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Intersectional LGBTQ
Organizations Team Up With
Lush to Create Awareness



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In recent years, the importance of intersectionality has come to the forefront in progressive movements; it is present in conversations around LGBTQ rights, feminism, immigration, the #resist movement, capitalism, healthcare, and economics. A growing number of people and organizations are working to uplift and support the most vulnerable members of our communities as we continue to work for a better world.

Lush cosmetics is one company contributing to this conversation by elevating the voices of grassroots organizations doing notable and important work within their communities through its **Charity Pot** charitable giving program. Charity Pot is a hand and body lotion sold year-round at Lush, with 100 percent of the purchase price (minus the taxes) donated to small organizations supporting human rights, animal welfare, and environmental resilience. In Southern California, a cultural melting pot where intersectionality creates various lived experiences, two of the organizations supported by Charity Pot explain the work they do at the intersection of trans rights, queer rights, and racial justice.

Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement

Familia: TQLM began in 2014 to serve as a cultural and political organizing base for the LGBTQ Latinx community. Executive Director Jorge Gutierrez explains, “We saw a void in this type of work nationally and we wanted to sort of fill in that gap, to organize and mobilize and activate the LGBTQ Latinx community across the US.” Looking at the big picture as well as each individual piece, Familia: TQLM aims not only to tackle issues affecting LGBTQ individuals at the intersection of immigration but to also aid in the broader fight for racial justice.

With a small staff, Familia: TQLM focuses on supporting those who face the most risk. One of those sectors is trans undocumented women. With that in mind, one of the first issues the organization tackled was closing Santa Ana’s LGBT pod: a specific detention center focused on detaining and deporting LGBTQ individuals. At times the Santa Ana pod **held up to half of the trans individuals in ICE custody nationwide**. Gutierrez describes Familia: TQLM’s role, “We launched a whole campaign against ICE and closing that down and saying, ‘No, our people do not need specialty cages. What we need is freedom. What our people need are resources. What our folks need is safety. And that cannot be done in a detention center.’” The campaign was successful and the pod closed in 2017. Though ICE opened a new LGBT pod in New Mexico, Gutierrez affirms that the closure of the location in California proves that “organizing can be successful and there are victories possible in the immigrant rights fight.”

By nature, the organization's community struggles with the constant political attacks that have risen with the new administration. "It does create a lot of anxiety and fear and uncertainty in our communities that I think sometimes forces people to sort of withdraw and not want to get involved," Gutierrez explains. Familia aims to help folks walk through those emotions and harness those feelings into action to make a positive change "so younger generations can come into a kinder world."

Familia: TQLM's focus is not exclusively on Southern California, where the organization is based, but on the LGBTQ Latinx community nationwide. In an effort to reach out to members of the community outside of their hometown, the organization is launching #FamiliaOnTheRoad2018 in March. Familia: TQLM will visit 13-15 cities across the US for one-day meetups, gatherings, and conversations with LGBTQ Latinx folks to engage the community in their work at a larger level. Interested individuals can get updates on the launch via the Familia: TQLM [mailing list](#) and [social media channel](#).

SoCal residents can meet with Familia: TQLM staff at the Glendale Lush (2148 Glendale Galleria, Glendale, CA 91210) on Saturday, February 17 from 2 p.m.–6 p.m.

API Equality-LA

[API Equality-LA](#) was founded in 2005 as the backlash towards the fight for marriage equality in California reached a fever pitch. Tracy Zhao, a former intern and current Executive Director at the organization explains, "In spring of 2004, Mayor Gavin Newsom in San Francisco decided to issue same-sex marriage licenses, which was quickly stopped after a couple of weeks by the courts. But during that time what happened within the API community, particularly the Chinese conservative Christian community, there was a huge backlash." Realizing the LGBTQ Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community was unprepared for such backlash, a group of civil rights leaders, organizers, and allies came together to form [API Equality-Northern California](#) and API Equality-LA and give a voice to LGBTQ individuals in this community.

In 2015, when the US Supreme Court made same-sex marriage a legal reality throughout the country, API Equality-LA expanded their focus to changing attitudes both within the API community and the LGBTQ community around youth empowerment, acceptance of trans and gender nonconforming people, and support for immigrants and Muslims. "Marriage equality was important because it was a turning point for our community and it did grant a lot of people access," Zhao posits, "But the conversation about cultural change is also important, so even if we have the policies, we know our community isn't always there yet." Attitudes are different for younger members of the API community, who tend to be more accepting of LGBTQ individuals. To reach less accepting facets of the community, the organization prioritizes providing a visible queer and trans presence at traditional API cultural events.

Earlier this month, API Equality-LA marched in Chinatown's [Golden Dragon Lunar New Year Parade](#), an event the organization has participated in annually since their founding. Zhao explains that while there were initially concerns about participating, "people have told me that they really notice a shift in the audience participation and feedback." The [626 Night Market](#), an API food festival in Santa Anita Park, is another event the organization attends yearly.

Support is an important facet of API Equality-LA's work and, in an effort to empower the diverse community it serves, the organization hosts workshops on coming out and trans allyship; aiding members of the community in standing proudly in who they are and providing assistance to more vulnerable community members who may need it. After the shooting at Pulse nightclub, many expressed the need to mourn and resist. API Equality-LA responded to that need and joined the fight

against the Trump administration's proposed "Muslim Ban" and changes to immigration procedure. "There are API LGBTQ Muslims," Zhao points out, "and we felt the need to take a stand against LGBTQ profiling." Immigration reform remains an issue for trans and queer undocumented APIs and educating community members on the importance of that topic has been a big focus for the organization.

API Equality-LA has experienced a noticeable growth in **volunteer** numbers since the 2016 election, as people feel a sense of urgency and that the country may be in a time of crises. The organization hosts **open meetings** and activist trainings so interested parties can step into action, even with little to no background in activism. There's also a part-time **internship program** for younger community members looking to get involved. API Equality-LA will have a contingent for both International Women's Day on March 3 and WeHo Pride this June. **Events** are regularly posted on the organization's **Facebook page**, making it easy for interested parties to get involved. Apart from providing a safe space and a chance to build community, volunteering with the organization is designed to provide participants the opportunity to believe in and see the value of their own leadership skills. Newsletters allow the message of support and action to reach members who may not have access to participating in a physical space.

API Equality-LA will be meeting with visitors to the Pacific City Huntington Beach Lush (20134 Pacific Coast Hwy C120, Huntington Beach, CA 92648) on Saturday, February 24, from 12 p.m.–4 p.m.

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Sondra Rose Marie

Sondra is an avid reader of YA fiction, master Instagram scroller, and proud lover of all things rainbow. She is an LA transplant from the South and enjoys contributing to Tagg from the West Coast.

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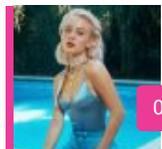
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