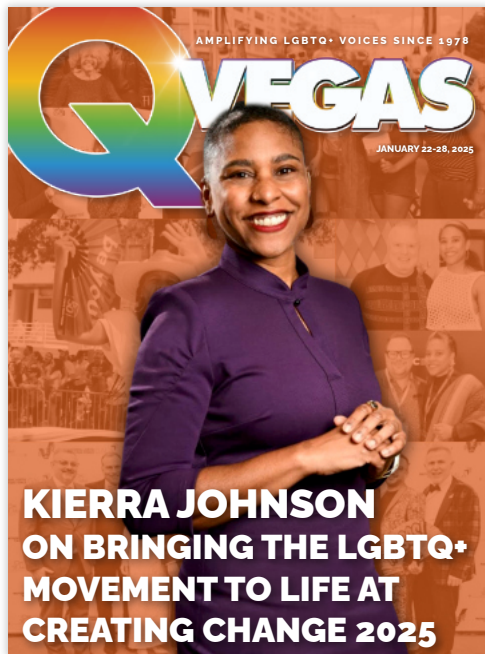


AMPLIFYING LGBTQ+ VOICES SINCE 1978



JANUARY 22-28, 2025

**KIERRA JOHNSON
ON BRINGING THE LGBTQ+
MOVEMENT TO LIFE AT
CREATING CHANGE 2025**



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.

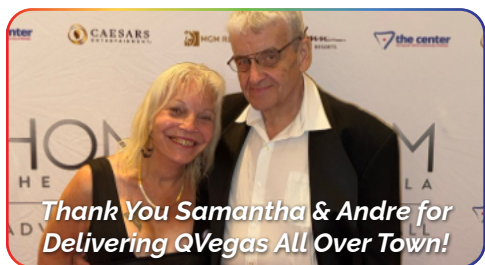
This week we feature Kierra Johnson, President of the National LGBTQ Task Force, who is leading the charge for the 38th Creating Change Conference in Las Vegas. This transformative event unites activists, celebrates progress, and inspires action, leaving a lasting impact on both attendees and the host city. Portions of the live stream will be available on YouTube, and \$50 weekend pass is available for some of the activities if you couldn't register for the conference.

It's been a very queer month in Las Vegas. Sin City Classic and the GayVN Awards have wrapped up, making this month a stellar destination for LGBTQ+ events in Vegas.

Nicole Cochener, a visionary artist, showcases her innovative mixed-media works at Gipsy Nightclub's "Canvas and Cocktails" event.



Russ White & Garrett Pattiani
Publishers, QVegas & QLife Media



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View this week's horoscopes at qvegas.com/horoscopes-are-a-drag.



GEMINI

JANUARY 2025

Honey, let me tell you all about January 2025 for all you fabulous Geminis out there. It's a month when you're going to shine, sparkle, and slay, darling! The stars are aligning to bring you a whole lot of drama, but the good kind, where you emerge as the shining star. You're going to be serving up fierce looks and even fiercer accomplishments. Remember, you've got the power to turn every challenge into your runway. So, throw on that glitter, pump up the volume, and strut into 2025 like the fabulous diva you were born to be, because this month is all about embracing the limelight and living your most fabulous life. Yasss, Gemini!"



CAESARS
ENTERTAINMENT



LUXOR



MGM RESORTS
INTERNATIONAL



WYNN RESORTS



VIRGIN HOTELS
LAS VEGAS



THE VENETIAN RESORT
LAS VEGAS



PALMS
RESORT & CASINO

Hotels

These hotels have a current HRC Corporate Equality Index score of 100.

CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT
caesars.com

Caesars Palace
The Cromwell
Flamingo
Harrah's
Horseshoe (formerly Bally's)
The LINQ
Paris
Planet Hollywood

THE VENETIAN RESORT LAS VEGAS
venetianlasvegas.com

These hotels have actively demonstrated support for the LGBTQ+ community but do not have a current HRC CEI of 100

MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL
mgmresorts.com

Aria
Bellagio
The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas
Delano
Excalibur
Luxor
Mandalay Bay
MGM Grand
New York New York
Park MGM
Vdara

WYNN RESORTS
wynnlasvegas.com

Wynn Las Vegas & Encore Las Vegas

PALMS RESORT & CASINO
RESORTS WORLD LAS VEGAS

RIO LAS VEGAS

VIRGIN HOTELS LAS VEGAS

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THURSDAYS
GIPSY
PRESENTS
KARAOKE

WITH
Sunshine
8PM - 10PM

2 FOR 1
WELL DRINKS | MIXERS ONLY | SICKENING DRAG

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



FRIDAY JAN 24

GIPSY
PRESENTS

RuPaul's DRAG RACE

HOSTED BY
JOELLA

FROM RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE
SEASON 17

EPISODE AT 8 PM | DOORS OPEN AT 7:30 PM
PERFORMANCE AT 11:30 PM | M&G AT 12:30 AM

\$8 WELL COCKTAILS BEFORE 11 PM

WWSW PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH MTV



SATURDAYS GIPSY
PRESENTS

Ultra BRUNCH

BOTTOMLESS MIMOSAS | BRUNCH BUFFET
SICKENING DRAG

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



THURSDAYS

GIPSY
PRESENTS

SALVAGE THURSDAYS

HOSTED BY
PALOMA MURKIN

SHOWTIME AT 1:30 AM
BUNDLES BY DJ VARIO

STARTING AT 10 PM

2 FOR 1 WELL COCKTAILS BEFORE 11 PM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



SATURDAY JAN 25

GIPSY
PRESENTS

Ultra BRUNCH

WITH
JOELLA

RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE SEASON 17

BOTTOMLESS MIMOSAS | BRUNCH BUFFET | SICKENING DRAG

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS GIPSY
PRESENTS

DRAG SHOWS

SHOWTIMES AT 11:30 PM + 1 AM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



FRIDAYS GIPSY
PRESENTS

RuPaul's DRAG RACE

SEASON 17 VIEWING PARTY

8 PM | DOORS OPEN AT 7:30 PM

2 FOR 1 WELL COCKTAILS BEFORE 11 PM

WWSW PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH MTV



SATURDAYS GIPSY
PRESENTS

BODY HEAT

STARTING AT 10 PM

PRE-SALE ENTRY AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



FRIDAYS GIPSY
PRESENTS

LIVE MUSIC

ESTEVAN CIERRA VELASCO
AND THE
Glute Band

2 FOR 1 WELL COCKTAILS BEFORE 11 PM

LIVE MUSIC BY
11:30 PM | 12:00 AM | 1:00 AM

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT GIPSYLASVEGAS.COM



SATURDAY JAN 25

GIPSY
PRESENTS

SLONINA ARTSPACE

FINE ART

CURATED BY
ROBIN SLONINA

BPM - 11PM
SHOWTIME 10:30PM

Canas & Cocktails

NICOLE COCHENER



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DRAG RACE LIVE



DRAG BRUNCH



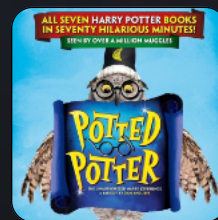
FRANK MARINO



AUSSIE HEAT



MAGIC MIKE LIVE



POTTED POTTER



MISS BEHAVE'S
MAVERICKS



MAD APPLE



STARS OF COMEDY



DONNY OSMOND



TERRY FATOR



U2 • UV



ATOMIC SALOON SHOW



ILUMINATE



CARROT TOP



DITA VON TEESE



ZOMBIE BURLESQUE



CHASE BROWN



JIMMY KIMMEL'S
COMEDY CLUB



DIVA ROYALE



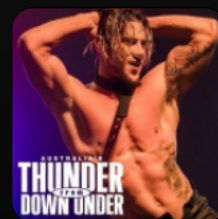
WOW - THE VEGAS
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ROUGE



CHIPPENDALES



THUNDER FROM DOWN
UNDER



RAIDING THE ROCK
VAULT



PENN & TELLER



DISCO SHOW



VEGAS! THE SHOW



THE SPHERE
EXPERIENCE



LADY LIKE



Navigating Challenges:

How CEI Drives LGBTQ+ Inclusion Amid Polarization

The 2025 Corporate Equality Index (CEI), published by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, marks another milestone in the journey toward inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ+ employees. Now in its 22nd year, the CEI remains the leading benchmarking tool for assessing and promoting LGBTQ+ workplace equality in the United States and globally. This year's report highlights record-breaking participation and unprecedented growth in companies implementing comprehensive LGBTQ+ inclusion policies, benefits, and practices. It also underscores the challenges posed by ongoing political polarization and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. This article delves into the key findings, achievements, and implications of the 2025 CEI.

Participation and Growth

The 2025 CEI achieved record participation with 1,449 major businesses evaluated, employing over 22 million workers in the United States alone. Among these, 765 companies scored a perfect 100, earning the prestigious "Equality 100 Award: Leader in LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion" designation. This represents a 28% increase in top scorers compared to the previous year, signaling corporate America's growing commitment to fostering equitable workplaces.

Over 72 new companies participated in this year's survey, spanning more than 35 industries. The report highlights that top-rated CEI employers come from every region of the United States and represent diverse sectors, including technology, healthcare, retail, and law. This expanding participation underscores the CEI's influence as a roadmap for advancing LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion.

Key Criteria for Evaluation

The CEI evaluates companies based on four core pillars:

1. Workforce Protections: Companies must have non-discrimination policies explicitly covering "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" for all employees.

2. Inclusive Benefits: Equitable benefits must extend to same- and different-sex spouses, domestic partners, and transgender individuals, including access to medically necessary care.

3. Supporting an Inclusive Culture:

Employers must demonstrate a sustained commitment to LGBTQ+ diversity through employee resource groups, training programs, and inclusive policies.

4. Corporate Social Responsibility:

Companies must engage in public commitments to the LGBTQ+ community, such as supplier diversity programs, philanthropy, and advocacy for equality under the law.

Record Growth in Inclusive Benefits

One of the most significant areas of progress is the adoption of transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits. In 2002, no CEI-rated company provided such benefits. Today, 91% of CEI participants offer at least one plan that includes comprehensive transgender-inclusive coverage. Additionally, 1,112 companies have adopted gender transition guidelines, a notable increase from 660 in 2022. These guidelines help ensure transitioning employees receive consistent support from managers, HR, and peers.

Companies are also providing LGBTQ+ health benefits guides to help employees navigate their options without fear of outing themselves. This year, 75% of rated companies offered such guides, enhancing transparency and accessibility for employees and their families.

Expansion of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ERGs continue to play a vital role in fostering inclusive workplace cultures. This year, 1,416 companies reported having ERGs or diversity councils focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion. Among these, 1,312 explicitly welcome both LGBTQ+ employees and allies, reflecting a broadening commitment to intersectional inclusion.

Corporate Advocacy

Many businesses have gone beyond internal policies to publicly advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Over 1,000 CEI-rated companies demonstrated public commitment to the LGBTQ+ community through initiatives such as supporting Pride events, advertising inclusive messaging, and funding LGBTQ+ organizations. Additionally, 557 companies joined the HRC's Business Coalition for the Equality

Act, advocating for federal non-discrimination protections.

Challenges in a Polarized Landscape

Despite these achievements, the 2025 CEI acknowledges the increasingly complex environment businesses face. Over 600 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced across the United States in 2024, many targeting transgender individuals. These legislative attacks have placed additional pressure on companies to reaffirm their commitments to inclusion.

Some businesses have faced backlash for their DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives, with critics alleging these efforts are politically motivated. Yet, the data remains clear: inclusive workplaces drive innovation, attract top talent, and improve business outcomes. For example, a 2024 report from Boston Consulting Group found that companies with diverse leadership teams generate 19% more revenue from innovation compared to less diverse peers.

Stories of Impact

The CEI report includes personal accounts from employees whose lives have been transformed by inclusive workplace policies:

Imani's Story: As a Black queer woman, Imani found belonging and professional growth through her company's LGBTQ+ ERG. The group's support enabled her to thrive both personally and professionally.

Alex's Journey: Alex, a non-binary employee, shared how their workplace's gender transition guide and inclusive culture allowed them to bring their full self to work. For the first time, they felt respected and valued.

- Carlos and Thomas: This married couple accessed inclusive family formation benefits to adopt a child, emphasizing the importance of equitable parental leave and adoption reimbursement programs.

These stories underscore the tangible impact of LGBTQ+ inclusion, highlighting how equitable policies create environments where employees feel safe, valued, and empowered.

Global Expansion of Equality

Beyond the U.S., the HRC Foundation's Equidad/e programs have extended the

CEI framework to Latin America. Programs in Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil have driven significant progress:

Equidad MX: In 2025, 261 companies in Mexico earned top ratings, a 716% increase since the program's launch in 2016.

Equidad CL: Chile saw a 367% increase in top-scoring companies since its inaugural report in 2019.

Equidad AR and BR: Argentina and Brazil have also shown remarkable growth, with companies embracing domestic partner benefits, transgender-inclusive healthcare, and LGBTQ+ ERGs.

These programs have impacted nearly 25 million employees worldwide, showcasing the global relevance of LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion.

The Future of Workplace Equality

Looking ahead, the HRC Foundation remains committed to evolving the CEI criteria to address emerging challenges. Key areas of focus include:

1. Strengthening Intersectionality:

Encouraging companies to integrate intersectional training and support for employees who hold multiple marginalized identities.

2. Combatting Backlash: Providing resources to help businesses navigate opposition to DEI initiatives while staying true to their values.

3. Expanding Global Outreach: Continuing to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion in regions with less tolerant legal and cultural environments.

Why the CEI Matters

The CEI is more than a scorecard; it's a powerful tool for driving cultural and organizational change. By participating in the CEI, companies signal their commitment to fostering workplaces where all employees can thrive. The data is clear: inclusive policies benefit businesses, employees, and society at large.

For LGBTQ+ employees, a high CEI score represents a workplace where they can feel safe, valued, and supported. For businesses, it's a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining top talent. And for society, it's a step closer to a future where equality is the standard, not the exception.

As Kelley Robinson, President of the HRC, aptly stated, "This work isn't about politics—it's about people." The 2025 Corporate Equality Index reaffirms that inclusive workplaces are not only morally imperative but also essential for building stronger, more competitive businesses in an increasingly global marketplace.

Read the entire report at hrc.org/cei

Las Vegas Equality by the Numbers

Caesars Entertainment has received a perfect score for the 18th consecutive year, solidifying its position as a leader in LGBTQ+ workplace equality. This achievement is a result of Caesars' commitment to inclusivity, advocacy, and various initiatives supporting LGBTQ+ employees and communities.



100

IGT, based in Providence, RI (but with a significant Las Vegas presence), has maintained its top score of 100, implementing various programs and policies to promote diversity and inclusion, including inclusive hiring practices, training on unconscious bias and its efforts to create an inclusive work environment.



100

Under the ownership of Sheldon Adelson, the Venetian and Palazzo did not participate in the CEI. Now under ownership of **Apollo Global Management** (based in New York), Venetian and Palazzo are attributed a score of 100 for the second year in a row.



100

MGM Resorts International dropped from a multi-year 100 streak to 85 in the 2023-2024 report, and improved by 5 points this year. The only lacking criteria was equivalency in same- and different-sex family formation benefits. MGM has not responded for comment in 2 years.



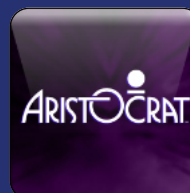
90

Las Vegas Sands Corporation, previous owner of Venetian and Palazzo and the Sands Expo improved 35 points this year. The company current lacks the criteria of equal health coverage for transgender individuals without exclusion for medically necessary care.



75

Aristocrat entered the CEI last year for the first time with a score of 40 and improved greatly this year with a score of 70. Criteria lacking is equal health coverage for transgender individuals without exclusion for medically necessary care, and providing four LGBTQ+ internal training elements.



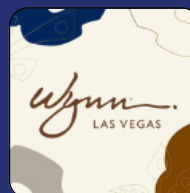
70

For its second year at 55, **Cosmopolitan** is lacking in many areas, including internal training and culture and benefits, and social responsibility. Cosmopolitan has been acquired by MGM Resorts International and has not responded to our request for comment.



55

Wynn retains a score of 35 for the second year in a row. The company's once high-standards for DEI now lacks in inclusive benefits, internal training and culture, social responsibility. Wynn responded last year for our request for comment with a commitment to work with HRC to improve this year's score, but has not responded this year.



35

Creating Change 2025



Kierra Johnson on Bringing the LGBTQ+ Movement to Life at Creating Change 2025

From January 22 to January 26, 2025, Las Vegas will host the 38th annual Creating Change Conference, a monumental gathering organized by the National LGBTQ Task Force. This is the first time the city will welcome this transformative event, bringing together over 2,500 activists, community leaders, and allies for a week of education, connection, and celebration. At the helm is Kierra Johnson, the President of the National LGBTQ Task Force, whose vision and leadership guide this essential event for the LGBTQ community.

"Creating Change is not just a conference—it's an experience," Johnson explains. "It's a space where we affirm each other, inspire action, and birth new ideas to propel the movement forward."

The Heart of the Experience: Workshops, Plenaries, and Connection

The conference offers a rich tapestry of workshops, plenary sessions, and networking opportunities designed to meet the diverse needs of attendees. A standout feature this year is the Democracy Panel, a continuation of the dialogue started in 2024 about the growing threat of fascism in the United States and how the LGBTQ community can stay vigilant and proactive.

"This isn't just an academic exercise," Johnson emphasizes. "It's a space to strategize and prepare for the real-world challenges ahead, especially as we navigate a changing political landscape."

Attendees can also expect dynamic cultural programming, such as a ball and a cabaret, which balance the intensity of activism with opportunities for joy and celebration. For many, Creating Change is the only time all year where they can fully express themselves in a safe, affirming environment.

"Creating Change isn't just about organizing and strategy," says Johnson. "It's also about dancing, laughing, and being your whole self."

Workshops will explore a range of pressing issues, from addressing homelessness and healthcare disparities in the LGBTQ community to combating anti-trans

legislation and supporting mental health. Attendees will have the chance to learn directly from experts and grassroots organizers who have pioneered innovative approaches to activism.

Why Las Vegas?

Bringing the conference to Las Vegas is a deliberate choice, reflecting the Task Force's mission to go where queer people are—everywhere.

"Las Vegas is a dynamic and diverse city with a rich history of activism," Johnson notes. "The strong labor movement, the advocacy by sex workers, and the intersectionality of the community here make it the perfect host city."

The conference isn't just an event that comes and goes; it leaves a lasting impact on its host city. By partnering with local organizations, vendors, and volunteers, Creating Change strengthens local networks and builds capacity for future activism.

"We're working with local childcare providers, contractors, and businesses," Johnson explains. "This isn't about parachuting in—it's about building connections and leaving something meaningful behind."

This year's local collaborations include partnerships with Las Vegas-based nonprofits addressing food insecurity, LGBTQ youth homelessness, and equitable healthcare access. Conference attendees will have opportunities to volunteer with these organizations, creating direct ties between the national LGBTQ movement and Las Vegas's local needs.

An Inclusive Space for All

Creating Change is renowned for being a big tent event that welcomes people from all walks of life. This year's attendees include students, professors, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, and everyday community members who share a commitment to advancing LGBTQ equality.

"It's a microcosm of our movement," Johnson says. "You'll find white folks, Indigenous folks, pansexual folks, cisgender men, transgender women, and people from Oakland to Idaho all in one

space, learning from and supporting one another."

For first-time attendees, Johnson offers practical advice:

- **Stay Hydrated:** With so much to do, it's easy to neglect self-care. "Drink water and take breaks."
- **Pace Yourself:** The sheer volume of programming can be overwhelming. Johnson suggests taking time to step outside and breathe.
- **Find a Buddy:** Connecting with a veteran attendee can make the experience more digestible.
- **Utilize PheedLoop:** This digital platform keeps participants updated on schedule changes and special announcements.

One of the event's hallmarks is its focus on intersectionality. Workshops and panels will explore how race, class, gender identity, and sexual orientation intersect to shape the LGBTQ experience. Faith-based programming will provide spiritual resources for attendees of diverse religious backgrounds, while youth-focused tracks will ensure that younger activists find their voice in the movement.

Balancing Progress and Challenges

While the conference celebrates progress, it doesn't shy away from addressing the ongoing challenges faced by the LGBTQ community. Johnson points out the importance of acknowledging both.

"We have to honor the wins of our ancestors while recognizing the work that remains," she says. "Progress is never linear, but every step forward matters."

Johnson's perspective is rooted in history. She highlights how far the community has come, from the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis to today's struggles for trans rights and against systemic oppression.

"Even as things get bad, it's not like it was 50 years ago. That's a testament to the resilience and brilliance of our community," she asserts.

Prioritizing Safety

In a world where LGBTQ spaces are often targets, safety is a priority for the Task



Force. Creating Change implements a range of measures, from badge systems to partnerships with local law enforcement and hotel security teams.

"Our first plan is always to take care of each other," Johnson explains. "We're consistent about ensuring that everyone who is supposed to be there is identifiable, and we're working closely with local allies to address any potential threats."

The conference's security measures extend to creating a firearm-free zone and ensuring that all vendors and contractors align with the community's values of safety and inclusivity. Additionally, the Care Bear team will be present throughout the event to provide emotional support to attendees navigating challenging topics or personal experiences.

The Las Vegas Footprint

One of the unique aspects of Creating Change is the impact it leaves on the host city. For Las Vegas, this means strengthened networks, increased visibility, and a deeper commitment to activism.

"People follow Creating Change from city to city," Johnson says. "The relationships and ideas forged here will continue to influence the movement long after the conference ends."

The collaboration with local activists, labor movements, and organizations brings a unique flavor to this year's event. By highlighting issues specific to Las Vegas—from sex worker rights to housing justice—Creating Change ensures that its programming reflects the realities of the host city while providing national and global perspectives.

A Space for Joy and Inspiration

Above all, Creating Change is a space for inspiration, where attendees leave with renewed energy and a sense of purpose.

"It's a reminder that we need each other to not just survive but thrive," Johnson concludes. "We are deserving of joy, love, and the freedom to dream big. This conference is about creating that reality together."

The event's cultural programming will feature performances from renowned drag

queens, spoken word artists, and musicians, ensuring that the spirit of creativity and expression remains central to the experience. Workshops will range from beginner-level sessions on organizing to advanced discussions on policy advocacy, ensuring that attendees of all experience levels find value.

Even the dining and informal gatherings are intentionally planned to encourage community-building. Las Vegas's vibrant nightlife will be integrated into the conference, with LGBTQ-friendly venues hosting after-parties and networking events.

The Power of Legacy

As the conference marks its 38th year, it's a moment to reflect on its enduring legacy. Founded in 1988, Creating Change has grown from a small gathering to the premier convening for LGBTQ activists and allies. Its longevity is a testament to the power of community and the importance of spaces dedicated to collective growth and action.

"Every Creating Change feels like a family reunion," Johnson shares. "It's a time to reconnect, celebrate, and recommit to the work that lies ahead."

For Las Vegas, hosting this milestone event is not only an honor but an opportunity to showcase the city's commitment to diversity and inclusion. As attendees arrive, they bring with them the hope, energy, and determination that define the LGBTQ movement.

Looking Ahead

As the doors open on January 22, Las Vegas will not only host a conference but will become the epicenter of a movement. For those attending, it promises to be a life-changing experience. And for the city itself, it's a chance to showcase its commitment to diversity and inclusion—proving once again that Las Vegas truly is a place for everyone.

Welcome to Creating Change 2025. Let's make history together.



Local walk-in registration welcome for the full conference

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\$50

WEEKEND PARTY PASS

Perfect for local attendees or Creating Change enthusiasts looking to experience the evening energy of CC25, the Weekend Party Pass includes entry to the Desert Sun Meets Vegas Lights House Ball and Kierra's Kabaret.

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January 22-26, 2025
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Brady McGill	Kiande Jakada
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Brie Starks	Ladon Henry
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Darrell Tucci	Leana Ramirez
David Leach	Lori Insera
Earl Saulter	Lukas Serrano
Ebony Jackson	Lukas Soto
Erika Castro	Mario Rodriguez
Frankie Perez	Megan Sanchez
Garrett Pattiani	Nicole Williams
Glit Bodega	Percy Neavez
Grayson Bell	Preston Tang
Heidi Lee	Raheem Bodega
Holly Reese	Raheem Pickens
Jason Flatt	Rev. Li Arnee
Jason Sherman	Reyes Luna
Jerry Masini	Rio Antonè
JP Coleman	Russ White
Judy Bowenwiener	Sebastian Alcalá
Julio Jimenez-Wenz	Tanya Alexander
	Victor Rodriguez
	Yessica Valencia



Canvas and Cocktails

Spotlight on Nicole Cochener and Her Artistic Vision

Nicole Cochener, a visionary mixed-media artist and the spotlight artist of the month, is set to take center stage at the Canvas and Cocktails fine art event. This highly anticipated evening of creative expression will be held on Saturday, January 25th, at Gipsy Nightclub in Las Vegas. Curated by the renowned Robin Slonia of Slonia ARTSpace, the event promises an immersive experience that connects the arts and LGBTQ+ communities.

As one of the featured artists, Cochener brings a unique perspective through her innovative creations. Based in Las Vegas, she operates Squishy Studio, her gallery and working studio in the city's Arts District. She is also the mastermind behind Gallery to Go, a series of art vending machines scattered across Las Vegas that offer miniature masterpieces by local artists. This remarkable initiative not only makes art accessible but also emphasizes sustainability—a central theme in her work.

In an exclusive interview with QVegas, Cochener opened up about her artistic journey, inspirations, and what attendees can expect from her at Canvas and Cocktails.

A Lifelong Passion for Art

"I was one of those kids who always wanted to be an artist," Cochener shared. "My mom has pictures of me drawing at the age of five. I attended an art magnet high school and went on to earn a degree in art. I've had this creative passion my whole life."

Her journey into professional art wasn't without pivotal moments. One such moment came when a college professor encouraged her to switch from the writing program to the art program, offering an independent study to support her transition. "That was the turning point," she explained. "It set me on the path to becoming an artist."

The Birth of Gallery to Go

Cochener's career reached new heights with the creation of Gallery to Go. The initiative features refurbished snack machines that sell small, affordable art pieces created by local artists. "Instead of chips and sodas, these machines offer tiny masterpieces," she said. Prices range from \$5 to \$25, making art accessible to everyone.

With seven machines located at venues like Omega Mart and Virgin Hotels, the project has become a staple in the Las Vegas arts scene. "We've worked with over 120 artists so far and currently have 70 active contributors," Cochener noted. "It's been a game-changer for making a living as an artist."

Mixed Media and Sustainability

Cochener's artistic style is a testament to her versatility. "I'm a jack of all trades when it comes to art," she admitted. "I work with mixed media because I love combining materials. My favorite is recycled stuff—newspapers, maps, magazines—things you'd find around the house."

Her pieces often feature layers of textures and colors, inviting viewers to discover hidden details. "From across the room, you see the big picture. Up close, there's so much more to uncover," she explained.

One of her most cherished works, *At the Bottom*, exemplifies this approach. "It's a painting of koi fish on a background of rocks made from various recycled papers," she said. "It's a masterpiece that came together beautifully."

Overcoming Challenges and Embracing New Mediums

Recently, Cochener faced a major personal challenge. "I crushed three bones in my foot and couldn't walk or drive for 15 weeks," she shared. Despite the setback, she focused on creating digital art. "It allowed me to keep working," she said. Her

latest series, *Digital Deserts*, will debut at Canvas and Cocktails.

This vibrant series combines the neon chaos of Las Vegas with the natural beauty of the Mojave Desert. One standout piece, *Queen of Vegas*, will be unveiled exclusively at the event.

Bridging Communities Through Art

Cochener's collaboration with Robin Sloanina reflects the supportive and inclusive nature of the Las Vegas arts community. "I've worked with Robin on several projects, including Omega Mart and Virgin Hotels," Cochener said. "She's been an incredible advocate for local artists."

The Canvas and Cocktails event aims to foster connections between the LGBTQ+ and arts communities. "Art and the LGBTQ+ community go hand in hand," Cochener said. "I've always felt supported by this community, and I'm excited to showcase my work at Gipsy Nightclub."

Looking Ahead

Cochener's future is as vibrant as her art. She has two solo shows planned for the fall, a new series called *Well-beings*, and an expansion of Squishy Studio onto Main Street in the Arts District.

Her advice to aspiring artists is simple: "Be tenacious. Put yourself out there, even if you hear a lot of 'no's.'"

Join the Celebration

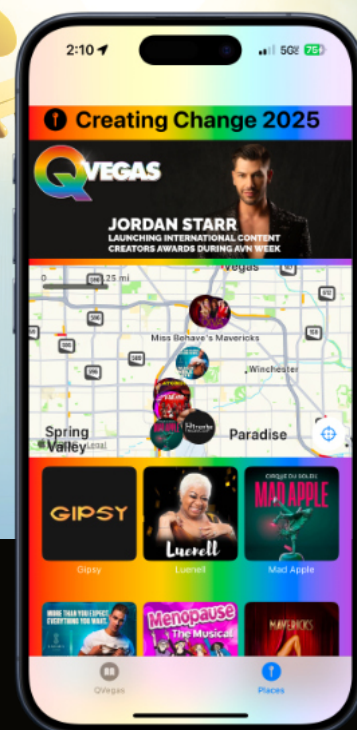
Canvas and Cocktails offers a unique opportunity to experience the dynamic fusion of art and community. Attendees can look forward to viewing Cochener's work, purchasing original pieces, and connecting with local creatives.

To learn more about Nicole Cochener, visit squishystudio.com or follow her on Instagram at [@squishystudioLV](https://www.instagram.com/squishystudioLV). Connect with sloninaARTSpace.com and follow [@SloninaARTSpace](https://www.instagram.com/SloninaARTSpace). Don't miss this unforgettable evening of art, cocktails, and connection at Gipsy on January 25th.



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LGBTQ+ Resources

THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA
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
hhendersonpride.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



HIV Resources

AID FOR AIDS OF NEVADA (AFAN)
afanlv.org

AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)
aidshealth.org

FARABI WELLNESS CENTER
hplv.com

GOLDEN RAINBOW
goldenrainbow.org

HORIZON RIDGE WELLNESS CLINIC
hrc.lv.org

SIN CITY SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE
sinsitysisters.org

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Email info@qvegas.com to add your organization to our directory.



STI Testing

THE ARLENE COOPER COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER
thecenterlv.org

AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)
aidshealth.org

HUNTRIDGE FAMILY CLINIC
huntridgfamilyclinic.org

SOUTHERN NEVADA HEALTH DISTRICT
southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

UMC
umcsn.com

LIGHT OF PRIDE: AN INTERFAITH EVENING OF HOPE AND INCLUSION

Jan 23, 2025 from 6:30 - 8:30pm
The Interfaith Contemplative Center
4770 Harrison Drive, Las Vegas, NV (Paradise Park)

Join us for an evening celebrating hope, inclusion, and community at the Interfaith Contemplative Center on January 23rd, from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM. This special event features presentations from interfaith leaders dedicated to fostering compassion and understanding in the greater Las Vegas area. Enjoy refreshments, networking opportunities, and the chance to connect with others passionate about creating a more inclusive and compassionate world.



Q VEGAS BAR & NIGHTCLUB GUIDE

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