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Demi LOVATO

Won't **STAND** for Stigmas

From substance abuse to mental health issues, the 24-year-old singer embraces her struggles for what they are: human. And now, she's advocating that no one should have to apologize for their sexuality either. For Demi, the only path toward mutual acceptance is an open one.

“I can be sick as a dog and throwing up between songs and I will not cancel a show,” Demi Lovato tells *WH*. Her one and only exception came this past April, when she nixed her concerts in North Carolina to protest the state's controversial HB2 law, which dictates pre-op transgender individuals must use the bathroom corresponding to their birth gender. “It's important to take a stand so people can pay attention to the reason,” says the longtime LGBTQ advocate. “You don't have to define people anymore. I think love is fluid, and so is attraction. It doesn't matter what gender you are—love is love.”

Many in the media speculated that when her hit song “Cool for the Summer” was released last year, she was coming out as bisexual. Demi admits that, yes, her music is fueled by personal experience, but she believes in experimentation, not labels.

No matter the topic, no matter how thorny, Demi wants to change the national discourse around subjects where already strong stigmas become magnified in the context of women's issues. This July, she took the stage at the Democratic National Convention, and while she acknowledged herself as someone living with a mental illness, her focus was on encouraging voters to consider which candidate would help bust the shame and, more important, give people the tools to seek (and afford) the treatment they need. “I've just become less afraid of what other people think,” she says of her growing frankness. “The only way we're going to break through the taboo is by creating the conversation. Compassion is key.” —Sarah Bruning

Learn more about Demi's mental health initiative, *Be Vocal*, at bevocalsspeakup.com.

