



June 2015

GASS Summer Events

- ACLU at GASS Meeting June 12
- Capital City Pride June 20
- Trans Pride Seattle June 26
- Tacoma Pride Fest July 11
- TWAC July 27-Aug 3

ACLU Attorney Will Speak at GASS Meeting

Guest speaker, Jenni Wong, representing the ACLU, will inform GASS members of the current state of trans legal protections and ongoing work to expand trans rights. Ms. Wong will be presenting at the 7 pm, June 12 GASS meeting at the Tacoma Rainbow Center and intends to host a Q and A session.

Jenni Wong serves as a Robina Public Interest Fellow and staff attorney at the ACLU of Washington. Jenni's work at the ACLU focuses on legal advocacy for LGBT people in Washington, which includes enforcing the rights of individuals under state antidiscrimination laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Examples of Jenni's work include revising the ACLU of Washington's guide, "The Rights of Transgender People in Washington State"; conducting know your rights trainings; providing technical assistance for transgender students facing discrimination in schools; and advocating for individuals seeking access to transgender-inclusive healthcare.

Trans Art Exhibit Downtown Tacoma



The T-Town: Transgender Neighbors art exhibit is running in its most prominent public space to date. Through the city's Spaceworks program of support for artists and to enliven the downtown, GASS has the opportunity to show its widely acclaimed display of trans portraits and stories. The fourteen museum quality framed pictures by photographer Rikki D. and stories gathered and edited by Annie R. face one of the busy main thoroughfares in a thirty five foot storefront window.

The theater district location not only promises much foot traffic that can pause to learn about their transgender neighbors, but is also along the same street that Out in the Park, Tacoma's pride festival, will be this year. GASS will have its annual booth at the fest to direct folks to the art exhibit and expand on its other community projects.

T-Town: Transgender Neighbors runs now through August in the Woolworths building display at 963 Broadway. The pictures and bios can be seen online at <http://southsoundgender.com/t-town>

Justice Advocates Take to the Hills this July

Environmentalists, social justice champions, trans folks, and women, will be holding the annual Trans and/or Women's Action Camp this year at the end of July somewhere in Western Washington. The non-profit GASS was able to act as a fiscal sponsor of the group this year securing a grant to help fund the no-fee event. Last year more than ninety campers attended workshops and seminars on the intersectionality of oppressed peoples, disability and environmental justice, and critical anti-oppression and direct action skills. TWAC organizers acknowledge their debt to those whose lands were taken from them by force and honor the occupied and unceded Coast Salish territories.



Through donations, the TWAC vegan kitchen is able to feed all attendees healthy, environmentally friendly, nutritional meals for the entire week: Full bellies make for better participation and experience for all. Campers are advised to bring their own bowls and spoons!

Due to past queer-phobic and misogynistic oppression, cis-gender men will not be attending the event. Organizers feel that this is the best way to promote and provide a supportive healing camp atmosphere. Someday cis-men may sit in, just not yet. Until then, all others are very welcome.

Those are able to support this very unique event, please go to the funding page at <https://twac.wordpress.com/twac-cascadia-15/twac-cascadia-fundraising-page/> Dollars are needed for climb gear, kitchen and camp equipment, transportation, art and medical supplies, and other equipment for success. With enough donations the action camp can remain a no fee event. As a historically marginalized and often economically challenged group, it is especially important that trans people be afforded access to rare inclusive events

such as TWAC if trans people are going to form robust healthy communities.

Trans Celebrity or Heroine?

Transgender sexy and glam gets America's attention. With Caitlyn Jenner's blockbuster CBS interview and the new cover piece from Vanity Fair she vaults into superstardom as the latest twitter rocking sensation. Jenner speaks for herself only, her unique journey toward a more whole self, but media presents the story as representing what trans life is like for others. By luck of marriage only she has wealth and fame; a polar opposite example of how nearly all trans people exist would be difficult to imagine.

During her three hour show with Diana Sawyer in April, Jenner details her struggles coming to grips with being trans, of coming out to family, and even suicide: Though touching it was all about her. She got much about trans people correct such as pronoun use and whether or not having surgery makes a person trans, but she fails to emphasize that her story is not much like trans lives outside of a Hollywood bubble.

What kind of woman is Caitlyn?

With extreme unemployment and lack of competent healthcare, trans individuals hang on to life day to day. The trans community is trying desperately to form a cohesive support network in the face of the constant onslaught of negative discrimination from all sides.



A recent Facebooker told of their unemployed trans friend living in a park in Seattle. When shelters are full or less safe than sleeping under a tree, life has become mean for homeless trans folks reduced to survival existence.

- 13.5 years old: The average age that trans youth in New York become homeless.
- Twice as many LGBT homeless youth report being sexually assaulted compared to their straight contemporaries.
- \$53,665: Cost to keep one young trans person in the criminal justice system for a year. \$5,887 to permanently get a homeless trans kid off the street and help them from reentering jail.

If one were to ask homeless youth if they have ever heard of Caitlyn Jenner, they most likely would not really care: Hunger and cold have a way of focusing ones priorities. Has Jenner heard of people being homeless or without work because of transphobia? She might have, but has yet to say much if anything about the epidemic. The trans community has a right to expect more from this generation's most famous trans person. Some other high profile gender transitioners received undue pressure to speak for a desperate, hurting community. They were not ready or able to assume that role. Jenner has perhaps been gifted with more privileges than any other trans person in history, with special advantage comes more responsibility.

[town/](#) where viewers may leave comments.



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Caitlyn's much anticipated next interview, now that she is "on the other side", could go a couple different ways. She could, like the first big interview and the Vanity Fair layout, make it all about Caitlyn. She could go on about her new Valentino dress and Tiffany earrings or she could use her fortunate privilege to help others by highlighting the war on trans people in this country. Imagine the impact if the only way she were to consent to be interviewed by those famous reporters was with a homeless trans youth sitting right next to her on the couch. The outpouring of support and the acknowledgement of her bravery for coming out could shift to caring for a segment of society being ground down under the crushing weight of indifference.

Collectively our expectations create heroes through a system neither side really controls which sometimes leads to disappointment: Will Jenner evolve from Olympic victor and reality show celeb to trans champion? That would truly be a remarkable transition indeed.

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