Hello Again
Note From Hartford Pride's Chair

Parenting Options
for LGBTQ Peoplesentiocre

The Fight For Rights
Transgender and Human Rights
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Chair's Note

What a challenging journey it has been since our last edition. From a total shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, significant changes in the political landscape and a slow return to normalcy only to face new challenges, it has definitely been quite a whirlwind. If anything was proven beyond a doubt it has been our undeniable ability to be both stealth and resilient. Our community was able to regain territory to insure that our hard fought gains would not be lost.

PrideFest 2021 was an incredible testament to our ability to bounce back and celebrate. We were able not only to celebrate Pride but also honor those who were the victims of the September 11th attacks upon our nation as well as the hundreds of thousands who were lost during the COVID-19 Epidemic. To watch the hundreds who came to our “Remembrance Wall’ not only brought tears to my eyes but showed the broader community the incredible respect and capacity to love that is encompassed in our community.

Our ability to present to world known artists, Vincint and Steven Grand, marked a new milestone is making our celebration a true class act. Our local and state talent has reached new heights in executing performances that raised our event to a much higher level. Thousands showed up in a respectful and safe manner to celebrate Pride and honor our heroes. We were able to deploy resources to vaccinate against COVID-19 and educate our community so as to decrease associated risks.

Next year marks yet another important milestone " 40 years of Hartford Prides". We are hopeful that next year will be a safer environment for us to come out and celebrate. A special thanks to the City of Hartford, Stanley Black & Decker and our Sponsors for making this years event possible and as always a special and loving shout out to our dedicated volunteers who year after year give so much of their time to see our event through.

We hope to see you at this year’s event and continue to raise the bar and advance our communities’ ability to pursue our collective dreams and aspirations.

Sincerely,

Charlie Ortiz
Chair of Hartford Pride
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About Us

Out In CT is a publication of Hartford Pride showcasing LGBTQ+ accomplishments and the best our community has to offer in Connecticut. Hartford Pride relies on the commitment of volunteers and your financial support to make this publication and LGBTQ+ events possible for our community, families, and allies.

When you make a donation or volunteer with us, you are making a difference in your community as a whole. We need your support to make sure that “Pride, Love, Life and Equality” continue to be alive and well in Connecticut. Make your voice heard and play your part by volunteering, fundraising, or donating to Hartford Pride.

How can you help?

If you own a business or work for a company that supports our community, please support Hartford Pride by having a booth, placing a paid listing in our OUTINCT.COM directory, or making a monetary donation. Your support makes it possible for us to bring events like the PrideFest and resources like OUTINCT.COM to the LGBTQ+ community.

Donations from our sponsors and donors are critical to our organization. Funds go directly to supporting events like PrideFest that help bring our community and allies together in a safe family-friendly atmosphere. Our CLARO social justice branch is supported by Hartford Pride and provides scholarships for students who pursue careers in the health and social justice fields that serve the LGBTQ+ community.

Volunteer

Interested in getting involved with Hartford Pride? Running an organization like Hartford Pride requires all sorts of skills. We are always looking for volunteers to help us with administration, events and talented individuals that want to share their skills to promote diversity and tolerance.

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IN SUPPORT OF HARTFORD PRIDE

Stanley Black & Decker

#pride #togetherwearemore
Think about this. In 1998 your community still has no rights. You have witnessed and have worked with the Lesbian and Gay community in securing civil rights for their people yet you as a Transgender woman and all of your community still are missing the dignity, and protection that civil rights laws would bring. You are fired from your job if you even get hired in the first-place transitioning on the job, forget it, you are denied employment over and over, you can’t rent an apartment, and are harassed out of shelters, your children are taken from you as the judges and society say you are unfit to parent, you are humiliated in trying to get health care, and your gender identity or expression doesn’t match all of your important papers. Oh yes and let us not forget that there is always someone lurking, to take away your life simply for being who you are. Then in 1998 along comes a Transgender woman who said loud and clear ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! Rise up people we cannot take this anymore! That woman, that trans woman was Jerimarie Liesegang. She had lost her computer consulting company when she transitioned, she had lost her children in a messy divorce, was now unemployed and from these experiences began to engage others in standing up and fighting back. She fought hard for employment with a major insurance company in Hartford after rejection after rejection. No one would hire a Transgender women. She finally got the job but realized that even though she had succeeded many others could not. She began engaging with the national movement for Trans rights and then moved on to form It’s Time Connecticut a political organizing group. Indeed, it was time for a political awakening as the Transgender community had waited far too long. It’s Time Connecticut had the distinct honor in 1999 to lead Connecticut’s annual Pride Parade.
She joined with members from the XX Club and began meeting to form political strategy. At the start It’s Time Ct. focused on building a grassroots coalition to effect social and legislative change for the Transgender Community. She fully understood at this time that her community would have to engage with other groups and alliances formed within the LGBT community, the women’s community, and others. In 2002 The Connecticut TransAdvocacy Coalition (CTAC) was formed to begin the long work for a gender identity and expression bill. In 2002 Jeri and her wife Anja began the Ct. Transgender Day of Remembrance a day set aside to honor Transgender people murdered during the last year. Jerimarie was on the PRIDE Committee when Gov. John Rowland finally signed an inclusive PRIDE Proclamation in 2003. Gender Identity and Expression was included in the Ct. Hate Crime Statues due to the work of Jerimarie and CTAC in 2004. In 2006 along with Linda Estabrook of the Gay and Lesbian Health Collective the Transgender Health and Law Conference was founded. This conference continues today under the direction of Natasha Lombardi of CTAC.

As any political revolutionary knows and I will call her that, the road to liberation is a full-time job, often putting aside her own political beliefs for the good of her community. After eleven years of educating the community, legislators, and the general public the Gender Identity and Expression bill was passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2011.

Jerimarie was a firm believer in and saw these words by the late Black Lesbian, poet, philosopher, writer, teacher, warrior, and mother Audre Lorde as a call to action. Ms. Lorde wrote, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle as we do not lead a single-issue life.” Those words informed all that Jerimarie did. She formed alliances with the antiwar movement, with the Black movement, the reproductive rights movement, she stood against pinkwashing and the apartheid state of Israel, was arrested protesting the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, fought for safe shelters for all, for disability rights, housing, and many other social justice issues of our times. She had an uncanny way of connecting the dots when it came to oppression and understood she could not be free if others were oppressed. There was no room for selfish behavior and believed as Audre Lorde once said, “there is no hierarchy of oppression.”
To further these goals Jerimarie with others formed Queers Without Borders a group of Anarchists, Socialists, pacifists, and others on the Queer left to begin multi-issue organizing with social justice groups. We fully understood as our foremothers and fathers in the Gay Liberation Front that we had to join with all the oppressed of not only this country but around the world. Only then would our movement and all other movements become powerful enough to make the necessary changes needed for everyone to be liberated and set free. The self-centered single issue organizing had to go.

After Jerimarie left CTAC to work on her own projects, that of writing, researching LGBTQI+ history, and film making, Connecticut TransAdvocacy Coalition continued the work she began under the direction of Diana Lombardi and with others we saw the passage of pieces of legislation benefiting our communities. An act concerning birth certificates, acts concerning protection of youth from conversion therapy, the treatment of incarcerated women, and an act concerning the use of panic defense in crimes committed against the LGBTQI+ communities all became law in the state of Connecticut.

Myself and many others know that when we put on our marching shoes Jerimarie will be with us. We will continue resisting, police militarism in our streets; the murder of Black and Brown women and men, the murder of our Black Trans women, the bi-partisan nature of U.S. wars; the repression of whistleblowers; the military and the environment; sanctions and blockades as weapons of war; and the war against the poor. We will keep a watchful eye on the government and not be afraid to speak up when we must. We will demand that rights taken away from the people by the past administration be reinstated and that the war against the LGBTQI+ community, the Black and Brown communities, women, reproductive rights, immigrants, the poor, and many others be ended. We will continue as Mother Jones said, to “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living.” These fight backs would have been her issues and certainly should be ours.

Jerimarie Liesegang PRESENTE!
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We make pride a year-round celebration! Like everyone else, people in the LGBTQ+ community want to live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives. AARP is committed to creating a new vision for aging – one complete with diverse stories and innovative ways for everyone to pursue their passions – equally, openly and proudly.

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Parenting Options for LGBTQ People


When you are LGBTQ, becoming a parent is not as simple as deciding to start trying to have a baby as it may be for CIS-Het (Gender assigned at birth heterosexual) couples. With CIS gendered heterosexual people, their sex life becomes about getting pregnant. However, try as you might, same-sex couples cannot achieve pregnancy. Bisexual individuals in a heterosexual relationship and trans people in relationships with people of the opposite gender at birth (for example, a trans man with a cis man) may have some traditional options, but having children when you are an LGBTQ couple has some logistic challenges. Nonetheless, you can certainly become parents when you are a non-heterosexual couple.

Adoption

Adoption is a viable avenue for LGBTQ couples in most places. Some states and countries may still prevent adoption by LGBTQ parents, but that is rapidly changing. Most places now allow LGBTQ adults to be foster parents and adoptive parents, provided they meet the same qualifications everyone else does. Some of those qualifications may include a stable home, a place for children to sleep/have their own space, loving parents, and financial responsibility. Some states and countries require home visits and intrusive looks into finances, marriage/relationship status, and mental health. Adoptions can be open or closed and private or public. Public adoptions are usually handled by adoption agencies running orphanages or foster systems for children who are ineligible to return to parents or family members. Private adoptions are usually set up by the couples and require legal documentation and incur higher fees and costs. Open adoptions are cases where children and biological parents may maintain contact or identifying information about the other. On the other hand, closed adoptions may seal any information about the parties involved. You and your spouse or partner should decide which avenue is for you.

Surrogacy

Surrogacy is a similar process for LGBTQ or heterosexual couples except that some places do not allow single people or LGBTQ people to undergo the process. While many of these places are rescinding their old-fashioned thinking, it has taken some time to do so. In those cases, it may be possible to still become parents to a surrogate child, but you may need to do so in another state or location. Surrogacy involves several options, and we will cover them below.

Traditional Surrogacy

In traditional surrogacy, the gestational
carrier is also the biological mother. In generations past, a man would have sex with the intended biological mother to get her pregnant, then he and his partner would raise the baby. However, artificial insemination has eliminated any need for sexual contact with others. In this case, the male sperm is generally used in the lab to fertilize the eggs, and then they are inserted into the carrier. Sometimes, the lab is skipped, and the sperm is inserted when she is most fertile, but this is not common now.

**Gestational Carriers**

In the case of gestational carriers only, the biological mother is not the person carrying the baby. This might be done in lesbian couples when one mother wants to donate the eggs, and the other mother carries them. In this case, they would use donor sperm. Other couples find that the female cannot carry to term for some reason, but her eggs are viable. Either way, the mother is not genetically connected to the baby in most cases. Sometimes the father’s sister will carry the baby for the couple. In that case, the mother’s egg and father’s sperm are combined in the lab and inserted into the aunt. Whatever choice you make, the gestational carrier doesn’t have to be someone you know.
Known or Unknown Donors

Both eggs and sperm can come from donors. There are two options—known and unknown donors. Known donors can be friends, family members, or other people you know who are willing to donate eggs or sperm for fertilization. These people will not be the parents, and legal documentation is provided upfront.

Known or Unknown Carriers

Like donors, carriers can be someone you know or not. Agencies are equipped to find couples an unknown carrier, and some websites cater to finding carriers for couples. If a male (sex assigned at birth) couple wants an unknown carrier, they will also need to find an egg donor. There are a few gestational carriers also willing to provide eggs as in traditional surrogacy, but that happens far less now than in the past.

Insemination

Donor insemination is only a viable option for females (assigned at birth). Males will require a surrogate. For a lesbian couple wishing to have a baby together, they may opt for insemination. Again, they will have to decide which female partner will donate the eggs and carry the baby, and they need to choose a sperm donor. If they opt for an unknown donor, they will need to contact a fertility clinic for the process of finding a donor. If they wish to use a known donor, they may also need to use the fertility clinic for fertilization, but they will not have to undergo the same process for finding the donor.

Important Considerations

Physical examinations, psychological evaluations, and other exams are required for most of these processes, unlike traditional male-female relationships. These examinations can be exhausting, but the result is that you can grow your family in the way you choose.

Final Thoughts

When deciding to start a family with your partner, you will want to discuss all of the options and know what you want before beginning the process. It is generally a very detailed progression, so be sure to cover everything you want and do not want to have. If you want unknown carriers, make that known. Likewise, if one or the other of you wants to provide the sperm or eggs, make that known as well. Everyone deserves to have the family they desire. It may look different for LGBTQ people, but it can still provide you with all the joys of parenting you have always desired.
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September 15 | 10:15am church service

In response to a wave of discriminatory anti-LGBTQ laws and the divisive 2016 election, the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus embarked on a tour of the American Deep South.

Over 300 singers traveled from Mississippi to Tennessee through the Carolinas and over the bridge in Selma. They performed in churches, community centers, and concert halls in hopes of uniting us in a time of difference and intolerance.

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Audre Lorde

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Audre Lorde, an inspiring intersectional feminist, said, “We are powerful because we have survived, and that is what it is all about – survival and growth.” Like many trans women, Audre vocalizes her lived experiences using the power of words to highlight how challenging the path to walk on is for those with a multiplicity of identities. These words are a stark reminder that power is not handed down easily. It needs to be created. Growth and survival a monumental to a person’s success, but trans women of color face a staggering uphill battle to be validly recognized as equal human beings.

When Gwen Benaway, a “trans girl of Anishnaabe and Metis descent,” shared her fearless approach to sharing the truth about coping as a trans girl growing up in a colonial and racist system, her powerful words highlight the reality of how difficult it is for radicalized trans women of color. She said, “Of course, trans women find joy and pleasure in our lives and accomplish incredible things. We have always been very resilient – but our resilience does not mean that our lives are ever easy.”

Transexual women of color tackle discrimination in all facets of life. Even the legal, social, and medical institutions that most humans rely on for safety and support are skewed against them due to outdated laws, mindsets, and practices. These discriminatory cycles are oppressive and repetitive because transphobia is never eradicated, and only the privileged few enjoy the opportunity to feel happiness and joy. When it comes to accessing legal services, emergency medical services, or even community support becomes a matter of mutual aid and solidarity thanks to the compassion of a few souls, rather than an automatic basic human right that everybody should be entitled to.

By creating their own sites of power in trans communities, women of color are reclaiming their right to protection and a sense of belonging. Their creativity and love for each other results in a combined group effort to achieve safety goals to enjoy freedom by forming safe spaces for themselves and their loved ones. Combatting gender and racial violence requires assertive radical thinking and action to prevent the destructive forces of heteronormative colonialism. This type of spirit and energy is necessary because trans women of color are in danger. Aside from a lack of inclusiveness in society, their lives are literally at stake, especially in the most religious communities which lack diversity and sufficient protectionism laws for genders outside the “norm.”

According to Mental Health America (MHA National), 4.5% of the United States population identify as lesbian, bisexual, or gay, which
is nearly 5.8 million people. This is larger than the entire population of the state of Kentucky. Unfortunately, over 39% of this community reported suffering from mental health problems. Although being LGBTQ+ is never a mental illness as suggested by transphobes around the world, many young trans women of color suffer the most despite being the most resilient who thrive in the face of adversity. They find support from family and friends, but they are significantly at risk of experiencing traumatic events and are shamed in society for simply being who they are.

BIPOC LGBTQ+ (Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) are on the receiving end of many negative stereotypes, and their challenge is convincing other people why their identity matters just as much as anybody else’s. This is usually the case when people openly express themselves to peers, colleagues, friends, and family members to combat loneliness. Nobody wants to live in secret, but due to the harsh and judgmental societal climate, many are forced to stay silent to avoid rocking the boat. This is a difficult predicament because people who do not understand can retaliate in unexpected ways, and this often leads to violence. LGBTQ+ individuals face a lot of discrimination, stigma, and denial of their human and civil rights because others do not keep an open mind towards those who are different from them.

Many trans individuals have also lost loved ones by coming out to them, especially in religious and conservative households. Even though attitudes are shifting in a positive direction towards further acceptance thanks to an increase in gender awareness, a majority of BIPOC LGBTQ+ people still have a friend or know someone who has been threatened, experienced violence, or faced sexual harassment because of their identity.

MHA National also states that twenty-two percent of transgender individuals avoided health care or visiting doctors because they were concerned about being discriminated against. LGBTQ+ teenagers are also six times more likely to face depression than those who identify as non-LGBTQ+. This is alarming
because these depressive thoughts and a lack of safety and belonging lead to four times more suicides in comparison to their heterosexual peers. The tragic reality is that a trans person of color may either kill themselves or be killed by somebody else.

Before an independent non-profit national organization called the Joint Commission that certifies 20,000 health care organizations enforced hospitals to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression in 2011, many people faced providers denying basic care. They also experienced healthcare professionals using harsh language and even blaming a person’s gender identity for causes of illnesses. When there is so much fear of discrimination, people have no choice but to conceal their identity or avoid seeking medical care altogether. This is what many in the world do not understand when they reject the acceptance of others and criticize “Political Correctness” as though it is a bad thing to be kind and respectful to others rather than throwing harmful slurs around without consequences. BIPOC LGBTQ+ individuals are in a very vulnerable and emotional state, and several suffer from anxiety being open and social with others.

The National Center for Transgender Equality recorded that one in four people have lost their jobs because of bias, and over three-fourths have succumbed to workplace discrimination. Everybody needs employment and a steady income to survive, but trans women of color are consistently faced with physical and sexual violence on the job, or employers outright refuse to hire them. Many people reported having to switch jobs to avoid discrimination, and extreme levels of poverty have also pushed a lot of women to get involved in sex work to pay the bills. In a landmark Supreme Court case ‘Boston v. Clayton County’ in June last year, federal law prohibited anti-transgender discrimination regarding employment. This was a victorious decision to be a powerful tool to combat employment bias. Whether it is respected and practiced in real-life situations by every organization is a different story.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is investigating several cases on behalf of transgender workers to make their workers’ rights a top priority. However, the responsibility still falls on the individuals themselves to report any harassment or discrimination they face. This is not easy because people can purposely be threatened or fired if nobody believes them. When somebody’s rent is overdue, it is not viable to expect them to jeopardize their only source of income by reporting a bigoted employer with a lot of influence and money to hire fancy lawyers.

Trans women of color are survivors who feel alone, which is why active listening and support from everyone is necessary. No one should be isolated for being different, while others are encouraged to love themselves. Angela Y. David, a Black feminist, political activist, academic, and philosopher, stated, “It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism.” The power of unity should never be underestimated because those struggling in silence, it can be a balance between life and death. When people collectively practice the art of giving and taking respect, they can overcome fear and isolation. Trans women of color do not deserve to feel powerless, and the pressure of controlling and protecting their honor should not solely fall on them. No matter what a person’s sexual identity is, people should strive towards relentless care and compassion to pursue freedom and safety for all. Otherwise, surviving in this world will be like climbing Everest for those who just want to be themselves and feel accepted. Action and solidarity are the keys to achieving a more inclusive future, and Black, Indigenous, Queer, and Trans women should be applauded for inspiring people and opening minds to see beyond traditional bigotries that have caused so much unnecessary suffering.
Preparing Our Community to Meet Life’s Challenges

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