

Throughout PRIDE Month, CTI will be featuring profiles of local LGBTQ+ leaders to celebrate #LowellLGBTQExcellence by learning about their experiences, perspectives, and the wisdom they share in our local communities.

CTI Celebrates Local LGBTQ+ Leaders of Excellence ~ Mary and Dorene Bowe-Shulman

Nominated by Barbara Warren, Director of Housing and Homeless Services at CTI.

Mary and Dorene Bowe-Shulman were plaintiffs in the first multi-plaintiff comprehensive Federal lawsuit that challenged the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) Section 3. Filed on March 3rd, 2009, by GLAD on behalf of eight married couples and three widowers, GLAD argued that DOMA Section 3 violates the federal constitutional guarantee of equal protection as applied to federal income tax, Social Security, federal employees and retirees, and in the issuance of passports. Although this was the first lawsuit to challenge DOMA, several others soon followed. On June 26th, 2013, “the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that section three of the so-called “Defense of Marriage Act” (DOMA) is unconstitutional and that the federal government cannot discriminate against married lesbian and gay couples to determine federal benefits and protections.”

What is your title/role/organization and/or involvement in the community?

We were plaintiffs in a Federal lawsuit seeking recognition of same-sex marriages. We have been advocating for the equal treatment of same-sex couples since 1997.

What does Pride Month Mean to you?

The meaning of Pride to us has changed over time. Initially, it was a time to celebrate our identity and to gather with others like us, as there were so few spaces where we could feel safe about our identity. Recently, its meaning to us is more outward-looking, as a means of educating others and celebrating our own diversity as a community.

What can the community do more of to recognize Pride during the year?

Pride is a great time of year, but it's only one month. Ideally, the community would continue to recognize that many LGBTQ+ people struggle ALL year to be seen, have equal rights, and have jobs and housing security.

What advice would you give future generations of community leaders, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+?

Stay vigilant! There will be pushback for every couple of steps any social justice movement takes forward. We can see this now even in our own state. We ask future leaders, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+, not to take the progress made for granted and to stay visible in their work. Visibility is key for our community as it fosters understanding and dispels harmful stereotypes.

***#LowellLGBTQplusExcellence #PRIDE #CommunityLeader #Leadership #DEIatCTI
#PRIDEMonth2023 #Appreciation #Grateful #CTIPride #PrideMonth***