

Together Lexington
Courageous Conversations
LGBTQ+ Inclusion
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FUNNELING IDEAS INTO ACTION

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Purpose and Outcomes

Overall Purpose: To encourage meaningful discussion and awareness among all members of our community.

Meeting Purpose: To identify concerns and issues regarding the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population.

Outcomes:

- Prioritized list of key issues
- List of ideas for how these concerns/issues might be addressed
- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

Participants were given postcards and asked to select an image that spoke to them about the LGBTQ+ population's inclusion or lack of inclusion in Lexington. Participants then introduced themselves and shared their postcards. The following questions and comments were captured after the introductory activity.

Find an image that speaks to you about the LGBTQ+ population's inclusion or lack of inclusion in Lexington.

- As good and fun as things seem, you never know what's getting ready to come up and bite you
- "Coming out" is language that is used by someone that is comfortable with their lifestyle to acknowledge to the greater society, but many people are scared of being judged and try to hide who/what they are
- Everyone just wants a good life and wants to be happy because deep down, we all want the same thing
- I am concerned about the medical setting because I feel like they're not as receiving as it seems on the surface; I feel like the community is pulling-back and there's more of a segregation; People are trying to hide their true identities
- I think that we all have our own identities, but we can be allies for others; I feel like with many things, but especially with the LGBTQ+ community, I am worried about the direction we are going – we are going backwards
- I would like the community to be very inclusive, diverse and positive; however, I find that Lexington's LGBTQ+ community is mostly white and you'd be hard pressed to find many black people; people of color are far fewer at LGBTQ+ events
- It can be extremely alarming to "come out"; you can be scared, but can also get stronger
- Much of the discrimination comes from the pulpit, but there are alternative voices from the pulpit of several churches in Lexington

- When I think of the LGBT community, I think of white men who hold power; Lexington is very much centered on white, gay men; There is an absence of representation of the spectrum of identities

How does the inclusion or lack of inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population impact Lexington?

- Feeling good about the community you live in
- Feeling good at job interviews – will I be treated fairly? Can I be who I really am?
- It makes it harder for big businesses to want to “put down roots” because not being welcoming is a deterrent – it’s going to be much harder for Kentucky to recruit talents to come here
- Richard Florida (author) – his view that nobody is perfect
- Think of the people who live in Appalachia that feel like they can come to Lexington and be accepted, but also think of the people who leave the state entirely – there’s an economic impact to Lexington and the state
- We deprive our children of opportunities to thrive in the future community if they are raised in predominately white neighborhoods, go to private schools, belong to private social clubs, etc. because they will not be informed about the future
- We have children who are LGBTQ+ (more and more are coming out at younger ages) and their experience is not good, results are horrible – they are experiencing pain among their peers – heterosexual peers are not having to deal with those pains
- You want jobs where people feel like they can come, contribute and make a good living

Where have you seen or experienced positive examples of inclusion regarding the LGBTQ+ population in Lexington?

- Acknowledged gay man as Lexington Mayor
- Lexington has a fair number of open and inclusive congregations (in multiple denominations)
- Lexmark and United Way would not provide funding to those who were non-discriminatory
- Pride Festival
- The approval of the Fairness Ordinance
- The best day of the year to live in Lexington, KY is the Fourth of July – it seems like downtown Lexington is a “melting pot” – minorities will go downtown for events that they wouldn’t go to if it was in another location (e.g., Masterson Station) – everyone who is in Lexington on that day feels like they belong because it’s a day of “community”
- The gathering at Triangle Park after the shooting in Florida – the diversity of folks who came out for that was wonderful
- There are stories in our community that people need to hear

- There's been a lot of hurt through churches and to be in the presence of clergy who are accepting is very moving
- We have an alliance group who supports LGBTQ+ at BCTC that is fairly new and will be reaching out to students, faculty and staff – they will be collaborating with UK
- Years ago when we added domestic partner benefits at Lexmark it was a huge uproar; we are now trying to be on the forefront of benefits and want to be one of the great corporate places to work and we are putting together a tool kit for those who are transitioning – tool kits to educate supervisors, co-workers, etc., to help have a framework in place to support “everyone”

Where have you seen or experienced examples of the opposite; lack of inclusion?

- A lot of what I deal with is how to change attitudes. I talked to two Lexington magazines about publishing an LGBTQ+ article. One magazine refused the idea because they had advertisers who they thought would leave if they published the article and the second would only publish the article in a special “mental health” issue of the magazine, but even in that article, what could be included was very limited.
- As a whole, the Lexington community is very segregated/isolating
- Even at events where the LGBTQ+ community is attending, people are still segregated into their groups; they're not mingling or talking to one another
- Having to pay “out of pocket” expenses for medical care is a burden for transgender people
- Martin Luther King, Jr. parade
- There's a fear that transgender people will not get the medical care that they need – am I safe? Will an EMT treat me if I needed help?
- There's a lack of allies in Lexington
- There's a lack of visibility of transgender people and transgender people that are “out there” don't always represent the population in the best way
- Transgender people (in general) are not being included
- Transgender people do not feel safe in Lexington
- When you add-in race, that changes everything because race “trumps” the LGBTQ+ community; people don't feel connected to the LGBTQ+ community that is here, as it's very much focused on “whiteness”

What are the key issues regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion in Lexington?

Participants were asked to answer the key question within their small groups. Once all of their issues and concerns were listed, each small group was asked to identify the two most critical issues for the community to address. Their prioritized responses are presented below.

Critical Issues and Concerns

- Coming out more publically
- Education
- Need safety, support and affirmation for the transgender population
- Need to improve how LGBTQ+ staff, teachers, students, etc. experience Fayette County Public Schools
- Need to make LGBTQ+ people themselves more open, erase the stigma of being LGBTQ+
- Workplace attitudes affecting employment decisions

Additional Issues and Concerns

- Acceptance in more settings (social, medical, employment)
- Access to nonjudgmental healthcare providers
- Discrimination - jobs, schools, churches, organizations, public places, etc.
- Discrimination and hate from churches
- Discrimination in schools
- Economic disparities based on LGBTQ+ identifies
- Education of LGBTQ+ issues within public schools and government business community. Official policies to protect LGBTQ+ rights (Employment, health benefits, housing)
- FCPS does not support or protect LGBTQ students, staff, or teachers
- Fear of coming out and of others who may be different
- How children are raised/taught
- Improving disparities
- Inclusion
- It's okay to be open with hate these days
- Lack of diversity and acceptance limits economic and community growth
- Lack of knowledge and understanding in community-at-large
- Lack of understanding/education (secrecy)
- Latinx, Muslim, Asian LGBTQ+ community is nearly invisible

- Not good support or role models in schools for younger LGBTQ+ people
- Not okay to be visible
- Not operating through a lens of intersectionality
- Police presence in LGBTQ+ community
- Raging homophobia in the black community
- Reputation of Kentucky as conservative and religious keeps people from coming and living here
- Risk to transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary people
- Segregated community
- The economic and social costs to our community when LGBTQ+ persons leave Kentucky to move to other communities and states that are inclusive
- The risk of state legislation that could undercut the protections for LGBTQ+ in local fairness ordinances
- The segregation of gay people among themselves, by race, age (especially age), and looks
- Too many people of color unwilling to come out as gay; it continues to give being gay a stigma
- Transgender persons who are at risk if EMS staff/ambulance staff refuse to treat them
- Workplace attitudes effect employment decisions

What can be done to address these issues?

Coming Out More Publically/Education

- Allies can be more public with their support – university president, corporations, clergy etc.
 - Kentucky Competitive Workforce Coalition
- I would recruit corporate leaders to lead conversations regarding respect for all people including LGBTQ+
- Patronize businesses that are inclusive
 - Pink Directory – Pride Community Service Organization/Bluegrass Rainbow Faith Communities
- Provide better K-12 education around cultural competency
 - Public school task force

Need Safety, Support, and Affirmation for the Transgender Population

- Being intentional in recognizing these are the most vulnerable
- Community group be charged with how to enforce safety, support and affirmation

Need to Improve How LGBTQ+ Staff, Teachers, Students, etc. Experience Fayette County Public Schools

- Assess policies and then look for actions that mirror the policies
- Climate survey that's age-appropriate to see how people are experiencing Fayette County Schools (staff, students, etc.)

Workplace Attitudes Affecting Employment Decisions

- Maybe we can follow-up with people about how they are doing – hold corporate committees more commonly accountable for checking in on vulnerable individuals and communities

Key Next Step

- Together Lexington could support funding for some of these recommendations

Meeting Debrief

Evaluation Questions/Responses

To bring the session to a close, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The complete evaluation results will be tabulated at the conclusion of the 12 conversations, but the closing three questions are included below to inform the remaining conversations. Duplicate responses are denoted with an asterisk.

1. What worked for you during tonight's session?

- Crystalizing ideas together
- Liked the small group
- New perspective; small group
- Open sharing
- The open and honest sharing
- The small group actually worked beautifully

2. What would have made tonight's session better?

- Better publicity
- Follow up on the recommendations made
- I think having people who hold the power be a part of these talks and have them commit right here
- More people need to be involved
- None

3. Do you have any lingering comments and/or questions?

- Great issues
- Thank you
- This went far better than I expected