

Memo

To: Pride Volunteers

From: Nicole E Cozier, Senior Vice President, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Human Rights Campaign

Re: Use of More Color, More Pride Flag & Colors

Thank you so much for lending your time and talent to volunteering for HRC at one of the many wonderful Pride celebrations around the country. You will notice that our Pride theme and materials feature the 8-color rainbow (including the black and brown stripes) inspired by the More Color, More Pride flag. You may get some inquiries from folks coming to the booth asking about our use of this version of the Pride flag, so we wanted to share some responses to some common questions about why we have made this decision. If you have any questions about these responses, please feel free to reach out to the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion team. Thank you again, and HAPPY PRIDE!

Why is HRC using the MCMP flag instead of the traditional Gilbert Baker flag?

The Gilbert Baker flag has been an important symbol for many in the LGBTQ and allied communities for a long time. While it was created to be a symbol of unity for the community, the reality is that there are still many LGBTQ people who experience marginalization and discrimination from within the community because of their race. The More Color, More Pride flag was created in Philadelphia in 2017 to acknowledge the work that we still have to do to create a meaningful sense of unity and inclusion within our community. We are choosing to fly this flag to amplify that call to action by our community. Only then, will we truly be able to achieve our mission of LGBTQ equality.

The 6-color flag is iconic and has been a symbol of our community for as long as I can remember. Why are people messing with it?

LGBTQ symbols and iconography have been evolving and changing in response to the evolution of our community. Early symbols of our movement included the reclaiming of the pink triangle, a vehicle used by the Nazis to support their oppression and ultimate murder of many LGBTQ people. Even since its introduction in 1978, the Gilbert Baker flag has gone

through its own evolution. It started out as an 8-color flag including pink and turquoise stripes. These colors were subsequently dropped for different reasons, leaving the iconic 6-color flag that we know today. Even as recently as 2017 - in the aftermath of the election of Donald Trump - Gilbert Baker released a limited series flag with the original 8 stripes, plus an additional 9th stripe to represent diversity. So the introduction of new iterations of our iconography to reflect changes in our community and society is not new. **Rather than focusing on the flag in and of itself, it is really important for us to reflect on the conditions that exist for folks in our community that make a change like this feel necessary.**

Why are you including black and brown in the flag but no other representation for white folks, the API community or others that don't identify with the black and brown?

The More Color, More Pride flag was not created by HRC. It originated in Philadelphia, with the black and brown stripes added to the traditional rainbow flag for a specific purpose - in response to the city's underlying problem with racial discrimination in its LGBTQ bars. Because this experience of exclusion and discrimination is not unique to the Philadelphia LGBTQ community, the MCMP flag has been adopted by many organizations and communities both across the country and internationally to represent the intentional inclusion of people of color more broadly.

The original flag was already meant to be about unity. Isn't introducing race to the flag actually divisive and exclusionary?

This flag is not meant to be a source of divisiveness, but rather to shine a light on the reality that despite the tremendous diversity of our community, and the experience of discrimination against LGBTQ people, members of our community are not exempt from the racism that haunts our country. People of color have been marginalized, ignored, and intentionally excluded within and by the LGBTQ community.

Further, while there is much progress to celebrate, we have not all benefited from that progress equally within our community. For LGBTQ people who hold multiple marginalized identities, the compounding impact of multiple systems of oppression is real and can be devastating (e.g., violence against transgender women of color, disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on Black gay and bisexual men). We must be willing to be introspective about our role in perpetuating the divide that has existed in our community, and committed to being part of a solution that recognizes and combats the different ways that members of our community experience oppression rather than denying those realities exist. For us, the addition of the black and brown stripes takes nothing away from white LGBTQ people, but instead sends a message to our POC community that we are in this fight for ALL of us

because we know that we will never have LGBTQ equality until the most marginalized among us do.

Why is HRC doing this now?

The use of the More Color, More Pride flag is not new for the Human Rights Campaign. This flag has been reflected in different elements of our work for over a year. That said, our deepened commitment to using this flag is also a reflection of our newly articulated values which includes equity and intersectionality as one of our 8 values pillars.

What about Trans and Bi+ people, and others who don't think that the rainbow flag represents them?

Our commitment to inclusion of the rich diversity of our community also means reflecting Bi+ and Trans Pride as well, so we are also committed to using the Bi+ and Trans Pride flags as well.

Does this mean that all of HRC's merchandise will have the MCMP flag on it?

No. There are many different representations of LGBTQ experience that resonate differently with people. When it comes to items that folks are purchasing as an expression of *their* LGBTQ experience, we want to ensure that they have options of things that are meaningful to them. HRC will continue to produce t-shirts and other merchandise that features a wide array of designs and symbology from across the LGBTQ movement.

Are you expecting that all of HRC's partners etc to also use the MCMP flag?

Not at all. We have made a decision to fly this flag because it is in keeping with our values and is a reflection of our commitment to equity and intersectionality. We respect the decisions that other organizations make about which Pride or other community visibility flags resonate with them.