

SEPTEMBER 2, 2018

GNRC NEWSLETTER N°6

Catholic LGBTI News around the world



*Global Network of Rainbow Catholics
Third Assembly*

July 1 – 4, 2019 / Chicago - USA

It has been a while since our last newsletter, so GNRC leaders would like to let our members and friends know what has been going on in terms of developing our organization.

- The Board elected or ratified some officers on March 2018 as well as established committees and assigned willing individuals to act as conveners. Read in detail the names of the officers, conveners and the Board work in the [Report from the GNRC Board](#). Reports from Committees are included in this newsletter too, so we invite you to join them by getting in contact with each convener.
- A new PR was released after the intense mentions about LGBTQI issues – during the first semester - from the Vatican, Pope Francis himself or official clergy spaces claiming, ["The Church is evolving in our affirmation and inclusion as LGBTI individuals but our families do exist and should be included in their recognition and dignity"](#).
- We also wrote another Press Release about the initial lack of response and the posterior negative confirmation for an [exhibit booth application at the World Meeting of Families](#). We'd like to thank to all our dear friends and colleagues who have shown such solidarity and support by endorsing our PR till now.
- As each year, we have built a [Pride 2018 Album](#) compiling the presence of our wide LGBTQI community worldwide in the different Pride Parades from April to March. Please be part of the joy, creativity and visibility of our Catholic Rainbow!
- We also developed an article that shares the life witness of Marielle Franco about the complexities of discrimination on gender, sexual orientation / gender identity, ethnicity and economic situation called ["Being a Woman, LGBT and Catholic in Latin America"](#).

To finalize, we are proud and excited to announce the date and allocation of our next Assembly: **GNRC's Third Assembly will take place July 1-4, 2019, in Chicago, USA.** Pre-conference meetings will take place on 30 June. Save the Dates!

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Report from the GNRC Board

The Board of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics that was elected at the 2nd Assembly in Dachau in December 2017 has been working at making GNRC run effectively and efficiently. The following list is a summary of some of the most important tasks the Board has accomplished, broken down by categories.

ORGANISATIONAL WORK

Officers:

The Board elected the following officers:

- Co-Chairs: Ruby Almeida and Christopher Vella
- Secretary: Francis DeBernardo
- Treasurer: Brian Okallan
- Legal Representative: Andrea Rubera

The office of media representative was not filled. Because this job is so immense, Board members and members of the media committee will assist in fulfilling the role communally.

Committee Conveners:

The Board distributed a questionnaire to all members to find out which committee members would like to serve on. We established the following committees and assigned willing individuals to act as conveners:

- Membership and Nominations: Francis DeBernardo
- Organisational and Structural Development: Thomas Bartsch
- Next Assembly Committee: Chris Vella
- Financial Management: Brian Okallan
- Media, Public Relations, and Communications: Ruby Almeida
- Prophecy and Justice: Decriminalisation: Benjamin Oh
- Spirituality and Faith Development (Rainbow Pastoral Work): Argel Tuason
- Dialogue with Hierarchy: Dumisani Dube
- Gender Ideology: Marisol Ortiz
- GNRC as an Inclusive Organisation: Susanne Andrea Birke

Reports from Committees are included in this newsletter (check below for details)

Internal Communications

We are in the process of registering and acquiring a video conferencing program (Microsoft Office 365 For Non Profits) to allow clearer and less problematic connections for GNRC Board and committee meetings.

This license will also allow all interested GNRC members to participate in our 2018 online annual meeting later this year.

External Communications

The Board's Media Committee sent out a press release about the Second Assembly and produced a members' newsletter which covered the Second Assembly.

Youtube Channel for the GNRC was created in January 2018. Current content includes the Second Assembly Greetings (from Sr Jeannine Gramick, Mary McAleese, Fr James Martin), as well the Chronicle of HuK and Sr Monica Astorga which were presented during the Second Assembly.

A general GNRC information leaflet has been produced to be used for distribution at meetings, conferences, and to any interested individuals. It is available as a ready-to-print pdf.

We have begun the process of revamping the GNRC website so that it has a creative synergy with the design and style of our new leaflets.

Fundraising

With the assistance and lead from Michael Brinkschroeder, a proposal for a grant from the Arcus Foundation has been prepared and sent for its evaluation. Among the items to be funded: a part-time project manager for decriminalization project, scholarships for 3rd Assembly travel and participation, participation at the Dublin World Meeting of Families, and having a presence at the October 2018 Youth Synod in Rome. Funding for a part time IT Specialist has also been identified for implementing the technical demands of our online Assembly, for technical support for the website and the GNRC intranet.

Networking

The Board assisted in sending Co-Chair Christopher Vella to Rome to represent GNRC at the European Forum of LGBT Christians conference in Rome.

The Board assisted in sending Co-Chair Ruby Almeida to Bratislava to represent GNRC at the International Church Reform Network meeting.

The Board attempted to assist Treasurer Brian Okallan and GNRC Member Dumisani Dube to represent GNRC at the Pan-Africa ILGA Conference in Botswana, however plans for their participation did not materialise due to travel and registration issues.

World Meeting of Families

GNRC Board Co-Chairs are representing the organization on a continuing Skype meeting with other Catholic organizations to discuss plans for an LGBT presence at the World Meeting of Families in Dublin in August 2018. GNRC has applied for an exhibit booth at the event, which may not be successful but GNRC hopes to have some form of presence there. Other GNRC members participating in the Skype meeting: Michael Brinkschroeder, Francis DeBernardo, Marianne Duddy-Burke and Marisol Ortiz.

Next Assembly

The Board's Next Assembly Committee has been working with DignityUSA's Marianne Duddy-Burke, Leo Egashira, and Jeff Stone to plan the Third Assembly which will take place July 1-4, 2019, in Chicago. Pre-conference meetings will take place on 30 June. The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center has been selected as the venue. Plans for pre-conferences, cultural events, and other activities are being discussed.

Brand, Identity, and Regional Associations

The GNRC Board adopted the following policy:

- **The 'GNRC brand' and use of the GNRC logo and name by members/ regions, etc.:** Regional configurations are not official designations in the Constitution. Any use of the name or speaking for the organization needs to be approved by the GNRC Board. Regional associations should be informal committees of the GNRC. The Media committee will be coming up with regulations for using logos and name.
- **The internal working of GNRC regions:** Regions organise themselves autonomously and work, using their own methods, and will keep in touch from time to time with reports to the GNRC Board.

General Data and Protection Regulations

On May 25th, the General Data Protection Regulations came into effect for any organization that has a connection within a European Union nation. This includes the GNRC, whose official office address is in Rome, Italy. Thanks to Chris Vella's research and prompting, a questionnaire was sent out to all GNRC members asking their permission for GNRC to hold their electronic data. This step brings us into compliance. The Board will also be publishing a Privacy Policy regulating the way the GNRC manages personal data of individuals and details of its member groups.

Online Assembly

The Media Committee is planning for our 2018 Online Assembly to take place later this year. The committee will look at things such as: finding an effective online platform, planning the agenda, and organizing preparatory materials. If you are interested in being involved in this work, particularly if you have any experience in online meetings or expertise in information technology, please contact the GNRC co-chairs.

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Reports from Committees

Next Assembly Committee

This Committee has been working since December on the organisation of the next Assembly that will be held in Chicago in July 2019. The Committee includes representatives from Dignity USA and from the GNRC Board. They have been working on the logistics of the meeting and travel plans for the various delegates coming over from the rest of the world.

Organizational and Structural Development Committee

This Committee is responsible to keep working on the Constitutions, the Internal Regulations and the Governance Manual to iron out any issues that need clarification and modification. These include protocols, election procedures and the like that can always be enhanced and improved upon.

Media Committee

The Committee has been looking to create an agreed position and vision on what GNRC's wishes to say about Church institution statements that impact on the lived lives of our lgbti family around the world.

We have also been looking at the communication structures and IT platforms which will help us to have good communications internally as well as externally.

We have already produced a general information leaflet and plan to have a more specific print campaign that will focus on our LGBTI decriminalisation project.

Spirituality and Faith Development Committee: Rainbow Pastoral Work

The Committee has kept in touch via email. Their three main goals are collecting pastoral resources from GNRC members, sharing these resources throughout GNRC, and developing new resources. One idea for development would be to produce YouTube videos, including people telling their stories.

They are also considering developing knowledge or emphasis on contemplative spiritual life within GNRC.

Gender Ideology Committee

The Committee has been having a discussion on email, and they are considering changing the name and scope of the committee. Instead of looking only at the negative effects of the Church's "gender ideology" movement, they would like to focus on the question of gender identity, including other areas of the transgender movement.

They would like to build a map showing the different gender identity laws and national Church's position in gender identity issues and identify the challenges and goals in the different countries.

Dialogue with the Hierarchy Committee

The Committee held its first meeting via Skype and devised a small agenda of tasks based on the discussion in Dachau:

- Compiling a list of known Catholic hierarchy members who are sympathetic to LGBT issues and people.
- Developing talking points around the following topics: Sensitivity to Language about LGBT people, decriminalization, focusing on "family" and the diversity of families rather than same-sex unions.
- Developing global and regional GoogleGroups for GNRC members to share questions, experiences, and recommendations about dialoguing with the hierarchy. These discussions could lead to a GNRC resource for members.
- Discussing the best ways for GNRC to respond publicly to Vatican and other hierarchical statements.

Prophecy and Justice: Decriminalisation

The Prophecy and Justice Committee identified that violence, be it cultural, structural, religious, spiritual as well as direct violence against LGBTQI persons and our families remains the most pressing issue confronting all and it manifests differently in our varied locations.

The campaign for decriminalisation will play a vital role alongside addressing the issue of violence against LGBTQI persons, as we are fully aware that decriminalisation legislative reform alone is not the antidote in addressing violence against LGBTQI persons and our families.

In countries with or without legislative frameworks that supports the persecution of LGBTQI persons and our families, and even in countries where legal protection is in place for LGBTQI persons and their families, LGBTQI people and their loved ones remain exposed to violence, discrimination and prejudice, often motivated by some religious groups, including sections within our church.

Currently, these are the plans the committee is working on:

- Develop a multilateral dialogue kit -on how to dialogue with social and civil movements, religious communities, families etc.
- Map out connections in regions and countries where we are
- Create or curate a Story-Telling Project to focus on building literacy on effects of violence against LGBTQI person
- Build support for Catholic LGBTQI Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- Develop a statement on addressing violence and criminalisation against LGBTQI persons (appropriate to cultural contexts and languages)

We hope that more members from the GNRC community will join us in our effort. The Committee meets on the 8th July 2018, please email Benjamin Oh committee convener (benjaminowk@gmail.com) for more information.



1st Semester LGBTQI Catholic Milestones Review

The Church is evolving in our affirmation and inclusion as LGBTI individuals, but our families do exist and should be included in their recognition and dignity (originally published as GNRC PR N°10).

Note: This article was originally published by the end of June 2018 as GNRC PR N°10 *"The Church is evolving in our affirmation and inclusion as LGBTI individuals."*

We are currently celebrating Pride month and we - as GNRC - note the significant mentions about LGBTI issues in the Church that have recently been released worldwide. Even if not all of them can be perceived as positive, at least portrays that LGBTIs are part of the Church agenda from Vatican reunions to Laity gatherings.

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Last May, we celebrated the positive message and outcomes of a meeting between Pope Francis and Juan Carlos Cruz - a Chilean gay Catholic - after a private reunion related to investigations on cases of sexual abuse in Chile. The amazing words that Juan Carlos reproduced - indicating that Pope Francis told him ["God made you like that"](#) - are a strong approach of empathy and understanding that sexual orientation is inherent to our human nature.

And yet this amazing and relevant fact is challenged with the recent statement from Pope Francis himself ["The human family in the image of God, man and woman, is the only one"](#) - during a meeting with a Family Association on June 16th in Rome. ***"Despite these contradictory statements from Pope Francis, we as LGBTI Catholics see this as our challenge to continue to have a dialogue with the Church about the lived lives of our LGBTI families around the world. We strive specially to give visibility to LGBTI Catholic couples that live faithful lives in loving relationships based on fidelity, integrity and respect."*** claims Ruby Almeida, co-chair of the GNRC.

On this path, the recent official invitation of Father James Martin sj – writer of Building Bridges - to the [World Meeting of Families](#) suggests that both the hierarchy and the laity are opening their hearts and ears to discuss the role of an LGBTI person in a family and particularly in a Catholic one. Chris Vella, co-chair of the GNRC, comments, ***"The Church is evolving in our affirmation and inclusion as LGBTI individuals, but our families do exist and should be included in their recognition and dignity, not restricted to those with an LGBTI child but also where a father, mother or both parents are part of the LGBTI Catholic community."***

And finally, a momentous pieces of history was made in the [Instrumentum Laboris](#) for the next Synod of Bishops on June 19th. The acronym LGBT was used for the first time ever in an official Vatican document. It referred to *"some LGBT youth, through various contributions made to the Secretary of the Synod, wish to 'benefit from greater closeness' and experience greater care from the Church."* (pg.197) ***"Even this fleeting mention of LGBT is an indication of a massive change in language and approach. It is a sign of the acknowledgement of the call from the faithful lay youth for honest recognition of them and for their pastoral care. This is a good start."***, concludes Ruby Almeida.

GNRC PRIDE 2018 ALBUM

As each year, we have built a [Pride 2018 Album](#) compiling the presence of our wide LGBTQI community worldwide in the different Pride Parades from April to March. Please be part of the joy, creativity and visibility of our Catholic Rainbow. Find more pictures in the link!





Vatican World Meeting of Families

[Chinese](#) / [English](#) / [Español](#) / [French](#) / [Italiano](#) / [Portugues](#)

24 July 2018. The GNRC (Global Network of Rainbow Catholics) is “deeply dismayed and disappointed” by the lack of response from officials overseeing the [World Meeting of Families 2018](#) in Dublin, Ireland. The GNRC, representing 32 LGBTI Catholic groups from around the world, applied for an exhibit booth on 17th April 2018. Despite repeated requests for a decision about their application, and information that booth spaces are still available, GNRC has received no response.

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The GNRC is not alone in not having received a response. [We Are Church Ireland](#), a group of Catholics committed to the spirit of Vatican II, has also not been notified whether its booth application has been approved.

The silence regarding the groups’ outreach booth comes in the wake of a conflicted history on LGBTI issues for World Meeting of Families 2018. Despite [early comments by Dublin Archbishop Diarmuid Martin](#) and other Irish church officials saying they expected same-gender couples and LGBTI families to be welcomed at the meeting, a promotional booklet for the Vatican-sponsored event deleted images deemed to depict same-gender couples and their families. [A video also deleted remarks by Los Angeles auxiliary Bishop and Cork native David O’Connell](#) referencing family models including “*gay couple raising children, people in second marriages.*” Speakers considered to be both homophobic and gay-positive are now on the agenda for the meeting.

Ruby Almeida, Co Chair of GNRC who submitted the application for a booth said, “*Attempts to get a response about our exhibit booth from World Meeting of Families officials have been very frustrating. We feel completely ignored. It was our hope that we could provide support to our fellow Catholics who have LGBTI family members. Many families have questions about how to best support gay and transgender family members, what the Church really teaches about us, and how and why we choose to remain Catholics. Our hope was to provide a place where these families can have honest conversations with people who have dealt with the same questions, to provide them resources, and to help them connect with people in their own countries who might be able to provide ongoing support. **We have much to offer to them, as well as to Church leaders responsible for ministering to all kinds of families.***”

Ruby Almeida continued, “*Due to the delay and the repeated refusal of those in charge to give us an approval, it is no longer practical for us to do this outreach. People needed to schedule time off from work and to arrange travel. The foot-dragging means that we will not be able to provide support to our fellow Catholics through an outreach booth at World Meeting of Families.*”

Christopher Vella, Co-Chair of GNRC said: “*The reality is that LGBTI people and families are part of the Church. **There are millions of Catholics who are LGBTI, and hundreds of millions who have LGBTI family members.** They deserve effective ministry and pastoral care, just like everyone else in our Church. Church officials don’t have all the answers—many have questions themselves. We are willing to be a resource for these families and for Church leaders. It is tragic that our assistance and expertise are not welcomed with enthusiasm.*”

Christopher Vella added, “*This seems to follow a historical pattern of editing-out LGBTI voices and Catholic LGBTI stories, the faith-filled voices of our loving Catholic families and affirming church communities. We believe that officials at the World Meeting of Families did not want to deal with further controversy related to the inclusion of Catholic LGBTI realities. Rather than face the fallout from a decision, they stalled and ignored our request. This lack of consideration for the needs of potential attendees has inconvenienced and frustrated us. We expect better of our Church.*”

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics has sent letters asking for clarification about the booth to Rev. Tim Bartlett, heading the World Meeting of Families 2018 planning team, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, and Cardinal Kevin

Farrell, President of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. To date, it has not received any form of answer or acknowledgement.

The Co-Chairs noted that LGBTI families will still be represented at World Meeting of Families, even without a booth. Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA (a member group of GNRC), her wife, and their two adopted children will be attending the event. **"We are part of the Catholic family,"** Duddy-Burke said, *"and it is important that we have a visible presence at this and other Catholic events. I look forward to hearing what questions other folks attending this meeting have, and to sharing our experience as a Catholic family."*

THE GNRC BOARD

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Global Network of Rainbow Catholics 2018

Update:

To our dear friends and colleagues who have shown such solidarity and support for our Press Release on our application for a booth at the exhibition hall at the World Meeting of Families.

This is an update to let you know that GNRC has in fact finally heard from Paul McCann Exhibition Co-Ordinator for WMF. Mr. McCann has confirmed that GNRC have not been successful with our application because of "uncertainties over the amount of space we will have available for exhibitions because of other logistical considerations."

In its response to the Exhibition Organisers, GNRC stated that we hoped that their decision "had nothing to do with our work for LGBTI equality." We also stated that despite this decision we were keen to apply for a booth at the next World Meeting of Families and would continue to offer our assistance in any discussion on Catholic LGBTI issues.

Some good news that we can share is that our Secretary Frank De Bernardo has succeeded in getting press credentials and so will be representing the LGBTI Community at the WMF on behalf of GNRC and New Ways Ministry. We look forward to some excellent reports from Frank as well as from Marianne Duddy-Burke who is there with her rainbow family.

Thank you again for all your support.

GNRC Co Chairs Ruby Almeida and Chris Vella

We asked you to endorse this Press Release on behalf of your group, community, organisation or as an individual so our voices may be heard by the officials of the World Meeting of Families. Till the close of this Newsletter we have received more than 170 endorsements from all over the world.



Being a Woman, LGBT and Catholic in Latin America

In March 2018, two well-known female activists were brutally murdered: Marielle Franco in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and Maria Guadalupe Hernandez in Guanajuato (México). They both shared a strong commitment with to the dispossessed and a lesbian sexual orientation, as the two women were lesbian. In this article we want to delve into the testimony Marielle gave us with her life.

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Latin America, July 2018. After the violent death of Marielle Franco (Brazil, 1979 – 2018), her family received a significant phone call from the Vatican. [The Pope himself expressed his condolences](#) recalling Marielle’s effort and commitment for the most in need.

There is a history behind this call, as it was the fruit of a letter sent to the Pope by Marielle’s daughter in March 19, 2018. In this letter, she described her mother’s life and portrayed her as an example of a Catholic woman.

"I learned my faith and being a Catholic from my mother. Her devotion for Our Lady, her faith and her commitment with Christ’s mission, will always guide our lives. She taught me about the martyrs and about never denying the Gospel. She always reminded me that God’s major commandment is love.

This is a moment of grieve, a sword that cuts our souls. I ask you to pray for us, for our families, for the women, for the black community, for life in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, for our city and country.

There is too many speeches of hate and what we need is love.

Sincerely yours"

(Luyara Santos, March 19th, 2018)

As Luyara explained, Marielle was a Catholic woman, in her youth she was a catechist in her parish – Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes – and she was also committed in transmitting the faith to her family.

The Social Stigma in Latin America

Appreciating Pope Francis’ gesture after facing the heartfelt claim of Marielle’s daughter, there are a few facts that are important highlight: Marielle was a woman, an afro descendant, a lesbian and she worked in favor of the poor that live in the favelas, where she also came from. In this context, Marielle was a person that lived and contributed from a place the Church nowadays refers to as The Frontier. For those who are not familiar with the traditional context of Latin American societies, we frequently witness the double, triple or even quadruple discrimination suffered by those who bear any of the characteristics Marielle united: she was a woman (gender), afro/native descendent origin (ethnic), LGBTI (sexual orientation) or poor (economic).

This is the reason why Marielle’s activism is remarkable; during her life she embraced the Gospel’s commitment with justice, love and solidarity. Although for her it would have been easy to speak against the Church by blaming it as many others do – from a perspective that the Church forms part of an ideological machinery that justifies and persuades exclusion – she preferred to show with her life that the Gospel is incarnated in any believer and, in the absence of an institutional or hierarchical Church, the commitment of the Christian transforms the more diverse realities.

In Marielle's activism, the triple nature of baptism became true: she was a prophet, a priestess and a queen. She reported injustice with honesty, she announced love and lived in solidarity, enabling the presence of the Kingdom among the excluded and needy; but as a consequence, just as Christ himself, she paid with her own life the confrontation with the structures that generate poverty and discrimination.

Teachings from Marielle

How much of Marielle's example do we see in our own countries? Many of our rainbow Catholic communities have decided to join the Pride parades or to raise their voices when a person or a group makes reference of the supposed contradiction between faith and being LGBTI. Through her life testimony, Marielle proved clearly that both dimensions are not in conflict, but complementary to the life experience.

At the same time, is important to recognize and appreciate the presence of women in our Church communities, especially in our lesbian sisters who are rainbow Catholics. They have usually been a minority and even from time to time have chosen to work in parallel to their male counterparts, as they declare to deal with the same barriers of inclusion and recognition present in spaces where diversity is expected to be a fundamental value.

This is Marielle's legacy: the call to recognize us as diverse and active Catholics in the construction of the Kingdom, the social justice and the fullness that our faith calls us as sons and daughters of God.

GLOBAL NETWORK OF RAINBOW CATHOLICS 2018 ®

Website: www.rainbowcatholics.org Mail: media@gnrcatholics.org
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The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC) brings together organizations and individuals who work for pastoral care and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people and their families. We work for the affirmation, inclusion, dignity and equality of our rainbow community in the Roman Catholic Church and in society. The GNRC was founded in Rome in October 2015, and ratified and adopted the Constitution and Internal Regulations in Munich- Dachau in December 2017. GNRC was officially registered in Italy as an international Third Sector organization on the 17 December 2017.