

travel in the United States, your family should be secure, your relationship should be recognized.

J.P.: *Has the deck been cleared in Oregon as far as marriage equality? Is Basic Rights Oregon moving on from that issue now?*

J.F.: We have some work still to do to implement the ruling from last year. So we're working on some sort of technical administrative bills in the legislative session so that the legal decision is reflected in our statutes. That work continues ... ensuring folks are actually receiving the legal recognition that is bestowed upon them by the court decision. Still, we get calls on a weekly basis from couples that are navigating systems of inheritance, or parenting, or joint mortgages, joint taxes, all these kinds of things. So there's quite a bit of implementation work moving forward to ensure that the decision is carried out in people's day-to-day lives. And beyond that issue, we have for a very long time had a much broader agenda across issues that affect LGBTQ Oregonians, primarily health care advocacy for transgender communities in this state and then, as a coalition partner with communities of color, working across economic issues, issues that are big on the agenda in the legislative session: the end-profiling legislation led by the Center for Intercultural Organizing and the "ban the box" work by the Urban League. We're strong coalition partners in that work, as well.

J.P.: *How does the new leadership structure with the co-directors support that?*

J.F.: Beautifully (both women laugh). I think that with the changes, this is a movement-wide moment. This isn't just a Basic Rights Oregon moment for LGBTQ communities across the country. Folks are really looking at how we lift up the leadership of LGBTQ people of color, how we bring internal to our organization the kind of collaborative models of leadership that we seek to build in our work externally. So for us, the new leadership structure is demonstrating that deep commitment from the top position — now "positions" — in our organization right on down. And it's really incredible to have a board with the vision to recognize that this is a real opportunity to think creatively, and not just rely on the structures that we've built through the work that we've done to date, but to think about what kind of structures are necessary to support the work moving forward.

Nancy Haque: And I think that for us to have a transformative moment, we need our organization to transform as well. It's exciting. It seems, in some ways, like a small change from an executive director to co-directors, but I think it's larger than just adding a position. It's really thinking about how we just do our work differently. And how we don't just focus on sort of one person being the face of Basic Rights Oregon. I think that, for me personally, I don't purport to have all the answers or to move this work forward, but I do think it matters to have someone who is queer and Muslim and a person of color take on leadership in this organization to get to think about how we move this work forward in our state.

J.P. (to N.H.): *What do you see as experiences and knowledge that you bring from previous work that may be new to the organization and benefit it?*

N.H.: I don't feel exactly super new to Basic Rights Oregon because I was on the board for three years and worked at an organization, the Western States Center, upstairs, that's very close to Basic Rights Oregon. I think that I have a lot of experience doing organizational development and really thinking about how an organization can do better and just trying to be really helpful. That's a lot of what my role has been the past several years. So I think I bring that experience. And beyond my professional experience, I think I bring my lived experience of being who I am and doing this work, which is hard. My queer identity has never been a part of my work really before. So it's a whole new thing for me, actually. I feel like a lot of my passion in starting social-justice work was around economic justice. I come from a working-class family and that's what felt important to me to focus on: issues around basic fairness, as I see it, around people's ability to support their families.

J.P.: *How do you protect the LGBTQ young folks out there from bullying, including cyberbullying? And I was hoping you could talk about what's been done and what still needs to be done.*

J.F.: What has been done is that there have been a number of legislative efforts to address bullying over the years. The most recent effort was in 2009. Basic Rights Oregon led a coalition of over 40 organizations to pass the Oregon Safe Schools Act. It does address cyberbullying and I think was even updated a couple of years later to strengthen that provision. It sets clear requirements for school districts to address bullying in schools. But what we're finding is that because those policies are — like any policies in the school systems — left without a lot of resources for enforcement, then it's pretty spotty in terms of how school districts are doing in addressing bullying. This gets at building the tools and empowering the community to do that implementation work that is a little bit newer terrain for us and is part of what we'll be looking at. Also ensuring that we're connecting those conversations with the really urgent needs to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. We don't want to be in a situation where we're trying to address the impacts of bullying and harassment only to find that that leads to reinforcing the problems that we're seeing with the school-to-prison pipeline and criminalization of youth.

J.P.: *The Legislature is considering banning sexual orientation conversion therapy. The Senate is considering it. The House of*

Representatives voted 41-18 to pass it. I saw seven Republicans joined Democrats in voting for that. Why is this bill important? Is this happening here in Oregon?

J.F.: First of all, the bill will ban conversion therapy for sexual orientation and gender identity, so I want to make sure that's explicit, as well. If folks don't know, conversion therapy is any number of practices that aim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, and it's based on the idea that that's a mental illness. You can imagine the incredible damage that it could do to someone to be subjected to therapies where the premise is that the core of who you are is somehow wrong and needs to be fixed. The practice has been discredited by every mental health professional association in the country and yet, in spite of that fact, it persists, even

here in the state of Oregon. And most often those who are subjected to the therapies are young people. We've had a number of folks share their personal stories in the legislative process at hearings and so forth and within the media. So it definitely still continues here today. One of the key pieces is really public education. It's not the kind of thing that often sees the light of day. These are therapies that are happening behind closed doors, and so the campaign to pass the legislation is as much about raising

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JEANA HAQUE,
CO-DIRECTOR, BASIC RIGHTS OREGON

awareness as it is clarifying that if you're licensed — you practice mental health in the state of Oregon — you are prohibited from continuing this legacy of harm and damage that's been done to so many people.

J.P.: *The Oregon Health Plan decided to start covering gender-reassignment procedures. Was this a big victory?*

N.H.: Huge victory.

J.F.: Huge victory with the Oregon Health Plan. We're one of the first states in the country to have a Medicaid program that covers transition-related care for transgender Oregonians, including services that are specific for youth, which is a really exciting part of that decision. And we have a really strong task force of community members, health care providers and advocates that have come together to work on the implementation of that policy. The care has been excluded from coverage for so long there's a lot of work to do to build competency among providers, to strengthen the network so that folks can actually access the care, to provide policy guidelines and connect folks to resources around best practices.

J.P.: *Looking at the website, I saw that Basic Rights Oregon was looking to also support the movement to raise minimum wage and to "ban the box," or ask on job*

applications about past convictions. Is this mission creep? Is it still central to the organization's goals, or is it starting to creep out a little bit?

N.H.: I don't think it's mission creep at all because we all have lots of different identities. I think there's plenty of LGBTQ people who are making minimum wage who need a raise, and there are a lot of LGBTQ people who are really victimized by things like having the box "Have you ever been convicted of a felony?" on job applications. So I think it speaks to who we are, which is a diverse movement. These issues are central to LGBTQ folks. And it's also part of being a good coalition partner, is supporting organizations that are fighting for those policies.

J.F.: I just want to lift up what Nancy was saying about the impact on LGBTQ people. There are disparate impacts when you are a minority that is discriminated against. LGBTQ people are more likely to live in poverty. Our youth are more likely to be homeless and drop out of school. Those contribute to folks more likely to be working in minimum-wage jobs. Folks turn to crimes of survival and are targeted by law enforcement, often based on sexual orientation and gender identity. So you are more likely to see previous convictions within an LGBTQ population.

J.P.: *I was hoping you guys could talk more about the profiling piece you mentioned. That's obviously been big in the news all around the country. What does the organization hope to accomplish in Oregon to prevent police profiling?*

J.F.: We are part of a large coalition working to pass the end-profiling legislation this session. The Center for Intercultural Organizing is the lead partner in that coalition. The bill aims to, at the very minimum, shed some light on what's happening with profiling in this state. So it's structured to collect information to specifically define profiling so that we have a common and shared understanding of what we're talking about, and it directs the Attorney General's Office to consider that data and report out any patterns that emerge from that, which would help inform next steps: figuring out what kind of training might be necessary, what kind of interventions might be possible, where there's opportunities to improve the relationship between communities and law enforcement. And certainly what we know both anecdotally and from national statistics is that there's a lot of misunderstanding among law enforcement about LGBTQ identities and that folks are often targeted based on their gender presentation, based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

N.H.: And right now the bill is inclusive. It talks about race, it talks about gender identity, it talks about sexual orientation, as well as religion and national origin. Just the language of the bill itself as it is now is a great example of coalition building and partnership and that it is a larger umbrella than you might think when people just say "profiling."