



Sean Dorsey (center) performing with Sean Dorsey Dance. Photo by Kegan Marling, courtesy Dorsey.

[Dance As Activism](#)

Trans Artist and Activist Sean Dorsey on How Dance Can Meet This Political Moment

[Claudia Bauer](#) April 1, 2025

[On his first day in office](#), President Trump issued a series of executive orders limiting the rights of transgender and nonbinary Americans, from stating that the U.S. government would recognize only male and female genders to removing gender options from passports. His orders targeted rights and protections attained through years of courageous advocacy. And award-winning San Francisco choreographer Sean Dorsey has

been at the forefront of those efforts for more than two decades, as an activist, an educator, and the artistic director of [Sean Dorsey Dance](#). On the eve of the company's [20th-anniversary home season](#), Dorsey spoke about living as a transgender person in the U.S. today, and how dance can meet this sociopolitical moment.



Sean Dorsey. Photo by Lydia Daniller, courtesy Dorsey

How is the current political climate affecting you personally?

This is a moment of total dire emergency for trans communities. Our bodily autonomy, our freedom of movement across borders or states, our freedom of expression, and our most basic civil liberties have been stripped. Myself and the transpeople I know are experiencing off-the-charts daily anxiety, fear, depression, and rage.

As an artistic leader, how are you responding?

My work is about creating sanctuary. In the creative and rehearsal process with my dancers, I work really hard to build trust and safety, and bring in lots of humor and play. And audiences still rarely have the experience of seeing work that centers trans and queer bodies and experiences. My life calling has been about creating that kind of sanctuary. There's no way I'm backing away from that work. I'm digging in deeper.

This season, Sean Dorsey Dance will be performing works that highlight trans history: *Lou*, *The Missing Generation*, and *The Secret History of Love*. What does that mean to the community right now?

At the very moment when so many forces are working systematically to erase our history and our existence—we're seeing the word "transgender" being removed from the Stonewall Monument's website, for example—it

feels more important than ever, and excruciatingly timely, to be performing works that embody our history. All the works assert the worth, beauty, wisdom, and value of trans and queer bodies and lives. To be doing these works feels incredibly important.

How can dance help us right now?

Artists have always been at the forefront of resisting tyranny and forwarding justice and creating magic and joy. And this time is no different. The beauty of art is that it is truly uncontainable—it's unstoppable. Artists are storytellers, and we're truth-tellers. And truth cannot be extinguished, no matter how hard tyrants try. Truth will always be victorious. Love will always be victorious over hate.

But the victories will not happen automatically—they will only happen if we all step up and take action.

To those who are feeling discouraged, look for the heroes and she-roses and they-roses in history, when artists and activists created so many roadmaps for us, so many tools. This will be a marathon, so we must take care of each other and ourselves.

How does creating and performing dance make you feel hopeful?

Dance is a physical art form; its instrument is embodiment. Whether we are in the audience or onstage, dance locates us and reconnects us to our body and our breath. I truly believe in the enormous healing potential of dance. I've seen it, I've lived it, I know it.