

In just over 40 years, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) community in New York City has made great strides in achieving equality and social justice. The LGBT community has had a major impact and continues to make major contributions to the greatness of New York City, and this impact can be felt across the state and throughout the country.

Despite these major victories, homophobia, transphobia, stigma, and discrimination continue to affect the lives of many LGBTQ New Yorkers, including Latino LGBTQ New Yorkers. These problems continue to affect our communities in a variety of ways:

- Ongoing accounts of anti-gay attacks (29 reported from January to May 2013) due to homophobia and transphobia
- Increase of HIV amongst Latino Gay men who comprised 31.6% of those diagnosed with HIV in 2007 in New York City
- Stigma and discrimination based on race, ethnic origin, religion, immigration status, socio-economic status, education, poverty, homelessness
- Substance abuse, mental health problems, and the lack of social support, inclusion and integration¹

These and other issues are critical to the vitality of New York City. As you prepare your campaigns and engage in the design of your work plan in the running for Mayor, we reach out to you as concerned New York City residents, community advocates, service providers, and members of the Latino LGBTQ community and present to you our concerns in a format that highlights the underlying infrastructural problem and the different issues that result from it. In addition, we present what we believe are effective solutions should you become the new Mayor of this great city.

Increasing LGBTQ Participation in NYC Infrastructure

The realities of LGBTQ Latinos can be very complex, shaped by differences in immigration status, gender identity, sexual expression, racial background, economic status, education level, health status, amongst others. Because of this complexity, LGBTQ Latinos have a relationship to all offices within the New York City government. Navigating these offices, however, can be complicated, and making recommendations in order to change ineffective, discriminatory, or undesirable policies can be difficult.

In order to increase communication and create a more streamlined system to voice our concerns to the Mayor's office, we ask that you establish a LGBTQ Advisory Commission that works in partnership with the Mayor's office in order to forge a stronger

¹ For more information on other issues that affect LGBT Latinos, please visit "What's Next for LGBT Equality" by the Center for American Progress: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2013/07/09/69047/whats-next-for-lgbt-equality/> and "New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community" from the Williams Institute at UCLA: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/lgbt-poverty-update-june-2013/>

connection between LGBTQ New Yorkers and the Mayor. This Advisory Commission should be as diverse as the LGBTQ community in New York and include individuals from all parts of the city and all ethnic, racial, economic, gendered, and sexual backgrounds.

The establishment of this Commission can be modeled after a similar commission in the city of Newark, NJ. In 2009, the Newark LGBTQ Advisory Commission was created to “seek to improve conditions affecting the cultural, social, economic, political, educational, general health and well-being of LGBTQ individuals and their families in the City of Newark in New Jersey, by studying and developing policies, programs and practices to recommend to the Mayor and Municipal Council in partnership with various stakeholders and multiple levels of government.” An Advisory Commission in NYC would enable LGBTQ New Yorkers to voice their concerns and contribute to the beginning stages of policy development, at all levels of city government. Specific recommendations to policy makers can be made through this commission, which will enable members of the community to be in constant, direct dialogue with city government. For example, this Commission would work to ensure adequate representation of LGBTQ Latinos in the makeup of city government at all levels and appropriate resource allocation to the LGBT community.

A Holistic Approach to LGBTQ Latino Issues

Because of the complexity that LGBTQ Latinos face, the issues that matter to our community include harassment by the police, employment and education discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, serious health concerns, and bettering overall access to city and social services. Too often, the approach to LGBTQ issues is fragmented and one-dimensional, excluding many segments of our community and the many issues facing LGBTQ New Yorkers. For LGBTQ Latinos, **a holistic approach to our issues is critical** to crafting and implementing effective and appropriate policy. We ask that as you work to understand the lives of LGBTQ Latinos and all LGBTQ New Yorkers, you consider all the different ways in which city policy impacts different aspects of our lives. Through this understanding you can develop effective city policy that can benefit not only LGBTQ Latinos, but New York City residents in general.

In addition to this, there are current specific policies and laws that impact various aspects of our lives as LGBTQ Latinos. We ask that you support the following actions and policies:

- Sign the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) into law.
- End the Stop and Frisk Policy.
- Pass the Community Safety Act Bills
 - End Discriminatory Profiling Act (Intro 800) - Protecting New Yorkers against discriminatory profiling by the NYPD.
 - NYPD Oversight Act (Intro 881a) - Establishing independent oversight of the NYPD.

- Give the Latino LGBTQ community access to the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force.
- Support through implementation and accountability the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2013 (S. 815), a bill to prohibit the employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.²

While we are at a national moment that reflects the hard work and dedication of many of our efforts over the last few decades - from the repeal of DOMA and the overturning of Prop 8, to gay marriage recognition in 14 states and Washington, D.C. – New York City can continue to be a leader in LGBTQ history by establishing a citywide, LGBTQ-specific infrastructure and adopting policies that recognize the value that the LGBTQ community has offered and continues to offer to the city. As the possible future mayor of New York City, we ask that you show your commitment to our communities by ensuring our participation in building the best New York City for all New Yorkers.

If you would like more information about these recommendations, you can contact John Hellman at the Latino Commission on AIDS at jhellman@latinoaid.org or 646-377-6115. You can also visit the following reports that cover many diverse issues affecting LGBTQ Latinos:

Thank you,

² <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s815>