

# SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE®

SAN FRANCISCO LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER  
PRIDE PARADE AND CELEBRATION COMMITTEE, INC.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## SAN FRANCISCO PRIDE ANNOUNCES 2019 COMMUNITY GRAND MARSHALS AND HONOREES

*Five Community Grand Marshals and Eight Awardees to be honored at the 49th Annual Event*

San Francisco, CA – The 49th Annual San Francisco LGBT Pride Celebration and Parade will be held on June 29 and 30, 2019. The Parade/March is Sunday, June 30 in the heart of downtown San Francisco beginning at 10:30 AM. A two-day Celebration and Rally is scheduled from Noon to 6:00 PM on Saturday, June 29, and from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM on Sunday, June 30 at San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza and surrounding neighborhood.

"2019 is a momentous year in the history of our movement. With almost one million people gathering in San Francisco, we will join the world in commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York City," said SF Pride Executive Director, George Ridgely, Jr. "This year's theme, *Generations of Resistance*, is not only a nod to the heroes of Stonewall, but also to those at Compton's Cafeteria who stood up against police brutality in 1966, and the decades of LGBTQ+ activism, creativity, and advocacy born right here in San Francisco. Each of our honorees exemplify the tenacity and compassion that underscore a resistance that results in positive change. Our strength as a community is tied inextricably with visibility, and we are honored to showcase the accomplishments of these excellent individuals and organizations. The collective stories of these honorees are an integral part of the cultural patchwork which makes the San Francisco LGBTQ+ communities great."

"Recognizing the work and accomplishments of our amazing Grand Marshals and Honorees is a great honor and delight" said Jacqueline Bishop, President of the San Francisco Pride Board of Directors. "They influence change where change is needed and demonstrate the power of love and persistence. We are privileged to live among these people and organizations who make this city a magical place. The entire globe can see the light they emit that shines out from San Francisco. We acknowledge advocacy and activism as the root to our movement and we're excited to demonstrate, celebrate, and motivate at *Generations of Resistance*."

San Francisco Pride honors and applauds this year's Community Grand Marshals and Honorees, in recognition of their contributions to the LGBTQ community and movement.

Congratulations to the 2019 San Francisco Pride Community Grand Marshals and Awardees:

**API Equality – Northern California (APIENC)**  
**Ms. Billie Cooper**  
**Vince Crisostomo**  
**Cheryl Dunye**  
**Bob Haas**  
**Lyon-Martin Health Services**  
**Sampson McCormick**

**NIA Collective**  
**Donna Personna**  
**Richmond/Ermet Aid Foundation**  
**China Silk**  
**Mrs. Vera**  
**Cristal Veronica**

Designations and short bios follow below.

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## COMMUNITY GRAND MARSHALS

### **Vince Crisostomo** - Community Grand Marshal, Selected by Public Vote

Vince Crisostomo is a gay Chamorro (Pacific Islander) long-term HIV/AIDS survivor who believes in the power of community and has dedicated more than 30 years to HIV/AIDS activism and LGBTQ communities. He is passionate about bringing healthcare and social justice equity to people of every sexual identity, HIV status, gender, race, and age. Vince currently runs a program for long-term HIV survivors at San Francisco AIDS Foundation and co-chairs the HIV and Aging Work Group of the Mayor's Long-Term Care Coordinating Council. He was executive director of the Coalition of Asia Pacific Regional Networks on HIV/AIDS, founded the Pacific Island Jurisdiction AIDS Action Group, and served as a United Nations NGO delegate for the Asia Pacific.

### **API Equality – Northern California (APIENC)** - Community Grand Marshal, Organization, Selected by Public Vote

APIENC (API Equality–Northern California) builds queer and transgender Asian and Pacific Islander power to transform our community livelihoods from scarcity to abundance. APIENC organize to heal, create intergenerational connections, and lay foundations for a new, liberated world. Through their leadership development and movement building work, APIENC envisions a world where all queer and trans Asians and Pacific Islanders can be present and affirmed in our bodies, families, and communities as our full authentic selves.

### **Mrs. Vera** - Community Grand Marshal, Selected by the San Francisco Pride Membership

Mrs. Vera is on a quest to brighten the lives around her by celebrating the artistic spirit associated with San Francisco and looking as gay as possible while doing so. Mrs. Vera is a character created by David Faulk and his partner Michael Johnstone. David moved to San Francisco from New York City in 1992, met his partner Michael, and by 1994 they had created Mrs. Vera, a character for Michael to photograph that honored the spirit of the many creative people they had lost to the AIDS epidemic. The character expanded over the years, through a determined lens of vibrancy, humor, craft, and joy. Originally designed as props for the photos, various articles of costume soon found a second life at civic events and street fairs. More and more friends became keen to wear them, especially at the SF Pride Parade. Now, more than 50 costumed revelers march in concert with Verasphere, wearing the whimsical, colorful creations built from unexpected non-traditional materials. At these public events and at workshops throughout the Bay Area, Mrs. Vera and Verasphere have been encouraging people to experiment with their own creativity. They help others to discover their own unique vision through creating outlandish costumes utilizing recycled, colorful materials. Verasphere have marched in the SF Pride Parade every year since 1995, entertaining the crowds in support of local agencies such as The LGBTQ Center, the SPCA, The SF Library's Bookmobile, and Shanti.

### **Ms. Billie Cooper** – Community Grand Marshal, Selected by the SF Pride Board of Directors

Ms. Billie Cooper, a 60-year-old transsexual woman, has lived and thrived with HIV for 33 years, and has been invested in her transgender community for over 30 years. She is proud to be a transgender elder and one of the many faces of Black transgender excellence. A client of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation for many years, Ms. Billie is the founder of the TransLife program at the AIDS Foundation, a weekly group for transgender men and women, gender-non-conforming, and gender-fluid people. Living in sobriety for 15 years, she is a motivational speaker and mentor for recovery. *Life is truly what you make it.* She educates about transphobia in our community and how to end it, and speaks out about trans-excellence, trans-equality, and trans-equity. She is so very grateful and honored to be selected as a 2019 Community Grand Marshal and thanks the community. She will continue to be invested as one of the many voices for the transgender community, her community.

### **Donna Personna** – Lifetime Achievement Grand Marshal, Selected by the SF Pride Board of Directors

Donna Personna is an artist and activist for transgender rights, who got her start with the Cockettes. She has served on the boards of Trans March and Transgender Day of Remembrance, and on the committees to name streets after Vicki Marlene and Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco's Transgender Cultural District. In 2018, she raised San Francisco's first transgender flag at City Hall with Mayor London Breed. Donna was the subject of

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the Iris Prize-winning 2013 short film *My Mother* and featured in the film *Beautiful by Night*. Donna has been covered in publications such as *Out*, *The Advocate*, *SF Chronicle*, and the *Daily Beast*. The immersive play she co-wrote, *The Compton's Cafeteria Riot*, recreates SF transgender history and received many accolades, including *SF Weekly's* Best of 2018.

## HERITAGE OF PRIDE AWARDS

### **NIA Collective – Heritage of Pride – 10 Years of Service Award**

*For those organizations, individuals, or other entities that have contributed at least ten years of consecutive service to the LGBTQ community.*

NIA Collective was created by and for Lesbians of African descent in 1987 during the Black Caucus at the Lesbians of Color Conference in San Francisco. They created an organization that would give voice, visibility, and safe space for Lesbians of African Descent to come together in community. The name NIA was chosen because it means “purpose” in Swahili and is one of the 7 principles of Kwanzaa. NIA’s purpose is to make their collective vocation the building and development of their community in order to honor and celebrate their beauty, their intelligence, and their contributions. For over 30 years, NIA Collective has provided safe spaces for Lesbians of African Descent to gather, teach, learn, and exist without judgment. They are committed to addressing the needs of our communities and supporting Lesbians of African Descent by sharing information through annual gatherings and partnerships with other community organizations. NIA believes that it is important to support our LGBTQ youth and provide support as they find their voices. They are the future and are encouraged to participate in NIA and in the larger LGBTQ community by speaking their truths and by being visible.

### **Bob Haas - Heritage of Pride – Pride Freedom Award**

*For outstanding contributions to advancing civil rights and freedom for LGBTQ people.*

Robert D. (Bob) Haas was born and raised in San Francisco and is a proud graduate of UC Berkeley. In 1982, as a senior executive at Levi Strauss & Co., Bob joined in the effort of a group of employees handing out leaflets alerting fellow employees to a still-unnamed disease fatally impacting gay men. When Bob moved into the CEO role in 1984, the company quickly established itself as a corporate leader in responding to AIDS by educating employees, establishing support groups, and sponsoring volunteer activities. The Levi Strauss Foundation has since 1983 provided \$70 million to HIV/AIDS nonprofits around the globe. Bob served as CEO of Levi Strauss & Co. from 1984 until 1999. In 1992, they became the first Fortune 500 company to offer benefits to same-sex couples. That same year, the company braved a boycott campaign and made the decision to cease matching gifts to the Boy Scouts of America because of its ban on gay individuals. The *New York Times* at the time highlighted Levi’s “hard line on the new diversity of America.” Bob has helped lead the fight for LGBTQ equality as a board member of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, a San Francisco-based foundation established by his parents in 1953. The Fund was the first funder to make marriage equality a priority and helped create the Freedom to Marry campaign as a driving force for change. This work culminated in the Supreme Court’s 2015 *Obergefell* decision, making marriage equality the law of the land. Bob wrote in a piece for *The San Francisco Chronicle*, “Advocates for marriage equality didn’t give up on the fight despite enormous setbacks — and even with the Supreme Court firmly on the side of justice, I know we won’t stop moving forward.”

### **Richmond/Ermet Aid Foundation – Heritage of Pride – Pride Community Award**

*For outstanding service to LGBTQ communities.*

The Richmond/Ermet Aid Foundation (REAF) is an organization dedicated to raising funds for AIDS services, hunger programs, and programs for homeless youth in the Bay Area, through the production of quality entertainment programs. Two mothers who lost their only sons to AIDS, Barbara Richmond and Peggy Ermet, founded REAF as a way to honor their sons’ memories and to help alleviate the suffering of all the other sons and daughters living with HIV and AIDS. REAF began as completely volunteer-run, working with a partner agency to produce a fundraising event called *Help is on the Way: San Francisco Cares*. *Help is on the Way* has become one of the Bay Area’s largest annual benefit concerts and a major source of funding for many local programs. REAF focuses on creating public awareness that the AIDS epidemic is not yet over, that too many people rely on local food and nutrition programs as their only sources of food, and that thousands of homeless and underserved youth need our help to live full, productive lives. In addition to *Help is on the Way* each summer, REAF also produces an annual *Help is on the Way for the Holidays* in December, a series of *One Night Only* cabaret shows

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with touring Broadway casts, *Broadway Bares/San Francisco Strips*: a burlesque-style strip show, and a variety of other smaller fundraising events and receptions.

## **Cristal Veronica** – Heritage of Pride – Pride Creativity Award

*For outstanding artistic contribution to the LGBTQ community.*

Cristal Veronica is a proud Queer Chicana feminist photographer. After getting two higher education degrees, she fell into wedding photography after seeing images of non-traditional couples doing things their own way. She felt a strong pull to document folks making decisions about what love looks like to them and not compromising their values for societal standards. So, she picked up a camera and photographed a friend's queer wedding seven years ago. Since then, she married her wife at San Francisco City Hall with Governor Gavin Newsom as the officiant, and focused her business, Cristal Veronica Photos, solely on LGBTQ folks and POC. She always feels honored when folks hire her based on her niche. Cristal lives in San Francisco, wishes Tupac was still alive and making music, and is always craving sushi and donuts.

## **COMMEMORATION AWARDS**

### **Lyon-Martin Health Services** – Gilbert Baker Pride Founder's Award

*For those who have made a significant and historical impact on the LGBTQ community and the movement for LGBTQ rights.*

Lyon-Martin Health Services provides culturally responsive health care to women, lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender people in a safe and compassionate environment, with sensitivity to sexual orientation and gender identity; all services are regardless of ability to pay. Founded in 1979 and named in honor of LGBTQ civil rights activists Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, Lyon-Martin Health Services was created by a group of medical providers and health activists to address a lack of sensitive health services available to lesbians. Lyon-Martin Health Services started out as a volunteer-run clinic and over time grew into a national model for the delivery of culturally sensitive, community-based health services. Lyon-Martin Health Services merged with HealthRIGHT 360 in 2015 and provides primary and preventive healthcare, transgender healthcare, mental health services including individual and group therapy, integrated behavioral health, gynecological care, breast/chest health services, and HIV services to all women and transgender people, including those who are uninsured and low-income.

### **China Silk** - José Julio Sarria History Maker Award

*Awarded to Bay Area people who make extraordinary changes in the way society views the LGBTQ community.*

China Silk is a longtime fundraiser and the nicest person you could ever meet. A San Francisco native, China Silk as we know her was conceived during the Carrillo-Wong Dynasty of the Imperial Court of San Francisco. Fundraising for her community, in venues all over the city, has always been the center of her world. She was so honored when the people of San Francisco elected her Grand Duchess 27 in 1999 and then Absolute Empress 39 in 2004. This year, she is celebrating her 15th anniversary of being crowned Absolute Empress. Her fundraisers include an annual Chinese New Year's event benefiting API Wellness Center and Gay Asian Pacific Alliance, and an annual legacy Cinco de Mayo event honoring Emperor 32 Fernando Robles. In addition, China Silk fundraises through her participation with AIDS Walk and many other events throughout the year. Helping our community is what she loves to do.

### **Cheryl Dunye** – Teddy Witherington Award

*Recognizing those individuals who have contributed a longstanding, large body of work to the LGBTQ community.*

Cheryl Dunye is an African American director, writer, and actress. She emerged as part of the "queer new wave" of young film and video makers in the 1990s, and recently directed multiple episodes of *Queen Sugar* for Ava DuVernay and Oprah Winfrey. Her first film, *The Watermelon Woman*, won Best Feature in 1996 at the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival. Her next feature, HBO's *Stranger Inside*, was nominated for four Independent Spirit Awards including Best Director. Cheryl's project *Black Is Blue* was named one of the top five "Must See Feminist Films" by *IndieWire*. Recently, Cheryl directed episodes of *CLAWS* for TNT, *The Fosters* for Freeform, and an episode of *Love Is* for OWN. She also recently directed episodes of *The Chi* for Showtime, *Star* for FOX, and *David Makes Man* by Tarell Alvin McCraney. Cheryl is set to adapt and direct a feature based

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on the novel *The Wonder of All Things* for Lionsgate. Presently, Cheryl is the producing director for season four of OWN's *Queen Sugar*.

## **Sampson McCormick** – The Audrey Joseph LGBTQ Entertainment Award

*For those who have made a significant and historical impact or left an indelible impression on the LGBTQ community and the movement for LGBTQ rights, through their artistic expression, or through their contribution within the entertainment industry.*

Sampson McCormick is a down to earth comedic force of nature, an experience, and has been one of the most sought-after voices of diversity in comedy for almost two decades. He has appeared on *BET*, *TV One*, *VICE LAND*, and in a highly lauded comedy special *That B\*%@# Better Be Funny*. He co-starred in the Oscar-nominated short *I Live Here*, produced the documentary *A Tough Act to Follow*, and wrote and produced 2019's *A Different Direction*. He's headlined venues including the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Howard Theatre, the Punch Line in San Francisco, and the Laugh Factory in Hollywood. His comedy offers riveting and fresh takes on race, religion, politics, and sexuality — you know, all those things you aren't supposed to talk about in polite company.

**More comprehensive biographies, illustrations, and information about San Francisco Pride's Community Grand Marshals and Honorees can be found at [sfpride.org/grand-marshals](http://sfpride.org/grand-marshals).**

## **CALENDAR INFORMATION**

### **Celebration and Rally**

Civic Center Plaza Park

Saturday, June 29 | Noon to 6:00 PM

Sunday, June 30 | 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM

### **49th Annual SF Pride Parade and March**

Sunday, June 30 | Starting at 10:30 AM

Along Market Street, from Embarcadero to Civic Center

Information regarding registration, event tickets, and the complimentary SF Pride Community Calendar; as well as sponsor, exhibitor, advertising, membership and donor opportunities may be found at [www.sfpride.org](http://www.sfpride.org) or by calling (415) 864-0831.

## **ABOUT SF PRIDE**

The San Francisco Pride Celebration Committee is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded to produce the SF Pride Celebration and Parade. The mission of the organization is to educate the world on LGBTQ issues, as well as commemorate the heritage, celebrate the culture, and liberate the people of all LGBTQ communities. A world leader in the Pride movement, SF Pride is also a grant-giving organization through its Community Partners Program. Since 1997, SF Pride has granted over \$3 million dollars in proceeds to local nonprofit LGBTQIA organizations and organizations working on issues related to HIV/AIDS, cancer, homelessness, housing rights, and animal welfare.

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