

DAY 5: Equity & The LGBTQIA+ Community

People in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other sexual and gender minority ([LGBTQIA+](#)) community face barriers to equity in [almost every aspect of their lives](#) including housing, employment, healthcare, and education. This is especially true for LGBTQIA+ people who are also people of color. For example, for Black and transgender or gender nonconforming people, 2020 was [the most dangerous year](#) since reporting started in 2013, and 2021 has already seen at least 23 transgender people killed. The average life expectancy of a black trans woman is only [35 years](#) due to the frequency with which they are targets for violence.

While the U.S. Supreme Court extended marriage to same-sex couples nationwide in 2015, Michigan's civil rights laws still allow for discrimination against LGBTQI+ people because they don't explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The stories we hear of LGBTQIA+ people are often those of discrimination, abuse, loss of family, and painful experiences. It is also important to remember and recognize queer and trans joy, and the power that these communities have to create radically welcoming spaces and chosen families. Especially during June, when people around the world celebrate Pride Month, we see that LGBTQIA+ people live lives full of joy, resilience, and liberation, an invitation to explore beyond what we are told is possible.

Did you know? Approximately [4% of Michigan's population identifies as LGBTQ](#), there are more than [61,000 LGBTQ youth in Michigan](#), and [one-quarter of LGBTQ people in our state are raising children](#). A [2019 survey by GLSEN](#) of LGBTQ students found that 94% of students heard anti-LGBTQ remarks at school, and most students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. A recent [UCLA School of Law study](#) examined the impact of stigma and discrimination in Michigan and found that LGBTQI+ high school students were almost two times as likely to be bullied and three times as likely to seriously consider suicide than their straight and cisgender peers. Anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination isn't just wrong, it's deadly. All Michiganders, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, should be treated fairly and live in safe, supportive communities.

Today's Challenge:

Option 1: Learn about and take part in a LGBTQIA+ Pride event this month. [Click here to learn more about the origins of Pride](#) and the [LGBTQIA+ community](#) to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan.

While some in-person events have been canceled, [people are still taking to the streets marching in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement](#). Other events are going fully virtual, enabling

people to take part in Pride wherever they are. [Click here](#) and [here](#) to locate a Pride event in Washtenaw County.

Option 2: Watch this quick video to [learn why using correct pronouns is so important](#). Add your pronouns to your [email signature](#), to show your advocacy for LGBTQI+ individuals.

Option 3: Read this explanation of [the differences between gender, sex, and sexuality](#). Consider using the gender unicorn template to better understand your own identity.

Option 4: Watch all or part of the [Trans in America documentary series presented by the ACLU](#) to hear the stories of three different trans women in America. Each documentary is 15-20 minutes in length.

Option 5: Molly Pearson is an AIDS activist who tells the story of how AIDS has impacted her family, and how queer identity has led to her sense of self and home. Listen to her in the [Campfire Storytelling Podcast](#).

Option 6: Journal on your own experience of feeling safe or unsafe based on your sexual orientation and gender identity. If you are getting married, can you easily find someone to officiate your wedding? Can you hold hands or kiss in public? Can you find clothes that match your gender identity and body type? Can you openly display photos or talk about your spouse at work?

Share your reflections on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).