Connections

LGBTQ+ Pride Month
June 2020

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PMB Administrative Services
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Our Vision: To Deliver Outstanding Products and Customer Service While Actively Creating and Sustaining a Respectful Focus
Rise and Shine

In 1980 when I was 21, I applied for a GS-3 Clerk/Typist position with the U.S. Department of Justice. Since I would be handling grand jury material, it required I receive a top secret security clearance, which in those days was conducted by agents of the FBI.

I was asked to disclose in writing if I had ever engaged in homosexual activity. My relatives were asked the same question, and so were random neighbors I didn’t even know who later stopped me on the street to tell me about it. If any of us answered in the affirmative, I could be denied a security clearance because at the time it was thought that my “perversion” (or its concealment) meant I was vulnerable to blackmail.

When the Connections magazine team considered this month’s beautiful cover featuring DOI employees Maria and Ana [read their story on pages 13 & 14], who were the first same sex couple deployed to a war zone by the U.S. Army, I thought immediately of Dr. Maya Angelou’s great poem, “Still I Rise,” and in particular the last line:

“I am the dream and the hope of the slave and so I rise, I rise, I rise.”

I couldn’t see into the future far enough back then to imagine that one day members of the LGBTQ+ community could marry and have successful careers as open federal employees. But Maria and Ana exemplify the dreams and hopes of generations of individuals who simply could not experience the most basic of life’s joys: an honorable opportunity to serve their country and marriage to the person they loved.

Fifteen years later, loud and proud and still with the Justice Department, I was in the Seattle Gay Men’s Chorus when Dr. Maya Angelou was our guest. At our first rehearsal the 200-member chorus burst into thunderous applause and sang to her an a cappella version of “We Shall Overcome.” Dr. Angelou graciously accepted this spontaneous tribute with regal dignity. She understood absolutely that her story, indeed her life, inspired those of us in the LGBTQ+ community as much as it did everyone who has felt themselves on the outside looking in.

Thank you for spending a few moments perusing Connections magazine, and for celebrating with us remarkable stories of the LGBTQ+ community, for it was not very long ago when these stories could not be told.

With warmest regards for a bright future,

- Steve Carlisle (he/him), Connections Editor
June 19, 2020

June is the month that our Nation and the Department of the Interior celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer+ (LGBTQ+) Pride. It is a commemoration of the heroic efforts of Americans within the LGBTQ+ community and how they have strengthened our nation through their incredible talent and creativity to create awareness and goodwill.

In the United States, the last Sunday in June was initially celebrated as “Gay Pride Day,” but the actual day was flexible. It is celebrated in June to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan, whereby patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn staged an uprising to resist police harassment and persecution of LGBTQ+ Americans. The Stonewall Uprising was a catalyst for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States.

In major cities across the nation, the “day” soon grew to encompass a month-long series of celebratory events. Today, celebrations include educational activities, pride parades, lectures, workshops, symposia, picnics, festivals, and concerts, all of which attract millions of participants around the world. An essential characteristic of the activities are the memorials held in recognition of those members of the community who have died to hate crimes or HIV/AIDS. The purpose of the month is to commemorate the impact Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer+ individuals have had in the shaping of our history locally, nationally, and internationally, and to show forth their continual efforts to further the Department’s success in achieving its mission objectives.

Despite the extraordinary progress the LGBTQ+ community has made to actualize equity, diversity and inclusion, discrimination based solely on sexual orientation and standing for those beliefs, still exists. The fight for dignity and respect for the LGBTQ+ community continues as advocates and allies tirelessly fight to forge a more inclusive society. Efforts of the community have spurred sweeping progress by changing hearts and minds, and by demanding equal treatment under our laws, from our courts, and in our politics.

The Department has taken action as well when then Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt issued Personnel Bulletin 18-01 in 2018, which for the first time in the Department’s history shielded employees from harassing conduct based on the employee’s sexual orientation, as well as other protected bases such as race, marital status and political affiliation. This policy gives Interior employees greater protection from abuse than provided for under federal employment law, and it exceeds any previous Departmental action.

During LGBTQ+ Pride Month, the Office of Civil Rights encourages supervisors, managers, and employees to participate in the myriad of activities that are held nationally in recognition of LGBTQ+ Pride Month. Your participation supports continuous learning and appreciation for the many contributions made by the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, it fosters knowledge and understanding of the many employees within the Interior that are proud members of the LGBTQ+ community. Let us continue to work together to maintain the Interior’s reputation as being an employer who educates, honors, and recognizes all employees that work to further the DOI mission.

Thank you,

Erica White-Dunston
Director, Office of Civil Rights

Did you know?

Employees who differ from most of their colleagues in religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and generation often hide important parts of themselves at work for fear of negative consequences. We in the diversity and inclusion community call this “identity cover,” and it makes it difficult to know how they feel and what they want, which makes them vulnerable to leaving their organizations.

Most business leaders understand the diversity part of diversity and inclusion. They get that having a diverse workforce is important to customers and critical to succeeding in a global market. It’s the inclusion part that eludes them — creating an environment where people can be who they are, that values their unique talents and perspectives, and makes them want to stay.

The key to inclusion is understanding who your employees really are.

- Karen Brown, founder and managing partner of Bridge Arrow, a diversity and inclusion management consulting firm.
"The world changes in direct proportion to the number of people willing to be honest about their lives." — Armistead Maupin

As America’s storytellers, the National Park Service (NPS) is committed to telling the history of all Americans in all of its diversity and complexity. For many years, the rich histories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Americans have been erased through punishing laws and general prejudice—appearing sporadically in police proceedings, medical reports, military hearings, and immigration records.

Yet for many LGBTQ+ groups, preserving and interpreting their past has been an important part of building communities and finding mutual support. Because of their efforts, we can retrace LGBTQ+ histories across the United States—from private residences, hotels, bars, and government agencies to hospitals, parks, and community centers. From the mujерado of the Acoma and Laguna tribes to the drag queens of the Stonewall riots, discover their stories in our nation’s parks, homes, and historic sites.

The use—and potential misuse—of language is an important concern for LGBTQ+ communities. While some have reclaimed the term "Queer" for people who do not identify as heterosexual, the term still resonates as a pejorative slur for others. Some scholars adopt "Queer" as a broad category to encompass the experiences of peoples whose identities do not fit neatly into current categories of gender and sexual identity and to build a more complete understanding of Americans’ lives. Because it is part of a movement to recover the voices of peoples of color, the bisexual, transgender, the poor, and those from rural communities, we adopt it here with the intention to be inclusive, not hurtful.

For centuries, medical experts have struggled to definitively categorize human sexuality. Influenced by European sexologists like Magnus Hirschfeld and Havelock Ellis, 19th Century American doctors attempted to diagnose and treat what they considered pathological sexual behavior. At the Selling Building in Portland, Oregon, Dr. J. Allen Gilbert treated patients for “sexual inversion.” Here, gender nonconformists like Alberta Lucille Hart underwent some of the earliest sex-reassignment procedures in the United States. These medical professionals worked through a period when homosexuality had been understood as sexual deviance, then slowly came to understand homosexuality as an outward expression of an individual’s internal identity. By the mid-twentieth century, sex researchers like Alfred Kinsey at The Kinsey Institute in Bloomington, Indiana, began to challenge popular perceptions of "normative" sexuality.

Such histories show that gender and sexual identities are not fixed. The labels and categories different institutions have created to label different identities change over time and never encompass the full spectrum of personal identity. Because of this, historians must study the past without assigning the people of the past with an LGBTQ+ identity that they would not have understood. Interpreters face this challenge at Hull House in Chicago, Illinois. Here, pioneer of the settlement house movement Jane Addams (1860-1935) worked, lived, and sustained intense, personal relationships with a number of women but would have not understood or accepted the term "lesbian" for herself.

Too often categorized as outsiders, Queer Americans nevertheless consistently played important roles in American cultural life. For example, many gay pioneers found international acclaim as artists during the Harlem renaissance. New York’s Apollo Theater—an iconic center for American jazz—also hosted a multitude of black queer performers.

Vaudeville actors Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters and comedian Jackie "Moms" Mabley publicly acknowledged same-sex relationships and even occasionally made nods to their sexuality in their acts on stage, although they were unable to fully disclose.
Queer heritage has been preserved by the communities, social networks, and enclaves established and nurtured by generations of LGBTQ+ Americans. Spaces like New York’s Fire Island and Pier 45, or The Castro in San Francisco provided safe outlets for queer expression and also created community resources for political activism. Other spaces were explicitly political from their founding—such as the Furies Collective, a separatist lesbian organization that called Washington, DC’s Capitol Hill home in the 1970s. While many of these sites continue to thrive as hubs of LGBTQ+ life and community, others sites have hidden queer histories.

Queer activism has been central to the history of civil rights in the United States. Grassroots movements, private organizations, individual writers and artists articulated a need for political equality and social justice for all Americans—regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, or creed.

Moments of violence brought queer activism to national attention. The 1969 raid-turned-riot at the Stonewall Inn in New York City exposed the systematic police harassment—including routine raids and physical abuse—LGBTQ+ Americans endured in public spaces across the United States. The ensuing riots galvanized LGBTQ+ activists nationwide and has been remembered as a significant turning point in the modern Gay Liberation Movement. In 2000, the Stonewall Inn became the first National Historic Landmark for its importance in LGBTQ+ history. The LGBTQ+ experience is a vital facet of America’s rich and diverse past. Their stories highlight how personal lives continuously are affected by (and affect) the political, economic, social, and commercial. Personal identity and shifting definitions of gender and sexuality are central to the American experience and reveal the complexities of our nation’s citizenry. By recovering the voices that have been erased and marginalized, the NPS embarks on an important project to capture and celebrate our multi-vocal past.

Visit the National Park Service Telling All Americans’ Stories portal to learn more about American heritage themes and histories.

**Did you know?**

- All 50 states have elected openly LGBTQ+ people to political office in some capacity.
- 46 states have elected openly LGBTQ+ people to one or both houses of the state legislature.
- 6 states have elected openly LGBTQ+ people to statewide elected offices, all of whom are currently in office: Jared Polis (Governor of Colorado), Kate Brown (Governor of Oregon), Tammy Baldwin (United States Senator from Wisconsin), Kyrsten Sinema (United States Senator from Arizona), Maura Healey (Attorney General of Massachusetts), and Dana Nessel (Attorney General of Michigan).
- 2 of the 10 most populous cities in the United States have elected openly LGBTQ+ people as mayor, 1 of whom is currently in office: Lori Lightfoot (Mayor of Chicago) and Annise Parker (Mayor of Houston).
- No openly LGBTQ+ person has served as president or vice president of the United States or as a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States or as a secretary in the Cabinet of the United States, but Richard Grenell currently serves as acting Director of National Intelligence, which is a United States cabinet-level office.
Spotlight on LGBTQ+ Heroes

Influence and Marginalization:
Bayard Rustin

Bayard Rustin was a brilliant strategist, pacifist, and forward-thinking civil rights activist during the middle of the 20th century. In 1947 as a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Rustin planned the Journey of Reconciliation, which would be used as a model for the Freedom Rides of the 1960s. He served as a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. in the practice of nonviolent civil resistance, and was an intellectual and organizational force behind the burgeoning civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. He organized protests in England and studied Ghandian principles in India. His life as an openly gay man, however, put him at odds with the cultural norms of the larger society and left him either working behind the scenes or outside of the movement for stretches of time.

Born 1912 in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Rustin was raised a Quaker and his family was engaged in civil rights activism. He attended Wilberforce University, Cheney State Teachers College, and City College of New York. A charismatic man, he earned a living as a spiritual singer in nightclubs while living in New York City. He took a brief interest in the Communist movement and was a lifelong pacifist, due to his Quaker upbringing. His commitment to civil and human rights came at a personal cost. He was arrested multiple times and twice went to jail.

In the 1940s he met A. Philip Randolph and worked with him on various proposed marches on Washington, D.C. to protest segregation in the armed forces and the defense industry. Because of their experiences together, when Randolph was named to head the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, he appointed Rustin as Deputy Director and overall logistical planner. In 1947, Rustin and George Houser, executive secretary of CORE, organized the Journey of Reconciliation which was the first of the Freedom Rides. The Rides were intended to test the U.S. Supreme Court’s ban on racial discrimination in interstate travel. Rustin was arrested for violating state laws regarding segregated seating on public transportation and served twenty-two days on a chain gang.

With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, his talents and tireless work were transferred to human rights and the gay rights movement. In the 1970s and 1980s he worked as a human rights and election monitor for Freedom House and also testified on behalf of New York State’s Gay Rights Bill.

Bayard Rustin died from a ruptured appendix on August 24, 1987 at the age of 75.

LGBTQ+ History

Stonewall Inn—A Movement Takes Shape

From the National Park Service

Through the 1960s almost everything about living openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) person was a violation of law, rule, or policy. New York City’s prohibitions against homosexual activities were particularly harsh. People were arrested for wearing fewer than three articles of clothing that matched their sex. Serving alcoholic beverages to homosexuals was prohibited. For married men and women who lived homosexual lives in secret, blackmail was a constant threat. Discrimination and fear were tools to isolate people when homosexuality was hidden. After Stonewall, being “out and proud” in numbers was a key strategy that strengthened the movement.

Stonewall was a milestone for LGBTQ+ civil rights that provided momentum for a movement. In the early hours of June 28, 1969, a police raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York City provoked a spontaneous act of resistance. Demonstrations continued over the next several nights at Christopher Park across from the Stonewall Inn and in the surrounding neighborhood. When asked to describe the difference that Stonewall had made, journalist Eric Marcus observed that before Stonewall, “For most people, there was no out, there was just in.”

People who would identify today as LGBTQ+ had few choices for socializing in public and many bars they frequented were operated by organized crime. Members of the police force were often paid off in return for information about planned raids. Customers caught in a raid were routinely freed, but only after being photographed and humiliated with names and pictures often printed in newspapers. In the early hours of June 28, 1969, people fought back.

Following what at first appeared to be a routine raid, a crowd gathered outside to watch for friends in the bar. But as police vans came to haul away those arrested, the crowd became angry, began throwing objects, and attempted to block the way. The crowd’s aggression forced police to retreat and barricade themselves inside the Stonewall Inn. Onlookers joined in and attacked the bar with pennies, metal garbage cans, bricks, bottles, an uprooted parking meter, and burning trash. The confrontation grew as the fire department and the NYPD’s Tactical Patrol Force, trained for riot control, joined police reinforcements sent to the scene.

The agitated crowd took to the streets chanting “Gay Power!” and “Liberate Christopher Street!” LGBTQ+ youth who gathered at Christopher Park—some of them homeless and with little social capital—challenged police, linked arms, and formed a blockade. Police charged the crowd, but rather than disperse, the mob retreated to the neighborhood they knew well with its network of narrow, winding streets, doubled-back, and regrouped near the Stonewall Inn and Christopher Park, surprising the police.

Demonstrator Tommy Schmidt described the feeling of being in the melee: “I was part of a mob that had a kind of deep identity and was acting as one force.” John O’Brien said, “What excited me was I finally was not alone.”

Social change takes different forms. Pioneers organized and took a range of actions and approaches in the fight for their equality. Stonewall was a galvanizing moment that empowered a range of advocacy; some mainstream, and some non-conforming or militant, that rejected approaches based on assimilation.

“By the time of Stonewall, we had fifty to sixty gay groups in the country. A year later there were at least fifteen hundred. By two years later, to the extent that counts could be made, it was twenty-five hundred. And that was the impact of Stonewall.” Frank Kameny
What is Gender?
An Exploration of Change

By Ash Richardson-White
(they/them)

Male equals muscles, and female equals womb. These ideas are what society commonly accepts as gender. We are taught that there are only two options. No one is supposed to deviate at all. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this just isn’t the case for everyone. Our world isn’t black and white. Aside from binary transgender and cisgender people, there’s a large community who don’t fit within society’s traditional definition of gender. I’m one of these people. Society has placed me in a box in which I don’t fit. Instead of male, or female, I use the label “non-binary”. My pronouns are “they/them.” Unfortunately, non-binary and transgender, or trans, people face a lot of discrimination. There are often some very rough patches in our lives. The best thing you can do for us is to listen and keep an open mind.

One of the first hints that I wasn’t female was in 5th grade. That year was the year I began coming out as gay. However, I was firmly against the label “lesbian.” I was a biological girl who liked girls, but I only felt comfortable with the label “gay.” At the time, I didn’t pay any mind to this preference. My true journey into gender began a year later when I discovered a coding website called Scratch. There were several LGBTQ+ communities in residence, and by visiting them I learned of the multitude of labels that people use to describe gender. I had no idea there were so many! Through this discovery, I was able to realize that I didn’t need to be confined to the identity I had always assumed was set for me: female.

It wasn’t smooth sailing from there, however. Many trans people are lucky enough to know exactly who they are from a very young age. That wasn’t the case for me. I went through a lot of soul searching to get where I am now. At first, I was incredibly insecure. I worried that maybe I was just “making it up for a reason.” Somewhere in my mind, I thought the only way for my gender to be valid was if I found a label that described me perfectly. If others had my exact same experience, then of course I wasn’t faking it. This wasn’t a helpful idea, and it just ended up sending me further into a cascade of doubt, worry and insecurity. I was so focused on pinning down exactly who I was, I never stepped back to just accept myself.

Luckily, with a bunch of help from my therapist, I’ve been able to take that step. I’ve acknowledged that my gender isn’t perfectly definable. Instead, it’s fluid. Some days I feel more masculine, some days more feminine. Some days I don’t feel anything at all! For me, the label non-binary is enough. It can be all-encompassing, and it’s really wonderful in its simplicity. There is a wealth of experiences that can be categorized under non-binary, and mine is one of them. It allows me freedom to explore my changing gender, and freedom to switch around how I express myself. I don’t need anything more.

A large part of my journey has been pronouns. Fairly quickly after I began questioning my gender I realized I wasn’t comfortable with she/her pronouns. For me, they were incredibly restrictive. When I used the pronouns she/her, I was told by society that I should like makeup. That I should have breasts. That I should shave. There was a huge host of expectations placed upon me, and that was really uncomfortable. She/her pronouns felt like a too-small coat. Every day when I would put them on they would squeeze me in all the wrong places. I never felt like I had room to breathe.

[continued on next page]
This feeling is often called dysphoria. A lot of trans people experience it. Dysphoria can come in many different forms. I have primarily body dysphoria and social dysphoria. The first is centered around my chest. I often feel very uncomfortable with the fact that I have breasts. Society associates femininity and femaleness with them, but I am not female. This causes me a very painful dissonance. The second aspect of my dysphoria is social dysphoria. My social dysphoria is about how I’m treated in public, including pronouns and my name. It means that I much prefer a family or unisex bathroom to a women’s room. It also means I feel very uncomfortable when placed into a group based on assumed gender. Social dysphoria is also the primary reason I decided to come out with different pronouns.

The new usages of pronouns are confusing for a lot of people. Many consider “he/him” and “she/her” to be the only pronouns used for an individual. “They/them” is considered plural, and that’s it. Surprisingly, this isn’t wholly true. It’s only recently that English has disowned the singular usage of they. The *Oxford English Dictionary* actually traces the singular usage of they/them back to a piece of 14th-century romantic literature. Up until the early 1800s, they/them pronouns were used freely as singular. In fact, even after grammarians began disputing its usage, authors including William Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson used its singular form. In 2019, Merriam-Webster dictionary officially adopted the modern use of singular they.

For a lot of non-binary people like me, the pronouns he/him and she/her are uncomfortable. We seek out more neutral options. I considered they/them briefly, but at first I felt that they were a little too neutral. I didn’t like how detached and impersonal they sounded. I explored newly-invented alternative pronouns, but ultimately they/them became quite comfortable. Some of the new ones you might come across are “xe/xem,” “xe/xyr,” “ze/hir,” and “ey/em.” These might sound super confusing at first. It also might be hard to get used to using they/them as singular. That’s okay! It will take practice to get used to using them and their conjugations. If you make a mistake it’s not a big deal. Just apologize, correct yourself, and move on.

No matter how well versed you are in pronouns, at some point there will be a situation where you’re not entirely sure about which ones someone uses. In this case, the best thing to do is ask. The transgender community tends to be a pretty easy-going bunch. We’re not going to be offended at all if you ask for clarification. In fact, we love it when you do this! Instead of making assumptions (and probably getting them wrong), your question means you care enough to put in the effort to make us comfortable. That’s super awesome!

What’s not so awesome is when you refuse to use someone’s pronouns. For a lot of us, they’re tied very deeply to who we are. It can be extremely painful when you don’t accept them, both because of dysphoria and emotional factors. When you disrespect our pronouns it means that you value your traditions and ease over our comfort. This is hurtful and alienating. Saying something like, “What’s in your pants? That’s the pronouns I’ll use,” is never okay. Pronouns (and names) are not something that should be a battle between your views and my views. Using the correct ones is not “political.” It doesn’t mean you’re expected to march in the next Pride parade. All it is is basic human decency.

The bottom line is that society is a pretty weird place. We’re expected to never change or deviate from “the norm.” Our path is supposed to stay straight and true throughout our lives. We’re supposed to fit into these neat, tidy little boxes that weird dead scholars conceived for us. The problem is, life doesn’t work this way. Nature isn’t made up of tick-boxes. It’s got twists and turns. It’s got weirdly shaped plants and animals who eat their brains. Even nature’s view of gender is convoluted (take the boatshell, who changes its sex as it grows). There is no reason to say that humans aren’t the same. Our path isn’t perfectly even. It’s not a tidy little box. It gets messy sometimes. If we all can accept these realities, then we will be one step further to living in an equal, decent society.

*Ash Richardson-White is a fourteen-year-old 9th grader who just finished 8th grade at Talcott Mountain Academy. They will be attending Suffield High School in Suffield, Connecticut in the fall.*
Non-Binary: A Parent’s Perspective

By Suzanne Richardson-White (she/her/hers)

When I had my first child, I knew I had a lot to learn about parenting. I’d never really taken care of a baby before, and my entire life was turned joyfully upside-down as I began my relationship with the new little person in my life.

What I was pretty sure of, though, was that I had the whole acceptance-of-diversity thing down. After all, I’d grown up in New England as a Unitarian Universalist, with parents who were very inclusive. My middle school English teacher was gay (and, sadly, died of AIDS when I was in high school). I was a theatre kid, doing all sorts of musical theatre in high school and college.

I participated in the original Gay Rights March on Washington D.C. in 1993, saw the AIDS quilt, and cried with my friends. I had gay friends in college and grad school. So when my first child came out to me as gay as a fifth grader, I was excited.

“That’s great, honey!” I enthused. I figured I had this covered. I bought books for my kid to read, and listened and sympathized with first crushes, and worries over coming out to friends. We attended Pride marches and bought rainbow hats to wear. What fun!

What threw me, unexpectedly, was having my child tell me two years later that they were non-binary, wanted to use ‘they/them’ pronouns, and wanted to go by the name “Ash,” not their birth name. Although difficult for me to get used to at first (being a die-hard grammar geek), the “they/them” pronouns eventually grew on me, and after a year plus of intense practice, I am finally pretty good about getting them correct most of the time.

The new name, though, was hard for me. I love my child’s birth name, and I felt very sad at first that my child didn’t feel the same way about the name, and had picked out a new name without including me or my husband in the process. We both used the new name consistently, but I found myself missing the old name. As time has gone on, though, I’ve come to realize that this journey is my child’s, not mine, and I really only see my child with their new name now.

Most of all, I am incredibly grateful to my child for being open, for being true to themself, and for educating me along the way. I have learned so much about non-binary people, about the great variety in the LGBTQIA+ community, and about the wonderful diversity in humankind.

A final note: as a preschool teacher and bibliophile, I always love finding new children’s books to read. There are many wonderful books out now featuring binary trans people, but only a few that I’ve found that feature non-binary folks.

For preschool, I love Jamie is Jamie by Afsaneh Moradian.

My child Ash recommends the YA novels I Wish You All the Best by Mason Deaver and Symptoms of Being Human by Jeff Garvin.

For elementary/middle-grade chapter books, I have not yet read any, but this title looks amazing: The Moon Within by Aida Salazar.

Happy reading and learning! With love, Suzanne

Suzanne Richardson-White, former paleontologist and park ranger, is currently a parent to three, a preschool teacher, and a classical singer. She lives with her husband, kids, and various pets in West Suffield, Connecticut.
Pronouns and Respect

By Kim Oliver (she/her)
Workplace Culture Transformation
DOI Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget

Pronoun usage is an important part of a person’s identity because it’s one way that we refer to each other. It’s also something that many of us give very little thought or consideration to. We typically see or hear an individual, assume their gender based on visual, verbal, or written cues, and begin associating that person with the gender we assign them. This assumptive and unintentional process can be problematic, because we aren’t always correct. A person does not need to look or sound a certain way to demonstrate the gender they are or are not. I choose to specify my preferred pronouns in my email signature block to be more inclusive and bring awareness about the importance of respecting every individual’s pronoun preference.

Supreme Court Rules Title VII Applies to LGBTQ+ Employees

On Monday, June 15, 2020, the United States Supreme Court ruled that employers who fire people for being gay or transgender violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII protects an individual from being discriminated against by an employer based on their race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Court ruled that “sex” applies to individuals who are gay or transgender.

According to the Court, “An employer violates Title VII when it intentionally fires an individual employee based in part on sex. It makes no difference if other factors besides the plaintiff’s sex contributed to the decision or that the employer treated women as a group the same when compared to men as a group. A statutory violation occurs if an employer intentionally relies in part on an individual employee’s sex when deciding to discharge the employee. Because discrimination on the basis of homosexuality or transgender status requires an employer to intentionally treat individual employees differently because of their sex, an employer who intentionally penalizes an employee for being homosexual or transgender also violates Title VII. There is no escaping the role intent plays: Just as sex is necessarily a but-for cause when an employer discriminates against homosexual or transgender employees, an employer who discriminates on these grounds inescapably intends to rely on sex in its decision-making.”

Read the entire decision here:
A Child’s Journey to Self-Acceptance

Why Pride?
By Steve Carlisle (he/him)

By the time I was five, I knew that my father was utterly ashamed of me. I didn’t know exactly why, but he would get a sorrowful, distant look in his eyes sometimes and although I couldn’t put it into words, I knew that his dream for me was dead, and I felt his shame.

In fifth grade, a female classmate looked at me with great disdain and called me the “F” word. Although I could tell it wasn’t a compliment, I didn’t know what it meant, so at recess I went to the school library and looked it up in the huge Webster’s Dictionary:

(1) Slang for cigarette
(2) A bundle of twigs
(3) A contemptuous and derogatory term for male homosexual

There it was. My heart was beating a mile a minute and I felt like a rat caught in a box. She could tell that I was this detestable thing, this hateful thing.

I determined there and then that I would do whatever I could to hide it. I stopped bending my wrists (sissies had limp wrists). I forced my voice deeper and tried desperately not to lisp. I monitored every word I said, modified every gesture, quelled every glance.

Evidently, it didn’t work. A few years later, when I was in junior high, a new family moved in across the street. Their son was in tenth grade so we weren’t in the same school, but we made wary eye contact a couple of times.

One sunny afternoon, I was washing my grandparents’ car in the driveway. The neighbor boy and a friend of his stood on their front porch looking at me. I waved and said “Hi.” That’s all I did. They looked at each other and smirked, then looked back at me with disgust. My neighbor sneered and called me the “F” word loud enough for my grandparents to hear all the way in the house.

Figuring what’s the use, that night I tried to kill myself with an overdose of drugs. I was violently ill all night, a deafening pounding in my head obliterating all other sounds, but finally I drifted off to sleep about 4 AM. Two hours later the alarm went off and, disappointed to find myself alive, I got dressed and went to school. Nobody ever knew about it.

Until I came out, shame was my constant companion: ashamed of myself, ashamed to be this detested thing, ashamed that I couldn’t change, not even for my father. And that’s why I embrace the word pride to describe how I feel about myself now. Because pride is the opposite of shame.

Like everyone else in the world, sometimes I’m ashamed of things I do. But I refuse to be ashamed of who I am.

Did you know?

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 24, and LGBTQ+ youth are twice as likely to attempt suicide than their peers. This does not mean, however, that LGBTQ+ identity itself is the cause of these challenges. Rather, these higher rates may be due to bias, discrimination, family rejection, and other stressors associated with how they are treated because of their sexual identity or gender identity/expression.

These challenges can contribute to anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges, as well as to suicide and self-harming behavior. But families and friends can help. Read more here to find out how.

Source: Youth.Gov, a consortium of 21 federal agencies including the Department of the Interior, supports programs and services focusing on issues affecting youth.
Maria and Ana: A Story of Love and Public Service

By Abigail T. True (she/her)
Writer/Editor, AVSO

For Maria Gonzalez-Melendez and Ana Suero-Ogando, love was a delightful surprise, but at first, Maria admits, “It was scary” to fall in love.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico to strongly patriarchal Catholic families, Ana and Maria met through mutual friends. At first it was friendship, but as they became closer, their relationship bloomed. Maria had never felt that way before. “It was the kind of love where you will do anything it takes to be with that person,” says Maria. Ana felt the same way, so they made the commitment to themselves and to each other to live in truth no matter the consequences. They came out as gay to their families, and declared their love for each other.

Almost immediately the consequences were severe. They were kicked out of their homes, requiring them to live for a time in their cars. Maria was shunned by her family, especially by her father, a painful wound that wouldn’t heal for many years. It was while they were living in their cars that Maria determined to join the Army. Her deep commitment to public service and her country was only part of the story. “Honestly, I had nowhere else to go.” Maria and Ana joined the Army separately before they met. Maria had a break in service and when their relationship became stronger, Maria was inspired to rejoin the Army to serve the country along with Ana. Both worked in logistics and were assigned to the same unit. Initially, everyone thought they were just best friends—after all, they did everything together!

Maria and Ana laugh about their whirlwind wedding over a Thanksgiving weekend many years ago. Same-sex marriage was still illegal in Puerto Rico, so Maria and Ana flew to New York on a Thursday evening, got married the next day, spent time with family in New Jersey on Saturday, then flew back to Puerto Rico on Sunday in time for training, which began on Monday. “We were determined to make it official!”

Eventually they were deployed to Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. Military base in Afghanistan, to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom, the longest war in U.S. History.

[continued next page]
Only after “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” was lifted in 2013 could Ana and Maria be open about the true nature of their relationship. As the first same-sex married couple deployed together to a war zone, there was no precedence for how the Army should respond, and it took awhile before things were sorted out.

The couple encountered many roadblocks. Even after coming out to their commander, they were not allowed to reside together in designated couples’ quarters and continued to be treated as though they were close friends. “It was a challenge to find the right person to talk to because no one we approached had ever been asked the questions we were asking,” said Ana. It was finally after approaching a female Colonel that things got better for them during their deployment and their status as a married couple was recognized.

According to the couple, it was both a blessing and a hardship to be deployed together in a war zone. On the one hand, it was a rare opportunity to be able to serve their country alongside one another, to be there for each other and give support to each other the way military spouses hardly ever are able, usually being thousands of miles away. On the other hand, there was the realization that every morning when they kissed one another good-bye and said, “See you tonight,” that might not be the case. Ana and Maria had different roles at Bagram Airfield, so during the hours spent apart each day, they would worry for each other’s safety. “If something happened to Ana, I might not know about it until hours later,” said Maria. When they returned to their quarters each evening, it was joy and relief to see each other and know they had safely made it through another day.

When their tours ended, Ana had the opportunity to attend training in Colorado, where she fell in love with the Rocky Mountains and encouraged Maria to find a federal position, which she did. Ana’s work managing a nutrition store kept her busy weekends while Maria had weekends off, so they both began to get frustrated at the lack of quality time to spend together. At Maria’s urging, Ana applied for and got a job with IBC Human Resources Directorate’s Payroll Operations.

Energetic Ana was concerned she wouldn’t do well in an office job, but the fast pace of the payroll department turned out to be a great fit. Maria moved from TSA to BLM then finally to IBC, where she continues to work as a Financial Systems Specialist. Ana moved to OCIO as a Customer Support Analyst so they are finally on the same work schedule!

They love their weekends together exploring all that Colorado has to offer, and they especially enjoy being their authentic selves with co-workers and friends.

Maria and Ana agree that communication and having one another’s back has been key to the success of their ten-year relationship. “Like any other couple, sometimes we disagree, but our love is stronger than ever,” says Maria.

**Did you know?**

**Pride in Federal Service (PFS)**

*Pride in Federal Service is an interagency forum for sharing resources and materials in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, nonbinary, asexual, and gender nonconforming (LGBTQ+) inclusion in federal employment.*

You can find resources, meeting notes and other info on the Pride in Federal Service MAX Page at: [https://community.max.gov/display/OPMExternal/Pride+in+Federal+Service+Collaboration+Area](https://community.max.gov/display/OPMExternal/Pride+in+Federal+Service+Collaboration+Area)
It was April on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. I rose before dawn to watch the sunrise, but when I stepped outside, I realized it had snowed quite heavily overnight. I grabbed some extra warmth and plodded silently down to the rim, only to discover lots of other people had a similar idea. A few hundred yards down the South Kaibab trail though, and I was nearly alone, save for the occasional passing hiker. I settled in.

In the growing light, I could see every crack, every crevice, every ledge dusted in fine white powder, hiding all the “imperfections” beneath. I watched the shadows of pinnacles get shorter. I watched the shadows of clouds race down one side, slow across the bottom, and scamper up the other side. I watched ravens soaring a hundred feet...below me. I sat there for hours: watching, thinking. I began to see the canyon as a metaphor for my own life, for I too was hiding in the shadows, ashamed of who I was because so many had told me I should be.

I’d always known I was gay, I just never imagined I would EVER say those words out loud. But there in that incredibly beautiful place, I saw an opportunity for a new beginning. I was no different than I was the day before, yet everything had changed. When I got home, I was going to be honest with those I loved about who I really was. And that’s what I did.

Fast forward 14 months. Again, I am at the Grand Canyon. Again, it is before dawn, and again there is snow on the ground. But two things are different. Now I am on the Canyon’s North Rim...and I am not alone. I lead Roger down to the rim for his first view of the place that had gotten me to this incredibly perfect moment. We sat down hand-in-hand on the opposite side of that miles-wide gash in the earth and watched the sun rise...together.

[continued next page]
Fast forward again, this time 18 years. The place could not have been more different: people laughing, waving flags, dancing. In the distance was the roar of what must have been a thousand motorcycles. I’m standing in the middle of New York City’s Fifth Avenue in full ranger uniform surrounded by a couple dozen others similarly clad. Just days earlier, President Obama had made Stonewall the nation’s newest national park. The site commemorated the place where the most marginalized members of the LGBTQ+ community decided to fight back against police abuse. It is widely viewed as the beginning of the gay rights movement. And there we were, at the beginning of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade...a parade that would last for 9 hours that year.

We marched down Fifth with crowds 10 and 20 deep on both sides. They cheered when they saw our flat hats... not really for us, but for the fact that people like them were now represented in one of our nation’s greatest institutions: her national parks.

We turned into the narrow streets of Greenwich Village, and the crowd grew thicker and louder. We made a final turn and there it was, the small brick and stucco building where nearly 50 years earlier a much smaller, much angrier crowd threw rocks and bottles and fought for their lives. What would they have thought to see this now?

Soon we stood in front of the Stonewall Inn, decked out in rainbow flags and a new temporary sign that said “Stonewall National Monument.” I remember the sunlight streaming down into a very different sort of canyon, one made of glass, brick, concrete and steel. With wet eyes, I raised my right hand to wave at the crowd and felt a squeeze in my left hand. I looked over at Roger and knew my life had come full circle.

Gary Bremen is a 34-year veteran of the National Park Service. Pictured, below: Gary and Roger Boone were married on their 20th anniversary together, on paddleboards, in Biscayne National Park.

Gary and Roger have been to well over 200 parks together. Above: Yellowstone. Below: Yosemite.
Symbols and Identity

The Rainbow Flag

By Abigail T. True (she/her)
Writer-Editor, AVSO

I remember often seeing the rainbow flag as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. And then on bumper stickers and T-shirts, at pride festivals, and flying outside of homes and bars. We know its basic meaning—it is a symbol of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ+) pride. But how many of us know what the colors stand for or the history behind the design? Or going back further, what symbols of LGBTQ+ culture existed prior to the rainbow flag, in an often-covert community?

The rainbow flag first flew in San Francisco on Gay Pride Day on June 25, 1978. The original rainbow flag was designed by artist, designer, and Vietnam War veteran Gilbert Baker. Baker had been commissioned to design an emblem of empowerment for the LGBTQ+ community by his friend Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California.

Of the inspiration behind his design, Baker wrote: “I thought of the American flag with its thirteen stripes and thirteen stars, the colonies breaking away from England to form the United States. I thought of the vertical red, white, and blue tricolor from the French Revolution and how both flags owed their beginnings to a riot, a rebellion, or revolution. I thought a gay nation should have a flag too, to proclaim its own idea of power.”

With the help of close to 30 volunteers, Baker was able to construct the first rainbow flag, which measured 30 x 60 feet, in the attic of the Gay Community Center in San Francisco. Baker, who was just 27 years old at the time, sewed the flag by hand.

Baker’s original design featured eight colored stripes, each stripe assigned a different meaning: hot pink for sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, turquoise for magic, blue for harmony, and purple for spirit. After the debut of the original design, turquoise and hot pink were dropped to make the flag easier to mass produce, as hot pink and turquoise fabric were difficult to come by in those days. The best-known, six-stripe flag (sans hot pink and turquoise) was established in 1979.

Baker was an incredibly generous spirit and never trademarked his design because he wanted it to be owned by everyone, leaving the door open for reinterpretation of the design.

Since the rainbow flag’s debut, it has only grown in popularity and is a well-known symbol of pride for the LGBTQ+ community. In 2017, campaigners in Philadelphia added black and brown stripes to the flag as a way to highlight the fight against racism, while honoring black and brown members of the gay community.

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nation-wide, and the White House commemorated the ruling by illuminating its façade in rainbow colors.

Gilbert Baker died on March 31, 2017, at the age of 65, two years after the legalization of same-sex marriage throughout the U.S. His legacy lives on in the six-colored flag that flies proudly every Pride month, recognizing the lives, and loves, of LGBTQ+ people worldwide.

Sources:
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/rainbow-pride-flag-history_n_5b193aafe4b05999bc6e124a0
https://qz.com/quartzy/1303522/the-new-rainbow-pride-flag-is-a-design-disaster-but-a-triumph-for-lgbtq-inclusiveness/
Meet Members of DOI’s LGBTQ+ Family

**Pat Schmidt**, Park Ranger at Fort Smith National Historic Site, whose work involves both telling the stories that encompass the breadth of American history and giving voices to those whose history has silenced.

**Amanda Gossard** is a second-generation Park Ranger. She inspires the next generation of park stewards through immersive educational experiences.

**Andrew Gertge** is Senior Concessions Specialist for NPS in Philadelphia. He loves building NPS partnerships that help us to enjoy and protect our public lands.

**Megan Springate** is the NPS 19th Amendment Centennial Commemoration National Coordinator and Interpretation Coordinator. Meghan is proud to share that February 2020 was her 10th anniversary as a U.S. Citizen.

**Orien Richmond**, Wildlife Biologist with the National Inventory and Monitoring initiative, loves helping FWS use the best available science for the conservation of our Nation’s fish, wildlife and their habitats.

**Penni Winberg**, Esq., is senior EEO Specialist in the Office of Civil Rights. Penni proudly shares that she and her wife just had their first baby. She can’t wait to teach him about the wonderful diversity of our country and its people.

**Teresa Johnson**, better known as TJ (she, her, hers, gender non-conforming female), is BLM’s Environmental Protection Specialist for the Wyoming Solid Minerals Coal leasing program and serves collateral duty as Special Emphasis Program Manager for the Casper Wyoming area.

**Joshua Ream**, NPS, contributes to the fulfillment of obligations under the ANILCA. Joshua says he’s blessed to work for an agency that recognizes the importance of both natural and cultural resources on Federal public lands.

**Melissa Axtman**, NPS. In 34 years, Melissa has traveled to 100 parks working with park management to provide asset management services and guidance. Currently she works with Parks Canada on management practices.

**Meaghan Johnson**, Deputy Chief of Resource Management and Science, NPS Cape Hatteras, loves working to preserve and protect our natural and cultural resources above and below water for future generations to enjoy.

**AJ Legault**, Chief Park Ranger, has worked as a Park Ranger with NPS for over 20 years. He described his experiences as a Park Ranger as living a life of wonder. AJ has been promoting NPS & PRIDE since the beginning.

**Allie Holdhusen** is a Biological Science Tech at the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area. Allie’s work is centered around the conservation and monitoring of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.
FWS: Pride in the Wild

FWS Interior Regions 5 and 7 along with the new FWS Pride Employee Resource Group (open to all LGBTQ+ employees and allies) created and developed a remarkable resource this year. Entitled *Pride in the Wild 2020: Cultivating Resilience Through Diversity*, the SharePoint site is rich with opportunities to celebrate pride.

FWS Pride is a voluntary employee group dedicated to enriching the work-life of LGBTQ+ USFWS employees and allies by fostering a work environment free of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and where employees feel safe bringing their full authentic selves to work. Here’s just a few of the projects and resources on the site:

**Wild Pride Quilt**

This virtual quilt weaves together personal reflections, photos, memes, educational materials and references while honoring the AIDS Memorial Quilt and the community’s resilience.

**Resources and Links**

From training guides and opportunities to supporting LGBTQ+ people of color organizations, this comprehensive listing of resources is a great place to learn more about the community.

**Peer Network**

With the goal of empowering each other to cultivate a safe and welcoming work environment and to provide resources, support and community, the FWS LGBTQ+ Peer Network connects individuals and groups in the wildlife, conservation and natural resources management fields.

*Congratulations to everyone at FWS Pride for their outstanding work!*

Did you know?

The NAMES Project formally transferred The Quilt and its archival materials under the care and stewardship of the National AIDS Memorial in early 2020. Under a special arrangement with the National AIDS Memorial, The American Folklife Center at The Library of Congress in Washington, DC now serves as the stewards of the vast archival collections associated with The Quilt, and will make them digitally accessible to the public through the world’s largest library.
"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." - James Baldwin

Difficulties connecting over challenging subjects frequently lead people to pull back. The next time you find yourself hesitating to reach out, ask yourself, “What is mine to face, feel and do?” A place to start is to create a space to listen and to have the experience of empathy: “I want you to know that I see you and hear you.”

Do you know about whole body listening? Please take a look at the graphic below from the Hendricks Institute to understand how each person can set the stage for a meaningful, compassionate conversation. It’s through these practices for relationship building that we all can find connection and seek to understand.

With love and peace — Tonianne Baca-Green, J.D.

TONIANNIE BACA-GREEN, J.D., is a Mindfulness and Compassionate Leadership trainer and attorney within OHA. She is also a Mediator and a Coach and will be offering short 30-minute virtual modules of her 2-day trainings “Mindfulness Based Emotional Intelligence” and “Compassionate Leadership” as well as “Mindful Self-Compassion” in the near future. Tonianne welcomes you to reach out if you would like more information about the trainings offered or if you would like to discuss these practices. Tonianne may be reached at Tonianne.Baca-Green@bia.gov.
“I joined the Diversity Change Agents (DCAs) as an opportunity to possibly make a change. Whether it be in an office or for an individual or even just for myself, I wanted to see change. Unfortunately, since we started there have been many issues that cause me to wonder if change can actually come. With discrimination, political bias, entitlement and privilege on the rise it has caused me to realize the DCAs are needed even more today than ever before. We as DCAs cannot live under the motto ‘let’s just treat everyone with respect’ because respect to one may be totally disrespectful to another. What we need is to do is take a moment to imagine living in one another’s shoes, to try not just to understand but to experience what each diverse group of people live with on a daily basis. You simply have to ask yourself if you would be willing to switch places with them. If not, then change needs to start with yourself.”

- Barbara Smith, IBC

“As a federal employee, I would love to be able to dedicate more time to social justice and change in my organization but at the end of the day my normal duties and responsibilities take precedence. Yet this is the time for proactivity.

“No injustice in history has been resolved due to the benevolence of those that benefited from that injustice.”

- Marland J. Clark, IBC

“How can we fight against the force that guides us, protects us, covers us and governs our moral soul? If I have to choose, I’ll always choose LOVE!!!”

- Roberta Richardson, OFAS

“Anything we can do as a society to combat fear and support love—I’m for that. On the one hand, it’s incredible that in 2020 we’re still facing pervasive racial inequality and also asking the question whether an employer can fire someone on the basis of sexual orientation. It’s disappointing that those things are happening, but that so many multitudes of people care deeply to affect change is encouraging and powerful, and indeed positive change is happening.”

- Abigail True, AVSO
“Civil Rights would not exist without social change. In a perfect world when dealing with discrimination, I wish that I had a mic and a platform to say cut it out. Instead I have to deal with the communication layers to remain professional. The DOI workplace is full of delicately crafted training that offers hope (and promises), but at the end of the day - the cultural shift for a respectful and fair workplace is what matters. “As an African American woman, what needs to be shared is that the opportunities afforded to many groups by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was initiated on the backs of our community, yet there continues to be dysfunction on our relationship to the American equation. I encourage everyone to make a commitment to greater understanding of the history underlying today’s stressful climate. “Lastly since I work with EEO offices across the nation, the action plan from our leadership is of my greatest interest. This is needed so my work with workforce analysis is not in vain.”

- Denise T. Swingler-Sweet, IBC

Like her family who marched for justice years ago, Shelita Saint-Louis is the daughter and granddaughter of 1960's Alabama Civil Rights activists.

Shelita and her family participated in a peaceful community protest/vigil for George Floyd. Before joining the other participants, Shelita and her husband Jean-Philippe had a painful and difficult discussion with their nine-year-old son Zion and seven-year-old daughter Zoelle.

“We welcome the noteworthy first steps being made to address racism and injustice in America,” says Shelita and Jean-Philippe, “but we are concerned about real change and what the future holds for our children.”

Pictured: Shelita Saint-Louis and her husband Jean-Philippe with their daughter Zoelle and son Zion attending a peaceful vigil.

Shelita is Chief of Acquisition Management, Branch 3, Division 1, in the Acquisition Services Directorate of the Interior Business Center.
About the Special Emphasis Program

Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) are implemented and observed throughout the Department of the Interior primarily to ensure that all are provided an equal opportunity in all aspects of employment. These programs encourage employees to appreciate, value, understand, and celebrate social and cultural similarities and differences.

The Administrative Services Special Emphasis Program Team publishes Connections magazine to coincide with each monthly commemoration. We would be delighted to have you be a part of our efforts by:

- Shaping subject matter for each magazine
- Creating and submitting content
- Participating in and hosting virtual observances and informal discussions
- Celebrating diversity with family, friends and co-workers

Team members spend approximately one hour per pay period on SEP initiatives, are able to take time away when work schedules require it, and can focus on those subject areas that are most meaningful to them.

To get started, please send an email here and a team member will contact you.

Thank you sincerely for your interest!

Connections in July: Caribbean Heritage Month
The Special Emphasis Program Magazine is a publication of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Administrative Services. Your input is essential to making this a valuable resource for all employees. Please feel free to share your ideas, suggestions and articles/pictures with editor Steve Carlisle by calling (505) 288-4092 or emailing Stephen_Carlisle@ibc.doi.gov. Thank you!

The views and conclusions contained in this work are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government.

ON THE COVER

Maria Gonzalez-Melendez and Ana Suero-Ogando are Department of the Interior employees who were the first recognized same-sex couple to be deployed to a war zone by the U.S. Army.


Ana is a Customer Support Analyst in the Customer Support Center, Enterprise Services Division of the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Together they represent the best and brightest in our federal family. Read more about them on pages 13 and 14.