

LGBTQ+ WORK GROUP AT FRIENDSHIP PLACE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



LGBTQ+ RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

Are You Prepared For Another Year?

"Best advice I ever got was an old friend of mine, a black friend, who said **you have to go the way your blood beats**. If you don't live the only life you have, you won't live some other life, you won't live any life at all. That's the only advice you can give anybody. And it's not advice, it's an observation." - James Baldwin

Being allowed to live the only life you have and live it honestly and truthfully. Friendship Place supports that conviction with our mission to empower people experiencing or at risk of homelessness to attain stable housing and rebuild their lives. Our Work Group was created to ensure that members of the LGBTQ+ community know that if they are in need they are welcome here and can turn to us for help and support.

This newsletter features an inspiring personal story from one of our employees and also provides you with ideas on how you can advocate and be a force for change. "The fight for equality does not end."

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THE POWER OF ALLIES



Friendship Place is happy to announce a new partnership with the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

HRC is a well-known and respected LGBTQ advocacy group and political lobbying organization with over three million members and supporters nationwide.

Quoting the HRC website:

"Fighting for equality means we can't afford to let anyone fall through the cracks. We work locally, nationally and globally on issues that affect the LGBTQ community. HRC partners with people across demographics, industries and governments to provide leadership on how to back up pro-equality statements with real action – and create a society where none of us is left behind."

HRC met with Friendship Place about supporting The Brooks and La Casa with donations for their participation in The National Day of Service for the Inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Harris celebrating and honoring the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on January 18, 2021.

During that meeting HRC learned of our LGBTQ+ Work Group and sent a request to the HRC Steering Committee to explore a more significant partnership. More to come, stay tuned!



"Fighting for equality means we can't afford to let anyone fall through the cracks."



Friendship Place is now listed in [The Equality Chamber of Commerce DC Metro Area](#). EECDC is a nonprofit organization of hundreds of LGBTQ+ and ally members, with a network of several thousand LGBT professionals, allies, and business leaders in Washington, DC and the surrounding region.



EECDC's mission is to advocate, empower, promote and facilitate the success of LGBT businesses and their allies in the Metro DC region.

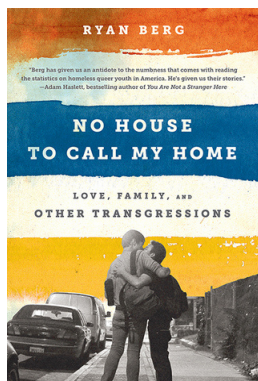
Our Work Group is looking forward to networking with the many potential allies in The Chamber that will benefit Friendship Place and our consumers.

FRIENDSHIP PLACE'S NEW LGBTQ+ YOUTH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Our work group recently completed a new questionnaire to be completed by Friendship Place participants. This survey is geared towards LGBTQ+ youth and young adults 17-29 years of age who use our services. To ensure that all our services are welcoming and inclusive to everyone these questionnaires will provide valuable feedback as to where Friendship Place is excelling and where improvements might be needed.

All of our divisions at Friendship Place now have access to the questionnaire and we look forward to receiving responses.

The survey will be an important tool to support our commitment to ensuring that all programs, services, and expressions of Friendship Place are considered welcoming, affirming, inclusive, and safer for LGBTQ+ community members and allies.



READING SUGGESTION

No House to Call My Home: Love, Family, and Other Transgressions by Ryan Berg

Underemployed and directionless, Ryan Berg took a job in a group home for disowned and homeless LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) teenagers. His job was to help these teens discover their self worth, get them back on their feet, earn high school degrees, and find jobs. But he had no idea how difficult it would be, and the complexities that were involved with coaxing them away from dangerous sex work and cycles of drug and alcohol abuse, and helping them heal from years of abandonment and abuse.

In *No House to Call My Home*, Ryan Berg tells profoundly moving, intimate, and raw stories from the frontlines of LGBTQ homelessness and foster care. In the United States, 43% of homeless youth were forced out by their parents because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Berg faced young people who have battled extreme poverty, experienced unbalanced opportunities, structural racism, and homophobia. He found himself ill-equipped to help, in part because they are working within a system that paints in broad strokes, focused on warehousing young people, rather than helping them build healthy relationships with adults that could lead to a successful life once they age out of foster care.

By digging deep and asking the hard questions, and by haltingly opening himself up to his charges, Berg gained their trust. Focusing on a handful of memorable characters and their entourage, he illustrates the key issues and recurring patterns in the suffering, psychology and recovery of these neglected teens.

No House to Call My Home will provoke readers into thinking in new ways about how we define privilege, identity, love and family. Because beyond the tears and abuse, the bluster and bravado, what emerges here is a love song to that irrepressible life force of youth: hope.

WE WON A GREAT BATTLE, THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY DOESN'T END

Sara Simone, Veterans First Case Manager, Friendship Place
on President Joe Biden's Executive Order lifting transgender
military ban

It may be difficult for some who are not transgender to truly understand the last four years. To be told by your government that you don't exist. To be told that you can be denied health care including emergency medical assistance because of who you are. To be told that if you are homeless you can be denied entrance into homeless shelters and those homeless shelters can measure your hands, look for an Adams apple and ask you to show your genitals to homeless service providers just for admittance. To be murdered at record rates but the government refuses to call it a hate crime and among other things to be told that patriotic trans people otherwise eligible for military service, could not serve and those currently serving would be kicked out of the military!

What was coming next, I thought 4 years ago. Perhaps, the Veterans Administration would be issued an edict that there would be no more trans medical services, and veterans including homeless veterans would be identified and this identification led to discrimination, mandated by the VA. I have friends working in high levels of the federal government and they told me that anyone who is trans and working for the federal government would be in great jeopardy. Of course, there would be court challenges should this have come to fruition, but you never know the power that administration would have, if they remained in power for another 4 years. That power may have been absolute!

"PRESIDENT OBAMA TOLD THEM TO 'COME OUT OF THE CLOSET' AND SERVE IN THE OPEN, THEY WOULD BE SAFE, SO THEY REVEALED THEMSELVES AND NOW BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THEIR GOVERNMENT, THEY WERE IN JEOPARDY OF LOSING IT ALL. JUST BECAUSE OF A TWEET IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT."

I have served honorably in the United States Military. I have two honorable discharges, one as an enlisted soldier and one as a commissioned officer. In total I dedicated nine and half years to the military. So, what happens to our service people and veterans is of great interest to me.

Back in the late spring of 2017, I gave a speech in Alexandria Virginia. In the audience was a host of officials, social workers, city government workers and law enforcement. Little did I know that also in the audience were two people in civilian clothes who were active-duty military from the Army stationed at Ft. Belvoir. After the speech I was shaking hands with well-wishers who were moved by my words, when those two soldiers introduced themselves. One was an E-7 and the other a 1st Lieutenant, and they asked if I would consider speaking to active-duty soldiers. The speech was subsequently cleared by someone high at Ft. Belvoir and a tentative date for early June 2017. It was all official.

Then something happened, they kept putting off the date and then stopped corresponding at all. That behavior is unusual for the military, especially to a veteran and a former officer. I sent an email expressing my frustration, in a professional but very clear manner. That email was dated June 10th, 2017. Knowing the military, in my heart of hearts I knew something was very wrong. Then five and half weeks later a midnight tweet was sent to the world from the President of the United States of America, and that tweet stated that transgender people will no longer be accepted in the military in any form.

It was a workday for me, but I found myself incapacitated in anguish and pain. I called my supervisors; I broke down in tears and I was inconsolable. Not only did my government declare that I and people like me were less than human, but now the whole world knew we were less than human. I have friends on active duty who were suddenly thrown into crisis, career people who served 18 years and 2 years before their retirement, they would be kicked out and lose all benefits. It was turmoil and disorganization, and they were lied too by their own government. President Obama told them to "come out of the closet" and serve in the open, they would be safe, so they revealed themselves and now because they believed in their government, they were in jeopardy of losing it all just because of a tweet in the middle of the night.

Continues...

WE WON A GREAT BATTLE, THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY DOESN'T END

Continued...

Later that same day, the day of the horrible news, Equality Virginia invited me to a meeting. It was a reception with the Equality Federation Institute. There were 46 out of the 50 states represented. Most of all it was networking. I met LGBTQI activists from Montana, New Hampshire, Boston, New York, California, Texas, Pennsylvania, Maryland, DC, Iowa, Florida and many more places. There were speakers and politicians and representative from the National Center for Transgender Equality, was there and they asked if I was available to talk to the press and do press briefings. I agreed!

The main topic was the ban on transgender service. I was feeling so bad earlier but after being around activists from all over the United States I was energized, because this decision had just energized the entire community. Being around 100 LGBTQI activists from all over the country was the perfect environment after the news I heard that day.

That morning 4 years ago, I felt defeated but by that evening I was determined to fight, and it inspired my activism for the next 4 years.

I was not the only one fighting, we all were including active duty trans military folks who spoke in front of congress, and congress members fought on our behalf.

And we did press, and I met career officers and a member of JAG like Deirdre Anne Hendrick who as a attorney and advocate worked directly with the folks most impacted by "tweet" and "Order".

But today all that hard work of many people and many citizens, many heroes brought relief to military trans persons and trans veterans and the military as a whole!

President Joe Biden who years ago coined the phrase that Trans Discrimination is the Civil Rights Issue of Our Time changed all of that with the stroke of a pen.

Although we won a great battle, the fight for equality doesn't end until this executive order is permanent so that an unscrupulous president can't change it in the future.

But today I am happy, very happy.

“

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

— Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

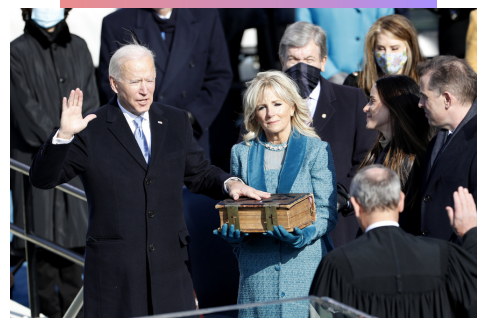
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NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE U.S.

In a recent article The Washington Post noted:

Advocates say the 78-year-old will be the nation's most pro-LGBTQ president ever. He and Vice President Kamala D. Harris have promised an ambitious slate of actions that would go beyond reversing what LGBTQ advocates have called President Trump's "discrimination administration."

The Trump Accountability Project, by the advocacy group GLAAD, has recorded more than 180 anti-LGBTQ statements and actions by the Trump administration and those in the president's circle since January 2017, including a proposal that would allow homeless shelters to house transgender people according to their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity. (Emily Wax-Thibodeaux, Jan. 11, 2021)



Daniel Acker/Getty Images

Even before becoming President, Joe Biden established himself as an outspoken LGBTQ ally in 2012, when he publicly declared — ahead of then President Barack Obama — his support for same-sex marriage. Read more about President Biden's plan to advance LGBTQ+ equality in America and around the world: [Joe Biden.com LGBTQ+ Policy](https://joebiden.com/LGBTQ+Policy)

MESSAGE FROM FRIENDSHIP PLACE'S ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

LYNN AMANO - JANUARY 19, 2021

Advocacy at Friendship Place

For those of you I haven't yet had the chance to meet, my name is Lynn Amano, and I am the new Advocacy and Community Organizer here at Friendship Place. Friendship Place has made a commitment to creating positive changes through advocacy at both the community and government levels with this new full time position.

My role here is to build relationships with other organizations, government leaders, the community, and staff, and help organize those stakeholders, so Friendship Place can expand options and services to meet the needs of those who find themselves experiencing homelessness.

We are pulling together people who care about meeting those needs enough to write letters or testimonies to the Mayor and DC Councilmembers into an Action Network —asking for money and services. Rent relief, expanded housing options, supportive services like mental health and employment, fair wages and anti-discrimination laws are all parts of the puzzle.

As these issues impact our LGBTQ+ community, Friendship Place also wants to play a role in LGBTQ+ advocacy.

As many of you probably know, the LGBTQ+ population is overrepresented in youth who find themselves homeless. It is estimated that 40% of these youth are LGBTQ+. Our youth outreach programs assist LGBTQ+ youth, and Friendship Place has strong relationships with organizations like SMYAL and Casa Ruby who assist in finding or provide housing for LGBTQ+ youth.

Here are a couple of ways we can advocate for our LGBTQ+ community:

First, the DC Council and Mayor create DC's yearly budget, and we can advocate for sufficient funds to house both youth and adults. Recently, two programs that address homelessness for LGBTQ+ youth received substantial cuts to the money they receive from DC government to carry out their programs. During the worst part of the pandemic, these organizations became less able to reach the most vulnerable population individuals. You can read the article about these cuts here:

[D.C. Is Cutting Funding For Homeless Services As COVID Cases Surge](https://dcist.com/story/168144-D.C.-Is-Cutting-Funding-For-Homeless-Services-As-COVID-Cases-Surge/) (dcist.com)



Second, we can also advocate for laws and regulations that help protect LGBTQ+ residents at the government level. Anti-discrimination, anti-hate, anti-bullying, fair housing, fair employment and adequate medical care legislation all impact the LGBTQ+ community. This includes guidelines for fair treatment in both shelters and services. For example, Friendship Place's President/CEO, Jean-Michel Giraud, recently sent out a call to action for DC residents to comment on a rule that would limit access to shelter for transgender individuals.

If you'd like to be more involved in our advocacy work, please consider joining both our Friendship Place Action Network to help us tackle all homelessness in DC by signing up [here](#) and our LGBTQ+ Work Group by emailing Chris Cannedy at ccannedy@friendshipplace.org.

NATIONAL LGBTQIA ADVOCACY ISSUES TO WATCH FOR 2021

Human Rights Watch October 27, 2020

In June 2020, the US Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County* recognized that federal laws prohibiting sex discrimination in employment also prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Nonetheless, many federal laws do not contain express protections for LGBT people, leaving them vulnerable to discrimination in housing, health care, and other domains. The next administration should encourage Congress to pass, and robustly enforce, clear and comprehensive nondiscrimination protections for LGBT people across the United States.

EQUALITY ACT

SUPPORT PASSAGE OF THE EQUALITY ACT, A BILL THAT WOULD EXPRESSLY PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN EDUCATION, HOUSING, PUBLIC SPACES, FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS, CREDIT, AND JURY SERVICE.

TRANSGENDER MILITARY BAN

SWIFTLY REVERSE THE DISCRIMINATORY BAN ON TRANSGENDER SERVICE IN THE MILITARY, WHICH HAS JEOPARDIZED THE CAREERS OF THOUSANDS OF TRANSGENDER SERVICE MEMBERS IN THE US ARMED FORCES.

REGULATORY PROTECTIONS

RECOGNIZE THAT FEDERAL SEX DISCRIMINATION PROTECTIONS ALSO PROHIBIT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY, CONSISTENT WITH THE US SUPREME COURT'S DECISION IN *BOSTOCK*. WITHDRAW PENDING RULES THAT WOULD ROLL BACK PROTECTIONS FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN HEALTH CARE, HOUSING, AND OTHER DOMAINS. ENFORCE EXISTING REGULATIONS THAT PROHIBIT SEX DISCRIMINATION TO ADDRESS ANTI-LGBT DISCRIMINATION. ENSURE THAT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN FEDERAL CUSTODY ARE HOUSED IN A MANNER THAT RECOGNIZES AND RESPECTS THEIR GENDER IDENTITY.

SWEEPING RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

WORK WITH CONGRESS TO ENSURE THAT RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS ARE CAREFULLY CRAFTED AND DO NOT INFRINGE ON THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS, INCLUDING THE RIGHTS OF LGBT PEOPLE. ENSURE THAT FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS SERVE ALL PEOPLE WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY, INCLUDING IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICES.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

REAUTHORIZE AN LGBT-INCLUSIVE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT THAT IS INTERSECTIONAL AND COMPREHENSIVE AND BEST SERVES COMMUNITIES AT RISK. THE ACT SHOULD RECOGNIZE LGBT PEOPLE AS AN UNDERSERVED POPULATION AND ENSURE THAT LGBT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT ARE ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION. TAKE STEPS TO ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST TRANSGENDER PEOPLE, INCLUDING STRONGER EFFORTS TO ADDRESS POVERTY, HOMELESSNESS, AND BARRIERS TO OBTAINING GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE.

ACCESS TO ASYLUM

ENSURE THAT LGBT PEOPLE FLEEING PERSECUTION IN THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN CAN CLAIM ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES. REVERSE POLICIES AND REGULATIONS THAT HAVE LEFT LGBT ASYLUM SEEKERS STRANDED IN MEXICAN BORDER TOWNS OR THAT HAVE RESULTED IN EXPEDITED REMOVALS OR TRANSFER TO COUNTRIES THAT DO NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION. THESE INCLUDING METERING, WHICH LIMITS THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ALLOWED INTO THE UNITED STATES EACH DAY TO MAKE ASYLUM CLAIMS, THE MIGRANT PROTECTION PROTOCOLS, THE PROMPT ASYLUM CLAIM REVIEW AND HUMANITARIAN ASYLUM REVIEW PROCESS, THE ASYLUM COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH GUATEMALA, EL SALVADOR AND HONDURAS, AND THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION'S "ORDER SUSPENDING INTRODUCTION OF CERTAIN PERSONS FROM COUNTRIES WHERE A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EXISTS." WITHDRAW PROPOSED REGULATIONS ISSUED IN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER 2020 THAT WOULD FURTHER RESTRICT ACCESS TO ASYLUM, INCLUDING BY ELIMINATING SEEKING ASYLUM ON THE GROUNDS OF "GENDER" AND ALLOWING IMMIGRATION JUDGES TO INTRODUCE THEIR OWN, POTENTIALLY BIASED EVIDENCE INTO THE RECORD IN ASYLUM CASES.



JUVENILE JUSTICE

Increased criminalization of homelessness and its impact on LGBTQ youth in the Juvenile Justice system

LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are disproportionately likely to come into contact with the juvenile justice system. As reported by service providers, up to 40% of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ. Furthermore, 30% of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness were also reported to have had contact with the juvenile justice system.

One experience that directly connects LGBTQ youth homelessness with increased involvement in the juvenile justice system is mistreatment in schools. Research shows that more than half of LGBTQ students hear homophobic remarks in their schools, that 6 in 10 LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; and 4 in 10 reported feeling unsafe at school because of how they expressed their gender, and more than 8 out of 10 LGBTQ students have experienced physical assault or harassment. Other research has found that LGBTQ youth are three times more likely to be injured or threatened with a weapon at school and twice as likely to report getting into a fight the previous year. This fighting can lead to referrals by school resource officers to the justice system.

"THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF LGBTQ YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IS DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS."

Experiences with bullying in school coupled with family rejection in the home, result in some LGBTQ youth skipping school or running away. These behaviors are known as status offenses and violate the law solely because the person engaging in them is younger than the age of majority (in most states this is 18 years old however, some states set the age of majority lower than 18). This further increases the likelihood that they will enter the justice system. Presently, more than half of all states report that they incarcerate youth for status offense behaviors.

Running away can also lead to homelessness, which further increases the chance that youth will enter the justice system due to the criminalization of homelessness. Youth experiencing homelessness frequently report that they have been apprehended by police for loitering, and/or panhandling. Youth who are living on the streets may also engage in selling or trading drugs and sex in exchange for shelter, food, and other necessities, which can lead to their arrest. In many states, running away itself is classified as a status offense and can result in charges for the young person.

Researchers argue that this combination of bullying, family rejection, running away, and homelessness has led to the overrepresentation of LGBTQ youth in the justice system. LGBTQ and gender nonconforming/transgender (GNCT) youth are overrepresented at twice the rate of their presence in the population at large. Gallup has found that 4.2-5.6% of the general youth population is LGBTQ, while 12.5% of youth in detention halls are LGBTQ. Similarly, research shows that 6% of the youth population identifies as "highly gender nonconforming," while 13.3% of youth in the justice system can be categorized as gender nonconforming.

Youth who cycle into homelessness, survival crimes, and the justice system are exposed to increased danger. Crimes like selling drugs and trading sex put youth at increased risk of victimization from violence. In addition, research shows that when placed in detention facilities, youth at an increased risk for physical and sexual assault by peers and adult staff.

Instead of incarcerating youth for status offenses, misdemeanors, immigration code violations, and minor school code violations, juvenile justice systems should consider diverting youth into community-based programs prior to arrest. Communities such as Los Angeles County are working to divert low level felonies prior to arrest. Serving low-risk youth through the court system can increase recidivism and should be avoided. Higher risk youth with high needs can be served by the courts, but should still be referred to community-based programs whenever possible to meet their underlying needs.

Source: Price, C., Chanchan, D., Wheeler, C., Seip, N., & Rush, J. (Eds.). (2019). At the Intersections: A collaborative report on LGBTQ youth homelessness. (2nd Edition) True Colors United and the National LGBTQ Task Force.



Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives

THE LGBTQ+ WORK GROUP AT FRIENDSHIP PLACE

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Community Engagement Manager

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Social Worker - The Brooks

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Case Manager - Veteran Services

Kara Green
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(she/her/hers)
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OUR MISSION

The LGBTQ+ Workgroup of Friendship Place is a collective of Staff, Participants, Board, and Volunteers committed to ensuring that all programs, services, and expressions of Friendship Place are considered welcoming, affirming, inclusive, and safer for LGBTQ+ community members and allies.

We seek to continuously expand our awareness, competency, and sensitivity through action and advocacy throughout the broader Friendship Place community and community at-large.