

CONNECTICUTS #1 LGBTQ+ LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

FREE

2023 ISSUE

OUT IN CT



p12 BACK TO THE CLOSET

How Politics, Social Media, and
Societal Shifts Impact Gay Rights.



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Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone at Capital Pride and the thousands who celebrated the 2023 Hartford Pride and Concert in Hartford, Connecticut. The vibrancy, color, and spirit you brought to the streets of Hartford were truly unparalleled.

This year's celebration was an embodiment of unity, love, and acceptance, and it wouldn't have reached such remarkable heights without the generous support of our sponsors, LEGO, CVS Specialty, Aetna, Stanley Black and Decker, Travelers, Greater Hartford Arts Council, City of Hartford, Hartford HealthCare, Tito's Handmade Vodka, AARP, Eversource, TD Bank, Land Rover of Hartford, Vargas Chapman Wood Attorney at Law, Sun Life, Global Atlantic Financial, Van Horst General Contractor, Conning, CREC, The Hartford, Yard Goats, The Marriott, Goodwin Hotel, The Hilton Hotel, State of Connecticut Public Health, Hartford Public Health, Liberty Bank, Quiver, Stop & Shop and many more. . Their financial contributions were not just monetary in value but symbolic of a bigger commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

Moreover, the tireless dedication, passion, and hard work of our Pride Committee and volunteers made this year's event one for the record books. Your commitment to making Hartford Pride and Concert an event to remember was evident in every detail, every performance, and every smiling face that graced the occasion.

For those who attended, your enthusiasm and energy were infectious. The collective spirit of togetherness added to everyone's experience, making it one of the best Hartford Prides to date. The sea of colors, joyful noises, and shared experiences not only uplifted spirits but also highlighted the strength of our community.

However, as we bask in the success of this year, we are also aware of the uncertainties that lie ahead in 2024. With the upcoming presidential election and the prevailing world instability, the atmosphere might be different. Yet, what remains constant is our commitment to celebrating love, diversity, and acceptance. It is crucial that we all come together to support a more just, open, safe, and supportive community, country, and world. Our collective mission is to continue to strive for **#HartfordPride**, ensuring every member of our community feels seen, heard, and valued.

With that spirit in mind, we would like to extend our gratitude to each and every one of you for contributing to a successful and well-received celebration. Your presence, your voice, and your unwavering support played a pivotal role in creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Please mark your calendars and save the date for 2024; the Hartford Pride and Concert is confirmed for Saturday, September 14. We promise an event filled with even more excitement, love, and celebration. For all updates and information, visit our website, www.hartfordpride.org.

In closing, thank you from the depths of our hearts for your unwavering support. Hartford Pride and Concert is not just an event; it's a movement, a message, and a reflection of our shared values. We look forward to continuing our valuable partnership and hope to see you all in the years to come, celebrating love, diversity, and togetherness.

With Warm Regards,

Charlie Ortiz

Chair & Chief Editor

SAVE THE DATE



September 14, 2024 Hartford, Connecticut



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About Us

Out In CT is a publication of Hartford Pride, showcasing the accomplishments of the LGBTQ+ community and the best that 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.

By donating or volunteering with us, you are making a difference in your community as a whole. We need your support to ensure that "Pride, Love, Life, and Equality" continue to thrive 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 consider supporting 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 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 pursuing 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 various skills, and we are always looking for volunteers to help us with administration, events, and talented individuals who want to promote diversity and tolerance by sharing their skills.

In summary, Out In CT and Hartford Pride exist to celebrate and promote the accomplishments and diversity of the LGBTQ+ community in Connecticut. We rely on your support to make this possible, so please consider donating, volunteering, or getting involved in any way you can. Thank you for your support!

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2023 Julio Morales, Jr. Scholarship

CLARO Inc and in partnership with the NASW/CT Latino/a Social Workers Network has awarded eight students the Julio Morales, Jr., Scholarship, and gives away 500 back packs full of needed school supplies to the children of Hartford.

THE BUSHNELL



Connecticut's largest arts organization, The Bushnell, has been central to life in Greater Hartford for 90 years as a unique gathering place for arts, education, and community activities.

The Bushnell has always been committed to finding ways that the arts can be creatively and strategically used to engage and support the community. One of their newest efforts to do so has been through their innovative use of technology to present the Local Arts Stage.

The Local Arts Stage, sponsored by the Richard P. Garmany Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, is a new way to experience the talented artists who live and work in the Greater Hartford community. The performances take place on a digital platform of large video screens installed on the exterior of the building in the spring of 2021 which complements the eye-popping projection-mapped wall in the Grand Foyer Lobby. These digital performance spaces engage and excite audience members on show nights throughout the season.



Photos by Ahnecia Eduard-Gary

While new technology provides the platform for the performances, the installation is part of a larger initiative to bring community arts to The Bushnell. Emmy-Award Winning Filmmaker Ryan Glista has served as the Director and head visionary for this project since its inception. He has been joined by CT-based Choreographer/Dancer/Actor Carolyn Paine since 2022 who serves as the project producer.

Both Glista and Paine share the same overall passion as The Bushnell, constantly striving to develop new ways to use arts and this technology to not just entertain, but to enrich the community. They recognize the unique power of the arts to strengthen and re-energize Hartford and Glista and Paine specifically wanted to use this platform this season to highlight and celebrate LGBTQ artists.

In early 2023, they combined their talents with Sky Casper Entertainment to present a cunningly clever digital drag show featuring six hilarious local and regional favorite Queens belting showtunes and firing quips (and shoes) back and forth at each other. The timing of the premiere of the digital drag show on the screens in the courtyard outside The Bushnell was also poignant as it happened the same week that drag shows and culture were being silenced in other parts of the country. Paine, the producer and co-writer of the digital drag show said, "we were so proud to present drag in such a loud, grand public way at The Bushnell."

This summer, following the success of the digital drag show, Glista and Paine next brought a passion project conceived by Glista to life—Stories of Queer Love told through dance. Glista had been wanting to create and film this for the screens since the first season of Local Arts Stage, but it took the additional vision and dance connections of Paine to help make it happen. The concept was to have different choreographers representing diverse styles of dance each tell a story of queer love. The choreographers joining Paine in creating original works were aerialists Stacey Strange and Dani Bobby Lee of New Haven's Air Temple Arts, Garett Wierdsma of Garett & Co (a CT-based contemporary dance company), and LA-based Hip Hop and Latin Choreographer Lyrik Cruz, who is part of the creative team for legend Debbie Allen and has choreographed for TV and film.

Working with the same piece of music edited by Glista, the choreographers rehearsed their dancers individually before coming together to film their stories for the screens and projection-mapped wall at SONO Studios soundstage in Norwalk, CT.

The stories the choreographers chose to tell represent the many facets and journeys of love from tentative exploration, to passionate polyamory, to dynamic and agonizing conflicts. For the choreographers, it was a very personal experience.

Local choreographer Garett Wierdsma said "My identity as a queer person is not something I've explored as an artist yet, so this was nerve-wracking, exciting, and very meaningful. I'm super honored to be a part of this project." Choreographer Lyrik Cruz also felt the weight of getting to put his personal experiences and voice into this work, especially as a gay Puerto Rican. Cruz says "Being able to tell stories from my POV and how it was to hide love from everyone in our neighborhood and our families...finding those moments where you could escape to be partners and boyfriends- that's the story I wanted to tell."

But more than just telling stories of queer love, Cruz acknowledges that all patrons viewing this project on the

screens and the wall will connect deeply with the performances because "At the end of the day, these are not just gay love stories, these are human love stories. Kudos to The Bushnell for doing this."

"Stories of Queer Love" will premiere on the courtyard screens and Grand Foyer projection wall on October 14th as part of the celebration of Theatre Week with a free event at The Bushnell. Visitors at this event will also get to view the Digital Drag Show and all the other digital content from the past few seasons.

Visit www.bushnell.org for more information about their upcoming shows and events. 🌈

While new technology provides the platform for the performances, the installation is part of a larger initiative to bring community arts to The Bushnell.



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A close-up photograph of a person's open palm, facing the viewer. On the palm, there is a vibrant, multi-colored tattoo of a rainbow flag. The colors are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, arranged in horizontal stripes. The hand is positioned in the center of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The background is dark and out of focus.

BACK TO THE CLOSET

How Politics, Social Media, and Societal Shifts Impact Gay Rights

The journey towards gay rights has been marked by significant milestones of progress and periods of regression. Initially, many societies either accepted or tolerated homosexuality. However, this changed dramatically with the rise of organized religions and colonial influences, leading to the criminalization and stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community. Despite advancements, the rights of the gay community are facing new challenges in the modern era, influenced by politics, social media, societal shifts, political correctness, and transgender rights.

Political decisions have been central to the recognition and denial of gay rights. Historical legislation has played a pivotal role, ranging from criminalization to decriminalization, and even to the legalization of same-sex marriage in some regions. The political climate and policy changes continue to affect these rights significantly. In some regions, there has been a rollback in gay rights, while others have celebrated progressive steps. Political advocacy, both supporting and opposing gay rights, has significantly shaped these public policies.

Social media has emerged as a double-edged sword in the struggle for gay rights. While platforms like X(Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook have provided unparalleled opportunities for advocacy, visibility, and community building, they have also been arenas for misinformation and hate speech. The spread of anti-gay rhetoric and false narratives on these platforms has led to real-world consequences, impacting the safety and mental health of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community.

Societal shifts and changing cultural norms have had significant implications for gay rights. Increasing representation in media and entertainment has helped normalize LGBTQ+ identities, leading to greater acceptance in many societies. Yet, this progress is not uniform across the globe. In some regions, a cultural backlash has emerged, leading to scenarios where individuals face renewed pressure to conceal their sexual orientation.

The rise of transgender rights has further complicated the landscape. Transgender individuals, advocating for recognition and rights specific to their experiences, have brought to light the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community itself. This has led to politicized debates over issues such as gender identity, bathroom access, and participation in sports, resulting in backlash and internal conflicts within the community.

The backlash against political correctness and the complexity of transgender rights highlight the ongoing challenges in the struggle for gay rights. They underscore the need for nuanced discussions that consider the varied perspectives within the community and society at large. The future of gay rights will likely involve ongoing debates and negotiations. It will require a continuous effort to educate, foster empathy, and promote dialogue that bridges differences. As the LGBTQ+ community becomes increasingly diverse, the movement must adapt and respond to these new challenges, ensuring that the fight for equality remains inclusive and respectful of all voices.



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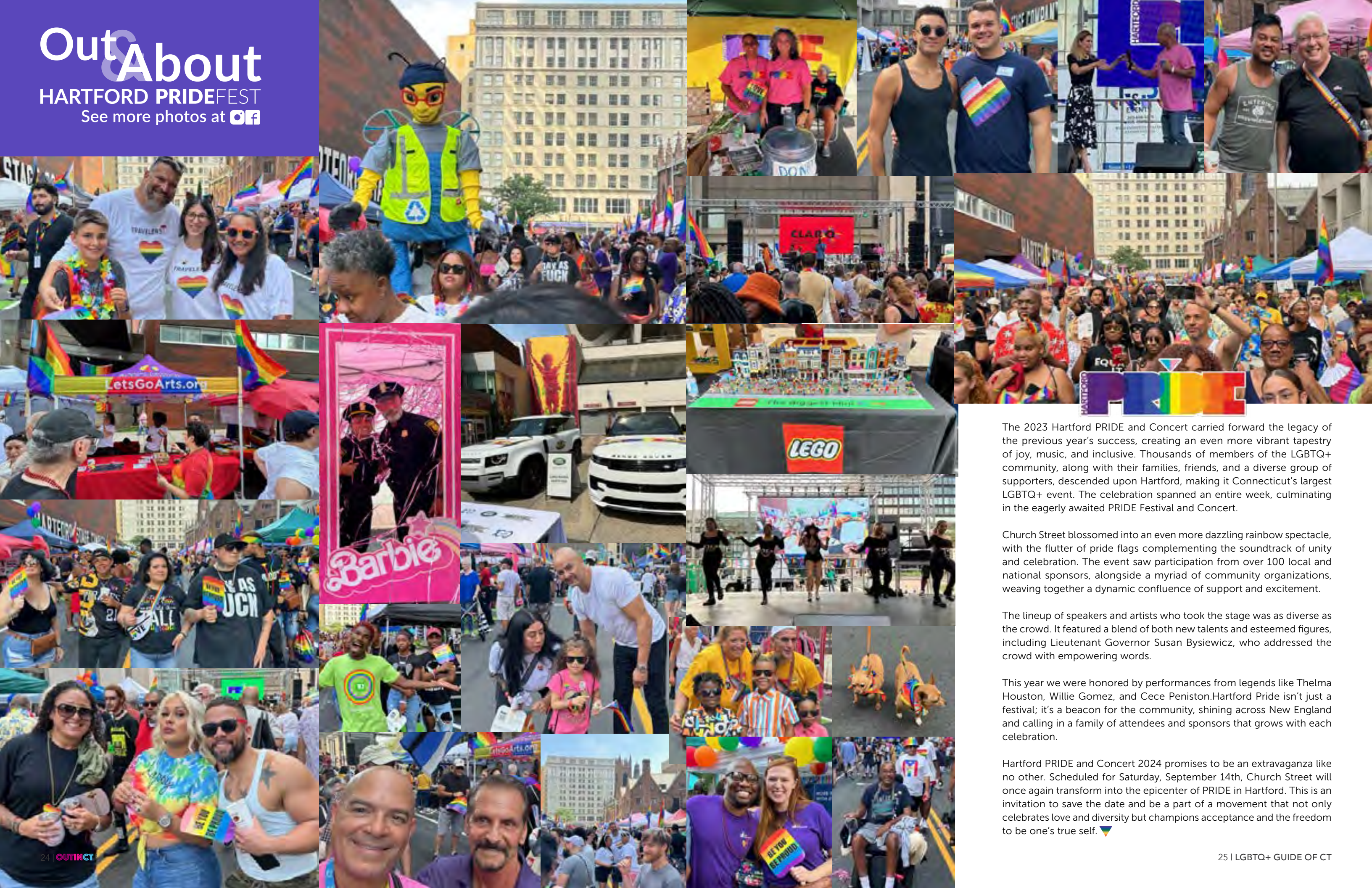


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Out About

HARTFORD PRIDEFEST

See more photos at [OAF](#)



The 2023 Hartford PRIDE and Concert carried forward the legacy of the previous year's success, creating an even more vibrant tapestry of joy, music, and inclusive. Thousands of members of the LGBTQ+ community, along with their families, friends, and a diverse group of supporters, descended upon Hartford, making it Connecticut's largest LGBTQ+ event. The celebration spanned an entire week, culminating in the eagerly awaited PRIDE Festival and Concert.

Church Street blossomed into an even more dazzling rainbow spectacle, with the flutter of pride flags complementing the soundtrack of unity and celebration. The event saw participation from over 100 local and national sponsors, alongside a myriad of community organizations, weaving together a dynamic confluence of support and excitement.

The lineup of speakers and artists who took the stage was as diverse as the crowd. It featured a blend of both new talents and esteemed figures, including Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz, who addressed the crowd with empowering words.

This year we were honored by performances from legends like Thelma Houston, Willie Gomez, and Cece Peniston. Hartford Pride isn't just a festival; it's a beacon for the community, shining across New England and calling in a family of attendees and sponsors that grows with each celebration.

Hartford PRIDE and Concert 2024 promises to be an extravaganza like no other. Scheduled for Saturday, September 14th, Church Street will once again transform into the epicenter of PRIDE in Hartford. This is an invitation to save the date and be a part of a movement that not only celebrates love and diversity but champions acceptance and the freedom to be one's true self. 🌈

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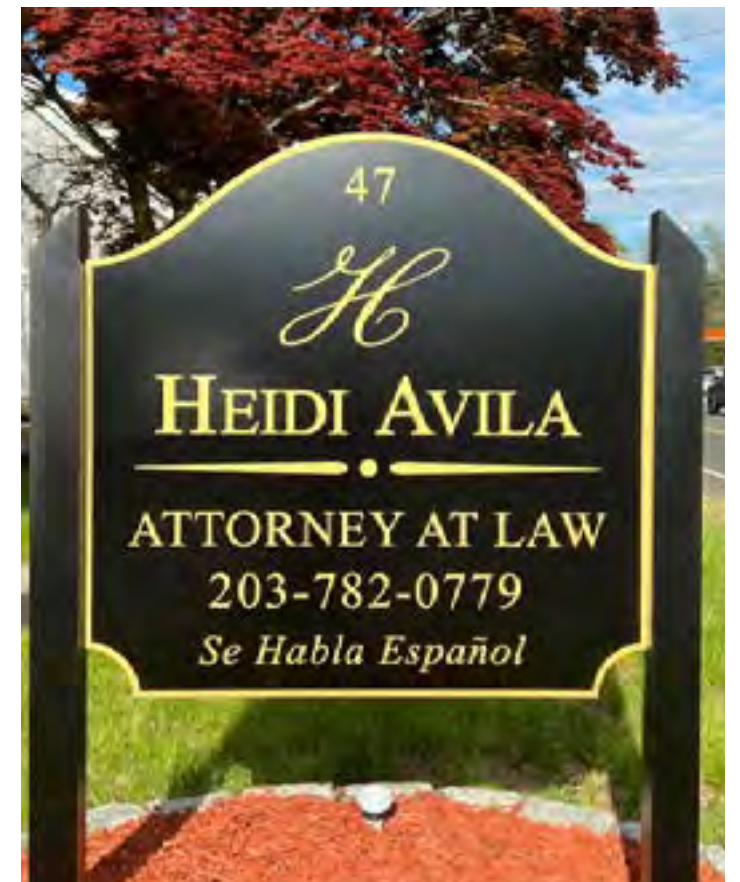
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LGBTQ+ Timeline

From ancient civilizations to the present day, the perception and acceptance of homosexuality and gender diversity have witnessed dramatic shifts. Ancient Greece, with its rich tapestry of art and philosophy, celebrated love between men, setting an early benchmark for openness. In his masterpieces, Plato deliberated on the nature of love, not shying away from exploring same-sex attraction. The neighboring Roman Empire, influenced by Greek ideals, initially showcased a level of acceptance for same-sex relationships, provided they fit within the established norms of Roman masculinity and social structure. However, as Christianity's grip strengthened over Rome, a more conservative stance on homosexuality emerged.

Simultaneously, far to the East, Ancient China's literature hinted at emperors and scholars who, besides their heterosexual commitments driven by the necessity for heirs, found solace in same-sex relationships. India, with its myriad cultures, was no stranger to the acknowledgment of diverse love forms. Its temples, adorned with intricate sculptures, occasionally depicted same-sex unions. The famed "Kamasutra" didn't just focus on heterosexual love but also acknowledged same-sex attraction.

However, as Europe plunged into the Middle Ages, the overarching influence of Christianity brought about a paradigm shift in attitudes towards homosexuality. It was branded as sinful, leading to persecution. The Islamic world, especially during its Golden Age under caliphates like the Abbasids, saw a flourishing of arts that celebrated or at least recognized same-sex love. But with time, stricter interpretations of Islamic teachings veered towards lesser tolerance.

By the time the world entered the 19th century, a fresh challenge arose. Homosexuality was no longer just a moral or religious debate; it became a subject of medical scrutiny. The labeling of same-sex attraction as a mental disorder began, casting a shadow that persisted well into the next century. However, the 20th century's latter half marked a turning point. Post World War II, the Western world witnessed the rise of the gay rights movement, and a tide of change began, culminating in legal and societal recognition for the LGBTQ+ community. Yet, this wave was not uniform. While Europe and parts of the Americas progressed, many regions, influenced by a complex mesh of cultural, religious, and colonial histories, remained resistant.

As the new millennium dawned, the journey of LGBTQ+ rights entered another critical phase. The celebration of same-sex marriage in various countries and the amplification of LGBTQ+ voices on global platforms was heartening. Yet, the tapestry of acceptance

remained varied. Europe, North America, and parts of Asia and Latin America showcased an upward trend, but areas like Africa and the Middle East often remained intransigent.

This era also underscored the need to address the unique challenges faced by BIPOC LGBTQ+ individuals. Often grappling with dual prejudices of race and sexual orientation, their struggles highlighted that the path to true equality was multifaceted. Activism and advocacy had to combat not just homophobia but also deeply entrenched racial biases.

Parallely, transgender rights began to emerge prominently on the global stage. Transgender individuals, historically misunderstood and marginalized, found their voices gaining resonance. However, acceptance was patchy. While advocacy led to significant strides in education, legal rights, and healthcare access, many transgender individuals, especially from BIPOC communities, faced heightened challenges. Interestingly, many Indigenous cultures worldwide had traditionally recognized and honored non-binary and gender-diverse identities. The process of re-embracing these ancient values became an integral part of modern transgender rights discourse.

Yet, the scars of European colonization remained evident. Many regions, once colonies, still grappled with colonial-era anti-LGBTQ+ laws and sentiments. The journey of acceptance and rights for all, irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and racial or ethnic backgrounds, continues. While significant strides have been made, the complexities of race, gender, and sexuality persistently challenge the global community. The enduring aspiration is for a world where diversity is not just tolerated but celebrated in all its hues. 🌈

**Activism and advocacy
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The Story Behind Drag Queen Story Hour

Drag Queen Story Hour” (DQSH), is a relatively recent movement where drag queens read books to children in libraries, schools, or bookstores. This initiative began in San Francisco in 2015 and quickly spread to other cities around the world. The purpose of DQSH and its significance can be understood from the following perspectives:

Promotion of Literacy: First and foremost, DQSH, like other storytime events, encourages reading and literacy among children. By making reading a fun and interactive experience, it helps cultivate a love for books and stories.

Diversity and Inclusion: DQSH introduces children to individuals who might look or express themselves differently than what they’re accustomed to. By interacting with drag queens in a positive and supportive environment, children learn early on about the importance of acceptance, diversity, and being true to oneself.

Breaking Gender Norms: Drag inherently challenges traditional notions of gender and gender expression. Introducing children to drag in a friendly setting can help them understand that gender can be fluid and that there’s a broad spectrum of ways to express oneself.

Building Empathy: By hearing stories about characters from various backgrounds and experiences, children can develop empathy and a broader understanding of the world.

Counteracting Bullying: Encouraging acceptance and understanding can also have the positive side effect of reducing bullying. When children are taught to celebrate differences rather than fear or mock them, they are less likely to engage in hurtful behaviors.

Entertainment: Let’s not forget the sheer fun and joy of the event! Drag queens are often vibrant, theatrical, and entertaining performers. Children can enjoy the colorful costumes, lively personalities, and spirited storytelling.

Community Building: Such events can also serve as a bridge, fostering positive interactions between diverse groups in the community. It’s an opportunity for parents, caregivers, and children to come together in a communal setting, learn from one another, and form connections.

While DQSH has been celebrated by many for these reasons, it’s worth noting that it has also faced criticism and backlash in certain circles. Some people believe that drag isn’t appropriate for children or have concerns rooted in traditional beliefs about gender. It’s essential to approach the topic with an open mind, recognizing the diversity of opinions on the subject, while also understanding the positive intentions and benefits behind the DQSH initiative. 🌈



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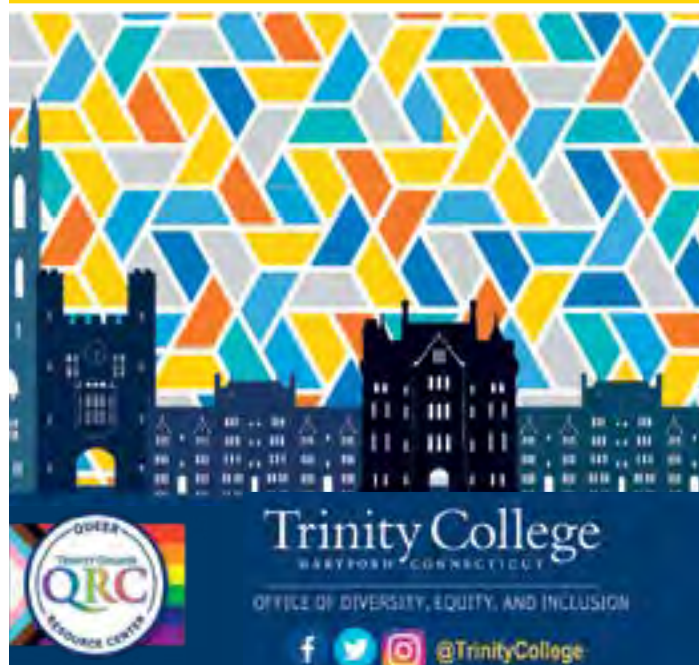
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OPEN HEARTS “GLBT” MINISTRY *at the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry*

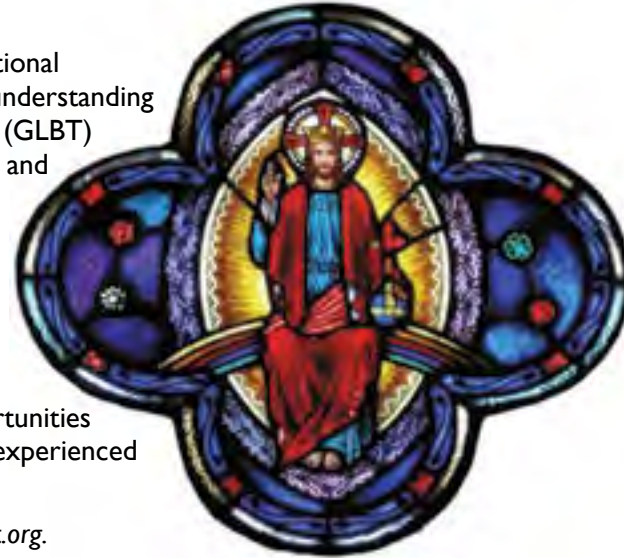
MISSION STATEMENT

The Open Hearts Ministry provides educational experiences to build greater visibility and understanding of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) experience within our Church community, and develop faith-building outreach programming to the diverse spectrum of the GLBT community.

As a Catholic parish committed to social justice, Open Hearts Ministry of the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry actively provides and promotes faith opportunities that build community for those who have experienced spiritual disconnection.

For more information email us at info@spsact.org.

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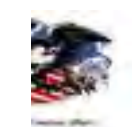
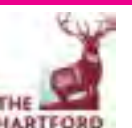


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