Shannon Minter emerged as one of the nation’s leading legal advocates for LGBTQ+ rights, defending trans and queer people against discriminatory family and constitutional laws before the California (Proposition 8) and Florida Supreme Courts and the U.S. Supreme Court (Christian Legal Society v. Martinez). In 2002, Minter gained national attention when he won the case of a trans man, Michael Kantaras, who was trying to keep custody of his children. Although the Florida Supreme Court reversed the case on appeal in 2004, Kantaras achieved joint custody in a mediated settlement.

Trans men’s organizing continued to expand in the first two decades of the 21st century, as more men took positions on the boards of LGBTQ+ nonprofits, policy institutes, health collectives, and city and state planning committees to change laws and social policies adversely affecting them. Trans men’s establishment of businesses, film festivals, social retreats, nonprofits, support groups, independent presses, and annual conferences, as well as their increasing presence in academia, the military, law, and government, made them visible in a way that was unimaginable even a generation ago.

Trystan Theosophus Cotten

See also Dillon, Michael; Erickson, Reed; Garland, Jack Bee; History; Sullivan, Lou; Teena, Brandon; Trans Women

Further Readings


Trans People of Color Coalition

Founded in 2010, the Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC) was the first national organization in the United States created to address the specific needs of trans people of color. Its mission is to provide a voice for trans people of color, foster community leadership, and advance justice for all trans people through trainings and presentations about the intersections of various forms of oppression, including racism, transphobia, and transmisogyny. At a time when the LGBTQIA+ right movement in the United States continues to be led primarily by white activists and often fails to focus on the issues that specifically affect trans people of color, TPOCC brings the experiences of trans people of color from the margins to the center of discussions and enables them to be seen as their full selves.

Early Activities

TPOCC was founded by trans attorney and activist Kylar Broadus after recognizing that the trans and larger LGBTQIA+ movements were often no better at addressing issues of racism and classism than the larger society. He hoped that the group could bring trans people of color together, consider their shared experiences, and then raise their concerns within the wider LGBTQIA+ and people of color communities and with local and federal policymakers and officials.
To foster community among trans people of color in its early years, the group hosted an annual hot dog roast in the Washington, D.C. area that attracted people from throughout the eastern United States. TPOCC has also sponsored gatherings for trans people of color at annual LGBTQIA+ and trans conferences, including holding an opening reception for years at the Philadelphia Trans Wellness Conference, and organized town halls in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco to bring trans people of color together and hear their concerns.

In his role as executive director of TPOCC, Broadus testified before the U.S. Senate in support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in 2012. He was the first openly trans person to speak in front of Congress. TPOCC has also been on Capitol Hill to help organize the annual “OUT on the Hill” leadership summit with the National Black Justice Coalition.

Collaborations

TPOCC is perhaps best known for its collaborations with other LGBTQIA+ organizations to further the inclusion of trans people of color and their perspectives. It partnered with the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and the National LGBTQ Task Force on congressional lobby days to advocate for federal antidiscrimination and hate crimes laws that protect the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. TPOCC also worked with NCTE to recruit people of color for its two national studies of the trans community: the National Transgender Discrimination Survey (2011) and the U.S. Transgender Survey (2016). Both studies showed that trans people of color, especially trans women of color, were more likely to experience harassment, discrimination, and violence in all areas of life than white trans people.

TPOCC has also collaborated with trans-, LGBTQIA+-, and people of color–related conferences to include sessions focused on trans people of color. For example, the group has led workshops at the National Black Justice Coalition Conference and organized the first trans women of color panels at the National LGBTQ Task Force’s Creating Change Conference and at the Trans Wellness Conference. The latter event was hosted by well-known actor and activist Laverne Cox, which helped draw attention to the hostile climate for trans women of color, including the fact that dozens of trans women of color are murdered each year, at a time when few people outside of trans people of color communities were discussing these issues. To further raise awareness about this pandemic of violence, TPOCC partnered with the Human Rights Campaign from 2015 to 2017 to release yearly reports that documented the individuals killed in the United States because of their gender identity or expression, the vast majority of whom were trans women of color. The group also worked closely with WITNESS Media Lab’s “Capturing Hate” Project, which used eyewitness videos to document the extent of anti-trans violence.

Many people of color pursue careers in the military because other employment and education options are less readily available, and trans people of color are no different.

TPOCC was involved in challenging the Trump administration’s ban on trans people being able to serve in the military. Working with GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, TPOCC reached out to trans people of color who were interested in enlisting, who were currently serving, or who had served in order to share their stories with the media as part of efforts to show the negative effects of the ban.

TPOCC has also partnered with some of the other trans people of color organizations that have been formed in recent years. With the TransLatin@ Coalition, TPOCC has sponsored panels and workshops at conferences and joined them in participating in rallies and marches. With Black Trans Media, TPOCC is organizing to address homelessness, food insecurity, and unemployment/underemployment among Black trans people and to respond to police violence against Black trans people, which is part of the larger targeting of Black people by law enforcement officials.

Significance

The dominant white society often treats “people of color” as a single, monolithic group, but there is tremendous diversity among people of color, and TPOCC is noteworthy for bringing different races of trans people together to address shared issues and be in solidarity with each other. Moreover, given that trans people of color often
feel marginalized in both predominantly white trans and LGBTQIA+ movements and predominantly cis racial justice movements, TPOCC has provided a space where trans people of color can be seen in their entirety and not have to de-emphasize a part of themselves. As a result, TPOCC has helped empower trans people of color and provided a sense of community to individuals who have often felt isolated, silenced, and invisible.

Kylar W. Broadus

See also Activism; Military/Military Ban; National Center for Lesbian Rights; National Center for Transgender Equality; Racialized Femininities; Racialized Masculinities; Transmisogynoir; United States Transgender Survey (USTS)

Further Readings


The Trans Pride Flag

The Trans Pride Flag was developed for trans people to have a specific image to represent themselves, similar to how the LGBTQIA+ community in general is symbolized by the Rainbow Flag. Over the past 20 years, the flag has been widely adopted, such that it is commonly seen at LGBTQIA+ and trans events, on a vast array of trans-themed merchandise, and in media coverage of trans people. Having a flag of their own has been critical to increasing the visibility of trans communities and to helping trans people feel included and recognized. The flag has also served as a unifying symbol, as it has been adopted by trans people around the world.

The Flag’s Origins

The most popular version of the Trans Pride Flag was developed by U.S. trans activist Monica Helms in 1999. She was urged to create it by Michael Page, who had designed the Bisexual Pride Flag and felt that the trans community likewise needed to be represented by its own flag. She came up with a flag consisting of five horizontal stripes of equal width: light blue stripes on the top and bottom, pink stripes next to them, and a white stripe in the middle. Helms chose these colors because light blue is traditionally associated with boys and masculinity and pink with girls and femininity. The white stripe stands for nonbinary trans people. Helms also chose to design the flag to be horizontally symmetrical, saying in an article in ThinkProgress that “no matter which way you fly it, it is always correct, signifying us finding correctness in our lives.”

Figure 1  Monica F. Helms With the Trans Pride Flag

Source: Courtesy of Monica F. Helms. Photo by Mara Kiesling.