



# AT THE INTERSECTION RACE, SEXUALITY AND GENDER

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION | KEY FINDINGS

This study, “At the Intersection: Race, Sexuality and Gender,” is part of Equality Forward, an initiative by the Human Rights Campaign to unite lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and straight allies of all races and backgrounds to win equality for all.

More than two years ago, we began this project with one desire: To better understand what’s important to LGBT people of color, a group of people that has not traditionally been asked. We envisioned a listening project and put aside our assumptions of what we thought we knew or didn’t know. Most importantly, we wanted to empower LGBT communities of color with information.

The Human Rights Campaign wants to do three things with Equality Forward: Deepen understanding among individuals, organizations and coalitions about the complexities we find when we bring race, sexual orientation and gender together; use dialogue and educational tools to broaden support for LGBT equality; and establish an ongoing forum for dialogue and collaboration on the issues important to us all. Through partnerships with 100 local and national groups in more than 25 cities, we have already heard from more than 5,000 people. By moving this discussion from boardrooms and leadership summits to church pews, living rooms, break rooms, pride festivals, happy hours, conferences and online social networks, we are hearing from LGBT people of color who deal with unique challenges large and small.

This report comes at a critical time when our future depends on our ability to understand our differences and similarities. In this area, we have so much work to do – both within ourselves, as well as in our communities. But if we dare and care to learn, we can begin to speak of “we” and eliminate the false dichotomy of “us” and “them.” Because in truth, “we” are all that we have.



## **DIVERSITY IS A REALITY, BUT INCLUSION IS THE REAL CHALLENGE**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of color tell a complex story about being simultaneously present and excluded in the communities where we live – feeling both treated like everyone else and condemned. Diversity is a reality, but inclusion – valuing and leveraging differences – is the real challenge to build genuine partnerships with LGBT people of color. We want to foster a greater sense of connection and shared opportunity to work on the issues that affect us all. In organizations working to end racial discrimination as well in LGBT groups, the participation of LGBT people of color should be invited early and at every level of decision-making.

## **WE ALL HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN WE REALIZE**

Too often, human rights advocates stress our differences, but the clearest finding from the research is that we have more in common than we realize. We seek the same freedoms and opportunities and share concerns about affordable healthcare, jobs and the economy. LGBT movement organizations have to stand up for more than just LGBT concerns and recognize that issues such as access to healthcare and the economy affect LGBT people of color just as much (and in some cases more) as everyone. In joining others to achieve these common goals, LGBT groups can build effective partnerships.

## **RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES ARE A MAJOR SOURCE OF PREJUDICE**

Religious attitudes are a major source of sexual prejudice. For LGBT people of color, many of whom are regular churchgoers, the conflict is acute. More than half of LGBT people of color interviewed feel treated like sinners by their ethnic and racial communities, and faith communities are among the places LGBT people of color feel least accepted. The need to reach out to faith and religious leaders is underscored by the rise of HIV/AIDS in black and Latino/a communities even as anti-LGBT sermons continue to be delivered in houses of worship. Human rights advocates should have dialogues with faith leaders who condemn LGBT people and find common purposes to gather around. LGBT people of color should be welcomed into inclusive and affirming communities of faith.

## **RACE STILL MATTERS**

LGBT people of color view the world first from the point of view of race and gender. Most feel there is as much racism and sexism among LGBT people as there is among non-LGBT people, and racially motivated violence and discrimination are more prevalent than violence or prejudice based on sexual orientation. Race matters, and partnerships among groups of LGBT people must respect that. Human rights groups have to ask for and listen to the concerns of LGBT people of color in large forums and in one-on-one conversations. LGBT groups should recognize that for some, the desire to achieve racial equality is more important than the desire for marriage equality. We should support efforts to combat racial profiling, ensure fair immigration laws, fight HIV/AIDS, stop discrimination in housing and end disparities in healthcare.

## **MORE INFORMATION AND MEDIA IMAGES OF LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE NEEDED**

LGBT people of color are serious media consumers, but they do not find enough information or see accurate media representations of themselves. They watch LGBT television programming, read print and online publications, websites and blogs looking for LGBT information. Human rights organizations should provide more news and information about LGBT people of color as well as advocate for better media representation. We should embrace communications that allow for full reader and viewer participation, such as online social networks and blogs.

## **PROTECTIONS FROM VIOLENCE AND JOB DISCRIMINATION ARE BRIDGE-BUILDING ISSUES**

Nearly all LGBT people of color say protections from violence and workplace discrimination are important; issues strong majorities of all Americans support in opinion polls. Violence and discrimination are also the most salient issues that connect three critical groups – non-LGBT people, communities of color and white LGBT communities. Human rights advocates should look for every opportunity to use these crosscutting issues to build open partnerships that not only foster confidence and trust among each other, but also lay the groundwork for winning coalitions.

### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

This study began in summer 2007 with nine discussion groups of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Groups, which were assembled by race and gender, informed the creation of a national online scientific survey of 727 LGBT people of color in summer 2008.

While this research offers insight into issues of race and sexual orientation faced by many LGBT people, a national study dedicated to the lives of transgender people of color is needed to begin to examine prejudice at the crossroads of race, sexuality, gender identity and gender expression. Absent from this research are discussion groups of transgender people of color, and while 3 percent of the survey's participants identified as transgender, the number is too few to do a methodical analysis of their individual concerns and experiences.

Special recognition is extended to the following local and national partners whose collaborative spirit makes it possible for the Equality Forward initiative to engage thousands of diverse members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

We are so grateful.

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Asian Queers United for Action, Washington, D.C.  
Austin Relay Pride, Austin, Texas  
Bienestar, Los Angeles, Calif.  
Bilerico.com, Washington, D.C.  
Black National Pageantry System, Washington, D.C.  
BlackGayChat.com, National  
Brother2Brother Book Club, Houston, Texas  
Center for LGBT Life at Duke University, Durham, N.C.  
Chances Bar & Night Club, Houston, Texas  
Chicago Gender Society, Chicago, Ill.  
Cincinnati Men's Chorus, Cincinnati, Ohio  
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Gay Asian Pacific Islander Men of New York, New York, N.Y.  
Gender Identity Center, Denver, Colo.  
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National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum – D.C., Washington, D.C.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D.C.  
National Black Justice Coalition, Washington, D.C.  
North Carolina State University "AEGIS" Student Group, Raleigh, N.C.  
North Carolina State University LGBT Advisory Committee, Raleigh, N.C.  
Northwest Gender Alliance, Portland, Ore.  
Nubian Phi Knights, Atlanta, Ga.  
Phish Phest, Orlando, Fla.  
Planet Out, Gay.com, National  
Philadelphia Black Gay Pride, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Portland Latino Pride, Portland, Ore.  
Project Angel Food, Los Angeles, Calif.  
Rainbow Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Rainbow Pages – Houston, Houston, Texas  
Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, Houston, Texas  
Stop AIDS, Cincinnati, Ohio  
The Men's Gathering, Houston, Texas  
Thomson Legal Employee Resource Group, Minnesota and New Jersey  
TransCarolina, Albemarle, N.C.  
Trans Central Station, Orlando, Fla.  
Transsexual Support Group, Cincinnati, Ohio  
Triad Gender Association, Greensboro, N.C.  
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Valiente, Dallas, Texas  
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Washington, D.C., Latino Pride, Washington, D.C.  
Walk4mewednesdays.com, National  
WhatsTEA.com, National  
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Women in the Life, Washington, D.C.  
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THANK YOU