



HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

# EQUALITY

SPRING 2018



## EXPOSING **THE REAL** MIKE PENCE

**HRC TAKES ON THE MOST  
INFLUENTIAL, LEAST SCRUTINIZED  
VICE PRESIDENT IN U.S. HISTORY**

### **VICTORY IN ANCHORAGE**

FAIR-MINDED ALASKANS  
REJECT DISCRIMINATION

### **“CONVERSION THERAPY”**

A SURVIVOR  
SPEAKS OUT

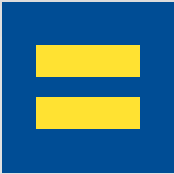


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## DEAR FRIENDS,

Mike Pence has made a career out of attacking the rights and equal dignity of LGBTQ people, women and other marginalized communities. Now as vice president, he poses one of the greatest threats to equality in the history of our movement. With the world distracted by Donald Trump's scandal-ridden White House, Mike Pence's nefarious agenda has been allowed to fly under the radar for too long. He has become not only the most powerful vice president in American history, but also the least scrutinized.

## No more.

HRC has released a comprehensive new report exposing the extent of Pence's extremism, the threat he poses to equality, and all that we're doing to combat his hateful agenda. Together we're pulling back the curtain on this extremist once and for all, dispelling the notion that Mike Pence is the "rational" voice in this unhinged administration. That narrative defies reality, ignoring the deeply troubling history of this deeply discriminatory politician and his aggressive agenda to advance an extremist ideology.

Our new report and microsite shine a spotlight on Pence's inside-the-White House efforts to continue his decades-long crusade by leading this administration's attacks on LGBTQ people, including those who bravely

serve our nation in the military. It lays out his long record of support for the abusive practice of so-called "conversion therapy"; his relentless pursuit of a license to discriminate against LGBTQ people; his attempts to block hate crime legislation and funding for HIV and AIDS prevention; and his efforts to undermine access to health and reproductive care essential to LGBTQ people. He also keeps busy with his extremist agenda by working to undermine science, health, transparency, education, justice and public safety.

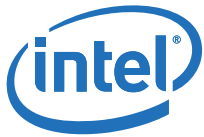
With Donald Trump lurching from one scandal to the next, it is crucial we cast a spotlight on Pence's role in undermining our rights and undoing our progress. We also have an opportunity to stop Trump and Pence's despicable attacks by electing pro-equality candidates up and down the ballots this November.

That's why at this very moment HRC is on the ground in key battleground states ensuring we elect a pro-equality majority in Congress that will pull the emergency brake on this administration's hate-fueled agenda. With your support, we are organizing and mobilizing the more than 52 million Equality Voters we've identified across America. And on Election Day, we are going to send a loud and clear message that the days of attacking LGBTQ people to stir up votes are over.

Sincerely,

Chad Griffin  
President  
Human Rights Campaign





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**Cover:** HRC's new report and microsite exposes Vice President Mike Pence's long history of anti-LGBTQ animus.

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“IT WAS JUST SUCH AN INCREDIBLE PLEASURE AND AN HONOR TO STAND BESIDE HIM AS TWO OUT, PROUD GAY ATHLETES REPRESENTING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE WINTER OLYMPICS.”

— **Gus Kenworthy** presenting **Adam Rippon** with the Visibility Award at the HRC L.A. Dinner.





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# POWER TO THE POLLS!

A growing number of LGBTQ candidates are seeking office this year, including an unprecedented 40 transgender candidates as estimated by Reuters, who are running for all levels of government during the November 2018 midterms.

HRC has endorsed approximately a dozen openly LGBTQ candidates this election cycle—including openly bisexual candidate Kyrsten Sinema (pg. 13)—and will endorse more than 200 pro-equality candidates.

This comes after a wave of transgender and pro-equality candidates secured office last fall, including Danica Roem who became Virginia's first out transgender public official. Voters are sending a loud message denouncing the hateful agenda of Donald Trump and Mike Pence—and we will have the opportunity to do it again this election season.

To register to vote, or to check your registration status, visit [hrc.org/vote](http://hrc.org/vote).



## 31 ADVOCATES FROM 29 COUNTRIES...

descended on Washington, D.C., for the HRC Foundation's third annual Global Innovative Advocacy Summit.

From April 9-12, these Global Innovators took part in intense discussions with each other and HRC staff on innovative ways to advance LGBTQ equality.

Since 2016, the Global Summit has brought together nearly 100 leaders from all corners of the globe who are advancing LGBTQ equality. The 2018 Global Innovators join HRC's growing network of advocates and partners from nearly 70 countries.



"Queer Eye's" Karamo Brown and HRC President Chad Griffin lead marchers at the March For Our Lives.

up  
front

## MARCH FOR OUR LIVES

Pulse nightclub shooting survivors and family members led hundreds of HRC members and supporters in the March For Our Lives in Washington, D.C.

Before stepping off, they addressed HRC's annual Spring

Equality Convention to talk about the Pulse nightclub shooting and the importance of mobilizing the LGBTQ community against gun violence.

Our message was clear: Enough is enough. Americans deserve commonsense gun violence prevention measures to keep their communities safe.

## RISE UP, SPEAK UP, SHOW UP FOR PRIDE 2018

As the days get warmer, we're also getting fired up about the upcoming Pride festivals and marches happening across the country. This year, our visibility and action on the streets are ever more important with the Trump-Pence administration determined to silence LGBTQ voices and rollback our progress.

Taking to the streets isn't just about celebrating how far we've come—it's also about speaking up against the attacks on our civil rights as LGBTQ people. From the trans troop ban, rescinding critical guidance that details schools' obligations to protect

transgender students, to nominating anti-LGBTQ officials to our highest places of government, we have plenty to speak out against.

To volunteer with HRC at a Pride happening near you, visit [hrc.org/pride](http://hrc.org/pride).





The EY logo, consisting of the letters 'EY' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with a yellow triangle pointing upwards to the right of the 'Y'.

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## BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR THE EQUALITY ACT

Support for the Equality Act continues to accelerate across the country, with U.S. Senator Doug Jones of Alabama signing on as a co-sponsor last month. The Equality Act would finally guarantee explicit, permanent protections for LGBTQ people under our nation's existing civil rights laws.

With Jones' announcement, the number of congressional co-sponsors of the Equality Act is now 245 strong. The Act also makes good business sense; a group of 109 major companies with operations in all 50 states has endorsed the Equality Act. Together, these companies employ more than 6.8 million people across the U.S. in all 50 states.



“EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN SHOULD BE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION BASED ON WHO THEY ARE OR WHOM THEY LOVE, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE... I'M PROUD TO BE A CO-SPONSOR OF THE EQUALITY ACT AND TO CONTINUE MOVING CONVERSATIONS FORWARD ABOUT LGBTQ EQUALITY.”

— Sen. Doug Jones



## VICTORY IN ANCHORAGE

In April, HRC celebrated as voters in Anchorage, Alaska, made history as the first jurisdiction to uphold transgender protections at the ballot box by soundly rejecting Proposition 1—a dangerous ballot measure that sought to eliminate existing municipal non-discrimination protections for transgender people. The ballot measure would have also enshrined discrimination into law by forcing transgender people to use facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity.

HRC served on the Executive Committee for Fair Anchorage, a coalition of local organizations working to uphold the city's LGBTQ non-

discrimination ordinance. HRC President Chad Griffin and HRC field staff worked on the ground with the campaign to mobilize opposition to Proposition 1 and elevate transgender voices and stories in the fight for equality.

“In a truly historic election, Anchorage voters refused to succumb to hate and bigotry by rejecting this discriminatory, anti-transgender ballot measure,” said HRC President Chad Griffin. “Community leaders, businesses, faith leaders and public officials all spoke out in support of equality. Together, we sent a powerful message that Anchorage is a welcoming and inclusive city for all—including transgender people.”

## MEET NON-BINARY ACTOR ASIA KATE DILLON

Asia Kate Dillon is an actor, writer and director best known for their work in the Netflix series “Orange Is the New Black” and in Showtime’s “Billions.” They are the first non-binary identifying actor to ever be cast in a major television series.

Last year, Dillon accepted the Visibility Award at HRC’s Seattle Dinner. This is what they had to say to *Equality*:

**Fortunately, we’re at a time in history where language is brought to the forefront again. Today, the language around gender identity is inconsequential for young people in a way that would have been so consequential for me to have when I was younger.**

**[Receiving the HRC Visibility Award] is evidence that the**

**world is a safer—if only marginally safer—place than when I came into the world. And that gives me hope.**

**Ultimately, I believe that no one is free until we all are free. So because I desire to be free I have to fight for the freedom of others.**

Check out Dillon’s powerful acceptance speech at [hrc.org](http://hrc.org).





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WA assistant attorney general La Rond Baker speaks outside the federal courthouse following a hearing in Seattle, with plaintiff Catherine Schmid (left) and HRC's Chris Sgro (right). The court found that the administration's "new" ban on transgender troops did not pass muster.

# THE BATTLE AHEAD

**I**n the nine months since Donald Trump hastily tweeted his ban on transgender troops, six courts have blocked the Pentagon from discriminating against transgender individuals, more than 20 retired generals and admirals have spoken out against the ban, the American Medical Association has stated there is "no medically valid reason" to exclude transgender troops from serving in the military and a vast majority of Americans believe that transgender troops should be allowed to serve their country.

Nevertheless, the Trump-Pence administration has doubled down on its cruel and unconstitutional ban on transgender troops. Last March, it released an official policy attempting to implement the ban on transgender people serving or enlisting in the military.

But we won't stop either. Every step of the way, HRC and its partners have condemned the Trump-Pence administration's attempts to push its extreme anti-transgender agenda over the best interests of our troops and national security. This time is no different.

A federal court in Seattle rejected the administration's claim that their "new" plan to ban transgender people from serving openly in the U.S. Armed Services passes muster. Instead, the court found that transgender people are a protected class and that the lawsuit brought by Lambda Legal and OutServe-SLDN—of which HRC is an organizational co-plaintiff—can proceed to trial. Meanwhile, the preliminary injunction the court previously granted remains in place, preventing the implementation of the ban pending trial.

"The court wants to expose this bigoted ban for all of its ugliness at trial, and we are happy to oblige. If it's a full record the judge wants, then it's a full record we will give her," Lambda Legal Senior Attorney Natalie Nardecchia said. "We look forward to putting the capriciousness and cruelty of this discriminatory ban against transgender people on trial, where it can be relegated for good to the trash heap of history, alongside other vile military policies that discriminated based on race, sex and sexual orientation."

In March, HRC, Lambda Legal, OutServe-SLDN, the American Military Partner Association and Gender Justice League unveiled a new television ad featuring military, national security and bipartisan officials voicing opposition to the Trump-Pence administration's ban on transgender service members. The television ad is part of the largest paid media campaign against Donald Trump's ban on transgender troops since he tweeted the policy last July—and complements a full page print ad that ran in USA Today and more than 32 regional Gannett papers nationwide.

"Donald Trump and Mike Pence are pushing their extreme anti-transgender prejudices onto the military over the overwhelming objections of bipartisan officials, national security leaders and the American public," said HRC President Chad Griffin. "We will never stop fighting this discriminatory policy until every current and future transgender service member is treated equally and respected fully for their bravery." 🇺🇸



# EXPOSING **THE REAL** MIKE PENCE

MIKE PENCE IS AN EXTREMIST WHO IS AMASSING POWER AND EXERTING MORE INFLUENCE WITH LESS SCRUTINY THAN ANY VICE PRESIDENT IN U.S. HISTORY.

While Donald Trump's scandals and erratic tweets dominate the airwaves, Mike Pence has operated largely out of public view, stacking the administration with members of his inner circle, pushing his long-standing legislative priorities and currying favor with donors and candidates across the country. He has even become the first vice president in history to have his own Super PAC. And yet, many Americans do not know anything about Mike Pence or his record.

Over his 17 years in public office, both in word and deed, Pence has attacked LGBTQ people, women, immigrants, refugees, workers and voters. He has attacked science, health, transparency, education, justice and public safety. But now he continues to do all of this—just a heartbeat away from the presidency.

A new HRC report and website details Mike Pence's long track record of attacks on the LGBTQ community and others, and aims to shine the spotlight on Mike Pence's extreme agenda.

The American public deserves to understand the motivations and ideology of a vice president that is largely unknown, but inordinately powerful within a tumultuous White House.



## ATTACKS ON MARRIAGE EQUALITY

In 2003, as more states began to legalize marriage equality, Pence—then a member of Congress representing Indiana's 6th District—dialed up his efforts to ban marriage equality through a constitutional amendment. He called the issue a "looming constitutional crisis" and asserted that his legislation was the only effective way to stop marriage equality.

Ten years later, as governor of Indiana, Pence still had not given up his crusade to ban marriage equality at any cost. In 2014, U.S. District Court Judge Richard L. Young struck down an Indiana law prohibiting state recognition of same-sex marriages from other jurisdictions. Following the ruling, Pence's General Counsel wrote a memo to executive branch offices that said the state's ban on same-sex marriage was "in full force and effect."



Reacting to the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that ruled state bans on marriage equality are unconstitutional, Pence said "I believe marriage is the union between one man and one woman, and I am disappointed that the Supreme Court failed to recognize the historic role of the states in setting marriage policy in this country." The statement by Pence flew in the face of his decade-long effort to amend the Constitution and override the voice of the states to decide their own destiny.

## CONNECTIONS TO "CONVERSION THERAPY"

Pence is arguably most infamous for his connections to "conversion therapy": A range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.



On the archived website for Pence's 2000 congressional campaign, he suggested funding for HIV prevention programming should be suspended and diverted to organizations that "provide assistance to those seeking to change their sexual behavior."

When the Republican Party convened in the summer of 2016 to nominate Donald Trump and Mike Pence, the official platform voted upon including the line "we support the right of parents to determine the proper medical treatment or therapy for their minor children", with "therapy" added after lobbying by Tony Perkins, head of the Family Research Council, which has long publicly supported "conversion therapy" practices.

## ATTACKS ON LGBTQ HEALTH CARE

As governor of Indiana, Pence's cuts to public health funding helped fuel the worst outbreak of HIV and AIDS in the state's history, sparked by the closing of the local Planned Parenthood clinic in Scott County, which was the county's only HIV testing center. As the outbreak of HIV and AIDS spiraled out of control, Pence was "reluctant" to lift a ban on needles exchanges that could mitigate the spread of the virus. Only after an intervention staged by officials from the Centers for Disease Control did Pence finally relent and authorize needle exchanges.

Pence continued dragging his feet on full implementation for needle exchanges, waiting for a year to sign off on funding while local leaders begged for alleviation to the bureaucratic process, leading to an outbreak in Scott County that included 190 victims of HIV and AIDS.

## PUSHING FOR A NATIONWIDE LICENSE TO DISCRIMINATE

Shortly after taking office as vice president, it became clear that the anti-LGBTQ work done by Pence in Indiana was a trial run for an attempt to inflict a license to discriminate on LGBTQ people throughout the United States.

In early February of 2017, media reports emerged about a leaked Executive Order being prepared by Donald Trump's White House that confirmed those fears. The leaked order would have explicitly allowed an unprecedented expansion of taxpayer-funded discrimination with broad implications for LGBTQ people.

## ATTACKS ON LGBTQ TROOPS

In addition to arguing that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which barred lesbian, gay and bisexual members of the military from serving openly, should remain in place, last year Pence and his staff quietly lobbied Congress to pass an amendment banning transition-related care for transgender service members.

Then on March 24, 2017, the Trump-Pence administration released new guidance for a ban on transgender persons serving openly in the military. According to reporting by Slate's Mark Joseph Stern, Pence "played a leading role" in drafting the guidance, alongside Tony Perkins, head of the Family Research Council, and Ryan Anderson, an anti-trans activist.

This is the man who is just a heartbeat away from the presidency, and we don't have to guess what President Mike Pence would do to LGBTQ people. He has made clear his intentions over the past two decades, never once flinching away from the anti-LGBTQ core of his political philosophy.

Visit [RealMikePence.org](http://RealMikePence.org) to read the entire report. 



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# RECLAIMING OUR TIME

**W**e are at a critical moment in our fight toward LGBTQ equality. Across the country, people are rising up, speaking up and showing up—determined to send a loud message to politicians who attempt to use hate and fear to silence our community.

At the helm of this movement are political leaders like Rep. Maxine Waters, whose repudiation of Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin has since become the rallying cry for the resistance. This election season, we are all reclaiming our time.

## **Strength in Adversity**

Just hours before Waters arrived at California's JW Marriott L.A. LIVE to speak at the HRC's annual L.A. Dinner, President Donald Trump launched

a fusillade of attacks against the California congresswoman at a rally in Pennsylvania, where he insulted Waters' intelligence and political judgement.

This is nothing new. Trump has built his presidency on attacking and dividing others—be it vocal politicians like Waters, brave transgender service members or immigrant communities living peacefully in this country. Yet, as Waters reminded us at the L.A. Dinner, it is our ability to persevere despite the insults and find strength within adversity that will lead us to victory in the ballots. From the margins we must rise up and fight back.

"I'm in this fight!" Waters announced from the podium at the HRC L.A. Dinner. "I am not going to back down. And I believe that all of us deserve better than Donald Trump."

The simple question we all face as we head into the 2018 midterm elections is whether or not we will stand up with Waters and resist the Trump-Pence administration's attacks on our freedoms by delivering decisive victories for other pro-equality candidates across the country.

## **Resisting the Hate**

It could have all gone very differently. The divisive politics that have defined the Trump-Pence administration are rooted in the ability to silence and condemn those who dare to resist their agenda. It is most likely what prompted Trump to attack Waters in the first place—Waters has been a vocal critic of the Trump presidency and regularly calls for his

*continued on p. 17*



*We're proud of  
our differences;  
all 65,000  
of them.*

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in the fight for equality for everyone. We  
applaud the amazing work that has been  
accomplished and that which has yet  
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Rep. Maxine Waters took  
Trump head-on at HRC's  
Los Angeles Dinner in  
March, 2018.



**“ I AM NOT GOING TO BACK DOWN.  
AND I BELIEVE THAT ALL OF US DESERVE  
BETTER THAN DONALD TRUMP.”**

Reclaiming Our Time *cont'd from p. 15*

impeachment. This night was no different.

"I believe he is one of the most dishonorable, deceitful and despicable people ever to hold public office," said Waters of Trump. "Don't forget this man who's disparaging me has been called stupid, ignorant, uninformed unhinged and a moron by his own staff and appointees. And so he had the nerve to attack me?"

Waters inspires us to challenge the politics of hate and stand strong both within the LGBTQ community and within the chorus of civil rights groups demanding their justice against an administration determined to undermine them.

"Maxine Waters is a steadfast defender of equality who is fighting

to reclaim the United States from the Trump-Pence agenda of hate, fear and discrimination," said HRC President Chad Griffin. "For years, Congresswoman Waters has been standing up for the marginalized and oppressed in our society."

Together with Waters, our message is loud and clear: If you come for us, we're coming for you on Election Day.

#### **An Election Season Like No Other**

The Trump-Pence administration is beginning to show its cracks. We witnessed a wave of victories for LGBTQ and pro-equality candidates last fall, with voters resoundingly rejecting the hateful agenda of Donald Trump and Mike Pence. This year, the record-breaking number of women and transgender candidates seeking office shows that we

are determined to speak out and defend our rights.

Come November, we will have the opportunity to pull the emergency brake on the Trump-Pence agenda and fuel candidates like Waters willing to put sense and compassion above the nefarious whims of the current presidency.

"We are counting on all of you to show up during the 2018 midterms," said Waters, "and vote for people who will restore this democracy and uphold everything that we have fought for to advance LGBTQ equality."

Voting is the single most important action we can take to hold our leaders accountable, and deal a decisive blow to this administration's hateful agenda. This year, we are not just reclaiming our time. We are reclaiming our country. 🇺🇸





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# LGBTQ FAMILIES NEED PAID LEAVE

By Mark Lee

When Bret and Chad welcomed baby Eleanor into their household, they were overjoyed. But as excited as they were for their new child, the newly wedded couple did not anticipate the hardships that were yet to come.

"When she was about one and a half months old, I lost my job," Chad said. "Because I had taken time off for the baby, and then I had some medical problems later, I was let go for attendance reasons. I found a new job, but we still haven't caught up financially."

In the absence of guaranteed paid leave, Bret and Chad's story is unfortunately all too common among LGBTQ working people and their families. In February, the HRC Foundation's Public Education & Research program released the results of the 2018 U.S. LGBTQ Paid Leave Survey, which explored how LGBTQ working people are accessing parental, family care and medical leave. More than 5,400 LGBTQ people from all 50 states completed the questionnaire, making it the largest survey of its kind and one of the first to explore this issue among our community. The report also sheds light on the personal experiences of LGBTQ people who need to access paid and unpaid leave during significant life events.

HRC's groundbreaking report and survey confirmed that LGBTQ people

face heightened barriers to accessing leave—including unique medical needs, unequal relationship recognition and unjust employment discrimination. For instance, LGBTQ people who request for medical leave for HIV-related treatment and transgender-specific care often face adverse treatment from colleagues or even losing their jobs.

"I requested time off from work to travel out-of-state to access hormone replacement therapy," wrote a survey respondent who identifies as non-binary.

**More than 5,400 LGBTQ people from all 50 states completed the questionnaire, making it the largest survey of its kind and one of the first to explore this issue among our community.**

"Even though I asked my supervisor about it in confidence, word spread quickly around the office. People I barely knew suddenly had the intimate details of what was going on with my own body. I faced invasive questions and extreme harassment for something that should never have been shared."

These barriers also exist for employees who seek family care leave to care for a loved one who has a serious health condition, including cancer, accidental injury or a terminal illness. Only 20 percent of survey respondents

reported that their employer offers paid leave for this reason, putting many others into financial jeopardy during what is often already a troubling and stressful time. These challenges are especially troubling for LGBTQ people of color, who are also more likely than white LGBTQ respondents to say they are afraid to request time off for family care leave because it might disclose their LGBTQ identities.

That's why supporting paid leave policies is so important for LGBTQ

working people and their families. We can do this by elevating elected officials who support paid leave, advocating for inclusive policies in our own workplaces and simply raising awareness about this often overlooked topic.

"Paid family leave would have made a big difference for our family and the support that Elea got when she was born," said Chad.

For more information about this critical issue, read the full 2018 U.S. LGBTQ Paid Leave Survey report: [hrc.org/PaidLeaveSurvey](https://hrc.org/PaidLeaveSurvey). 🏳️‍🌈



Bret (l) and Chad (r) with daughter Eleanor who Bret—a transgender man—gave birth to in 2017. After taking leave to care for his child, Chad lost his job.



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Alex Cooper was held captive by a Mormon couple for eight harrowing months in an attempt to change her sexual orientation.

# “CONVERSION THERAPY”

A SURVIVOR SPEAKS OUT

By Helen Parshall

Coming out as a lesbian to a devout, traditional Mormon family was never going to be easy for Alex Cooper.

Cooper had been taught from a young age that marriage sealed in a Mormon temple was the only way to make it into the highest levels of heaven after death. By the age of 15, she knew that being LGBTQ was seen by her Mormon church as a grievous sin against God.

“I came out to my parents, and my mom was hysterical, but my dad didn’t say anything,” Cooper said. “They told me to get out of the house, so I stayed with a friend for a couple weeks. From there I was sent to conversion therapy.”

So-called “conversion therapy” encompasses a range of dangerous and discredited practices that attempt to change an individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. These practices are based on the false premise that being LGBTQ is a mental illness that needs to be “cured”—a theory that has been rejected by every major medical and mental health organization,

including the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association and American Medical Association.

Cooper was held captive by a Mormon couple for eight months. She was subjected to a range of attempts to change her sexual orientation, including verbal and physical abuse.

“At first ‘therapy’ was me learning how to be the perfect wife,” Cooper said. “I learned how to cook for a family of eight. I got the kids ready for school in the morning and helped them with their homework when they were done with school.”

During the day, Cooper would clean the house and perform other chores she was told would foster “motherly instincts”—but nothing changed how she felt inside.

“When that wasn’t working I had to wear a backpack full of rocks to feel the physical burden of being gay,” Cooper said. “It started out as a couple hours a day—and it still didn’t work. I felt the entire time that I was going to outsmart these people and somehow get out.”

The backpack weighed about 40 pounds and Cooper would have to wear it from sunrise until 4 a.m. the next day, facing a wall.

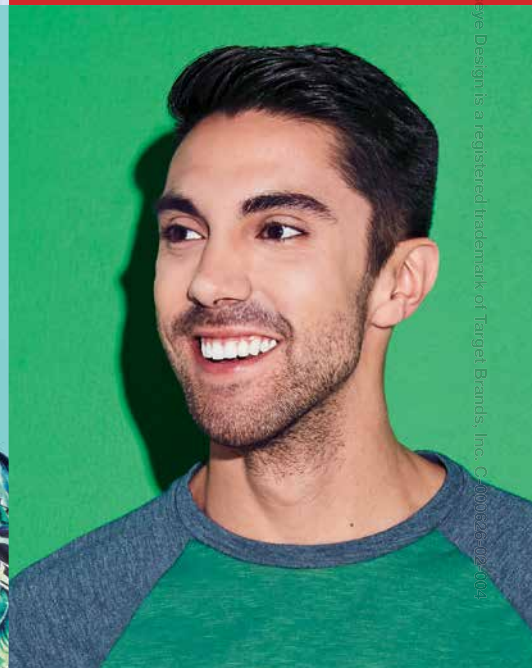
As time went on, the sense of isolation and hopelessness became overwhelming for Cooper. She attempted to escape but failed, resulting in increased abuse from her captors.

“I wasn’t allowed to go to school. I couldn’t talk to my family,” Cooper said. “I went to the same church as my grandparents every Sunday, and they wouldn’t even look at me because that was a part of the program.”

“I eventually decided I just had to fake it because I wasn’t going to get out any other way,” Cooper said. “They eventually let me go to school, and I got out the same month.”

There is no credible evidence that conversion therapy can change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. Rather, research has clearly shown that these practices pose devastating health risks for LGBTQ young people such as depression,

*continued on p. 25*



**Proud to stand  
with the HRC.  
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HRC President Chad Griffin and other LGBTQ advocates joined Washington Governor Jay Inslee to sign legislation protecting LGBTQ youth in the state from the dangerous practice of "conversion therapy."

#### Conversion Therapy *cont'd from p. 23*

decreased self-esteem, substance abuse, homelessness and even suicidal behavior.

According to a recent report by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, an estimated 20,000 LGBTQ minors in states without protections will be subjected to conversion therapy by a licensed healthcare professional if state officials fail to act to prevent the abusive practice.

"I don't think parents send their kids to these places to torture them," Cooper said. "I think parents do it because they fear for their kids and they want to help them, and so I want to make it very, very clear that it does not help anything. There's nothing that you can change."

HRC is working with the National Center for Lesbian Rights and state equality groups across the nation to pass legislation protecting youth from these harmful practices. In late March, Washington became the eleventh state

in addition to the District of Columbia to enact laws or regulations curtailing conversion therapy. This number is poised to increase as a Maryland bill awaits the Governor's signature.

A growing number of localities are also enacting similar protections, including cities and counties in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida, Washington, Arizona, Wisconsin and New York—where Gov. Cuomo announced he would end coverage of "conversion therapy" in his state. And just this year, almost 50 bills targeting conversion therapy were considered in more than 20 states.

"In the state of Washington we believe strongly in protecting our children and allowing people to be who they are and love who they will," said Washington Governor Jay Inslee before signing legislation protecting LGBTQ youth in the state from the dangerous and debunked practice. "And today when I sign Senate Bill 5722, we will be protecting our children by banning conversion therapy."

A typical day for Alex Cooper now looks much different than it used to.

After catching up on nearly a year of missed classes, she graduated high school at the age of 16 and put herself through beauty school. In her spare time, she volunteers as an HRC Foundation Youth Ambassador and at a women's shelter in downtown Portland, Oregon.

"I became an HRC Youth Ambassador so that I could share what I went through with as many people as possible, so they could understand the repercussions of sending your child to conversion therapy," Cooper said. "But it's also so that I could be there for other people who are going through this, and let them know that it does get better."

"I know that 'it gets better' is so annoying, but I'm the person who made it better," she said. "I got to eventually choose the life that I wanted to live, and I got to choose my family. It's not just going to get better—you're going to have the opportunity to make it better for yourself."

For more information on the lies and dangers of efforts to change sexual orientation or gender identity, visit [hrc.org/resources/just-as-they-are](http://hrc.org/resources/just-as-they-are). 🇺🇸

**TODAY WE REJECTED FUNDAMENTALLY THE ABSURD NOTION THAT BEING GAY IS A PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER AND THAT THEY SHOULD BE TREATED AND WE'VE ENDED CONVERSION THERAPY IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK. AND I AM PROUD TO HAVE DONE IT."**

— **Governor Andrew M. Cuomo** speaking at the 2016 HRC National Dinner, just hours after announcing executive actions to ban coverage of conversion therapy in New York State.



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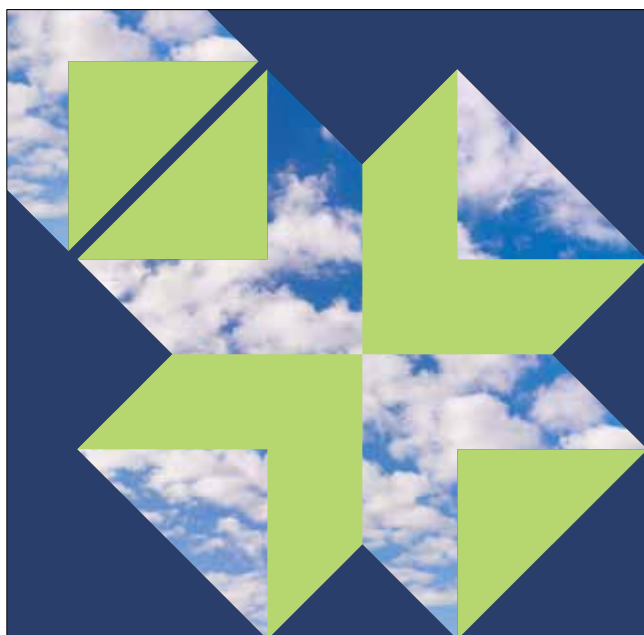


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# THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

## WHAT HRC'S NEW SURVEY TELLS US ABOUT LGBTQ YOUTH

**A**cross the country, young people are leading the resistance. From fighting for commonsense gun safety measures to combating anti-transgender discrimination in schools, our youth are raising their voices to demand justice for LGBTQ Americans from coast to coast.

The HRC Foundation continues to invest in programs and resources that both target and empower young people to become leaders, advocates and trailblazers in the movement for equality.

HRC's new 2018 U.S. LGBTQ Youth Survey, launched in partnership with the University of Connecticut, outlines key results from a major national survey of LGBTQ teens across the country. It paints a picture of LGBTQ teens growing up in today's America: A country more familiar than ever with their iden-

ties. Yet these young people are also facing a terrifying backlash, particularly if they are immigrants, youth of color, transgender or all these identities.



Former HRC Youth Ambassador and author Jazz Jennings presented transgender trailblazer Gavin Grimm with the Upstander Award.

### A TIME TO THRIVE

In February, the HRC Foundation hosted its annual Time to THRIVE conference in Orlando, in partnership with the American Counseling Association and the National Education Association, with

AT&T, BBVA Compass and Toyota as presenting sponsors. The event brought together youth-serving professionals to discuss best practices for working with and caring for LGBTQ youth and their families in schools, community centers, health care settings and beyond.

Chris Mosier, the first transgender member of Team USA, delivered a speech on the importance of LGBTQ inclusion in sports, and transgender trailblazer Gavin Grimm was awarded an Upstander Award for serving as a leader for LGBTQ youth everywhere. Other guests included Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.); HRC Youth Ambassador and author of "I Am Jazz" Jazz Jennings; parent advocate Betty DeGeneres; Rhode Island Teacher of the Year Nikos Giannopoulos; non-binary advocate Jacob Tobia and HRC HIV 360° Fellow Daniel Downer. 🇺🇸

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CURRENT AS OF APRIL 1, 2018

# HRC'S GALA EVENTS

**LAS VEGAS DINNER**

MAY 12, 2018

- ARIA Resort & Casino
- Latoya Holman, Laura Sussman & Sean VanGorder
- [hrc.org/lasvegasdinner](http://hrc.org/lasvegasdinner)

**WESTERN NY DINNER**

MAY 19, 2018

- Rochester Convention Center
- Carol Ebersole-Weiss & Frank Novak
- [hrc.org/westernnewyorkdinner](http://hrc.org/westernnewyorkdinner)

**COLUMBUS DINNER**

JUNE 2, 2018

- The Ohio Union at The Ohio State University
- Jen Bowden & George Schein
- [hrcolumbusdinner.com](http://hrcolumbusdinner.com)

**UTAH DINNER**

JUNE 23, 2018

- Lucas Horns, Claire Martinez & Karnell McConnell-Black
- Grand America Hotel
- [hrcutahgala.org](http://hrcutahgala.org)

**LOUISIANA DINNER**

JULY 14, 2018

- Betty Sun & John Canon
- Hyatt New Orleans
- [hrc.org/louisianadinner](http://hrc.org/louisianadinner)

**MILE HIGH GALA**

JULY 21, 2018

- Lindsay Kearns & Adam Diskin
- Hyatt Regency Denver at the Colorado Convention Center
- [hrc.org/MileHighGala](http://hrc.org/MileHighGala)

**ORANGE COUNTY GARDEN PARTY**

AUGUST 4, 2018

- Jeff Brumett & Marc LaFont
- TBD
- [hrcorangecounty.org](http://hrcorangecounty.org)

**SAN DIEGO DINNER**

AUGUST 11, 2018

- Clarione Gutierrez & Tessa Cabrera
- Hotel del Coronado
- [hrc.org/sandiegodinner](http://hrc.org/sandiegodinner)

**CLEVELAND DINNER**

AUGUST 18, 2018

- Dabney Conwell, Rick Taylor & Nathan Boone
- Hilton Cleveland Downtown
- [hrclevelandgala.com](http://hrclevelandgala.com)

**NATIONAL DINNER**

SEPTEMBER 15, 2018

- Rachael Gresson & Sherie Hughes
- Washington Convention Center
- [hrcnationaldinner.org](http://hrcnationaldinner.org)

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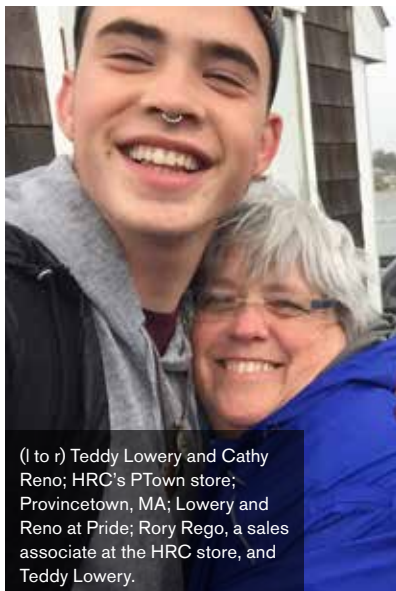
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(l to r) Teddy Lowery and Cathy Reno; HRC's PTown store; Provincetown, MA; Lowery and Reno at Pride; Rory Rego, a sales associate at the HRC store, and Teddy Lowery.



# PROVINCETOWN

HOW THIS COASTAL TOWN BECAME A “SAVING GRACE”  
FOR LGBTQ YOUTH FROM THE SOUTH

By Prianka Srinivasan

At first glance, Provincetown, Massachusetts—affectionately known as “PTown”—is just your average sleepy, coastal town. Its status as one of the most inclusive places in the country—the 2010 census revealed that Provincetown has the highest rate of same-sex couples in America—has made it an easy magnet for LGBTQ vacationers, and a natural location for HRC's store that has called PTown home since 1994.

But for many, PTown is more than just a vacation spot. It is a radical community that promises to transform and empower those who visit. At least, that's how it felt for Teddy Lowery, a young, gay native of Bossier City, Louisiana who first came to PTown in May, 2017 to work at the HRC store for the summer.

“I remember stepping off the bus and breathing in,” said Lowery, recalling his first moments in PTown. “Honestly it was the first time I felt I was able to breathe in years.” Coming from a conservative, small town in the South, PTown was a revelation for Lowery. It was the first place he felt he could not only be himself but be loved for that identity.

There was a reason Lowery found himself in PTown—he was one of the first participants in a groundbreaking new youth

program called “Summer of Sass,” developed by PTown resident and comedian Kristen Becker. Her idea was to provide a critical “mental health break” for LGBTQ youth from the South, while providing PTown with some much-needed young workers during the busy summer months.

“We keep telling kids it gets better,” said Becker on the significance of bringing LGBTQ youth from the South to PTown. “But this is what better looks like. This is a community to strive to build.”

Though acceptance and inclusion is certainly not unique to PTown, studies show that LGBTQ people in rural Southern communities often face higher levels of discrimination and prejudice. A 2014 study by HRC and Anzalone Liszt Grove found that 65 percent of LGBTQ Americans in Mississippi, Arkansas and Alabama reported suffering verbal abuse, and a further 1 in 5 reported experiencing physical violence because of their identity.

It is a dangerous reality that Lowery knows all too well. “In PTown I was very comfortable wearing the clothes I wanted, acting how I wanted,” he said. “In Bossier city, I didn't feel like it was acceptable or safe doing any of those things.”

Cathy Reno has managed HRC's PTown store for over 20 years. Over the

summer while Lowery worked in her store, she witnessed his transformation from a shy youth to the confident young man he is today—a transformation she attributes to the power of PTown's LGBTQ community, and particularly of HRC's store.

“It's not just a T-Shirt shop,” said Reno of her store. “We are there representing HRC and opening eyes and ears to the challenges that the LGBTQ community face, and the power that our allies have in supporting us.”

The empowerment Lowery found in PTown alongside Reno and Becker became a gift he too was able to pass onto others who walked into the HRC store that summer—particularly those who came from conservative Southern towns just like his own. They would wear HRC's shirts with a unique pride that Lowery intimately understood.

“You see the smiles on their faces. They can't ever wear that shirt again until they come back to PTown, but just for that moment they get to be who they are,” Lowery explained. “It's such a beautiful and eye-opening experience because that's exactly how I felt the whole time I was in PTown. It was my saving grace.” 🏳️‍🌈



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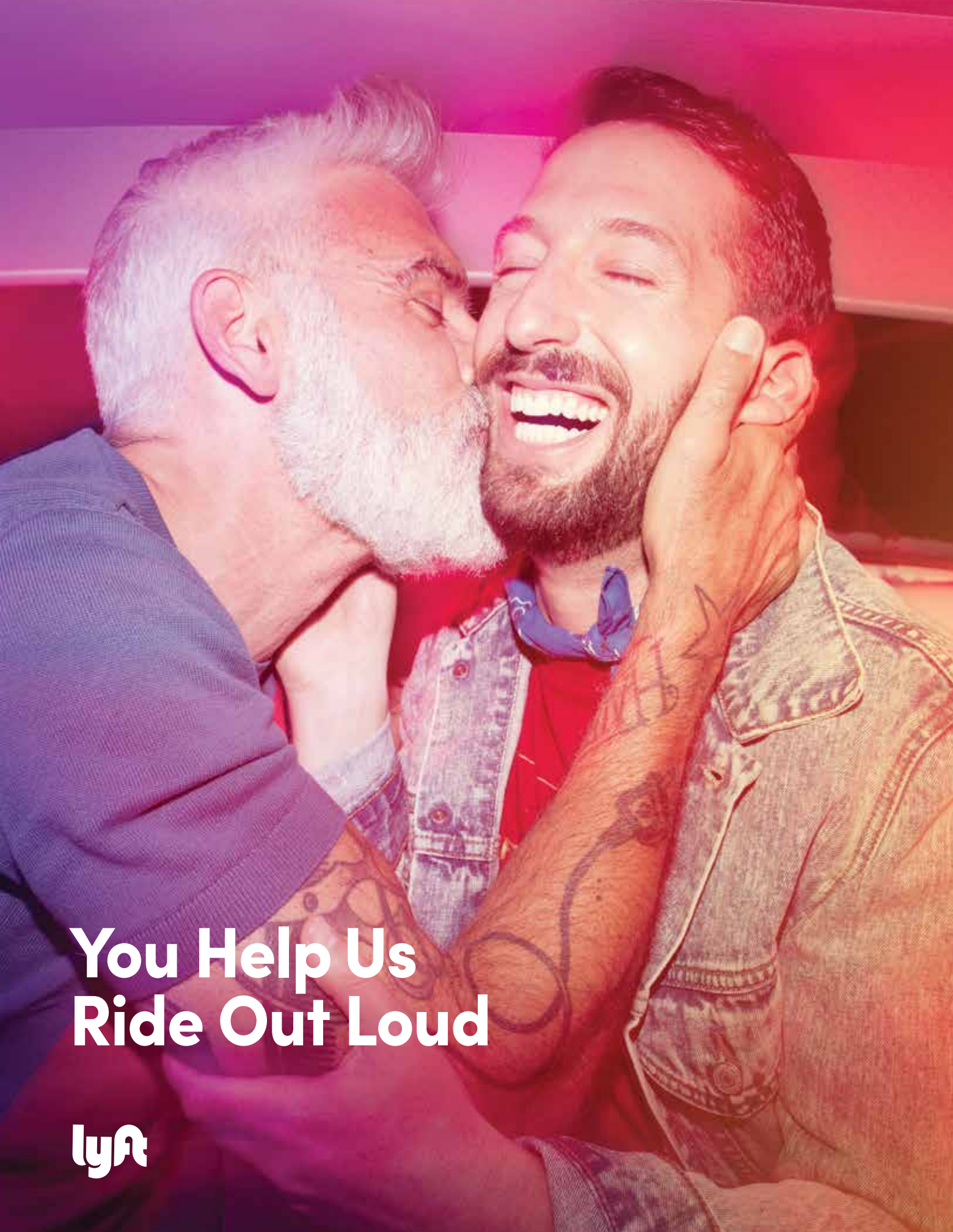
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