

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
Special Emphasis Program (LGBT- SEP)
Caribbean Area – Quarter #3 - June, 2014**

JUNE 2014 is **LGBT Pride Month!**

The LGBT Pride Observance's Theme: "Build Our Bright Future"

Holding the rainbow-colored bulbs poster – designed by Marcie Cox, LGBT SEPM from NRCS, VA – are several USDA APHIS and NRCS employees posing during the Civil Rights for LGBT Community Conference hosted by APHIS on May 29, 2014 to kick-off LGBT Pride Month Celebrations. The conference's speaker was Mr. Pedro Julio Serrano, a well-known local Human Rights activist in Puerto Rico, who specifically defends the **LGBT's Rights for Equality, Dignity and Inclusion**.

Quote: "People everywhere long for the freedom to determine their destiny; the dignity that comes with work; the comfort that comes with faith; and the justice that exists when governments serve their people -- and not the other way around. The United States of America will always stand up for these aspirations, for our own people and for people all across the world. That was our founding purpose."

President Barack Obama



From left to right: Mrs. Norma Rosario (APHIS - Port Director Carolina Work Unit), Mrs. Mildred Sosa (APHIS-LGBT-SEPM), Mr. Pedro Julio Serrano (Speaker); and from NRCS: Mr. Luis A. García (VSEPM), Eng. Lydia E. Collazo (LGBT & FW-SEPM), Mrs. Elizabeth Hernández (HR Manager), Agro. Edwin Almodóvar (Caribbean Area Director), Agro. Ismael Matos (NRI Specialist), and Agro. Manuel Matos (CRAC Chair). Mrs. Aissha Hernández from APHIS (Co-Chair & HSEPM, not included in this picture) also delivered a warm welcome to the activity and contributed to the success of this event.

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The conference was held at APHIS headquarters located at the PIS Building in Carolina, PR. Employees from both the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) (PPQ and VS Divisions) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) participated.

The Moderator, Mrs. Mildred Sosa, introduced Mr. Pedro Julio Serrano, reading his biography, briefly summarized as follows:

Pedro Julio was born in 1972 in Ponce, PR, but was raised in the San Juan Metropolitan Area. He has been defending people, asking questions and fighting for justice from a very young age. At the age of 13, Pedro Julio organized his first rally after a schoolmate was killed in drug-related gang violence.

He started to study at the University of Puerto Rico, but at 19 he tested positive for HIV. Once he knew about his HIV positive results, he came out to his parents and told them he had HIV. Then, Pedro Julio dropped out of school, unable to balance his school work and his recent discovery. From there, he entered the world of activism and politics, working to promote awareness and fair treatment of the LGBT Community.

Mrs. Sosa also mentioned that Pedro Julio finished his studies getting a BBA from the University of Puerto Rico, and in 2003 he founded the organization: "Puerto Rico para Tod@s" (translated into English as: Puerto Rico for All), whose mission is to fight for the Human Rights of the LGBT Community in Puerto Rico.

After his introduction, Mr. Pedro Julio Serrano began speaking about himself and very interesting LGBT Statistics. He began his presentation by defining the difference between heterosexuals (men who like women - or - women who like men), gays (men who like men), lesbians (women who like women), bisexuals (men or women who like men as well as women), transgenders (people who feel different from the sex they were born), and transsexuals (people who are - or have completed - the process to change their birth sex).

He began fighting for LGBT Human Rights in 1997 at the age of 24, when he was running as the first openly gay candidate for the Puerto Rican House of Representatives. In those days, he found the brake lines of his Oldsmobile car had been cut - an attempt to intimidate, injure, or kill the young candidate. For over a decade, he said, he still doesn't go a day without some form of hate or bullying from the many who despise him.

Despite all this opposition, he continues to fight for LGBT Human Rights. He revealed that in Puerto Rico, we are ahead of most of states because we approved two important laws to protect the LGBT Community. During 2001, the Anti-Hate Crimes Law was approved, while in 2013 the Anti-Discrimination in Employment Law was approved. Pedro Julio also mentioned that when we compare the laws to protect same-sex couples from domestic violence, Puerto Rico is ahead of 46 states. We are also ahead of 29 states when we talk about discrimination in labor, and we are ahead of 24 states regarding anti hate-crimes legislation.

He explained that during 2013, the Legislature and the Governor approved 4 laws that are very important for LGBTs, these were: Project #238, which prohibits discrimination against LGBTs in employment, Law #23 which provides protection to LGBTs against domestic violence, and two more laws that allow LGBT couples to be included in Medical Service Plans when they work in either the public or private sector.

He emphasized: "The main goals of our organization "Puerto Rico para Tod@s" are to eliminate the racism, homophobia, sexism, transgenderism, transexism - and all other words that end with -ism - because they are killing human rights".

Pedro Julio also said more improvements in our legal system are needed in order to provide equal treatment and opportunities to LGBTs in Puerto Rico and the USA. For example: to correct the sex identification requirement when Driver's Licenses are obtained by Transsexuals or Transgenders; and to obtain equal rights regarding civil marriage for LGBTs on the Island.

Regarding social disadvantages of LGBTs, Pedro Julio stated that 10% of Puerto Rico's population is homeless; and of that amount 30-40% are LGBTs. He also said that at least 1 of every 3 people who commit suicide in PR are LGBTs.

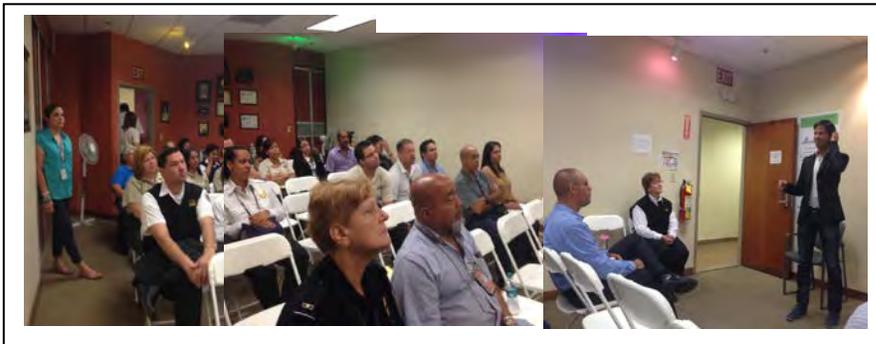
He ended his presentation emphasizing this thought: "Now, you can see, we are equal to any heterosexual human being. We are people that ask for the right to live with our couples, just asking to be treated equally."



Edwin Almodóvar - NRCS Caribbean Area Director, Pedro Julio Serrano – Humans' Rights Activist for LGBT in Puerto Rico, and Eng. Lydia E. Collazo – LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager.



Elizabeth Hernández – NRCS Human Resources Manager with our speaker, Pedro Julio Serrano.



Above: 40 USDA employees from APHIS and NRCS listen intently to Mr. Serrano during the Conference. Right: Mrs. Mildred Sosa from APHIS presents a Certificate of Appreciation to guest speaker, Pedro Julio Serrano.



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Did you know

Why June is LGBT Pride Month?

Gay Pride or LGBT Pride refers to a worldwide movement and philosophy asserting that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Gay pride advocates work for equal rights and benefits for all LGBT people.

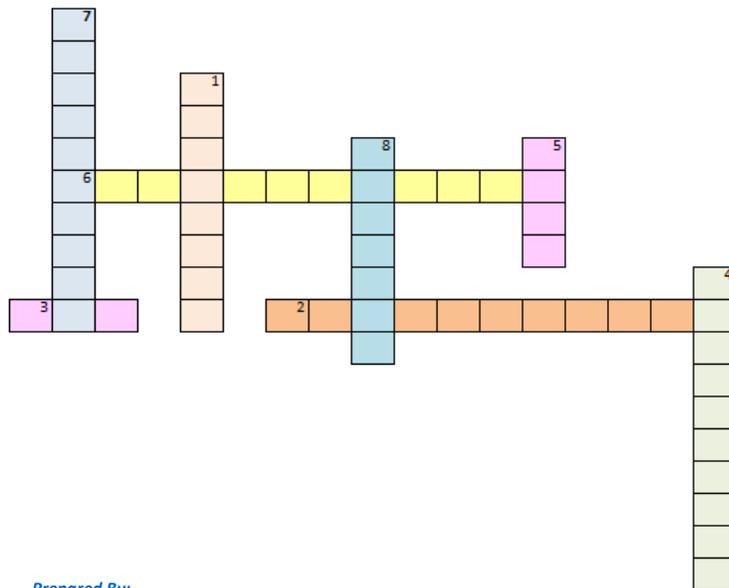
The movement has three main premises: that people should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity, that sexual diversity is a gift, and that sexual orientation and gender identity are inherent and cannot be intentionally altered.

In June of 2000, President Bill Clinton deemed the month of June to be "Gay and Lesbian Pride Month." **The month was chosen to remember a riot in 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in Manhattan that is thought to be the beginning of the gay liberation movement in the United States.**

June is now the month of acceptance and the month to welcome diversity in communities regardless of sexual orientation. Gay and lesbian groups celebrate this special time with pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost from HIV and AIDS, and other group gatherings that attract thousands upon thousands of individuals. This month is meant to recognize the impact Gay, Lesbian and Transgender individuals have had on the world.

Article from the National Women's History Project magazine, link: <http://www.nwhp.org/>

Crossword



HORIZONTAL:

- 2 Person who feels different from the sex born
- 3 Men who likes men
- 6 Men how likes women / women who likes men

VERTICAL:

- 1 Men who likes women and men
- 4 Person who change its birth sex
- 5 LGBT friend
- 7 Hate to homosexuals
- 8 Women who likes women

ANSWERS: Gay, Homophobia, Transgender, Transsexual, Lesbian, Ally, Bisexual, Heterosexual,

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