



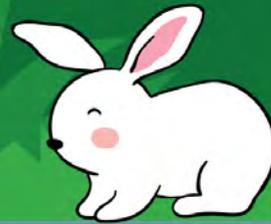
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## Mission:

The focus of *QNotes* is to serve the LGBTQ and straight ally communities of the Charlotte region, North Carolina and beyond, by featuring arts, entertainment, news and views content in print and online that directly enlightens, informs and engages the readers about LGBTQ life and social justice issues.

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# Equality North Carolina Statement on rescinding the endorsement of Tricia Cotham

Political Voices



by **Kendra Johnson**  
Qnotes Staff Writer

At a time when the U.S. is seeing increased attacks on trans youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, minorities, and other marginalized groups through hurtful legislation and invasive regulation, Equality North Carolina (ENC) is dedicated to creating a safer, more equitable state for all people. ENC works hard to ensure this equity by providing training and support in our communities and also working directly with state leaders to craft and strengthen legislation that will assist our marginalized members.

Equality NC Action Fund also endorses candidates for public office in North Carolina who share our vision and support the communities and causes we champion. As a non-partisan state organization, ENC thoughtfully vets endorsements through an application and interview process. ENC does not endorse based on party affiliation but on the promise to stand up for marginalized communities. When an endorsed leader takes a position counter to ours, we engage in a conversation to understand the reasoning.

Representative Tricia Cotham was one such endorsed leader, but today ENC is revoking that endorsement. To be clear, Equality North Carolina is not revoking this endorsement because Cotham switched her party affiliation but because she materially misled our organization and the voters who put her in office and has now voted on numerous issues in ways that run counter to the positions she took in her endorsement application and endorsement interview. Representative Cotham ran as a progressive on progressive ideals and has now taken numerous positions that are harmful to the communities we seek to advocate alongside. Further, while ENC attempted to have a conversation with Representative Cotham to understand her recent votes, we have been fully shut out from communication and have been given no opportunity to discuss her radical shift from an ally to an adversary. At Equality North Carolina's Advocacy Day,

Representative Cotham refused to meet with members of the community she passionately claimed to support only a few months prior.

We initially joined calls for Cotham's resignation when it became clear she was not interested in communicating with us around her potential votes on LGBTQ+-specific issues and was voting contrary to the intersectional issues on which we based our endorsement. We called together our Political Action Committee and began the process of reviewing all of our relevant materials and, ultimately, voting to revoke Representative Cotham's endorsement.

Representative Cotham filled out and submitted an application for endorsement to ENC after previously missing the March 15, 2022, deadline for submission. After missing the deadline, she reached out directly to ENC's executive director, Kendra Johnson, and utilized her contacts in LGBTQ+ organizations across the state and Charlotte region to advocate on her behalf. She completed the application on March 22, 2022, without assistance from her staff.

In an April 21, 2022, email, Cotham stated, "Equality NC's endorsement of me is very important to me personally and would be an honor to receive once again." She had previously been endorsed by ENC in 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and in 2013 won the organization's "Legislative Leadership Award." Representative Cotham reiterated her desire to be considered for an endorsement in an April 22, 2022, email, stating, "ENC's Endorsement is very important to me. I was so very honored and proud to have received the endorsement every election. I was extremely honored to win legislator of the year by ENC." She further indicated, "My survey was very thorough and showed my real record and experience speaking up fiercely for the LGBTQ community repeatedly on the House [sic] floor, to the media, National cable networks like CNN and MSNBC. I would like to have a strong consideration." Based on her questionnaire answers and advocacy, Representative Cotham was given an endorsement interview and received Equality North Carolina's endorsement based on the alignment of her stated values and those of our organization.

Tricia Cotham's shift is not about values but about access to power and power brokers. By shifting her stated positions, she has aligned herself with people who will take away every right for which the most marginalized and vulnerable in North Carolina have fought. Even prior to her announced party switch, Cotham was voting against the values she claimed to hold in her endorsement questionnaire.

Some of the ways Representative Tricia Cotham has voted against her own stated values in her March 22, 2022, endorsement questionnaire include:

- When directly asked if she was pro-choice and would support legislation guaranteeing access to abortion care without "dangerous delay, isolation, or obstruction," Representative Cotham replied in the affirmative, but on May 16, 2023, she voted to severely limit access to abortion in North Carolina.

- When asked if she supported local sheriffs determining if their department will cooperate with ICE and allow them to end existing 287(g) agreements, she responded in the affirmative. However, on March 29, 2023, Representative Cotham voted in favor of a bill requiring local sheriffs' full cooperation with ICE.

- When asked if she supported trans-inclusive sports in public schools and the ability for trans students to play sports in alignment with their gender identity, Representative Cotham wrote, "Trans youth should be able to play in alignment with their gender identity. While this is an issue dealt with by local school boards, I would support statewide legislation to ensure that trans students are protected and not discriminated against by school sports programs." As of April 2023, Representative Cotham has shown support for the so-called "Fairness in Women's Sports Act," which would exclude trans students from athletic participation.

- When asked about her position on school vouchers and the use of public tax dollars to support schools that may discriminate against LGBTQ+ students, Representative Cotham wrote, "LGBTQ students deserve to be protected in every school. I would not support any public funding for private schools



that discriminate in any way." However, on April 18, 2022, she introduced H823, a bill that dramatically expands private school vouchers, regardless of family income, and includes private schools with discriminatory policies. After this bill passed the House, Cotham posed for pictures with Moms for Liberty from the floor. Moms for Liberty is nationally recognized as the organization leading book bans and attacks on LGBTQ+ communities in schools.

These are just a few of the ways Representative Cotham has voted against her own stated values in this legislative session. In 2016, Cotham was a vocal opponent to House Bill 2, writing in her 2022 questionnaire that she "led the fight against HB2 in the legislature" and that she was the "first member to stand up and speak against it." In this session, she has stood uncritically with the bill's orchestrators, posting pictures with them, and Tweeting their praises.

Representative Cotham either misrepresented herself or turned her back on her district and marginalized communities who relied on her for support and advocacy. She misled people by convincing them she was an ally and gaining their trust. Ultimately, Representative Cotham chose herself and her ambition over the people of North Carolina.

For these reasons, Equality North Carolina cannot allow Representative Cotham's endorsement to stand and revokes her endorsement in full. ::

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# (queer)alize

Qnotes project yields new resource to promote more inclusive journalism nationwide

Qnotes Staff

Following a yearlong project with Qnotes' reporters investigating solutions to LGBTQ labor and workplace issues, Chris Rudisill launched an online resource in May to amplify more such stories in mainstream news outlets. In addition to writing for Qnotes over the past three-and-a-half years, Rudisill also supports the paper's digital and audience engagement needs, runs the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative and in 2020 launched artstreet, a creative project management company specializing in the arts, journalism and cultural history.

This latest project, named (queer)alize, is the result of a fellowship funded by the Solutions Journalism Network, following Qnotes' involvement in a national cohort of newsrooms focused on labor solutions. "My goal is to increase more diverse sourcing and visibility of LGBTQ people in local news stories and increase tools for LGBTQ reporters to create impactful solutions journalism," says Rudisill.

The project has already received some early attention from news outlets and support organizations across the country, giving Rudisill hope that it could increase more equitable reporting. Journalists are invited to sign up for a newsletter that will feature different story ideas and resources. New topics will be explored monthly.

The name references words like "localize" and "contextualize." In the case of (queer)alize, it is all about making stories relevant for queer audiences. Take for instance the first piece, "Finding the job (story)" that takes a common news topic like weekly unemployment numbers and highlights the increased risks and barriers that LGBTQ people face.

The online toolkit provides questions that reporters might consider when approaching the story, along with source ideas and journalism resources like LGBTQ-focused stock photography and style guides.

"I knew from the start that a key part of the project would be to centralize LGBTQ resources, data and organizations," says Rudisill.

The project launches with an initial set of linked tools including:

- Style guides from the Associated Press, the Association of LGBTQ Journalists and the Trans Journalists Association
  - Stock images from the Gender Spectrum Collection
  - Links to professional networks like the National LGBTQ Journalist Association and the News is Out collaborative
  - Research from Franklin & Marshall Global Barometers on gay and transgender rights
- Another important resource included

in the launch is The Trans Language Primer, a project Rudisill was first introduced to when interviewing Greyson Simon for "Nonbinary and seeking a job" for Qnotes in April.

Greyson and their fellow organizers hope the Primer helps people better express the personal and complicated nature of gender terminology.

## Be Proud of Your Reporting

For Pride month, (queer)alize includes two additional toolkits by reporter Jordan Wilkie, one that lays out a series of tips and laws reporters should be knowledgeable of when covering events and protests. "Reporting should be done carefully to avoid amplifying hateful groups or messaging, or making LGBTQ+ people feel unsafe by creating a perception of danger even when there are no specific threats," writes Wilkie.

It includes basic facts about anti-LGBTQ actions and tips for documenting them. It also provides some questions a reporter might ask of local elected officials or organizers. "Establishing community and fostering allyship is a key strategy for building safety into civil society for minority groups," continues Wilkie. The other Pride month feature gives reporters some clear ideas on stories that celebrate the LGBTQ community.

Rudisill is now exploring ways to grow



the project and its reach. He is even exploring how AI tools might be adapted to advance diversity in writing versus the fear that it will further divide.

"Our stories and our life experiences are nuanced," says Rudisill. "That is why I created (queer)alize - to increase diversity in journalism sourcing, further inclusion of LGBTQ people and their stories in local news and to build out tools that LGBTQ journalists need to be successful."

As the LGBTQ community faces legislative and social threats, some of which are focused on removing our stories and culture like bans on books with LGBTQ characters or outlawing drag, visibility can be a key tool in fighting back. Rudisill hopes that (queer)alize helps others promote that visibility too.

To learn more about the project, visit [queeralize.com](http://queeralize.com) and to read more stories from Qnotes' special series, OUTlook: Finding Solutions for Labor and Workplace Equality visit [qnotescarolinas.com/features-outlook](http://qnotescarolinas.com/features-outlook).

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## Service members at NC Air Force Base celebrate Pride month

Despite the negative cultural and political attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community from many right-wing elected political officials and their supporters, a small, but devoted group of Air Force members and their families recently gathered to celebrate pride in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

Site of the event: the small town's Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.

Service members and their families came together June 7 for a two-mile Pride Walk and the reading of an LGBTQ+ fact poster.

An Air Force base and a small town might seem like an unlikely place to host such an event, but, according to Airman First Class Rebecca Sirimarco-Lang, a member of the fourth fighter wing, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and the Department of Defense is supportive of efforts to honor the service,

commitment and sacrifice of LGBTQ+ members of the armed forces.

"Events like this promote diversity and inclusion and [are] a way Team Seymour help support airmen and their families," Sirimarco-Lang wrote in a press release from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base dated June 12.

### Brief LGBTQ Military History

The earliest evidence of bigotry and discrimination towards gay men in the US military dates back to 1778, although no specific policy was put into place until 1921, which called for court martial and dishonorable discharge.

That changed in 1993 when former President Bill Clinton signed into law the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which allowed service by non-heterosexuals, as long as they did not

discuss or reveal their sexual orientation.

That policy remained in place until President Barack Obama repealed it in 2011, allowing for service without any restrictions for individuals who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. The policy was updated in 2016 to include gender identity but was then rescinded under the direction of Donald Trump in 2017. Current President Joe Biden reversed that decision upon taking office in 2021.

As of today, all LGBTQ+ individuals are allowed to serve in the military without restriction.

### Some Details on Goldsboro

Goldsboro is a small town with a population of around 35,000 that was incorporated in 1847. It is the county seat of Wayne County. Located in North Carolina's coastal plains region it is approximately 40 miles Southeast of Raleigh. Over half the population is Black or African American, while approximately 32 percent are identified as Caucasian.

The cost of living in Goldsboro is less than



**A good time was had by all: friends and family celebrating Pride at Seymour Air Force Base. ALL CREDITS: Airman First Class Rebecca Sirimarco-Lang/Public Domain**

many areas of North Carolina, with the average median price for a three-bedroom, two bath home as low as \$100k.

Unfortunately, there is little to no LGBTQ statistical information on life in Goldsboro or Wayne County, although the county website does maintain a resource page specifically for the LGBTQ community. ::

—David Aaron Moore

## York County library board makes final decision on books in children's section

Several children's books that have been deemed sexually explicit by some residents of York County, South Carolina, will remain in the children's section of the public library. On June 8, the York County Library board convened at the Fort Mill branch to hear an appeal from Linda Fisher of Rock Hill, who had previously requested the relocation of four books from the children's section to the adult section. During the meeting, Fisher presented her case to the board before they voted to deny her appeal.

Fisher argued that the books were unclassified, which rendered them "invisible." She suggested that books on human sexuality should be shelved together for easy access, similar to how books on mammals, reptiles, ethnic cultures, and holidays are

categorized. Julie Ward, director of the York County Library, clarified that two of the books are nonfiction and are shelved according to their Dewey subject matter number, while the other two are picture books that are organized based on the author's name.

The four books in question are "It Feels Good to Be Yourself" by Theresa Thorn, "Pink, Blue and You!" by Elise Gravel and Mykaell Blais, "Twas the Night Before Pride" by Joanna McClintick, and "The Rainbow Parade" by Emily Nielson.

The controversy surrounding these books arose in early May when York County Councilman Tom Audette received complaints from constituents who deemed the content sexually inappropriate for children.



**'Twas the Night Before Pride,' by Joanna McClintick and 'The Rainbow Parade,' by Emily Nielson are two of the books some York County residents objected to.**

Supporters of relocating the books argue that it would allow parents to decide what their children read, while those against relocation view it as censorship. Although the council has no authority over the placement of books on library shelves, it retains the ability to reduce library funding. Audette has not announced any plans to propose funding cuts at this time.

During the June 8 meeting, nearly 75 individuals from both sides of the issue gathered outside the library, holding signs that read "Bring Back Books" and "Please Relocate the Books." Supporters of relocation dressed in red, white, and blue attire, with some display-

and his attack on Charlotte for attempting to initiate LGBTQ protection policies by creating the notorious HB2 law.

Following a loss in a gubernatorial reelection campaign, a rumored rejection for some sort of cabinet appointment by former President Trump, and a failure to capture the nomination for a Senate race, McCrory said in an interview that he did not regret his actions with HB2, even though they cost the state purported millions in revenue, backfired on his own future political aspirations, and negatively impacted the state's largely positive reputation.

### Most NC Republicans Voted in Favor of Censure

An estimated 1,000 Republican delegates voted to censure Tillis behind closed doors. While the move does not impact his position as a senator, it indicates extreme dissatisfaction from the Republican party with his actions.

According to a comment carried by PBS News Hour and the Associated Press, 81-year-old Guilford County Republican delegate Jim Forster was clearly dissatisfied with Tillis's proclaimed "break with

ing American flags, while those opposing the move wore rainbow or LGBTQ flag colors.

Several individuals addressed the board during the public forum. Fort Mill resident Diane Simone, who had previously spoken to the county council in May and addressed the library board on Thursday, drew comparisons between the books at the York County library and pornography. Simone stated, "It's not a First Amendment right, it's not censorship, it's obscene material, and it's against the law."

Heather Jones, a Tega Cay resident formerly from Texas, expressed her belief in parents' rights to oversee their children's viewing materials, emphasizing the importance of individual choice. Jones argued that it becomes disingenuous when one parent dictates what another parent's child can access. She said, "If my child does pick up a book, no one is at the door forcing this book into my child's hands. And no one has come here and had somebody sneak a book out of a trench coat into my child's bag, and when I get home suddenly they've seen something I don't want them to see."

This article appears courtesy of our media partner, *The Charlotte Observer*. ::

—Tracy Kimball

## NC GOP censures Thom Tillis for LGBTQ support, McCrory condemns state Republican Party

At this year's annual NC GOP conference, held in Greensboro, North Carolina, delegates from the Republican Party formally voted to censure Republican Senator Thom Tillis.

Tillis has served in the Senate since 2015 and has often received widespread praise for his bipartisan efforts.

According to a report by CNN, an unidentified delegate from the Republican party, which has maintained anti-LGBTQ sentiments in its platform since the 1980s, cited their primary reasons for censuring Tillis as his support of the Biden-sponsored same-sex marriage law and immigration reform, both considered hot-button topics but measures that were still given a bipartisan green light.

The vote came on the same day as speeches delivered at the convention by

Donald Trump and Mike Pence.

Former Charlotte mayor and former one-term Governor Pat McCrory, on the other hand, offered a surprising condemnation of the vote against Tillis.

"I join former Governor Jim Martin in opposing the censure against Senator Thom Tillis," McCrory said in a tweet. "It's time for all NC state and federal elected Republicans to stand with Thom and publicly voice their opposition to the action taken at our convention."

As the previous Charlotte mayor and NC Governor, McCrory remained steadfastly anti-LGBTQ throughout most of his career, as evidenced by his refusal to sign on to a standard city welcome proclamation for an HRC dinner held in the city, his attempt to shut down a Charlotte LGBTQ Pride event,



**NC GOP censures Senator Tillis (left) for supporting same-sex marriage, while former Charlotte mayor and NC Governor McCrory defends Tillis's actions. CREDIT: Campaign PR**

Republican Party ideals."

"We need people who are unwavering in their support for conservative ideals," Forster said in reference to Tillis, who has been willing to break with party stances on LGBTQ+ rights, gun control, and immigration policy. "His recent actions don't reflect the party's shift to the right - in fact, they're moving in the exact wrong direction."

According to a statement from a spokesperson for his office, Tillis has no regrets about his bipartisan leanings. At press time, he had not replied to any comments or the censure via social media. ::

—David Aaron Moore

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# Women's college sports included in NC transgender athlete ban

NC Chamber close to passing 'Fairness in Women's Sports' bill

Jazper Lu/The Charlotte Observer

North Carolina lawmakers, mostly Republicans, are nearing an agreement on how to restrict transgender athletes in women's sports.

The latest version of their bill would ban transgender women and girls from participating in women's sports in middle and high schools, as well as colleges and universities. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives previously passed different versions of the bill, but the major differences have now been settled. On June 13, a Senate committee passed that version of House Bill 574, known as the "Fairness in Women's Sports Act."

"There have been discussions between the House sponsors and the Senate sponsors to negotiate those provisions," said House Speaker Tim Moore, a Republican from Cleveland County. "I suspect the changes that the Senate is making are things that we'll concur with when it comes back."

Unlike a similar bill that only applied to middle and high schools, HB 574 applies to higher education, including all public and private colleges and universities in North Carolina. The latest amendment removed proposed restrictions on male sports teams, with state Sen. Kevin Corbin citing the banning of female kickers on football teams as an example of an unintended consequence had that provision remained. He indicated that the House had agreed to the changes.

The amendment also removed proposed restrictions on collegiate intramural sports, with Corbin citing how they were recreational and did not deal with scholarships.

"The impetus of my journey with (the bill) was to protect women, and I do enjoy women's sports, and that's what all this is about," state Sen. Vickie Sawyer, a Republican and one of the bill's primary sponsors, said at the committee meeting. In arguing for the bill, Sawyer pointed to 17 examples of "how women didn't win in their respective sports" including Lia Thomas, a transgender woman who won the NCAA 500-yard freestyle swimming

championship in 2022.

Riley Gaines, who tied for fifth place in the 2022 NCAA 200-yard freestyle swimming championship with Thomas, submitted a statement to the committee that called for the passage of HB 574, asserting that "the NCAA and its member colleges intentionally discriminated on the basis of sex" by "allowing Thomas to displace female athletes." The bill prohibits "students of the male sex" from playing on "athletic teams designated for females, women, or girls" in all interscholastic and intramural athletic teams in public middle and high schools, and would only apply to certain private middle and high schools if the school is a member of an interscholastic athletic organization, or playing against a team required to follow the provisions of the bill.

"What we're talking about, in many cases, is a middle school student who is likely on puberty blockers ... living as a girl, using female names and pronouns, and just wants to play on the middle school team," Democratic Sen. Natasha Marcus said at the committee meeting, pointing out that there have only been two cases of a transgender athlete being allowed to play on a girls' team. "This is targeting her in a way that is mean-spirited and unfair, and will do damage to her in a way that makes me very sad." The North Carolina High School Athletic Association's current policy allows students to play on sports teams that are in line with their gender identity.

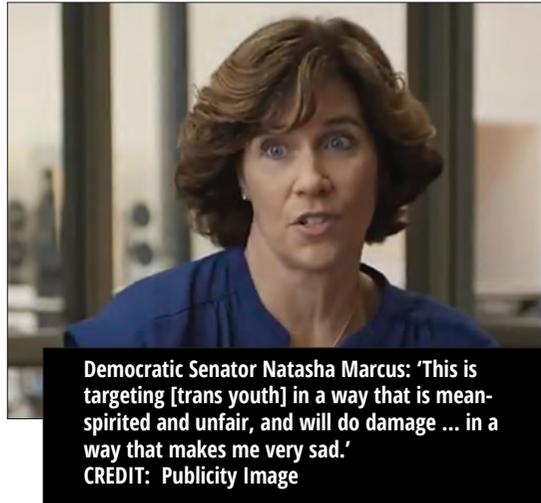
## Colleges Included in Bill

As for "institutions of higher education," which include all public universities, private colleges or universities, and community colleges, the bill applies to all athletic teams that are part of an "intercollegiate athletic program." This includes teams competing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), and the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA).

Sylvia Hatchell, former head coach of the UNC women's basketball team, spoke in support of the bill at the committee meeting. She argued that if transgender athletes are allowed to play in women's sports, they would "take scholarships away from female athletes."

"If you want to win, if another team has a transgender and that person is dominating, what are you going to do? You want to keep your job, you're going to go recruit a transgender," Hatchell said.

"I'm not against transgenders. There's a place for them, but it's a separate category." Republican lawmakers previously proposed a bill in 2021 to ban transgender athletes from playing on women's sports teams, but it failed due to a lack of examples of it being a problem in the state. Since then, beyond the fact that Republicans now have a supermajority in



Democratic Senator Natasha Marcus: 'This is targeting [trans youth] in a way that is mean-spirited and unfair, and will do damage ... in a way that makes me very sad.'  
CREDIT: Publicity Image

the General Assembly, a story reported by Fox News in 2022 generated national attention after the Cherokee County school board forfeited girls' volleyball games against Highlands High School after a transgender athlete from the school reportedly injured a player, Payton McNabb, with a spike.

While conservatives have lauded the bill as being protective of girls and women in sports, others have framed the bill as an attack on transgender kids and the broader LGBTQ+ community. "Hate legislation like this does nothing to protect us. In fact, the mere existence of these proposed bills causes harm," the Rev. Vance Haywood, pastor of St. John's Metropolitan Community Church, said at a press conference.

Kyle Love, a transgender man from Prospect Hill, spoke at the committee meeting against HB 574. He argued that the bill "only creates a scenario where trans children feel unsafe and not able to enjoy and succeed in school. 'You're faced with a choice: a choice of whether to show love to your neighbors, the same love I have felt from mine, or create a government that stops children, children, from living fulfilling lives just for being and living as who they are,'" he said.

Despite the opposition, HB 574 is likely to pass both the Senate and the House, and the Republican supermajority is likely to be able to override a veto by Gov. Roy Cooper. The bill is part of a nationwide debate over transgender participation in sports.

According to the Movement Advancement Project, 22 states currently ban transgender students from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity. In April, Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that would ban transgender women and girls from participating in women's athletic programs nationwide.

The bill has virtually no chance of passing a Democratic-controlled Senate and being signed by President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

*This story appears courtesy of our media partner The Charlotte Observer. ::*

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Republican Senator Vickie Sawyer, one of the main sponsors of 'Fairness in Women's Sports,' believes the proposed law will 'protect women,' apparently from her perceived dangers of trans women.  
CREDIT: WSIC Screen Capture

# Pat Robertson has died, but his anti-LGBTQ legacy lives on

He created a culture of hate that will continue well beyond his lifetime

Molly Sprayregen/ LGBTQ Nation

Televangelist Pat Robertson, known as one of the nation's most divisive anti-LGBTQ evangelical Christian leaders, has died at the age of 93.

"Pat Robertson, longtime TV host, religious broadcaster, educator, humanitarian, and one-time presidential candidate, died at his Virginia Beach home early Thursday morning. He was 93," a press release from the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) said.

Born Marion Gordon Robertson, the talk show host founded the influential CBN, which launched in 1960 and still exists today. He also hosted his own show, "The 700 Club," from 1966 to 2021. His son, Gordon, has since taken over.

Throughout his time on the show, Robertson became known for his fire-and-brimstone style of religion and his controversial claims about LGBTQ people, often blaming them for natural disasters.

In 2013, he claimed gay men have rings that cut people's fingers when they shake hands to transmit HIV to unsuspecting victims.

In 2020, he told viewers that if the Equality Act passes, "a righteous God will do to us what he did to Sodom and Gomorrah."

He also attributed the coronavirus to same-sex marriage and claimed there would be "atomic war" if Christians can't discrimi-

nate against LGBTQ+ people.

In 2018, he said drag queen story hours mean humanity is "trying to... stick our fingers in God's eyes."

Robertson's words may have been bizarre, but their influence was significant. CBN reaches over 100 countries, and according to a 2017 Vox article, "The 700 Club" reaches about a million people per day.

"The 700 Club" is credited with revolutionizing evangelical broadcasting. Robertson communicated evangelical propaganda through casual, comfortable, and accessible conversations rather than passionate sermons.

"Here's a well-educated person having sophisticated conversations with a wide variety of guests on a wide variety of topics," said John C. Green, emeritus political science professor at the University of Akron. "It was with a religious inflection to be sure. But it was an approach that took up everyday concerns."

Robertson used this format to promote not only a religious ideology but also a political ideology. Through his teachings, he played a significant role in solidifying the link between evangelicalism and Republican politics.

"He was able to blend Republican Party politics and conservative politics with the Bible, and in so doing he presented a consis-

tent message that if you were for Jesus, then you were for the Republican Party," said Terry Heaton, a former "700 Club" executive.

In fact, Heaton said, one can draw a direct line from Robertson's 1988 presidential run and his teachings on "The 700 Club" to the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

Robertson's presidential campaign mobilized an even larger base of evangelical Christians, strengthened their connection with the Republican party, and helped shape the white Christian nationalist ideology prevalent in society today.

In a calculated business move, Robertson made his ideology even more accessible to mainstream viewers.

As "The 700 Club" gained popularity, Robertson changed the name of one CBN branch to the Family Channel in 1998. He later sold it to News Corporation, and it became Fox Family. Disney eventually acquired the channel, which is now known as Freeform.

As part of the original sales contract, Robertson stipulated that "The 700 Club" must remain part of the channel's daily programming. Thus, families tuning in to Freeform to watch shows like "Grown-ish" and "The Fosters" may also encounter Robertson's teachings that LGBTQ people are destroying the planet.

Freeform is also known for airing dis-



Televangelist Pat Robertson in one of his later appearances. CREDIT: Screenshot

claimers before "The 700 Club," such as "The people at Freeform would like you to know we did not make this next program. We haven't even seen it."

Robertson, an avid Trump supporter, remained firmly in Trump's corner for weeks after the 2020 presidential election, reiterating unfounded claims of voter fraud on his show. However, he eventually withdrew his support for Trump and even expressed doubts about his potential 2024 run.

While Robertson may be gone, his legacy endures. Through his children, followers, and network, he created a culture of hate that unfortunately will persist long after his passing.

*This article appears courtesy of our media partner LGBTQ Nation. ::*

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# Mike Pence left stammering when CNN host points out his hypocrisy on trans youth

Former VP could barely put two words together before he changed the subject

Alex Bollinger/LGBTQ Nation

GOP presidential candidate Mike Pence could hardly respond when a CNN reporter pointed out his hypocrisy on LGBTQ+ issues. Pence argued that parental rights are paramount in one instance and then argued against parental rights when it comes to gender-affirming care.

CNN held a town hall event for Pence last night – the same kind of event that has gotten CNN criticized for not properly fact-checking the GOP presidential candidates as they speak in front of a hand-selected and very friendly audience – and he railed against gender-affirming care for transgender youth.

“We’re gonna protect kids from the radical gender ideology and say no chemical or surgical gender transition before you’re 18, period,” he said, getting applause from the conservative audience.

Host Dana Bash pushed back: “I just want to be clear on this because you are so adamant about parents’ rights.”

“Right, I am,” Pence responded.

“But in this particular case, parents who say, along with the doctors, that what is best for their kids, what their kids feel most comfortable with doing, is gender transition,”

Bash said. “The parents should not be allowed to do that?”

Pence did not appear to have a response ready for this fairly obvious question.

“Right, look, I, I, look... The, the s- state has the obligation to see to the safety and health and well-being of the people in the state,” he said, even though

Pence adamantly opposes safety measures like vaccine mandates, which do a lot more to keep people safe than focusing on transgender youth. “And I accept that. Look, yet... I, I take your point, I take your point...”

Bash insisted that she wasn’t making a point, “It’s a question,” as Pence continued to stammer.

“Well, I, I, look, this... Well we have afoot in America that is a radical gender ideology



CNN host Dana Bash (right), listens as former VP Mike Pence tries to justify Trans discrimination. CREDIT: Screen Capture/CNN

that has taken hold in our schools, that has taken hold in our universities, it is afoot across the nation....” Pence responded, trying to talk about anything other than the inconvenient fact that many parents of transgender kids support their children.

“Parental rights” have been used in the past several years to

attack LGBTQ+ equality, with anti-LGBTQ+ bills often being named after parental rights. Florida’s Don’t Say Gay law was officially named the “Parental Rights in Education” law. Anti-LGBTQ+ activists often style themselves as parents’ rights activists since they believe that parents have a right to prevent their children from knowing that LGBTQ+ people exist, and they simply assume that all parents agree with them.

“Parental rights” has become a particularly useful expression for the right when arguing that schools and teachers have an obligation to out LGBTQ+ youth to their parents. They say that parents have the best interests of their kids at heart and that child abuse is so rare that parents should be given unfettered control over their children’s lives. The ideology is even applied to non-LGBTQ+ issues, like opposition to vaccinations and critical race theory, arguing for a parent’s right to keep a child ignorant of the history of racism in the U.S. or unvaccinated against preventable diseases.

The rightwing narrative around transgender youth – supported by even elected officials like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) – is that schools, social media, and greedy doctors are turning children transgender, and honest, salt-of-the-earth parents are fighting against these institutions. In reality, many parents are supportive of LGBTQ+ youth, and the parents of transgender children have been particularly active as state legislatures across the country attempt to ban gender-affirming care for trans youth.

*This article appears courtesy of our media partner LGBTQ Nation. ::*

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# Emblems of equality: Discovering the world of LGBTQ+ flags

A handy guide to the history and significance of the most common LGBTQ+ Pride flags

Daniel Villarreal/LGBTQ Nation

During Pride Month, it's common to see a variety of LGBTQ+ Pride flags. But the variety of designs and meanings can be hard to decipher. Each one has its own unique history and symbolism, which celebrate the diversity



of identities under the queer umbrella.

Below is an explanation of some of the most common Pride flags and their meanings, as well as many other Pride flags, some representing niche LGBTQ+ micro-identities as well as special interests and communities.

## Gilbert Baker Pride Flag



In 1977, gay activist and politician Harvey Milk challenged gay military veteran and artist Gilbert Baker to create a symbol to represent and

unite the gay community. Before then, the most common gay emblem was the upside-down pink triangle symbol that Nazis used to mark queer prisoners throughout the Holocaust — a dark reminder of anti-gay oppression.

Baker's original design — co-created, hand-dyed, and sewn by Lynn Segerblom, James McNamara, and other activists — was first displayed at the June 25, 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. It consisted of eight differently colored stripes, each with its own symbolism:

- Hot Pink: Sexuality
- Red: Life
- Orange: Healing
- Yellow: Sunlight
- Green: Nature
- Turquoise: Magic/art
- Indigo: Serenity/harmony
- Violet: Spirit

In 1985, Baker told *The Bay Area Reporter* that he chose the rainbow design because of its associations with the 1960s

countercultural hippie and World Peace movements, as well as other uses dating as far back as ancient Egypt. He also said the flag related to the Rolling Stone's song "She's Like a Rainbow" (a song about living artistry) rather than Judy Garland's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" (a song about idyllic escapism).

## 1978 Pride Flag



Following Harvey Milk's November 1978 assassination, demand for the Pride flag increased. While increasing production to meet

demand, Baker and the Paramount Flag Company (where Baker worked) found that hot pink fabric wasn't widely available. They dropped the pink stripe from the flag, reducing the number of colored stripes from eight to seven.

## Traditional Gay Pride Flag



In 1979, production of the rainbow flag increased to adorn the lamp posts along the route for San Francisco's Pride parade

route. It's unclear why the turquoise strip was removed, though it may have been due to the colored fabric's unavailability in the fabric market or to its similarity to the color blue.

Either way, the number of colored stripes went from seven to six color. The flag's six colors are now widely interpreted as representing the following aspects of the LGBTQ+ community and its journey:

- Red: Life and the fight against HIV/AIDS
- Orange: Community healing and health
- Yellow: Sunlight, positive energy, and hope
- Green: Nature and the natural world
- Blue: Harmony and peace
- Purple: Spirit and the diverse identities within the LGBTQ+ community

## Philadelphia Pride Flag



The Philadelphia Pride flag was unveiled on June 8, 2017 by Philadelphia's Office of LGBT Affairs, after

the city's Commission on Human Rights published a report on widespread racism in the city's gay bars. The flag added a black and brown stripe to denote the historic contributions queer people of color as well

as the ongoing fight for racial justice and inclusivity.

Some people complained that the rainbow Pride flag already represents all queer people, regardless of skin color. A spokeswoman for Philadelphia's Office of LGBT Affairs said the new flag is neither meant as a "replacement" nor a challenger to the standard six-stripe Pride flag, but merely an "additive" and inclusive version of the widely recognized LGBTQ+ icon.

## Transgender Pride Flag



Although designers have created various transgender Pride flags over the recent years, the most widely recognized one was

created by transgender woman Monica Helms in 1999. The flag made its public debut at a Pride parade in Phoenix, Arizona in 2000.

The Transgender Pride flag consists of five horizontal stripes. The colors represent the following:

- Light Blue: Traditionally masculine color symbolizing individuals who were assigned male at birth and those who identify on the masculine spectrum
- Pink: Traditionally feminine color symbolizing individuals who were assigned female at birth and those who identify on the feminine spectrum
- White: A traditionally neutral color symbolizing individuals who are intersex, transitioning, gender-neutral, or identify as any other non-cisgender identity.

## Intersex Pride Flag



The Intersex Pride flag was created in 2013 by Morgan Carpenter of Intersex Human Rights Australia, an organiza-

tion that promotes the human rights and bodily autonomy of intersex people, those born with an anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

Carpenter said he wanted to create a non-derivative flag that was "firmly grounded in meaning." He chose yellow and purple as colors that were "free from gender associations and were historically used to represent intersex people." He put a circle in the flag to represent something "unbroken and unornamented, symbolizing wholeness and completeness, and our potentialities."

"We are still fighting for bodily autonomy and genital integrity, and this symbolizes the right to be who and how we want to be," Carpenter said of the flag's design.

## Progress Pride Flag



The Progress Pride flag was unveiled in June 2018 by Daniel Quasar, a self-identified "queer, nonbinary demiguy"

and artist living in the Pacific Northwest. The flag contains the traditional Pride flag's six rainbow-colored stripes and three differently colored sets of chevrons on its side, each set representing a traditionally marginalized LGBTQ+ community:

Black chevron: People who are either living with HIV or those who have died from it, and the stigma surrounding both.

Black and brown chevrons: LGBTQ+ people of color

Light blue, pink, and white chevrons: Transgender people

Quasar (who uses xe/xem pronouns) designed the flag after seeing the 2017 Philadelphia Pride flag. Xe said xe wanted the flag to "shift focus and emphasis to what is important in our current community climate." The chevrons point rightward to suggest forward movement, but remain on the flag's left edge to show that progress still needs to be made, Quasar explained.

## Intersex Inclusive Progress Pride Flag



In 2021, Valentino Vecchiotti of the group Intersex Equality Rights UK incorporated the intersex flag into the

Progress Pride flag. The flag recognizes the intersex community as a traditionally marginalized group and represents both its progress toward achieving equal rights and the progress left to be made.

"I wish to live with a sense of authenticity and not change myself to fit in but instead, to be welcomed to join in with everyone," Vecchiotti told the BBC when explaining why they included the intersex flag within the Progress Pride flag.

## Queer People of Color Pride Flag



While it's unclear who created this flag, it emerged online and at San Francisco Pride in 2019 and gained

popularity during the worldwide protests for racial justice and police reform in 2020. It represents the overlapping movements for racial justice and LGBTQ+ rights.

The flag's raised fist represents defi-

ance, resistance, and solidarity — historically, the raised fist has been displayed in support of workers' rights, anti-fascism, anti-racism, and other revolutionary social movements. The varying colors on the fist represent different skin tones, a sign of anti-racist unity in the ongoing fight for liberation and equality.



### Two-Spirit Pride Flag

The Two-Spirit Pride Flag represents members of Indigenous cultures who have both a masculine and feminine spirit within them. The flag signifies a reclamation of Indigenous LGBTQ+ identities, traditions, and sovereignty.

Tumblr user 2Sanon shared the flag online on December 17, 2016, according to Queer In The World. The two feathers signify a male and female spirit, and the circle signifies wholeness in a single being.



### Queer Pride Flag

Although not widely recognized or displayed, the Queer Pride Flag was created by designer Pastelmemer in 2015. Its colored

stripes represent the following:

Pink and red: Same-gender attraction for feminine individuals

Light blue and blue: Same-gender attraction for masculine individuals

Orange and green: Non-binary individuals.

Black and white: Asexual, aromantic, and agender spectrum individuals.

### Labrys Lesbian Pride Flag



In 1999, a gay male graphic designer named Sean Campbell created the Labrys Lesbian Pride flag for a special Pride edition of the Palm Springs Gay and Lesbian Times, according to The Queerstory Files,

Its purple color represents a mixing of the traditionally masculine color blue with the traditionally feminine pink color. The inverted black triangle reclaims the inverted pink triangle used by Nazis to stigmatize LGBTQ+ prisoners. The labrys, a double-sided axe, has a historic association with ancient Greek female goddesses. In the 1970s, some lesbian feminists embraced the labrys as a symbol of strength and self-sufficiency.

The flag has never been widely recognized as an emblem representing the lesbian community, in part because it was developed by a gay man.

### Lesbian Pride Flag



American activist Natalie McCray created the Lesbian Pride Flag in 2010 to signify lesbian experiences and

identity. Its seven stripes in varying shades of orange, white, and pink have a specific meaning:

Dark Orange: Gender non-conformity

Orange: Community, enthusiasm, and self-worth

Light Orange: Healing, vitality, and connection to the natural world

White: Unique relationships to womanhood and the fluidity of gender

Pink: Serenity and peace

Dark Pink: Femininity and lesbian uniqueness

Magenta: Love and attraction

Sometimes the flag shows a lipstick imprint on its upper left corner, signifying "lipstick lesbians," those who embody a traditionally feminine style.

### Butch Lesbian Pride Flags



Tumblr user Dorian-Rutherford created the first Butch Lesbian Pride flag in 2016, replacing the lesbian flag's

"feminine" colors with more "masculine" shades of blues and purple to represent butch and non-femme identifying lesbians. Its colors symbolize the following:

Purples: Lesbians and women loving women



Blues: Masculinity  
White: people across the gender and sexuality spectrums.

The orange version was created by Jim, moderator of the Tumblr page butchspace, Women's Health reported. Its colored stripes represent the following (according to its creator):

Red: Passion and sexuality

Red-orange: Courage

Light orange: Joy

White: Renewal

Beige: Chivalry

Orange: Warmth

Brown: Honesty

### Bisexual Pride Flag



Michael Page created the Bisexual Pride flag in 1998 as a symbol for bisexual visibility and pride. Its three differently

colored horizontal stripes have specific meanings:

Pink: Same-sex attraction.

Purple: A combination of both same-sex and opposite-sex attraction, denoting the "queerness of bisexuality"

Blue: Opposite-sex attraction

The flag's colors were taken from an earlier version of a Bisexual Pride Flag, created by Liz Nania for the Second National March on Washington for

Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1987. Nania's flag had two inverted blue and pink triangles (or "biangles"), which overlapped to create a third lavender biangle.

"The key to understanding the symbolism of the Bi Pride Flag is to know that the purple pixels of color blend unnoticeably into both the pink and blue, just as in the 'real world,' where bi people blend unnoticeably into both the gay/lesbian and straight communities," Nania explained.

### Pansexual Pride Flag



The Pansexual Pride flag was anonymously posted by a Tumblr user named Jasper V in 2010. Its colors repre-

sent the following:

Pink: Attraction to individuals who identify as female or feminine.

Yellow: Attraction to individuals who identify as non-binary, genderqueer, or outside the gender binary.

Blue: Attraction to individuals who identify as male or masculine.

### Skoliosexual Pride Flag



The Skoliosexual Pride Flag was created in 2015 by deviantArt user Savvysweet as a symbol for people who feel attraction to

individuals who are gender-fluid, gender-non-conforming, and non-binary. Its different colored stripes represent the following:

Yellow: Gender-fluid, non-binary, and non-conforming individuals.

White: Individuals who feel attraction to all genders, regardless of gender identity or expression.

Purple: Love and attraction.

### Abrosexual Pride Flag



The Abrosexual Pride Flag's origin is unclear. One source says it was either created by a Tumblr

user named Mod Chad for the pride flags-for-us Tumblr page or it was created in 2013 by a user of the DeviantArt website. Regardless, the flag represents those who experience a fluid or changing attraction to different genders. Its differently colored stripes represent the following:

Pink: Varying attraction to feminine genders

Green: Varying attraction to masculine genders

White: Varying attraction to non-binary or non-conforming genders

The gradients between the colors represent the ever-shifting attractions

between all genders.

### Demisexual Pride Flag



The Demisexual Pride Flag represents individuals who feel sexual attraction only after forming a deep emotional bond or connection

with another person. It's unclear who created the flag, but it uses the same colors as the asexual flag, which was created in 2010. Its differently colored areas represent the following:

Black: Asexuality (the absence of sexual attraction)

Grey: Demi-sexuality

White: Sexuality

Purple: Community

### Demiromantic Pride Flag



The Demiromantic Pride Flag was created and posted on March 9, 2015 by Tumblr user @QueerAsCat to

represent individuals who feel romantic attraction only after forming a deep emotional bond or connection with another person. Its differently colored areas represent the following:

Black: The entire romantic spectrum

White: Queer/quasi-platonic relationships and platonic/aesthetic attraction

Gray: Gray-romance (experiencing some level of romantic attraction under specific circumstances)

Green: Aromanticism (the absence of romantic attraction)

### Asexual Pride Flag



The Asexual Pride Flag was created in 2010 by a member of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), known as "stand-

up." AVEN chose the flag after three rounds of member voting that included members of the asexual community. Its stripes represent the following:

Black: Asexuality (the absence of sexual attraction)

Gray: Gray-asexuality (experiencing some level of sexual attraction under specific circumstances)

White: Sexuality and sexual attraction

Purple: Community and the joining together of asexual individuals

### Aromantic Pride Flag



The aromantic pride flag was designed by a Tumblr user named Cameron in 2014 to represent people

who do not feel romantic attraction to others. Its stripes represent the following:  
 Dark green: Aromantic Individuality, growth, and independence

Light green: The range of aromantic experiences, identities, feelings, and perspectives on romantic attraction

White: Aromance (a lack of romantic interest in others)

Gray: Grey-romance (experiencing some level of romantic attraction under specific circumstances)

Black: Romance (those who experience romantic attraction to aromantic people)

### Genderqueer Pride Flag



The Genderqueer Pride Flag was created by designer Marilyn Roxie and its final version was unveiled in June 2011, according

to GenderQueerId.com. Its color stripes represent different parts of the genderqueer community:

Lavender: Androgynous and queer individuals

White: Agender and nonbinary individuals

Green: Individuals who identify outside of or without reference to the binary

### Nonbinary Pride Flag



The nonbinary pride flag was designed by Kye Rowan in 2014 to represent people whose gender identity doesn't exclusively align with the male-

female gender binary. Its stripes represent the following:

Yellow: genders outside of the binary  
 White: Multiple and fluid genders

Purple: A combination of masculine and feminine gender expression (or a rejection of them altogether)

Black: Agender identities (those who feel their gender undefined, neutral, or nonexistent)

### Ally Pride Flag



It's unclear who created the Ally Pride flag, though it has been in use since the early 2000s. The black and white stripe

background represents the heterosexual and cisgender community. The "A" shape stands for "ally," it is rainbow-colored to represent allies' support of LGBTQ+ people, and the shape points upward to represent the uplift and progress of the queer community.

### Polyamory Pride Flag



Several Polyamory Pride Flags have been created over the years to represent individuals who engage in consensual, ethical non-monogamous relationships involving multiple partners.

The earliest known flag was created by Jim Evans in 1995. Its differently colored stripes represent the following:

Blue: Openness, honesty, communication, and transparency among all partners across multiple relationships.

Red: Love, passion, and the deep emotional and affectionate connections and affection between polyamorous partners.

Black: Solidarity, inclusivity, stigma and challenges faced by polyamorous individuals in a hetero-monogamo-centric culture.

Designs of the flag have included the

symbol for "pi," a Greek letter that represents a never-ending number in mathematics, and a heart with an infinity symbol inside of it to represent the infinite capability of love. These symbols are displayed in a gold color to represent energy and perseverance, PolyAmProud.com reports.

The aforementioned site released a tri-color version of the flag designed by Red Howell. Howell's version has a white chevron representing "the blank canvas upon which every non-monogamous person creates and develops their individual relationships." The chevron points rightward to signal "hope for the future of the polyamorous and non-monogamous community" and "sits asymmetrically on the flag to reflect the non-traditional style of polyamorous relationships."

Howell's design also includes purple to represent a united non-monogamous community, including historically "unacknowledged, suppressed, ridiculed, or erased" non-monogamous practices by people of color and Indigenous people.

### Bear Brotherhood Pride Flag



The Bear Brotherhood Flag was created by Craig Byrnes and Paul Witzkoske in 1995 as a way to represent hairy and large-bodied

men. Its colors denote the different colors of bear fur throughout the world. The paw in the upper left corner denotes the "bear" identity taken by hairy and large-bodied queer men.

### Leather Pride Flag & Leather BDSM Pride Flag



The Leather Pride flag was designed by Tony DeBlase in 1989 for the International Mr. Leather (IML)

contest. It represents the leather and bondage-domination-submission-masochism (BDSM) communities. Its differently colored stripes represent the following:

Black: The traditional color of leather fetish gear as well as the physical and sexual aspects of the subculture

Blue: The "true" or "authentic" loyalty and dedication to BDSM and leather principles and traditions

White: Purity and innocence and spiritual and ethical practices of the subculture

Red: A heart representing the affection, passion, love, and care that the community has for its members and others

### Leather Boy/Girl Pride Flags



The Pride Flags for Leather Boys and Girls represent younger people in the leather and BDSM subcultures. The origin

of the flags is unclear. Their different colors represent the following:

Black: The traditional color of leather fetish gear as well as the physical and sexual aspects of the subculture

Green or Pink: Masculinity and boyhood or femininity and girlhood, respectively.

White: Purity and innocence and spiritual and ethical practices of the subculture

Red: A heart representing the affection, passion, love, and care that the community has for its members and others.

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# Southern LGBTQ+ organizer says change ‘needs to happen no matter where you live’

Mandy Carter, co-founder of Southerners on New Ground (SONG), reflects on 30 years of queer liberation organizing and says people shouldn't write off the region

Rebekah Barber, The 19th

In 1990, one of the most racially charged political races in recent history was taking place in North Carolina. Harvey Gantt, the first Black mayor of Charlotte, was challenging incumbent U.S. Senator Jesse Helms, a stalwart racist who proudly opposed any type of civil rights legislation.

At the time, Mandy Carter, a Black lesbian activist, was organizing N.C. Senate Vote '90, a statewide campaign funded by lesbian and gay people in the North Carolina triangle region who were working to defeat Helms.

Ultimately, Helms won the race. But, Carter notes, the movement that began with the goal of defeating Helms propelled LGBTQ+ activists in the state to “fall forward.” They began to think more deeply about what it means to be an LGBTQ+ person living in the South and why it was important to come together to fight for liberation.

Thus, in 1993 — 30 years ago this year — Carter, along with Suzanne Pharr, Joan Garner, Pat Hussain, Mab Segrest and Pam McMichael came together to form Southerners on New Ground (SONG), a Queer liberation organization that uses community organizing to fight for economic and racial justice in the South.

The 19th spoke with Carter about her work with SONG, what she has learned over the past 30 years and what she hopes the organization will accomplish over the next 30 years.

**Rebekah Barber: Southerners on New Ground was founded 30 years ago. Can you talk about what brought you and the other founders together? At the time, what were your hopes for the organization?**

**Mandy Carter:** The six founders, we all knew each other already, but the founding of SONG really all stemmed back to the Jesse Helms/Harvey Gantt U.S. Senate race in 1990. We did a lot of organizing around that race that got the attention of the National [LGBTQ] Task Force.

They do a conference each year called Creating Change. The conference was started by the National [LGBTQ] Task Force to create a way for people, once a year from all across the country, to get together and strategize.

Because of the success of what happened with that 1990 campaign in North Carolina, it was the first time they ever had Creating Change in the South — in Durham, North Carolina.

When they asked to have it in Durham, we said yes. The plan was actually originally for us to do a workshop, but in addition to having the conference proactively chosen to be in Durham, Mab Segrest (another founder of SONG) got to be one of the keynote speakers. Her speech was about what it means to be gay and lesbian in the South with other southern connections.

We also did the workshop, and that workshop really ended up being the genesis of what we ended up calling Southerners on



**Mandy Carter, co-founder of Southerners on New Ground (SONG) speaks at the District of Columbia Official Kick-Off Event of the 8th Annual DC Black Lesbian & Gay Pride Day at Judiciary Square on May 24, 1996. CREDIT: Photo by Elvert Barnes, is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0**

New Ground because there was so much reaction to it.

That Harvey Gantt/Jesse Helms race will have to go down as one of the most provocative races in history. There's a concept of losing forward. Even though Harvey Gantt didn't win — he was the first Black mayor of Charlotte, he helped integrate Clemson [University] — the organizing that went around that race ended up forming such an amazing coalition. Even though Helms won, strategically, that election ended up being a game changer.

**RB: Since that time, some of the same fights are still going on. Can you talk about some of the important organizing lessons you've learned over the past 30 years?**

**MC:** When we first started, we purposely made sure that we started SONG with three White southern lesbians, out and visible, and three Black southern lesbians, out and visible. We thought that was critical for our work.

But then we started talking about it and realized that it wasn't just about being Black and it wasn't just about being gay or lesbian. It was about the issues of being in the South. It was about the issues around health, money, discrimination.

We purposely wanted to make sure that one of the first things we did was not a queer issue, per se. We wanted to show how the gay and lesbian community could support an economic issue of farmworkers/people of color.

At the time, farmworkers employed at the Mt. Olive pickle company, the largest independent pickle company in the United States, were fighting for higher wages and safer working conditions. They wanted to do a march, just like the freedom struggles of the civil rights movement.

Mab and I went and walked with the farmworkers in Mount Olive to Raleigh, North Carolina. We don't speak Spanish. All the meetings they had, they had people speaking Spanish, but for the first time, we had to put the headsets on to receive translation from Spanish to English. That was one of the first important things that happened. Culturally, that was a game changer because it brought us together. It was a bonding moment, and I almost get chills thinking about it.

In retrospect, 30 years looking back on it later, the fact that one of the first things that SONG did officially was something in North Carolina around farmworkers, equality and jobs — that made a big difference.

**RB: SONG describes itself as a queer liberation organization. When you think of liberation, what does it look like for you?**

**MC:** Rather than trying to find the things that separate us, what are things that no matter what language you speak or where you live, what would you have in common? I think when I hear the word liberation, whether you put queer in front of it or not, a lot of it is about language justice. A lot of it is about clean air, water. It is the understanding that no one should be homeless — no one.

Everyone should have access to an education, health care. ... All the things that you would perceive to be quality of life, whether you're living in eastern North Carolina with 10 people or New York City with 10,000 people.

Then I would almost pose a rhetorical question: But who gets to define that? Who gets to say if you do or don't live in these boundaries you may or may not end up in jail?

**RB: In recent years, SONG has engaged in bailouts — combating the incarceration system by paying the bail of incarcerated people. Can you talk about why efforts to end mass incarceration are so important to SONG's work?**

**MC:** The original mission statement of SONG was “Southerners on New Ground is about building transformative models of organizing in the South that connect race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation.” ... Later, more people started adding other things like language justice, but the commonality of who's sitting in those prisons remained the same. The people sitting in those prisons were pretty much either poor White folk or Black folk and other people of color.

One of the thoughts that came out of SONG was, “What if we were to do a bailout project?” They also said, “Let's go down, for one day, just sit in that downtown courthouse and see the color and class of the folks going into those rooms: all Black, Brown and poor White. That was like an awakening.

Someone said, “What if we had the funds to bail women out so they could take care of their family and children?” That ended up being an experiment, but it worked — and it had a lot of power. They replicated that across other parts of the state and country.

In many cases just \$200 made the difference between whether or not a person was incarcerated pretrial. Many of those we were able to bail out were from women-led households. When we were able to bail out these women, we also challenged the whole notion about why these people were in jail. They should not be sitting in there, they can just wait until the trial comes up.

**RB: Can you talk about what your hopes for SONG are over the next 30 years?**

**MC:** I always say that, ideally, any of us involved in social justice, we should try to be putting ourselves out of a job. One thing I loved about SONG, even though we had the six original cofounders, it wasn't ours.

There's a saying, “As the South goes, so goes the nation.” I think a lot of times people write off the South. But the issue of interracial marriage happened in the South (Virginia). The issue of sodomy law happened in the South (Texas).

People often have an idea about where change can happen, but it needs to happen no matter where you live. Some of the legal, cultural, societal changes are actually happening in a place that no one thinks can make a difference. It takes time, but it's not impossible.

What I would like to see, demographically, is an understanding of how we form more of a cultural bond with other groups like the Latino community and AAPI community.

It's not just SONG, by itself, but about how we partner with other groups intentionally.

*This article appears courtesy of our The 19th. ::*

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# Athens, Georgia

## Pride Journey



by **Joey Amato**  
Qnotes Staff Writer



City Hall in Athens, Georgia. CREDIT: Jud McCranie

Everyone knows that I am a sucker for small-city charm, so I decided to venture about an hour and a half outside of Atlanta to Athens, Georgia, home of rock bands R.E.M., Widespread Panic, and of course, the B-52's. As soon as I drove into the college town, I knew I was in for a treat. I love exploring these destinations as they tend to offer tons of local restaurants and boutiques which ooze with character.

Athens is a thriving college town and home to the University of Georgia, which is the state's flagship university, as well as the Athens Institute of Technology and Piedmont College. Athens is a vibrant city that offers a unique blend of Southern charm and culture.

Athens has a rich history that dates back to the early 1800s when it was founded as the seat of Clarke County. The city was first settled in 1801 and was named after Athens, Greece, the birthplace of democracy. The city played a key role in the Civil War, serving as a transportation hub for the Confederacy. In the years following the war, Athens became a center of higher education, with the founding of the University of Georgia.

The city soon became the center of politics and commerce in the region. The University of Georgia is the largest employer in Athens, and its presence has shaped the city's culture and economy. The university is home to the Georgia Bulldogs, the school's football team, and a number of other athletic teams. It also hosts numerous music, art, and theater events throughout the year.

Athens is also known for its distinctive neighborhoods. Five Points is the city's oldest and most popular area, and is home to a variety of shops, restaurants, and bars.

After checking into my room at Hotel Indigo, I walked to the center of town, which was lined with a large selection of restaurants and live music venues. Given the musical heritage of Athens, live music is still at the heart of their nightlife scene. Some venues worth checking out include 40 Watt Club, The Warehouse, and the Georgia Theatre.

To my surprise, located in the center of downtown is a fabulous four-way rainbow crosswalk. Sometimes when I visit smaller destinations, I wonder if the community is welcoming to LGBTQ individuals, but I quickly realized that Athens most definitely is. If you are in town on a Friday evening, swing by Athens Showgirl Cabaret's Fabulous Fridays at Hendershot's, located in the Bottleworks development. A coffee shop during the day and bar in the evening, Hendershot's is the perfect place to mingle among LGBTQ locals. After the drag show, head to Sister Louisa's Church, about a 10-minute walk from Hendershot's. The quirky establishment features a bar, patio, and club area and is the hub of LGBTQ nightlife in Athens.

After a restful night's sleep, head to Mama's Boy, for breakfast. A short drive from the hotel. Then head to The State Botanical Garden of Georgia. I spent about 2 hours strolling around the gardens and taking in the sights and smells. Be sure to visit the Discovery and Inspiration Garden as well as the Hummingbird Trail.

For an afternoon pick-me-up, head to 1000 Faces Coffee, a cute coffee shop and roaster in town or check out Condor Chocolates and sample some delicious chocolate truffles.

The Georgia Museum of Art is located on the University of Georgia campus and definitely walkable from Hotel Indigo, although I would recommend bringing a bottle of water along for the journey. The museum contains a lovely sculpture garden as well as various exhibition halls which feature a vast collection of fine art. Admission is free to both the Museum of Art as well as

the botanical gardens, making Athens a budget-friendly getaway.

Speaking of art, beautiful murals can be found all over town, depicting the city's rich musical heritage, but my favorite was the "Greetings from Athens" mural located on the side of a building in a narrow alley. It can easily be missed if you don't know where you are going.

The city is home to numerous festivals, including the AthFest Music and Arts Festival, the Athens Film Festival, and the Athens International Film & Video Festival, so it may be a good idea to plan your visit around one of those events.

If you are in the mood to do some shopping, I recommend wandering through Wuxtry Records, one of a few independently owned record stores left in the country. I could spend hours going through their endless aisles of records but only had two days in the city, so I had to move on. I stumbled upon Community, a hub for locally-made products including candles and handcrafted soaps.

Athens is a small city with a lot to offer. Its vibrant music scene, thriving culinary scene, and abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities make it a perfect destination for a solo trip or a vacation with friends. If you are looking for a hip weekend adventure, I would give Athens a try.

Enjoy the journey! ::

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# Pride 2023

Jesse's Journal

Jesse Monteagudo | Contributing Writer

Every year, "Jesse's Journal" tries to bring something clever or inspirational to the conversation regarding LGBTQ+ Pride Month. Though pride in one's sexual orientation or gender identity should be year-round, it is good to set apart a month to showcase and celebrate our community and our culture. In this, we join other groups who have their own Pride months: Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), Arab American Heritage Month (April), Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May), Disability Pride Month (July), and Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15). The only group that does not have a month are white, heterosexual, able-bodied Christian men, but then, they are in control all year long.

The concept of LGBTQ+ Pride was formed over half a century ago as a reaction to a religious/legal/medical establishment that taught us to be ashamed of ourselves. Some people in search of an argument complain that there is no such thing as "straight pride month" as if we needed one. The day that heterosexuals or cisgender people discover that their own sexual orientation or gender identity is made a crime, a sin, or a mental illness, or forbidden to be discussed in our public schools, then we can talk about a need for a "straight pride month."

For a while, events seemed to be going our way, and Pride celebrations, which began when queer people and trans women of color finally said ENOUGH!, became an excuse to throw a party (as if we needed one). But every

two steps forward come with one step backward, and our LGBTQ+ community is currently facing a backlash, not only in benighted places like Russia or Uganda but in our own USA. Conservative politicians like Ron DeSantis, who use "woke" as a catchword to excite their followers and camouflage their racism, homophobia, and transphobia, do their best to put the brakes on our community's progress. Though most Americans support LGBTQ+ rights, extremist groups like the Proud Boys or the ironically named Moms for Liberty have pushed like-minded governors and legislatures to pass oppressive laws that make it harder for queer people to be free and live fulfilling lives. At worst, they seek to destroy us. At best, they seek to erase decades of Pride and pressure us to feel



shame again.

Like everything else, the new anti-LGBTQ+ and especially anti-trans laws affect some people differently than others. As a white-appearing, able-bodied, middle-class, cisgender man living in South Florida, I am barely affected by the reign of terror emanating from Tallahassee. But for a young LGBTQ+ person in our public schools, and especially for a young trans person coming to terms with their gender identity, the new, hateful Florida laws are devastating. I can buy "woke" books anywhere. But to young queer people, especially people of color, books that speak the truth about racial, sexual, or gender minorities are increasingly hard to find. Of course, there is always a possibility that a mentally disturbed person, assisted by our increasingly lax gun laws, might decide to take us out of our miseries, all to our leaders' "thoughts and prayers."

We never know how long we are going to be on this earth. We only hope that when the time comes, we leave this world a bit better than it was when we came here. If I have done anything good in my life, it is that I helped other LGBTQ+ people feel better about themselves, with my writings and my example. Pride 2023 has come at a challenging time. We must continue our fight and remember that the original Pride was a protest and not a party. Let's make this year's Pride something our enemies will long remember. ::

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# Our People: James Funderburk

Area entrepreneur talks business, love and being bitten by the travel bug



by L'Monique King  
QNotes Staff Writer

Attention readers! Please be advised, there's a self-proclaimed serial entrepreneur living among us. Though 50-something and now officially retired, his zest for life and ability to live it so fully has often been envied by many folks half his age.

Who is this man?

His name is James Funderburk, "a gay identified bisexual male" who lives in the Myers Park area with his husband of 19 years. By the time this content makes it to print and our website, he'll be off to Cairo and from there to Tel Aviv for Pride (his next two destinations) and have to read it online.

Funderburk was born in Eden, N.C., a place he describes as "a small mill town north of Greensboro on the Virginia border," but has lived in the Charlotte area for nearly 32 years. From the comfort of a 100-year-old house in the Myers Park area he shares with his husband Jim Hock, Funderburk talked to us about his multiple business ventures, his travels and sharing life with a man he adores.

**L'Monique King: So, 19 years huh? That's beautiful. How'd you meet your husband?**

**James Funderburk:** At Velocity, a gay bar that used to be in Charlotte. We were married in 2004, but we've been together almost 22 years. We were the first non-heterosexual marriage/union announced in the Charlotte Observer. Jim had to fight for it. He called, and called and wrote letters and finally got them to put us in there. When they finally agreed to list the announcement they wouldn't put it on the celebration page. They put us in a corner of the newspaper on the garden page, but we got in there.

**LMK: Wow. He went through such lengths to have your union announced in the Charlotte Observer? Sounds like Jim is a pretty special guy.**

**JF:** My husband is the reason I notice things like the scent of the magnolias. He always makes sure to plant things near the windows that are going to smell good. He's one of the most thoughtful people I've ever known. He always celebrates other people's accomplishments, achievements and victories. He's great about sending a card [to acknowledge a win] and really good at making people feel seen. He's also really heavy duty into social justice.

**LMK: What originally brought you to Charlotte?**

**JF:** I came to Charlotte after my marriage [to a woman] ended and shortly after opened Urban Evolution, a clothing store. I had a few nightclubs and a restaurant as well before becoming a real estate developer in 2007. And now I've been able to retire



Entrepreneur, world traveler and North Carolina native James Funderburk.  
CREDIT: Courtesy J. Funderburk

from my real estate business.

**LMK: Ok, so serial entrepreneur is more than a catchphrase for you – it's a lived experience. How'd it all start?**

**JF:** I started my first business at 22 after flunking out of UNCG (University of North Carolina Greensboro) and got into a clothing business. I like to create businesses, generally centering around design. A clothing store, a club – where fashion shows could be held. I've done a lot of different things and throughout all of that it's always been about uplifting people. It started with seeing the magic that can happen when you meet people and they're looking for a pathway. Whether they are coming out, buying a pair of jeans and realizing for the first time that they are beautiful. Whatever it is, it's been about doing things that help people find their expression and White Rabbit was part of that.

**LMK: Wait, White Rabbit? The store that also houses the office for QNotes? What's your connection?**

**JF:** I started a bisexual support group in Charlotte back in 1993. There was a tremendous lack of acceptance of bisexual people at the time. Back then there weren't words like pansexual and I recognized that we needed a group. We needed to come together. So, we started having meetings at the White Rabbit. At the time, I opened and managed the bookstore for a friend of mine, the owner, John Neal. The opening of White Rabbit exposed me to so many parts of our community. I met my first trans people there. They were just starting their journey [in navigating life as trans individuals] without resources or much support. My time at White Rabbit was a really wonderful experience, knowing that I could help where I could just see people and let them know they were seen. It was almost like a ministry

of sorts. It was fantastic. All of a sudden, I was a visible out gay person doing business and there wasn't really anything negative [felt or heard] about it – though there were encounters with an anti-gay mayor, Vin Root. Charlotte has come so far since then.

**LMK: You've been known to be quite a globetrotter. What ignited your passion for travel?**

**JF:** When I was 13, my mother remarried. [Her new husband] took us to Tehran. He worked for a company that installed phone lines in Tehran and I found myself swept into another culture. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Persian culture [modern day Iran] because it taught me so much about what being hospitable to people is really about. I also experienced sexuality in a very different way also. Homosexuality is a huge part of the culture, though they are known for putting homosexuals to death.

**LMK: How are same-sex relationships a huge part of a culture that puts people to death for it?**

**JF:** Since the sexes can't mix or have sex until they're married, there are a lot of homosexual relationships, both lesbian and gay, and it's all very discreet. It was almost like an open secret. If you're going to have intimacy, it's going to be with someone of the same sex, if you're not married.

**LMK: Your debt to Tehran aside, what's your favorite travel destination?**

**JF:** Bangkok is my favorite city in the world. It has canals and rivers – kind of like Venice. The boats are mixed with the train system, you can hop off a boat and get on a train. They also have modern architecture and a crazy love for shopping – whether it's a floating market or a high-end mall. It's sort of the crossroads of Southeast Asia and the back packing world. This will be my 20th

year going to Thailand and Bangkok.

**LMK: Seems like all those businesses have literally paid off for you.**

**JF:** I wake up every day and count my blessings for being very fortunate. A lot of people think it takes a lot of money to travel but it really doesn't. People think they can't travel but they go to Myrtle Beach or Disney every year and that costs more than it can cost to visit Southeast Asia in general – at the backpack level at least. It's all about your accommodations and what you're looking for in an experience.

**LMK: Pride Season is now gayly upon us [corny pun intended]. For those looking to travel during this time, what would you say are your top three travel haunts for celebrating Pride?**

**JF:** Sydney, Australia. I've been to Pride there about four times. Toronto Pride was amazing as well. Toronto is an amazing city, it's so ethnically diverse, very much like New York. London World Pride was really good for me. It was where I really woke up to Pride. Seeing these waves of people and different groups so proud. [Recognizing] the pain carried by everyone you see marching, whether because they are trans or of color or old. The energy of a Pride Parade really feeds me and makes me feel very happy to see so many people affirming themselves and accepting and loving themselves. It's really about the importance of all that because of the oppression our community has experienced.

[Reflective pause] And things seem like they're moving in the wrong direction [right now]. My beloved state has been hijacked by gerrymandering and all this shit that is not representative of our population.

It's one of the reasons I travel. I see so many terrible things going on that I need a break from. Charlotte will always be home to me, but we're actually working on getting dual citizenship in Portugal right now. We decided to do it when Trump got elected. When he got elected, I had this feeling, I was back to being a kid, being "fag bashed" on the school bus and thought, we've got to have an escape route.

**LMK: That's understandable. Thank you for being so candid in sharing your thoughts and so much about your private life with our readers. Is there anything you'd like to share that most people don't know about you?**

**JF:** Hmmm. Let me think about that for a minute. My favorite meal is Salisbury steak, overcooked green beans and mashed potatoes with gravy. I just got my motorcycle license, even though I've had a motorcycle for years, because you can't rent a motorcycle in Greece unless you have an endorsement on your American license. Oh! I know. I'm also close to getting my private pilot license, which means I'll actually be able to fly a plane. ::

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