

Episode 49: "We Are Everywhere" On Family, Resistance, and Advocacy with Foula Dimopoulos

Released on June 30, 2021

[00:00:00.33] ANTHONY SIS: The opinions expressed by the guests and contributors of this podcast are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Cornell University or its employees.

[00:00:09.18] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:14.31] Welcome to the Inclusive Excellence podcast. June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month, a month that recognizes the 1969 Stonewall uprising that took place at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. To honor this month, we have collaborated with the LGBTQ+ college network group at Cornell to create a special series called Beyond Binaries. Through this series, we will interview Cornell staff who identify as LGBTQ to share what pride means to them and celebrate the diverse lived experiences among members of the LGBTQ community at Cornell. My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:00:57.35] TORAL PATEL: My name is Toral Patel.

[00:00:58.73] ANTHONY SIS: And you are listening to Beyond Binaries.

[00:01:08.81] Foula, thank you so much for being our last guest on our special series, Beyond Binaries. And so to get us started, if you just want to share your name, pronouns, your role here at Cornell, as well as some of your salient identities with our listeners.

[00:01:24.56] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Sure. It is wonderful to be here with you. And again, my name is Foula. The most affirming pronouns for me are gender inclusive ones, which are ze, hir, and hers. So ze went to the store to get a box of books for hir library. And everybody's on the learning curve for the most part. So if that takes a little while to get in people's vocabulary, he, him, and his work as well. I have the honor of serving as an advisor to first gen students, students of color, and/or low income students as a part of our Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives and particularly our EOP, HEOP, and preprofessional programs. And for those who don't know, EOP stands for Educational Opportunity Program. And HEOP stands for Higher Education Opportunity Program.

[00:02:19.40] And some of my salient identities include that I identify as queer. I also identify as trans. And I also identify as a first gen professional, and as somebody who has crossed class borders, in that I grew up fairly working class poor, and I'm not in that class bracket anymore, although a lot of my life is influenced by it. And I also identify as white. I can't take out how I move through the world as a white person, even juxtaposed against all of those other salient identities. They all are always at play.

[00:02:56.72] ANTHONY SIS: Thank you so much for sharing that with us. And thank you for also sharing the examples of the pronouns because that's one question that I often get in the trainings that I do around pronoun use, is how do you use hir or zir pronouns? And I'm like, let's look at some examples. So thank you for sharing those examples with your pronouns as well-- your affirming pronouns.

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[00:03:17.06] So I want to start off by asking you a question. So the question is, why is the rainbow flag a symbol of LGBTQ pride?

[00:03:28.52] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: There's a longer answer and a shorter answer. So the rainbow flag was actually, I think, eight colors. And it was designed by Gilbert Baker. And each color has a meaning as it reflects different areas of balance and well-being in our lives. So for example, red means life. Hot pink-- when we had hot pink-- stood for sex. Lavender often stood for spirituality. And so all of the colors really-- this may not be the official answer-- but to me really elevate the ways in which we are whole beings and not merely one or only parts of who we are.

[00:04:10.79] ANTHONY SIS: That is spot on. You got a quarter through the right answer, which is amazing to me, because I heard about this answer before looking up this question. But then when I actually looked at the answer, I feel like you're reading right off the script. So yes, you're right. It was created by artist Gilbert Baker. And you're right, so when you think about the different colors, it alludes to holistic parts of ourselves as LGBTQ individuals. And so as you mentioned, red stands for life. Violet/lavender stands for spirit, as you mentioned. Pink, also sex-- as you also mentioned-- and then some of the other colors-- orange stands for healing. Yellow is sunlight. Green is nature. And turquoise is magic. And then blue is also harmony. So as you mentioned, there were originally eight colors. So that's all the eight colors stand for.

[00:05:01.70] I've been seeing-- which is interesting too-- just on a side note to reference in terms of flags-- I've been seeing a lot more people use the progress flag. So for folks who don't know what the progress flag is, it's the addition of the sideways triangle on the left hand side of the flag, which includes the trans flag colors as well as black and brown stripes to acknowledge Black and brown Indigenous communities within the LGBTQ community as well.

[00:05:30.47] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: And my hope is that that will be the flag that continues to bubble up to the surface and be integrated into mainstream, not only US, but also global culture. I think it highlights more visibility of the intersections of our communities. And I would also add that the reason that the eight-color rainbow flag-- the original eight-color flag was decreased to six was actually because I think it was-- it was either in San Francisco or New York, they had to shorten the number of stripes because they didn't have enough material to have the eight colors. So they actually decreased the size to the six colors. And that's where we have the six-color flag. And I think the progress flag is maybe-- it's less than a decade old.

[00:06:23.32] ANTHONY SIS: It is. It was started--

[00:06:24.91] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: And probably within the last five to seven years--

[00:06:27.91] ANTHONY SIS: Yes. The progress flag we were just talking about was created in 2018 by Daniel Quasar in response to Philadelphia's updated pride flag, which included the black and brown stripes only, but not the incorporation of the trans

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flag or the trans flag colors in that progress flag. And so yeah, it is fairly recent. But I have been seeing a lot more businesses and folks using that flag this year, which was definitely different from even last year or years prior to as well.

[00:07:01.42] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Which I think is still-- I don't know how many listeners realize actually how revolutionary it is to have not only included black and brown stripes initially Philly, but also the inclusion of the blue, white, and pink stripes of the trans flag, to have all of those pieces there speaks not only to intersectionality of our communities, but also how our struggles were intertwined even in the first place, even prior to Stonewall. So for me, there's a lot about the progress flag that resonates for sure.

[00:07:39.49] ANTHONY SIS: And I think that nicely transitions into the first question I want to ask you, which is, when you hear the word pride, what feelings, emotions, experiences come to mind for you?

[00:07:51.22] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: For me, I am always excited about pride. And sometimes that excitement is tempered with skepticism. It seems like a lot of Supreme Court decisions come out in June. And--

[00:08:05.95] ANTHONY SIS: Why is that the case?

[00:08:07.13] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: I don't know. But certainly there is some apprehension. But for me, fundamentally, pride is about resistance and then celebration. Pride is also about liberation to me. Pride is about possibility. And for me, all of those pieces make me excited. And I think about the fact that some of my very first Pride parades also coincided with watching PFLAG people, so parents and friends of lesbians and gays, everywhere, though it's trans and pansexual and bisexual inclusive, and folks without labels inclusive. PFLAG chose to stick with their name because they've been known in as PFLAG for so long. But to watch all of these parents and families march in support of their children-- even as I've gotten older, there's something emotional that happens to watch that.

[00:09:01.52] And so I think for me, pride is also about family of choice. It's about family you don't know. It's also about the families that fight. It's also about sex and desire and intimacy. And I think all of that, for me, has typically had roots in resistance, resistance to who people said we were, resistance to growing up in a very religiously extremist household, where I first learned about homosexuality along with the fire and brimstone. For me pride is about resistance to all of the ways in which we are socialized to be in general, but also resistance to gender roles and all of those things and resistance to the status quo.

[00:09:52.49] And in that, I think for me is celebration and joy and delight. Pride is delight. And pride is also hard. And it's hard for lots of folks. And part of it can be hard because they're not in a place where they can or want to be out. And it can feel really

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isolating to see lots of celebrating pride. And I think there's enough room and Pride Month for folks who have made different choices than me, for example.

[00:10:21.64] And also pride can be hard because with HIV and AIDS, even though we know lots of things now, and things are very different than they were when I was coming out in the early '90s, that doesn't eradicate the fact that we lost a whole generation of men and male-bodied folks. And we don't have the benefit of those elders. And conversely, breast cancer has taken a lot of women, particularly lesbian women. And pride is hard because it's also a time where we remember who we've lost and who have been taken, so not only around the health and wellness, but also about violence within our communities.

[00:11:01.78] And when I think about resistance, pride didn't start out as a celebration. Pride started out because it was about resistance and particularly working class and people of color and trans folks saying, no. You cannot arrest us. You cannot suppress us. You cannot affect violence on us. This is not going to happen. And that was Stonewall. But that was built off of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot out in California and also from the 1950s, where our communities were creating spaces for ourselves, even if it wasn't about being public.

[00:11:40.57] Not all of our communities, and not all of our experiences, and certainly not all of my experiences are about shame or self-hate or self-loathing. There's a lot of joy in our communities. And so for me, pride is about joy and resistance. And I think resistance and joy, they're just as important now as they ever have been-- maybe me even more so-- because I think that those things foster hope.

[00:12:07.48] ANTHONY SIS: And I think in summary too, it also just sounds like a moment to reflect, right?

[00:12:12.17] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Mm-hmm.

[00:12:12.61] ANTHONY SIS: To reflect on that resistance, to reflect on that joy, to reflect on all of the things that we still need to work on as a community internally, but then also externally for our allies, and to really revisit what does that connection to the community look like for people who are not members of the community? And so I think in summary, that's what I hear a lot of. And I say this a lot when there's like a really good thing that is shared on our show. So for those who are listening, please rewind and listen to everything that was just said for a history Pride Month crash course 101 because you shared so much that I think, for me, also really resonated strongly.

[00:12:47.95] And one of the things I wanted to just extract and talk a little bit about is this notion of a chosen family. And so being able to really have this sense of familial ties and kinship and connection without having them be biologically related to you. And so can you just share a little bit about that? What does chosen family mean? How is that different from biological family, and what that means within the queer LGBTQ context for you?

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[00:13:15.14] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: So when I think about the chosen family, I also think about what Cherrie Moraga talks about in terms of making families from scratch. And for those folks who don't know, Moraga is an out, Chicana lesbian writer. And for me, I've been making family of choice or making family from scratch since I was much younger than I am now, in part because of my own family of origin dynamics, and also in part because when I came out, my family of origin was not very happy. And also conversely, the fact that I grew up fairly poor and working class meant that there wasn't anything related to being disowned. The benefit of growing up poor and coming out as queer in college was that there wasn't anything monetarily that could mess with my stability there.

[00:14:07.04] And so I have been making families-- in fact, we were talking before the show started. I'm going to go see some of my family of choice and my chosen family next week. And not all of the folks in my chosen family happen to be queer. I have a wide variety of folks who are part of my chosen family. A lot of them are queer. And that's, I think, on purpose. I think that's by virtue of us finding each other and making our families from scratch, where we show up for folks. We show up in the ways in which-- when I think about what family means, family means that you may not always like each other. But you figure it out. And for me, a chosen family does that.

[00:14:46.66] And I think for me it's about being able to show up as yourself without any hesitation or apprehension. I know that my family of choice sees me in ways either that the world doesn't, or my family of origin doesn't or can't. Or health care providers-- like yesterday, who continue to misgender me. My chosen family, they will always have my back. It's never a question. And that doesn't mean that we always agree. In fact, we don't. We don't even agree about where we should go as queer communities. And I think that that's the beauty of having family of choice, so that at the end of the day, we want to make sure that we not only are alive, but that we are thriving. And to me, blood or not, that's what families do.

[00:15:34.72] ANTHONY SIS: And I just want to just explicitly name the importance of language here. And so I think in reference to this question, I use the term biological family. And you use family of choice, which I think-- our family of origin, sorry-- and I think that's a more appropriate, more inclusive language. And so I just want to acknowledge that and name that right for our listeners. And especially with the trainings that I do, I always tell people, you've got to practice. You've got to learn. And so I want to thank you for sharing that language with me and for me to be able to learn and grow to continue to use inclusive language. And so thank you for that.

[00:16:07.42] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: You're welcome.

[00:16:09.04] ANTHONY SIS: And there's just-- we could talk about this for--

[00:16:12.19] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: We could.

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[00:16:13.57] ANTHONY SIS: Because really for me, when I think about family-- and I'll speak for myself in terms of my identity journey-- my family of choice was the one who really taught me how to survive and be queer in this world. So my family of origin taught me the basics of survival and the basics of navigating life. But when it came to navigating life as a queer person, as an LGBTQ person, that lens and perspective is so different. And so my family of origin could not teach me that because they themselves were not members of the community, right?

[00:16:48.52] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Yeah.

[00:16:49.42] ANTHONY SIS: So my family of choice-- and I really just give so much credit to the LGBTQ, people of color, particularly trans woman, and trans women of color, especially, who earlier in my identity development, really taught me how to survive and thrive, not just around surviving, but thriving as well. And just seeing so many beautiful, powerful, resilient humans who also were trans and also women of color and who loved and embraced me so much, for me it's like-- I feel forever indebted to the trans community for me particularly because they taught me how to survive and thrive. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be the person that I am today.

[00:17:32.56] And it's just something that I continue-- within the work that I do, both personally and professionally-- continue to just elevate and support their work, their voices, because people need to hear them. People need to hear-- they need to hear their stories from their words from their lens and not me as somebody who is on the spectrum, but doesn't explicitly-- which that's another conversation-- explicitly identify as trans myself. I can't come into this role-- and this is also I think something from an allyship lens that I think even people within the community can really benefit from hearing, is if you have the opportunity to have this platform, and you want to showcase allyship, don't speak over trans individuals or people from different lived experiences from your own.

[00:18:19.39] Really use your platform and just pass the microphone, as I like to say, to say, give folks the opportunity to share their stories, and the podcast being one of them, in a professional context, but even just outside of this, just to make sure that we're being mindful of how we engage folks who have different lived experiences than our own and just making sure that we're not speaking over them, if we're trying to showcase allyship, which is very important to me.

[00:18:43.52] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Yeah, I concur. And I love that piece about passing the mic. As you spoke, I was like, actually I came of age where there were a lot of older lesbians in the small town in Kentucky. That's where I came out. And they weren't-- so there were a lot of white folks involved in that. But there were also women of color who deeply impacted me, even though they may not have known it, just by the virtue of them being out in the early '90s.

[00:19:18.68] And also Laverne Cox talks about possibility models. And those were the folks that taught me what possibly could be, as well as the professors who were brave

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enough to teach and include queer writers of color and queer writers in general and trans writers. So for me, I also found a lot of my way and path by reading other folks. YouTube was not a thing. I was around when we were finding each other through GeoCities, which was not helpful. But there were other groups that you could find each other. But really, that's where I learned about-- oh my gosh, that's where I learned about and read folks like Audre Lorde and Dorothy Allison and Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa-- all of these powerhouse folks.

[00:20:14.80] And while some of our stories and others were clearly very different, there were also elements that I could relate to. And those professors didn't have to include those writers because it was dangerous. People could lose their jobs. And I was very lucky to have not only those professors, but also folks out and about in the community who also supported me as a college student, who were like, so do you know this? Have you been to Lexington? Do you know about this bookstore? What do you know?

[00:20:45.55] And then I came out also dancing in clubs. I'm not a great dancer, but to just go out and see us-- that's where a lot of my family of choice, where we went. We drove 45 minutes to an hour to Lexington from Berea to go dancing. And on some weekends, we would drive 3 hours to Louisville or 2 and 1/2 hours, depending on how fast folks drove.

[00:21:09.12] ANTHONY SIS: Three hours? Wow.

[00:21:09.91] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: I think it was three-- maybe it was two and a half. But to go dancing and to be with other people who look like you, who were also showing same gender desire, that was phenomenal-- in safe places or safer places. Things like the Pulse hadn't happened at that point.

[00:21:32.54] ANTHONY SIS: Yeah, the Pulse incident in 2016, I think a lot about that, as a person of color, and just how sad that moment was even though I wasn't physically there. And I think ironically enough, the community's kind of small, so I knew a lot of people who knew people in that shooting, in that incident, where 49 folks lost their lives due to a gun shooting, and a specific night at a venue that was for queer and trans people of color. And so I knew people who knew people who passed away. And that was just hard to see.

[00:22:09.27] Let alone just knowing that my particular intersection of identities was at a threat at this event, but then to also know people who knew folks, that was just really-- that was a hard moment. That was a really hard moment. And I'll never forget where I was that moment that that incident happened too. It's just one of those things like some other historical moments, where people will always remember where they were. That for me will always be just so hard to understand and really wrap my head around, is how could somebody specifically target these identities that I belong to.

[00:22:39.87] And so you mentioned safer spaces because that, for me, was the first moment where I felt like my safe space was no longer safe anymore, no matter what

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city I was in, whether it was Orlando or Miami or Chicago. That was a real moment for me, where I was like, oh my goodness, people are out for me. But I think historically, people have always been out for people like me, people like us, within the community as well. So it's just-- yeah, I appreciate that acknowledgment because it's just-- especially in this month because it happened in June.

[00:23:14.37] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: I didn't know that you knew people.

[00:23:17.52] ANTHONY SIS: I didn't know them personally. But it was just-- when you see the social media, and people sharing, like, oh my goodness, I knew this-- I remember one in particular who had shared that they knew this couple that was there attending that night. And they both passed away. And he was sharing that they were going to get married and all this other stuff. And it was like, oh my gosh, what? So it's just-- it was really hard moment for me. And I know for a lot of folks within the community-- even outside of the community too-- just knowing that 49 people were lost.

[00:23:48.51] And not all of them were also queer too. There were some-- I remember this one woman, hearing about her, and she was a mother of her son who was gay and just so happened to be there that night. She passed away along with her son. And that was challenging. So just to hear those kinds of stories--

[00:24:03.75] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Yeah. And I also remember where I was. I just sat and-- I think that was one of the very first times that I felt terror. Growing up and being socialized as female, you're taught to be afraid. You carry your keys in your fingers. You make sure you figure out where your exits are-- and all of that. So I think there's also an undercurrent. I think as somebody who's queer, there's also an undercurrent of being vigilant, but not-- for me, at least, I didn't move through my life afraid. Some days, I was just like, OK, come on, bring it.

[00:24:45.21] ANTHONY SIS: Right.

[00:24:45.47] [LAUGHTER]

[00:24:47.10] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: But I also-- I think part of it goes back to the fact that all of the folks that were [INAUDIBLE] for me, their resistance was being able to live out loud and on their own terms. And I think for me, the Pulse gave me a huge pause because it was not-- it was very different than other-- for me, at least, it was very different than how other murders had landed, which I think also sent messages to whole communities.

[00:25:17.34] I think about Sakia Gunn, who was a young woman of color who was attacked in Jersey. I also think of Matthew Shepard. And also I think the piece about the Pulse was that it was so many. It was so many. And clearly, intentional or not, I think that sent ripples throughout multiple communities across the country about their safety--

[00:25:45.90] ANTHONY SIS: And arguably around the world too.

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[00:25:47.40] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Yeah, that's true.

[00:25:48.60] ANTHONY SIS: Because I do remember there was another incident in Mexico, I believe. And don't quote me on this. But there was an incident, I want to say that same year, where there were a number of LGBTQ folks at a club in Mexico that were also killed too. So I think about the global implications I think that Pulse had too for folks within our community, as well as outside of community too.

[00:26:11.22] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Clubs have often been sanctuary-- how they were a sanctuary for me, and how they have been that to other folks, I think that our communities are really adept at cultivating and sometimes carving out sanctuary for each other and ourselves, whether that's a club, whether that's going through a list of affirming spiritual organizations-- like the Unitarian church-- we are good finders in many ways because we have to be resourceful, particularly when we move to new communities. And sometimes even when we in the same community, but we have shifted and decided to be differently out, that looks a bit different when we're trying to find resources and things. And I think we have often been a sanctuary for each other. And I think for me, pride is often about sanctuary.

[00:27:05.15] ANTHONY SIS: Absolutely. So I know we've been talking about some heavier stuff. So let's bring it up to a lighter note. And I do want to ask you, if you can share a little bit about that first moment where you felt truly represented and included-- whether it was in a workplace context, whether it was a different setting. We talked a lot about a lot of things outside of work. But thinking about what that moment was like, can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:27:31.31] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: I think one of the biggest moments was going to the '93 March on Washington. I'm a college student. My girlfriend and I at the time are riding in a friend's car driving to DC. From Berea, Kentucky, to DC, it's a long drive.

[00:27:52.58] ANTHONY SIS: I was going to say, yeah--

[00:27:54.70] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: And as we're going, we're looking at people's bumper stickers, to figure out, are they going to the march? Are they going the same places? So at that time, some of the bumper stickers that were out were things like, hate is not a family value, or the six or eight color rainbow flag, sometimes the lambda symbol, sometimes the pink triangle, which had been reclaimed as a symbol of pride and resistance from the Holocaust, where folks who were deemed homosexual, particularly men, were given pink triangles, versus women-- and apolitical-- so women who were thought to be lesbians or apolitical were given black triangles.

[00:28:34.71] So we were looking for all of these, saying, is there anybody-- and we'd get very excited every time we'd drive past cars with those stickers. And just to be-- we slept on somebody's floor. I don't even know whose floor we slept on. I don't even know that we knew them. But to have all of these people at the metro stations, flooding out and going and marching-- and it wasn't perfect. At that point, the trans folks were

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somewhat maligned and were not part of the original speaking set. And yet I didn't have the language for me in terms of being trans. I think I had just read, or would then read later that year, *Stone Butch Blues*, because my girlfriend was like, you need to read this.

[00:29:22.03] ANTHONY SIS: Fantastic book, by the way.

[00:29:22.58] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: And I read it in-- yeah. And you can read it for free. You can actually download a PDF of it-- and read it in one sitting. And I was like, oh, this makes a lot of sense to me. Oh, this makes a lot-- But I also went to this march. And there were certainly representations of folks who were genderqueer and who were trans. And it was the first time that bisexual and pansexual folks were included from the stage. And there were thousands. And you had folks from PFLAG. And you had folks from so many different organizations.

[00:29:59.43] And I just remember sitting there like, I could be a part of this. Energy was electric. You could touch it. I think that was one of the very first places where it was more than my budding family of choice. It was more than stuff I had read or being part of Kentucky Fairness Alliance. It was more than that. It was, when we gather en mass, there's something that happens. And I think for me, that's where when I go to pride parades, it's about us gathering en mass, even if that little mass is itty bitty.

[00:30:39.71] One of the prides I went to in Ypsilanti, Michigan, when I lived near there, was really small. But there was so much delight in the air. And so I think about that. And I also think about when I've watched pop culture and watched shows that are now-- they're telling more of our vast amount of stories. When I read Dorothy Allison, I felt included, partly because it was somebody writing from an Appalachian voice. So I think there are all these snatches of moments.

[00:31:18.20] And I think most of us-- and I'll just speak for myself. I'm always looking for those places where I can be not only represented, but also included, and included from the get-go, not as an afterthought. I think people are always hungry to know that they belong. And so those are some of the first places that I thought about.

[00:31:39.26] And I think subsequently in the latter years, I think about places I've worked, where their nondiscrimination policies included gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, because it tells me at least on some level they're thinking about how those things are at play in those workplaces where it's then reflected in policy, whether that's about adoption-- even if I'm never going to adopt, I want people to have access to those things. Or whether it's about insurance covering trans folks and hormone replacement therapy or surgery or some combination thereof, or just wellness in general, and how they define family in things like gym memberships, Colorado State and Cornell were two of the places that certainly I felt included and represented in a variety of ways.

[00:32:39.34] ANTHONY SIS: Thank you so much for your vulnerability. And so as we wrap up our time together-- we can go on and on about this conversation. But as we

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wrap up our time together, I would love to hear your perspective what you'd want to share with our listeners around what does advocacy look like beyond Pride Month? So we've talked a lot a lot about what it looks like within the community, partially a little bit about what it looks like from folks outside, but as we move beyond past Pride Month, it's not just a celebration we celebrate for one month. It should really be something we celebrate and continue to advocate for beyond the month of June. And so what does that look like from your perspective?

[00:33:17.01] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: I think advocacy takes on a variety of forms. And sometimes advocacy is simply living your life and living. That's advocacy, even if it's not deemed as such, right?

[00:33:30.60] ANTHONY SIS: Right.

[00:33:31.41] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: I think advocacy then, not only for folks who are within our communities, but also folks outside, can take on a number of different forms. So first, I think it's important to be educated. So folks may not know that last year in 2020, employment non-discrimination went through at the Supreme Court level. And there are also certainly lots of employers across the country that still do not have adequate inclusive nondiscrimination policies. I think it's also important to know that aging elders within queer communities, are also facing a scarcity of where they can live safely with one another, with their partners, and with staff that is not only friendly in terms of LGBTQ folks, but also informed and comfortable. For me it has to be all of those things.

[00:34:25.16] I think it's important as we think about families, to know that it is still OK in a number of states for states to discriminate on the basis of perceived or real sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression about whether folks can be foster parents or adoptive parents, in spite of the fact that foster parents are overwhelmingly-- I was just reading. And I don't have the complete stat. But LGBTQ folks comprise more foster parents than their heterosexual or cisgender counterparts.

[00:34:58.19] ANTHONY SIS: Oh, wow. I did not know that.

[00:35:00.70] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: So I think it's important to be educated because we have not arrived in 2021. Brown and Black people and Indigenous folks, folks of color in general, who are either perceived or actually queer in some way, are still being murdered, are still being beaten and violated, outside of anything related to police brutality. I think already this year 27 trans folks-- most of them trans women of color-- have been murdered.

[00:35:29.71] So I think whether you're writing letters, you're educating yourself, you're participating in demonstrations or protest, or you're seeking to change policy, all of those things are helpful-- and also inviting people in for conversations. Change doesn't happen overnight. Protests and demonstrations are great for drawing media attention to

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one thing for a short period of time-- shorter now. But that has to work in tandem with all of the other kinds of ways one can advocate and educate.

[00:36:06.77] ANTHONY SIS: It's ongoing, I think, right? And--

[00:36:08.72] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Yes.

[00:36:09.11] ANTHONY SIS: --I think the important thing, and what I would share with folks through my trainings, is that even allyship, what that looks like and how does that look like, it's continuous. It's long term. You're thinking about how, at an individual level, you participate in some of these practices, systems that oppress other marginalized communities. And I think that's very similar to how we celebrate Pride Month and what advocacy looks like.

[00:36:31.85] And just to go off of your education piece, I think this series alone, we have your story as well as for other incredible stories that highlight this diversity of lived experiences from people within the community. And I think that can, for some people, also be a way in which they showcase advocacy, to listen to these stories and to really hear what it is that people are saying and share with folks outside of their network. So shameless plug there. But I think that's also the reason why we work collaboratively with the LGBTQ CNG for this series, is to really just highlight the fact that even for people within the community, pride means something so different. And that's OK, that these stories are real. These stories matter. They're valid. And we should be celebrating them for their differences, not just for their similarities, in terms of identities and shared identities within the community.

[00:37:24.27] So thank you so much for your time. Really appreciate it. I think this is such a great way, a powerful way to end this series. And the last question I have for you before we wrap up is, how have you-- or will you plan on celebrating Pride Month beyond pride or even within the month of June?

[00:37:44.45] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Sure. So my partner and I just started watching the series Pride. It's a six-part documentary series about LGBTQ folks from the 1950s to the 2000s. They're 45 minutes apiece. So that's partly how we're celebrating. We are also trying to figure out what that's going to look like because so many events are online for pride this year, and rightfully so, in my opinion. And so I think part of it is also taking a road trip together. And hopefully there will be some great things to document. I think going on road trips in June is always-- for me, at least, it's always been a lot of fun because there are often surprises.

[00:38:28.10] Beyond this, there are lots of districts and towns and states that actually do pride outside of the month of June, for a lot of different reasons. Sometimes it's about not competing with other larger cities, prides, and things of that sort. So I'm always looking for where to go after June too. And I think that that's really cool because it also drives home that pride is not only relegated to one month and Stonewall and remembrance of Stonewall. Pride and delight and resistance and sanctuary for us all

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year long. And wherever we are, I think we create pride. Much like creating families of choice or chosen family, wherever we are, we can create those things.

[00:39:16.88] ANTHONY SIS: And we are everywhere.

[00:39:18.96] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: We are. Yes. We are here. We are queer. We are everywhere.

[00:39:24.02] ANTHONY SIS: Literally, we are everywhere, small towns, big cities-- and if you've been listening to the rest of the series, you'll definitely-- I hope that message hones it across, that we are literally everywhere. Foula, thank you so much for spending time and for your vulnerability for sharing so much for our listeners, for myself as well. And Happy Pride Month.

[00:39:44.57] FOULA DIMOPOULOS: Happy Pride Month. Thank you so much for inviting me to do this. It was so good to see you.

[00:39:49.13] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:39:50.28] ANTHONY SIS: For the latest updates on diversity, equity, and inclusion at Cornell, as well as resources to honor and celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride Month, be sure to visit diversity.cornell.edu. My name is Anthony sis.

[00:40:05.76] TORAL PATEL: My name is Toral Patel.

[00:40:07.23] ANTHONY SIS: Thank you for listening to the last episode of our special series, Beyond Binaries.