

DIVERSITY MATTERS



Spring 2017

This is an advertisement.

EDITOR'S NOTE: CHARACTER MATTERS *By Nancy A. Vincent*



Every day we celebrate very dynamic women who impact our lives. During March, we highlighted the accomplishments of historical and ceiling-shattering women. Tonya Mitchem Grindon is one such dynamic and ceiling-shattering woman. Several years ago, we highlighted her many accomplishments, when in 2008, Grindon became the first woman to chair the Securities/Corporate Governance Practice Group at Baker Donelson. Today she continues to chart her own course and break down barriers. In so doing, she has developed a very successful practice in corporate finance/securities, an area long dominated by men, and has developed one of the most demographically diverse practice groups at Baker Donelson in an area of law not known for diversity. Grindon has been very intentional about hiring successful lawyers and being self-aware.

Grindon has taken her own advice and diversified her search for excellent talent, where the Corporate Finance/Securities Department now has LGBT representation, 10.5 percent minority attorneys and 26.3 percent women. This year, Grindon continued to take a path very few women have taken, when she was named to head the Firm's Business Department, the first woman in the Firm to hold that position. She has been a member of the Firm's Board since 2013, serves as chair of the Firm's audit and finance committee, and continues to have a thriving corporate finance/securities practice. She attributes her success in her practice to being comfortable in her own skin (i.e., developing personal relationships based upon mutual interests and referrals rather than following how others may have been successful in developing business). Along with being true to herself, Tonya also is loyal to the Firm and to those with whom she works, as well as respectful to all she meets. There's no substitute for character.

As we end Women's History Month, we celebrate someone at Baker Donelson who continues to build bridges and extend her ladder of success to a wide variety of people: Tonya Mitchem Grindon.



Tonya (left) with her family.

“

For quite a few years, I didn't realize it, but I was almost exclusively hiring lawyers who were 'mini-mes' (white, outgoing women).

It wasn't until I participated in the Firm's implicit bias training, did I realize that I unintentionally had been hiring lawyers who resembled me. Following this training, I began to look for qualities that had also made other people successful.

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THE ORLANDO ATTACK – A FEMALE AMERICAN-MUSLIM ATTORNEY PERSPECTIVE

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I first heard about the Orlando attack from an American Muslim friend who was residing in Orlando and had posted on social media to pray for the city. As that day progressed, I soon discovered that this incident would be known as the deadliest mass shooting in American history, and the worst terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11, leaving 49 people dead and 53 injured.

I remember feeling sick to my stomach on that ominous day, especially as I was fasting for the Islamic month of Ramadan. It just did not add up for me, or for many other Muslim Americans, who were observing one of the holiest times of the Islamic lunar calendar. Bad-mouthing and arguing in anger are not permissible in Islam, let alone causing harm to any being.

Yet, in the wake of this horrific attack at Pulse nightclub in downtown Orlando, the overwhelming reaction of mainstream media was to tie the attack to terrorism committed by a Muslim. As the days passed, several different articles and interviews surfaced showing that the attacker, Omar Mateen, was a disgruntled American-born licensed security guard who was a frequent attendee of Pulse himself and who had a revenge motive at the nightclub. There were many reports of his emotional instability, including from his ex-wife. Rather than being highlighted in mainstream media, this information has been diminished.

Instead, media outlets and, of course, some politicians, focused on other issues that help drive Islamophobia in this country. Every such incident leads to a striking increase in hate crimes against Muslims in the U.S. For instance, according to *The New York Times*, hate crimes against Muslim Americans and mosques tripled across the U.S. after Donald Trump's call for a ban of Muslims following the San Bernardino attack in December 2015. Victims of such assaults and murders include Americans who look like me, simply because they may dress differently than the mainstream.

In particular, there were a number of incidents of backlash against Muslims post-Orlando shooting. On June 30, 2016, a fasting Muslim woman running to catch her train in Chicago was tackled and strip-searched by five Chicago police officers. On July 2, 2016, a Muslim man was beaten in front of a mosque in Fort Pierce, Florida after the suspect allegedly said, "You Muslims need to get back to your country." Another incident occurred on July 3, 2016 when a Muslim doctor was shot on his way to a Houston mosque for morning prayers. On June 19, 2016, at the mosque in Sunrise, Florida where I attended weekend school growing up, a woman walked into the prayer hall, making threats against the mosque and bringing an alleged bomb.

The Orlando attack, just like every other incident tied to Islam by media, prompted my husband and me to have the age-old conversation about our safety. As a practicing Muslim who wears a headscarf, or hijab, in public, I am a visible target for anyone harboring anti-Muslim sentiments. Even if the rise in Islamophobia does not translate into statutory crimes, all Muslim Americans are nonetheless affected by it, experiencing racism and stereotyping to some degree in public, grade schools, universities and careers.

Unlike other attacks which are tied to Muslims, however, the shooting at Pulse had led to a plethora of dialogues regarding pressing issues aside from terrorism. I witnessed for the first time this type of incident leading to a swarm of LGBTQ American Muslims openly writing their thoughts, and being heard. Yes, there is a Muslim LGBTQ community, not only in the U.S., but around the world.

Even further, the attack at Pulse had sparked a conversation across the board about glaring domestic issues related to mental health access, gun control, voting, counterterrorism practices and first response procedures. This was unusual because most incidents labeled as terrorism invite more spotlight on foreign policy, and how to combat the "outsiders." Yet, here we are, engaging in the political process of how we can improve our domestic policies.

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THE ORLANDO ATTACK – A FEMALE AMERICAN-MUSLIM ATTORNEY PERSPECTIVE, *continued*



The morning after the Orlando attack, on June 13, 2016, I attended a hearing in Broward County Civil Court. It was not a routine day in foreclosure court. Before

beginning his motion calendar, Judge Joel T. Lazarus stood and addressed the tightly-packed courtroom in remembrance of the victims, voicing domestic issues that needed to be addressed and offering a moment of silence. Tears ran down my face as he spoke. This was not about Muslims versus non-Muslims. It touched upon all of humanity.

A fellow female attorney in the Broward County courtroom noticed my state of emotions and walked toward me, patting my shoulder and softly counseling me to “hang in there.” She was not the only one who had reached out to me in support after the Orlando shooting. I was approached by fellow colleagues, old and new. I was surprised at how quickly people from all walks of life came together in support and remembrance of the victims. Our Firm, Baker Donelson, has even donated to the OneOrlando Fund, encouraging its employees to donate as well.

There is hope, for a better society with more understanding and acceptance of different views. We cannot allow fear to prevent us from living and working to improve our society and policies. This small token of our efforts is the least we can do in remembrance of the Pulse victims, and countless other victims of attacks around the world.

CHOICES

David Gevertz, 404.221.6512, dgevertz@bakerdonelson.com



I live in Atlanta, Georgia, the crown jewel of the Southeast. Along with its benefits, we enjoy dense traffic, inconsistent sports teams and challenged public schools. I mention the latter as my wife and I have sent both of our children

(ages 17 and 14) to public school since they were kindergarteners.

Our initial decision was easy. We moved to a neighborhood with a great elementary school that the neighborhood kids attended. Attrition set in beginning in fourth grade, as our children’s friends peeled off to secure spots at competitive private schools. About that time, we began hearing rumors about the local middle schools, where drugs were “everywhere,” teachers were “awful” and violence was “rampant.”

Had public schools gotten so much worse since my wife and I attended them? Upon drilling down, many of these characterizations turned out to be exaggerated or even made up. Conversations with parents who actually sent their

children to them revealed an imperfect learning environment, but one filled with homework, extracurricular activities, buses, friends and teachers that sounded awfully familiar. In short, a normal teenage existence. Insecure in our decision, we nevertheless sent them on their way and haven’t once reconsidered.

To be sure, this decision has impacted us in many ways, some of which I never would have expected. Our kids’ high school is “majority-minority,” so most of their friends (and all of my daughter’s boyfriends) look different than us. Their middle and high schools have large free and reduced lunch programs, so we talk about whether or not our kids want to have friends come over, or whether hosting them at our “rich house” would damage their school cred. We have experienced both great and not-so-great teachers. On graduation, their high school feeds mostly into smaller, local colleges as opposed to the Ivy League.

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CHOICES, *continued*

Through it all, my wife and I have enjoyed watching our kids mesh with the real world, struggle with familiar challenges and grow, perhaps, beyond their years. With luck, they will bring savvy and emotional intelligence, if not a high school pedigree, along with them to college and beyond. I can't wait to see what comes next for them.



On February 7, Baker Donelson's Birmingham office hosted lunch for 103 students, teachers and chaperones from the Dekalb County School for the Arts from Atlanta. The students were on a field trip to the Civil Rights Museum and 16th Street Baptist Church, and treated Baker Donelson attorneys and staffers to a beautiful acapella rendition of "America the Beautiful."



Students from the Dekalb County School for the Arts

BAKER DONELSON DEMONSTRATES COMMITMENT TO LGBT EQUALITY WITH REPEAT OF PERFECT SCORE ON HRC EQUALITY INDEX

Sam Felker, 615.726.5558, samfelker@bakerdonelson.com



The Human Rights Campaign is considered a leading national advocate for LGBTQ equality and its Corporate Equality Index is the national benchmarking tool on corporate policies and practices pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees. HRC recently released its 2017 Equality Index report and 517 major businesses – spanning nearly every industry and geography – earned a top score of 100 percent and the distinction of “Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality.” For the second year in a row, Baker Donelson made that elite group of companies, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to LGBTQ equality in the workplace.

“We are honored to achieve a perfect score on the Equality Index for a second year in a row,” said Mark Baugh, chairman of the Firm’s Diversity Committee. “It took incredible commitment from the management and our CEO Ben Adams to make this happen.” Baugh noted that the Firm’s LGBTQ employee resource group, Affinitas, made the HRC Index perfect score a goal several years ago and advocated for the changes necessary to achieve this recognition. “Along the way, by making the necessary changes to our policies and benefits, we became a better and more inclusive firm,” said Baugh.

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BAKER DONELSON DEMONSTRATES COMMITMENT TO LGBT EQUALITY WITH REPEAT OF PERFECT SCORE ON HRC EQUALITY INDEX, *continued*

Of the 517 companies with perfect scores, Baker Donelson joined 112 other law firms, the most of any industry sector, suggesting that the legal profession is on the forefront of LGBT workplace equality. “These businesses know that LGBTQ equality isn’t just the right thing to do, it makes them stronger in our global economy,” said Chad Griffin, HRC President. “Ensuring fairness in the workplace is a value and increasingly a policy norm, and not just in the U.S. Now, more than 90 percent of Corporate Equality Index-rated businesses have embraced both sexual orientation and gender identity employment protections for their U.S. and global operations.”

The HRC survey criteria reflect leading policies, benefits and practices for the LGBT workforce and their families. The criteria are premised on the notion of parity rather than prescription. In other words, HRC promotes the adoption of LGBT-specific language into existing corporate practices (e.g., ensuring that existing health care coverage affords coverage for routine and chronic care of transgender individuals as well as transition-related medical coverage). By using the HRC survey as a guide, businesses can ensure that their existing policy and benefits infrastructure is inclusive of the LGBT workforce and their families, resulting in greater recruitment and retention of a talented, diverse workforce. The voluntary survey rates companies based on these criteria:

- Equal opportunity (including sexual orientation and gender identity) employment and vendor policies;
- Equivalent employment benefits for same-sex spouses and partners (including transgender-inclusive health insurance);
- Organizational LGBT competence (e.g., LGBT employee group, diversity training, professional development for LGBT employees, option for LGBT employees to “self-identify”);
- Public commitment to LGBT community (e.g., philanthropic activities, supplier diversity program, recruiting and marketing); and
- No large-scale official or public anti-LGBT blemish on the company’s recent record. Note: No employer received this deduction in the 2017 HRC Survey.

These criteria are updated each year, as HRC adapts to changes in LGBT business mores, so that the HRC survey continues to represent the “gold standard” for LGBT-friendly and inclusive employment policies and procedures.

This 15th edition of the Corporate Equality Index saw the largest increase in top-rated businesses in the history of HRC’s survey and the largest jump ever in businesses offering transgender-inclusive health care coverage – from 511 last year to 647 this year. This was welcome news in a year which saw an unprecedented wave of anti-LGBTQ bills spread across the country, from Mississippi to North Carolina. “Corporate champions state to state – from South Dakota and Mississippi, and North Carolina and Georgia – made their voices heard and stood firmly on the side of fairness and equality,” said Griffin.

Despite the good news from the HRC survey, much work remains. “Today, marriage equality and hate crimes protections are the law of the land. Barriers to LGBTQ service in the armed forces have been lifted. But the lack of consistent, explicit federal protections in employment, housing, credit, public services and other essential aspects of American life remain major barriers to full equality for the LGBTQ community,” said Griffin, who remains optimistic. “While there is much to do and many key civil rights fights ahead, thanks to these private sector leaders, the march towards greater equality is not slowing down.” Baker Donelson is proud to be leading the march.



Sam Felker represented Baker Donelson at the recent HRC Celebration for the 517 companies who scored a perfect 100 on the Equality Index 2017.

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NEWS BRIEFS

FIRM ATTORNEYS SELECTED FOR LEADERSHIP COUNCIL ON LEGAL DIVERSITY PROGRAMS



[Nakimuli Primer-Davis](#) has been selected for the 2017 Fellows Program of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), a national organization made up of the legal profession's top general counsels and managing partners.

She joins a class of more than 200 attorneys from around the country who have been selected to the 2017 class.



Additionally, Memphis Associate [Kavita Shelat](#) and Nashville Associate [Sye Hickey](#) were selected to participate in LCLD's Pathfinder Program. This program is designed to work with diverse, high-potential, early-career law firm associates and in-house counsel to develop practical tools for relationship building, leadership and career development strategies during six months

of in-person meetings, online learning opportunities, compass conversations, peer networking and study groups. More information is available at www.lclldnet.org.

BAKER DONELSON EARNS RANKINGS ON FORTUNE'S "100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR®" AND "50 BEST WORKPLACES FOR PARENTS" LISTS

Baker Donelson has once again been named one of FORTUNE magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For®." In its eighth consecutive year to be included, the law firm is ranked 95th in this prestigious list recognizing companies with exceptional workplace cultures.

The FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to Work For®" list is based on employee ratings of their workplace culture, including the level of trust they feel towards leaders, the pride they take in their jobs and the camaraderie they experience with coworkers. Qualities such as the Firm's team mentality and a spirit of cooperation contributed to Baker Donelson's inclusion in this year's list.

In this and other workplace surveys, Baker Donelson employees often mention a family atmosphere, a service-driven culture and a strong sense of camaraderie not usually found at professional services firms among the reasons they feel the law firm is a great place to work. Baker Donelson has maintained this culture while experiencing significant growth in recent years, including its combination earlier this year with Ober|Kaler, resulting in the Firm becoming one of the 50 largest law firms in the country, with more than 800 attorneys and advisors in 24 offices across ten states and Washington, D.C.

Baker Donelson has also been named to FORTUNE'S first-ever list of "50 Best Workplaces for Parents." The Firm is ranked 43rd on the list, which is based on anonymous employee feedback, as well as benefits provided to help mothers and fathers participate fully in their organizations. Among the parent-friendly policies that helped Baker Donelson earn its ranking on the list is its parental leave policy, which offers 16 weeks of paid leave for both male and female attorneys to take as primary caregivers and which also allows intermittent leave for both primary and non-primary caregiver attorneys. In 2016, as many men as women took advantage of the parental leave policy. Baker Donelson also put parental leave mentors in place in every office to help attorneys transition successfully in and out of leave and is studying implementing free express breast milk shipping for mothers who travel for business.

BAKER DONELSON NAMES ATTORNEYS TO FIRM LEADERSHIP ROLES



Baker Donelson has named a number of female attorneys to new leadership roles within the Firm. [Tonya Mitchem Grindon](#) (Nashville) has been named chair of Baker Donelson's Business Department, [Mary Ann Jackson](#) (Memphis) has been named chair of the Corporate Finance & Securities Group and [Christy Crider](#) (Nashville) has been named chair of Baker Donelson's Health Care Litigation Group. She will also continue to serve in her roles as chair of Baker Donelson's Long Term Care Group as well as the Firm's Women's Initiative. Ms. Grindon has also been named to the Firm's Board of Directors.



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NEW FACES

With Baker Donelson's merger with respected Baltimore-based firm Ober | Kaler, the Firm welcomed 38 new women and diverse attorneys. Below are those new faces from this merger, including their titles, practice areas and office locations:

BALTIMORE – BUSINESS LITIGATION



Emily Billig
Associate



Kelly Preteroti
Shareholder



Diane Schmitt
Shareholder



Melinda Antalek
Senior Counsel

BALTIMORE – COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND BUSINESS COUNSELING

BALTIMORE – CORPORATE FINANCE AND SECURITIES



Abigail Baker
Of Counsel



Victoria Baylin
Of Counsel



Darlene Davis
Shareholder



George Jones III
Shareholder



Penny Somer-Greif
Of Counsel



Nicole Soraruf
Associate

BALTIMORE – FINANCIAL SERVICES TRANSACTIONS

BALTIMORE – HEALTH LAW



Kristin Bohl
Shareholder



Kristin Carter
Shareholder



Hannah Clark
Associate



Kelly Davidson
Shareholder



Samantha Flanzer
Associate



Leslie Goldsmith
Shareholder



Carel Hedlund
Senior Counsel



Julie Kass
Shareholder



Meredith Larson
Associate



Catherine Martin
Shareholder



Carol McCarthy
Senior Counsel



Christine Morse
Shareholder



Donna Senft
Shareholder



Emily Wein
Shareholder

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NEW FACES, *continued*

BALTIMORE – INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY



Cynthia Sanders
Associate



Neil Duke
Shareholder



Donna Glover
Associate



Jennifer Curry
Associate

BALTIMORE – TAX



Betty Bannat
Senior Counsel



Courtney Brust
Associate



Lindsay D'Andrea
Associate



Mary Edwards
Shareholder



Wendy Yoviene
Shareholder

WASHINGTON, D.C. CITY CENTER – GOVERNMENT ENFORCEMENT AND INVESTIGATION



Elizabeth Capiello
Associate



Bryna Shmerling
Associate



Gina Simms
Shareholder



Susan Turner
Of Counsel



Jacqueline Henson
Shareholder

WASHINGTON, D.C. CITY CENTER – HEALTH LAW

Baker Donelson also has a number of additional new faces to share:



In Atlanta, Megan Quinn has joined the Firm as a staff attorney in the Labor & Employment Group, and Hannah Jarrells is an associate in the New Litigator Group.



Katherine Anderson has joined the Memphis office as of counsel in Health Care Litigation.



Heather Iverson has joined the Real Estate/Finance Team in Nashville as an associate, and Frank Xue has joined as an associate in the Commercial Transactions and Business Counseling Group.



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AWARDS AND RECOGNITION



[Teresa L. Bailey](#), [Linda S. Finley](#) and [Linda A. Klein](#) are among the 13 attorneys with Baker Donelson who were named to the 2017 edition of Georgia Super Lawyers.



[Abbey Baker](#) and [Doreen Edelman](#) (both Washington, D.C.) finished with High Honors on the 2016 Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll.



[Rachel Barlotta](#) (Birmingham) was selected by Alabama State Bar as one of 30 members for the 2017 Leadership Forum in Class 13.



[Jonell Beeler](#) (Jackson) was recognized among the Top 10 Lawyers in the *Mississippi Business Journal's* 2016 Leadership in Law list.



[Sheryl Bey](#) (Jackson) was named to the 2016 Mid-South Super Lawyers list, and [Nakimuli Davis-Primer](#), [Wendy Ellard](#), [Jennifer Hall](#), [Adria Jetton](#) and [Ashley Tullos](#) (all Jackson) were named 2016 Mid-South Rising Stars.



[Lisa Borden](#) (Birmingham) received the Susan Bevill Livingston award, which is presented by the Legal Aid Society of Birmingham in memory of Susan Bevill Livingston to honor an attorney that has provided extraordinary advocacy and counsel in the areas of indigent defense and pro-bono representation.



[Julie Boswell](#) (Nashville) was recognized in the 2017 *Nashville Business Journal* "Woman of Influence" awards program.



[Amy Elder](#) (Jackson) was named one of *Mississippi Business Journal's* Fifty Leading Business Women for 2016.



[Sharonda Fancher](#) (Birmingham) was named one of *Birmingham Business Journal's* Rising Star Lawyers for 2016.



[Donna Fraiche](#) (New Orleans) was appointed to the American Hospital Association Committee on Governance. She was also named as a Louisiana Bar Foundation "Distinguished Attorney," will be honored at a gala in April and has been appointed to serve on the Nominating Committee of GNO, Inc.



[Charles Grant](#) (Nashville) was the co-recipient of the 2017 J.C. Napier Trailblazer Award.



[Emily Lee](#) (Houston) was appointed vice chair of the American Bar Association Health Law Section's business and transactions interest group.

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AWARDS AND RECOGNITION, *continued*



Jill McCook (Knoxville) was selected by the judges of the Eastern District of Tennessee to serve as a member of the Merit Selection Panel for the Appointment of United States Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of Tennessee at Knoxville.



Kathlyn Perez (New Orleans) was honored by Louisiana Appleseed for her pro bono leadership.



Sara Turner (Birmingham) was named a BTI Client Service All-Star for 2017. She was also named to a one-year term as vice chair of the Defense Research Institute's Retail and Hospitality committee.



Jill Steinberg (Memphis) has achieved recertification as a civil trial advocate with the National Board of Trial Advocacy (NBTA).



Jennifer McNamara (New Orleans) was named to the *New Orleans CityBusiness* Women of the Year 2016 list.

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WHERE WE'VE BEEN/WHERE WE'RE GOING

January 4:	Tennessee State University (TSU) Presidential Prayer Service – Nashville
January 21:	Second Vanderbilt Black Law Students Association (BLSA) Student and Alumni Event – Nashville
February 3 – 5:	Chart Your Own Course – Orlando
February 4:	Kozyak Minority Mentoring Annual Picnic – Miami
February 7:	Dekalb School of the Arts/Atlanta – Sponsored field trip to Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
February 17:	17th Annual Julian Blackshear Scholarship Gala – Knoxville
February 19:	Tennessee Equality Project (TEP) Gumbo Contest – Memphis
February 23:	Napier-Looby Barristers' Banquet – Nashville
February 23 – 25:	National Bar Association (NBA) Commercial Law Section Corporate Counsel Conference – Atlanta
March 15:	International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC) Southern Regional Meeting – New Orleans
March 22 – 23:	Leadership Institute for Women of Color Attorneys Conference – Atlanta
March 25:	Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Equality Dinner & Gala – Nashville
March 30 – April 3:	Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) Mid-Year Corporate Counsel Conference – Miami
April 2:	Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network (GLLN) Gala – Fort Lauderdale
April 6 – 7:	22nd Annual Asian Pacific Interest Section State Bar of Texas Conference – Austin
April 6:	Corporate Counsel Women of Color One-Day Career Strategies Conference for Law Firm Associates – New York
April 18:	Alabama State Bar Minority Pre-Law Conference – Birmingham
May 2 – 3:	ABA Litigation Section – LGBT Forum – San Francisco
May 25:	Georgia Asian Pacific American Bar Association (GAPABA) – Atlanta
June 15 – 16:	DRI Diversity for Success – Chicago
June 24 – 25:	Pride Festival – Nashville

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