

Youngstown
Chapter
Summer
2020

PFLAG Rag

Visit our website at
www.youngstownpflag.org



PFLAG Calendar

Full Spectrum Events

5060 Youngstown Poland Rd

Greetings, Youngstown Area PFLAG family. During this time of social distancing and stay-at-home orders, Youngstown Area PFLAG will not be holding in-person support meetings till further notice. We are available, though, for those who need support and resources.

For immediate support or resources such as food assistance, call 211 (Help Network)

You may reach PFLAG if you or an LGBTQ friend or family member have non-emergency needs through our contact email here or our facebook page, Youngstown Area PFLAG.

Note: Full Spectrum announces the cancellation of the Pride in the Valley Festival in Warren originally scheduled for June 20.

Support groups are held virtually. See <www.fullspectrumcommunityoutreach.org>, Services > Peer Support Groups.

HIV testing, Team, and Pride in the Valley *meetings* have been suspended for the duration of social distancing.

Our pantry of nonperishable food and toiletries and gender-affirming accessories, as well as case management/referral services are accessible by leaving a voicemail at (234) 254-8924 or emailing us at info@fullspectrumcommunityoutreach.org. We will schedule one-on-one meetings as needed.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Social & Support Group
1st & 3rd Sunday, 3-5PM

Youth 14-18 welcome, under 14 with completed parental consent form.

Sexuality Support Group (18+)
2nd Sunday, 3-5PM

Gender Support Group (18+)
2nd Sunday, 6-8PM & 4th Sunday 3-5PM

Family & Friends of Gender Variant Individuals
3rd Sunday, 6-8PM, All Ages



Our Meeting Place
St. John's Episcopal Church

Disclaimer

The views expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the executive board, editor, or chapter.

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Amazon Shopping Supports PFLAG

Help Youngstown PFLAG while shopping on Amazon.com by clicking the "Shop" button at <www.youngstownpflag.org> for an active link to the Amazon site or by using this link: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/34-1783833>. Amazon will make a donation to our chapter for every purchase you make, with no extra cost to you or to us.

What Is PFLAG?

Our Vision

We, the parents, families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, celebrate diversity and envision a society that embraces everyone, including those of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Only with respect, dignity and equality for all will we reach our full potential as human beings, individually and collectively. PFLAG welcomes the participation and support of all who share in, and hope to realize this vision.

Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

Our Strategic Goals

1. Build the capacity of our organization at every level so that we may have all the resources, in the form of information, people and funding, necessary to move forward in our work with the greatest possible effect.
2. Create a world in which our young people may grow up and be educated with freedom from fear of violence, bullying and other forms of discrimination, regardless of their real or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation or that of their families.
3. Make our vision and our message accessible to the broadest range of ethnic and cultural communities, ending the isolation of families with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender family members within those communities.
4. Work toward full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within their chosen communities of faith.
5. Create a society in which all LGBT persons may openly and safely pursue the career path of their choice, and may be valued and encouraged to grow

to their full potential in the workplace.

6. Create a society in which all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons may enjoy, in every aspect of their lives, full civil and legal equality and may participate fully in all the rights, privileges and obligations of full citizenship in this country.

We welcome the participation and support of all who share in our Vision and Mission and who hope to realize our goals.

—See more at: <http://community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=237#sthash.WpB2s9T6.dpuf>

Join Us

—Steve Schildcrout

Are you ready to commit? If you are joining as a new member, please send your name and email (postal address and phone number optional) to YoungstownAreaPFLAG@gmail.com. You may securely submit your dues of \$25 per household (or \$15 for student/low-income) plus any optional additional donation using PayPal or a credit/debit card using the “Donate” button at our website: www.youngstownpflag.org.

If you prefer paper and a stamp, mail your information and a check to Youngstown Area PFLAG, 2201 Goleta Ave., Youngstown, OH 44504.

If you are already a member, consider an additional donation. Your dues and donations are needed to cover our costs for local meetings, publications, our participation in Pride and other festivals, advertising, special programs, and donations to local allied organizations. We send \$15 annually to National PFLAG for each household membership to support their programs. We are an all-volunteer group, so no local funds go to salaries. Thanks for your support!

Submissions

The Youngstown Area PFLAG Rag needs your input. Deadlines are March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1. Send submissions (including pictures) to tcopeland@neo.rr.com or to

Youngstown Area PFLAG
313 N. Belle Vista Ave.
Youngstown, OH 44509

Our Organizational Members



Mahoning County
**Mental Health &
Recovery Board**

*“Help for Today ...
Hope for Tomorrow.”*



Prides Postponed

— PFLAG National’s Policy Matters

LGBTQ+ Communities Worldwide Plan Digital Pride Celebrations. More than 220 Pride events worldwide have been canceled or postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, but organizers are finding innovative ways of reaching out to the LGBTQ+ community to provide alternative online spaces to celebrate. The world’s largest international Pride networks are organizing a Global Pride to be celebrated online on June 27th, which will include speeches from human rights activists, workshops, and performances. PFLAG National is working now to partner in an official capacity with the celebration, delivering virtually the hugs we’ve been offering at Prides since 1972.



City Hall in Kingston, ON,
as of 6/12/20
Happy Pride Month!

Transgender people who have IDs that match their gender identity are 25 percent less likely to experience psychological distress or consider suicide.

— Nico Lang, “Gender-affirming IDs linked to lower suicidal thoughts, study finds,” NBC, Newscom, 4/3/20

Join Us in a New Way to Gather Together in July

Youngstown Area PFLAG invites you to a new way to meet together as we safely attend to this coronavirus pandemic. PFLAG National has provided us with a Zoom account, with all the safety bells and whistles, and we want to take advantage of this technology to meet and discuss so much that has happened since we were together at our March meeting.

Our Zoom gathering will be held July 14 from 7-8:30 p.m. If you are available and would like to join this virtual support group meeting, please let us know by July 13 and you will be sent the information needed to participate, either by phone or on the device of your choosing. Please send your request to join with your email contact information to youngstownareapflag@gmail.com

We look forward to being together. Stay safe and healthy.

A Letter from PFLAG National

May 29, 2020

It's a very different Pride Month that starts today. A global pandemic has led to the cancellation of countless celebrations worldwide, and in the US, rage over the lack of equality and justice for people of color has brought protesters to the streets of communities nationwide.

Pride started with a riot against injustice, brutality, and disparate treatment. This year, as we witness the pain and anger of our Black loved ones, we have an opportunity to again be in solidarity, locked arm in arm, and demonstrate that being an ally means showing up to fight for justice in all communities. Pride remains--even without parades and festivals--a time when we get to celebrate our community, reflect on the work that we still need to do, and be seen. Let our work

continue to build on the understanding that we are all created equal and that we all deserve safety, security, and respect.

PFLAG National was proud to sign on to the following joint letter (also linked here, where the list of signing organizations continues to grow), committing our movement to make “explicit commitments to embrace anti-racism and end white supremacy, not as necessary corollaries to our mission, but as integral to the objective of full equality for LGBTQ people.” PFLAG National’s Board of Directors created a Unity and Inclusion Policy, back in 2016, which did indeed make this work integral to our direct objectives, mission, and vision. We will continue to do that work.

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Those words, written over 30 years ago by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, remind us that indifference can never bridge the divide of hate. And, today, they should serve as a call to action to all of us, and to the Movement for LGBTQ equality.

This spring has been a stark and stinging reminder that racism, and its strategic objective, white supremacy, is as defining a characteristic of the American experience as those ideals upon which we claim to hold our democracy—justice, equality, liberty.

- We listened to the haunting pleas of George Floyd for the most basic of human needs simply, breath—as a Minneapolis police officer kneeled with cruel indifference on his neck.

- We felt the pain of Breonna Taylor’s boyfriend as he called 9-1-1 after plainclothes Louisville police kicked down the door of their home and shot her eight times as she slept in her bed.

- We watched the shooting death of Ahmaud

Arbery by white vigilantes in Brunswick, GA, aware that they evaded the consequence of their actions until the video surfaced and sparked national outrage.

- We saw the weaponizing of race by a white woman who pantomimed fear in calling the police on Christian Cooper, a Black gay man bird-watching in Central Park.

- We have heard and read about the killings of transgender people—Black transgender women in particular—with such regularity, it is no exaggeration to describe it as an epidemic of violence. This year alone, we have lost at least twelve members of our community: Dustin Parker, Neulisa Luciano Ruiz, Yampi Méndez Arocho, Monika Diamond, Lexi, Johanna Metzger, Serena Angelique Velázquez Ramos, Layla Pelaez Sánchez, Penélope Díaz Ramírez, Nina Pop, Helle Jae O’Regan, and Tony McDade.

All of these incidents are stark reminders of why we must speak out when hate, violence, and systemic racism claim—too often with impunity—Black Lives.

The LGBTQ Movement’s work has earned significant victories in expanding the civil rights of LGBTQ people. But what good are civil rights without the freedom to enjoy them?

Many of our organizations have made progress in adopting intersectionality* as a core value and have committed to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. But this moment requires that we go further—that we make explicit commitments to embrace anti-racism and end white supremacy, not as necessary corollaries to our mission, but as integral to the objective of full equality for LGBTQ people.

We, the undersigned, recognize we cannot remain neutral, nor will awareness substitute for action. The LGBTQ community knows about the work of resisting police brutality and violence. We celebrate June as Pride Month,

***Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

because it commemorates, in part, our resisting police harassment and brutality at Stonewall in New York City, and earlier in California, when such violence was common and expected. We remember it as a breakthrough moment when we refused to accept humiliation and fear as the price of living fully, freely, and authentically.

We understand what it means to rise up and push back against a culture that tells us we are less than, that our lives don’t matter. Today, we join together again to say #BlackLivesMatter and commit ourselves to the action those words require.

Youngstown City
Council voted yes
to declare racism
a public health crisis
this afternoon during
a virtual zoom meeting.
—WFMJ, 6/19/20

A Letter of Support from PFLAG-Youngstown to the City Council

To Youngstown City Council President DeMaine Kitchen and Council Members Julius Oliver, Jimmy Hughes, Samantha Turner, Mike Ray, Lauren McNally, Anita Davis and Basia Adamczak:

We are writing you today as a business owners, organizations and community members to fully support the resolution to declare racism as a public health crisis and to acknowledge that racism damages public health through discrimination. We support the resolution because we are profoundly outraged and heartbroken that our City’s citizens, and people of color across

America, continue to be frequently demeaned, threatened and physically harmed. We hope and believe the resolution will appropriately bring increased government and private-sector attention to these persistent and systemic issues.

We are proud to be part of the Youngstown community, and prouder still that Youngstown is coming together to find ways to deal with the role racism plays in undermining public health, and seeking solutions for issues that have felt difficult and overwhelming for too long. Because racial prejudice is most harmful when it is held by people in positions of power, we fully support City leadership working toward a plan to dismantle systemic racism. We are concerned that a lack of publicly-stated outrage by us makes racial animosity—or indifference—socially acceptable.

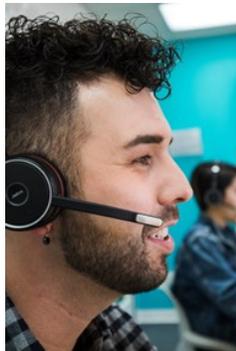
We write this letter together because the issue about which we write is not a political one, and we recognize that our country's most basic democratic ideals are threatened when we further head in the wrong direction on issues of basic human rights.

Our community needs to know we are fighting for it to be more just, fair and safe. We also recognize that our glass houses are not perfect. There is work to be done in our organizations, and in our own leadership, and we are committed to that work. We believe in and will work for an America that can—and must—do far better to provide basic human rights protections, create a level playing field, and easier paths to the American dream.

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Trevor Project

We are the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ youth. Our TrevorLifeline, TrevorText, and TrevorChat services provide free and confidential crisis counseling to LGBTQ young people 24/7.



Starbucks Reverses Stance, Will Allow Employees to Wear Clothes Supporting Black Lives Matter

—Marty Johnson, *The Hill*, 6/12/20

Starbucks on [June 12] reversed its stance barring employees from wearing clothing that supports the Black Lives Matter movement.

“We see you. We hear you. Black Lives Matter. That is a fact and will never change,” Starbucks said in a statement.

The coffee chain giant made its initial stance against wearing Black Lives Matters shirts and pins known to employees in a memo earlier in the week. The memo informed employees that apparel supporting the BLM movement violated the company's policy against accessories that “advocated a political, religious, or personal issue.”

Pushback against the memo was immediate. “Starbucks LGBTQ+ partners wear LGBTQ+ pins and shirts, that also could incite and create violent experiences amongst partners and customers,” one black transgender employee of the coffee chain told *BuzzFeed News*. “We have partners who experienced harassment and transphobia/homophobia for wearing their pins and shirts, and Starbucks still stands behind them.”

Starbucks also said in its statement Friday that it had designed a special Black Lives Matter T-shirt for their employees to wear. Starbucks tweeted a mock-up of the shirt Friday, saying that its Black Partner Network had helped design the graphic. Each of Starbucks's employees will receive a T-shirt, the company said.

“Until these arrive, we've heard you want to show your support, so just be you. Wear your BLM pin or t-shirt,” Starbucks also said. “We are so proud of your passionate support of our common humanity. We trust you to do what's right while never forgetting Starbucks is a welcoming third place where all are treated with dignity and respect.”

“Because of Sex”

— David Leonhardt, *The Morning*, *New York Times*,
6/24/20

The Supreme Court currently has a reliable five-member conservative majority on many issues—like business regulation, campaign finance, voting rights, and the death penalty. On several of these issues, the court has issued sweeping decisions that throw out earlier precedents.

On other issues, however, the court does not lean so far to the right. The list includes immigration, antitrust, and the census, all subjects on which at least one conservative justice has joined the court’s liberal members to issue liberal or moderate rulings.

After Justice Anthony Kennedy retired in 2018, it wasn’t clear which category L.G.B.T.Q. rights would fall into. Kennedy had written landmark opinions on gay rights, including the 2015 legalization of same-sex marriage. And when Brett Kavanaugh replaced Kennedy in 2018, many civil-rights advocates were anxious.

Yesterday’s big Supreme Court decision—holding that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protected gay and transgender workers from workplace discrimination—seems to answer the uncertainty: Even post-Kennedy, the court still leans left on L.G.B.T.Q. rights.

It was a 6-3 decision, with all four liberal justices in the majority, along with Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Neil Gorsuch, who wrote the opinion. They rejected arguments from the Trump administration and the employers. (Kavanaugh dissented, along with Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas.)

“The lopsided ruling, featuring unusual alliances, was a major surprise from a fundamentally conservative court,” Adam Liptak, *The Times*’s Supreme Court reporter, told me. “It was a reminder that the justices are independent thinkers with varying approaches to the law.”

Other Observations

It’s always been wrong to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people. Thanks to today’s ruling from the Supreme Court, it’s officially illegal too.

This ruling comes just days after the Trump administration launched a hateful new attack on LGBTQ+ rights.

The Supreme Court has made their ruling—but many Republicans in Congress will still seek new ways to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people.

—from BlueFuture

“An employer who fires an individual for being homosexual or transgender fires that person for traits or actions it would not have questioned in members of a different sex. Sex plays a necessary and undisguisable role in the decision, exactly what Title VII forbids,” Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote for the court.

—Associated Press, “Justices Rule LGBT People Protected from Job Discrimination,” WKBN, 6/15/20

The ruling confounds the Trump administration both legally and politically. Not only did Trump and Co. argue in favor of perpetuating discrimination against LGBTQ Americans and lose, the fact that Gorsuch penned the majority opinion kneecaps one of Trump’s key appeals to religious conservatives—that he’s delivered them the perfect justices to the Supreme Court. Looks like the last laugh is on Trump.

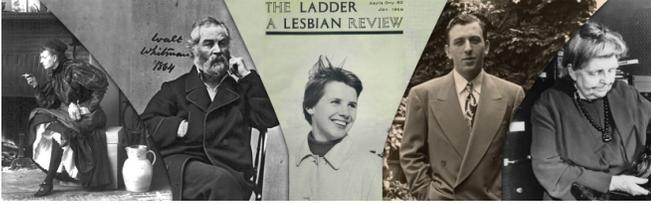
—Kerry Eleveld, “Trump Suffers Double Blow on Supreme Court Ruling Outlawing Bias against Transgender, Gay Workers,” *Daily Kos*, 6/15/20

The ruling is a historic one for the entire LGBTQI community, and specifically marks the most sweeping legal protections for trans communities in U.S. Supreme Court history.

—Astraea, email 6/16/20

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Pride Month

—The Library of Congress



June is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Month. This month-long celebration demonstrates how LGBTQ Americans have strengthened our country, by using their talent and creativity to help create awareness and goodwill. June 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of LGBTQ+ Pride traditions. The first Pride March in New York City was held on June 28, 1970, on the one year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. More

The legacy of LGBTQ individuals is being discovered by interested readers and seasoned researchers perusing unparalleled global collections. The acquisition of historic material and the ongoing program of copyright deposits will continue to enrich the Library’s holdings of LGBTQ materials.

The collections of the Library of Congress contain many books, posters, sound recordings, manuscripts and other material produced by, about and for the LGBTQ community. The contributions of this community are preserved as part of our nation’s history, and include noted artistic works, musical compositions and contemporary novels. The Library’s American collections range from the iconic poetry of Walt Whitman through the manuscripts of the founder of LGBTQ activism in Washington, D.C., Frank Kameny.

The Library of Congress is the largest single repository of world knowledge in a single place. In addition to having the mission of acquiring and preserving this exponentially growing body of knowledge, the Library is responsible for making all of its vast collection accessible to all.

Your 2020 Virtual Pride Guide

—Maya Salam, *The New York Times*, 6/13/20

L.G.B.T.Q. Pride events will look and feel very different this year, but many are still on—online. Here are some of the most notable, with details on when and how to tune in.

Gay bars, drag shows, concerts, performances, galleries—and, of course, Pride marches. . . . But this year is not like most years, not by any stretch.

In the era of the coronavirus, traveling and gathering are not options for many. But that should not hinder the spirit and mission of Pride: to remind community members and allies that they are not alone, but part of a greater push for equality, and to elevate the voices and causes central to L.G.B.T.Q. people and other marginalized groups. And with the uprisings in response to the deaths of George Floyd and other black people by the police, Pride is taking on a greater significance.

“It’s more important than ever that every L.G.B.T.Q. person in our community—many who are also people of color—raise their voices in protest,” Cathy Renna, the interim communications director for the National LGBTQ Task Force who is helping to organize Global Pride and NYC Pride, recently told me. The gay rights movement was sparked by an uprising, after all, one that is recognized every June. “Protest has always been a part of Pride,” she said.

And while it is disappointing not to be able to gather, as we have done for the last five decades, Ms. Renna said, the internet has been used by the community to forge connections for decades. “This is an opportunity for individuals who would never have the chance to attend a Pride march—say, in New York or Chicago or San Francisco—to be able to be part of it.

“You can be an isolated kid in the small rural town in Mississippi or you could be in Eastern Europe or you can be in a country where it’s illegal to be L.G.B.T.Q.,” she said. “All you need is an internet connection.”

Global Pride

Saturday, June 27, at 10:30 a.m.

World leaders, royalty, pop stars, and drag queens will anchor this year's 24-hour Global Pride livestream, the first worldwide L.G.B.T.Q. event, which is putting the Black Lives Matter movement at its center. Todrick Hall will host the stream of music, performances, speeches and messages of support. It is expected to attract up to 300 million viewers.

Participants include Joseph R. Biden Jr., the presumptive Democratic nominee for U.S. president; Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Justin Trudeau, the Canadian prime minister; Leo Varadkar, the Irish prime minister; Carlos Alvarado Quesada, president of Costa Rica, where same-sex marriage was legalized in May; Erna Solberg, prime minister of Norway; Xavier Bettel, prime minister of Luxembourg; Crown Princess Mary of Denmark; and Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil of India.

The entertainers Laverne Cox, Adam Lambert, Kesha, Rita Ora, the Pussycat Dolls, Dixie Chicks, Olivia Newton-John, Pabllo Vittar, Courtney Act and many others will also take part.

Hundreds of Pride organizations from around the world contributed to the stream, including most of the ones on this list.

Where: The Global Pride website, Todrick Hall's YouTube channel and the iHeartRadio YouTube channel.

[Google this article on the NY Times website for other key virtual Pride events.]

Finding Home: Eduardo Okporo's Journey as an LGBTI Refugee

—USA for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency

"I feel at home in New York because home is where [I] feel safe, I can express myself, get a job, retain a job and participate in community



of origin."

Eduardo Okporo is the Executive Director of the RDJ Refugee Shelter in New York City — the only shelter in the city specifically serving homeless refugees and asylum-seekers. Eduardo works every day helping resettled refugees in the United States rebuild their lives. He understands their struggles because he was once in their shoes as well.

As a gay man living in Nigeria, Eduardo faced discrimination, threats of violence and potential imprisonment. Nigeria is one of many countries in the world that criminalizes same-sex relationships. After being attacked by a mob, Eduardo fled his home.

When he arrived in the United States, Eduardo says it's the kindness and compassion of strangers that helped him survive. First Friends of New Jersey and New York, an organization that connects refugees with legal representation and housing, helped Eduardo access legal services and his first shelter. "How would I have survived if not for the kindness of strangers," says Eduardo.

His first job in the U.S. was with another local organization, Eat Offbeat — a delivery service that employs refugee chefs to create and share meals from their home countries. From there, Eduardo went on to join the RDJ Shelter as its Executive Director, where he could help refugees and asylum-seekers find housing.

For LGBTI refugees, finding a home doesn't end with finding housing. The RDJ Shelter also assists with offering English classes, job training and providing food through their pantry. Helping refugees and asylum-seekers connect with the community is also essential in their resettlement journey. Through events like movie nights, the local community has the opportunity to connect with refugees and make them feel more welcome in America.

"Especially as a displaced person, community makes you feel at home," Eduardo explains. "Community is the bedrock of [LGBTI refugees'] integration in a new country."

Even Eduardo is still working on making the U.S. his home. As the Executive Director of the

events despite my sexual orientation and country of origin.”

Edafe Okporo is the Executive Director of the RDJ Refugee Shelter in New York City — the only shelter in the city specifically serving homeless refugees and asylum-seekers. Edafe works every day helping resettled refugees in the United States rebuild their lives. He understands their struggles because he was once in their shoes as well.

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When he arrived in the United States, Edafe says it’s the kindness and compassion of strangers that helped him survive. First Friends of



De Vos Strikes Again at At-Risk Students

A *Washington Post* article, “States Sue to Block DeVos’ Campus Sexual Assault Overhaul,” which may not be reprinted or rewritten for distribution (but which may be summarized), reports that the Department of Education has repealed 1917 guidelines concerning the handling of sexual assault cases in schools. On May 6, new instructions, in the name of civil rights, were published. They are represented as dealing more fairly with the accused, but they also make reporting more difficult, and do not permit isolated cases to come before a tribunal—only “pervasive” problems—and they limit the kinds of cases that may be considered.

The attorneys general of twenty states, led by Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and California, are suing the Department of Education, arguing that against the “procedural barriers” created by the new rules and claiming that students will hesitate

to report assaults because of them. The schools also cannot make such sweeping changes in the three months allowed, especially not when the pandemic has stretched their budgets to the limit and forced the revamping of all other functions.

At Height of COVID-19 Pandemic, Trump Administration Finalizes Anti-LGBTQ Health Care Rule

—Lambda Legal, 6/12/20

Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) published a rule change that attempts to roll back anti-discrimination protections in health care, including for LGBTQ people under Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. The rule does not and cannot change the law, but does cause confusion and invites health care workers, doctors, hospitals and health insurance companies that receive federal funding to refuse to provide or cover health care services critical to the health and wellbeing of LGBT people and everyone living with HIV, even during the global COVID-19 pandemic. . . .

“Today’s rule is a tragically failed public health policy and just flat out illegal,” said Omar Gonzalez-Pagan, Senior Attorney and Health Care Strategist. “We will be challenging the rule because at a time when the entire world is battling a dangerous pandemic, which in the United States has infected more than 2,000,000 people and killed more than 116,000, it is critical for everyone to have ready access to the potentially life-saving health care they need. LGBTQ people need to know that they continue to have rights and Lambda Legal will fight back. If you experience discrimination when seeking health care because of your sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status you should contact us immediately.” . . .

Covid-19 Echoes AIDS

—Casey O’Brien, “Decades after the HIV/AIDS Crisis, Advocates and Survivors Watch Covid-19 Cripple Their Communities,” *Daily Kos*, 6/15/20

... In some ways, the COVID-19 pandemic is different from the early days of the HIV/AIDS crisis, but in others it feels eerily familiar—and deeply uncomfortable.

“One thing that feels similar to COVID, at least potentially, is that during the HIV crisis there were some lives that didn’t matter, because in the early days the people getting it were what were often called the ‘Four H’s’—homosexuals, Haitians, heroin addicts, and hemophiliacs—so no one paid attention,” said public health expert Anne Donnelly, who has worked in HIV/AIDS advocacy for decades after losing many of her closest friends to the virus.

“We were more than ignored. [President Ronald] Reagan wouldn’t even say HIV. For years and years, he wouldn’t even mention it. It took him all that time just to say it, and meanwhile people were falling ill and dying ... and now it’s obvious that everyone in America is disposable except for maybe 400 families at the top who run the country,” said Fred Andres, a nurse from Richmond, California, who, along with his husband Joel, lost many friends and even former boyfriends to HIV.

In both pandemics, many felt national leadership was lacking, leaving more people vulnerable to the viruses’ impacts, especially those who are already marginalized. “We have had terrible responses from our leaders, on the federal level. If we had better leadership, there wouldn’t

11

have been nearly so many deaths, which is exactly what happened with HIV. . . .

Although anyone is vulnerable to the coronavirus, the death rates for people of color are significantly higher than white individuals, as are death rates for low-income people. The same is true for HIV, which is still an issue in the U.S. Black communities remain the hardest hit by HIV and have had the highest age-adjusted rates of death from the virus throughout the pandemic’s

course in the country.

“Before we understood that COVID was just going to amplify the disparities that already exist in our system, I thought maybe it would be different than HIV. But now, it’s so painfully obvious, it’s just happening all over again . . . 35 years I spent in this work, and we haven’t made a lot of progress,” said Donnelly. . . .

But even as the two pandemics echo

each other, there are striking differences. During the HIV/AIDS crisis, the community of those infected was, at least originally, small, tightly knit, and deeply supportive. Now, everyone is impacted, but the feeling of community is actually lessened, according to interviewees.

“Honestly, in some ways HIV was easier. The community was smaller, and it was able to cross link and network more easily. Now, everybody is kind of on their own,” said Andres. “During the

Tony Fauci Notes That LGBTQ+ People Lifted Stigma with “Incredible Courage” in HIV/AIDS Epidemic

—PFLAG’s *Policy Matters*, 5/4/20



Dr. Anthony Fauci said on April 7th that the visibility LGBTQ+ people brought to themselves during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic helped change the tide for public perception. Fauci made the remarks during the daily White House Coronavirus Task Force briefing when responding to COVID-19’s disproportionate impact on Black Americans, saying the disease has “shed a light” on health disparities in the United States much like HIV/AIDS did with LGBTQ people.

HIV crisis, we all got together, we could do things in person. Now the community is so diffuse, and sometimes all we have is the internet, Zoom meetings, and things like that.”

“Because this pandemic impacts everyone, there have been more splits in our communities,” said Donnelly.

The HIV crisis launched the largest patient advocacy movement the world had ever seen, and the bonds between survivors were deeply powerful. “We had no treatments. I thought that I was going to die—we all did. That’s why the activism was so strong—we literally had nothing to lose,” explained Clark.

And in the cases where patients did die of HIV, they weren’t alone, which is unfortunately the case for many COVID patients due to the highly contagious nature of the virus. . . .

What’s true in both pandemics, however, is the importance of asking for help, providing care and support, and being understanding. “The biggest lesson I learned from having HIV, and now living through COVID, is the importance of letting other people help you,” said Clark. “For a long time, I thought HIV was my fault, and I wouldn’t let anyone help me with it—and I did that this time too a little bit, I kept saying I was fine. But you know what, I wasn’t fine, I needed someone to get me some groceries. So I allowed someone to help, and that was so comforting.”

United Nations Calls for an End to “Conversion Therapy” Practices

—Marissa Higgins, *Daily Kos*, 6/14/20

. . . [T]he United Nations calls for nations around the globe to finally end the archaic, discredited practice known as “conversion therapy,” . . . denounced by the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the American Medical Association (AMA), among others, which aims to change one’s sexual orientation and/or

gender identity. Globally, the horrifying practice is banned for minors in only five countries: Germany, Brazil, Malta, Ecuador, and Taiwan.

. . . [I]t’s often minors that are subject to conversion therapy. . . . because they are still subject to the whims of parents or guardians; if parents want their LGBTQ (or even assumed LGBTQ, or questioning) adolescent or teenager to conform to heterosexuality or being cisgender, they may force the minor into conversion therapy. . . . As pointed out in the report, conversion therapy is often quite lucrative for the people providing it; the report claims that some providers in the U.S., for example, charge more than \$25,000 per “dose” of the debunked practice.

If all of this sounds horrible, that’s because it is. It’s also still legal in much of the United States, as states decide individually whether or not to ban the practice. Virginia, for example, became only the 20th state (including Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico) to ban the practice for minors in April. This ban also made Virginia the first Southern state to ban the widely debunked practice. In addition to states and territories, about 50 cities and counties ban the practice for youth.

A U.N. program officer for OutRight Action International, Sahar Moazami, stressed to NBC News in an interview that no country can claim they’re “the best” on this issue. “In all countries, we are facing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity,” she told the outlet.

The report notes that “attempts to pathologize and erase the identity of individuals, negate their existence” as LGBTQ people, and “provoke self-loathing have profound consequences on their physical and psychological integrity and well-being.” This assertion is backed up in numerous studies, suggesting that, in the long-term, conversion therapy is linked to higher rates of suicidality, addiction, self-destructive behavior, and mental health struggles, like depression and anxiety.

Close to 700,000 adults in the U.S. have experienced conversion therapy, with about half of those people experiencing it as minors, according to a 2018 study.

First LGBTQ+-Inclusive Civil Rights Law in South & Nation's First in 2020

—PFLAG's *Policy Matters*, 4/17/20

Governor Northam signed the Virginia Values Act into law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, public and private employment, public accommodations, and access to credit. The law will go into effect on July 1st. PFLAG Metro DC was a strong contributor to this successful bill becoming law.

Thousands in Brooklyn March for Black Transgender Community

The *Daily Kos* reports that “On Sunday [June 14], thousands gathered in Brooklyn, New York, to protest as part of the movement



to draw explicit attention to the violence and discrimination faced by the Black transgender community, as reported by CNN. . . . Sunday's The Black Trans Lives Matter rally was co-organized by The Okra Project, the Marsha P. Johnson Institute, and Black Trans Femmes in the Arts, among others. Demonstrators gathered outside of the Brooklyn Museum and spilled out over the road on Eastern Parkway, as reported by NBC News.”

See Marisa Higgins's story “As protests continue across the nation, thousands in Brooklyn march for Black transgender community,” 6/15/20.

Surviving Partners Now Eligible for Social Security

—Kerry Eleveld, *Daily Kos*, 4/29/20

A federal judge Wednesday ordered the Social Security Administration to pay benefits to the surviving partners of same-sex couples who had been denied the opportunity to marry sooner due to state marriage bans.

As Slate's Mark Joseph Stern notes, the ruling reversed “one of the last remaining vestiges of federal discrimination against same-sex couples.”



The case centered around Michael Ely and James A. Taylor, a committed Arizona couple of 43 years who wed shortly after the Supreme Court struck down same-sex marriage bans nationwide in June 2014. Six months later, Taylor died of cancer. But when Ely applied for federal survivor benefits, he was denied because federal law requires couples be married for at least nine months in order to qualify. The fact that the couple had been illegally banned from marrying sooner was deemed immaterial.

The case was brought in 2019 by the LGBTQ advocacy group Lambda Legal as a class action suit, arguing that the Social Security Administration “cannot rely upon unconstitutional state laws that have since been overturned to justify discriminating against same-sex surviving spouses today.”

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Macdonald agreed with that reasoning, writing that “reliance on an unconstitutional law” perpetuated an “unconstitutional infringement on Mr. Ely and Mr. Taylor's fundamental right to marriage.”

Lambda Legal counsel Peter Renn called the ruling a “tremendous victory” for surviving same-sex spouses nationwide. “No one should be penalized for being the victim of discrimination. The denial of access to these critical benefits can have dire consequences, with some of our class members experiencing homelessness,” Renn said.

First Annual Trans Immigrants Day Honors the Lives And Legacies of Trans Women

—Tina Vasquez *Daily Kos*, Prism, 5/24/20

The first annual Trans Immigrants Day honors trans people who died too soon, and vows to fight like hell for the living. Launched by the organization Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, the first annual Trans Immigrants Day [took] May 31, preceded by a week of action. . . .

According to Oluchi Omeoga, a national organizer with the Black LGBTQ+ Migrant Project (BLMP), an organization that works closely with Familia, too often the immigrants' rights movement forgets about LGBTQ+ people—especially Black LGBTQ+ immigrants—and the LGBTQ+ movement treats undocumented immigrants as an afterthought, if it thinks of them at all. Organizations like Familia and BLMP are unapologetically centering LGBTQ+ immigrants and honor the leadership of trans immigrants.

“What has been made very apparent to me, especially during the pandemic, is that in times of crisis, the most vulnerable and the most marginalized are left behind,” Omeoga said. “When COVID started, people scrambled—what are we going to fight for, what are we going to demand from ICE? Queer and trans immigrants were left out of that conversation; Black folks were left out of that conversation, and that’s just the case in these larger movements. It’s really disheartening to hear organizations say they have an intersectional framework, yet when things really heat up and become chaotic, they drop it. We need to embody these things every day, especially during a crisis. We mean it when we say we are trying to get to liberation.”



Supporters of migrants and LGBTQ+ community march in demand of justice for the death of Roxsana Hernández, a Honduran trans migrant who died while in custody of U.S. authorities.

Jennicet Gutiérrez, an organizer with Familia, told Prism that the organization’s main priority is demanding justice for trans immigrant women and holding federal immigration agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) accountable when trans women die in detention. . . .

Federal immigration agencies have a long history of abusing trans immigrants and denying them necessary health care. . . . A 2019 report from Amnesty International found that HIV-positive trans women are routinely denied medical care in federal immigration custody, a fact also confirmed by a 2016 Human Rights Watch report.

. . . Gutiérrez said, “Trans Immigrants Day is about fighting for women like these, honoring them, and making sure that no more trans women die in detention. . . . and every day we are working to abolish ICE.”

For many trans immigrants, [Roxsanna] Hernández’s death in 2018 symbolized a grave milestone in the history of ICE, forcing them to organize in bold ways. Hernández was detained by federal immigration authorities on May 13, 2018, after arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border from Honduras as part of a “migrant caravan.” While in federal custody, Hernández reportedly spent five days in what migrants often call CBP’s “hieleras,” or “ice boxes,” holding facilities known for frigidly cold temperatures. According to ICE, Hernández was admitted to Cibola General Hospital on May 17 “with symptoms of pneumonia, dehydration, and complications associated with HIV.” Later that day, she was transferred via air ambulance to

Lovelace Medical Center (LMC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she remained in the intensive care unit until she died on May 25.

Since November 2018, LGBTQ+ advocates have pursued a wrongful death claim on behalf of Hernández’s family because evidence suggests she was abused in ICE custody prior to her death. . . .

Let's Talk Gender: A Guide for Using Pronouns

—Justice Ameer Gaines, *Daily Kos*, 4/13/20

["He" and "she"] are the primary way we indicate the gender of other people.

As transgender people continue to advocate for our rights, discourse regarding pronouns has expanded and even become controversial. This has been especially true for pronouns used by nonbinary people. . . . Learning and respecting every person's pronouns [are] crucial to building a trans-inclusive culture in our society. . . .

Gender-neutral pronouns are pronouns that don't aim to specify any gender, or that specify a nonbinary or genderqueer identity. The pronoun "they" has served as a singular gender neutral pronoun for centuries. Singular "they" is helpful when referring to someone whose gender you don't know or are not sure of. Most of us use singular "they" pretty often without even realizing it; for example, "Oh shoot, someone left their bag. I'll take it to the lost and found."

Many nonbinary people have adopted singular "they" pronouns to identify themselves on an individual basis; e.g. "Ashton is nonbinary. Ask them about their new job.")

Numerous alternative gender neutral pronouns, or neopronouns, were also developed by writers and researchers throughout the 20th century. Popular neopronouns include ze/hir/hirs, ve/ver/vis, and xe/xem/xyrs. Here's an example how to use "ze" pronouns:

Ze hosted hir party at the roller rink.
Those skates are hirs.

That same example using "she":

She hosted her party at the roller rink.
Those skates are hers.

Some people don't prefer to use pronouns at all and would rather just be referred to by their name.

Note: Pronouns do not equal identity. Not all nonbinary people use gender neutral pronouns. A person's choice of pronouns is whatever makes them feel most comfortable and may even change over time. . . .

What If I Don't Know Someone's Pronouns?

Learning someone's pronouns can be as simple as asking them.

Introducing yourself with your own pronouns is one of the best ways to ask someone for theirs. This presents the other person with an opportunity to share their pronouns as well. It also normalizes the introduction of pronouns in the environment you're in. For example,

"Hi, I'm Danielle. I use she/her pronouns. What about you?"

"Oh, hi. I'm Skylar. My pronouns are they/them/theirs."

If you're in a place or situation that seems unsafe for a trans person, you can either hold off on asking or ask in private. You may also ask *if* the person prefers a different set of pronouns for safety reasons in those particular situations.

Why Is Using Correct Pronouns Important?

Using someone's correct pronouns is a matter of respect. It's a simple yet powerful way to show someone you respect their humanity and identity.

Only third person pronouns indicate gender. That means most often we're using pronouns to talk about someone, not when we're talking to them directly. By using incorrect pronouns for someone, you're actually teaching others to use the wrong pronouns too.

Using incorrect pronouns for a person is called "misgendering." Misgendering can be extremely damaging and dangerous for transgender and nonbinary people for numerous reasons. Being misgendered is a major source of social anxiety and dysphoria for many trans people, leading to negative mental health outcomes. Misgendering is also a primary tool

used to bully and discriminate against trans and nonbinary folks. Misgendering a trans person can also “out” them, or reveal they are trans to others without their permission. Being outed can have dire consequences for trans people including job loss, homelessness, physical and sexual violence, and even murder.

On the other hand, using a trans person’s [preferred] pronouns can have significant positive impacts on mental health and helps cement a more inclusive culture for other trans people as well. . . .

But Still What about Grammar?!

Language evolves. Grammar adjusts. The purpose of language is to allow us to communicate with each other, which changes with time and context. In fact, language is constantly changing to fit the needs of our culture and society.

Think of all the new words (and meanings) you’ve learned adjusting to new technologies in the past 20 years alone. Do you **FaceTime** or **Zoom** folks? Maybe you have a favorite **YouTuber** or **influencer**? How many **memes** have you scrolled past today?

Using someone’s correct pronouns is about respect, not grammar. If a person takes the time to tell you their pronouns, it’s probably not insignificant. Taking the time to learn their pronouns can play a major role in making that person feel accepted and respected.

If grammar is what’s tripping you up when using pronouns you’re not used to, my best advice: Don’t overthink it. Singular “they” [works with verbs] the same way as a plural “they”:

Casey is a great teacher. **They are** so good with kids.

Many of us who use neopronouns are happy to help you learn. . . .

But Does Anyone Really Use “Neopronouns” Anyway?

Well, yes. I do.

I’m a trans woman. I also identify as

genderfluid. For me this means that “woman” is never an inaccurate description of my gender, AND I recognize that my gender has shifted at various points of my life and still does on rare occasions.

I use the pronouns *xe*, *xem*, and *xyr* (pronounced “zee,” “zem,” “zeer.”) While I’m okay with she/her pronouns being used for me, they are not my pronouns.

Ironically enough, when I first saw *xe/xem/xyr* pronouns I didn’t know how to read them, let alone say them out loud. I hadn’t come into my own identity yet, and I scoffed at the idea of learning new words for other people.

As I explored my relationship with gender more I realized that I’d been feeling dysphoria for as long as I could remember. I knew clearly that I was not a man, but my relationship to womanhood was still . . . complicated by others’ perceptions of me. I had personal reasons for not using “they” pronouns, but I still wanted a shift.

The pronoun “xe” felt fluid and most comfortable at that place in my journey. It had enough flexibility to let me grow at my own pace. And it was just kinda fun to learn with my friends.

Now, being much more confident in my womanhood, I can say that “xe” still feels right as a pronoun. I was even surprised how off it felt when I tried solely using “she” for a few months. This word I didn’t want to learn before became the term that made me feel most respected in my body.

Anything Else?

Probably. To be honest, the language around trans inclusion and identity is ever-evolving and growing and blooming and that’s a beautiful thing. Don’t be afraid that you may not get everything “right” or can’t keep up with the terms.

The main goal of developing a trans-inclusive vocabulary is to help every person feel respected in their identity and learn how to respect others’ in their full humanity. Learning how to respect another person’s pronouns is a step toward a society where we can support everyone no matter what they want to be called.

Rowling Provokes Trans

—From Al Donato, “Why J.K. Rowling’s Statements About People Who Menstruate Are Transphobic,” Huffpost, 6/9/20

[On June 6, J. K. Rowling, creator of Harry Potter, tweeted an objection to a headline reading, “Creating a more equal post-COVID-19 world for people who menstruate,” and suggested the word “women” be used instead: “‘People who menstruate.’ I’m sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?” [In another tweet, she wrote,] “If sex isn’t real, there’s no same-sex attraction. If sex isn’t real, the lived reality of women globally is erased. I know and love trans people, but erasing the concept of sex removes the ability of many to meaningfully discuss their lives. It isn’t hate to speak the truth.”

[Responses to her tweets emphasized the difference between sex and gender. Daniel Radcliffe, who played Harry Potter, wrote,] “Trans women are women. Any statement to the contrary erases the identity and dignity of transgender people and goes against all advice given by professional health care associations. . . .”

Ultimately, the fixation people like Rowling have on biology fails to account for the diversity of womanhood around the world; identifying as one is the only prerequisite needed. Clearly, Hogwarts needed a gender studies course.

Phyllis Lyon, Pioneering Lesbian Activist, Dies at 95

—Trudy Ring, *The Advocate*, 5/9/20

[Phyllis] Lyon “died peacefully at her home in San Francisco . . . of natural causes,” according to *The Bay Area Reporter*. . . .

“We lost a giant today,” California State Sen. Scott Wiener said in a prepared statement. “Phyllis Lyon fought for LGBTQ equality when it was neither safe nor popular to do so. Phyllis and her wife, Del Martin, played a crucial role winning the rights and dignity our community now enjoys.

We owe Phyllis immense gratitude for her work. Rest in power.” . . .

[Kate] Kendell issued a statement through NCLR, saying, “Phyllis Lyon is truly an iconic figure in the history of LGBTQ and women’s rights. Her life was marked by courage and the tenacious belief that the world must and could change. She and her love of over 50 years moved from the shadows to the center of civil life and society when they became the first couple to marry in California after Prop. 8 was struck down in 2008. Few individuals did more to advance women’s and LGBTQ rights than Phyllis Lyon. From the moment I started as legal director at NCLR, Phyllis and Del were fixtures in my life. Our monthly lunches gave me the chance to learn at their feet about my own history and the story of much of our movement. . . . I will miss her every day, but am comforted knowing she and Del are finally together again.”

Darrell Cummings, chief of staff at the Los Angeles LGBT Center, also released a statement: “. . . While the loss of Phyllis makes this a profoundly sad day, I hope we can focus on the groundbreaking impact she and Del had on our community from the founding of the Daughters of Bilitis to their hard-fought battles to transform the National Organization for Women into a lesbian-inclusive organization and their activism on behalf of LGBTQ seniors. We will miss Phyllis to be sure, but we will always feel her presence in the continuing march toward full equality and justice for the LGBTQ community.”



San Francisco International Airport (SFO)   
@flySFO



We are saddened to hear of the passing of LGBTQ activist Phyllis Lyon. #SFO will be lit in the colors of the rainbow flag this weekend in memory of Phyllis. twitter.com/MyrPressOffice...



Larry Kramer Has Passed Away

—sfbob, *Daily Kos*, 4/27/20, from the *New York Times* by way of Joe My God [Joe Jervis].

Larry Kramer, screenwriter, playwright, novelist, columnist and founder of both New York's Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT-UP passed away this morning at the age of 84.



Kramer received an Academy Award nomination for the screenplay he wrote for the 1969 movie "Women in Love." But he became more widely known as an activist and a critic of the LGBT community.

His 1978 novel "Faggots" was at one time the best-selling gay-themed novel. It also created his reputation as a gadfly. He skewered New York's gay (male) community by portraying some of the worst aspects of some of the people who were part of the West-Village-in-the-winter, Fire-Island-Pines-in-the-summer crowd. He was flayed by the gay press for airing dirty laundry in public. I once went to a New Year's party at which all of the attendees were gay men and most were also writers, a couple of them today fairly well-known. Kramer showed up with Andrew Holleran, another gay writer who's novel "Dancer from the Dance" had recently been published and had been greatly praised both inside and out of the gay community. Holleran had been invited; Kramer had not. Holleran was turned away simply because he'd brought Kramer with him.

I was introduced to Kramer once, at the very beginning of 1980, following a colloquium on "The Future of the Gay Novel." Kramer was in the audience; he wasn't part of the on-stage discussion. I recall him being quite personable.

Not long after, everything changed. In 1982 Kramer helped found Gay Men's Health Crisis, the very first organization devoted to fighting what was at the time still being called "GRID" (Gay-related-immune-deficiency). He achieved

more notoriety the following year when he published an article titled "1,112 and Counting" in which he expressed outrage over the fact that more was not being done to combat the spread of AIDS (HIV was not in use at the time as the cause of AIDS hadn't yet been identified).

Probably his finest work was his play "The Normal Heart" which was among the first to tackle AIDS. He went on to found ACT-UP, an organization which in some ways expressed his sense of outrage and thirst for justice.

Part of Kramer's reputation came from his being so combative and confrontational that both of the organizations he founded eventually booted him out for being disruptive. As irritating as he could be, many of the people he worked with—or against—even the ones he antagonized, recognized his commitment and his sense of purpose.

Kramer was a long-term HIV survivor. He had a number of health challenges later in his life.

I've always admired Larry Kramer and am greatly saddened by his passing.



Remembering Roberta Cowell

—*New York Times* Weekend Briefing, 6/7/20

Roberta Cowell became famous as the first woman known to have undergone sex reassignment surgery in Britain in the 1950s. By the time of her death in 2011, she was all but forgotten.

But Cowell was more than a transgender trailblazer: She also crash-landed her stricken warplane and was taken prisoner by the Germans. Twice she tried to escape, and twice she failed.

Celebrities' Coming-Out Stories

—Abridged and reorganized: “How I Came Out in Hollywood: A Decade-by-Decade Oral History,” Seth Abramovitch, *THR* (HollywoodReporter.com), 6/4/20

For any LGBTQ person, there is no bigger game-changer than coming out. It's a rite of passage equal parts terrifying and liberating—and all the more so when you do it in the public eye. For its first Pride issue, *THR* turns to some of the most famous faces to have ever emerged from the Hollywood closet to learn what they were thinking before, during and after the biggest decision of their lives. Some came charging; others did it more tentatively. They span generations—the youngest, Josie Totah, is 18; the oldest, Richard Chamberlain, is 86. Their stories are vastly different, shaped as much by their own lives as the eras in which they came out. (What once required a *People* cover declaration can now be slipped into a tweet.) But what's common throughout is that each of these stories—some told here for the first time—made it that much easier for LGBTQ people keenly watching and listening to follow in their footsteps.

RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN, ACTOR, 86



Growing up in the '30s, '40s and '50s, being gay was not an option. It just wasn't. So one pretended to be not gay. One pretended to be a regular person. And I spent a great deal of my life pretending to be a regular person. . . . Being a kind of romantic leading man, I thought being gay would be a disaster for me careerwise. And so I had not only this feeling that there was something wrong with me, which I got from the childhood experiences, but that it would have been the end of my acting career. . . . I had a few dalliances. I tried to be very discreet about it. . . . But the town has great gaydar. Within the business, it was not a

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big secret. But the press was very discreet back then—the fan magazines and all that. . . . I was about 69 years old [in 2003], and it was almost as if an angel walked into the room—there was, of course, no angel there, at least not visibly—and put her hand on my head and said, “You know something, Richard? This whole thing about the negative side of being gay is total bullshit.” This wonderful holy being said, “It's the most benign fact about you.”

RUPERT EVERETT, ACTOR, 61

At age 16 or 17, I hit the discos and the clubs. And this was the '70s, so it was the time of *Studio 54*, and it seemed in those



clubs, underneath the glitter ball, that there was an incredibly liberal world. But graduating into a world like the cinema was completely different. It took me ages to understand that being gay wasn't quite acceptable there. . . . But then things got harder. . . . AIDS put the gay movement back a lot because people were terrified of us. And you . . . go to people's houses and you see them washing your plates in a different sink. . . . There was no coming out for me, really. I never made a statement to anybody or anything. But when I did *My Best Friend's Wedding* in 1997 [playing the gay friend of Julia Roberts' character], it was a moment for me. I suddenly got tons of jobs and tons of offers, and it was extraordinary. The press was very interested and curious. But looking back, the trouble was that I couldn't do anything else. I wasn't asked about anything except for, “How does it feel being gay?” . . .

HARVEY FIERSTEIN, ACTOR/ PLAYWRIGHT, 65



When I was a little kid, I knew I was attracted to men. It never occurred to me to hide who I was. . . . When *Torch Song Trilogy* won the Tony for best play in

1983, my producer, John Glines, thanked his lover in his speech. The following year I was nominated again for writing *La Cage aux Folles*. A producer of the Tonys said, “And please no one repeat the embarrassment of last year.” When I won, I got up and I thanked “my lover, Scott, for typing scripts and blah-blah-blah,” which he really didn’t do. But I had to thank him just to show them.

NEIL PATRICK HARRIS, ACTOR, 46

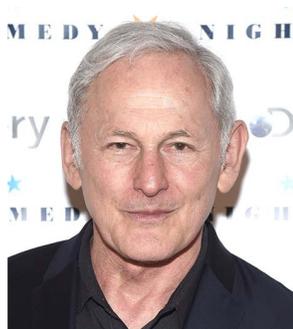


I lived in L.A. in the ‘70s and ‘80s, so West Hollywood was kind of the beacon of [gay life]. I was terrified of Club Rage and being seen there. I was terrified of Oil Can Harry’s in the valley. Every time I’d drive by it, I was just perplexed and would never have stepped [sic] foot in there, but I wondered what was happening inside. . . . [Coming out] wasn’t simple for me, but I tried to represent myself well. I just think everyone needs to be proud of who they are. If you want to be super crazy, wonderfully flamboyant, wearing dresses to work and dancing in heels every day, you should. If your version of being gay in Hollywood means that you have a very personal, private life and you don’t want your personal life to be a reflection of your professional life, you should. We need to practice tolerance as best as we can.

VICTOR GARBER, ACTOR, 71

Ian McKellen and I had dinner one night, and it was just around the time he had come out [in 1988]. He told me I had to come out. And it really resonated with me. But I didn’t have the courage to do it until I was older.

. . . After playing Jesus in *Godspell*, the director, David Greene, said, “I’d like you to play Liberace [in 1988’s *Liberace: Behind the Music*].” There were some people who thought it wasn’t a good move [because Liberace had just died of AIDS], but I didn’t care. There



was no question that I was going to do it. But I didn’t work in TV for years after that.

CYNTHIA NIXON, ACTOR/ACTIVIST, 54

I had always dated men. I had a boyfriend for 15 years. I remember on *Sex and the City*, we had an episode about bisexuality and “does bisexuality exist.” They quizzed us all, and I was like, “Totally.” The idea of being attracted to a woman or falling in love with a woman or having sex with a woman always seemed completely within the realm of possibility—it just had never happened to me. . . . [Now-wife] Christine [Marinoni] and I were dating for a few weeks [in 2002], and we got a press inquiry about it. . . . And the publicist just kept saying, “Your private life is your own.” So, basically, we fired him. Then I won the Emmy [in 2004], and people started asking more. By this time my manager kind of had figured things out better and she went to [publicist] Kelly Bush. I explained the whole situation, and she said, “Why don’t we just confirm?” It was like somebody telling you there’s a Santa Claus. . . . I think the first award that I got was from GLAAD. It was such a big deal for me. But I remember I presented them with my speech ahead of time, and they came back with rewrites to my script. . . . I had a line in it where I said, “I’ve been straight and I’ve been gay—and gay is better.” And they took the line out. I was like, “First of all, you can’t take that out—that’s a huge laugh line and that’s a huge empowerment moment for this room.”



CHAZ BONO, ACTOR, 51

My mom [Cher] had a hard time both times I came out to her. When I came out [as gay in 1995], she kind of had an explosion—and then it was pretty much over. It was less of a big deal for my dad [Sonny Bono]. But [coming out as trans in 2008] was much harder for her. It



CLAY AIKEN, SINGER/ACTIVIST, 41

I think America knew I was gay before I did. I grew up in the South in an era when either you were out because you were very obviously gay or you were closeted. And I know I ain't nobody's lumberjack, but I wasn't quite as—whatever that is, you know? . . . Coming to L.A. for *American Idol* [in 2003] was the first time I ever met anyone else who was gay who didn't come across as gay. I remember meeting some of these people who worked on the show, worked backstage and thinking, “Oh, wait, hell, he's gay? Shit, well, maybe I am too.” . . . A crewmember on *Idol* was the very first guy whom I ever came out to. I mean, I came out to him but mostly because I was kissing him. Then I came out to [third-place season two *Idol* finisher] Kimberley Locke one night. . . . Literally 10 minutes after the *American Idol* finale, we go out to this press tent. Ruben [Studdard] gets the first question. The second question's for Clay. My fucking luck it was somebody from *Out* magazine, and the very first question I got on that stage was, “Clay, are you gay?” I remember just sort of ignoring it. But in that moment I realized, “Fuck—don't trust any of these reporters.” . . . There came a point around 2009 or 2010 where it stopped being that big a deal, but until then, it was. I mean, it was a huge deal when Lance Bass came out. He was brave as fuck for doing it. And I am not going to say I was brave, but that is the time when my publicist and my manager finally said to me, “You've got to do it now.” My *People* cover came out [in 2008], and I did *Good Morning America* that morning. I was in *Spamalot* on Broadway at the time and was terrified I was going to get booed. But I didn't get booed.



ANDERSON COOPER, JOURNALIST, 52

I certainly wish I had come out sooner for a variety of reasons. For me, the biggest coming-out was when I came out to my friends and my family back in high school, and to my mom right after college. But then the public



just took time. There was no religious reasons or disapproval or whatever; it was just this sense of loss. That eventually went away.

LANCE BASS, SINGER/PRODUCER, 41



I always knew I was gay. Five years old, I knew I was gay, but I also knew that it was something I'd have to hide the rest of my life because my Southern Baptist upbringing told me that. At the height of *NSYNC*, I was scared shitless. The bigger we got, the more people are looking into your personal lives. I didn't want anyone to find out because I knew, especially in the year 2000, that if anyone found out that I was gay, *NSYNC*'s career would be completely over, and these guys would hate me for the rest of my life. . . . In the band, I told Joey [Fatone] first, but I didn't really have to tell him. He walked in on me [in 2004] with my boyfriend on my lap. Normal straight dudes don't sit on guys' laps as they're typing on the computer, so it was very obvious to him. . . . The guys are still so pissed that I wasn't able to tell them when we were still a group. . . . [They] don't care about me being gay[, but] they thought that we could've had so much more fun together at the height of *NSYNC*. . . . I went to Provincetown with some friends [in 2006]. I didn't know it was a predominantly gay town. I'm not wearing a hat or glasses or anything, and I'm sitting there at Crown & Anchor talking to a guy, waiting for the bathroom. He's like, “Wait, you're Lance, right?” “Yeah.” He goes, “Wait, so you're gay?” It was the first time I'd told a stranger, “Yeah, I'm gay.” He was like, “Aw, that's so cool.” . . . When I got back from the vacation . . . all the magazines started calling because the guy I was talking to in line was a reporter for *The Washington Post*. I knew that I needed to choose one outlet to tell my real story, so that's when we went with *People*. Literally, the day before the magazine hit the stands is when I was doing the photo shoot, doing the interview. It all happened within 48 hours of coming back from that vacation. Talk about a Band-Aid being ripped off very publicly.

coming-out was obviously another big step, which took me a long time to reconcile. . . . I did read stories about me [not being out] on *Gawker*, and I felt it was always pretty snide. But I certainly heard the criticism and understood the arguments about it and intellectually understood it. I

just felt like as a reporter, it just felt antithetical to what my job is supposed to be. . . . To me, the final straw really was the idea that there would be some kid out there or anybody out there who thought I was unhappy being gay or that I was somehow trying to hide it, which was not the case. . . . I didn't really want to make it seem like I was doing this . . . for any kind of public attention. So I didn't want to be on the cover of a magazine—not that there's anything wrong with that. I respected Andrew Sullivan's website a lot. I thought it was very influential and just a really smart, interesting place. And [in 2012] I thought, "Oh, you know what? I'll do this." . . . I didn't think coming out would change anything in my life because I felt like my life was already pretty out. But it really did. It changed things tremendously. . . . I mean, it's kind of a strange thing to walk into a room and have people know your sexual orientation and everything about you before you've even said anything.

WANDA SYKES, COMEDIAN/ACTOR, 56



I was always viewed as a "gay ally." You know. "She's so supportive of the community." It wasn't until I started dating Alex [in 2006], who's my wife now, when I think my material became more personal and I started talking more about relationships and equality. . . . It was the national



It makes me more sad and frustrated for anybody who is still in the closet or feels that they can't be free about who they are. I know firsthand that you can't know the strength that comes to your aid until you take the brave step forward. It's like that old quote, "Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid."

—Jim Parsons, from *The Big Bang Theory*

day of protest for Prop 8 [in 2008], and I was performing in Vegas that weekend, and we went to the rally in front of the LGBTQ Center. So I'm out in the crowd, and the speaker goes, "We have someone in the audience who's a strong ally of the community and I hate to put her on the spot . . ." And I'm

looking around in the crowd thinking, "Is Drew Barrymore out here?" And then when she said, "Wanda Sykes, would you come up?" I was like, "Oh, oh, me. OK—she thinks I'm an ally. No, I'm the community!" So I go up, and I just said what was in my heart, and next thing I know I get back to the hotel room and it was on the CNN scroll.

JOSIE TOTAH, ACTRESS, 18

I never had a coming out *per se*, to my family. Ever since I was 5 years old—or I guess as early as I can remember, I might have been 3 when I told my family that I felt that I was a girl—and so it wasn't, like me sitting anyone down and telling them. It wasn't until the day before I started my freshman year of college that I had posted an article—an essay that I had written for *Time* magazine basically telling the world that I had known and my friends and family had known my entire life. Just telling them, like, this is now. I'm transitioning and I'm going to take this leap.



ANTONI POROWSKI, TV HOST, 36

I don't take any offense to being referred to as being gay, but that's not how I typically refer to myself. Because I've gone from men to women and back and forth again—even though I've dated men for the past nine years now. I've always kind of referred to myself as fluid.

Celebrating Pride on Film

— Erik Piepenburg, *New York Times*, 6/1/20

Missing parties and parades during Pride Month? These movies will fill your screen with joy, history and rainbows.

It's June, and that normally means it's time to celebrate Pride. But with protests, a deadly pandemic and record unemployment convulsing the country, it feels like there's little reason to party.

That doesn't mean Pride is over. Parades and events may have been canceled or postponed. But Pride Month festivities are moving online, with virtual drag shows, benefit concerts, and many other events daily around the globe.

Movies are no substitute for a rainbow-drenched parade. But they can be entertaining and evocative—and let's face it, shorter—ways to experience queer community and commune with the past. Here are seven films that will deliver the revolution, camaraderie and flirtatiousness of Pride right to your home.

Gay USA (1977) Stream on Amazon Prime.

The director Arthur J. Bressan, Jr. was an indie polyglot who made adult films and the under-the-radar 1985 AIDS drama *Buddies* (beautifully restored in 2018). But Bressan, who died from the disease in 1987, also made this carefully observed documentary about Pride in New York and other cities. It's a fascinating, scrappy time capsule of queer life in post-Stonewall, pre-AIDS epidemic America that chronicles the revelry and protest that greeted the modern gay liberation movement. *Gay USA* also features footage, taken by the activist Lilli Vincenz, of New York's first gay pride parade, in 1970, on what was then known as Christopher Street Liberation Day.

Before Stonewall (1984) Stream on Fandor or Kanopy. Rent or

buy on Amazon or iTunes.

The first Pride parades were revolutionary. But for the generation of L.G.B.T.Q. people who came of age before the Stonewall riots in 1969, a parade was only the latest, if most visible, sign of public resistance and self-respect. The uncovering of that past is the mission of this documentary, directed with tenderness and urgency by Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg (and selected for the National Film Registry). The movie is chockablock with grainy footage of early Pride parades. But even more fascinating are the Mod-style drag queens, the butch lesbian nuptials and the other people and moments that show how a future for queer life was being forged well before Pride officially took the parade route.

Jeffrey (1995) Stream on Fandor or Hoopla. Rent or buy on Amazon or iTunes.

New York City Pride makes a cameo in Paul Rudnick's snappy screen adaptation of his hit 1993 Off Broadway play, set in the uneasy years after the first panicked decade of the AIDS crisis. This sharp-tongued romantic comedy, directed by Christopher Ashley, is about a gay man (Steven Weber) whose plan to swear off sex grows complicated when he falls for an H.I.V.+ muscle boy (Michael T. Weiss). The sunny, oh-so-'90s Pride scenes—did we really wear that much flannel?—were shot in Central Park and on the streets of Manhattan. They'll make you wistful for queer marching bands and boastful moms, thanks to Olympia Dukakis's cheeky appearance as the devoted mother of a transgender daughter.

Milk (2008) Stream on Starz. Rent or buy on YouTube or iTunes.

Sean Penn won an Academy Award for his performance as Harvey Milk, the slain gay rights leader, in Gus Van Sant's biopic set in 1970s San

Francisco. In one memorable scene, the firebrand Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California, urges a Pride rally crowd to come out and “break down the myths and destroy the lies and distortions” perpetuated by homophobes. The Hollywood treatment is rousing, but it’s also worth checking out footage of Milk himself from the UCLA Film & Television Archive. A clip of Milk speaking at the Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade, just months before he was shot to death in 1978, is a glorious snapshot of how his fiery charisma lit a match under a movement.

Pride (2014)
Stream on Amazon Prime.

Gay Pride marches bookend this rousing feel-good dramedy, directed by Matthew Warchus, about the uneasy alliance between mineworkers and gay and lesbian activists during a labor strike in the mid-’80s that rattled Britain under the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher. Many of the characters are based on people from the L.G.B.T.Q. and labor communities who marched together despite often violent opposition. Writing in *The New York Times*, Stephen Holden called *Pride* “a stirring film” that’s accentuated by “the kind of hearty, blunt-force drama with softened edges that leaves audiences applauding and teary-eyed.”

BPM (Beats Per Minute) (2017)
Stream on Hulu or Kanopy.

The smiles: that’s what lifts a parade scene in Robin Campillo’s stirring drama about the Paris chapter of the AIDS activist group Act Up. Beyond a biography, the film is a remembrance of how L.G.B.T.Q. people found ways to love and celebrate despite death, despair, and other bleak markers of a plague. In a joyous montage, beaming men bounce about in pink cheerleader skirts, waving pink pompoms. Yet they’re also wearing Act Up’s signature black T-shirts featuring pink triangles (the Nazi emblem

identifying gays that was reclaimed as a pride symbol) and the urgent precept “silence = mort” (“silence = death”). The jarring juxtaposition of mortality and camp is a poignant reminder of how an afternoon of joy meant the world to a generation that didn’t have a minute of rage to spare.

The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson (2017)
Stream on Netflix.

Murder or suicide? That’s the heartbreaking question that fuels David France’s documentary about Marsha P. Johnson, the trailblazing transgender activist, performer, and high-profile elder of the Stonewall uprising who was found dead in the Hudson River in 1992. Yet embedded among the investigative elements of the film is a treasure trove of archival footage of Johnson, described in a 2018 obituary in *The New York Times* as “a fixture of street life in Greenwich Village.” To watch Johnson resiliently parade down Christopher Street during Pride, her beaming smile accentuated by her signature glossy lip, is to see a revolution in heels.

A Secret Love
— Natalia Winkelman, *New York Times*, 4/29/20

The affecting documentary *A Secret Love* offers a window into the lives of Terry Donahue and Pat Henschel, a lesbian couple who lived for six decades, in public and to kin, as dear friends. Streaming on Netflix, the documentary. . . . [examines] the queer chosen family who supported their otherwise secret partnership. . . .

Delightful asides are devoted to Terry’s career as a professional baseball player—a real-life version of “A League of Their Own”—as well as the Chicago they once knew, where they avoided the raids at gay bars by hosting lively parties. The film blossoms during these sequences, when it explores how, in a troubling time, Terry and Pat carved their own space for freedom and bliss.