

AMPLIFYING LGBTQ+ VOICES SINCE 1978



JANUARY 29-FEBRUARY 4, 2025

AGENTS OF CHANGE



Whether you're a local or tourist, we always feature our favorite spots along with all the new and exciting things our city has to offer.

We dedicate this week's issue to The National LGBTQ+ Task Force and their first Creating Change conference in Las Vegas, which took place from January 22 to 26, 2025. Due to the extensive nature of the event, we couldn't cover every workshop, caucus, or plenary session. However, we've selected a few key highlights to provide a summary of the conference, along with photo galleries featuring speakers, evening activities, indigenous ceremonies, and variety shows. Creating Change offered a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community from across the country to come together and navigate the challenging years ahead. Together, we can pave the way for positive change.



Russ White & Garrett Pattiani
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CANCER

JANUARY 2025

Alright, my dazzling celestial darlings, let's get into the cosmic tea for all you fabulous Cancerians out there as we kick off January 2025. Now, honey, you better strap on those glittery pumps because the universe is serving us some major energies. This month is all about channeling your inner superstar – we're talking big emotions, even bigger dreams, and opportunities to shine like the dazzling diamonds you are. Remember, darlings, in the grand ballroom of life, you're the main event, so sashay down the universe's runway with all that emotional depth and intuitive fierceness that makes you oh-so-special. Get ready to werk, twirl, and maybe even spill a little tea, because it's your time to glow, glow, glow!"



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FRI FEB 14 DRAG RACE S17 VIEWING PARTY EPISODE AT 8 PM	 ALEXIS MATEO	
LYDIA B KOLLINS		SAT FEB 15 PERFORMANCE AT 11:50 PM M&G AT 12:30 AM
FRI FEB 28 DRAG RACE S17 VIEWING PARTY EPISODE AT 8 PM PERFORMANCE AT 11:30 PM M&G AT 12:30 AM	KORI KING	SAT MAR 1 ULTRA BRUNCH DOORS OPEN AT 12 PM SHOWTIME AT 1 PM M&G AFTER THE SHOW

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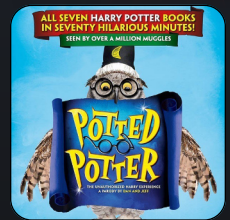
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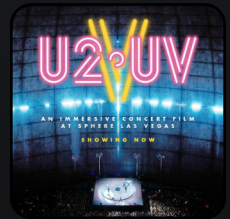
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Creating Change 2025

A Celebration of Community, Leadership, and Resistance in Las Vegas



The energy was palpable as **Creating Change 2025** kicked off in Las Vegas, hosted by the National LGBTQ Task Force. Against the backdrop of the neon-lit city, this annual gathering brought together activists, leaders, and change-makers from across the LGBTQ+ spectrum. It was a week filled with inspiring speeches, groundbreaking panels, and heartfelt ceremonies, all centered on this year's theme: resistance, power, and love.

Opening with Purpose

The conference opened with a land acknowledgment that set a reflective tone. Indigenous leaders welcomed attendees to the traditional homelands of the Southern Paiute people, emphasizing the importance of honoring both the land and its stewards. The acknowledgment wasn't just ceremonial—it was a call to action, urging attendees to reckon with the ongoing impacts of colonialism and to commit to supporting Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization.

"Acknowledging the land does not heal generations of trauma inflicted by colonialism," said Meredith Morgan, a two-spirit leader. "We must stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, not just in words but in actions." The ceremony included traditional prayers, songs, and a powerful reminder of the resilience of Indigenous cultures.

Amplifying Black Leadership

One of the most highly anticipated sessions was the plenary on Black leadership, moderated by Andre Wade, state director of Silver State Equality. Featuring powerhouse panelists like Imani Rupert-Gordon of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Dr. David Johns of the National Black Justice Coalition, and Representative Maury Turner, the discussion delved into the challenges and triumphs of Black leadership in the LGBTQ+ movement.

Rupert-Gordon spoke about the importance of authenticity in leadership. "You don't have to be the second-best

version of someone else," she said. "Be yourself. That's how you'll create meaningful change."

Representative Turner shared their journey as the first openly nonbinary person elected to a state legislature in U.S. history, representing Oklahoma's District 88. "The work we do isn't just about opening doors," Turner said. "It's about keeping those doors open and ensuring others can walk through them."

Dr. Johns added a reminder that Black leadership has always existed, even when unrecognized by mainstream institutions. "We've always been here," he said. "What we need now is for our communities to rally around us, to create trampolines that help us bounce forward when systems try to hold us back."

Care Bears and Radical Wellness

Wellness was a recurring theme throughout the week, embodied by the "Care Bears" initiative. These spaces offered attendees a place to rest, reflect, and



recharge. Whether through playdough, bingo, or one-on-one sessions with therapists, the Care Bears highlighted the necessity of mental health support within activism.

"We can't pour from an empty cup," one organizer said. "Wellness isn't a luxury; it's a radical act of resistance."

The initiative also emphasized community care as a cornerstone of the movement. Attendees were encouraged to look out for one another, reinforcing the mantra that "we keep us safe." This ethos was woven into every aspect of the conference, from de-escalation workshops to language justice initiatives that ensured accessibility for all participants.

Honoring Two-Spirit Leadership

A highlight of the conference was the presentation of the Indigenous Leadership Award, which recognized the contributions of two-spirit leaders. Dean Marlise, a Northern Paiute elder, accepted the award with a moving speech about resilience and the sacred role of two-spirit people in Indigenous cultures.

"We have always been here," Marlise said. "Before colonization, before Christianity, we were part of creation. And we will continue to be part of creation. We must stand for the land, for our ancestors, and for the generations yet to come."

The ceremony served as a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of all struggles for justice. It underscored the importance of centering Indigenous voices in the broader fight for LGBTQ+ rights and equity.

Charting a New Way Forward

Throughout the week, the conference offered a variety of workshops and panels aimed at equipping attendees with the tools to create change in their own communities. From sessions on combating anti-LGBTQ+ legislation to panels on intersectionality, the programming was both practical and inspiring.

One recurring theme was the need for structural change. "It's not enough to bring someone through the door," said Rupert-Gordon. "We need to remove the door

entirely." She shared strategies for eliminating barriers in hiring practices and creating workplaces that truly value diversity and inclusion.

Dr. Johns echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the role of education in dismantling systemic oppression. "Democracies have to be defended by each generation, and education is the midwife," he said, quoting Bell Hooks. "We need to teach our young people not just how to survive but how to thrive."

The Power of Vulnerability

National LGBTQ Task Force President Kierra Johnson closed out one of the plenary sessions with a call for vulnerability. "We're so hurt, so scared, so angry," she said. "But we've armored ourselves from each other. Vulnerability demands that we take a risk, that we expose our wounds and invite others to heal with us."

Her words struck a chord with attendees, many of whom expressed gratitude for the space to connect authentically. Johnson's call to "be reflective about your triggers and unpack your assumptions" resonated as a challenge to build deeper, more inclusive communities.

Looking Ahead

As the conference drew to a close, attendees left with renewed energy and a clear sense of purpose. Creating Change 2025 was more than a gathering; it was a reminder of the power of collective action and the importance of holding space for joy, grief, and everything in between.

From the land acknowledgment that opened the event to the closing plenary, every moment was a testament to the resilience and creativity of the LGBTQ+ movement. In the words of Dr. Johns, "We've forged ourselves out of the fire before, and we'll do it again."

As the fight for justice continues, Creating Change remains a beacon of hope and a catalyst for transformation. For the LGBTQ+ community and its allies, the message was clear: we got us.



Creating Change 2025

Black Leadership Rising: A Defining Moment at Creating Change 2025



The annual Creating Change Conference, hosted by the National LGBTQ Task Force, has long been a beacon for activists, allies, and leaders within the LGBTQ+ community. This year, the conference held in Las Vegas set the stage for one of its most impactful plenary sessions to date: "Black Leadership Rising."

Amid a backdrop of systemic challenges and escalating attacks on marginalized communities, the panel brought together four trailblazing Black leaders to reflect on the state of Black queer leadership and to chart a course for the future. Moderated by Andre Wade, State Director of Silver State Equality, the plenary provided a powerful, candid, and uplifting dialogue that resonated deeply with the audience.

Setting the Stage: The Panelists

The panel featured an extraordinary lineup of leaders who each bring unique perspectives and lived experiences:

Imani Rupert-Gordon, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights

(NCLR), whose work champions intersectionality and structural change.

Dr. David Johns, Executive Director of the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), an educator and advocate for systemic equity and intersectional leadership.

Mandisa Moore-O'Neal, Executive Director of the Center for HIV Law and Policy, whose work centers Black feminism and transformative policy advocacy.

Representative Mauree Turner, the first openly non-binary and Muslim legislator in U.S. history, representing Oklahoma's 88th District, who champions intersectional justice and community-led policymaking.

Together, these leaders exemplify the essence of resilience, vision, and transformative power in the face of societal challenges.

A Defining Question: Is Black Leadership Rising?

Andre Wade opened the session with a

critical question: Is Black leadership truly rising?

Imani Rupert-Gordon's response was optimistic yet nuanced. "Black leadership is absolutely rising," she stated, acknowledging the increasing visibility of Black leaders across various sectors. However, she also noted the simultaneous rise in systemic attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Dr. David Johns added a historical lens, reminding the audience that Black leadership has always been rising. "Everything started in Africa," he declared. "We are the original influencers. Black leadership isn't new; what's new is the spotlight and the challenges that come with it."

Mandisa Moore-O'Neal and Representative Mauree Turner provided further depth, emphasizing the often-overlooked leadership roles held by Black women, queer individuals, and those in the South. "Leadership isn't always acknowledged," Moore-O'Neal observed. "For Black folks,



especially in the South, leadership has been about survival. It's ingrained in our communities."

Barriers to Leadership

While Black leadership is on the rise, the panelists were candid about the barriers they face. Representative Turner reflected on the intersectionality of their identity as a non-binary, Muslim Black legislator in Oklahoma. "I had to fight against being seen as just one thing," they shared. "People didn't want to see the full intersection of who I am and how that informs my work."

Rupert-Gordon highlighted the importance of authenticity in leadership. Drawing from an anecdote about auditioning for roles, she cautioned against leaders conforming to expectations. "Don't be the second-best Janet Jackson," she said. "Be the best version of yourself." Her point underscored the need for leaders to break free from prescribed molds and redefine success on their own terms.

Moore-O'Neal pointed to a lack of institutional and interpersonal support as a major barrier. "We need to acknowledge the cost of leadership," she said. "When you're clear and unapologetic about your values, it's not always welcomed. But clarity is necessary for transformation."

Building Bridges for the Future

When asked how they are paving the way for future leaders, the panelists emphasized mentorship, structural change, and community.

Dr. Johns shared his work with the NBJC's "Good Trouble Network," a program designed to support Black LGBTQ+ elected officials. "We need to create spaces where leaders can not only survive but thrive," he explained. "It's about building trampolines, not just safety nets, so that when we fall, we bounce forward."

Rupert-Gordon echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of structural change. "It's not just about opening doors; it's about eliminating them altogether," she said. She described initiatives at NCLR that prioritize equity in hiring, eliminate salary negotiations to prevent pay disparities, and

extend job postings to reach more diverse candidates. "We're not just recruiting; we're retaining," she asserted.

For Moore-O'Neal, Black feminism provides the foundation for her leadership. "Black feminism is not just a theory; it's a framework for action," she said. By centering the most marginalized voices, she believes we can craft policies that uplift entire communities.

Representative Turner reflected on their role as a community organizer-turned-lawmaker. "I'm always working to build a pipeline of leaders," they shared.

"Liberation is collective, and we don't get there by leaving people behind."

The Call to Action

Dr. Johns concluded the session with a powerful challenge to the audience. "If you're not Black, ask yourself: What are you doing to support Black leadership?" he urged. "Use your privilege to uplift Black leaders in your community. And if you don't know any Black leaders, start there."

His words encapsulated the essence of the plenary: true progress requires collective effort. Black leadership is not just about representation; it's about creating systems and communities where every voice can thrive.

A Moment of Inspiration

As the session drew to a close, the room was filled with applause, energy, and a renewed sense of purpose. The "Black Leadership Rising" plenary was more than a panel; it was a call to action, a celebration of resilience, and a reminder of the transformative power of community.

Creating Change 2025 has set a bold precedent for how conferences can center marginalized voices and drive meaningful dialogue. As the LGBTQ+ community continues to confront challenges, the leadership and vision of these Black leaders provide a roadmap for a future rooted in equity, authenticity, and love.

To the attendees and beyond: the work continues. As Dr. Johns put it, "We forged ourselves out of this fire. And if we can do that, we can face anything that lies ahead."



Creating Change 2025

Democracy, Fascism, and the Road Ahead



In Las Vegas, a city known for reinvention, the 2025 Creating Change conference provided a space for deep reflection, powerful storytelling, and a vision for collective resistance in the face of rising authoritarianism. Thousands of LGBTQ+ activists, allies, and community leaders gathered at the Rio Hotel to discuss how we fortify democracy, build inclusive futures, and maintain hope against the challenges of a shifting political landscape.

The plenary session, titled "Democracy, Fascism, and the Road Ahead," set the tone for the weekend with a lineup of inspiring panelists: Ash-Lee Henderson of the Highlander Research and Education Center, Imara Jones of TransLash Media, Kris Hayashi of the Transgender Law Center, and Scot Nakagawa of the 22nd Century Initiative. Moderated by journalist and cultural force Imara Jones, the session tackled the rise of authoritarianism, the targeting of LGBTQ+ communities, and the urgent need for collective action.

The Urgency of the Moment

Imara Jones opened the plenary by

Photo: QVegas

grounding the conversation in the current political climate. "We're closer to a fascist future than we've ever been," she stated. Citing recent events—the erosion of DEI initiatives, attacks on birthright citizenship, and increasing criminalization of transgender and queer identities—Jones reminded the audience of the tangible stakes. Yet, she emphasized that the situation is not irreversible.

"We are not there yet," she affirmed. "The most critical thing we can do is recognize the possibilities in this moment and act boldly."

This theme of possibility resonated deeply throughout the session. Panelists agreed that the current challenges present an opportunity to reimagine democracy and reaffirm the resilience of marginalized communities.

Lessons from History

Scot Nakagawa, a longtime activist and co-founder of the 22nd Century Initiative, contextualized the conversation by providing a clear definition of fascism.

"Fascism requires ultra-nationalism, the

glorification of violence, centralized authority, and the suppression of dissent," Nakagawa explained. "While we're seeing trends in this direction, it's critical to note we're not fully there yet."

Drawing comparisons to historical examples of resistance, Nakagawa noted how grassroots movements have repeatedly countered oppressive regimes worldwide. He urged attendees to recognize the cracks in authoritarian systems—internal divisions, ideological inconsistencies, and public discontent—as opportunities for resistance.

"Fascists thrive on the illusion of invincibility," Nakagawa said. "But the truth is, they're not as unified or as powerful as they seem. There's still time for us to act."

Building Collective Power

Ash-Lee Henderson, the first Black woman to lead the Highlander Research and Education Center, highlighted the importance of organizing. Henderson reminded the audience that the South—often portrayed as a monolith of conservatism—has long been a site of radical resistance.



"The South gave us the civil rights movement. The South gave us queer Black liberation," Henderson declared. "And the South will lead us again."

Henderson emphasized the need for "infrastructure-building," which she described as strengthening the "bones" of movements to sustain long-term resistance. From mutual aid networks to labor organizing, she encouraged attendees to focus on strategies that build resilience and solidarity.

"We've survived before," she said. "And we'll survive again, but only if we commit to the collective work of keeping us safe."

Centering Trans Liberation

Kris Hayashi, executive director of the Transgender Law Center, shared insights into how trans communities are at the forefront of resistance—and why they've become a central target for authoritarian regimes.

"The attack on trans people is not accidental," Hayashi explained. "Trans liberation challenges the core of authoritarian ideologies. We disrupt binary thinking. We embody possibility."

Hayashi emphasized the importance of supporting trans-led organizations, particularly in states where anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has surged. He highlighted the work of grassroots activists who are fighting for access to gender-affirming care, inclusive policies, and community safety.

"If we want to save democracy," Hayashi said, "we must center trans liberation. It's not optional. It's essential."

Possibilities in Resistance

As the conversation shifted toward actionable steps, the panelists focused on the possibilities embedded in the present moment. Henderson underscored the power of hope.

"Hope is not passive," she said. "Hope is action. It's showing up when it's hard. It's believing that another world is possible because we're going to create it together."

Nakagawa echoed this sentiment, pointing

to international examples of successful resistance movements.

"Around the world, people have faced authoritarianism and won," he said. "We have to learn from them, build alliances, and adapt their strategies to our own context."

Hayashi added that the surge in attacks on LGBTQ+ rights has also sparked unprecedented solidarity across communities.

"We're seeing coalitions form that didn't exist five years ago," Hayashi noted. "People are waking up to the fact that our liberation is tied together."

A Call to Action

The plenary ended with a powerful call to action from Imara Jones.

"Don't miss the opportunities," she urged. "Even in Russia, activists had multiple chances to stop the rise of authoritarianism. They missed them. Let's not make the same mistake."

Jones encouraged attendees to support local and national organizations, engage in mutual aid, and prioritize community care. She also emphasized the importance of protecting trans and queer youth, who represent the next generation of leaders.

"The possibilities are endless," Jones said. "But it's up to us to seize them."

Creating Change in a City of Reinvention

As attendees left the plenary, the energy in the room was palpable. The Creating Change conference had once again demonstrated the power of collective action, offering not just a blueprint for resistance but also a reminder of the joy and connection that sustain movements.

In a city defined by reinvention, the conference's message was clear: transformation is possible. Whether through small acts of courage or large-scale organizing, the LGBTQ+ community has the tools, the history, and the vision to build a more inclusive and equitable future.

As Kris Hayashi aptly put it: "We get there together, or we never get there at all."



Creating Change 2025

Empowering Identities: The Revolutionary Voice Training Program for Trans and Non-Binary People



Nicole Gress, the Founder and CEO of Undead Voice, is revolutionizing the way trans and gender-diverse individuals explore and affirm their voices. Speaking at the Creating Change Conference in Las Vegas, Nicole shared the inspiring journey of creating a global platform that aligns voices with identities and builds a supportive community in the process.

A Mission Born from Experience

Nicole began her career as a licensed speech-language pathologist over 12 years ago, specializing in voice work. For the first five years, she worked in traditional healthcare settings in the San Francisco Bay Area. However, she quickly realized the limitations of these systems in serving the trans and gender-diverse community effectively.

"Unfortunately, traditional healthcare isn't the best setup to serve our community," Nicole explained. "The techniques don't

work very well, and the environment often isn't safe or inclusive."

Determined to create a better solution, Nicole founded Undead Voice six years ago. What began as a passion project has since grown into a global, virtual program with over 80,000 members from more than 20 countries.

What is Undead Voice?

At its core, Undead Voice is a trans voice company dedicated to helping trans and gender-diverse individuals modify their physical voices to align with their authentic selves. The organization's offerings include:

Undead Voice Lab: The flagship program is a comprehensive curriculum providing lifetime membership, unlimited voice coaching, and access to a vibrant community of peers. The program costs \$1000—a fraction of the typical cost for traditional voice training.

Jump Start Your Voice Transition: A free,

three-week masterclass designed to help individuals begin exploring voice training in a safe and supportive environment. Participants receive individual practice plans and a \$1000 tuition credit if they decide to join the full program.

"We strongly believe that community is the basis for all voice training," Nicole said. "Being surrounded by others who are also transitioning their voices is crucial for motivation, accountability, and seeing what's possible."

A Unique Approach

One of the most remarkable aspects of Undead Voice is its inclusive and non-binary approach to voice training.

"A lot of times when people talk about trans work, they frame it in binary terms, like feminizing or masculinizing the voice," Nicole explained. "We don't use gendered language because it recreates a binary within a non-binary space. Instead, we ask



clients: Do you want a higher, brighter, lighter voice? Or something darker and deeper? Or something fluid? It's about empowering individuals to make choices that feel right for them."

This approach has made Undead Voice the only company to offer curriculum tracks tailored to all identities. Nicole emphasized that the work is not only about achieving a particular sound but also about creating a safe, affirming space for exploration and growth.

A Global and Accessible Community

Undead Voice operates entirely online, making it accessible to individuals around the world. The program's curriculum is designed to be inclusive across languages and cultures. While vocal instruction is conducted in English, the act of changing one's voice relies more on exercises and sound demonstrations than language proficiency.

Participants from over 20 countries often translate the program's materials into their native languages and share them within the community. Additionally, the platform offers closed captions to enhance accessibility.

The program's affordability is another key feature. "Traditional voice training can cost upwards of \$30,000 over several years," Nicole noted. "Our program costs between \$1000 and \$2000, and that includes lifetime access to all resources. We also offer tuition assistance and accept FSA or HSA accounts."

Results and Community Impact

The Undead Voice curriculum is designed to produce significant changes within six months, with most participants seeing the biggest shifts in the first four months. However, the program's lifetime membership allows individuals to progress at their own pace.

"Life happens," Nicole acknowledged. "We want our community to feel like they can take a break if they need to without worrying about falling behind or losing access. Lifetime membership gives them the space to breathe and focus on their goals when they're ready."

Undead Voice's impact extends beyond voice training. Many members remain active in the community long after achieving their affirming voices, participating in daily events and forming lasting friendships. "Eighty-five percent of our members stay involved because they find value in the connections they've built here," Nicole said.

Barriers in Traditional Healthcare

Nicole's decision to create a private, de-medicalized model for Undead Voice was intentional. While her background as a licensed speech-language pathologist provides valuable expertise, she chose not to work under her licensure within this program. This allows Undead Voice to operate outside the constraints of insurance systems, which often dictate the scope and frequency of care.

"Insurance rarely covers voice training for trans individuals, and in states with care bans, it's completely inaccessible," Nicole explained. "By de-medicalizing the program, we've been able to make it more affordable and accessible than a typical co-pay."

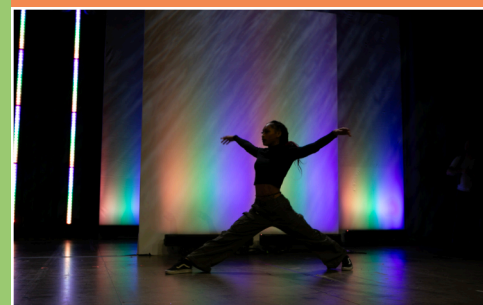
A Gift to the Community

In response to the recent election and its implications for the LGBTQ+ community, Undead Voice is offering the Jump Start Your Voice Transition program completely free throughout the year. Nicole emphasized the importance of making resources available during challenging times.

"This is a way for us to give back and ensure that every trans and gender-diverse person has the opportunity to explore their voice," she said. "We're running 20 sessions of the program this year, so there will always be one open for registration."

How to Get Involved

Undead Voice is more than a voice training program; it's a movement to create affirming spaces and empower individuals to find their authentic voices. Whether you're looking to begin your voice journey or want to join a supportive community, you can visit undeadvoice.com for more information.



Beyond The Strip: A Conversation With Members From The Las Vegas LGBTQ+ Community



In the glittering city of Las Vegas, known globally for its entertainment, tourism, and vibrant nightlife, lies a thriving and resilient LGBTQ+ community. While many know Las Vegas as Sin City, a destination of indulgence and transient pleasures, its LGBTQ+ residents experience a different reality—one of community building, advocacy, and creativity. This duality was at the heart of the recent panel discussion titled ****Beyond the Strip: A Conversation with Members from the Las Vegas LGBTQ+ Community****. Moderated by Grayson Bell and featuring panelists Calvin Byrd, Nicole Williams, and Rio Antone, the event brought to light the challenges, triumphs, and aspirations of LGBTQ+ individuals in Las Vegas.

The event, hosted on the Creator Stage at the LGBTQ Center of Southern Nevada, began with a warm welcome from Holly, the Senior Director of Programs at the Center. Holly emphasized the Center's commitment to serving the community, noting that it provides a wide array of services, from medical care to advocacy programs, and welcomes around 200,000 points of service annually. Holly's invitation

Photo: QVegas

to tour the Center and learn more about its resources set the tone for a day dedicated to fostering connection and understanding.

A Dynamic Panel

Grayson Bell, the moderator, is a multifaceted creative known for blending humor and raw emotion in his work as a satirist, poet, songwriter, and ordained minister. He introduced the panelists with enthusiasm, highlighting their contributions to the LGBTQ+ community.

Kalvin Byrd

A Las Vegas native, Calvin is the co-founder of Uncloak, an organization focused on HIV prevention, combating homelessness, and addressing mental health issues among trans men. His work challenges stigma and promotes inclusivity, making him a pivotal figure in queer and trans wellness advocacy.

Rio Antone

Also known as Del Rio Perkins, Rio is a trailblazing non-binary icon who made history as the first Mixed Las Vegas Trans Pride titleholder. With a career spanning media influencing, public speaking, fashion styling, and creative directing, Rio is a

powerful voice for gender identity education and self-love.

Nicole Williams

As the founder of Vegas Urban Pride and the Social Influence Foundation, Nicole has been instrumental in creating spaces that celebrate and uplift BIPOC LGBTQ+ voices. Her efforts have garnered her numerous proclamations, including Nicole Williams Day on October 25th and House of Vegas Pride Day on August 18th.

Life Beyond the Strip

The discussion kicked off with a question about how life for LGBTQ+ residents in Las Vegas differs from the city's image as a hub of entertainment and tourism. Nicole shared her perspective, describing Las Vegas as a "big small city" where community members often know each other across neighborhoods. While tourism has helped to spotlight LGBTQ+ events, Nicole emphasized the growth and resilience of local organizations and individuals who work tirelessly to create impactful events and foster a sense of belonging.

Kalvin echoed these sentiments, highlighting the city's collaborative spirit.



Despite challenges in gaining recognition, organizations like UNCLO have found success by partnering with other local groups, such as Les Touch and the LGBTQ Center of Southern Nevada. Calvin's focus on trans men underscores the importance of inclusivity within the broader LGBTQ+ community.

Rio offered a unique perspective, noting that Las Vegas is a home for people who might not have found one elsewhere. However, the city's transient nature can make it difficult for individuals to feel rooted. To address this, Rio has cultivated spaces that prioritize intentional connection and community care. By checking in on members who might feel isolated, Rio's efforts ensure that no one is left behind.

Challenges and Opportunities

Building a strong and inclusive community in a transient city like Las Vegas presents unique challenges. Panelists identified several areas for growth, including access to funding, resources, and visibility. Nicole stressed the importance of creating opportunities for smaller organizations to be heard and taken seriously, while Calvin advocated for increased recognition of trans men's contributions.

Rio emphasized the need for breaking down silos within the LGBTQ+ community. By fostering cross-community collaboration, Rio believes Las Vegas can overcome the stagnation that often arises from insular social circles. "Change is the only way to curate real community," Rio stated, highlighting the importance of embracing diversity within and beyond established groups.

Creative Expression as Activism

Creative expression emerged as a central theme in the panel's discussion of activism. Each panelist shared how their artistry and advocacy intersect, demonstrating the transformative power of creativity in fostering social change.

For Calvin, creative expression involves creating spaces where trans men can explore their identities without fear of judgment. By challenging traditional

notions of masculinity and encouraging playfulness, Calvin helps his community reconnect with their inner child and find joy in self-discovery.

Nicole's activism is deeply rooted in responding to community needs. Whether organizing a basketball tournament to address gun violence or launching a music conference to support local artists, Nicole's initiatives are driven by a commitment to "party with a purpose."

Rio described their artistry as a "love letter to myself." By embracing vulnerability and authenticity, Rio creates a ripple effect of self-love and empowerment. Their performances and creative projects serve as reminders that joy and resilience can coexist with struggle.

Building Bridges

The panelists also addressed the importance of building bridges between different parts of the LGBTQ+ community. Nicole's upcoming online resource directory aims to connect individuals with jobs, networking opportunities, and other resources. By creating a centralized platform, Nicole hopes to make it easier for LGBTQ+ individuals to find the support they need.

Rio spoke passionately about the need for intentionality in community building. "Your people will find you if you make yourself visible," they said, encouraging audience members to step out of their comfort zones and forge new connections.

Kalvin's focus on collaboration underscores the importance of partnerships in achieving shared goals. By working with other organizations and individuals, Calvin has been able to amplify his impact and create meaningful change.

Advice for Aspiring Advocates

The panel concluded with advice for those looking to make a difference in their communities. Nicole emphasized the importance of setting boundaries and prioritizing self-care. "If it doesn't feel right, don't do it," she advised, urging attendees to listen to their intuition.

Kalvin encouraged aspiring advocates to

"take a break" and prioritize their well-being. "Community will be there when you get back," he said, reminding attendees that self-care is essential for sustainable activism.

Rio's advice centered on embracing one's unique strengths. "You have to love yourself so hard that it makes people think you're crazy," they said, emphasizing the power of self-love in overcoming adversity.

Audience Engagement

The panel's interactive Q&A session highlighted the community's hunger for connection and collaboration. Questions ranged from how to integrate friends into business ventures to addressing burnout in advocacy work. Panelists provided thoughtful and practical responses, underscoring the importance of authenticity, perseverance, and self-care.

One audience member's question about finding black queer spaces in Las Vegas sparked a broader discussion about the need for better integration and visibility. Nicole's resource directory and Rio's call for cross-community collaboration offered actionable solutions to this ongoing challenge.

Looking Ahead

The Beyond the Strip panel was a testament to the strength and resilience of Las Vegas' LGBTQ+ community. By sharing their stories, challenges, and triumphs, the panelists demonstrated that activism and creativity go hand in hand. Their work serves as a reminder that even in a city known for its glitz and glamour, there is room for meaningful connection and transformative change.

As Las Vegas continues to grow, so too will its LGBTQ+ community. With leaders like Calvin, Nicole, and Rio at the helm, the city's future is undoubtedly bright. Beyond the Strip, Las Vegas is home to a vibrant tapestry of voices, each contributing to a richer and more inclusive narrative. Through their advocacy, creativity, and unwavering commitment to community, these trailblazers are shaping a legacy that extends far beyond the neon lights.

Creating Change 2025

Empowering LGBTQ Communities through Technology: LGBT Tech at the Creating Change Conference in Las Vegas



Las Vegas recently hosted the **Creating Change Conference**, one of the most impactful annual gatherings dedicated to advancing LGBTQ equality. Among the many organizations showcasing their initiatives, **LGBT Tech** stood out as a leader in bridging the gap between technology and the LGBTQ community. With its innovative programs and policy advocacy, **LGBT Tech** is paving the way for digital inclusion, empowerment, and safety for LGBTQ individuals and organizations nationwide.

LGBT Tech: A Mission of Inclusion and Innovation

"We work at the intersections of the LGBTQ community and technology," explains Arin Rook, Digital Inclusion Manager for **LGBT Tech**. This mission is reflected across the organization's diverse initiatives that address both immediate needs and long-term progress in technology access and education.

Photo: QVegas

The cornerstone of their work lies in three major areas: programmatic support, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) empowerment, and policy advocacy. At the conference, attendees had the opportunity to learn about these initiatives and their transformative impact.

Expanding Access through the Power On Program

One of **LGBT Tech**'s flagship initiatives is the **Power On** program, which focuses on equipping LGBTQ individuals and organizations with vital technological tools.

Community Tech Grants: Through these grants, LGBTQ-serving organizations and centers can apply for up to 10 devices, such as laptops, tablets, cell phones, and printers. The devices can be used for staff operations, setting up computer labs, or establishing rental or loan programs for clients. These grants ensure that organizations can better serve their

communities with modern tools and resources.

Individual Tech Grants: Recognizing the personal technological barriers many LGBTQ individuals face, **LGBT Tech** recently launched a grant for individuals aged 16 and older. This program provides free laptops, tablets, or cell phones to individuals referred to the organization, giving them access to essential tools for education, employment, and personal growth.

Empowering STEAM Professionals through the PATHS Program

STEAM fields are often seen as gateways to innovation and economic mobility. **LGBT Tech**'s **PATHS** program is designed to support LGBTQ individuals pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. The program combines financial aid, mentorship, and visibility to create pathways for success.



STEAM Educational Grants: Participants can apply for up to \$5,000 in grants, which can be used for traditional education, housing expenses related to education, or attending industry conferences and boot camps.

Mentorship Opportunities: Grant recipients are paired with mentors from STEAM fields who are also members of the LGBTQ community. This mentorship fosters guidance, encouragement, and networking opportunities.

Visibility through Storytelling: As part of the PATHS program, LGBT Tech produces professional video interviews with LGBTQ STEAM professionals. These interviews, available on the organization's YouTube channel, share inspiring stories of individuals navigating their careers while breaking barriers in their fields.

Promoting Digital Literacy and Safety with the Digital Navigator Program

Recognizing the importance of digital literacy in today's world, LGBT Tech has launched its Digital Navigator Program to address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals and organizations in online spaces.

Cybersecurity Guidebook for LGBTQ Centers: This guidebook provides practical advice, templates, and worksheets to help LGBTQ centers develop policies and safeguard their data. It is particularly valuable for smaller organizations without dedicated IT staff.

Resource Hub: LGBT Tech is developing a free, online resource hub specifically designed by and for queer and trans people. The hub will offer educational tools on digital literacy, cybersecurity, and safe technology use, ensuring that LGBTQ individuals can navigate the digital world with confidence.

Advocacy for Tech Policy and LGBTQ Rights

In addition to its programmatic work, LGBT Tech plays a significant role in shaping policy to protect and advance the interests of the LGBTQ community in technology. The organization collaborates with policymakers and legislators to address

issues such as online safety, equitable access to technology, and the implications of proposed legislation like the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA).

Through its research and reports, LGBT Tech provides valuable insights into how technology impacts LGBTQ lives. This data helps inform legislative decisions and advocates for inclusive tech policies at the federal level.

Engaging the LGBTQ Community through Surveys and Research

LGBT Tech also conducts national surveys to better understand the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in STEAM fields. By gathering comparative data, the organization identifies trends and challenges that inform its programs and advocacy efforts. The ongoing surveys allow community members to contribute to a growing body of knowledge that benefits both individuals and organizations.

Creating Change: The Future of LGBTQ Tech Empowerment

As the Creating Change Conference highlighted, the work of organizations like LGBT Tech is vital for the progress of LGBTQ equality in an increasingly digital world. Whether it's through providing technology grants, offering mentorship opportunities, or shaping policy, LGBT Tech is committed to ensuring that LGBTQ individuals and organizations have the tools and resources they need to thrive.

Arin Rook summed it up best: "Digital inclusion is not just about access to devices; it's about creating opportunities for education, career advancement, and personal empowerment. It's about making sure every member of our community can participate fully in the digital age."

To learn more about LGBT Tech and its initiatives, visit their website or check out their YouTube channel for inspiring stories and resources. As the organization continues its impactful work, it serves as a reminder that technology, when used inclusively, can be a powerful force for equality and progress.



The State Of The LGBTQ+ Movement: A Conversation Between Kierra Johnson and Tre'vell Anderson



At the recent Creating Change Conference, two powerhouses of the LGBTQ+ movement, Kierra Johnson, President of the National LGBTQ Task Force, and Tre'vell Anderson, journalist and cultural force, came together for an insightful and dynamic conversation on the current state of the LGBTQ+ movement. Their dialogue, filled with humor, vulnerability, and wisdom, shed light on the challenges, successes, and the path forward for the community. Here are the highlights of their engaging exchange, showcasing how the movement is evolving and where we need to go.

Grading the Movement: A Self-Assessment

When asked to grade the current LGBTQ+ movement, Johnson candidly gave it an "A-minus." While acknowledging the progress made, she didn't shy away from critiquing areas that require improvement, particularly in scaling successful local and state-level strategies to a national level. She noted, "We have winning strategies happening across the country, but they aren't being scaled, spotlighted, or funded the way they should be. That scalability is where we're falling short."

Johnson's reflection underscores the tension between localized victories and the

broader systemic change needed to combat growing threats, such as rising anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and attacks on bodily autonomy. She emphasized that the roots of these threats run deep, planted by decades of organized efforts from opposition forces. "We have to focus on pulling up the roots of fascism," she stated. "This isn't just about what we're doing wrong; it's about the long-term strategies of our opposition and how we counteract them."

Urgency vs. Long-Term Strategy

One of the central themes of the conversation was balancing the "urgency of now" with the necessity of long-term planning. Anderson asked Johnson what this balance looks like, especially in an era of relentless attacks on LGBTQ+ rights. Johnson explained, "We're often in crisis mode, reacting to the latest attack, but we need to pause and think about what feeds our community for the long haul. Every decision we make in the short term should set us up for bigger wins down the line."

She pointed to gender-affirming care as an example. While it's often framed narrowly as a trans-specific issue, Johnson highlighted its broader relevance. "Gender-affirming care isn't just for trans people. Think about hormone replacement therapies for menopausal women or

testosterone treatments for men with erectile dysfunction. By framing it as an issue that impacts a wider swath of the population, we can build broader coalitions and create more sustainable strategies."

Coalition Building and Centering Vulnerable Communities

A recurring theme in their dialogue was the need for coalition-building—bringing together communities across identities and issues. However, both Johnson and Anderson stressed that this must not come at the expense of centering the most marginalized.

"When we build coalitions," Johnson said, "we need to ask, who are the queer migrants at the border? Who are the Black trans women being denied access to healthcare? These are the people who need us most, and we can't put them on the back burner because we need numbers."

Anderson echoed this sentiment, cautioning against the temptation to dilute focus in pursuit of broader appeal. "Building a big tent doesn't mean we compromise on centering those who are most impacted," they said. "We need to be strategic but also unwavering in our commitment to justice for all members of our community."



The Power of Vulnerability

One of the most moving parts of their conversation was their shared emphasis on vulnerability—both as individuals and as a movement. Johnson shared a personal story about her own growth, admitting that early in her career, she held Black staff to a higher standard than others, expecting them to “do more to get equal.” Recognizing this bias was a pivotal moment for her.

“Being vulnerable about our mistakes is hard,” she said. “But it’s necessary if we want to grow and build trust within our community. None of us are perfect, and we need to give each other grace as we learn and evolve.”

Anderson built on this idea, emphasizing the importance of creating spaces where people can learn without fear of being cast out. “We’ve all made mistakes. What matters is how we hold ourselves accountable and how we support each other in doing better.”

Lessons from Elders and Ancestors

Throughout the discussion, Johnson and Anderson honored the wisdom of LGBTQ+ elders and ancestors. “We’re not the first to face these challenges,” Johnson reminded the audience. “Our ancestors navigated a world that didn’t recognize their identities but still found ways to thrive and resist. There’s so much to learn from their resilience.”

Anderson highlighted the importance of intergenerational dialogue, urging younger activists to seek out elders for guidance. “They have a wealth of knowledge that can ground us and remind us that we’re part of a larger continuum of struggle and triumph.”

Reclaiming Joy and Rest

Another key takeaway was the importance of joy and rest as acts of resistance. Johnson referenced a memorable moment from the previous year’s conference, where legendary activist Miss Major Griffin-Gracy advised attendees to “take a nap and come back.”

“Rest is revolutionary,” Johnson affirmed.

“We’re no good to the movement if we’re burnt out. Taking care of ourselves is not just self-preservation; it’s community preservation.”

Anderson added, “Joy is an essential part of our survival. We need to celebrate our wins, big and small, and create spaces where we can simply be ourselves without fear or judgment.”

Moving from Defensive to Proactive

As the conversation wound down, both Johnson and Anderson emphasized the need for the LGBTQ+ movement to shift from a defensive posture to a proactive one. “We’re really good at crisis management,” Johnson said. “But we need to spend more time envisioning the future we want and taking deliberate steps to build it.”

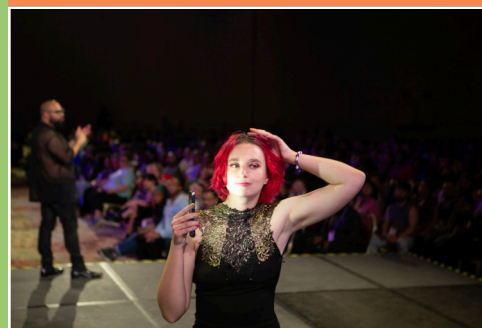
This includes fostering networks of mutual support, scaling successful strategies, and framing issues in ways that build broad-based coalitions. “The future is ours to shape,” Anderson concluded. “But it requires all of us to show up—not just in moments of crisis but consistently, with our full, authentic selves.”

A Call to Action

The conversation between Kierra Johnson and Tre’Vell Anderson was a powerful reminder of the work that lies ahead and the strength that comes from unity. Their insights challenge all of us to think critically about our roles in the movement and how we can contribute to a more inclusive and just future.

As we move forward, let us honor the lessons of our elders, embrace vulnerability, and prioritize joy and rest. Let us build coalitions that center the most marginalized while envisioning a future where everyone in our community can thrive. And above all, let us remember that the fight for liberation is a long journey, one that requires persistence, courage, and collective care.

The state of the LGBTQ+ movement is strong, but there is always room to grow. Together, we can turn that A-minus into an A-plus. The future depends on it.



Creating Change 2025

Perez Hilton Reflects on Accountability, Growth, and the Evolution Of Social Media at Creating Change 2025



Perez Hilton, the self-proclaimed "original internet gossip," took the stage at the LGBTQ Task Force's Creating Change Conference in Las Vegas to deliver a candid, heartfelt conversation about personal growth, the complexities of social media, and the evolving dynamics of community and activism. Over the course of an hour-long panel, Hilton shared insights from his 21-year career, weaving in moments of vulnerability, humor, and reflection. Here's a recap of the highlights.

Opening with Accountability

Hilton began his session by addressing his well-documented past, including his "apology tour" for the controversies he sparked during his early blogging days.

"I've made a lot of mistakes in my past, which I've apologized for," he said, leaning into the audience with earnest sincerity. "I'm done with the apology tour, but I'm not done living the change I've committed to. For me, it's about showing that change over a long period of time. That's how you prove to people you've learned. You have to live it."

Hilton emphasized the importance of grace, especially in a society prone to

cancel culture. "We need to give others the space to evolve," he explained. "We all make mistakes, but the best truth is in how we grow from them. Fighting and labeling people as 'evil' because they disagree with us gets us nowhere."

In a poignant moment, Hilton recalled the infamous video of himself crying on Election Day in 2016 after Donald Trump's victory. "At the time, I believed everything I said about Trump voters. But my language has evolved. I no longer see people I disagree with as the enemy. That's not progress. I'm here to understand, not to vilify."

The Social Media Paradox

Shifting to the conference's theme of social media and its intersection with activism, Hilton offered a layered critique.

"I hate social media," he admitted with a laugh, eliciting knowing nods from the audience. "But I also need it for my job. Social media has amplified so much toxicity, but it's also created communities that didn't exist before. It's a double-edged sword."

Hilton, who began blogging in 2004, reflected on the stark differences between

then and now. "When I started, there was no such thing as 'social media' or 'influencers.' I was called a 'web celeb,' which I actually like better than influencer. Celebrity news wasn't even mainstream yet—it was on the fringes, in tabloids and entertainment shows. Now it's everywhere."

He drew a direct line from the commodification of celebrity to the "showbiz-ification" of politics, which he partly attributes to the Trump era. "Politics has become entertainment. It's about clicks and views. Theatrics over substance. And it's polarizing us even more."

Despite his frustrations, Hilton acknowledged social media's role in amplifying queer voices, albeit with caveats. "It's a wonderfully complex time to be queer," he said. "Social media has helped queer people—including conservative queer people—be seen. The idea of a gay monolith doesn't exist anymore."

Mindfulness in the Digital Age

Hilton offered advice to activists and creators navigating today's fraught social media landscape: mindfulness and intention matter.



"Take a moment before you post. Think about how your words will impact others," he said. "Expressing a critical opinion isn't bullying. How you express it—the words you use—that's where mindfulness comes in."

Recalling a recent controversy involving Megyn Kelly, Hilton used it as a teaching moment. "She viciously attacked Lauren Sanchez for her outfit at an event. Was it inappropriate? Maybe. But the way Kelly ripped into her... it sets a tone. It tells her viewers it's okay to do the same. That's what I used to do, and I'm not proud of it."

Hilton spoke candidly about his own wake-up call in 2010, when the LGBTQ youth suicide crisis shook the nation. "I was part of the problem," he admitted. "When I made an 'It Gets Better' video, people called me a hypocrite and a bully. They were right. That was the turning point for me. I didn't want to be that person anymore."

On the Rise of Conservative Youth

In a sobering moment, Hilton shared his concerns about what he sees as a shift among younger generations.

"I'm depressed because I feel like teenagers and young people are shifting to the right," he said. "It's scary. Social media's to blame, along with misinformation and the theatrics of politics. It feels like the focus is on demonizing groups of people rather than finding common ground."

Hilton urged nonprofits and activists to adapt their messaging. "You have to be smart about it," he said. "Speak in code if you need to. Play within the system to beat the system. It's exhausting, but it's necessary."

Advice for Creators and Activists

Hilton's advice for those building platforms or pursuing activism was simple: be authentic, but don't overthink it.

"Create. However you interpret that—just do it," he said. "Make mistakes. That's how you learn. But be mindful of your intentions. Don't just do something for shock value. Do it because it means something to you."

He also stressed the importance of

consistency and hard work. "You can't just post and leave. Engage with your audience. Build those relationships. It's time-consuming, but it's what separates good content from great content."

Hilton encouraged attendees to embrace the power of video. "If you're not creating video content in 2025, you're already behind," he said. "People want dynamic, visual storytelling. Lean into it."

Family, Identity, and the Power of Empathy

As a Cuban American, Hilton shared how his cultural background shaped his worldview. "Family is everything," he said. "Even when we disagree politically, I don't cut ties. That's not who we are. We pick our battles and focus on what unites us."

This sentiment extended to his view of the LGBTQ community. "We're not a monolith. We never have been. And that's okay. The goal is to find ways to bridge those divides, not deepen them."

Hilton closed with a reminder of why spaces like Creating Change are so vital. "It's easy to feel alone in your corner of the internet. But when we come together, we remind each other that we're not alone. That's the power of community."

Looking Ahead

Despite his critiques of social media and its effects on society, Hilton remains optimistic about its potential. "The future of digital media is the past," he said, half-joking. "It's going to keep changing, just like it always has. The key is adapting. If you're not willing to pivot, you're not going to last."

Hilton's journey—from gossip blogger to self-reflective advocate—is a testament to the power of growth and the resilience of the LGBTQ community. His words at Creating Change served as both a call to action and a reminder that even in divisive times, understanding and empathy can lead the way forward.



Creating Change 2025



Dr. Bronner's, the iconic soap company known for its commitment to fair trade, organic practices, and social responsibility, made a powerful debut at this year's Creating Change Conference in Las Vegas. Represented by Ariel Vegosen, the company brought its mission of inclusivity, sustainability, and community care to the forefront of this vibrant event, which celebrates LGBTQ+ advocacy and activism.

"Dr. Bronner's is not just a soap company. It's about creating a better world and caring for each other," said Vegosen. "We believe in the All-One philosophy—that we are all connected. This is why supporting the LGBTQ+ community, and especially trans organizations, is at the heart of what we do."

This year's Creating Change Conference brought together over 4,000 attendees, making it a pivotal moment for Dr. Bronner's to showcase their full rainbow of products. From classics like lavender and peppermint to rose and tea tree, the company's vibrant branding aligns seamlessly with its message of love, diversity, and inclusion.

"Rainbows are a symbol of unity and connection," Vegosen explained. "They're a beautiful way to express our love and support for the LGBTQ+ community. Plus, let's be honest, they look amazing on our bottles!"

Attendees at the conference were treated to complimentary samples of Dr. Bronner's soap, creating an opportunity for people to experience the brand firsthand. The company opted not to sell products at the event, instead focusing on community engagement. "We're here to give back," Vegosen shared. "People can stop by, pick up a bottle of our soap, and learn more about who we are and what we stand for."

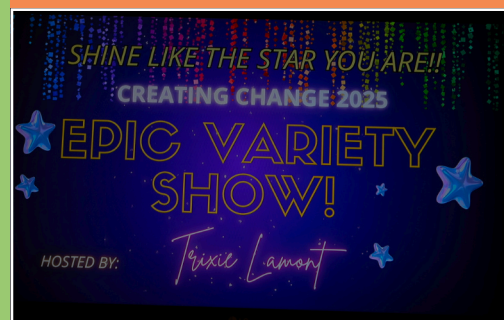
Photo: QVegas

Dr. Bronner's commitment to ethical practices extends far beyond their products. As a family-owned business, they prioritize fair wages, sustainable sourcing, and regenerative practices. "We know where our ingredients come from and ensure that everyone in our production chain is treated fairly," Vegosen said. "It's about making a positive impact on the planet and creating a company culture rooted in kindness and care."

This is the first year Dr. Bronner's has had a booth at Creating Change, though their products have been included in past health and wellness initiatives. For Vegosen, who has attended the conference for 20 years, this partnership represents a meaningful step forward. "Being here is such a beautiful experience," they said. "Now more than ever, with everything happening in our political system, it's critical to stand with and support LGBTQ+ and trans communities."

Creating Change, which moves to a different location each year, provides a unique platform for organizations like Dr. Bronner's to connect with changemakers and advocates. Vegosen noted the importance of these interactions. "This conference is about building relationships and showing up for each other," they said. "It's inspiring to see so many people come together to create a better world."

As attendees left the conference's Expo Hall with their complimentary bottles of Dr. Bronner's soap, the message was clear: this isn't just about soap. It's about unity, care, and a commitment to making the world a kinder, more inclusive place. For those who missed the event, Dr. Bronner's products are available in local stores and online, bringing a little piece of their rainbow magic to everyone.



Photos: Fernanda H. Meier (She/Her), fernandameier.com



Mexico vs USA Now

By Marilyn K. Simon

As a United States citizen with permanent residency in Mexico, I find myself uniquely positioned to observe and compare the significant political and societal developments unfolding in Mexico and the United States. While these neighboring countries share a border, their trajectories in leadership and societal values appear to be diverging in striking ways.

In Mexico, President Claudia Sheinbaum, a former energy scientist and Nobel Laureate, has assumed leadership with a commitment to continuity and progress. Building on the legacy of her predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, she has expanded welfare programs that have resonated deeply with the Mexican populace. These initiatives, aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, have bolstered her popularity and reflect a government prioritizing social well-being. Her scientific background also brings a refreshing perspective to governance, underscoring the importance of informed decision-making in addressing complex national issues.

In stark contrast, the United States has elected an individual with a well-

documented history of legal troubles, divisive rhetoric, and undemocratic tendencies. Felon 47, as some have come to label him, attempted to overturn the results of the 2020 election—a direct attack on the democratic foundations of the nation. His proposal to eliminate birthright citizenship, enshrined in the Constitution's 14th Amendment, represents a fundamental shift away from the inclusive ideals that have historically defined America. Ironically, Mexico, a nation often stereotyped as less progressive, grants birthright citizenship irrespective of parental nationality, reflecting its commitment to universal human rights (Article 30 of the Mexican constitution).

Another glaring disparity lies in the treatment of the LGBTQ+ community. In the United States, many LGBTQ+ individuals live in fear, facing a resurgence of discriminatory policies and societal hostility. The country that once symbolized freedom and equality now grapples with a troubling erosion of these values. Anyone with gender marked X on their passport is banned from entry into the U.S. Meanwhile, Mexico, a predominantly Catholic country, demonstrates what it means to embody truly Catholic values—compassion, acceptance, and love for all. Anti-discrimination laws protect the LGBTQ+

community, and the prevailing societal attitude is one of inclusivity and respect. This stark difference challenges the assumption that religious conservatism must equate to intolerance.

These contrasts are more than political; they reflect the soul of each nation at this moment in history. Mexico's government, while not without flaws, appears committed to uplifting its most vulnerable and fostering a culture of acceptance. The United States, conversely, seems mired in a battle over its identity, with forces of regression threatening the principles of democracy, equality, and inclusion.

As someone who straddles both worlds, I cannot help but feel a sense of urgency for my native country. The United States has long been a beacon of hope and progress, but it risks losing that distinction if it continues down its current path. Perhaps it is time to look south, not with condescension but with an openness to learn. Mexico's approach to welfare, human rights, and community values offers lessons worth considering. The question is whether the United States is willing to embrace them before it's too late.



MARILYN K. SIMON, PhD, has been actively involved in Mathematics and Computer Education since 1969 and has taught all levels of mathematics and study skill development from pre-school through graduate school with extraordinary results, receiving outstanding faculty awards at several universities.

Dr. Simon has authored numerous research papers and several books. Dr. Simon was a mathematics education ambassador to South Africa in 2000, where she assisted in online learning development. She also conducted post-doctoral research at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, New Jersey. She is president of the board of trustees of The Responsibility

Project, which builds schools and hospitals for children (preK-K) who live in the Matagalpa and Tijuana Municipal Dumps. Dr. Simon was a visiting professor in Tonga where she, and 10 other professors, conducted a leadership training seminar for Tongan adults and youth. In 2018 she became a visiting professor at America Samoa working to improve the educational programs in this territory.

The Simon's spend as much time as possible in their Mexican home in Rosarito beach. Their favorite activity is being with their grandkids and watching sunsets and sea mammals from their deck in Mexico.



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thecenterlv.org

ACLU
aclunv.org

ADL
lasvegas.adl.org

ALCOHOLICS TOGETHER
alcoholicstogetherlasvegas.com

BEARS LAS VEGAS
bears.lv.org

COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA
cccfsn.org

HENDERSON PRIDE
hendersonpride.org

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN
hrc.org

IMPERIAL ROYALE SOVEREIGN COURT OF THE DESERT EMPIRE
desertempire.org

LAMBDA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION
lambdalv.com

LAS VEGAS MEN'S CHORUS
lvmenschorus.org

LAS VEGAS PRIME TIMERS
lasvegasprimetimers.com

LEATHER UNIFORM CLUB OF LAS VEGAS (LUC OF LV)
lucoflv.com

LEGACY COUNSELING
legacycounselingandworkforceconnections.com

MAMA DRAGONS
mamadragons.org

NEVADA GAY RODEO ASSOCIATION
ngra.com

THE PRIDE TREE
thepridetree.lv.com

SILVER STATE EQUALITY
silverstateequality.org

SOUTHERN NEVADA ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER QUEER SOCIETY
snapiqs.org

YOUNG: EQUAL
youngequal.org

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AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)
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FARABI WELLNESS CENTER
hpvlv.com

GOLDEN RAINBOW
goldenrainbow.org

HORIZON RIDGE WELLNESS CLINIC
hrc.lv.org

SIN CITY SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE
sinsitysisters.org



STI Testing

THE ARLENE COOPER COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
thecenterlv.org

AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)
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HUNTRIDGE FAMILY CLINIC
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