

LOCAL LEADER SPOTLIGHT: PATRICK LYRA LANIER, PACIFIC PRIDE FOUNDATION

November 29, 2017 by Ella [Leave a reply](#)

Nonprofit Resource Network of Santa Barbara County is proud to announce the launch of our Local Leader Spotlight Series. These spotlights aim to recognize and showcase standout individuals for their commitment to our social sector.

Today we are featuring Patrick Lyra (First Name, like “Mary Beth”) Lanier, LGBTQ+ Program Manager for Pacific Pride Foundation. Patrick Lyra (lie-rah) Lanier identifies as queer and transgender, using they/them pronouns.

Patrick Lyra holds a B.A. in African-American literature from Vassar College and a M.A. in Clinical Psychology (Somatic Emphasis), from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Previously they served as an Early Childhood Educator for ten years, beginning at Yale University’s Child Study Center. Currently, Patrick Lyra is a licensed Marriage & Family Therapist in [private practice](#) and an adoptive co-parent to two amazing teenagers.

You can find Patrick Lyra and Pacific Pride Foundation’s heartfelt, humorous presentations county-wide, as well as up and down the central and southern coast. Patrick Lyra’s teaching style meets each participant’s learning curve with patience, understanding, and the passionate belief that – whatever our implicit and learned biases – it is possible to develop new practices and languages that welcome all in the LGBTQ+ community.



1) What does “leadership” mean to you? What characteristics do you admire in a leader?

For me, leadership is easier to define by describing what I think a leader is not. A true leader is not a charismatic “personality” motivated by seeking accolades and personal attention. A true leader utilizes their charisma and talents to decenter their own ego and to create space for disenfranchised populations – and the services or advocacy they seek. A leader focuses on finding and executing a clear mission with a team they want to help grow as individuals – and who in turn help the leader grow as an individual. Leaders are solutions-focused and try to avoid overly self-congratulatory whirlpools of social justice theorizing or politicizing or ranting.

Leaders avoid echo chambers and ideally have some kind of concrete training – I don’t think charisma and grassroots passion alone provide what is needed for a leader’s long haul in the push for social change. Leaders are not perfect, and are often working under the weight of uncompensated emotional labor. Leaders are also too often treated as holy. This means when they need a day off, or when they display inevitable human error – the wider community’s response can be one that lacks compassion and care, because the expected level of performance is that of a god. Ideally leaders display their humanity regularly and are seen as human by those they collaborate with. so this unhelpful kind of hero-worship can be avoided.

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2) Who is a person that has influenced your leadership style?

Pacific Pride Foundation's Executive Director Colette Schabram has been one of the most formative influences on my leadership style. Colette has a stunning ability to both welcome your unique skill set as a leader, while also providing support for the growing edges you have as a human being. If I am perceived at all positively as a local leader, it is because of Colette's mentoring, friendship, and directiveness in core moments when I feel lost or confused by the intense weight of the work we do at PPF. I could never have led our vigil the day immediately after the Pulse Orlando Massacre, or supported observances around local hate crimes, if Colette was not there – mobilizing our team, and reminding me of my own personal strengths and my ability to use my emotional intelligence and vulnerability as a guiding presence for our community during painful moments.

Colette is one of the most overlooked leaders we have locally – and I've been glad lately to hear how folks are finally seeing her immense skill and commitment to our mission. All good things happening at PPF come back to Colette's leadership of our team. Additionally, Colette brings a thoughtful and rich introversion to the table that I think makes her an ideal leader during an intense year of attack on LGBTQ+ rights. Rather than live in a state of reaction, I admire her ability to turn inward and process carefully, and quietly. As an extrovert, I can struggle to pause and steep in the nuances of the moment – so I am always trying to embody this aspect of Colette's leadership in my own way.

3) What are you doing to ensure you continue to grow and develop as a leader?

I am always open to feedback, and work quite successfully to “not take it personally.” I solicit feedback regularly from my team – overtly verbalizing what I know to be my growing edges, and extending an invitation to collaborate in helping each other massage our growing edges. I enjoy building relationships with other leaders and seek out mentoring where needed. I also meet any feedback I get from the community and other leaders with direct, growth-oriented feedback of my own – as I think we grow collaboratively, and that too often we enable each others' avoidance of growth.

I also attend leadership conferences to sharpen my skill set. In 2017 I attended the McCune Foundation's hosting of the Midwest Academy's Organizing for Social Change Trainings, as well as the bi-annual Unity Through Diversity: A National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People of Color Health Conference. The latter took place in New York State, granting me a more national perspective on our community's populations of color – strengthening my commitment to being a useful white ally to racial and LGBTQ+ social justice.

4) How do you lead in a way that allows for creativity and innovation?

My background is in early childhood education, and I was trained at the Yale Child Study Center – where an emphasis on child-centeredness and person-centeredness was core. This deeply influenced me. I have always taught on teams – never as a single teacher in a classroom. I lead in a way that invites community constituents to step forward and be heard as their whole self –

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Regarding these tougher areas, I push my teammates and my mentees to trust their innate ability to learn and to try out new approaches, looking at bumps in the road as normal and a part of expanding their toolkit. First and foremost, I use myself as an example by sharing anecdotes about my own foibles, mistakes, and the strange beauty of my own journey from humble, diaper-changing preschool teacher to active community leader.

5) Any current projects you are excited about that you would like to share with the NPRN community?

I am extremely excited about Pacific Pride Foundation's Grand Opening in our new headquarters at 608 Anacapa St., Suite A. We're seeing increased visibility for our center and our team at a time when we need to be bolstering ourselves against very pointed threats, most immediately manifesting in a measurable rise in hate crimes locally, statewide, and nationally.

Additionally, our Counseling Program has an unfilled opening for a bilingual counselor – our first ever paid counseling internship we've been able to offer, so I'm excited to expand our bilingual support in mental health (we've often had a bilingual counseling team member, but have never been able to provide the compensation needed for this critical skill-set... now we can!).

We've also committed to a unique clinical partnership with our neighbor Antioch University, via the support of a Cottage Hospital grant, to improve the LGBTQ+ mental health training of local therapists and counselors. And despite consistent rejections of high quality grant applications we have written to re-open our North County counseling center in our new Santa Maria office – I am excited to keep pushing for this support. I am excited to find a funder who sees how critical it is that we re-open this community resource as a part of the amazing work Pacific Pride Foundation already does in Santa Maria and Lompoc. Our undocumented and/or Spanish-speaking LGBTQ+ community members in North County need the support and deserve it.

6) What motivates/ inspires you most about your work?

Our LGBTQ+ community survival inspires me, and I include my own survival of intimate abuse in this (my biological parents rejected me when I came out as an LGBTQ+ teen – and persisted in abusing me verbally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually for a decade after). We are a people who are so similar and yet also so different from one another. Most of us have survived some form of trauma, and yet we keep showing up as best we can to grow together, and to stand shoulder-to-shoulder as oppressive forces seek to divide us. The survival of our community inspires me to show up. I want us to get beyond survival and into thriving – as a whole community – not just as the most privileged amongst us. This begins by acknowledging how complex the oppression is that we as an LGBTQ+ community face – and that marriage equality, which could disappear at any moment, is also not the end of our civil rights journey.

7) What do you most value in others?

– a disinterest in conformity for the sake of making others feel comfortable with the banal and the facile. Life is not easy, comfortable, and never promised to be. I like folks who recognize this and face this truth with courage and laughter.

8) What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Cutting off contact with the abusers in my life (especially my parents), teaching preschool for ten years, attending to my own therapy and mental health as I heal deeply-rooted wounds from my survival, coming out as transgender (non-binary), and collaboratively co-parenting two of the most beautiful and loving humans I've ever met. I'm also proud that I know how to say "no" now. I've worked hard, very hard, to be proud of myself for earned achievements – so I'm happy to say that the list is long.

9) When and where were you happiest?

I am the happiest and most alive when I am singing. Or when I am dancing. Or when I am in nature. Or when I am teaching and learning from children, teens and those who love them.

Pacific Pride Foundation's Mission

Pacific Pride Foundation's advocacy and education efforts meet the ongoing and emerging needs of a diverse population in order to create a thriving and visible LGBTQ+ community and to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

History of the Pacific Pride Foundation

Pacific Pride Foundation (PPF) began in 1976 as a Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counseling and Referral center for Gay men and Lesbians. At that time the organization was called Western Addiction Services Program (WASP), and also offered a newsletter called The Bulletin, which is still in publication as our monthly eBulletin.

Since its formation, Pacific Pride Foundation has become the foremost resource for people living with HIV/AIDS and the LGBT community, both in Santa Barbara County and the coastal communities of California between Los Angeles and San Francisco. With offices in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, PPF is a strong, respected leader providing high quality, compassionate health and social service programs not available through any other organization in the county.

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