

## Pro-gay Christians to tackle racism and gender identity issues at faith conference

*Many Stories, One Voice conference in New Orleans, Sept. 4–7, will address these important issues*

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Hundreds of pro-lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Christians will tackle issues of race, class, ability, age, gender identity and sexual orientation at the Many Stories, One Voice conference to take place in New Orleans, La., Sept. 4–7. Two pre-conference institutes will discuss, analyze and strategize on how to organize around these issues.

On Wednesday, Sept. 3, participants will converge at *For Such a Time as This*, a gathering of transgender people and allies to discuss the dynamics of ministry with the transgender community, the challenges and advantages of becoming more visible in their faith communities and how to build relationships of support and accountability between transgender people and their allies. This pre-conference institute is convened by TransFaith Online in an effort to highlight transgender people and their concerns, as they become more visible in both secular and religious communities.

**“Too often, as Christians and as Americans, we have viewed differences in identity as deficits, as problems, as things to be overcome,” says the Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, Institute for Welcoming Resources and faith work director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.** “This conference celebrates the ways in which difference tells us something about the richness and the vast creativity of God. If I do not pause and listen to what God is telling me through my transgender kin, I am the poorer for it. If I do not pause and listen to what God is telling me through my brothers and sisters of color, I am the weaker for it. These pre-conference institutes are critical both for transforming the systems of oppression and for celebrating the gifts that come when we do the transformational work.”

On Thursday, Sept. 4, conference attendees will converge for *An Un-Holy Alliance: Racism, Classism, Homophobia, Bi-phobia, Transphobia and How We Can Be Prophets of Liberation*. The sad truth is that Christian tradition has been a primary player in both the creation of and the perpetuation of oppression. Utilizing a focus on racism, this day will help participants move beyond the symptoms of racism to an understanding of what racism is, where it comes from, how it functions, why racism persists and how it can be undone. Participants will leave this workshop with a common language and process to use in their work as pro-LGBT Christians.

**Many Stories, One Voice: The North American Convocation of Pro-LGBT Christians, convened by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force,** will offer new tools and training in the areas of faith-based community organizing, media training, board development, fund-raising, research, biblical studies, theology, capacity-building and other concrete skills. Participants will also engage in discussions about issues of race, class, ability, age, embodiment, gender identity and sexual orientation. And in the end, each participant will emerge with individual and shared action plans for how to move the pro-LGBT Christian movement forward.

For more information or to register, please visit [www.manystoriesonevoice.org](http://www.manystoriesonevoice.org).