

LGBTQ+ Identity and Spirituality

Wednesday, May 8th

Reception: 6:30pm

Program: 7:00 p.m.

Love In Action UCC
350 S. York Rd. Hatboro, PA

Sponsored by:

Love in Action
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,
An Open & Affirming Community of Faith

SAGA
Sexuality and Gender Acceptance

Host: SAGA Community Center, Love in Action UCC
Moderator: Jeff Kearns

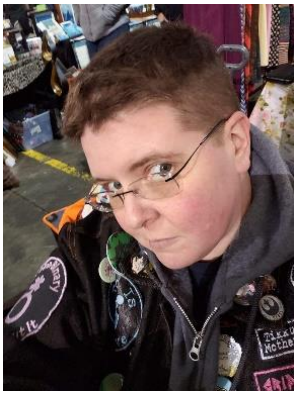
Conversationalists:
Sean Randall, Raquel Evita Saraswati, Spider Perry, Harsh Voruganti

Come join a diverse group for a conversation about LGBTQ+ identity and spirituality, and the intersections of various identities across a spectrum. Learn from a panel of LGBTQ+ individuals across a variety of faith traditions.
This event is FREE and open to the public.

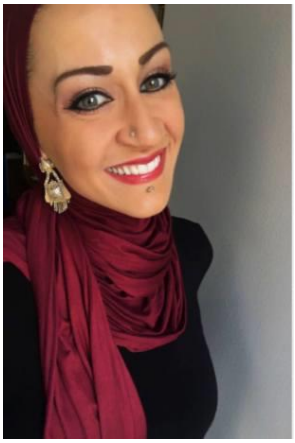
To ensure that we provide a safe and meaningful environment for all, please register your attendance by signing up here:
https://www.facebook.com/events/340560816586215/

This event will be livestreamed. A trained ASL interpreter will also be signing.
Questions? Please contact Josh Blakesley: josh@rctransform.com
Web address: http://loveinactionucc.org/
https://www.interfaithphiladelphia.org/civil-conversations

Meet the Conversationalists



Spider Perry is a Jewish artist, author, and activist. They own NerdyKeppie https://nerdykeppie.com/with their spouse, creating nerdy, punk and Pride clothing, accessories and Judaica. Spider has written for Onyx Path Publishing, Nisaba Fiction, and Green Ronin Publishing as well as independently publishing fiction and has consulted on queer inclusion on multiple RPG lines. They are deeply involved in disability, Jewish and queer activism. Spider lives in Montgomery County, PA, with their spouse, daughter, three dogs, and two embroidery machines.



Raquel Evita Saraswati is an American Muslim activist who focuses primarily on issues related to the status of women and girls in Muslim-majority societies and communities. She works to eradicate crimes honor and gender-based violence (including female genital mutilation), end forced and child marriages, and to protect the separation of religion and state. Raquel has been published in various papers and journals, including Publico, Portugal's largest daily, Aquila Style (a cosmopolitan Muslim women's magazine published in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei), and others. She has lectured in North America and Europe on issues like gender-based violence and minority rights. She has been interviewed in publications like The Root, International Business Times, Salon, and others. In 2007, Raquel received the prestigious Colin Higgins Youth Courage Award, granted to "those individuals who have endured overwhelming hostility and hate, yet have handled themselves with the utmost grace." In 2010, Raquel received a Durga Award at the 6th annual San Diego IndieFest. The Durga Awards are presented annually to "outstanding women who dedicate their lives to healing communities." Visit https://www.gofundme.com/RaquelEvita to learn about Raquel's project, The Adalah Initiative, which is still in its earliest stages.

Meet the Conversationalists *[cont.]*



Harsh Voruganti is the Founder and Principal of the Voruganti Law Firm. He is an Honors Graduate of the George Washington University School of Law and of the University of Texas at Austin. Before founding the Voruganti Law Firm, PLLC., Mr. Voruganti worked as a Fellow at the American Civil Liberties Union, Program of Freedom of Religion and Belief, and as the Associate Director of Public Policy at the Hindu American Foundation. Mr. Voruganti serves on the Board of the Washington D.C. Lawyer's Chapter of the American Constitution Society, and is the editor for The Vetting Room, a database of information and analysis on federal judicial appointments. Harsh is also a student and performer of Hindustani and Carnatic music in the Washington D.C. area.



Sean Randall is a songwriter and singer, as well as an actor. He hails from the city of Brotherly Love, and as such, he loves to share his talents with the world. "It's a blessing to be able to share my voice and my songs and in return, watch people enjoy them," says Randall. Sean began singing at the tender age of six at his home church in Philadelphia. After his first solo performance of "More Than Just a Story," Sean knew he was destined for a life in the performing arts. He went on to attend the Young Performance Theater where he won the Best Soloist award in 2003. Sean spent almost every waking moment honing his vocal skills and writing songs while other kids were hanging out with their friends. "I would write every chance I had. I wrote about whatever I was feeling, even if it wasn't a complete song or poem. Life inspires me to write music and I love expressing myself through this form of storytelling. Writing is so personal. It's a great way to connect with people," expressed Randall. At age 12, he made his television debut on the Bravo Network show called "Bravo On with the Show" as a dancer. In 2010, he scored the lead role of "Jalen Cooper" for a local stage play in Philadelphia called "Just Believe". Since then, Sean has been cast in several independent films and web series. In fact, Sean has become so enamored with the film world that he has plans to add script writing and production to his list of credits very soon. Currently, Sean is one working on his own album slated for release in the near future.

Moderator, ***Jeffrey Kearns***



Jeff Kearns is Manager of Learning at Independence Blue Cross (Independence) in Philadelphia, PA. Since joining Independence in 1999, Jeff has held several roles in various divisions. He currently works in the corporate university, a division of Human Resources, where he manages onboarding, personal and professional development, career management, mentoring, and organizational effectiveness for the enterprise. Jeff and his team provide practical and on-time learning resources for Independence and its subsidiaries with a focus on the needs of the modern learner while helping to prepare associates for the future. Jeff also oversees all diversity and inclusion training efforts for Independence and its subsidiaries and is a member of Independence's Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Council. Most recently, he collaborated with internal stakeholders and partners at Comcast/NBCUniversal to develop and implement a customized curriculum for *Know Your Value* at Independence, a unique development program that supports a diverse and inclusive workplace and enriches employee engagement through meaningful workplace experiences. Jeff has a B.A. in Communications from Temple University and a M.A. in Health Administration from St. Joseph's University. He lives in Warminster, PA.



Host, ***Rev. Josh Blakesley, M.Div.***

Josh grew up in the Midwest before completing a B.A. Theatre at Northwestern College [IA] and a Masters of Divinity [M.Div.] at Princeton Theological Seminary [NJ]. An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ [UCC], Josh has lived and worked in Iowa, Philadelphia, Hawai'i, Mexico, and Michigan. Currently, he is Pastor of Love In Action UCC [loveinactionucc.org] in Hatboro, PA, a Philly suburb, featured in a Vox Media episode of Divided States of Women with Liz Plank [dividedstatesofwomen.com] and in the Philadelphia Inquirer. Josh has 20+ years of experience working with children, youth, and adults in various intra and interfaith settings. Josh is a fellow of Interfaith Philadelphia [interfaithphiladelphia.org], designing and coordinating HS and University student groups for interfaith immersion service-learning weeks, called "Alternative Break Interfaith Encounters." Josh also is the founder and director of Relate, Create, Transform! [rctransform.com], an organization dedicated to providing interfaith experiences for youth and adults, and programing that encourages people of all ages and all faiths, and those who identify as atheist or agnostic--to deepen their identities, widen their service to others, and to develop partnerships to make a positive impact in the world. Josh also co-facilitates "How to be an Interfaith Ally" trainings for Philly Peace Day. Last November, Josh co-presented in Toronto at the Parliament of the World's Religions. He also performs regularly with the dinner theatre company, Without a Cue Productions, LLC [withoutacue.com] and has developed theatre arts curriculum for use in religious and secular settings. Josh also enjoys playing basketball, strumming on the guitar, traveling, learning languages, or making strange and funny faces. He lives in Center City Philly with his life and laugh partner María Elena.

Civil Conversation Program: Wednesday, May 8th

LGBTQ+ Identity and Spirituality

6:30pm

Reception, Meet & Greet

[doors open at 6:15pm]

7:00pm

Welcome

Rev. Josh Blakesley

Greeting and Gratitude

Niki Kulp, SAGA Community Center

Abby Stamelman Hockey, Executive Director, Interfaith Philadelphia

Civil Conversations Intro and Guidelines

Rev. Josh Blakesley, Jeff Kearns

Podcast Clip from *On Being*

Introduction of Moderator and Conversationalists

Rev. Josh Blakesley, Jeff Kearns

Conversation on Identity

Conversationalists, Jeff Kearns

Small Group Conversation

Group Sharing/Conversationalists Response

Questions for the Conversationalists

Closing