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Biden Helped Make LGBT History- Will That Be Enough?

“This is what every candidate should be talking about—not what I did once, but what I plan to do,” said Annise Parker, president and CEO of the LGBTQ Victory Fund.

Pride Month festivities this summer may be cancelled from coast to coast in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, but in a finished basement in Wilmington, Delaware, the party is just getting started.

On April 23, LGBTQ celebrities and Broadway legends hosted “A Fabulous Evening with Vice President Joe Biden,” a \$1.1 million celebrity fundraising “extravaganza,” in the words of emcee Billy Porter, complete with Pete Buttigieg, Billie Jean King and Kristin Chenoweth singing “Popular” from the musical *Wicked*. Two days later, Dr. Jill Biden joined fellow educator and political spouse Chasten Buttigieg’s popular Instagram Live show to talk about teaching, meeting their respective husbands, and Democratic unity ahead of the general election. And on Monday, the would-be first lady hosted a virtual LGBTQ social hour, with appearances by queer activists, advocates, politicians, and a performance by Cyndi Lauper.



“It’s simple: LGBTQ voters are a key component to Vice President Biden’s coalition in November,” said Reggie Greer, who recently joined the Biden campaign as its LGBTQ liaison, in explaining the push in queer-oriented campaign events. “Pride Month is going to look a lot different this year, and it is very important to Vice President Biden, to Dr. Biden, to myself that we give the community hope.

The spree of digital programming, outreach and fundraising efforts directed at LGBTQ voters and allies indicates that the Biden campaign sees

LGBTQ voters—and, perhaps just as importantly, their straight and cisgender allies—as critically important to the former vice president’s electoral strategy.

“We’re a major constituency,” said Lucas Acosta, national press secretary for the Human Rights Campaign, who noted that LGBTQ Americans are more likely to register and more likely to vote than their straight counterparts. “As a result, we are going to see more conversations coming from candidates themselves around issues that are important to the community.”

Biden has, without question, made outreach to LGBTQ voters and their supporters a top priority of his general-election campaign. The former vice president has pledged to sign the Equality Act into law, which would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, within his first hundred days in office, to direct federal resources to help prevent violence against transgender women in the same period, and to undo a swath of anti-LGBTQ actions implemented by President Donald Trump, whose campaign promises to support queer communities have been dramatically broken since his inauguration.

“I think this is the civil cause of [your] generation,” Biden told a supporter during a virtual fundraiser on April 8, when asked about expanding civil rights and protections for queer people. Biden called protecting LGBTQ Americans one of the two biggest causes of his lifetime, the other curing cancer, and pledged to make protecting trans women from violence one of his first priorities as president.



 @numberonessix
They are wearing different ties in these pictures which means that on at least two occasions Obama and Joe Biden have run around the Whitehouse waving pride flags, and that makes me really happy.

The former vice president’s campaign has also released a massive plan to address numerous issues that have fallen by the wayside during the Trump administration, from citizenship recognition for the children of same-sex couples born overseas to trans equality in the military to protecting homeless LGBTQ adults and youth from facing housing discrimination under the guise of “religious freedom” legislation.

“He’s somebody who cares about—and will be good at dealing with—something that’s not as glamorous and and splashy in the public eye, but that really makes a difference to people’s lives,” said Evan Wolfson, founder of the organization Freedom to Marry. “Which is making the mechanism of government agencies... inclusive and supportive of gay and trans people.”

For years, Biden has evinced his bona fides on the issue of LGBTQ civil rights by pointing to his history-making interview on Meet the Press in 2012, when, in queer parlance, the then-vice president dropped his mascara and publicly threw his support behind the cause of marriage equality.

That interview—in which Biden said that he was “absolutely comfortable” with same-sex couples being “entitled to the same exact rights” as heterosexual married couples—was seen as forcing President Barack Obama to publicly declare his own “evolution” on what was then still a divisive political issue. It has been Biden’s calling card when seeking the support of LGBTQ voters and their allies ever since. “The Biden Plan To Advance LGBTQ+ Equality In America And Around The World,” his proposal for protecting and expanding LGBTQ equality, begins with a quote from the interview, which is mentioned no fewer than four times over the next 8,100 words.

Part of the challenge of LGBTQ voter outreach is that even Biden’s extensive proposals, though a major departure from the current administration, seem less revolutionary—many of them are essentially part of the baseline expectations queer voters have for Democratic politicians. With marriage equality now the law of the land for half a decade, a younger, queerer generation is joining the voting ranks and asking the question: what are you going to do next?

“This is what every candidate should be talking about—not what I did once, but what I plan to do,” said Annise Parker, president and CEO of the LGBTQ Victory Fund, a political action committee that works to train and elect LGBT candidates for public office. “What you did once allows me to

understand the depth of your commitment, but it doesn't tell me what you're going to do in the future."

"Obviously, our concerns go far beyond the epic transformation of winning the freedom to marry," said Wolfson. "Nobody—including me, who led the campaign to win marriage—ever thought that winning marriage was the only thing that mattered. But it is and remains, as Joe Biden might say, a BFD."

Those high expectations mean that turning out LGBTQ voters will require special outreach, Greer said, as well as partnerships with advocacy organizations within the community, and with elected LGBTQ officials like Colorado state representative Leslie Herod, who was elected in 2016 as the first black LGBTQ member of the state general assembly.

"The Biden team does not just have people of color and LGBT people up front, as a kind of figurehead," Herod told *The Daily Beast*. "There are so many folks who are behind the scenes, working on the policy, who will be directly impacted by the policies, which is why I think they're so solid."

"Whatever all of our partner organizations are doing, the Biden campaign and LGBTQ+ For Biden wants to be an active partner in ensuring that their coalition is our coalition, and that they can find a home with Vice President Biden," Greer said.

Even the most fervent ally can occasionally stumble on LGBTQ issues, and the former vice president is no exception. Biden faced heat from some gay supporters when he praised Vice President Mike Pence, whose longtime hostility to anything queer has made him a loathed figure among many LGBTQ people, as a "decent man." During a CNN town hall devoted to discussing issues of interest to LGBTQ voters last October, Biden responded to a question about racial disparities in HIV infection rates by mentioning "gay bathhouses" and "round-the-clock sex" to illustrate how the discourse about homosexuality has changed since the Bush administration.

Moments like that, advocates told *The Daily Beast*, are when commitments beyond legislative priorities, including potentially committing to nominating the first out cabinet secretary in American history, can be useful—effectively broadening the coalition of LGBTQ support in a potential Biden administration beyond one man.

"We expect Biden to publicly and overtly commit to having a direct administration and a federal

bureaucracy that looks like America," Parker said. "And that means that it has to include a proportionate number of LGBTQ appointees, and at the highest levels."

"That's where it really goes to the candidate's character, the candidate's heart, and the candidate's team—who has this person brought around him," said Wolfson, who interned in Biden's Senate office in 1976 and has advised him on LGBTQ issues. "That's one very, very important question that I think he scores very high on... his openness to building a strong and diverse team."

Greer said that while it may be too early to talk about the specifics of what a Biden administration might look like, "you can guarantee that talented and qualified LGBTQ people will be serving at all levels of government, from the top down."

The electoral benefits of such commitments are potentially massive. In 2016, using decades of polling data, group membership and surveys, the Human Rights Campaign created a model identifying voters who prioritize LGBTQ issues at the ballot box.

"They are disproportionately women, disproportionately young, disproportionately people of color and have a strong presence in the suburbs," Acosta said, effectively listing off the most important Democratic constituencies that any nominee would hope to activate in a close general election. The group's index of so-called "Equality Voters" has identified more than two million such registered voters in the swing states of Arizona, Florida, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin—states where the collective margin of victory in the 2016 election was only 196,000 votes.

Biden's inclusion of LGBTQ-related policies in his other proposals is key to reaching those types of voters, Wolfson said, is equally important to those voters who view LGBTQ neighbors "as part of 'We the People.'"

"We could not have won the freedom to marry solely on the strength of gay people," Wolfson said. "We won because we persuaded, for every one of us, five to 10 non-gay people to open their heart and change their mind."

LGBT Center of Reading, PA Increases Community Services in Light of Pandemic

By Jason Hugg
Apr 29, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many daily activities and has placed enormous pressure on local community organizations. One of those organizations struggling to fulfill their mission is the LGBT Center of Greater Reading. Executive Director, Michelle Dech, gives us insight on how the LGBT community is handling the pandemic.



Like many organizations, the LGBT Center has gone virtual. Dech says figuring out how to offer the same services and programs online was a challenge at first, but now a few weeks in, she has gotten into a groove.

“All of our support groups are running virtually and it’s actually given us an opportunity to offer additional groups” said Dech. “Where we typically do one large event open for the community, once every two months or three months, now we are able to host additional programs, which is a big positive.”

Besides re-structuring programming, the LGBT Center is also helping community members one on one. “It’s been a big change, we do weekly calls and text message check-ins with a lot of our elderly or those who are isolated” said Dech. “Plus, we’ve been doing one on one outreach, distributing pre-packed toiletries, clothing, and a very small food pantry for those in need.”

Why is LGBTQ+ community at particular risk for COVID-19? Risks are the result of several factors. The LGBTQ+ community uses tobacco at rates that are 50% higher than the general population. In

addition, higher rates of HIV and cancer among LGBTQ+ individuals mean that a greater number may have a compromised immunity.

Unfortunately, risk factors do not just stop with personal health. According to Dech, they can also be from barriers in healthcare which may lead some to not seek medical care.

Barriers in healthcare are exactly why Dech and the LGBT Center provide training to local employers and healthcare companies. “We work with organizations to tailor our training to meet the needs of the organization, each workshop is completely custom.” said Dech. Workshops include best practices, terminology, and for the healthcare field, ways to make medical visits a pleasant experience. To continue their community engagement, the LGBT Center recently received an emergency grant from the Berks County Community Foundation. Dech says the funds will be used to support the nonprofit’s mission and additional community outreach programs.

“We have more needs than we do resources right now” says Dech. “We are so blessed and grateful for the help of the Community Foundation. We will be using the funds to keep things running and keep our community strong.”

Advocacy is still an important job for the LGBT Center. Amid the Coronavirus Pandemic, data driven demographic information is minimal for the LGBTQ+ community. “In Pennsylvania, there’s no mandate to collect data” says Dech. “It’s very difficult to really get a good a good grip on the extent of this virus and the level that it’s affecting our community because there’s no data being collected”

“My goal is to get sexual orientation and gender identity part of the data collection process” says Dech. “That way we can really identify the disparities and the deaths within the LGBTQ community with this virus.”

To find out why the data is not being collected, Dech, along with several other LGBT organizations across the commonwealth have reached out to policy makers for answers. “I had the opportunity to be on a phone conference with Senator Bob Casey last week where we discussed the data collection and some of the other health disparities”.

Although Dech is encouraged by the forward movement and proactive response, she also realizes it will take time for data collection to be mandated. “There is space for documentation by hospitals and doctors, however, it hasn’t been mandated by the state so no data is collected”.

Although the future is still unclear as to when everything will return to normal, Dech says the change has inspired her to double the efforts of the LGBT Center and focus more on the local community. “I would definitely recommend that people stay tuned to our Facebook page, website, and email newsletter, as we are actively creating and developing new programs and services to support the community.”

A New, Independent, LGBT-focused Record Label is Set to Launch Next Month to Increase Visibility of Queer Artists in the Music Industry

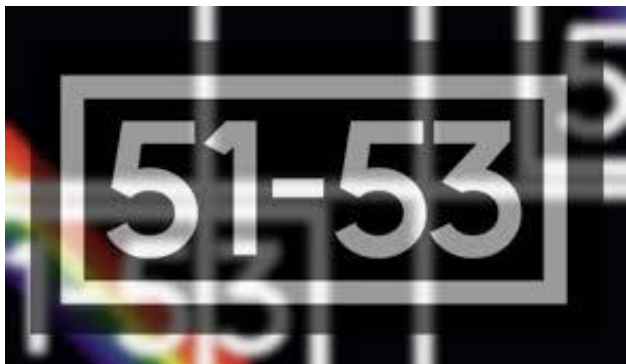
Named ‘51-53’ after the address of the Stonewall Inn in New York, the label hopes to take on “the rebellious spirit of that landmark day in 1969 that marks the start of the gay rights movement.”

From June the London-based label will “embolden, empower and embrace LGBTQ+ people in electronic music and highlight the genre’s rich heritage within queer culture.”

51-53 is now accepting demos from queer artists in electronic music, specialising in techno, house and everything in between.

The label’s first release will be a three-track EP from Dalston Superstore favourites, Super Drama.

Titled ‘Excess’ and driven by prominent acid and punchy samples, the record is said to “shine a light” on the energy and vision of London’s LGBT+ community and will be available on vinyl and digital release.



Super Drama have previously released music via labels such as Moshi Moshi, Stamp the Wax and Phantasy. Their new EP is geared towards the club and the late night dancefloor.

We’re both hyped to be the inaugural release on Fab’s gorgeous new label,” the duo told Ransom Note ahead of its release.

“Writing this record is a fun outlet for us to really touch upon our more outrageous tastes. Getting our good friend and high priestess Kuntessa involved really amped it up. She’s one of East London’s finest strippers/pop stars and an even better vocalist!

“Each track on the record has a different place in mind for us; parties like Adonis, Faboo or our home at Dalston Superstore. It’s the amazing people who make them what they are, and in increasingly uncertain times it’s even more important we have a real community.

“To quote James St. James, ‘The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom, Blake, William.’”

Coronavirus Crisis Forces LGBT Group HRC to Lay Off 22 Employees

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation’s largest LGBT rights advocate, on Tuesday laid off 22 employees.

The non-profit said that the layoffs were due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. HRC said that the cancellations of critical fundraisers had led to a drop in revenue.

The laid-off employees will receive at least a 2-month severance package based on tenure and health insurance coverage through COBRA for at least three months, the Washington Blade reported.

The organization is also trimming expenses. Executives have taken a pay cut and three full-time jobs have been converted into part-time positions. HRC has also frozen its hiring.

“COVID-19 is affecting the nation and no industry or workplace is free from its impact,” interim HRC

Communications Director Nick Morrow said in a statement. “For us, the economic reality is that because of the cancellation of events that represent critical funding streams, the decline of our economy, and our ineligibility for any federal funding, we could not make up this shortfall without impossibly difficult decisions.”

“HRC has been in a state of growth for years, and unfortunately, this economic climate forced us to recalibrate our budget and economic forecasts,” Morrow continued. “Despite these challenges, however, our membership and volunteer infrastructure remain strong as we prepare and stay focused on the most consequential election of our lifetimes and on programming that is more critical now than ever. With a staff of more than 200 employees, our investment in this election cycle remains our most significant yet.”

Baltimore Leather Bar Sells LGBTQ-themed Face Masks

LGBTQ community members and allies in search of flashier face protection need look no further than the Baltimore Eagle’s new online store.

On April 17, the self-styled “premier gay leather bar and nightclub” began to sell face masks, which it touts on its website as “made by the LGBT community for the LGBT community.”

Print options include the Pride rainbow, paw prints, dog bones, hikers and cowboys, with “American Traditional gentleman tattoo style masks” having recently been introduced, as well. All prints are priced at \$14.99.

According to Ian Parrish, owner of the Baltimore Eagle, the Baltimore Eagle has received calls regarding the masks from across the nation and overseas. The online store previously sold out of its masks, but more have since been stocked.

“As the online store is new, we’re working on programming a shipping option,” said Parrish in an email on Saturday. “For now, folks just need to email us and we can PayPal them the shipping cost.”

The masks are produced by Allen Ryde of Aurora Clothiers, who advertises on Etsy as a “Maryland based artisan/designer of fantasy fashion wear.”

“It’s a bar that can’t operate, so it’s not easy,” Parrish said of the Baltimore Eagle. “If anything, I guess the silver lining is that we’ve been able to have the time to put a lot of the products online that we probably otherwise wouldn’t have had the time to do. ... not just the liquor, but you know, toys and so on. And we’ve had time to focus on a lot of the details that we’ve been wanting to focus on, like the sound system upstairs and rebuilding the lounge.”

“I guess it’s a time to kind of reevaluate everything,” added Parrish. “And that’s really what the Eagle is all about – y’know, leave the drama at the door. This is the place to come in and be yourself, be free. It’s a judgment-free environment. That’s the way it’s always been.”

The Baltimore Eagle was most recently revived last Nov. 15 by manager Thomas Kiple, who originally founded the Baltimore Eagle in 1991. The Baltimore Eagle has had numerous stops and starts, previously operating from 1991 to December 2012, from January 2017 to July 2018, and then again from April to August 2019.

Once bars like the Baltimore Eagle are once again permitted to entertain guests on the property, the Baltimore Eagle plans to hold a grand reopening. Bombalicious Eklaver, the “Best Drag Queen” from the Washington Blade’s 2019 Best of Gay D.C. awards, is slated to headline the event.



LGBTs Are Blamed and Attacked for COVID-19, Say Global Reports

“HIV has taught us that violence, bullying and discrimination only further marginalize the people most in need.”

May 4, 2020 • By Trenton Straube

LGBT people across the world are being falsely accused of spreading COVID-19 and harassed, incarcerated and abused as a result, according to a United Nations AIDS group and a global organization for gay men. The discrimination makes it even harder for this population to stay safe, access health care and exercise their basic human rights.

“HIV has taught us that violence, bullying and discrimination only serve to further marginalize the people most in need,” said Winnie Byanyima, executive director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in a UNAIDS press release documenting reports of abuse. “All people, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, are entitled to the right to health, safety and security, without exception. Respect and dignity are needed now more than ever before.”

UNAIDS and MPact Global Action for Gay Men’s Health and Rights are calling on governments to protect the rights of LGBT people during the COVID-19 crisis.

“We are receiving reports that government and religious leaders in some countries are making false claims and releasing misinformation about COVID-19 that has incited violence and discrimination against LGBTI [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex] people,” George Ayala, executive director of MPact, said in the press release. “Organizations and homes are being raided, LGBTI people are being beaten, and there has been an increase in arrests and threatened deportation of LGBTI asylum seekers.”



Ayala added that advocates are increasingly concerned about governments using internet and smartphone technology to track people’s movements during lockdowns. “Gay men and gender-nonconforming people are often the first targets and among the most impacted by increased policing and surveillance efforts,” he said.

Police, for example, can single out LGBT people for allegedly breaking curfews. In Belize, a gay man with HIV was assaulted by police and is believed to have died. In the Philippines, according to the UNAIDS report, LGBT people were among a group of people punished for breaking curfew but were singled out by the police captain and forced to dance and kiss each other.

To counter this discrimination and abuse, UNAIDS and MPact have issued a list of actions that countries and governments should take. This includes ending raids on LGBT organizations, denouncing misinformation that blames and scapegoats LGBT people for the spread of COVID-19, and including LGBT people in media campaigns and public health planning around the COVID-19 pandemic.

For a recent POZ Q&A with MPact’s Ayala, who is also involved in the upcoming HIV2020

Baker and the Beauty- ABC's New LGBT Friendly Show

Jim Farmer May 3, 2020 11:29 am Arts and Community, Today in Gay Atlanta, TV

Based on the popular Israeli series, "Beauty and the Baker," ABC's new show, "The Baker and the Beauty," has proved to be one of the most LGBT-friendly shows on TV. It's a charming series with an appealing ensemble, and its pilot episode was shot largely in Atlanta.

The cast was back in town recently for Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)'s aTVfest. "The Baker and the Beauty" centers on blue-collar baker Daniel Garcia (Victor Rasuk), who works at his family's business, who turns down his girlfriend's marriage proposal and begins an improbable relationship with supermodel Noa Hamilton (Nathalie Kelley).

Belissa Escobedo plays Natalie, Daniel's younger sister, who is realizing she is attracted to women. In the May 4th episode, titled "I Think She's Coming Out," Natalie officially comes out to her family.

The actress describes Natalie as someone who is compassionate, strong-willed and very blunt. "She uses all of those to the best of her ability," Escobedo says. "She is a clever girl. I think initially the brother has some inkling about her but I think for the parents it's a big shock. Things become a bit more challenging after she comes out. There is a lot of confusion as the family is processing it."

The actress, who describes herself as pansexual, was excited about the role, especially since characters such as Natalie rarely appear on TV. "The Baker and the Beauty" was the third pilot she auditioned for, and she was not aware of the Israeli version. Even after she nabbed the role, she didn't want to watch that version and influence her interpretation.

Out actor Dan Bucatinsky stars as Lewis, Noa's gay manager. One of the appeals for the performer was the fact that the show had such depth, including several three-dimensional LGBT characters. "It is a romantic comedy but at the heart it's a family show," he says. "The 15-year-old daughter is dealing with her own identity and sexuality. You don't see that in an ABC drama that often."

He immediately empathized with the character of Lewis. "There was something fun, unedited, aggressive and protective about him that I responded to," he said. "Lewis comes across a bit like Ari in 'Entourage,' so director David Frankel and I talked about the potential of exploring that show businessy vibe. He has an aggressive, take-no-prisoners side but there's another side that is pure dad. I call him a 'momager.' He is as close to a parent that Noa is able to have. There is something sweet about that. I think his humanity is much more present in the American version."

Over the course of the first season, we learn more about Lewis and his relationship with Noa — and his own reluctance to date, almost burying himself in his work



The actor was also in Atlanta to film "24: Legacy," so he is comfortable in the city.

Bucatinsky, who has been partnered with director Don Roos for 28 years and married for 12 of them, was part of the ensemble of "Scandal," for which he won an Emmy Award. He credits that series, as well as "The Baker and the Beauty," for being daring in its LGBTQ content. His character, James Novak, was the husband of Cyrus Beene (Jeff Perry). "That show raised the bar," Bucatinsky says.

"The Baker and the Beauty" finishes its first season in late May. Usually by this time of year, network shows know whether they are returning next season. Because of the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, the cast and crew will have to wait a little longer, but they are hopeful and feel there is much more to tell.

"The Baker and the Beauty" airs Mondays at 10pm on ABCB

LGBT Students Comment on Confinement with Unaccepting Families During COVID-19

Amelia Jennings Apr 27, 2020

Since the arrival of COVID-19 to Louisiana in early March, LGBT+ students from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette have been forced to remain at home with parents or relatives who may be less than accepting of them.

A student at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who wished to withhold her actual name and will be referred to as Ty Atwood, is experiencing this first hand.

She is bisexual and now lives at home with parents who are religious and believe that her sexuality could be prayed away in church.

“When I found out that I was (LGBT) I figured it was a very bad idea to tell them that,” she said. “Then, my cousin accidentally outed me freshman year of highschool, and my mom took me out to an empty parking lot, checked me out at school and made me cry about it for like three hours.”

At UL Lafayette, Ty had more freedom to be herself away from her parents.

“My usual outlet for being myself would be hanging out with my friends or being in other places, but now that that’s gone I feel really confined, and my mood is not as great as it had been previously when I was more on my own,” she said.

Another student, who attends Texas A&M and wished to withhold her actual name and will be referred to as Madelyn Pierce, did not go home for the same reason, but she would have if her parents were accepting of her being transgender.

“They’re mourning their son, though it’s not like he died; he just doesn’t exist. But they’re shunning their new daughter,” she said.

If Pierce went home, she would also not be able to take the estrogen or testosterone blockers that she receives from her school, and she would eventually run out.

“So once I run out of those, that hormone balance would begin to shift again, and physically, I won’t lose anything that I’ve gained, but emotionally and just over all, things could get messy.”

A NBC news article on trans people being forced off of their medication in prisons spoke of the disastrous consequences this can have.

“Self-castration, suicide and waves of desperation are byproducts of the denial of sex hormones to inmates yearning to switch genders,” the article reads.

UL Lafayette’s GLASS (Giving Love, Acceptance, Safety, and Support), an LGBT+ organization on campus, has been helping students in whatever ways they can to find a safe space.

Tyler Nguyen, the president of GLASS, offered some advice as to who a student could turn to if they find themselves in an unwelcoming situation.

“My advice would be to try to stay at home with people who make you feel comfortable, your chosen family,” Nguyen said. “A chosen family is not an alternative to family, but kind of like people who are not necessarily related to you, but they can be. People who embrace you and make you feel comfortable, and that is kind of what GLASS is about.”

He also suggests finding other resources if a student does not have people to turn to.

“If you don’t have that resource, I’d say like look for groups online or just find communities that you can join, just to make yourself feel comfortable,” Nguyen said.

