

## CPCS Recognizes Pride Month 2023

In 2023, people are coming together with more fullness, in contrast to all we have missed to COVID. For the LGBTQIA++ (LGBTQ or Queer) community, this is especially important, as community members are experiencing a time of targeted political backlash.

Today, we witness politicians and legislation attacking transgender people and demonizing drag performers, making baseless accusations of “recruiting” that the LGBTQ community has endured for decades. Queer and trans kids bear the brunt of these attacks, with high rates of depression and self-harm. Critics of increased queer and trans visibility are promoting book-banning and shunning companies that show support, such as Disney and its films, Anheuser-Busch and Target.



Within Massachusetts, queer people have gained rights and attained political power up to the highest levels of our governance, reflected above in this Pride recognition organized by the Massachusetts Legislature. Within CPCS, we embrace, litigate with, and count as colleagues many LGBTQ people who carry the mantle of being public defense advocates with steadfast determination. For Pride 2023, two of our strong advocates, Nancy Hathaway, Senior Trial Counsel, CAFL-Boston, and Shain Neumeier, Trial Counsel, MHL-D-Worcester, share reflections of their commitment to our work and lived experiences that exemplify our responsibility to fight for justice.

Shain Neumeier is a lawyer, activist, and community organizer, as well as an out and proud member of the disabled, trans, queer, and asexual communities. Shain

was raised in Los Angeles, California, where they were subjected to coercive care that included forced anti-psychotic medication despite undiagnosed autism and ADHD and forced surgery relating to their craniofacial condition. Shain took control by secreting the medications, ultimately proving that they were able to manage their own life and thus planting the seed of their passion to work for the rights of others.

As a youth, Shain had interests that spanned gender, ranging from action figures and fandom to Spice Girls, along with a fashion sense that was “all over the place.” At 17, a friend who thought Shain was a girl identified them as asexual, which led Shain toward learning their reality, including that autistic people are often neurogender, such that they relate to gender differently than others. Shain took their passion, sharp mind, and quick wit to undergraduate study at Smith College and a law degree from Suffolk University, and then work as counsel in private practice for caring agencies and now our Mental Health Litigation Division. The quick turnaround on MHLT cases works well with Shain’s ADHD condition – while the review of exhaustive medical files is challenging, their acute memory enables them control to leverage massive volumes of information for our client’s causes.

As an activist and thinker, Shain sees the negative trends in our society against disabled and trans people, with some coming even from women and non-trans members in the queer community. Shain sees things as likely to get worse before they get better, starting with virulent attacks on trans people and abortion that undermine bodily autonomy, and repressive states trying to expand their suppression into more progressive states, which they see as a federalism issue and conduct akin to civil war. Despite the many challenges of this time, Shain sees Pride from the perspective of being willing and able to live openly, and as a time to reflect on “what we have come from and how we have survived dealing with active persecution.”

For Nancy Hathaway, being out as queer has been a relative “non-issue,” as she came out during her college study at Mount Holyoke College in the late 1980s, then lived in the welcoming community of Northampton before moving to Boston. After law study at Northeastern and a judicial clerkship, Nancy worked with the Suffolk County District Attorney, and when asked if she was going to be out in that position, her response was direct, “I don’t know how else to be.”

Nancy shared thoughts on her development in the legal profession, when in the 1990s many politicians had a “lesbian/gay community liaison” to help them connect to the community and internally translate for their heterosexual colleagues and leaders. Often, these were unofficial, unpaid roles taken on in addition to the liaison’s other professional responsibilities, a situation that would not be encouraged today. Today, CPCS proudly notes that Nancy has become a member of the Commonwealth’s Judicial Nominating Commission, a role that she takes on with honor.

Within CPCS, Nancy reflects that no one should take for granted that queer and trans people have it relatively easy here, especially when we have friends or family who are living in states where things are much more frightening. On a visit to her father in Florida, as they watched MSNBC, Nancy was struck by how uncomfortable it was to watch the wall-to-wall news coverage of efforts to vilify and erase the queer and trans community, even when presented with a sympathetic spin. She worries that the use of these “bogeyman” tactics will put the mental health of young people at risk, especially in upcoming national elections. “Even as queer and trans people hear supportive words from Massachusetts elected officials, we are also hearing from friends and family who are leaving their states out of concern for their safety. That takes a toll on all of us.”

We are fortunate to have two such candid and committed colleagues, CPCS, and their reflections provide deep reasons for supporting Pride Month and our queer colleagues, clients, friends, and neighbors. Happy Pride!

Here is one more thought for something to do in honor of Pride – take a history tour:

**Walking tour of Boston’s LGBTQ history.** Over the course of 90 minutes, you’ll learn about LGBTQ people from Boston’s history and the city’s gay and lesbian culture. [The two-ish mile walk](#) covers everything from Thoreau’s walks along the Common to the AIDS memorial quilt project. It’s also in partnership with [The History Project](#), a nonprofit org preserving New England’s LGBTQ history. (hyperlinks in text)