

RAIN MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT

Jasper Marino

(they/them)

by Justin Taylor (he/him), L&I

How long have you been a Washington state employee and what do you do?

I've been with Washington State for about four and a half years, my current title is Employee Experience Manager, with the ESD Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I do a lot of stuff around employee engagement, review employee engagement data, projects like our mentorship program, and different projects to increase those scores. I also support our agency employee resource groups.

How long have you been involved with RAIN and what interested you initially?

I've been with RAIN for as long as I've been with the state, so four and a half years. I joined for a couple reasons; I was looking for community and also, I was really interested in the stuff Best Practices was working on. At the time they were drafting a survey to send out and that really interested me. And some encouragement from Cassie and you, Justin [laughs].

Have you held a RAIN leadership role?

Yes, co-chair of the Best Practices subcommittee and now co-chair of the Training ad-hoc group.

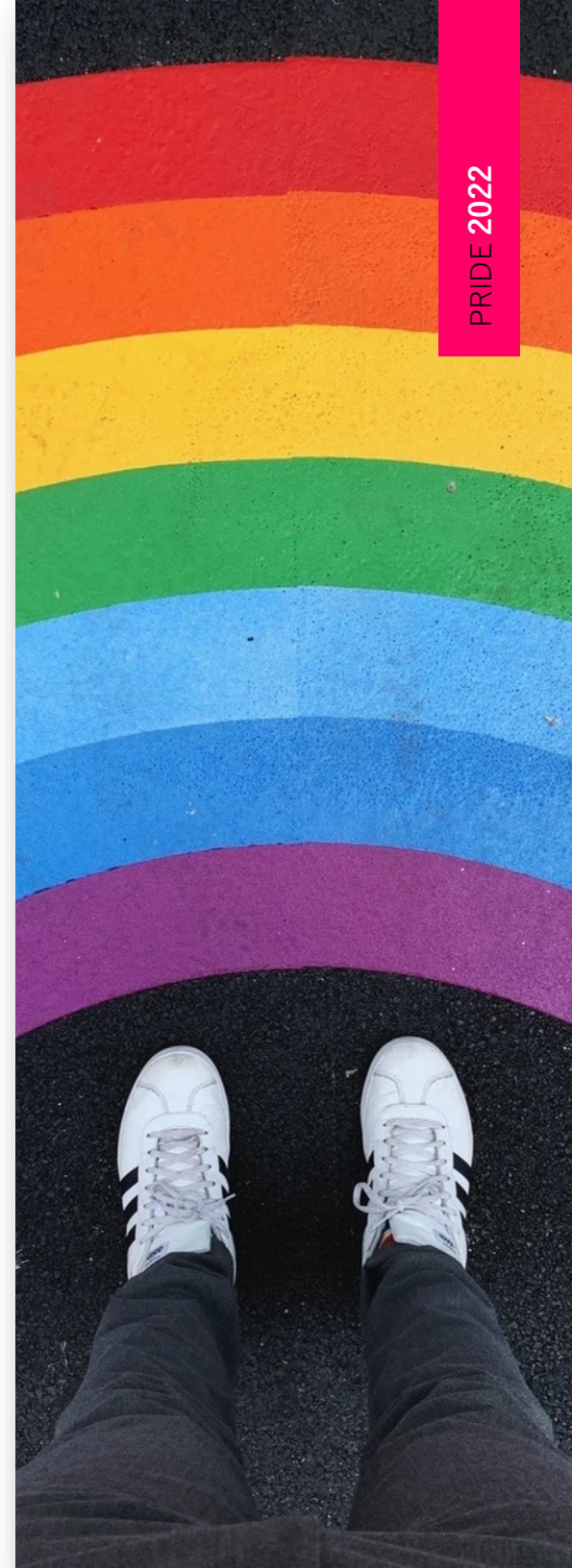
Why do you think RAIN is important to LGBTQIA+ employees?

Oh, so much – some of the ones that pop to mind are community, growth, and learning; being able to do work that actually changes culture across state agencies. For me, being a trans person, I don't really get to regularly work with other trans people; so getting to go to RAIN and be around other people who are out and trans, and have that same lived experience. So that community piece is really important to me. I also think hearing from all the folks that go to RAIN, (hearing) their stories and the different speakers we bring in. I feel like I've grown so much, just from showing up to the meetings and on top of that, I've had ample opportunity to build skills too. I never have done trainings or facilitated trainings, and now it's something I do all the time. I saw a gap where people wanted trainings and said, "I can do this and figure it out".

What do you feel is in store for RAIN in the coming years that excites you?

I know with the stability we're getting with OFM putting out for example the executive order cementing BRGs being here and being important. RAIN has already done so much, but what I'm hopeful for, is for more of that growth piece. I'm excited to see members be able to jump into opportunities...learn and build those skills that they want. As well, find that community. I think COVID has given us an opportunity to bring people from all over the state together and I love that – so I'm excited to see how that expands what we are able to do because we have people that couldn't come to meetings beforehand because they were on the eastside of the mountains. Sometimes we would Skype them in, but sometimes it wouldn't work, but now we get people from all over the state and that's a pretty amazing thing I think.

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So, I'm excited to see how having that vastness of people from all over the state can expand what we do and push us further into creating a really great culture statewide.

What's your community like? Family, friends, who YOU consider your community!

I really love this question. I think here in Olympia I have a really wonderful community that I consider to be my chosen family. We call ourselves "the Fruit Loops" [laughs]. It's mostly because of the cereal to be honest with you. Each person in this group that I call family are just the kindest, most thoughtful, wonderful human beings ever. It was just chance that we met them and it worked out. We get together every Friday evening to end our week together and just have snacks, and kind of talk about our week. We do a lot together; we do family dinners, go on vacation together, support each other, and show up when someone needs something. It's just [pause] a wonderful, weirdo family you know? I feel very lucky to have found that community because I have lived in a lot of states and this is the first place that I could say that I can feel that community; that support, that structure, and that kindness of being around people that understand and see you.

What are your hobbies?

Mostly I love being outside – so hiking, hammocking, snowshoeing, camping, kayaking – if it's outside, I'm there. I also do powerlifting, which is an interesting one. I have my first competition this June and it's a LGBTQ specific competition, which

is super exciting. I like building things, making moss walls, gardening, cooking – you know, the typical things. During COVID we built a dome shaped greenhouse on our lawn. Not sure how our neighbors feel, but I think it's cool [laughs].

Favorite food, movie or TV show?

Since I was a kid, the "I can eat this every day" thing is pizza. Not super original, but I can eat pizza every day.

My favorite movie for most of my life has been *Tank Girl*, which is such a weird movie [laughs]. I haven't watched in a while, so I don't know if it's aged well, but it was my favorite movie for a long time. It's such a strange movie though, most people don't know what I'm talking about. I don't really have a favorite TV Show.

Place you've never been to visit?

Singapore. I don't really know the answer to that [why Singapore?], but for some reason, I have always wanted to go to Singapore since high school. I went to culinary school too, so I think Singapore's food was amazing when we went through different cultural cuisines; their climate looks super cool, they have some amazing plants...something about it just... I just always wanted to go to Singapore. I don't have a great reason for it, but something about it has just drawn me there. One day I'll get there.

If you had the power to change one thing about the world, what would it be?

Oh gosh, such a heavy question. I think the

unrealistic answer is to remove suffering. There are just so many people in pain in the world that I would love to make that just go away, but I think that's not a realistic answer. I don't think there is a realistic answer for this I guess [laughs]. It just makes me so sad how many people are in pain on a consistent basis that if we can find a way to remove unnecessary suffering, I think it we would be so much better.

What else should we know about you?

I think something people don't know about me... I mean people should know it... but despite the fact that I do a lot of public speaking, facilitating and trainings, I'm an incredibly shy person socially. I really love engaging with people but I'm often too nervous to be the person to start that interaction. I say that because I welcome people to come talk to me, I'm just too shy to start the conversation. I think that's something that surprises people because in my work I have no problem talking in front of a group of people or facilitating, but in social situations, I shy away from interactions. I'm just a very, very shy person.

What messages do you have for those reading this?

There's been a lot of anti LGBTQ bills this year, so the message I want to get across is that – you belong. People that are part of the LGBTQ community belong; you have value, you have worth, and RAIN is here for folks. I know it's been hard for me with all these bills when they pop up and I know it's hard for a lot of other people. So the biggest thing I want people to take away is that LGBTQ people belong, have value and are worthy of taking up space, and should be here and should feel that community.