

Why are you interested in joining the Board of Pride Toronto?

Representation means more than visibility; it is about amplifying diverse voices and experiences within a community. Although Pride Toronto has been working towards diversity and inclusivity, there has been a noticeable gap in the representation of the lesbian Latinx community. This underrepresentation is not exclusive to Pride Toronto but reflects the broader challenges faced by Latinx LGBTQ+ individuals. I aim to address this gap by ensuring that the voices of lesbian Latinx individuals are heard, valued and included. As a Sapphic Latinx woman from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, I am deeply committed to representing and advocating for those who may feel overlooked or marginalized. My journey from Ciudad Juarez to Canada taught me the importance of building resilient, supportive communities especially for those who identify as LGBTQ+ where community support and shared experiences can make all the difference. I am inspired to join Pride Toronto to contribute to a collective vision of inclusivity, belonging, and justice. This vision aligns with my personal and professional experiences in, and commitment to, advocacy. By joining the Board of Pride Toronto, I aim to ensure that the voices of the lesbian and Latinx community are not only heard but celebrated

How will your experience, talents, and skill contribute to advancing Pride Toronto's Mission, Vision, and Values?

I bring over five years of experience in community advocacy. My career has allowed me to work closely with diverse community members, listening to and understanding their challenges. This has fueled my passion for supporting LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those from Latinx and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, by providing safe, culturally sensitive, and inclusive legal support. My legal and outreach expertise, combined with my commitment to advancing justice and support for LGBTQ+ individuals, will allow me to contribute meaningfully to Pride Toronto's mission of fostering a vibrant and inclusive community.

Pride has had a history of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and we are working to address and combat this. What is your experience in working against racism, particularly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism? What is your vision for Pride Toronto's external work in combating racism?

Recognizing that my own experiences of racism differ from those of Black and Indigenous people, I have always been committed to supporting initiatives that dismantle systemic racism. I envision Pride Toronto prioritizing anti-racist policies and listening to and amplifying the voices and leadership of Black and Indigenous members. This may involve strengthening partnerships with Black-led and Indigenous-led organizations and engaging with these communities to understand how Pride Toronto can better fulfill their needs, or actively supporting and including Black-led and Indigenous-led businesses during the Festival.

What is your experience in addressing and combating transphobia, transmisogyny, and transmisandry?

In my experience, it's easier to hate an abstraction than to hate someone who you see as a fellow human being and to whom you feel a sense of connection. In both my personal and professional life, I challenge any instances where trans people are seen as anything other than human whether this is through education or presence. In my career, I engage with members of the trans and gender-diverse community every day. Through my work, I have come to gain a better understanding of the particular challenges trans people face both outside and inside LGBTQ+ spaces. When I think about addressing and combatting transphobia, transmisogyny, and transmisandry I believe it is important to first support the efforts of those who identify as trans in their own efforts to address transphobia. As a cisgender woman who works with trans and gender-diverse clients every day during what is often one of the most challenging times of their lives, I see my role as one of support and advocacy. Sometimes that means creating safe non-judgmental spaces and using inclusive language, and at others that means sitting in silence and bearing witness, because I believe addressing and combating transphobia, transmisogyny, and transmisandry begins with respect and care for those affected by it.

Accessibility is a crucial aspect for Pride Toronto's celebrations, but we still fall short in providing a completely accessible Festival, especially for people with mobility issues, and the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. What experience, resources, and knowledge do you have in engaging and supporting these communities?

While I don't have specific experience with mobility issues or supporting the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, I am committed to learning from and working alongside accessibility advocates to create a Festival that is as inclusive and accessible as possible. That being said, I believe it is important to not only question but think through what it is we mean by accessibility and how that intersects with equity. If someone has to travel an extra 20 minutes to access a space, it may be accessible but is it equitable?

Beyond those with mobility issues, and the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, I believe accessibility also relates to language and systemic barriers. In my career, I strive to make legal services accessible to Spanish-speaking and LGBTQ+ individuals facing language and systemic barriers. I consistently seek to break down these barriers by providing information in Spanish and ensuring that services are inclusive for all.

Pride Toronto's Membership has voted to ban instruments and symbols of policing, including uniforms, cars and weapons, from participating in the Pride Parade and StreetFair. If elected to the Board, how would you ensure that this commitment is upheld?

As someone who has grown up with a deep distrust of the policing institution in my home country, I recognize the trauma policing can invoke. Ciudad Juárez has a complex history of violence and social challenges that has shaped my understanding of the need for community-driven solutions to safety and justice. I fully support Pride Toronto's commitment to maintaining a safe, inclusive space for all participants that is free from the symbols of policing which aligns with the broader movement to address systemic issues within policing and is in the spirit of Pride as a protest against oppression. However, I understand that a commitment to providing safe spaces without traditional police presence requires a careful balance. In situations where safety is compromised, the absence of police might be blamed, but I have witnessed the creativity and effectiveness of community responses to social issues. By advocating for community-based safety initiatives, we can create a secure environment that respects the dignity and safety of all participants which will not only uphold Pride Toronto's commitment but also empower the community to take collective responsibility for the safety of all those who are in it.

