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Welcome In! February 2025 Michigan Welcoming Congregation News

The Spiritual Work of Trans Justice & Safety

In-Person and Online Workshop: Saturday February 22, 2025

Join MidAmerica UU members, staff, and clergy for a workshop led by [Zr. Alex Kapitan](#) of the Transforming Hearts Collective. THE EVENT IS IN-PERSON AND ONLINE, and FREE to UUs in the MidAmerica Region. In-person attendees will gather at the [First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI](#). Events for all participants take place 10am-3:30pm CT/11am - 4:30pm ET, followed by a Worship Service at 4:30pm CT/5:30pm ET. Lunch provided for in-person attendees. Registration is required [here](#).

How Can We Take Heart at a Time Such as This?

The ACLU of MI and Equality Michigan hosted a webinar on responding and dealing with the recent Executive Orders on 2/5/25. Highlights included:

- We can't forget the many successes we had in the last two years with Michigan's legislature...Emme Zanotti listed 16 things to be proud of, from expanding the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to the more recent ID law changes.
- At the end of the day, you could take away all our accomplishments in Michigan and we still have each other...organized and engaged!
- Jay Kaplan, ACLU Attorney, reviewed the myriad of Executive Orders that may affect the LGBTQ+ community. He said it's the plan of this administration to pummel folks daily so that we all feel overwhelmed...but instead we need to take things one at a time as we can, see how we can prevent the overwhelmed feeling, and respond as we should. Taking care of ourselves is very important now.
- While Congress can't just override an Executive Order, federal courts can review them. The Eos need to have proposed rules within about 60 days and the public can comment on these. The EOs can't override state laws, court decisions and congressional activities. Many of the EOs are unconstitutional because they usurp Congress's power and discriminate solely against a group like transgender folks.
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual may be worried about marriage equality being brought up again in the Supreme Court and going the way of Roe vs. Wade, but we need to also protect our transgender siblings in this fight, together. When we saw Roe v. Wade reversed, we saw a court that seems willing to overturn precedent. Supreme Court Justice Thomas and Alito have even called for marriage equality to be brought up again. It won't happen overnight because it takes a while to get up to US Supreme Court level. What could happen? There's a very good chance it wouldn't impact people who are already married. However, an overturn would turn it over to the states, and even in Michigan we still have a 1996 law that prohibits same sex couples from marrying, and a later constitutional amendment, so voters would have to approve a ballot initiative, or legislature vote to overturn it.

- We can work on the gay marriage issue if it comes up again...but the most immediate harm is the transgender community. Jay Kaplan pointed out that trans women of color have always led in the forefront of our struggles, such as the Stonewall riots. Some opponents would like to divide our community, and have some lesbian and gay folks say we care about marriage equality and not transgender issues. But every case that we've won on the basis of sex has been brought by transgender women of color. People are trying to decide on how we are supposed to act, look, etc. based on gender assigned at birth...the entire LGBT community's rights are at risk. **Everyone's** rights have to be raised.
- The ACLU is going to fight against these Executive Orders in every way they can. "We might not always be successful, but we are not going to stand for this." They are a distraction from the real and serious problems and issues that our government should be dealing with.
- It's no surprise that the first legislation proposed in Michigan this legislative session, with the legislature now controlled by a different party, has proposed banning transgender people in restrooms, locker rooms, and sports.
- Final words of advice were like the airplane instructions, "Put your own oxygen mask first, and then give support to others." Take care of yourself--we're all in this together.
- With over 800 people participating in this webinar, the conveners will try to hold these talks regularly, some suggesting at least monthly. Many expressed comfort even hearing this spirited talk, because it clarified many items that were swirling around in uncertainty for them before.

Any Retreat from DEI Erodes Consumer Loyalty--HRC

The HRC Foundation's [auto consumer data report](#) has been a topic of conversation when it comes to the potential hit in sales that companies face when backtracking on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. "The takeaway: DEI is essential for maintaining consumer trust and tapping into an economically powerful and diverse demographic," writes Robert Conner in [AdAge](#). "The HRC Foundation's new data is a canary in the coal mine for big-name brands considering backpedaling on DEI. Despite Donald Trump winning the popular vote with an anti-DEI platform, the data overwhelmingly shows that dismantling DEI is a losing strategy for brands committed to consumer loyalty and market growth." We couldn't agree more.

OVER 80% OF TRANS WORKERS HAVE EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT, REPORT FINDS:

A new report from the Williams Institute at UCLA finds that 82% of transgender survey respondents and 59% of nonbinary respondents had experienced workplace harassment or discrimination for their gender or sexuality, as well as 45% of cisgender queer respondents. Two-thirds of respondents said they had left a job because of bad treatment around their gender or sexuality, a statistic that highlights the importance of promoting inclusion in the workplace through policies and culture that uplift LGBTQ+ employees. "Transgender people are a particularly vulnerable and marginalized group in the workplace," said Brad Sears, the report's lead author. "Many are not bringing their full selves to work and face unsupportive workplace environments, which makes them less likely to fully invest in their current employer and job." Learn more from Jo Yurcaba [here](#).

Let me know how I can help you in your Welcoming journey! (Keep in mind I am available for sermons/messages/services and presentations such as "How to be a Good Ally"!)

--Sharon Pedersen, MUUSJN LGBTQ+ Justice Organizer, 517-740-2629

