

October Diversity Tip Sheet: National Coming Out Day

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October 11, 2015 marks the 27th Anniversary of the first National Coming Out Day (NCOD). This day was selected 27 years ago to celebrate the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979, which attracted between 75,000 and 125,000 marchers. By 1993, the National March attracted between 800,000 and 1,000,000 marchers. In 1988, Rob Eichberg and Jean O'Leary founded NCOD as a means to give visibility to the power of individuals speaking their most basic truth and not hiding an essential core of their being.



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Keith Haring, deceased Artist and Activist, created an image that is used throughout the world to celebrate NCOD. It depicts a person "kicking open" a closet door and coming out. The image is both simple and deeply moving. When someone who is a gender or sexual minority speaks up and proclaims with pride who they are, hearts and minds are transformed.

The Human Rights Campaign provides the statistics that one out of every two Americans has someone close to them who is gay or lesbian, and for transgender people, it is one in ten.

On this day people are celebrating individuals who publicly identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, transgender - coming out regarding one's sexual orientation or gender identity being akin to a cultural rite of passage for so-called LGBT people. Members of the gay community and their straight allies observe the holiday annually.

NCOD, now celebrated worldwide, is both a day of celebration and a day of advocacy. We celebrate people for having the power to be who they are and we advocate that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) people have the right to live in a safe world.

"Every gay person must come out. As difficult as it is, you must tell your immediate family. You must tell your relatives. You must tell your friends if indeed they are your friends. You must tell the people you work with. You must tell the people in the stores you shop in. Once they realize that we are indeed their children, that we are indeed everywhere, every myth, every lie, every innuendo will be destroyed once and all. And once you do, you will feel so much better." –Harvey Milk

In 2015, National Coming Out Day is an international event to raise awareness, celebrate, and continue the march to full civil rights for all. It is a holiday observed annually by members of the gay community and their straight allies.

Human Rights Campaign Resources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Coming_Out_Day

<http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/the-history-of-coming-out>

<http://www.hrc.org/resources/category/coming-out>

<http://www.cute-calendar.com/event/national-coming-out-day/9654-world.html>