



AGLP

The Association of LGBTQ Psychiatrists

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In this issue . . .

Reflection on the Holidays <i>Amir Ahuja, M.D.</i>	1
Editor's Column <i>Donya Ahmadian, MPH</i>	2
Professional Development and Advocacy <i>Fi Fonseca, MBBChBAO, M.S., & Kevo Rivera, M.D.</i>	2
Peter Hein, M.D., Bequest <i>Roy Harker</i>	4
AGLP Patrons	5
Membership Form	6



Reflections on the Holidays

Amir Ahuja, M.D.

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As December starts, I am struck by the season of Giving and Thanks that we are all trying to enjoy in the midst of so much turmoil in the world. It is a daily struggle I hear from my patients of how challenging this time of year has been. Often, they feel that way because they are lonely or rejected by family, or they have bad memories of the Holidays. However, this year that has been compounded by constant news of war, political division, and economic hardship. It has made me search for ways to help others in a time that is meant to be happy, but often does not live up to its promise.

As LGBTQ+ people, we know better than anyone that the political environment can dramatically affect one's mental health. Just look at all of the studies about increased suicide and depression among LGBTQ+ populations in states where same-sex marriage was illegal, or in states where Transgender healthcare is now banned. It is difficult not to internalize the negativity of the Government, and by extension, of your fellow citizens, when they attack your ability to live freely and openly. Of course, this has not gone away over time, though aspects of discrimination have lessened. On top of this, our LGBTQ+ community has now had to deal with often crushing economic conditions with ensuing homelessness and chronic unemployment or underemployment.

// These bigger organizations allow me to honestly tell my patients that I am not just paying lip service to their troubles, but I am advocating for them on a higher level.

It is a challenge for me to hear my patients' stories every day and not be able to fix all of these issues for them. I know medications and therapy are helpful, but it feels inadequate when they have so many other stressors. It hopefully offers them some relief to have my shoulder to cry on, and the knowledge that I am in their corner rooting for them. However, I wish I could do more in that moment.

This is why I am so thankful for AGLP, and of course, the LA LGBT Center where I work. These bigger organizations allow me to honestly tell my patients that I am not just paying lip service to their troubles, but I am advocating for them on a higher level. There is a genuine ability for me to share with them that I am using whatever privilege I have, and platform I have, to effect change in their lives and hopefully create more equity in the world.

So, I thank all of you in this Holiday season for being a crucial part of AGLP's efforts. As you celebrate with your friends and family and other loved ones, I hope you think of all of the LGBTQ+ people who do not have the benefits we do. Please give whatever time and effort and money you can in order to help us make their lives better. I wish for you the same Gratitude and fulfillment I feel now.



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The views expressed in the Newsletter are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the opinions of AGLP. The sexual orientation of any writer or any person mentioned in the Newsletter should not be inferred unless specifically stated. Mailing lists for the Newsletter are confidential, to be used only by AGLP, and do not imply sexual orientation.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Persons wishing to submit articles for publication should send them to the National Office, 1512 Spruce Street #2601, Philadelphia, PA 19102; phone 215-222-2800; E-mail: AGLPeditors@aglp.org. Submissions become the property of AGLP. The Newsletter reserves the right to make editorial changes and to shorten articles to fit space limitations. Name, address, daytime telephone number, and a short biographical statement about the author should accompany the submission even if the author requests anonymity in publication (which is discouraged).

ADVERTISING RATES

The Newsletter of AGLP accepts limited advertising depending upon space and applicability to issues affecting psychiatrists who either are part of the LGBTQ+ community or who treat LGBTQ+ patients. The mailing lists for AGLP are confidential and never sold or provided to any vendor.

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Editor's Column Donya Ahmadian, MPH

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Donya Ahmadian, MPH

Dearest AGLP Family,

As we move towards the new year, I feel nothing short of gratitude for the opportunity to share this intentional space with you and to welcome you to a mini-edition of our Newsletter. As your trusted source for the latest news, insights, and stories from our vibrant and loving community, it is one of our greatest honors to share this time with you. This month, in taking note of the Holiday season, we extend our warmest love to you and honor the traditions that you hold dear... those both new and old. As we embark upon the idea of hope and choice, we realize all that is left for us to create- a life that may look slightly different than it used to, or than we imagined, but with a sense of agency all your own. Thus, as we take a moment to celebrate our togetherness, let us breathe in a sense of knowing, of belonging, and of ease.

Our community thrives on diversity, inclusivity, and the unyielding spirit of support. Together, we create a tapestry of shared experiences and stories that empower and inspire a story of never-ending fight and hope. Amongst this hope and all the joy it brings, we must also acknowledge the complexities of emotions that the Holidays often introduce. Although a time of connection, community, revival and slowness for many- there is shared truth in this time as one of hardship and the navigating of difficult emotional terrain. Whether these difficulties present as familial grief, disconnection, or even estrangement, the authenticity of your truth is both valid and deserving of Self-compassion. The delicate dance of these times is an opportunity for greater understanding and of forging new tradi-

tions which reflect the uniqueness of your lived experience. In particular, given the painful nature of much of our world at this time, celebration can feel distant and disjointed. Thus, no matter the emotional landscape you are facing, let it be here within these pages that you are reminded that both/either can exist. We can find joy and grief...sorrow and celebration... disillusion and connection. Above all, we can find strength in knowing that we can lean unto one another and those who meet us where we are and allow us to the slow exhalation we so often strive towards.

As we breathe ourselves bigger, into the space we were born to take up, let us look forward to the new year in anticipation and expectation of the strength we will find within ourselves as we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of LGBTQIA+ advocacy and support. Below are a few points I would like to emphasize:

Stay Informed: Knowledge is power. Remain diligently informed about the latest developments in LGBTQIA+ rights, health, and wellbeing. Knowledge empowers us to advocate for change and support our community effectively.

Celebrate a Spirit of Diversity & Inclusivity: Our community is beautifully diverse, and our strength lies in each and every one of your stories. Embrace and celebrate the unique experiences and identities that compose your multifaceted nature and rest in knowing that this is the art of your existence.

Practice Allyship: Continue to stand with us in the fight for equality, human rights, de-stigmatization, and the inherent recognition of this shared humanity. Your allyship is invaluable and each voice is critical to the advancement of allyship and the attenuation of adversary platforms and voices.

Self-Compassion: In times of shared progress and challenges, let us now underestimate the importance of serving from a spirit that has first been filled itself. Let us not forget the value of ourselves as we speak to bring healing to our communities.

Through each of these challenges and each of our triumphs, let us celebrate that which can never be taken- the intrinsic worthiness of all that you are and all that you fight for. As we've grown to learn, nothing is ever lost, when done with love. We can always be sure of this, even amongst the moments where there seems little else to be sure of. Let us hold one another and this truth tightly.

Thank you for being exactly this- something to hold, treasure, and protect.

■ ■ ■

Introducing the "Professional Development & Advocacy Column" (for ECPs, by ECPs)

Fi Fonseca, MBBChBAO, M.S., & Kevo Rivera, M.D.

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Hello AGLP! We are Fi and Kevo, your co-chairs for the new AGLP Early Career Psychiatrists (ECP) Committee, and we are the editors of this new Professional Development & Advocacy Column in the AGLP Newsletter. As we're writing this, we are just days away from celebrating the 50-year anniversary of the day that the APA's Board of Trustees voted to remove the diagnosis of "Homosexuality" from the DSM-II (December 15, 1973). This momentous occasion invites us to reflect not only on the ways that AGLP members played a role leading up to that history-making event, but also on all the ways that AGLP's younger members have continued to push psychiatry forward in the subsequent decades. As AGLP's newest generation of ECPs, we hope to emulate these predecessors by both honoring the light they've shone before us and by carrying the torch forward, casting away any remaining shadows that loom over LGBTQ mental health.

Through this column, we hope to provide a space wherein an array of topics can be covered, according to the interests of our ECP members. These can include mentorship and supervision; supporting trainees; the transition into a first attending job; arts, culture, and media digests; diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice; ECP perspectives on legislation and policies affecting LGBTQIA+ people; and, of course, advocacy. We also hope to spotlight some of our ECP members and the work they do. To that end, we invite any ECP members to submit their ideas or written pieces for this column to dr.theysi@gmail.com and hellodoctorkevo@gmail.com. We're excited to hear from you!

Also, in the coming months, we look forward to creating more opportunities for networking and collaboration among AGLP's ECP members, which we hope to achieve through both the ECP committee and other events and gatherings, whether virtual or in-person at upcoming annual meetings. Be on the lookout for surveys (optional! and we promise not to spam you) and event invitations so we can get to know more about you, your values, and your vision for AGLP.

In the meantime, we wish you the best as you ring in 2024. Here's to making more history together.

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About Fi and Kevo:

Dr. Fi Fonseca (they/them) is a queer and proud South Asian of Goan heritage, having completed high school and medical school in Ireland, before moving to the US. They have served in multiple capacities, including on the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Board of Trustees from 2022-2023 as chair for the APA Foundation Diversity Leadership and SAMHSA fellowships. They work as a Senior Associate Consultant in Psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester MN, within the outpatient Behavioral Medicine Practice (BMP) and the Transgender and Intersex Specialty Care Clinic (TISCC). They currently serve as chair for the Academy of Consultation Liaison Psychiatry (ACLP) LGBTQIA2S+ caucus.

Dr. Kevo Rivera (accepts all pronouns) is a queer, genderfree, Filipinx-American child of once-undocumented immigrants. They completed their medical school, psychiatry residency, and child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship training at the University of Iowa. During Kevo's training, they served as co-chair of the Department of Psychiatry Diversity Committee, as councilor of the Iowa Psychiatric Physicians Society, and as a Diversity Leadership Fellow with the American Psychiatric Association. Kevo now works as a full-time child psychiatrist in the New York State Office of Mental Health's NYC Children's Center while concurrently completing a year-long fellowship in Public Psychiatry through Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute.



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Bequest from Peter Hein, M.D.

In October, AGLP received a substantial bequest from Peter L. Hein, M.D., which provided for a disbursement to AGLP from his revocable trust. The amount contributed was \$100,000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Dollars). Dr. Peck was never a member of AGLP, but was a member of the APA LGBTQ Caucus. Dr. Peck died on April 10, 2023. At Dr. Hein's request, there was no memorial service or grave marker. The board of AGLP is discussing ways that AGLP can honor this remarkable legacy.



JGLMH available online FREE to AGLP Members



The *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health*, the official journal of AGLP, is now available for viewing online, free to all AGLP Members. The content is searchable with search words and phrases, and you can even download and print particular articles if you like.

AGLP members with valid and current memberships can now access the Journal directly through the AGLP website free of charge as a member benefit. Go to www.aglp.org, click on the Members Area link (upper right hand of the screen) and once you are logged in, a box will appear on

the right side of the blue banner to access the content.

Online help is available for any problems you may encounter. We hope that this new method will provide greater ease and dependability to the entire process.



Support AGLP today! Upgrade to a Patron Level Membership

AGLP derives 13% of our budget from members who support us at the patron level. Your additional support helps finance the social and educational events we have planned for the San Francisco APA. AGLP fosters a community of LGBTQ+ psychiatrists who can advocate for our patients and find support for ourselves, and organize cutting edge educational programming. If you become a patron, you will be invited to our VIP reception on Monday May 22 at 6pm.

Additionally, you can donate to our medical student travel fund to help fund medical students to come to the APA conference. You can donate to the John O'Donnell Medical Student Travel Fund by clicking on [this secure link](#). Or contact Roy Harker at RHarker@aglp.org. See www.aglp.org for more information.



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