO: DURING THE SIX MONTH STUDY PERIOD NO TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO JOIN THE MILITARY. BUT, SEVENTY SERVICE MEMBERS HAVE DISCLOSED THEIR TRANSGENDER STATUS TO THEIR SUPERIORS IN THE PAST YEAR.
LILY INTV cam 1 Cam 2 Cam 1		INTV: LILY: IF the sec def does what's right, in our eyes obviously, and just breaks down the barriers I feel that more trans people will come out I've read somewhere that there's over fifteen thousand transgender troops, I mean ya know, that's a lot and it says a lot. We are just like everybody else. All we want is happiness.
MS OF PRIDE, AMERICA, AND TAVA FLAG WS OF SOLDIERS RUNNING		AFTER THE 2011 REPEAL OF DON'T ASK DON'T TELL LGB PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN SERVING WITHOUT INCIDENT. MANY SAY ONCE THE BAN IS LIFTED,

<u>Production:</u>	TV/DOC	<u>Writer:</u>	Candese Charles	
<u>Client:</u>		<u>Date:</u>	May 2016	Page 5 of 5
<u>Slug:</u>	Military Boots Minus T	<u>Sequence:</u>		

		AFFECT.
Stephanie intv. Cam 1		INTV: Stephanie: When I'm on the job I'm on the job, I'm doing my job. MY transgender, etc has nothing to do with me performing an IV or providing first Aid. It's the farthest thing from my mind.
Cam 2		SO I think if people have the ability to serve and do their job and not cause disruptions in the unit they should be able to serve as they are.
American Flag waving		Nat Sound: Flag in the wind hitting against the pole
Fade to black to credits		

Source List

- Transgender American Veterans Association
- The Palm Center (report released 2014 on the issue:
http://www.palmcenter.org/files/Transgender%20Military%20Service%20Report_0.pdf
, updated memos, articles, interviews)
- The Williams Institute: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Transgender-Military-Service-May-2014.pdf>
- RAND Corporation study
- Swords to Plowshares (stats on the issue, interviews)
- Lauren Moody, SF transgender special emphasis program coordinator, SF VA
- National Center for Transgender Equality (interviews)
- The Center, San Diego (interviews, stats, group session for background)
- US DOD: statement by Ashton Carter on Transgender Policy, videos of Carter speaking on the issue, interviews with Press secretary- Matthew Allen, LTCOL Gabby Hermes and MAJ Ben Sakrisson.
- interviews with countless transgender veterans and active duty personnel
- articles on the issue from: ABC, NBC, WAPO, HuffPost, NYTimes, and many more
- Most recent article on the issue: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/06/opinion/the-militarys-transgender-policy-stalled.html?_r=2