

XWhy have a drag show at USD?

1. It aligns with USD's mission and values.

A drag show highlights diversity of gender expression and (at times) gender identity. It celebrates different sides of the self, the masculinity and femininity within all people. In this way it expresses the university's commitment to "creating a welcoming, inclusive and collaborative community accentuated by a spirit of freedom and charity, and marked by protection of the rights and dignity of the individual."

(http://www.sandiego.edu/about/mission_and_vision.php)

A drag show celebrates the freedom to express the many sides of who we are, reflecting USD's commitment "to creating an atmosphere of trust, safety and respect in a community characterized by a rich diversity of people and ideas." As it fosters embracing difference and exploring multiple sides of the self, it enhances "a values-based education that informs the development of ethical judgment and behavior" and "ethical and responsible leaders committed to the common good who are empowered to engage a diverse and changing world."

(http://www.sandiego.edu/about/mission_and_vision.php)

2. It provides the opportunity for students to become educated and aware about new USD policies and state law.

In October 2011, California Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 887, which revised the Fair Employment and Housing Act, Education Code, and other state laws to revise the definition of gender to specifically include gender expression. Gender identity had previously been added to the list of protected categories. According to University Counsel Kelly Douglas, "Following the unanimous endorsement of the Cabinet, the president approved a revision to the University's Equal Opportunity Policy and Policy Prohibiting Discrimination and Harassment to explicitly refer to gender expression as a protected characteristic for employees and students. . . . These changes reaffirm the University's existing practices and policy prohibiting sex discrimination, and clarify and enforce the University's commitment to create and maintain an educational environment free from various forms of unlawful sex discrimination." Gender expression was added to these policies in September 2011.

(<https://exchange.sandiego.edu/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAABVr1oTW2lcTKRgndEH%2f68%2bBwDGg9TF2l2iSr14FcwXKPbAAAEpeEH0AADwdlkEGWPWQLLqx9f5P23%2fADzzkGivAAAJ>)

The revised Policy Prohibiting Discrimination and Harassment reads in part, "The University of San Diego is committed to upholding standards that promote respect and human dignity in an environment that fosters academic excellence and professionalism. It is the policy of the university to maintain an educational and work environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment. To that end, the university prohibits and does not tolerate unlawful discrimination against or harassment of its employees, students or applicants for employment or admission on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, **gender identity**, **gender expression**, marital status, pregnancy, age, physical disability, mental disability, or other characteristic protected by federal or state law, unless a particular characteristic is a bona fide requirement of the position.(emphasis added)

(<http://www.sandiego.edu/legal/policies/community/institutional/discrimination.pdf>)

Few USD students or employers are aware of these changes or their implications. Many do not clearly understand distinctions between "gender identity" and "gender expression." At a drag show, students become better informed about what these terms mean, what the new policies entail, and how their lives may be impacted.

3. It provides the opportunity for students to become more educated and aware about the diversity of the LGBTQIA community, specifically the transgender community.

Many students are unfamiliar with meanings of terms transgender, transsexual, intersex, cross-dresser, drag queen, or drag king. These questions are frequently raised in Rainbow Educator and Safe Space Allies workshops. In spring 2007, through PRIDE, USD sponsored an openly transgender speaker for the first time and in fall 2010, the Rainbow Educators sponsored a panel and workshop on the spectrum of the transgender community. However, these events did not reach a large number of people. Because a drag show is entertaining, it can reach a wider audience of

students who might not ordinarily attend a speaker or workshop. Augmented by an accompanying workshop on the transgender community, a drag show provides additional education about the T in LGBTQ. (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender>)

For example, few students may be aware that drag queens and transsexuals were leaders of the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village in New York City in 1969. In June that year, police raided the Stonewall Inn, a private club with predominantly gay clientele. Although the charge was illegal alcohol sales that would apply to many establishments, gay bars were routinely and specifically targeted, and it was the second time that week that the Stonewall Inn had been raided. Many patrons left the bar when police arrived, but drag queens and transsexuals—easier to identify—were detained and arrested. Over the next few weeks, they led a street rebellion widely considered the beginning of the gay rights movement. Thus drag performers and the transgender community were among the first to oppose discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and advocate social justice for those who do not conform to norms of the dominant culture.

4. **It enables students to become more educated and aware of the fluidity of gender identity and expression.**

Rigid gender-based roles can inhibit creativity, self-expression, and the development of an authentic self identity. Through art and entertainment, a drag show explores constructions of gender and gender roles that are often taken for granted. Transgressing gender norms, such as cross-dressing, can trigger cultural anxieties, but can also be seen as entirely “normal.” A drag show asks, “Why?”

For example, today, most women “cross-dress” every day by wearing pants and other traditionally male clothing. Why is it more acceptable for women to cross-dress than it is for men? Some scholars assert that in a patriarchal society, the normalcy (and perceived superiority) of masculinity has allowed women to break free of less functional “feminine” clothing designed for the domestic sphere and wear “masculine” clothing as they enter the public sphere. Cross-dressing for women can be seen as a means of asserting power in a society that limits the social mobility of women.

Social anxiety now focuses its energy not on the performance of women dressing as men, but rather what it might signify, i.e. lesbianism. For men, dressing as a woman is still perceived as a performance because in a masculine-dominated society, dressing “as a female”—perceived as the subordinate sex—is considered weak, inferior, and/or perverted. Sexual orientation is often called into question, although many drag queens are heterosexual.

Cross-dressing is often explained as the desire to be the opposite sex. However, this interpretation enforces gender binarism—the idea that everyone is born either male or a female. This is not accurate: scholars estimate that as many in one of every 100 births results in an infant whose body differs from the standard male or female in terms of chromosomes, external genitalia or other biological factors. (<http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>)

Societal gender binarism enforces the idea that everyone *wants* to be either a man or woman. It is often used to argue for the innateness of heterosexuality. Perceptions of sexual orientation are often linked to gender expectations. Gay men and lesbians are frequently chastised less for being gay than for being not “masculine” or “feminine” enough. Thus, a drag show is a cultural critique of gender constructions that often originate in sexism and heterosexism. It enables students to think more expansively and inclusively about gender identity and expression.

5. **It aligns with Catholic Social Teaching.**

The foundational principle of Catholic Social Thought, the dignity of the human person, guides USD’s thinking about and outreach to our LGBTQ sisters and brothers. CST insists that all persons possess intrinsic value simply from the mere fact that they exist as beings having a divine origin. This principle applies to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. All people are created in the image and likeness of God and thus all are to be treated in such a manner that respects their inviolable dignity. This basic

principle absolutely applies to transgender, bisexual, and homosexual, as well as heterosexual, people and requires that we actively seek, as people of faith, to ensure that they have access to the support they need in order to reach their fullest potential.

Other CST guiding principles, especially Rights and Responsibilities, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, and Solidarity, reinforce our commitment to supporting the LGBTQ community. In the Catholic social vision, each person (without regard to gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation) has basic rights and responsibilities that flow from our God-given dignity. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Similarly, CST asserts that the needs and interests of the poor, marginalized, and dispossessed among us have a moral priority deriving from the essential unity of all humankind. CST proclaims that the basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members fare. In light of the discrimination, prejudice, and bias that many members of the LGBTQ community encounter, this principle calls us to attend in a special way to and adopt particular care and concern for LGBTQ people's well-being. Finally, the principle of solidarity proclaims that we are one human family, regardless of our differences, including differences in gender identity and/or gender expression. (adapted from USD Safe Spaces Allies training notebook, 8)

A drag show enables USD to put this vision into practice.

6. It helps educate the campus community about the needs of gender-diverse students and promote safety and inclusion.

While many students have heard of Brandon Teena's murder, they may be unaware of the prevalence of violence against transgender persons. In a December 6, 2011 article in *The Huffington Post*, Michelangelo Signorile, writer and gay rights advocate, states, "In almost every study of violence against LGBT people—which itself has increased in proportion to other groups in recent years—transgender people bear the highest proportion of violence, from bashers on the streets and from the police." (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michelangelo-signorile/escalating-police-violenc_b_1131343.html) A July 13, 2011 *Los Angeles Times* article provides a statistic: the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs reports that "violent crimes against people in the LGBT community rose 13% in 2010, and that minorities and transgender women were more likely to be targeted." <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jul/13/nation/la-na-lgbt-hate-crimes-20110713>

In USD's 2009 Campus Climate survey, nine undergraduate students identified themselves as transgender. While their numbers may be small, they are part of our community and deserve to be welcomed and feel safe on campus. A drag show sends the message that all are included, even and especially those who are gender-non-conforming. It is essential that this diversity is discussed and celebrated—especially when we witness how sexism and heterosexism can elicit a devastating response at the mere revelation that someone is transgender. Students from any under-represented group may feel unsafe when those with experiences or traits outside the dominant culture are targets of discrimination. While focusing on gender diversity, a drag show can enhance all students' feelings of safety because everyone possesses unique traits that are not considered mainstream.

7. It educates students about resources available in the San Diego community for gender-diverse and gender-non-conforming persons.

A drag show at USD could serve as a fund-raiser for these community groups. The following local organizations may be invited during the drag show to present information about their services:

- San Diego Lesbian and Gay Men's Center, www.thecentersd.org: offers counseling, resources, and discussion groups for the transgender community
- San Diego Chapter of FTM International, <http://ftmi.org/>: offers support and social gatherings for female-to-male transsexuals at any stage of transition, families, allies, and significant others
- Genderqueer San Diego, <http://GQSD.wordpress.com/>: fosters community and discussion among "all non-binary gender folks" and their allies

- Neutral Corner, <http://www.myneutralcorner.com>: provides support and socializing for people who cross-dress, identify as transgender or transsexual, and their significant others
- North Park Family Health Center, <http://www.fhcsd.org/services/hiv.cfm>: helps with accessing health and social services for the transgender community
- Transgender Law Center, <http://transgenderlawcenter.org>: provides resources in areas of law, policies, employment, healthcare, and leadership development for transgender people and allies
- Transgenero 2000, www.thecentersd.org: un grupo abierto a familias, amigos y personas que quieran comprender y dar apoyo a transgeneros

8. USD would not be the first or only Roman Catholic university sponsoring such an event.

Based on preliminary research, the following Roman Catholic universities hold annual drag shows:

- Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA: <http://www.thesantaclara.com/2.14532/drag-show-2007-aims-to-provide-more-education-1.1870671#.TuvFSVZOb9k>
- Loyola University, Chicago, IL: http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/chicagos-jesuit-run-loyola-u-drag-show-asks-what-does-your-gender-mean-to?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+LifesitenewscomLatestHeadlines+%28LifeSiteNews.com+Latest+Headlines%29
- Seattle University, Seattle, Washington: <http://www.su-spectator.com/news/triangle-club-drag-show-packs-campion-ballroom-1.2220381#.Tup2q1ZO9k>
- Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/tweed/at-mount-st-vincent-women-still-wear-the-pants-and-men-the-dresses/28153>

Learning outcomes

As a result of the drag show and accompanying workshop, participants and attendees will be able to do the following:

- Define and differentiate among the following terms:
 - Transgender
 - Transsexual
 - Cross-dresser
 - Intersex
 - Drag king
 - Drag queen
 - Genderqueer
 - Gender identity
 - Gender expression
 - Gender binarism
 - Gender non-conformity
- Summarize the impact of gender identity and gender expression on USD students, and implications of adding “gender identity” and “gender expression” to USD policies regarding discrimination and harassment.
- Articulate the connections between the LGBTQ community and Catholic Social Thought
- Name at least one San Diego area organization that addresses the needs of the transgender community.
- Understand and empathize with the complexities of gender non-conformity.

Compiled by Evelyn Kirkley, Advisor, PRIDE

December 15, 2011

Updated December 19, 2011