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CPCS Honors Pride Month



Deborah A Batts (1947-2020), the first openly gay federal judge, with Harvard Law School Dean Robert C. Clark, at the unveiling of her portrait. Judge Batts had a remarkable impact on the law in the Southern District of New York, both in the court and beyond. Learn more about this trailblazing jurist and her trajectory below.

🏳️‍🌈 Pride Month 2026 is just past its midpoint, with many celebrations, recognitions, and opportunities to learn and reflect on triumphs and tragedies still ahead. In honor of Pride 2026 and our public defense mission, here are a few thoughts, links, and reminders about the impact of queer colleagues within CPCS and across our nation.

- **Why it matters:** Our mission is grounded in the diversity, insight, and empathy we each bring to our legal representation, and LGBTQ+ colleagues are essential to this critical objective. Along with their legal or professional skills, they have often experienced slights, discrimination, and hatred akin to that which plagues our clients, building trust through pain that is differently shared.
- **In a world of multisectionalism,** our practice can only succeed when we work with colleagues across the spectrum of our diversity, and CPCS has proven itself not just welcoming but reliant and grateful for the skills, talent, and commitment of LGBTQ colleagues in all our efforts for justice.

Spotlight on LGBTQ Achievement in the Law: The Honorable Deborah A. Batts (SDNY)

Judge Deborah A. Batts was the first LGBTQ person to sit on the federal bench at the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

- Judge Batts took the oath of office during Pride Week in 1994, rising from private practice to federal prosecution, and as a law professor who taught Property, Trial Advocacy, and Domestic Relations.
- She presided over the civil trial brought by the wrongfully convicted men in the "Central Park Five" case, along with numerous other high-profile matters.
- On the bench, Judge Batts mentored countless law students and worked to build diversity among public defenders, while also devoting time to help people in custody regain their lives.
- Learn more about this trailblazing jurist here.

Spotlight on LGBTQ Achievement in the Law: Northeastern University School of Law (NUSL) and its work to advance impactful LGBTQ lawyers

This article covers the history of Northeastern's embrace of LGBTQ law students and its graduation of some of the most critical leaders in the fight for LGBTQ rights before the law.

- Among the schools from which CPCS derives legal talent to drive our public defense mission, NUSL has been a constant source of interns, attorneys, and legal professionals for our agency and the private bar.

Legal and Policy References of Note

There are many issues related to LGBTQ clients that we should learn about and incorporate into our work with our clients and our advocacy. Here is a recent case decision and a policy article of note on the risks and concerns among trans people in prison:

An Important Injunction: GLAD Law Wins Decision Blocking Transgender Women in Prison from Exposure to Extreme Risk of Sexual Assault (June 2026)

- A federal policy decision that sought to ignore the Prison Rape Elimination Act by forcing the placement of 14 transgender women into men's facilities regardless of individual safety assessments or risk of assault.
- The Court placed great weight on the government's awareness of the serious health and safety risks, against the asserted justification that the proposed men's facilities posed lower levels of risk
- **Go deeper:** Read the Judge's opinion and order here

Policy Article: Advancing Transgender Justice - Illuminating Trans Lives Behind and Beyond Bars, VERA Institute of Justice and Black and Pink National (2024).

- This article features a survey of 280 trans people in prisons across the United States. Key concerns include housing, supportive relationships, gender-affirming accessories and practices, health care, failure to carry out the Prison Rape Elimination Act, and staffing concerns.
- There are many striking reflections in the study, such as 89% of respondents indicating that they had been placed in solitary confinement at some point during their incarceration.
- Learn more about this impactful policy study here

There is still time to celebrate with colleagues, family, and friends, along with visiting the places across Massachusetts that welcome and embrace the great LGBTQ community. Let's all honor Pride, CPCS!

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