

A Letter to Our Membership regarding Charlottesville

August 23, 2017

Dear membership, friends, and partners:

We see you and have been holding you during these past weeks in light of the White Supremacist terrorism and tragedy that occurred in Charlottesville, and as we continue to recognize the racist, anti-Black, anti-Semitic, xenophobic terrorism and tragedies that preceded these events and continue across the country. We write to communicate our solidarity with you in these times and to hold all of us accountable to getting and staying engaged, as we are able, in protecting our communities from immediate and systemic violence.

The presence of American Nazis, the Klan, and white supremacists is not new, and this is not a resurgence. To state otherwise is to negate the real violence that has been perpetuated over the centuries since this landmass was colonized. Actors, enablers, and silent majorities of white supremacy have always been here; these latest events, in which white supremacists have made their presence known and enacted violence with emboldened force, while perhaps surprising to some, are not a deviation from the course of our country's long history of violence against people of color.

In the landscape of higher education, the events in Charlottesville have also reignited tensions around the use of free speech to marginalize communities of color, Muslim, queer and trans communities, Jewish communities, and others. As professionals working within institutions of higher education, we are often faced with the challenging balance between supporting some of our most marginalized campus communities and upholding an institutional commitment to the free speech of all people, including those voices that further marginalize historically oppressed communities. We must employ strategies to protect and empower our most marginalized communities and educate our constituencies, to find better solutions to these tensions. We

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Wednesday, August 23, 2017 04:17 PM

recognize that many of our members are trying to balance the complexity of this work and hope to engage each other in future webinars and Consortium-sponsored events on this topic.

As an organization committed to queer and trans justice, we are intrinsically connected to racial justice. We are not doing our work as LGBTQIA+ resource professionals if we are not doing racial justice work. This work starts with each of us, and we, as the executive board, take responsibility and ownership of our privileges and actions of compliance with white violence and supremacy. We all must recognize our power and influence through our work and in our positionalities, as we push our institutions to do better and empower our communities. As colleagues and partners in this work we are here for any guidance you need to push forward in this effort- at all of our institutions, with all of our students, colleagues, friends, and family.

In Community,

The Consortium Executive Board

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The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals envisions higher education

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environments where LGBTQ people, inclusive of all of our intersecting identities, are fully liberated. We are a member-based organization working towards the liberation of LGBTQ people in higher education. We support individuals who work on campuses to educate and support people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as advocate for more inclusive policies and practices through an intersectional and racial justice framework. Learn more about the Consortium at lgbtcampus.org.