



THE EVERGREEN RAINBOW AUTUMN 2020

Your Washington State LGBTQ Commission Newsletter



The LGBTQ Commission is new, just starting in 2020, and already we are tested by the many pressures of this demanding year. Like everyone else, the ongoing pandemic brings daily challenges to our lives and to our work. I am heartened and encouraged by the great talent and expertise of our fifteen Commissioners, our Executive Director, our skilled support Staff, our excellent Legislative Advisors, and my brilliant Co-chair and Executive committee. We are a fine team, and we are meeting the challenges.

Our Mission is to advocate for LGBTQ equity in all aspects of Washington State government, and our Vision is that every lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, and intersex Washingtonian of any age feels safe, supported, and empowered.

Be proud of this group. They know their task and they understand what is asked of them: to be true and vigilant representatives of our LGBTQ Communities.

Clearly, the issues are many and the needs are great. We meet these issues in a variety of ways, using town hall events, our website, our resource lists, our Commissioner's knowledge, and our regular meetings to keep efforts meaningful and effective. In these ways, we continually check our ideas and deliberations with the real needs of those we serve in our Washington cities, towns, and rural areas.



LGBTQ People are often called on to reconcile difference with community and singularity with unity in their personal lives, and our Commissioners bring these additional skills with them. The LGBTQ experience can be as fragile as leaves in winter and as powerful as summer's brilliant sun. We bring our learning and our gifts and place them in service to our beloved Washington State.

This Commission joins many other state commissions to act together, with us all, for the betterment of us all. I appreciate the honor of serving this grand project as Co-chair of our group. I gratefully thank Governor Inslee and the State workers and leaders who make our Commissions possible. Above all I thank you, the people of Washington, for it is your dream of equity we are enacting in our work.

Marsha Botzer
Co-chair, Washington State LGBTQ Commission

The Washington State LGBTQ Commission

Staff

J Manny Santiago, He/She/They/ÉI/Ella - Executive Director

Omar Santana, He/him/his - Executive Assistant

Legislative Representatives

Claire Wilson, She/her/hers - Senator (D-30)

Nicole Macri, She/her/hers - Representative (D-43)

Skyler Rude, He/him/his - Representative (R-16)

Commissioners

Marsha Botzer, She/her/hers - Jefferson County - Co-chair

Isyss Honnen, She/her/hers - King County - Co-chair

Jac Archer, They/them/theirs - Spokane County - Vice-chair

Alvaro Figueroa, He/him/his - Spokane County - Secretary

Lars Erickson, He/him/his - King County

Karen Goldsen, She/her/hers - Island County

Maeve Griffith, She/her/hers - Spokane County

Tobi Hill-Meyer, She/her/hers - Thurston County

Michelle Kelly-Barroga (KB), They/them/theirs - Pierce County

Matthew Landers, He/him/his - King County

Everett Maroon, He/him/his, They/them/theirs - Walla Walla County

Jeffrey Robinson, He/him/his - Franklin County

Josette Ross, She/her/hers - Pierce County

Steven Sawyer, He/him/his - King County

Beto Yarce, He/him/his - Snohomish County

CONTACT INFORMATION

Website : <https://lgbtq.wa.gov>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/WAStateLGBTQCommission>

Director : omar.santana@lgbtq.wa.gov

From the Executive Director

Welcome to the first edition of our Commission newsletter! This quarterly newsletter will help you stay updated with the work of the Commission and its committees.

The Washington State LGBTQ Commission was established by legislature in 2019 with the intention of improving the interaction of our community with the state government. It is the goal of the Commission to be a voice for the two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer communities across Washington when it comes to policymaking at all levels of government. We are tasked with advocating on behalf of the whole community. Although our official name uses the acronym *LGBTQ*, it is important for us to clarify that the Commission serves all marginalized sexual orientations and gender identities. The Commission also takes an intersectional approach to its work, centering the lived experiences of those LGBTQ folk in Washington who are also marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status, and many other realities.

This first year of work, and even with the challenges presented by COVID-19, the Commission has been able to accomplish many things. During the legislative session earlier this year, we saw the passing of every piece of legislation the Commission supported (a complete list can be found on our website at www.lgbtq.wa.gov). Commissioners have hosted three public meetings, with the first meeting held in February of this year in person. The community has engaged with Commissioners and legislators through five town halls, including one on transgender health concerns and one town hall in Spanish. Both staff and Commissioners have been active in recovery programs, workgroups, and task forces at the state and local levels, ensuring that the LGBTQ community is well represented.

As the Commission looks forward to the next legislative session, one of our priorities is to strengthen the protections for our community in the state. These protections will ensure that our LGBTQ community in Washington is safe regardless of federal rules, legislation, or court decisions that would potentially put our earned rights in jeopardy. This work is summarized in our vision: *The LGBTQ Commission envisions a state where every two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex Washingtonian of any age feels safe, supported, and empowered.* We count with each one of you to make this vision a reality, and I extend you an invitation to reach out to us with your questions, concerns, and ideas on how to best address the needs of our community throughout the state.

Enjoy this first edition of our newsletter and don't forget to sign up, share it with others, and visit our social media and website regularly for updates.

J. Manny Santiago



Currently, the Washington State LGBTQ Commission has seven committees:

Communication and Outreach; Children, Youth and Families; Health and Wellness; Economic and Business Development; Vulnerable Communities; Transgender, GNC, Gender Non-binary, and Intersex Communities; and the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Committee.

Health and Wellness Committee

Members: Maeve Griffith (Spokane), Everett Maroon (Walla Walla), Steven Sawyer (King), Karen Golden (Island)

Like so many other organizations, Covid-19 has taken the front stage for our work in this committee. We have been briefed on how the state is going to roll out a vaccine or vaccines when available. One of the inputs on creating a course of action for vaccine distribution will come from citizens of the state. Soon, we will be providing a link to participate in this survey.

Another item that we have been working on is to get links to local LGBTQ-friendly healthcare and services up on our website.

At this time, we realize that we are all going through tough times together. Certainly, marginalized communities have been hit hardest. We are continuing to look at insurance disparities in the coverage of trans-affirming procedures in the state, as well as the on-going fight to secure equal and just access to medical care for all who are LGBTQ in our state. Stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for information on how to get your voice heard.



**Maeve Griffith,
Convener**

Economic Development Committee

Members: Marika Barto (Thurston), Matt Landers (King), Jeffrey Robinson (Franklin), Lacrechia Hill (Spokane), Beto Yarce (Snohomish)

The mission of this committee is to identify economic opportunities and barriers for the LGBTQ community and LGBTQ-owned businesses in Washington State, and to provide recommendations to the Commission on how they can be addressed. In the first few months of its establishment, the Committee has worked to broaden its membership with community participation.

The Committee is developing a workplan for the coming year to help guide our work.

This includes addressing how economic relief efforts related to the pandemic can also address the needs of LGBTQ communities, with our Executive Director serving on the Governor’s recovery task force.

Reflecting one of the core reasons for the establishment of the Washington State LGBTQ Commission, the Economic Development Committee is working to bring recognition of our community’s real economic disparities to the state’s departments and agencies. LGBTQ people are rarely counted or included in economic data, and therefore remain mostly invisible to policymakers. This is despite well-documented disparities specific to our communities.

Through the Executive Director, we have provided feedback to the Department of Enterprise Services regarding their recent economic disparity study. Additionally, the Committee has also begun to examine how LGBTQ people could be included in the state’s supplier diversity efforts, such as recognition of LGBTQ business certification in government contracting.

We welcome the participation of community members, and for input on issues you would like the Economic Development Committee to have on our radar in coming months.



**Matt Landers,
Convener**

BIPOC Committee

Members: Josette Ross (Pierce) and Steven Sawyer (King)

The very first official action of the BIPOC Committee was to change our name. At the suggestion of one of our committee members, we voted to change the name from the original Communities of Color and Tribal Communities Committee to the BIPOC Committee (Black, Indigenous and People of Color Committee) to better represent the community we are working for. This was taken to the next LGBTQ Commission meeting, voted on, and passed.

The BIPOC Committee meets once a month and is currently focused on a month-long outreach campaign to encourage BIPOC folx to get out and vote in the November 3rd election.

We will be uploading information to both the WA State LGBTQ Commission website (<https://lgbtq.wa.gov/>) and the Commission Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/WAStateLGBTQCommission/>)



After the November election, we will focus on more long-term projects including a virtual youth event and resource connection.

**Josette Ross,
Chair**

Last month, we celebrated Indigenous People's Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, and National Coming Out Day.

Here are some upcoming dates to keep in mind:

Intersex Solidarity Day - November 8th
Transgender Day of Remembrance - November 20th
World Aids Day - December 1st
Holocaust Remembrance Day - January 27th

Editor's corner

"What will come out of this?"

I know this was a question I asked myself a lot before I came out. I am sure this is a question many of you asked yourselves, as well. Coming out is an act of intentionally telling the truth, a truth that may be hard for ourselves or others to deal with.

We know this will be an interruption of our lives and that the outcome of coming out will be a mixed bag. We will lose some friends and gain some new ones. We might lose some family members and gain new family members, as well. Our coming out may make it easier for someone we love, or someone in our workplace, to come out. Thanks to the work of so many in our state - citizens, politicians, business leaders and religious and community activists, we are pretty hopeful that our coming out will not result in our being fired or in losing our home.

During this pandemic, many of us again wonder "What will come out of this?" Perhaps, for the first time, our friends, neighbors and family are all asking themselves this same question. All lives have been interrupted - cis, trans, straight, queer, gay, lesbian, non-binary, two-spirit, black, white, Latin-x, Asian, conservative, liberal, intersex, single, married, employed, unemployed, the healthy and the unhealthy, Republican, Democrat, every age and **all** spectrums of **all** categories - most of us now share this experience of changed lives and the uncertainty that awaits.

Together, we ask "What will come out of this?"

Coupled with our current political climate, most now know what it feels like to have uncertainty take center stage of their lives. Welcome.

Last year, when we were selected to be on this commission, we all had a pretty certain idea of what this would look like.

Now, we do the best we can through our Zoom meetings. Not only is this inaugural year not how we envisioned it, we are pretty certain that the path ahead is a foggy one at best. Happily, through this commission, we are all now walking it together. We are asking you to join us in our pursuit to ensure equitable rights and opportunities for all LGBTQ citizens in our state.

Thank you for reading this newsletter. For more information, please consult our contact information.

Much peace. Much love. Maeve