



November 2021

RAIN Subcommittee Updates



Communications and Outreach

Co-Chairs: Natasha Holt (she/her), DOC and Justin Taylor (he/him), L&I

Along with preparing this newsletter, Communications and Outreach have been busy forming our goals for next year. We are hoping 2022 will bring more opportunities to connect in person and evolve ways we can reach distributed members across the state. We are excited to share more outreach products and see you all (virtually) for our annual December gathering that will take place outside of work (details in the coming weeks). We are still looking to fill a co-chair position. If you're interested in trying out this rewarding leadership role and would like to hear more, please contact Justin.Taylor@Lni.wa.gov.

Training

Co-Chairs: Jasper Marino (they/them), ESD and Marika Barto (she/her), OMWBE

Our Committee finished the last round of collecting feedback on a training that will be geared towards customer-facing staff about how to respectfully help transgender and nonbinary customers. Once complete, the training will be hosted by RAIN and will be open to any state employee. We are building our next training around LGBTQ+ history in the US and also creating a RAIN train-the-trainer program to build opportunities and skill sets for those interested in facilitating RAIN sponsored trainings.

Best Practices

Co-Chairs: Ariel Kay (she/her), ESD and Haley Roady (she/her), UW

This committee has done some amazing work including helping get bathroom signs changed in state buildings, sitting on numerous panels, selecting our winners for the Outstanding Agency Awards and our wonderful Pride Month toolkit.

Current work includes a signature line pronoun FAQ, family definitions project, and work on a transitioning in the workplace project.

Safe Place

Co-Chair: Jacob Towle (he/him), DSHS

The Safe Place subcommittee is continuing to support directive 16-11, which includes support of Safe Place WA programs.

Next steps include:

- Ongoing coordination with the LGBTQ+ Commission;
- Developing Safe Place WA program procedures and community resources;
- Gathering information about Safe Place use and operation; and
- Facilitating discussions about improving Safe Place programs.

We are meeting with Safe Place linked law enforcement, the Washington State Patrol, and city governments. We're re-evaluating need and availability at existing Safe Place locations. This includes closures, hours, and access, especially considering ongoing pandemic related impacts and restrictions. We are also taking part in the HB 1477 discussion (recently passed by the Washington State Legislature). The bill establishes the WA State Crisis Response Improvement Strategy Committee (CRIS) and steering committee. These committees will develop recommendations to support the implementation of the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (9-8-8), statewide improvement of behavioral health crisis response, and suicide prevention services. The new 9-8-8 lifeline is set to start running July 2022. The Safe Place subcommittee's goal is to align our directive 16-11 update with the launch of this new resource. We continue to address concerns voiced in this year's Safe Place survey from RAIN members and allies. This includes collaborating with local and regional crisis support response, professional survivor advocates, peer support or ally organizations, and equity, diversity, and inclusion supports.



Dear RAIN members,

Serving as a Co Chair of RAIN has been an honor and a privilege over the past two and a half years. You've entrusted me with listening to your experiences and empowering you to do the work of creating more inclusive workplaces for us all. When I reflect on what we've accomplished, it amazes me what a difference you all have made in the lives of state employees and those we serve.

Throughout the hardship of a global pandemic, I have witnessed passion and resilience. I have shed tears with your leadership team as we navigated personal setbacks and systemic barriers that prevent us from bringing our authentic selves to the tables where decisions affecting our lives and wellbeing are made.

Thank You

RAIN's Co Chair and Administrative Liaison model has been a fantastic opportunity to work alongside some amazing leaders. Thank you Justin Taylor, Mo Tabor, Allison Spector, Ariel Kay, Saundra Schaefer, Ryan Douglas, Chase Bayne, and Kristen Jenkins for your partnership. We could not have accomplished anything without the leadership of our subcommittee teams either. Thank you Marisa Sanchez Reed, Jasper Marino, James Trujillo, Sepha Weaver, Tracey Carlos, Jacob Towle, Haley Roady, Allison Fine, Natasha Holt, and Marika Barto.

The pandemic brought many challenges, and our Executive Sponsor, Secretary of Health John Wiesman, led the WA state response. The LGBTQ Commission launched, and we welcomed the inaugural Executive Director J. Manny Santiago as our new Executive Sponsor with additional support

from Omar Santana. Thank you for your guidance John, Manny, and Omar as we moved the work of RAIN forward in collaboration with other BRG leaders and our partnership with OFM.

Along the way, we've been supported by several dedicated OFM representatives. Thank you Cassie Bordelon, Robin Vazquez, Ayanna Colman, Flora Estrada, Allison Spector, and Indira Melgarejo. With these partners, and the additional leadership of Tammy Pitre, Altavia Jones, and Walt Jones, we've been setting a foundation for equity across all BRGs by drafting Executive Order 21 01 and establishing policies and guidelines for funding, participation, and communication.

Under Dr. Karen Johnson's leadership, the Office of Equity has elevated the statewide influence of the BRGs. We are just getting started, folks!

The Future

The future is bright. It's hopeful. It's revolutionary. The path toward respect, equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice for our community is arduous, but the challenges are opportunities. I have strong confidence with the incoming leadership of Taja Blackhorn and Erika Redzinak that RAIN is in good hands to further our goals to meet current and emerging needs for the LGBTQ+ community in the WA State workforce.

Ryan Douglas and Kristen Jenkins continue to play a critical role in shaping the future for our community. And you can too! I encourage every member of RAIN to consider joining this phenomenal leadership team. Opportunities exist today. Ask me about them!

-Elizabeth Fontanilla

Thank You to RAIN's Outgoing Leadership

by Ryan Douglas (he/him), DFI



It's that time of year again! As we experience a change of the seasons, a change in the color of the leaves on the trees, we also have a change of elected leadership at RAIN. While Administrative Liaison Kristen Jenkins and I will be continuing in our current roles through 2022, I'm excited to welcome new Co-Chair Taja Blackhorn and Administrative Liaison Erika Redzinak to RAIN's leadership team. I can't wait to see what we accomplish together in the coming months. But beyond welcoming our new leaders, huge thanks are due to our outgoing leadership for their amazing work and contributions.

Co-Chair Elizabeth Fontanilla has served in this role for multiple years and RAIN has benefited immeasurably from her engaged leadership and advocacy. Elizabeth, thank you so much for your friendship and partnership as we have worked through sharing this critical role. I have learned so much from you, from the history and structure of RAIN, to hopefully picking up and emulating some of the leadership skills that you exhibit each and every day. You consistently have stepped in to help where it is needed, serving on subcommittees and facilitating the connections that make all of our work possible. One of the great things about RAIN is the way that we all support one another, and you consistently demonstrate that strength through your skilled and compassionate leadership.

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Outgoing Administrative Liaison Chase Bayne has also been an invaluable member of the leadership team over the past year. Chase, your unparalleled skills in managing Zoom and the breakout rooms happens behind the scenes, but has been more critical than ever as we continue to operate in a fully virtual environment. Your resilience and willingness to step up and take on critical tasks, even with the many disruptions to your day-to-day job as the pandemic unfolded, have been so invaluable. From helping administer this year's Outstanding Agency Award nominations to coordinating our elections, you have been instrumental to keeping the business of RAIN moving and I am truly grateful for all you have done and will continue to do for RAIN.

Thank you both!

While I will miss working with you both on the Advisory Council, I know your contributions to RAIN do not end here. I appreciate all that you have done in your roles, as well as providing the opportunity for new leaders to step up and provide their unique perspectives. The diversity of this community is such a huge asset and I'm so thankful to all of our current and former elected leaders, as well those of you who have served critical roles within our various subcommittees. Thank you for bringing your unique perspectives and lived experiences to RAIN, for continuing to seek out and uplift all voices, and for everything you do to help us all accomplish this important work.





Congratulations to this year's RAIN Outstanding Agency Award winners!

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families

The Department of Social and Health Services
Developmental Disabilities Administration - Rainier School

The Employment Security Department

Every year, Washington State employees nominate agencies that have led the way in work to help create a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ employees.

Nominations highlight specific changes in policies, practices, and culture that each agency has done to promote LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusivity for employees. These awards are special because the nominations come from employees within the agency that appreciate and recognize the work being done agency wide.

We celebrate and thank all the nominated agencies for the work they are doing!

The 2021 Agency Awards Ceremony was on Oct. 21, 2021 during our October General Membership meeting.

Check out the intro video [here](#).

2021 Outstanding Agency AWARDS

by Kristen Jenkins (she/her), UTC

DSHS: Credentialing Diversity Champions

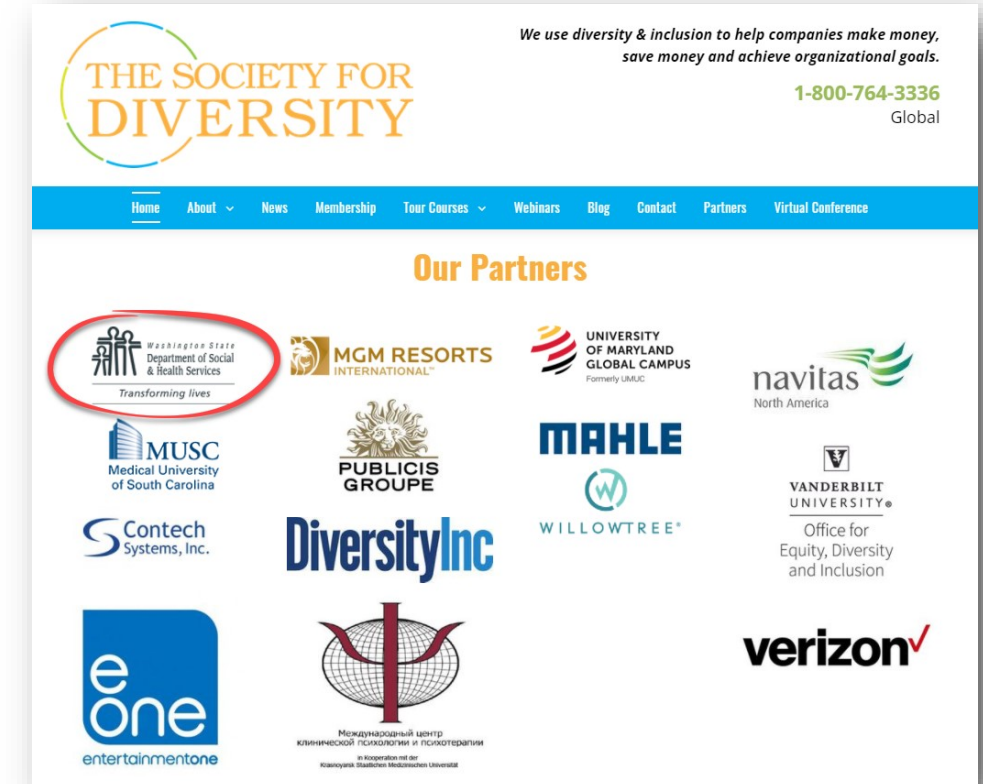
by Marianne Ozmun-Wells (she/they), DSHS

Since 2016, the Department of Social and Health Services has had a professional relationship with the Society for Diversity (SFD), Institute for Diversity Certification (IDC). In fact, when you check out the SFD website, you'll find DSHS is their first listed partner, right along with recognized brands such as Diversity Inc., MGM Grand, and Verizon.

The Institute for Diversity Certification is a leader among diversity credentialing entities in the United States and has expanded its work beyond USA borders. It is a member of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence and is in the process of pursuing accreditation through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.

DSHS recognized that diversity initiatives were often assigned to those who had passion for the work regardless of whether or not they had subject matter knowledge and competencies. Moreover, diversity efforts are often the victims of budget reductions and leadership changes so sustainability is critical in this work. The DSHS Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion determined that professionalizing EDI allowed DSHS to accomplish multiple objectives:

1. Build a cadre of knowledgeable and competent EDI practitioners.
2. Advance and embed the principles and practices of equity, diversity, and inclusion into everyday operations.



3. Demonstrate investment into a way of doing business that aligns with DSHS values.
4. Create consistency and sustainability in EDI practice.
5. Improve workplace culture and client experience.

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In the years since that first cohort of DSHS staff successfully attained credentials as either Certified Diversity Executives (CDE)[®] or Certified Diversity Professionals (CDP)[®], DSHS has invited staff from other state agencies such as Department of Corrections and the Office of Financial Management to join our staff in becoming credentialed.

Hundreds of state employee candidates have gone through IDC's certification program since 2016. This summer, the Economic Services Administration alone, a division of DSHS, sent 34 candidates through certification including members of RAIN, Cres Perez and Carrie Jackson. David Stillman, Assistant Secretary for ESA, required all members of his leadership team to obtain their (CDE)[®].

A number of other members of RAIN have previously obtained their diversity certifications through the DSHS sponsored program, bringing subject matter knowledge and credibility to our alliance.

The IDC program offers a curriculum module focused on LGBTQ+ history, national and global threats and protections, and best practices for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

For more information on the Society for Diversity's certification program, check out their [website](#)



Remembering Those We Have Lost

by Ryan Douglas (he/him), DFI



On November 20 of each year, we pause to honor the memories of transgender people whose lives have been lost to acts of violence. Gwendolyn Ann Smith, a transgender advocate, started the observance in 1999 as a vigil to honor the memory of Rita Hester, a transgender woman who was killed the prior year, and to remember all of the trans people lost to violence since.

In the more than two decades since that first observance, violence toward transgender people has not ceased. As the COVID-19 pandemic raged in 2020, another epidemic – one of violence – also raged [with at least 37 transgender and nonconforming people](#) losing their lives to violence, at that time the highest number since the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) started collecting data in 2013. Sadly, 2021 has already exceeded that number, [with at least 44 members](#) of our community losing their lives to violence as of early November. This includes [Zoella “Zoey” Rose Martinez](#), a 20-year-old Latina trans woman who was fatally shot in Maple Valley, Washington in August.

The “at least” is an important distinction when talking about these senseless losses, as too often stories of these crimes go unreported or misreported.

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In fact, in a [report from December 2020](#), HRC reported that at least three out of four known transgender or gender nonconforming victims of fatal violence were misgendered in initial police or media reporting surrounding their deaths.

But these deaths represent so much more than statistics. Each one is a person. A life cut short. And each left behind friends, family, and other loved ones. Remember the [names and human beings](#) behind these unacceptable numbers.

And for those that consider themselves allies to this community, think about how you can turn your grief into action. [Learn more](#) about the root causes of systems of violence that impact trans people and how to help dismantle those systems. Violence against transgender and gender nonconforming people is often deeply intertwined with racism and misogyny, with trans women of color making up about four out of five anti-transgender homicides. It is also exacerbated by a number of barriers that result in transgender people facing higher rates of discrimination, poverty, homelessness, and violence.

Dismantling these systems is not easy, but doing so remains a matter of survival.

NOV2021





*You can learn more about each person by clicking their name.

[Tyianna Alexander](#) (aka Davarea Alexander)

[Samuel Edmund Damián Valentín](#)

[Bianca “Muffin” Bankz](#)

[Dominique Jackson](#)

[Fifty Bandz](#)

[Alexus Braxton](#)

[Chyna Carillo](#) (aka Chyna Carenas)

[Jeffrey “JJ” Bright](#)

[Jasmine Cannady](#)

[Jenna Franks](#)

[Diamond Kyree Sanders](#)

[Rayanna Pardo](#)

[Jaida Peterson](#)

[Dominique Lucious](#)

[Remy Fennel](#)

[Tiara Banks](#)

[Natalia Smut](#)

[Iris Santos](#)

[Tiffany Thomas](#)

[Keri Washington](#)

[Jahaira DeAlto](#)

[Whispering Wind Bear Spirit](#)

Sophie Vásquez

Danika “Danny” Henson

(aka Prynce Daniel and Niia Da Don)

Serenity Hollis

Oliver “Ollie” Taylor

Thomas Hardin

Poe Black (aka Oliver Jackson and Legion)

EJ Boykin (aka Novaa Watson)

Aidelen Evans

Taya Ashton

Shai Vanderpump

Tierramarie Lewis

Miss CoCo

Pooh Johnson

Disaya Monae

Briana Hamilton

Kiér Laprí Kartier

Mel Groves

Royal Poetical Starz

Zoella “Zoey” Rose Martinez

Joe Acker

Jessi Hart

Rikkey Outumuru (aka Tru Starlet)

Marquiisha Lawrence

Jenny De Leon





Supporting our Community

by Tracey Carlos (she/her), LGBTQ



Mpowerment Washington

Promote LGBTQ+ Health and Strong Communities

DAPS: Diversity Alliance of Puget Sound

Transgender and Gender Diverse Support and Advocacy



Pizza Klatch

Support LGBTQ+, Marginalized, and Isolated Youth

PiPE: Partners in Prevention Education

Support Houseless, Street-Dependent, and Marginalized Survivors



GenPride

Empower and Support Aging LGBTQ+ Adults

Fall is the traditional time of year when state employees learn and take part in activities for the state's Combined Fund Drive (CFD). The annual campaign runs from October through December in over 250 state agencies and higher education institutions.

The CFD mission is "To empower Washington public employees and retirees to strengthen their communities through the funding and support of charities."

In the past, charities have visited offices for fairs and fundraisers during the fall. They inform state employees about different programs, volunteer opportunities, and ways to donate. From 2012 to 2019, the state donated over \$5 million per year. The CFD website reports over 1,000 people actively volunteering.

The CFD works with many community organizations that help our LGBTQ+ community. PFLAG, Camp Ten Trees, Partners in Prevention Education, Generations Aging with Pride, and Mpowerment Washington, to name a few. Also, groups like Seattle Men's Chorus and Seattle Women's Chorus that support our intersectional identities.

Check out the [CFD website](#) to see all the information it has to offer. You can search a list of charities, invite charities to speak at your events, log your volunteer hours, and find upcoming events.



Member Spotlight

We want to provide a deeper dive into the unique lives and skill sets of our members located all across Washington State.

If you want to nominate someone to be featured in the spotlight, please email Allison.Fine@dshs.wa.gov.



Allison Spector

Allison is a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion data analyst for the Office of Financial Management for the State and has been an active member of RAIN almost since its inception. She is a trans woman with a quiet tenacity and an open and honest heart.

Let's learn more about Allison...

Interviewer Allison Fine: What's your name? The name you prefer!

Allison Spector: My name is Allison Diana Spector. Like many other trans persons, this is a name I chose for myself. The first part of my name, Allison Diana, is a bit of inside joke. The first two initials of my original name were B.C. So, I decided I had to have a name with the first two initials being A.D. I chose Allison because I had always liked that name. The middle name was harder, but ultimately, I chose Diana because Wonder Woman, obviously. I chose Spector as my last name as an homage to the Mass Effect video game series because I am a total nerd and love RPGs.

Fine: How do you identify and what are your pronouns?

Spector: I identify as a trans woman and my pronouns are she/her.

Fine: Where did you grow up?

Spector: I grew up in the Whatcom County area. It's north of Seattle and runs along the border with Canada. I lived in the City of Bellingham for my early childhood. When I was eight, my parents moved to a tiny rural town called Everson where I lived for the rest of my childhood and teen years. There are a lot of negative stereotypes of rural America, many of which are unfortunately true. However, I have a lot of pride having spent my formative years in a rural community. I feel that experience really gave me a much more grounded perspective than I would not have had growing up in a non-rural environment.

Fine: What do you do for the State of WA?

Spector: I work for the Office of Financial Management as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion data analyst. My job is to analyze the demographics of the state employee workforce. Areas I look at include the demographics of the

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annual engagement survey, recruitment, new hires, resignations, and the current profile of the state workforce. The data is provided to state agency leaders to assist with their decision making on furthering DEI across the state. I am especially thrilled with how that data can be used intersectionally. It's possible to create visualizations where we can observe the effects of intersectionality and shine a spotlight on groups that have often been ignored because they have typically been aggregated with other groups. I also spend a lot of time on data integrity and security issues. Our analyses are only as good as our data. Being a good steward of employee data requires I protect the privacy of our state workforce and ensure that every employee feels they can continue to provide demographic data with the confidence their personal identifying information will be protected.

Fine: How long have you worked for the State?

Spector: I have been with the state for about five years. I first started at the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises and was there for about a year and a half.

Fine: How long have you been involved in RAIN and what interested you about RAIN initially?

Spector: I have been involved with RAIN for about three years. While I wasn't there at the beginning, I was involved early enough to see RAIN go through great changes and am very impressed with its current trajectory. It has been a privilege seeing an organization thrive amidst all the changes, which is a credit to all the individuals involved in making that happen.

Fine: Have you ever held any RAIN leadership positions or would you consider it in the future?

Spector: Yes. I served as an admin liaison for two years. Being involved in RAIN leadership opened a lot of doors for me professionally. I had the opportunity to learn about the work being done at other agencies and develop skills that later proved to be instrumental to my growth as a state employee. I highly encourage everyone to give leadership a try. It's a low stakes way of finding out the direction you would like to take as a state employee.

Fine: Why do you think RAIN is important to LGBTQIA+ employees?

Spector: As a business resource group, RAIN is critical in providing agency leaders with information on how to support their LGBTQIA+ employees. The best practices subcommittee has done and continues to do amazing work providing recommendations on how to support LGBTQIA+ employees. RAIN is also a great way to meet other LGBTQIA+ employees. I know from personal experience how isolating it can feel in the workplace when you don't know of anyone else who is LGBTQIA+ at your agency. To have a place where you meet other LGBTQIA+ employees really drives home the feeling you are not alone.

Fine: What's your community like? This can be family, friends, whatever YOU consider your community!

Spector: Honestly, I have been struggling a lot lately with isolation and loneliness as of late. I have always been an introverted person and have struggled to form strong attachments with other people.

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Before the pandemic, I felt like I was making progress on that front and was starting to feel that I was forming some good connections with others. But then the pandemic hit, and it has gone on long enough where I have regressed back to square one. Fortunately, one of my greatest skills is that I am great at getting myself out of holes and rebuilding. It would have been nice if my skill was avoiding holes in the first place, but it is what it is.

Fine: What are your hobbies?

Spector: I try to walk almost every day. Since moving to Olympia, I have made it a mission not to own a car. I have also found that walking is a great form of exercises and really grounds you to the environment. I also love to play video games and keep informed on the latest political news.

Fine: What else should we know about you?

Spector: I am one of those persons who has never read any of the Harry Potter books nor have I seen any of the movies. All things considered that might have been a sixth sense thing on my part.

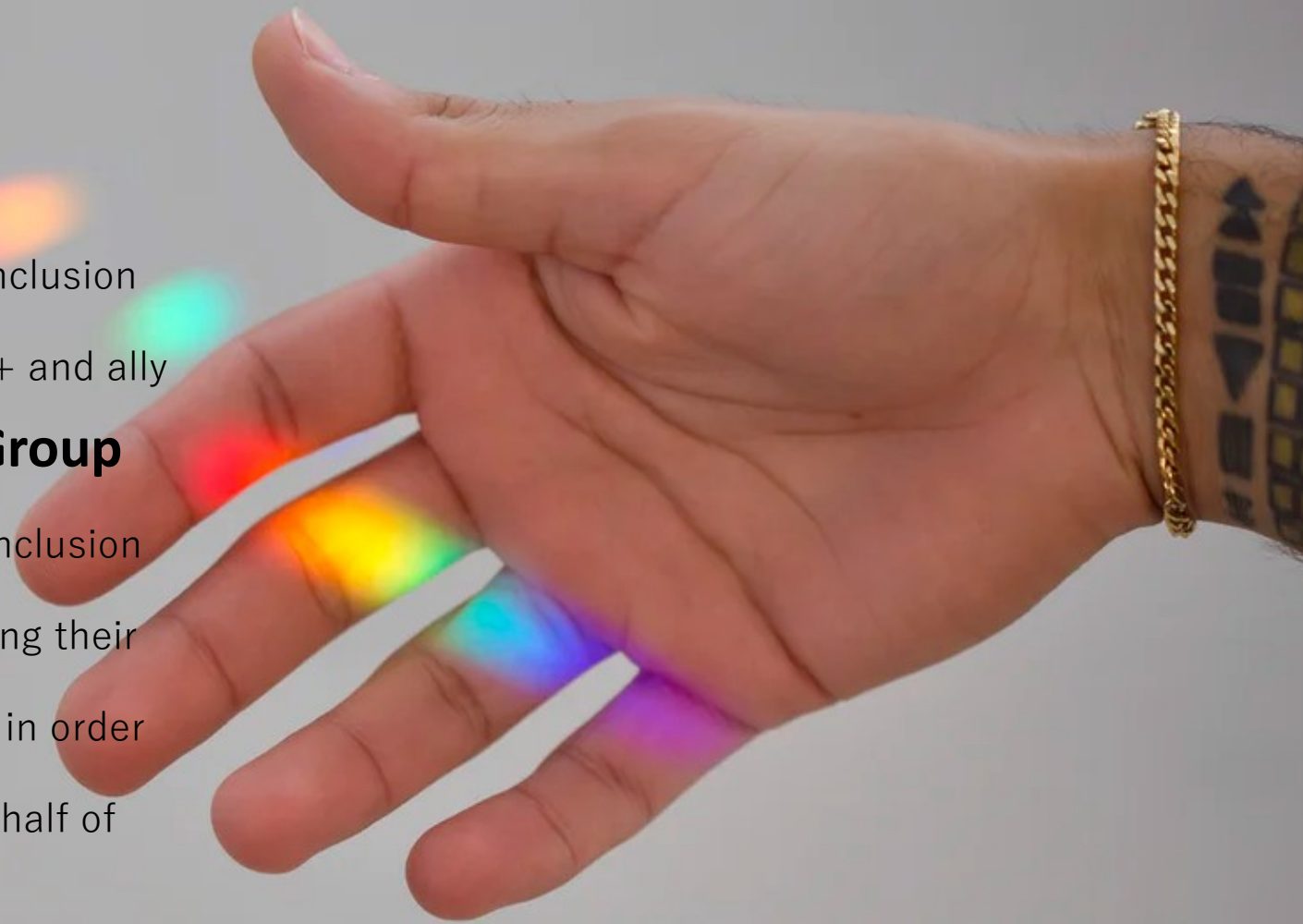
Fine: What message do you want to tell people reading this?

Spector: I would encourage folks to get involved. I think everyone has something valuable they can contribute. A good first step is get involved with one of the subcommittees. You can later up the ante by running for a spot on the advisory committee as a chair or admin liaison. Getting involved will open a lot of doors and give you front row seat on executive decision-making functions. Plus, everyone you will get to know some amazing people.

Fine: If people want to learn more about all the things you do, what should they do? Contact info, socials, whatever!

Spector: They can email me at Allison.spector@ofm.wa.gov.

The Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN) is an LGBTQ+ and ally **Business Resource Group** committed to diversity and inclusion efforts that allow staff to bring their full authentic selves to work in order to do their best work on behalf of Washingtonians.



Questions or feedback
RAIN@ofm.wa.gov

Visit our website
LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN

