



AUG 2022







AUG 2022

# Olympia Pride Recap

Rain was living up to our name this year at Olympia Pride!

Despite the weather, we had a blast representing Washington LGBTQ+ Employees. It was a joyous day filled with love and laughter. We enjoyed talking to folks that stopped by our booth, we were able to share a lot with the community about state service and what RAIN provides to foster a more inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ employees. We can't wait to expand our Pride presence next year!

We'd like to give special thanks to the following agencies for donating "swag" and supporting our Pride Booth this year!

- **Washington Health Care Authority**
- **Washington Department of Social and Health Services**
- **Washington Student Achievement Council (WA529)**
- **Department of Enterprise Services**

Another special thanks to all the RAIN members who showed up to help set up and work the booth, and to our Advisory Committee team who donated funds to purchase decorations and candy.

Thank you all and we'll see you next year!





# AGENCY Spotlight

AUG 2022

## RAIN member leads DEI project at DES

A new room is being set up in Office Building 2 (OB2) on the Capitol Campus with a very important purpose. Department of Enterprise Services (DES) Custodian **Andri Chavez** with the Buildings & Grounds Division (B&G), had a vision for this new room: “to create a safe and welcoming workspace for everyone coming into DES.”

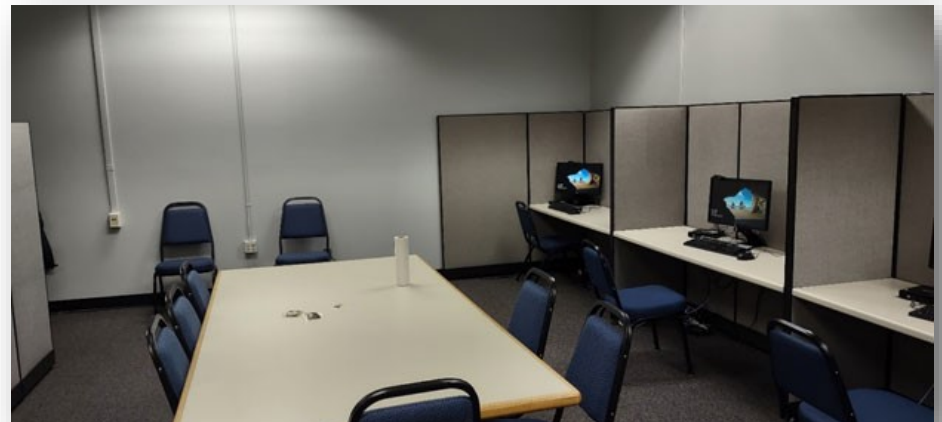
The project aims to help the space be inviting and put people entering this space at ease. The entryway will feature visible representations of support and acceptance, and small educational pieces that can be changed out periodically. The content of these pieces will spotlight marginalized people of any group that has been historically oppressed, events that are important to these groups, and other relevant DEI topics approved by management.

The room will serve several practical purposes to support DES employees, and specifically those within B&G. It will house the daytime caretaker supervisor’s desk, as well as computer stations where staff who don’t have a dedicated workstation can access their email, timecards and other programs. It will be used for interviews and trainings. There will be a large table and video-equipped tv/computer, which will be able to serve individuals or groups of employees attending virtual meetings. With this last purpose in mind, Andri has been intentional in creating a space that goes beyond just practicality.

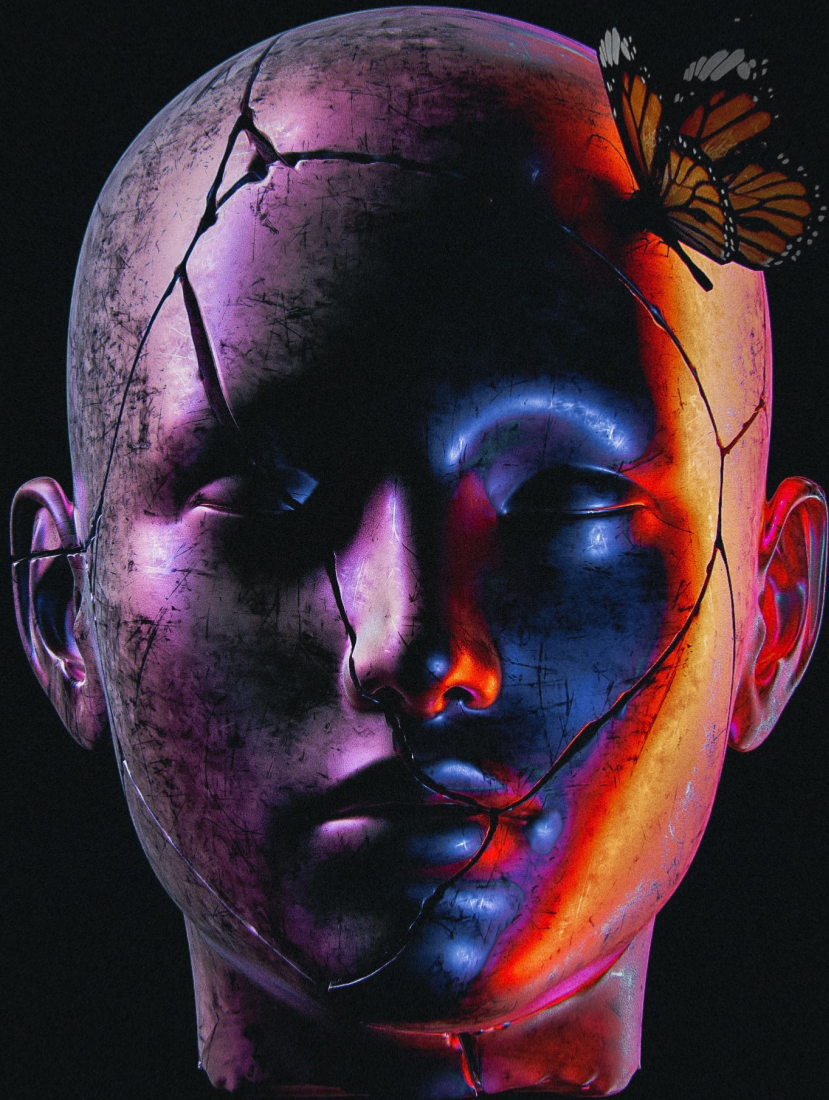
“I have been approved to use this space to host access to the RAIN BRG (Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network Business Resource Group) General Membership meetings,” said Andri, “so that people can join who don’t feel safe attending from their desk; don’t have access to their own work desk, such as custodial and trades; or just want to be able to meet others in B&G that are LGBTQIA+ identifying.”

To realize Andri’s vision, the front entrance of the new space will showcase artwork of the LGBTQIA+ progression flag as well as other welcoming items, and inside the room, there will be a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) education board.

Andri’s hard work to create an inclusive workplace has been making an impact all around DES. Thank you, Andri, for your leadership in this very important representation of how we live out our values at DES.







# Intersect

by Abigayle Coleman (she/her, they/them), ATG

I am nervous to walk in the store,  
I look at a person and immediately come up with a rebuttal,  
Before they can hurt me,  
I am throwing venom in my mind,  
But outside I am quiet and unassuming.

I shiver and cry to video clips,  
Where people scream go back to where you came from,  
And I see the pride parade almost attacked by a white supremacy group,  
And I am back in high school to those guys,  
With their flags on their trucks,  
Following me home and calling me slurs,  
Who saw me but a few weeks ago,  
And pulled over and yelled at me.

I know they tormented the out and proud too,  
Thank God they never knew.

And now I am at the pride event again,  
A couple of weeks after I fought for representation,  
And a group of cisgender gay men,  
Look me up and down and roll their eyes,

At my service dog and my tan skin.  
I almost cry right there and then.

I feel the trauma in my bones,  
When I walked a girl my age through an US citizen's application,  
And she is denied,  
I feel the trauma in my bones,  
When my friend went to the gay bar,  
And thought they were about to die,  
At the sound of gun shots pointed at them.



And when I go to get medicine,  
They tell me to lose weight,  
Exercise,  
And blame it on my mental health,

And even now,  
I fight for the same treatment as my fiancée.  
And there I was in the ER and the Asian doctor,  
Told them all the tests,  
I asked the white doctor to politely stop talking,  
And he took it all away.  
And as my beautiful fiancée tried to stand up for  
me, I apologized over and over to my white nurse,  
So afraid of being deemed aggressive.

I know the pain of tokenism,  
In both communities.  
The quirky, needs Jesus, gay friend,  
And that brown voice,  
Let us use her as the face of our campaign,  
And your story is oh so tragic.  
Let us exploit it,  
And being told I am sinner,  
When at the age of 9 I thought I was  
Already more broken and evil than my classmates,

As my teachers declared it was God's will,  
For the genocide of my people.

And I know the feeling  
Of dehumanization,  
And overarching statements,  
As people assume I am not from here,  
Or that I will not be going to heaven with them.

And when I tell my story,  
I have brought white ladies down on their knees,  
In tears as they say,  
You poor little thing.  
I had learned to smile,  
When racist family say build the wall to me,  
And when I stood up,  
And dare to come out,  
I was disowned on both counts.

Now my fiancée and I want kids,  
The discussion came up,  
There will be a race talk.  
And she teared up,  
Because our little family  
Would have to teach our children,  
Why people are mean,  
About their two mommies,  
And the skin color of our babies.

And even now my fiancée and I are  
Discussing if we should go ahead and get married  
Before that right is taken away  
For being interracial and gay.

I know the pain and traumas,  
The PTSD that is so unique to us.

And yet I have so much to learn,  
Please don't ask me to educate you,  
Please help me learn with you.





AUG 2022



# Annual Elections

**We are excited to announce the candidates for our 2022-2023 RAIN Leadership positions.**

The election process will take place August 19 through September 23. Active RAIN members will receive a Survey Monkey link to vote.

Make sure to attend our October 20, 2022 General Membership meeting to welcome our newly elected leadership!



# Taja Blackhorn



CHI/HER

## CO-CHAIR



Taja [Chi/Her] identifies as cis-gendered, bi, disabled, mixed race-Indigenous, mother to two amazing LGBTQ+ kids. Chi has worked for the state since 2016, and has been a member of RAIN since 2017.

Chi is passionate about social justice and centering an equity lens in every aspect of life. While working for the state, chi expanded their advocacy work for creating awareness, improving education, setting the example, and sometimes drawing the line in the sand to build equity for Indigenous and LGBTQ+ issues via ICSEW, BUILD, and inner agency efforts.

As RAIN's Co-Chair for the 2021-2022 cycle, chi has worked towards building cross-BRG communications, relationships, shared events, and centering intersectionality in the public discourse.

Chi earned a BA from Evergreen with focus on cultural studies emphasizing cross-cultural communication, organizational behavior, community building, and sub-cultural family formations. This combined with 30+ years of experience as a community Diversity Educator has provided chi the opportunity to serve the community in multiple ways on individual, group, and organizational levels. Providing safe shelter for LGBTQ+ youth who were de-housed when they came out. Creating and protecting respectful and safe spaces where LGBTQ+ voices have power and agency. Serving as an idea and informational conduit between interested parties – ensuring everyone affected is included in the conversation and their words and needs are recognized, given due respect, and supported.

On the less serious side; hobbies include getting out into nature, and if water is involved even better; most things fantasy/sci-fi; definite Whovian; tabletop gaming; writing, and painting. Plus for fun: Scorpio with Pisces Moon, and Leo rising.



# Jasper Marino



THEY/THEM



## CO-CHAIR

My name is Jasper (they/them) and I am transgender, nonbinary, and queer. The reason I want to run for co-chair is simple, I believe in this group. I believe in our collective ability to make positive change for LGBTQ+ state employees, I believe in supporting and uplifting our community, and I believe in our power to make systemic changes for a more equitable future for LGBTQ+ folks in WA state. I grew up in Connecticut and lived in Texas and Arkansas before moving to Olympia where I live with my partner Ranger and dog Steve. I work at Employment Security Department in our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion office. As part of this office I have supported ESD in centering equity in all the agency does. This includes supporting ESD's five Employee Resource Groups, rolling out several initiatives to address equity gaps, and supporting education efforts related to equity. I have done one on one mentoring as well as coached large groups and have been a strong advocate, often having difficult conversations with leaders at all levels, including executives. I have been an active member of RAIN for almost five years in which I was the co-chair of the Best Practices subcommittee for three years and I now co-lead RAIN's training committee. RAIN has been the support I needed while I transitioned at work, the community I needed when I felt isolated during Covid, and the educator I needed as I continue to learn and grow. I have had the opportunity to work on many of our projects and recommendations such as the bathroom signage package, pronoun FAQ and a few others. I have also led the effort (with a lot of support) for RAIN to be able to have trainings available for all state employees. If I get elected, I hope to expand on the strong foundation previous chairs have established by continuing to lift the voices and advocate on behalf of the group, build deeper relationships with our partners such as OFM and other BRGs, and create room for members to develop, grow, and connect. It's been amazing being a part of RAIN and I hope you consider voting for me for Co-chair.



# Robin Lang



SHE/HER

CO-CHAIR



Hi, my name is Robin Lang, I am the LGBTQ+ Veterans Outreach Coordinator for YOUR Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA). I connect LGBTQ+ veterans to their earned benefits, services, programs, resources, and information in order to promote the economic security and financial stability. Additionally, I help to shape Washington laws for the LGBTQ+ and veteran communities through advocacy and direct recommendations to the Legislature. Prior to joining WDVA, I worked at the Washington Military Department, where I headed up Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Security for the State of Washington. I retired from the Army in 2015, where I last served as the CIO of Madigan Army Medical Center. In my spare time, I enjoy photography and running, and I have even knocked out a few 50K trail runs.

I am running for the co-chair position because of the personal significance of RAIN to my own journey and I want to give back in the hopes that others will be able to have the same positive experience. RAIN was a contributing factor in my decision to transition in the workplace. At my very first RAIN meeting several years ago I saw members of the LGBTQ+ community openly and proudly being visible as an example to others that you can bring your whole self to work and be embraced as a valuable member of the workforce. I bring an enthusiasm and passion to the position for work I believe in. My entire career has been based on a desire to help others, from my early days as a medic to my current job advocating for and supporting LGBTQ+ veterans. The passion continues outside of work where I volunteer on the board of a trans/non-binary social club as the membership director as well as mentoring trans women as they begin their journey emerging into public life. To sum it up, it's personal and I am passionate about the opportunity to help others.



# Erika Redzinak



SHE/HER

## ADMINISTRATIVE LIAISON



Hello! My name is Erika Redzinak, I use she/her pronouns, and I am running for a second term as the Administrative Liaison. Over the course of my first year as Admin, I have enjoyed supporting RAIN's mission of helping "Washington State create safe and inclusive workplaces where every LGBTQ+ employee can bring their full authentic self to work" as well as promoting awareness, growing the BRG membership, and connecting Washington state employees and agencies to the important work RAIN is doing. I've learned a lot about the "behind the scenes" effort RAIN admins perform, and I would love to continue it!

I have been a member of RAIN for four years and it's been wonderful to see all the hard work and dedication this BRG does for ALL state employees. I want to continue this energy as your Administrative Liaison moving forward into 2023.



# Alison Mielke



SHE/HER



## ADMINISTRATIVE LIAISON

I was nominated to apply for this position, and would be happy to serve in such a role. I started participating in RAIN because I want to do more than just sit in meetings where the need for changes is discussed. Action and involvement is needed. Since starting, I have been getting more proactively involved in RAIN, such as being part of the group that will research standards of professionalism within state agencies and seek out where changes need to occur.

This month I applied for and was accepted as a new LGBTQ+ lead for our region in the Licensing Division (LD) in DCYF, where I work, and am excited about that opportunity. The LGBTQ+ leads are available to staff situations, including concerns about home study applicants regarding support of LGBTQ+ youth with other staff in LD. Recognizing that I have a significant amount of privilege, it is my responsibility to use it to advocate for social justice in a variety of ways. I'm raising my white sons, who are growing up with the maximum of societally-given privilege and it's my job to raise them to not fall into complacency.

I have a lot of experience staying organized professionally, taking notes in meetings, using Zoom (although I need to learn a bit more to run a meeting), and tracking information. I have been the executive director of an environmental non-profit, worked with the community to advocate statewide for environmental protection, ran a successful state senate campaign, worked in the senate for more than 8 years, and worked in child welfare since I completed my masters' degree in 2013. I work well with others and am a good communicator. In the senate and especially here in social work I have had a lot of experience having difficult conversations with people. Having held all of these positions has honed the skills needed for this position. Thank you for considering me.



# Andri Chavez



SHE/HER

## PROJECT MANAGER



I first joined RAIN 10 months ago. This was a very uncertain time for me for various reasons including coming out as a trans woman at work with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) in the Buildings and Grounds (B&G) division. I did not know what to expect or what was coming down the pipeline in the next coming months both professionally and personally.

Despite all of these challenges, unknowns and barriers, I have found the drive and focus to be my true and authentic self at work. As a result of this, I have left a profound and lasting impression with my coworkers in the B&G division and DES. I am striving to be the change I want to see at DES and the State.

My personal and professional diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) journey has allowed me to meet some truly inspiring people. I have found myself working on a larger and progressive DEI project I initiated at B&G. This continuing project will benefit, celebrate and acknowledge diversity and multiculturalism while at the same time providing a safe place for the LGBTQIA+ community. The idea behind the project was inspired in part by the people who have come to me showing acceptance and support for me and the LGBTQIA+ community both inside and outside the Department of Enterprise Services.

As an active member of RAIN, I want to apply this same drive, passion and focus as a Program and Project Manager. This position is a chance for me to do and be more as an advocate, change maker and member for the LGBTQIA+ community. As such, I ask for your support and vote of this goal. Thank you.



# Zoë Curlee-Strauss

THEY/THEM



## BUDGET & FINANCE MANAGER



I am excited to run for the position of RAIN Budget & Finance Manager. I believe I have the skills and experience to establish this new position and make it a success. I've been with the state for just over four years, with the majority of that time spent as a Budget Analyst for Dept of Enterprise Services (DES) and Dept of Fish & Wildlife (DFW). I also have a degree in Economics from New College of Florida. I love solving number puzzles and resolving issues, both of which have served me well in my work. My experience with budgets and state finance more generally will allow me to apply myself to the position. In my free time I enjoy gardening, baking bread, and making mediocre pottery.

I am relatively new to RAIN but it has played an important role in my work life. I first went to RAIN after coming out in 2020 but only started going regularly after starting in a new position this spring. I was very nervous about coming out here, especially around my gender identity. RAIN has helped me feel comfortable bringing my authentic self to work. I'm not out to all of my coworkers but I no longer feel like I have to hide. Going to RAIN meetings has also helped me meet other LGBTQIA+ employees in my division and we are starting to build a community here.

I want to contribute and give back to this organization that has helped me so much. I hope you will support me in achieving this goal!





PRESENTS

# BLACK PRIDE

2022

I Identify, We Unify, Let's Black Pride

**August 18-21 // Seattle, WA**

A weekend for everyone including workshops, paint and sip, a dating game, Sage dinner, 3 parties, and a health and wellness festival.

FEATURING

**Sevndeeep**
**RIKO WITH A K • Neverending Nina**

The Jacob Drummond • Saffron Volt • Ladie Chablis • Julian Lanvin  
 Koach T • Lamont White • Edens Garden Series • Autry Bell  
 Bobbi K • Javaè • Regine Dynasty • Steven Sawyer


**POCAAN**
**BIEIU**
**GILEAD**  
 Creating Possible

**NORDSTROM**

**AARTH**  
 AFRICAN AMERICANS  
 REACH & TEACH  
 HEALTH MINISTRY

**FRED HUTCH**

[www.nwblackpride.org](http://www.nwblackpride.org)



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.

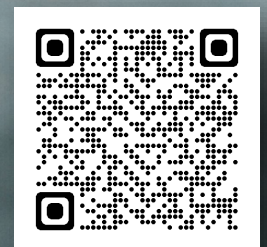


Questions or feedback

**[RAIN@ofm.wa.gov](mailto:RAIN@ofm.wa.gov)**

Visit our website

**[LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN](https://LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN)**



AUG 2022