

**"Your silence will not protect you." - Audre Lorde**

**CELEBRATING GAYPRIL 2022 {SAY GAY!}**

## THE DIONYSIAN BEAUTY OF DISCO

By Edwin Roman, Rainbow Alliance Advisor

*"Disco is one of the most maligned and misunderstood of musical genres, thought to be musically vapid, hedonistic and frivolous. Far from it. Disco was utopian and subversive, and political to its core. Born in New York's deepest underground, it brought together strands of gay liberation and post-Civil-Rights racial integration. Disco put into practice what the Sixties preached." - Martha Reeve*

I grew up across the Harlem River from BCC in the Inwood neighborhood of upper Manhattan during the 1970s and 1980s. Back then the neighborhood had a clear division: east of Broadway was primarily populated by Dominican Americans and other people of color, while the west of Broadway was primarily populated by whites. The neighborhood residents seemed to coexist and share public spaces without any major strife of which I was cognizant. However, in the summer of 1979, I entered Inwood Park and saw this boldly spray-painted on a wall: "Disco Suxs!" For some reason, it rattled me, and I remembered it for many years. What was so bad about disco? I was a fan. It had ENERGY and inspired you to DANCE. It made me happy.

Twenty years later, a VH1 *Behind the Music* episode on disco featured virtuoso musician and producer Niles Rodgers who conveyed that the hate stemmed from the fact that it was the music of minorities that included people of color and the LGBTQI+ community. Music critic Robert Christgau noted that homophobia, and most likely racism, were the driving forces behind the anti-disco movement that resulted in a preposterous disco record demolition night (which looks like a Nazi book burning) at Comiskey Park in July of 1979. Disco was transformed by this event, and it should be noted that those in attendance trashed the stadium.

Concurrently forceful and sensual, disco was the resurgence of Dionysian pagan culture in the 20th century. The haters were likely also intimidated by the liberating physicality of disco dancing and hastily labeled the music as vacuous. Disco music

is not vacuous and is indeed quite complex.

The term disco, which emerged in 1973, referred to a unique blend of R&B, soul, funk, salsa, and danceable rock as well as African and European imports heard in Manhattan nightclubs. When the sound of disco became more recognizable, DJs created dance magic by intermingling the music with contrasting sounds (I still remember hearing this on WKTU). The introduc-

tion of this contrast, as well as the juxtaposition of different styles, generated a sense of unpredictability on the dance floor that encouraged dancers to be fluid in their dancing as well as gender fluid.

Disco took significantly more effort to produce than the four-piece bands found in other genres like rock. Disco often contained an ample band, with chordal instruments, drums, percussions, horns, a string orchestra, and various classical solo instruments like the flute. The recording of complex arrangements with a large number of instruments required a team that included a conductor and mixing engineers. Disco also had extraordinary vocalists that included powerhouses such as Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor, Sylvester, Diana Ross, France Joli, Cheryl Lynn, Barbra Streisand, and

Barry White as well as groups like A Taste of Honey and Chic.

After the ridiculousness of disco demolition night, disco's life was extended in early rap, notably with "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugarhill Gang which sampled Chic's brilliant disco song, "Good Times." Disco still lives on under the sapped rubric of dance music. House music has more in common with classic disco. Post disco dance music is not as beautifully produced but has had many remarkable moments over the last forty years from artists such as Janet Jackson, Madonna, Aaliyah, Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Lady Gaga. Gay culture's influence on the mainstream is no longer a secret and in fact has become the mainstream. **SAY GAY! And say it loud in Florida while pumping some classic Donna Summer!**



## In the News...

### Florida's governor signs "Don't Say Gay" controversial law

Public school teachers in Florida are banned from holding classroom instruction about sexual orientation or gender identity after Florida's Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, signed the controversial "Parental Rights in Education" bill.

The bill, which some opponents have called "Don't Say Gay," was signed by DeSantis on Monday. It reads, "Classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards."

Read more at: <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/28/1089221657/dont-say-gay-florida-desantis>

### Ariana DeBose Says She's Discussed Disney's Handling of 'Don't Say Gay' Bill With CEO Bob Chapek: 'We're Gonna Do the Work'

Ariana DeBose made history by becoming the first openly queer woman of color to win an acting Oscar for her work as Anita in Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*. The musical was distributed by 20th Century Studios, which is owned by The Walt Disney Company.

On the Academy Awards red carpet DeBose said she has reached out to Disney CEO Bob Chapek to talk about the studio's controversial reaction to the legislation.

"Bob and I, we're gonna do the work," DeBose said. "I have [spoken to Chapek]. I'm a very hands-on type of person. And when I see something, I say something. And while I may not always put it on the internet, I do that. I reached out. And I will continue to reach out and Bob knows that."

Read more at: <https://variety.com/2022/film/columns/ariana-debose-disney-dont-say-gay-1235218543/>

## TGNB CORNER

### FEATURING THE WRITING OF Terry Rivenbark



BCC  
Student &  
2022  
TransSending  
Intern

#### It's My Duty to Write a Protest Poem

It's my duty to write a protest poem  
How do I put into words what I feel  
When my Body is protest. An angry  
Growl of defiance, a Siren's lure, a  
Sideshow spectacle, "Come Look In Wonder!"  
My Body, cut into so many times  
I have lost count, dissected, pumped, shaved, shaped,  
Implanted, alien material  
so my brain is no longer alien  
Recovery, cut, Recovery, cut...  
"Bet you have a gorgeous p---y, baby"  
you say  
"But I don't want anything serious"  
you say  
No, you're right. My body is not serious.  
You want it? 500 dollars. And you?  
I won't take less than 1000 dollars.  
You want to treat this Body like a playground?  
Pay for it. My Body is a protest.

#### A Vacant Space

On my family wall lies a vacant space  
mother, father, sister, nephews, and niece  
mournful portraits hold vigil of deceased  
one who still lives, now, a woman in place  
who does not mourn the ghost vanished through grace  
for out of that boy's body a release  
a triumphed resurrection of peace  
and soul that rejects the sacred birthplace  
to live beyond family expectation  
to transcend beyond the dark casket case  
holy evolving emancipation  
not deceased nor ghost but blood, flesh and bone  
no longer vacant but pure creation  
no mourners here, no lost relations moan

# {Say} GAYPRIL 2022

## WHAT IS GAYPRIL?

Every year college campuses across the country celebrate a month of LGBTQI+ Pride in April, which is celebrated in June around the world. GAYpril is an opportunity for LGBTQ+ students to enjoy visibility and support while promoting awareness about issues surrounding the diverse intersectionality of LGBTQI+ identity.

#SayGay #GAYpril

**FOSTERING ACTIVISM** April 7, 2022 | 12 - 2 p.m. | On Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87098986678> | Meeting ID: 870 9898 6678

Activism is a commitment to fostering equitable and democratic communities where everyone flourishes. Being an activist means getting involved and taking actions toward social justice. Social media and activism are indeed connected, especially since the 2010 Arab Spring demonstrations and since 2013, when the Black Lives Matter hashtag was used for the first time. However, activism is more than just posting on social media. Robt Seda-Schreiber, Chief Activist of The Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice along with Board Member and poet/Activist Michelle Elizabeth Brown will speak with students on how to foster activism for causes they believe in. ASAP Approved Workshop.

**TGNB INDIVIDUAL & EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS** April 12, 2022 | 12:30 - 2 p.m. | On Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>

On June 15, 2020, the landmark Supreme Court case *Bostock v. Clayton County*, clarified that federal law prohibits anti-transgender discrimination in employment. This decision was built on many victories in recent years, wherein courts and federal agencies had increasingly taken the view that job discrimination against transgender people is prohibited by existing laws against sex discrimination. This session will explore the rights of TGNB individuals in the workplace.

**THE POETRY, PROSE, AND ACTIVISM OF SIMPLY ROB** April 14, 2022 | 4 - 6 p.m. | On Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81782084870> | Meeting ID: 817 8208 4870

Activism is a commitment to fostering equitable and democratic communities where everyone flourishes. Being an activist means getting involved and taking actions toward social justice. Art has always had a connection with activist movements. Often, art is created to spread information and awareness. ASAP approved workshop. Bronx-based spoken-word artist Rob Vassilarakis (Simply Rob) was disowned by his family at the age of 17 for being gay and blazed his own path of creativity and activism. His life experiences led him to work with at risk youth focusing on issues of sexual identity and HIV / AIDS education and prevention. Vassilarakis is also a founding member of El Grito de Poetas, an all-Latino poetry collective. Vassilarakis will be performing poetry and discussing his life and professional experiences as an activist and educator. ASAP Approved Workshop.

**LGBTQ YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT HEALTH & WELLNESS** April 29, 2022 | 12:30-1:30 pm | On Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>

Queer young people face more barriers to health care and higher levels of psychoemotional stress and discomfort due to numerous factors in their lived experience. This event will feature Mark Baehser, M.D., Director of NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Judson, who will discuss the specific issues and challenges that arise when serving the needs of the LGBTQI+ youth population in NYC.

**Funding for these events was made possible by the CUNY LGBTQI+ Consortium.**



**LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM**  
 2155 University Avenue  
 Roscoe Brown Student Center [BC] 301  
 718.289.5300

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**MISSION**

The LGBTQI + Resource Room at Bronx Community College works to foster an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment for students, faculty, and staff of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. The LGBTQI + Resource Room aims to sustain visibility and a sense of community by providing education, programming, and support services on campus.

**Weekly !**

**THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM, LOCATED IN THE ROSCOE BROWN STUDENT CENTER IN ROOM 301, IS OPEN TUESDAY 12-4PM, WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY 12-2PM, AND FRIDAY 12-4PM.**

**THE LGBTQI+ RESOURCE ROOM IS AVAILABLE VIRTUALLY MONDAY-FRIDAY 1-4PM.**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2978780329>**

**MONDAYS**

**Media Literacy Mondays on Social Media**

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lgbqti/>

On Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lgbqti>

**TUESDAYS**

**LGBTQI+ Support Group | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

Share. Express. Support. Let's come together to express thoughts, hopes, and feelings with other like-minded people. Meets virtually through Zoom. To gain access please email [Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu)

**WEDNESDAYS**

**Beyond the Binary Group | 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

BCC's 1st and only transgender and non-conforming support group for transgender women and men, gender queer, gender fluid, gender non-conforming, non-binary and questioning students. We are experts, allies, and advocates ready to give support-oriented speech and offer student to student led feedback. This group meets virtually via Zoom. Please email [Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu)

**THURSDAYS**

**Rainbow Alliance Club | 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.**

The Rainbow Alliance, the oldest LGBTQI+ club on campus, provides extracurricular activities that address the needs of LGBTQI+ students as well as the greater campus community. This group meets virtually via Zoom and in person in the Roscoe Brown Student Center Room 301. Please e-mail [Edwin.Roman@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Edwin.Roman@bcc.cuny.edu) for information.

**FRIDAYS**

**Queer Lit Book Club | 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

Provides an opportunity for students to read and discuss queer literature of various genres and examine the ways in which this literature has inspired students' own creative works.. This group meets virtually via Zoom.

Please email [Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Emalinda.McSpadden@bcc.cuny.edu)

