

Welcome Note from Fall Conference Chair- Trenda Loftin

Hello and Welcome to the 2016 GLSEN Massachusetts Western Mass Fall Conference! I am so excited to be hosting this conference at Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School- as a PVPA teacher, as a community member, and as a Board member of GLSEN Massachusetts- Welcome!

Why the theme, *Context: Exploring Connections in Identity, Art, & Activism?*

Somewhere along the line, I learned that I could not be an activist without art. Literally, I could not do it. The more I learned about what was going on in the world, in my country, in my communities, the sadder and sadder I got. Theatre became my method for challenging the systems and dynamics that had me feeling incapable of making change, unable to push back, and unlikely to survive. I learned that for me, activism and art had to coexist. I learned that I was an activist.

I came to understand that I could use writing and performing as a way of imagining a different reality. Through creating pieces of art, I could imagine different ways we might exist together in a way that celebrates our various identities. I recognized that through performance, we could begin practicing the ways we want things to be and provide opportunities for others to see new possibilities. I realized that through creative thought, collaborative creation, and interacting with audience, I could actually aid in my own healing and potentially support the healing of others as well.

These are some of hopes for today. I hope this conference will offer multiple opportunities to connect with someone new, to try something new, and to envision new ways of being in this world together. I hope that this conference will offer an opportunity for celebration and for healing. I cannot lie. I needed this conference. I need art. And I need more activists! This is one of the reasons I am so thrilled that Jasmin Roberts is here with us today.

Introduction for Jasmin Roberts

Jasmin Roberts hails from Brooklyn, NY, and has lived in the Pioneer Valley for the last 8 years. She is an alumna of Oberlin College, and holds a graduate degree from UMass Amherst. She joined the Northampton Poetry scene in 2013, and is the 2-time grand slam champion of Northampton, heading Northampton's National Poetry Slam team. She also represented Northampton at the 2015 Individual World Poetry Slam competition, and at this year's Women of The World Poetry Slam competition.

Jasmin not only prides herself on writing hard-hitting and introspective poetry that educates and offers commentary on current world issues, but she also likes to remind us not to take ourselves too seriously, by using words like “homotastic.” She will make you laugh and question your place in the world in the span of three minutes, and she’ll do it all sporting 4-inch heels and skinny-jean overalls!

Please join us in welcoming GLSEN Massachusetts Fall Conference Keynote Performer Jasmin Roberts!

Jasmin Performs & Speaks- 15 mins

Logistics

You will notice in your program that there are 9 to 11 workshops offered in each session. In an effort to incorporate a variety of voices, accommodate a range of needs, and encourage tiered and creative learning- we are asking that each workshop hold no more than 15 participants. The more we spread out amongst the workshops, the more opportunities we will have to share our learning with each other and with those who could not or would not make it to this conference.

If you have come with friends, try to plan so each of you can come back with a different experience to share. Talk to each other. Check out the wonderful exhibitors who are all set up in the small theatre just across the way from this one.

If you have come with friends, try to plan so each of you can come back with a different experience to share. Talk to each other. Lunch will be 1 hour long and will be an opportunity to chat with each other and check out the wonderful exhibitors. Lunch will be set up and available at 12:30, in the hallway between the annex and the main hall. We will have people to guide you. Feel free to eat wherever feels comfortable for you except this theatre and the 2 dance studios. Take care of yourself today, drink lots of water, and break as you need to. The exhibitor’s tables will be available at any point during the day. There is also a Chill Zone in room 412.

In our closing session, we will have an opportunity to share some of our work. If by the end of the day, you have a reflection, a short poem, or a piece of art you’d like to share, please do. We won’t have time for everyone but keep sharing! Keep sharing even outside of this conference today.

If throughout the day you have questions, there will be volunteers all around. Just look for the GLSEN t-shirts!

Have a great morning!

INTRO FOR PERFORMANCE PROJECT'S FIRST GENERATION

Are you first generation? Are you first in your family to: Grow up in this country? Graduate from high school? Go to college? Speak English as your first language? Be incarcerated? Not be incarcerated? Be drug free? Be openly lgbt? Question your faith? Be a feminist? Break a silence? Be an artist? These are just some of the ways our next Keynote Performers are thinking about what first generation means

The Performance Project was founded by Julie Lichtenberg in 2000 in Springfield, MA. The First Generation Ensemble is one element of The Performance Project. Through intensive artistic training, inter-generational mentoring, research, self-reflection, and dialogue, First Generation develops stunning, multi-lingual, and compelling performances. Youth and their various identities are held at the center of their work.

GLSEN MA extends a huge thank you to this ensemble for their commitment to celebrating the diversity within community, challenging limitations, supporting each other with academic endeavors, and doing all of this artistically.

Please take your seats, silence your cellphones, and enjoy the performance from by The Performance Project's First Generation Ensemble's, the play "Tenderness" co-directed by Iyawana Burnett & Julie Lichtenberg.