



Pride 2024

Thank you Manny Santiago

Earlier this year, the RAIN BRG said farewell to our Executive Sponsor, J. Manny Santiago. Manny joined the RAIN BRG as Executive Sponsor in 2020 following the departure of John Weisman, former Secretary of Health. Manny guided us through an unprecedented shift from in person general membership meetings in Thurston county, to virtual Zoom meetings accessible to any employee across the state with internet access.

Under Manny's leadership, RAIN expanded our membership and strengthened our community during a time of social isolation. With Manny's support, RAIN developed a statewide training program, and expanded our Best Practices guidance for state agencies. As a token of our gratitude, the RAIN leadership honored Manny with this glass award. Thank you, Manny for your leadership and support of the RAIN BRG!

Following his time as the inaugural Executive Director of the LGBTQ+ Commission, Manny recently became the Chief of Equity and Community Partnerships at the Washington Health Benefit Exchange.



LET OUR PRIDE RAIN DOWN

As we begin another pride season, our community is reflecting and uniting. We're celebrating the moments that bring us queer joy. We're expressing the power in our pride.

Pride season can also be overwhelming, reinforce unrealistic expectations, or feel exclusionary. It's important we take care of ourselves, support our loved ones, and be allies to others during Mental Health Awareness Month (May). We're also embracing the beauty of our community's intersectionality by recognizing AANHPI Heritage Month (May), Immigrant Heritage Month (June), Juneteenth, and Disability Pride Month (July).

To our beloved 2SLGBTQ+ family and our allies...**Happy Pride!**

RAIN 2024 PRIDE MONTH STATEMENT

Pride Month is a time to celebrate the 2SLGBTQ+ community and acknowledge the advancements in the quest for equality. It's also a period for community recovery and self-nurturing. RAIN is deliberately shifting its focus this month away from educating others in the state enterprise to concentrate on organizing events and activities for 2SLGBTQ+ employees and allies. RAIN will offer spaces for members to connect with others who share similar life experiences, share personal stories, and seek mutual support.



The 2SLGBTQ+ community is facing an increase in violent attacks aimed at erasing transgender and gender-diverse individuals. While instances of violence against 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are sadly not uncommon, the recent surge in violent attacks through physical, psychological, and legislative means follows many years of small victories for the community. This highlights the importance for Washington state to create intentional spaces for healing.

This month, RAIN is urging agencies to support 2SLGBTQ+ employees in participating in state-approved Pride events and providing them with opportunities for self-care. Let's continue to honor and support the 2SLGBTQ+ community, while emphasizing the importance of self-care and healing. Pride provides a time to show support, observe, listen, and learn as we affirm our commitment to growing an inclusive future.



A REFLECTION ON LAVENDER RIGHTS PROJECT'S OFFICE GROUNDBREAKING

by Masozi Nyirenda (she/her), DES

As a so-called 'triple minority'— or, in some circles, a 'triple threat'— being a woman, Black and an immigrant, I intimately understand the challenges of discrimination and the uphill battles to find a sense of belonging. This shared experience has instilled in me a deep sense of empathy and solidarity with other marginalized groups, including the QT2BIPOC (queer, trans, Two-spirit, Black, indigenous, and people of color) community. That's why attending the Lavender Rights Project's (LRP) Office Groundbreaking event in February during Black History Month was extremely special and emotional for me.

Returning to Seattle's historically queer and trans Capitol Hill neighborhood, the LRP's office is an organizing space, community building and connection center, and place for folks to exhale and get their groove back. This remodeled space exuded warmth and inclusivity from the moment I stepped in.

Amidst the joyous chatter and laughter, the significance of the occasion was noticeable. LRP's commitment to uplifting and empowering Black trans lives resonated deeply with me. It wasn't just about the physical renovation; it was about creating a sanctuary—a space where marginalized voices are amplified and where advocacy translates into tangible action.



Throughout the evening, as I engaged in conversations and learned about LRP's ongoing work, I couldn't help but reflect on my own journey. I understand the importance of allyship and solidarity. I recognize that my struggles, though different in nature, intersect with those faced by the QT2BIPOC community.

Events like the office groundbreaking serve as powerful reminders of the strength and resilience of our community and the transformative power of collective action. They underscore the importance of using our platforms and privileges to advocate for those whose voices are often silenced or ignored.

I am honored and committed to stand in solidarity with the QT2BIPOC community and to continue the fight for equality and justice. I feel a profound sense of duty to use my privileges to celebrate, advocate and empower others, but most of all to learn and grow.

The office groundbreaking was not just an event; it was a celebration of resilience, advocacy, and community—a testament to the unwavering spirit of those committed to creating a more just and inclusive world for all.

RAIN MEMBERS HONORED FOR PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

Public service employees play a vital role in our communities, often working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth functioning of government agencies, public institutions, and essential services. These dedicated individuals contribute to our well-being, yet their efforts often go unnoticed.

Enter the Public Service Recognition Awards. These honors celebrate outstanding public servants who go above and beyond their call of duty. These awards shine a spotlight on those who exemplify excellence, dedication, and innovation in their respective fields. At this year's Public Service Recognition Week event, several RAIN members were recognized for their effort and dedication to state service.



EXTRA MILE AWARD

ANGELA BERG

DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING

Nominated by Daniel Cooke

Angela Berg exemplifies excellence through her leadership, commitment to inclusivity and educational expertise at the Department of Licensing. Her initiative—a unique driver knowledge testing system for neurodivergent individuals—not only revolutionized accessibility within the DOL, but also embodies the department's purpose statement, "Helping every Washington resident live, work, drive, and thrive."

Recognizing the limitations of traditional testing for neurodivergent individuals, Angela developed an alternative knowledge assessment system. This system incorporates diverse learning styles and sensory perceptions, ensuring fair and accurate evaluations without compromising testing standards. Her system recognizes the limitations of traditional methods and paves the way for inclusive testing practices across diverse populations.

Beyond individual accessibility, Angela's visionary leadership fostered empathy and innovation. Championing neurodivergent needs, she inspired her team through a collaborative approach, fueling the project from inception to implementation. Rooted in equity, Angela's tireless advocacy seeks to dismantle systemic biases, ensuring equal access to driving privileges through an innovative testing system. By dismantling barriers, individuals are empowered to participate fully in their communities, upholding the core values of diversity and inclusion. Her commitment also extends beyond accessibility, creating a welcoming and supportive environment with tailored solutions for a positive and dignified testing experience for every participant.

In conclusion, Angela Berg's impact extends beyond driver knowledge testing. She is a leader, an innovator and a champion for inclusivity. Her work embodies the highest ideals of public service, transforming lives and paving the way for a more equitable and accessible future. Her nomination for this award is a testament to her extraordinary contributions and her unwavering commitment to serving the entire Washington community.





EXTRA MILE AWARD

AMIRA JOY NORTE CALUYA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

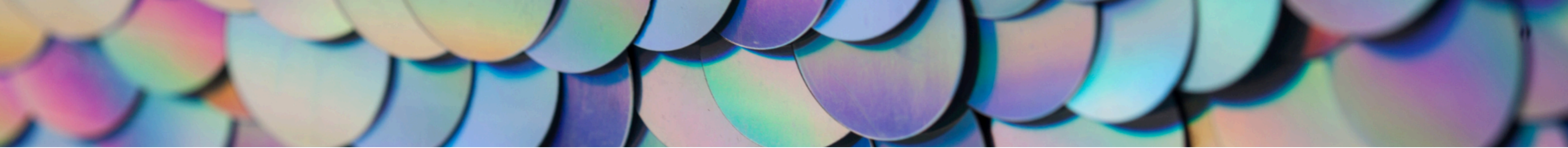
Nominated by Elaina I Perry

As Amira's supervisor, I have seen them excel in the many workstreams that they have taken part in. Beyond their everyday excellence, they have shown themselves to be deeply committed to equity in the implementation of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in Washington. In the past year, I have had the privilege of learning from Amira as they've led trust-building work to engage Tribal partners in building 988 in Washington and transforming the mental-health crisis care continuum. This work is no small feat considering the state's historical challenges with properly supporting and engaging Indigenous communities.

Amira has supported intentional decision-making that has often led up within our cross-agency team in ways that drive us to make more meaningful engagement efforts. They have shown up with patience and strength and flexed their historical social worker muscles when confronting crucial conversations.

Amira has also become a subject matter expert in their legislative work, creating tools for our team to track the impact of legislation and decisions around 988 in all policy-making settings. They've worked to build tools that promote collaboration from partners and the public in rule-making efforts and tools that proactively support the 988 team to fill knowledge gaps on engagement work.

Amira recently began to mentor other members of the team around navigating legislative session, bill analyses, and hearings. They demonstrate that leadership at all levels is not only possible, but essential for success. On a project that aims to respond in times of crisis, with legislative mandates that move the work at the speed of light, Amira is a beacon of calm. They lead through their values, thoughtful inquiry and well-timed laughs that support our team to think strategically and not just quickly, despite external pressures.



LEADERSHIP AWARD

**MARIANNE
OZMUN-WELLS
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING**

Nominated by Lani Fowlkes

Marianne is a servant leader with over 30 years of commitment to social justice and DEI. As DOL’s Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO) Administrator, Marianne demonstrates dedication to DEI through consulting, training and communication. Marianne’s vision is to advance equity and access throughout state government. She inspires staff to identify inclusive, equitable ways to remove barriers for customers. She is a member of several business resource groups and recently accepted the Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network’s Outstanding Agency award with the Director.

Outside of DOL, Marianne is a Social Justice and Equity Commissioner on Olympia’s Law Enforcement Oversight subcommittee. She cultivates DEI by providing consultation and training and using a DEI lens on policy development and reform.

Marianne accomplished the following in 2023:

- Authored the comprehensive annual Equity Performance PEAR report.
- Led the work to bring CDP/CDE training and certification to DOL.
- Provided a PEAR session at the Office of Equity’s Annual Summit.
- Developed the EIO five-year plan of critical deliverables.
- Initiated cross-divisional teamwork to remove barriers and allowed persons with neurodiversity to successfully take a driver’s knowledge exam in a testing environment that was inclusive for them.

Marianne takes pride in integrity and building trust—internally and externally. Marianne has built a rapport with community partners, enabling them to trust DOL and feel comfortable reaching out with challenges and barriers they are facing. She genuinely cares about her staff and encourages them to show up as their authentic selves.

Marianne holds CDP and CDE certifications and has authored multiple articles modeling DEI. She will be presenting at the 2024 DEI Empowerment Conference. Her topics will include looking at “anti-DEIB” efforts, learning tools for building DEIB momentum, and sharing self- and community-care approaches. Marianne is a Certified Diversity Professional Trainer and is teaching two cohorts of over 40 employees.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

MARK METZGER

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

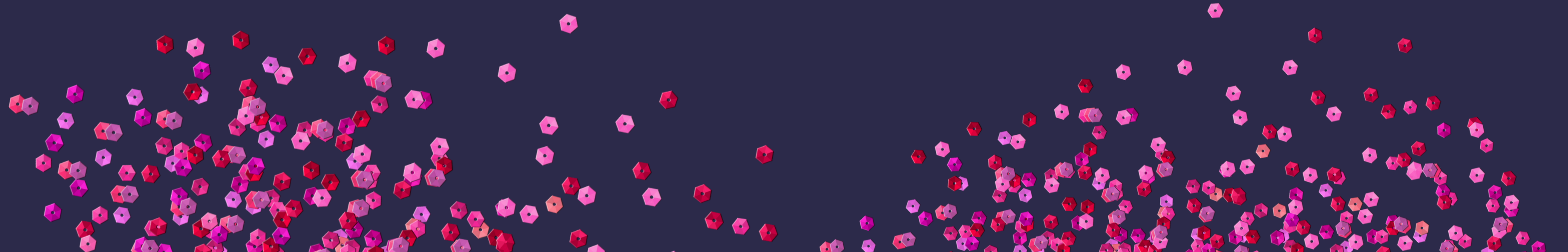
Nominated by Michaela Doelman

Mark started with OFM State HR in October 2022. On his own initiative, Mark joined the OFM DEI council, first as a member, and was quickly elected as co-chair. During his year-long tenure, he helped bring a new vision to the DEI council including obtaining funding for employees to attend The People's Gathering, designing facilitated spaces for people to debrief after watching The Who We Are video (a mandatory DEI training) and helped to create a safe space which has resulted in 74% of employees feeling a sense of belonging in OFM and 83% believing their coworkers help create that sense of belonging.

Within State HR, Mark has used his vision to help innovate the Governor's Outstanding Leadership Awards process, removing gender and other identifying language in award nominations to help reduce assessment bias and weaving equity criteria into all parts of the nomination form. He has helped build tools and processes for a more inclusive hybrid workplace and has built an onboarding program to help ensure virtual employees still get a chance to meet and know colleagues across the division.

For the enterprise, Mark is leading work to innovate monthly HR managers' meetings for more cross-agency collaboration and sharing of best practices. He's currently working with members of the DEI council to have them share their stories and experiences to improve the overall experience of state employees as outlined in our strategic plan. Mark was also elected as a co-chair for the RAIN BRG.

Every day, Mark demonstrates what servant leadership looks like by actively listening, taking the initiative and being willing to use his leadership role to create impactful change so that all employees across state government have a workplace where they belong and can thrive.



LEADERSHIP AWARD

JASPER MARINO

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

Nominated by Ayanna Colman

At ESD, one name resonates with unwavering commitment and transformative impact: Jasper Marino. It is my honor to nominate Jasper for the prestigious Leadership Award. Their multifaceted leadership, innovative spirit and genuine care for our team have left an indelible mark.

A Communicator Extraordinaire: Jasper's leadership begins with communication. They deftly navigate the intricate web of information flow. Interactions with Jasper reveal a compassionate ear, a willingness to listen and a knack for providing context. Jasper shares insights from diverse spaces they inhabit, ensuring transparency and alignment. No question goes unanswered; Jasper's commitment to clarity is unwavering.

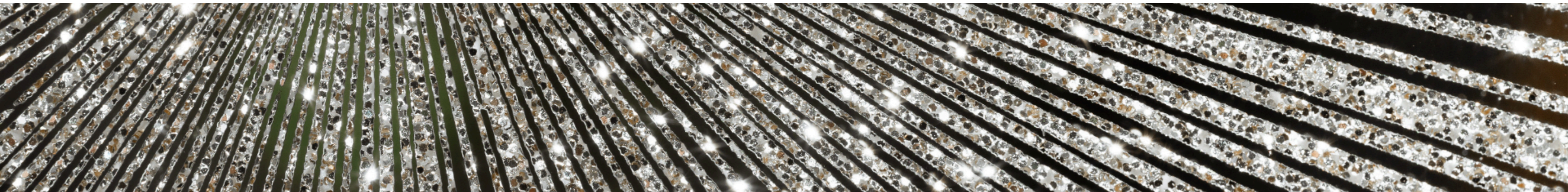


Innovator and Catalyst: Jasper's ideas are the heartbeat of our office. The quarterly EDI newsletter? Jasper's brainchild. The EDI office inbox? Their creation. But it doesn't stop there. Jasper leads conversations on anti-racism, challenging norms, and driving change. Their proactive outreach to agency partners fosters collaboration and shared success. Jasper's mantra: feedback fuels growth, and inclusivity is our compass.

Coaching and Mentorship: Jasper's mentorship transcends mere guidance. They invest in our agency, sharing wisdom generously. As co-chair of the PRIDE ERG and RAIN BRG, Jasper champions LGBTQ+ voices. Their journey in EDI work becomes a beacon, illuminating intersectionality and centering anti-racism.

Virtual Leadership, Real Impact: In the virtual realm, Jasper thrives. Teams, platforms and tools—they utilize them all. Our remote team stays engaged, thanks to Jasper's tireless efforts. They adapt, innovate, and prioritize accessibility. Group preferences matter; adjustments are made. Jasper's commitment to virtual excellence ensures our agency's resilience.

In summary, Jasper embodies leadership that transcends titles. Their legacy is etched in every conversation, every initiative and every heart touched. As we honor their contributions, let us celebrate Jasper—the architect of change, the empathetic mentor and the virtual trailblazer. A true leader, deserving of the PSRW Leadership Award.





SHOWING SUPPORT

Courtesy of Best Practices

Creating a supportive and accepting environment for 2SLGBTQ+ employees allows them to bring their true selves to work. This toolkit is designed to provide ideas on how each agency can take steps to acknowledge and show support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community during Pride Month.

This toolkit is meant to be a foundation for agencies to build their own Pride Month show of support. The resources provided are basic printable flyers and visuals from various sources. Although Pride Month is a good time to acknowledge the 2SLGBTQ+ community, showing support for 2SLGBTQ+ employees and customers should not be limited to the month of June.

WE NEED YOU!

Is your agency implementing something exciting? Are you aware of an event or topic our RAIN members would enjoy? Do you just have something gay to say?

If you would like to contribute an article for our next newsletter, we'd love to hear from you!

Connect with us!
RAIN@ofm.wa.gov



**MENTAL
HEALTHCARE IN
THE 2SLGBTQIA+
COMMUNITY:
GREAT NEEDS AND
HIGH BARRIERS**

by Nicoli Dominn (they/them), DSHS



Organizations across the US observe Mental Health Awareness Month each May, but awareness of mental health issues is only the beginning of important discussions on the ongoing mental healthcare crisis in the US. Recent statistics from multiple sources, including [Goldsen Institute](#); [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#); [Kaiser Family Foundation \(KFF\)](#); [\(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)\)](#); [The Trevor Project](#); and [Center for American Progress \(CAP\)](#), show disproportionately high needs for and barriers to mental healthcare in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, compared to overall national and Washington state populations. Several of the risk factors for mental health issues, like poverty, discrimination, and physical health conditions, also become barriers to mental health care, and they are further pronounced when weighing gender diversity, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and disability within the 2SLGBTQIA+ population. All subpopulations feel the shortage of available mental health providers and high out-of-pocket mental healthcare costs, but the impacts are higher on different marginalized groups.



According to Catalyst Café owner Adair Gearhart, who describes himself as Autistic, indigenous, libra-masculine, andro-romantic, and asexual, out-of-pocket costs for mental health counseling have typically been \$100 or more per visit, with very few sliding-scale or free options. “Unless the sliding-scale goes to ‘free,’ I can’t afford it – especially not when I’m living in a car,” Gearhart said, referring to their prior experiences as an unhoused young adult. In addition to housing instability, Gearhart reports having experienced generational trauma and poverty, sexual violence, and discrimination on multiple bases, believing all factors have contributed to their multiple mental health diagnoses and symptoms.

Seeing trends of poverty, trauma, and social isolation in common with their 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, Gearhart founded Everett, Washington’s 2SLGBTQIA+-friendly Catalyst Café as a sober, all-ages community space. Gearhart hopes the café will provide the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community with artistic and social outlets, anticipating the start of the café’s 2SLGBTQIA+-focused certified peer counselor-led support groups.



“Even with a list of providers [from a health insurance network], you still have to research each provider, especially to see if they’re gender-affirming, if they’re accepting new patients [...]. Add in the fact that the provider genuinely might not want to talk to you because you’re queer, and that’s a whole other barrier,” says Gearhart, citing reasons why their café provides affordable support group options, and why they collect and share contact information of known local mental health professionals specifically offering their services to 2SLGBTQIA+ patients.

An anonymous friend, who describes themselves as Black, neurodivergent, polysexual, and a demi-guy, discussed their difficulties with navigating the mental health system and finding culturally appropriate care. They have faced a combination of familial judgment and rejection, bullying, and discrimination from early childhood onward, based on some or all their identities. They first sought counseling through their employer’s Employee Assistance Program in 2018 due to rising family conflict and feelings of isolation.

continued...



“I didn’t know what to look for at the time; I was just looking to talk to someone, and maybe get some answers,” they said, stating that they initially had little idea of their specific needs, possible diagnoses, or how to seek mental healthcare. Like nearly 40% of 2SLGBTQIA+ people of color who have reported negative experiences with mental healthcare providers based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or race, they struggled to find a mental healthcare provider who showed respect or understanding, let alone a provider who looked like them and made them feel safe to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity.

About 44% of the Washington adult 2SLGBTQIA+ community has delayed seeking any type of healthcare, believing there is a lack of 2SLGBTQIA+-friendly providers in their area. Some providers, like Quinn Opatowsky (LICSWA, TheraGeek Counseling), seek to quell those fears by explicitly stating their commitment to providing culturally appropriate services on their websites.

Opatowsky also believes openly identifying themselves as queer, nonbinary, disabled, and neurodivergent on their practice’s website helps other 2SLGBTQIA+ and disabled people feel more confident about seeking their services. However, while Opatowsky states that “[...] no one is an expert on anyone else’s story,” they strongly feel that all mental health providers should be trained and equipped to provide culturally appropriate care to all patients, regardless of how providers identify. Despite the National Association of Social Workers’ ethics statements about the [need for cultural competence](#), Opatowsky says training opportunities for providing culturally appropriate care remain voluntary, treated as extracurricular or specialty coursework. “In the introduction to the [DSM-V](#), there are only a few paragraphs on taking cultural factors into account [when diagnosing],” Opatowsky said, highlighting what they feel is a lack of commitment to providing on culturally appropriate mental health services.



Opatowsky agrees there is a dearth of racial, gender, language, and other diversity in the mental health workforce, however, saying, “We have these conversations [about provider diversity], but I don’t see action.” Opatowsky goes on to cite costly education and licensing requirements for mental health professions, and unsustainable, low pay as key reasons why the mental healthcare workforce lacks diversity. “Becoming a licensed social worker is a privilege,” Opatowsky says. “In graduate school, I was told that this profession was not going to be profitable – that I should never expect to pay off [my student debt].”

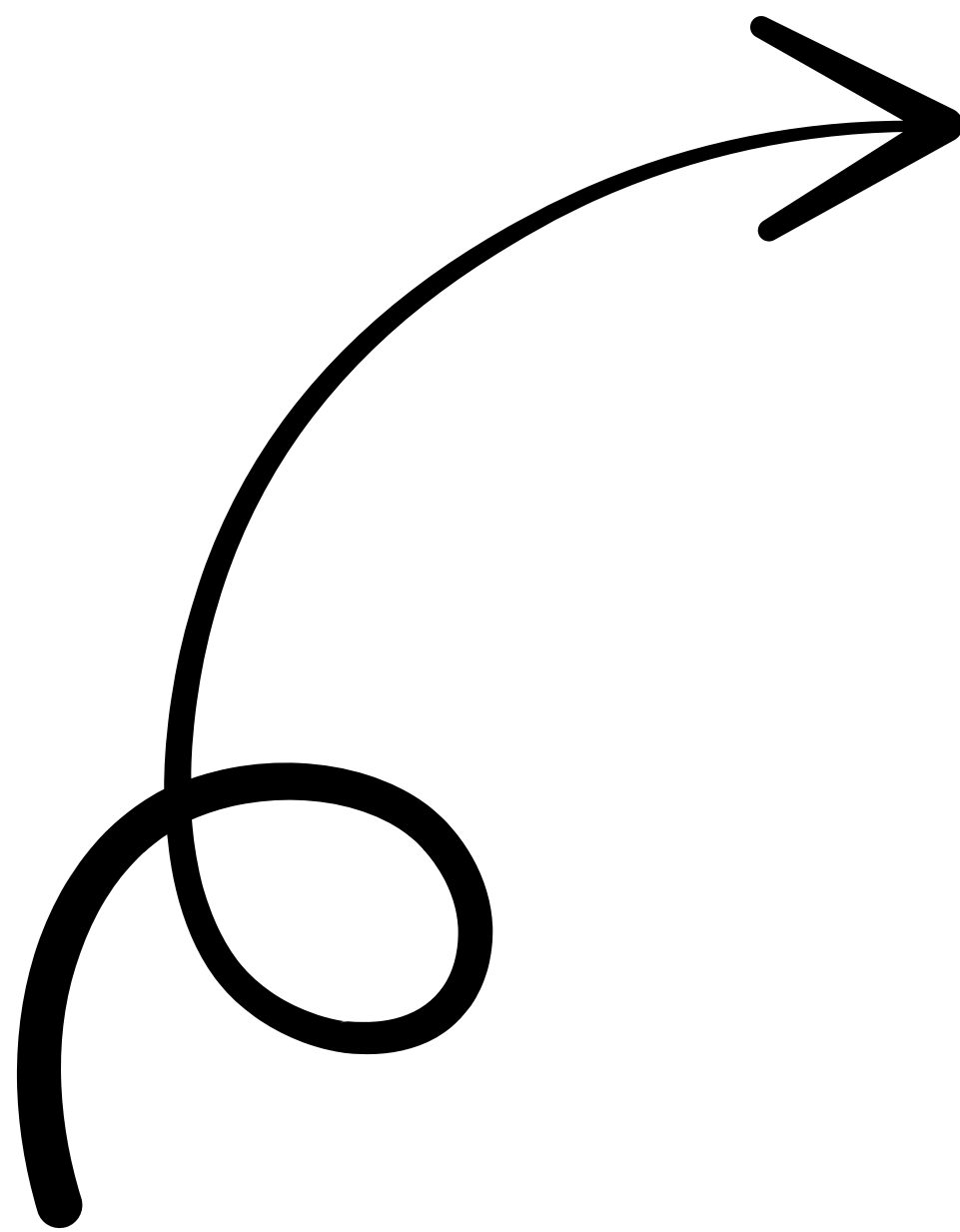
These selected observations by Quinn Opatowsky and Adair Gearhart and few statistics only brush the surface of the mental healthcare access crisis in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, particularly as data on the 2SLGBTQIA+ population is incomplete and inconsistent. Addressing the data gaps to tell a more compelling story is one of many calls to action by community advocates who continue to push for justice and equity. Until better data collection methods exist, interested researchers and advocates can find some of the most detailed data on mental health and the 2SLGBTQIA+ population through organizations like the Goldsen Institute, KFF, CAP, CDC, SAMHSA, The Trevor Project, and Mental Health America.



MEET THE AUTHOR

Nicoli Dominn (they/them) is a Social & Health Program Consultant with DSHS Community Services Division’s Constituent Relations Unit. They are also a composer, musician, visual artist, and writer, seeking to use their skills to promote social justice in and out of the workplace. One of their neurodivergent traits includes “going down the rabbit hole” to pursue research on anything from fractal geometry in music theory to phytochemistry and botany, so feel free to contact them for resources or to share special interests.





Identities are a varied and beautiful thing; fiercely resistant to the simplistic templates the mind makes. Still, as it stands, the Business Resource Group affinity group rules allow participation based on only one identity at a time. There is a hunger to connect the dots.

I, Aylis Jay, have many identities that are part of me. Among them, I am queer. I have committed my time to the Rainbow Alliance & Inclusion Network (RAIN) as my BRG. When I look around RAIN, I am so proud of the community that fills my cup once a month. In an election year like this, in a news cycle like this, it energizes me to create a more inclusive, kind, and safe world. Every BRG carries at its heart the same mission and the same passion. Identities cross the BRG system, and we are working on a way to honor the entire authentic person who serves Washington State.

I am queer and I am also an improver of process. This has manifested through various methodologies, yet at its core, the essence remains the same: there is always room for improvement within the system, and the individuals most equipped to make these improvements are the ones actively engaged in the work. The communities we serve are the ones who truly understand where change is necessary.

CONNECTING THE INTERSECTIONAL DOTS: A LOVE LETTER TO BRGS

by Aylis Jay (they/them), EQUITY



On May 15th, the Office of Equity's Equity and Belonging Team launched the "Equity & Belonging Community of Practice (CoP)", drawing over 300 participants! This platform is designed to foster community growth through meaningful partnerships, open conversations, and cooperative efforts. This is how we drive change! The CoP is taking June off for Juneteenth and Gay Pride glitter; however, the forum is set to continue, taking place every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. All BRG members are welcome, and we will use this space to bring a voice to our communities bridge the gaps for community and be there for each other. We hope to bring as many folks as possible together from BRGs and State Service everywhere to educate, empower, and support one another. This is a powerful way to bring down the walls between BRGs and build toward our collective mission and community.

As a queer process improvement professional at the Office of Equity, I am committed to promoting justice and equity for all. That's why I'm excited to share the idea of having a PEAR team – Pro-Equity Anti-Racism team – for BRGs. Unlike traditional diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, which emphasize individual responsibility, PEAR is a powerful tool for driving systemic change and dismantling oppressive systems that cause inequities.

With the community of practice bringing every voice to the table, building PEAR work connects the intersectional dots, it opens the door for folks to bring their full authentic selves to work. With all the messy and hard-to-box identities that I share, I am also neurodivergent, which means that I write everything down, overthink, and I must consider the balance of work in life in everything we build. I believe that we cannot achieve our goals alone; but as a collective, anything is possible.

Here are three things we can do, as BRGs or humans:

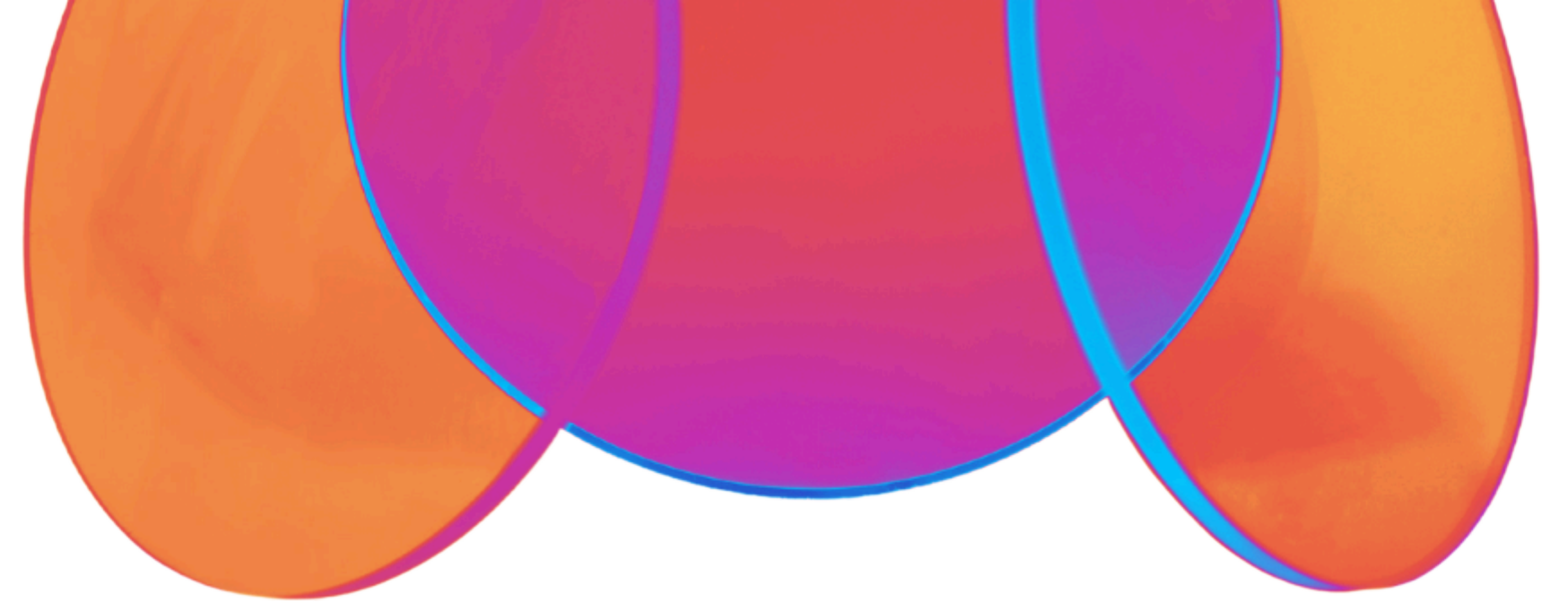
1. BRG Equity Community of Practice:

- Voluntary and open membership, as part of membership to a particular BRG that strives to build recognition of the intersectionality of BRG members without the focus on one or each single experience.
- Trauma-informed leadership acknowledges the historical and present harms caused by structural oppression and marginalization, such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heterosexism.
- Education, Training, and Information Sharing
- Concern for the Community; we are part of that community.
- Reducing disparities and providing resources where there is the most need.

2. Inter-BRG PEAR Team: The BRGs could assemble a PEAR team that brings in members from all over the BRGs, building on the foundation of the Community of Practice. I hope that this is the ongoing result: a self-sustaining, collaborative, intersectional voice to the BRGs, committed to proactive equity. This creates an ongoing, active place of solidarity to drive change. The BRGs have a way of supporting one another, sharing experiences, and fostering collaborative support so that unified selves can create a community where every member benefits equitably.

I have seen a cooperative like this in action within the huge and varied work of DSHS' Economic Services Administration. The simple ability to share information, solidarity, and resources can be so powerful. PEAR's guide toward strategic action can take it to the next level. The goal is to bridge opportunity gaps, reduce disparities (including racial and ethnic disparities), and create a more equitable environment for all Washingtonians. The PEAR team could be held accountable by the Office of Equity for their work and progress with equity within the BRGs through annual reporting and be able to plug into the resources and tools that the Office of Equity provides.

Do you find yourself in this Community of Practice, or perhaps in a future PEAR team? Here is how to reach the organizers in the Equity and Belonging Team for the effort: Rauneisha.Larkins@equity.wa.gov or Amber.Ortiz@equity.wa.gov.



3. Be an ally — and mean it. This is a calling that I have found takes more than one person alone but makes the world a better place with every step. It means listening to and reading voices unlike your own. It means being curious and listening to understand. If you go through your social media and only see one identity represented, it's time to rethink. Educate yourself on intersectional communities, and the complex powers, privileges, and challenges we have and share. Don't get defensive, do the work.

Thank you for coming on this intersectional journey. I hope you can find places that energize you and new communities to grow all of yourself this year.



MEET THE AUTHOR

Aylis Jay Lind is currently serving as a Statewide Accountability Analyst and Project Manager. Before that, they briefly studied journalism while working at a cruise line, but eventually found a home in the tough but meaningful work of state service. When they aren't cheerfully showing up in people's email boxes or process mapping, they are hanging out with their two children or finding something intensely nerdy to do.



“
**WHAT
 BRINGS YOU
 QUEER JOY?**
 ”



EMBRACING MY IDENTITY AS A FORM OF PROTEST AGAINST HETERONORMATIVITY AND HARMFUL GENDER BINARY.

HOLDING MY WIFE'S HAND

EXPERIENCING PEOPLE LIVING AS WHO THEY TRULY ARE!

People expressing their full authenticity, being weird, and being their truest selves

BEING ABLE TO HOLD MY PARTNERS HAND IN PUBLIC AND NOT FEEL LIKE PEOPLE ARE STARING.

PLANNING MY QUEER WEDDING

GATHERING IN PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL SPACES OF QUEER PEOPLE.

SUPPORTING FELLOW QUEER AND TRANS FRIENDS.

BEING GENDERED CORRECTLY

SPENDING TIME WITH MY QUEER FRIENDS/CHOSEN FAMILY

Knowing if I can find the bravery to share my "whole self" at work, my unconventional family and I will not be faced with ridicule or hate. I appreciate Washington state government taking steps to make this a state of acceptance and understanding.

COMMUNITY!

MUSIC THAT MAKES ME WIGGLE!

FRIENDSHIP ACTIVE ALLYSHIP

I love seeing people actively living their life and feeling comfortable showing up as they are.



HOLDING HANDS WITH MY PARTNER IN PUBLIC

I love going to Drag Shows! The creativity & artistry is amazing!

Being my Neurodivergent PAN self

**DETACHING MYSELF FROM
COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY
& BEING ABLE TO SEE A FUTURE
FOR MYSELF FOR THE FIRST TIME**



Being out and carefree with my family and modeling for others that LOVE makes a family!

**"OPPRESSION DOESN'T
HAVE ROOM FOR YOUR
HAPPINESS. YOU
RESIST IT WHEN YOU
FIND JOY ANYHOW."**

Uplifting my chosen family, friends, and all of the incredible queer people making society better through their activism, work, and art.

**WHEN MY NONBINARY PARTNER
IS GENDERED CORRECTLY**

**NAPS!
SNACKS!
QUEER BOOKS!**

**NOT
HAVING TO
EXPLAIN
MYSELF OR
"WHY" I AM
WHO I AM.**

Being in community with other queer folks

**HONORING MY VARIOUS TRANS
ANNIVERSARIES**

**WELL-
BALANCED
QUEER MEDIA**

**DRESSING UP IN WHATEVER
MAKES MY BODY FEEL NICE**

Uplifting my chosen family, friends, and all of the incredible queer people making society better through their activism, work, and art.



SPENDING TIME IN COMMUNITY WHERE WE ALL GATHER AND SUPPORT AND LIFT ONE ANOTHER.

UPBUILDING OTHERS - ESPECIALLY THOSE WITHOUT AFFIRMING FAMILY

MY CHILD LEGALLY CHANGED THEIR NAME EARLIER THIS YEAR!

2 things that are related. Prom. I had to fight to take my girlfriend to my prom in 1984 in Colorado. 3 hours with the principle debating back and forth, finally threatening a lawsuit. We also wanted to wear tux's and he tried to say we had to wear dresses. We won. Now I see kids going to prom together with little to no drama. I love that. Seeing so many queer couples hold hands in public. Especially the teens. We got chased, beat up, ridiculed, etc. in the 80's. Now it seems accepted for the most part. Yes, we've got a long way to go to reach safety and equity, but compared to the 80's...this is a whole new queer inclusive world.

CREATING THIS NEWSLETTER

2024



WHEN YOU LOVE ALL OF ME

ARTFUL EXPRESSIONS OF EVERY
COLOR SO BEAUTIFUL ALL
AROUND AND ON EVERY BODY.

**WATCHING
MY TRANS
SON THRIVE
AND FIND
HIS
COMMUNITY
WHILE AT
COLLEGE,
AND A
LOVING
SUPPORTIVE
PARTNER.**



Mutual aid, community
interdependency, intersectional
support with queerness and disability
rights/trans rights/antiracism/land
back movements

**BEING ABLE TO HAVE KINSHIP
WITH OTHERS AND TRULY FEEL
LIKE ONE OF A COMMUNITY.**

**HOLDING
MY
HUSBAND'S
HAND.**

**SEEING MORE PEOPLE LEARN
AND DISCOVER TRUTHS ABOUT
THEIR GENDER AFTER MEETING
AND TALKING WITH ME.**

All my queer teen asked for their birthday was
to legally change their name. It brings me joy
to see, at least in my county, it's a simple
process. No harmful questions, no judgement.

Pride

STATEWIDE



MAY 25

**ANTI-ANTI-
DRAG
SHOW**

SPOKANE



**MAY 31-
JUNE 1**

**SNOHOMISH
PRIDE
EVENTS**

JUNE 1 + 13

**MARINER'S
PRIDE
NIGHT**

SEATTLE



**THROUGHOUT
JUNE**

**EDMONDS
PRIDE EVENTS**



JUNE 1

**KITTITAS
COUNTY
PRIDE**



JUNE 1

**SEATTLE
PRIDE
IN THE
PARK**

JUNE 1

**WHITE
CENTER
PRIDE**

JUNE 1

**WALLA
WALLA
PRIDE**



JUNE 1

**TAKING
PRIDE IN
CAPITOL
HILL
COMMUNITY
CLEAN UP**

JUNE 1

**CENTRAILIA
PRIDE**



JUNE 2

**TRI-CITIES
PRIDE**

PASCO

JUNE 8

**LYNNWOOD
PRIDE**



JUNE 8

**YAKIMA
PRIDE**

JUNE 8

**SPOKANE
PRIDE**

JUNE 9

**MONROE
PRIDE**



Hear from speakers across all three branches of government, including Gov. Jay Inslee

WASHINGTON STATE

PRIDE² FLAG⁰ RAISING² G⁴

JOIN US!

Thursday, June 13th, 12:00pm

At the flag circle between the State Capitol & the Temple of Justice
416 Sid Snyder Ave SW, Olympia, WA

RAIN reception starts following the ceremony
Helen Sommers Building
106 11th Ave SW, Olympia, WA

RSVP Required for reception

Can't make it to Olympia? Watch live on TVW!



PRIDE 2024

JUNE 15

EVERETT
PRIDE

JUNE 22

WENATCHEE
PRIDE



JUNE-
JULY

CLARK
COUNTY
PRIDE



JUNE 28-
30

CAPITOL
CITY
PRIDE

OLYMPIA

JUNE 29

SEATTLE
TRANS PRIDE

JUNE 29-30

SEATTLE
PRIDE FEST

JULY 12

TACOMA
PRIDE
AWARDS

JULY 13

TACOMA
PRIDE
FESTIVAL

JULY 20

KITSAP
PRIDE



HETEROSUPREMACY: HOMOPHOBIA+

by Miranda Lewis (she/her), DSHS

Heterosupremacism is a multifaceted and intricate matter with historical, social, and political significance. It denotes the systemic power and privilege that cisgendered, heterosexual individuals have over 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and communities. This includes various social, cultural, and legal norms that prioritize heterosexuality as the default standard and uphold cisgender, heterosexual dominance.

Donald Kilhefner first proposed “the ideology of heterosexual supremacy,” or ‘hetero supremacy’ for short,” in his September-October 2016 article for the *Gay & Lesbian Review*.

The author proposes that homophobia, the term most often used to capture the systemic inequities faced by 2SLGBTQIA+, does not sufficiently capture the violence and persecution faced by sexual and gender minorities, stating,

“The “Final Solution” in Germany was not based on “Jewish-phobia” but was grounded in an ideology of Aryan supremacy and a theory of racial superiority, which created a category of inferior races that were subject to enslavement or elimination....The ideology of hetero supremacy has always had consequences for GLBT people—including gruesome death, as in the Orlando Massacre. The litany of horrors committed against gay people historically and still today—whether acts of individual butchery or state-sponsored terror in countries like Uganda or Bangladesh—are united by this ideology.”

Heterosupremacy is closely tied to the concept of heteronormativity, which, in the most simple terms, assumes that heterosexuality is the default sexual orientation. Heteronormativity refers to the dominant societal expectation that individuals should engage in heterosexual relationships and conform to traditional gender roles. It is characterized by the assumption that heterosexuality is the "normal" or "natural" sexual orientation and that gender identities and expressions should be aligned with traditional male or female norms. It is a pervasive ideology that shapes our attitudes, beliefs, and practices, influencing how we understand and experience love, relationships, and intimacy.

Heteronormativity has its origins in various historical and cultural contexts. Throughout history, societies have enforced strict binaries for gender roles and romantic pairings. Heteronormativity permeates the institution of marriage, where it is often seen as a union between a man and woman. Same-sex couples may face legal and social barriers to marriage or other forms of legal recognition, reinforcing heteronormativity. The media plays a significant role in perpetuating heteronormativity. Movies, TV shows, advertisements, and other forms of popular culture often depict heterosexual relationships and traditional gender roles. This constant exposure shapes societal expectations and influences individuals' perceptions of what is "normal." These norms have been reinforced by religious institutions, legal systems, and cultural norms.



Gender-based heterosupremacism requires a strict gender binary and upholds the superiority of masculinity over femininity. This form of heterosupremacism is evident in unequal gender norms and expectations, as well as, in the discrimination and violence faced by individuals who challenge socialized gender norms.

Men are expected to conform to stereotypical gender roles, such as being breadwinners, assertive, and dominant. On the other hand, women are portrayed as passive, nurturing, and subordinate to men. These gender norms can limit the freedom, opportunities, and self-expression of all people and especially 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. These gender roles perpetuate power imbalances and limit individual choices. Factually, there is no correct way to embody maleness or femaleness; gender is merely constructed from repeated behaviors that are deemed masculine or feminine, and considered by the majority to be necessary and natural.

2SLGBTQIA+ individuals face legal discrimination, including laws that criminalize same-sex relationships or ban 2SLGBTQIA+ rights. These laws perpetuate heterosupremacy by reinforcing the idea that heterosexuality/binary gender conformity are the only valid forms of sexual and gender orientation and that non-heterosexual relationships are inferior or unacceptable.



In 2024, over 400 bills were introduced across the country that sought to limit the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, making it a record-breaking year for anti-2SLGBTQIA+ legislation. Regardless of whether these bills were passed, they are still detrimental to 2SLGBTQIA+ people, as the ACLU notes. Introducing such legislation legitimizes and amplifies anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric — a report by the Human Rights Campaign found that the use of slurs like "groomer" and "pedophile"

on X increased 406% the following month after Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill was enacted in 2022. Youth who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ are also disproportionately impacted by these bills. This legislation leads to an increase in bullying and discrimination, which can lead to poor academic performance and social isolation. Nearly one in three respondents to a 2023 survey by the Trevor Project reported poor mental health "most of the time or always" because of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ legislation.

Experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals can vary based on factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other intersecting elements with their gender identity or sexual orientation.

The notion of race-based heterosupremacism reinforces the idea of certain racial groups being inherently superior to others, perpetuating racial stereotypes and hierarchies, particularly related to skin color, ethnicity, and cultural background. Heterosupremacism manifests as systemic racism, white supremacy, and the marginalization of individuals based on skin color. There are numerous intersections of identity and marginalization within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

Invisibility can reinforce heterosupremacy by fostering feelings of isolation, stigma, and discrimination. Mainstream narratives often lack representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities, leading to the neglect or silencing of their experiences, stories, and contributions, resulting in limited understanding and acceptance. Due to societal stigma and discrimination, these individuals may struggle to openly identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ and face discrimination in various areas like the workplace, housing, healthcare, and education. This discrimination can lead to unequal access to resources, opportunities, and legal protections, making them more vulnerable and restricting social mobility. The lack of visibility impedes their ability to live authentically and perpetuates stereotypes and misconceptions about the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, causing them to be viewed as undeserving of equal rights and opportunities.

continued...

Heterosupremacist ideology greatly impacts social privileges related to sexual orientation and gender identity. These privileges include rights to marriage, adoption, parenthood, job security, social acceptance, and legal protections. Heterosexual/cisgendered individuals can freely express their romantic relationships through public displays of affection, like holding hands or kissing, without fear of discrimination.

Conversely, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals may face challenges and legal consequences for similar behaviors. Sexual and gender majority individuals often encounter fewer obstacles in employment and career advancement compared to 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity continues to limit opportunities and earning potential for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. In contrast, those with majority identities benefit from legal protections in areas such as marriage, inheritance, and adoption, reinforcing their social advantage. 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals encounter discrimination in educational settings, leading to lower enrollment rates, lack of support, and academic barriers. Barriers to appropriate healthcare persist due to provider bias and inadequate training on the health needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, resulting in substandard care and restricted access to vital treatments. Despite progress in legal and social rights, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals still confront legal and social obstacles. Discrimination and marginalization are exacerbated by heteronormative privilege, leaving marginalized groups vulnerable.

Challenging heterosupremacy necessitates a multifaceted approach encompassing activism, legal advocacy, and the establishment of 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive environments. This endeavor demands a unified effort from individuals, communities, and organizations to counter heterosupremacist ideologies effectively.

Key strategies include heightening awareness, fostering LGBTQIA+ acceptance, and confronting discriminatory beliefs and behaviors. Educating oneself about the history and manifestations of heterosupremacy is pivotal in dispelling ignorance and misconceptions. Furthermore, advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights plays a crucial role in dismantling heterosupremacist paradigms and systems. Supporting legislation that safeguards LGBTQIA+ individuals from discrimination and upholds their rights to equality is paramount. Additionally, demonstrating empathy and understanding towards LGBTQIA+ individuals contributes significantly to combating heterosupremacism. By championing inclusivity, embracing diversity, and ensuring that all individuals feel esteemed and accepted, progress can be made in eradicating heterosupremacist ideals.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Miranda Lewis (she/her; pictured on right) is a mother to two children, a dog, a cat, and five chickens. She is in a relationship with a wonderful, intelligent, and talented woman. Currently, she holds the position of Training Program Manager for DSHS/DDA State Operated Community Residential Programs.



Additionally, she has taken on the role of Chair for the RAIN BRG Communications and Outreach Subcommittee! She is in the final stretch of the PhD in Leadership Studies at GU where she has extensively studied feminist ethics, critical theory, and heterosupremacy. She encourages you to reach out anytime to talk shop or just to say hi!



The Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN) is an 2SLGBTQ+ and ally **Business Resource Group.**

We are 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.

Visit our website
LGBTQ.wa.gov/RAIN



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