

Cover

All Identities | Standing Strong
Middle Tennessee State University
April 4 – 6, 2024

Message from the Conference Advisory Board

On behalf of the 2024 LGBT Plus College Conference Advisory Board, I welcome you and thank you for participating in this year's conference. I am honored to serve as chair of this year's Board once again.

The Conference Advisory Board is proud to have played a part in making this eleventh edition of the conference the best yet. We are excited to explore this year's theme, **All Identities: Standing Strong**.

The Board's purpose is three-fold:

1. Share information with our colleagues and peers, encouraging their participation and attendance;
2. Offer advice and counsel to ensure relevant, timely programming and presentations; and
3. Secure financial and public support for the conference and its related events.

Thanks to the organizers, MTSU Lambda Association, academic advisor Dr. William Langston, and Development Director John Roberson. And, of course, thank you to our sponsors.

I also want to thank all of the people you will see presenting and sharing at this year's conference. We literally could not do it without you!

As a Board, we thank you all for your participation, dedication, and commitment to belonging and engagement for everyone. We commend you for your attendance and ask that you leave here sharing the knowledge, messages, and resources of the minds—including yours—that make this event possible.

Justin Reed
2024 Conference Advisory Board Chair

2023 Reflections

In 2023 the conference continued to grow by partnering with the Middle Tennessee State University Holocaust Studies program to present a discussion of the evolution of the pink triangle from a Nazi concentration camp badge into a widespread emblem of queer liberation, pride, and community. The conference also hosted its first ever Lavender Celebration of Graduates.

The first day, April 13, spotlighted legislation influencing transgender life in Tennessee. Paul Pamba discussed LGBTQ+ peoples' rights and challenges in

East Africa. The day ended with a business etiquette discussion and resume review session.

The second day, April 14, was devoted to panel discussions. The opening panel addressed fundraising, with practical tips and advice. The documentary keynote was *Paragraph 175*, which documented the impact of the holocaust on LGBTQ+ people. The Bringing Your Whole Self to Work panel explored maintaining one's identity in the workplace.

The final day, April 15, was devoted to working and strategy sessions. The opening panel included personal reflections on pulling together. Then, the LGBTQ+ Community Keynote reviewed Curtis Chen's memoir *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*. Participants enjoyed the Community and Religious Organizations Fair and the first Lavender Celebration of Graduates. The day ended with an Issues Summit exploring the history of efforts to ban Pride celebrations.

Get ready to continue the conversation with the 2025 LGBT Plus College Conference, *All Identities: Driving Change*, April 3 – 5, 2025!

Sponsors

Thank You to Our Generous Sponsors

Nissan

Middle Tennessee State University Student Activity Fee Committee

Middle Tennessee State University Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance

Tennessee Valley Authority

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee

Middle Tennessee State University Vice President for Student Affairs

Middle Tennessee State University Distinguished Lecture Fund

Connect

Tennessee Pride Chamber

inclusion tennessee

Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi

Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Middle Tennessee State University College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

Middle Tennessee State University College of Basic and Applied Sciences

Middle Tennessee State University College of Liberal Arts

Middle Tennessee State University College of Media and Entertainment

Middle Tennessee State University James E. Walker Library

Middle Tennessee State University Department of Psychology

Middle Tennessee State University Intercultural and Diversity Affairs Center

Middle Tennessee State University Center for Fairness, Justice, and Equity in the College of Education

Middle Tennessee State University President's Commission on the Status of Women

Conference Display | Available During Conference Hours Each Day

Breaking the Stigma around Autism: an Interactive Art Exhibition, **Jillian DeGrie** (she/they), multimedia artist pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Middle Tennessee State University

Neurodivergence affects an ever-growing percentage of the population. For years, the definition of autism was based solely on the experience of nerdy white boys. Modern day research on autism is finally beginning to include people of other ages, genders, and races. Thus, more people are being diagnosed today than ever before. However, the stigma surrounding autism has not adjusted accordingly. Inaccurate representations in the media, preexisting stereotypes, and the taboo surrounding mental health discussions have prevented an accurate understanding of autism by neurotypical people. This project is my attempt to destigmatize autism through an education-based approach. I created an interactive art exhibition that allows the viewer to experience aspects of autism themselves to better learn how the disability affects autistic people. Sponsored by Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Day 1: Thursday, April 4

Student Union Building – Ballroom
Registration Begins 8:45 a.m.

Day Host **Ray White**, Ed.S. (he/him), Clinical Counselor, Walters State Community College

Welcoming Remarks | 9:15 a.m. – 9:35 a.m.

Sarah Calise (she/they), Curator of Community Histories, Vanderbilt University Libraries
Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University College of Behavioral and Health Sciences

Education Spotlight—“*Queers Read This!*”: *Contemporary AIDS Literature* | 9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Dr. **Eric Hughes** (he/they), Lecturer in English and Women’s and Gender Studies, Middle Tennessee State University, introduced by **Roberta Chevrette** (she/her), Associate Professor of Communication Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies, Middle Tennessee State University

This talk will focus on three contemporary texts that portray the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s—*Like a Love Story* (2019), *The Prettiest Star* (2020), and *My Government Means to Kill Me* (2022). It will consider the exigencies behind this retrospection in the so-called “post-AIDS” era, with an emphasis on queer culture, history, and politics in contemporary AIDS literature. Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University College of Liberal Arts

Voices—*Creating a Welcoming Island in a Sea of Prejudice: How to Support LGBTQ+ Students and Employees in Non-Inclusive Communities* | 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Dr. **Candace Lapan** (she/her), Assistant Professor of Psychology, Wingate University

This talk will overview the experience of seeking out educational and employment opportunities at institutions of higher education as an LGBTQ+ person. Drawing on her personal experience and research, Dr. Lapan will explain the unique challenges that LGBTQ+ people face in these situations, particularly when institutions are located in less than welcoming communities.

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University President's Commission on the Status of Women

Lunch Break | 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Keynote Panel—*From Policy to Practice: The Role of Business in Social Advocacy* | 1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Dr. **Stephanie Mahnke** (she/her; moderator), Executive Director of the Tennessee Pride Chamber of Commerce and Tennessee Pride Chamber Foundation, **Brynn Plummer** (she/her), Vice President and Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at AllianceBernstein, **Joseph Woodson** (he/him), Founder and President of Woodson Results, LLC, **Josh Wood**, Tennessee Pride Chamber

Businesses are increasingly aware of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in their operations. A diverse workforce that feels embraced by their employers leads to increased innovation and profitability. Consumers are more likely to spend money at companies that reflect their values. However, speaking out on politically charged issues can lead to public backlash and financial consequences. What roles and obligations do employers and businesses have in advocacy and impacting social change?

Sponsored by Tennessee Pride Chamber

Plenary Panel Discussion—*Bringing Your Whole Self to Work* | 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Dr. **Patrick McCarthy**, J.D. (he/him; moderator), Professor of Psychology, Middle Tennessee State University, **Amna Osman** (she/her), Chief Executive Officer of Nashville CARES, **Maurice Moore**, Ph.D. (they/them), Assistant Professor of Drawing and Painting, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Dr. **Sam Zaza** (she/her), Associate Professor of Information Systems and Analytics, Middle Tennessee State University, **Greg Cason** (he/him), Purchasing Manager at Nissan Group of the Americas and Owner of Inspired Concepts and Events and Misty Blue Event Venue

This panel explores the “bottom line value” that organizations place on their capacity to create a culture in which differences are respected and inclusion is strategically leveraged as an organizational strength. Students will gain insights on how employers' policies and practices address various dimensions of diversity. D&I professionals and other leaders will benefit from open and honest dialogue for the benefit of the work unit and organization.

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University Department of Psychology

Math and Science Education Ph.D. Seminar—Empowering LGBTQ Youth Through Science Education | 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Dr. **Gary Wright** (he/him), Assistant Professor of Science Education in the Department of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum, University of Missouri, introduced by **Kate Coscia** (they/them), second-year student in the Mathematics and Science Education Ph.D. Program, Middle Tennessee State University

Access to a gender and sexual diversity-inclusive curriculum, supportive teachers, and mentorship opportunities can have a significant positive impact on LGBTQ students' feelings of safety, academic performance, educational aspirations, sense of belonging and well-being, equity literacy, and it can enhance empathy and acceptance of all students towards diverse identities. The lecture will highlight opportunities to empower LGBTQ youth through science education.

Presented in partnership with Middle Tennessee State University College of Basic and Applied Sciences

LGBT PLUS COLLEGE CONFERENCE FILM FESTIVAL

6:00 p.m. | Student Union Building – Ballroom

Allie Sultan (she/her; host), Associate Professor of Media Arts, Middle Tennessee State University

The festival will feature LGBTQ+ themed films submitted from around the globe. Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University College of Media and Entertainment

Day 2: Friday, April 5

Student Union Building – Ballroom

Registration Begins 8:30 a.m.

Day Host **Elizabeth Cannan-Knight** (she/ze/fae), Middle Tennessee State University Lambda Association

Conference Opening Address | 9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.

Gini Pupo-Walker (she/her), Executive Director for Tennessee for the Education Trust

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Equity and Compliance

Opening Plenary Discussion—*LGBTQ+ Identity and Neurodiversity* | 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Trent Jackson (they/them; moderator), **Katie Munday** (they/them), multiply neurodivergent advocate and consultant, **Jillian DeGrie** (she/they), multimedia artist pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Middle Tennessee State University, **Kirk Aldave** (he/they), Middle Tennessee State University, **Kathlene Smith** (she/her), Manager of DEI for Nissan Group of the Americas

Being LGBTQ+ and being neurodivergent can each come with unique challenges and experiences. The discussion will begin with a look at some of the experiences of autistic transgender and non-binary adults, shared by Katie Munday. The panel and audience will then share in discussing additional intersections of LGBTQ+ identity and neurodiversity.

Sponsored by Nissan Group of the Americas

Documentary Keynote Presentation and Discussion—*Mama Bears* | 11:00 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Allie Sultan (she/her; moderator), Associate Professor of Media Arts, Middle Tennessee State University, **Daresha Kyi** (she/her), Emmy Award-winning director, **Candace Winters Johnson** (she/her), **Emily Gilreath** (she/her), **Jessica Gaby** (she/her), Assistant Professor of Psychology, Middle Tennessee State University

****Lunch will be served immediately prior to the beginning of the film****

MAMA BEARS is an intimate, thought-provoking exploration of the journeys taken by Sara Cunningham and Kimberly Shappley, two “mama bears”—whose profound love for their LGBTQ children has turned them into fierce advocates for the entire queer community—and Tammi Terrell Morris, a young African American lesbian whose struggle for self-acceptance perfectly exemplifies why the mama bears are so vitally important.

Sponsored by Tennessee Valley Authority and Middle Tennessee State University Vice President for Student Affairs

Plenary Panel Discussion—*Let’s Get One Thing Straight: Banned Books, “Decency” Ordinances, and Public Library Collections* | 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Kristen West (she/her; moderator), Chair of the User Services Department, Middle Tennessee State University James E. Walker Library, Dr. **Poushali Bhadury** (she/her), Assistant Professor of English, Middle Tennessee State University, **Jordan Nielsen** (they/them), Inclusion & Education Librarian, Middle Tennessee State University James E. Walker Library, Dr. **C. Rebecca Oldham** (she/her), Assistant Professor of Human Development and Family Science, Middle Tennessee State University, **Ken Paulson** (he/him), Director of the Free Speech Center and Dean Emeritus of Middle Tennessee State University’s

College of Media and Entertainment, **Steve Sullivan** (he/him), Smyrna Town Councilmember and Chair of the Rutherford County Library System Board

Public library books, especially those written for LGBTQ+ audiences, are increasingly becoming the subject of challenges and book bans. This panel of academics and community leaders will provide multiple perspectives on how “decency” laws are having (un)intentional ramifications on public library collections.

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University James E. Walker Library

Plenary Panel Discussion—*Exploring the Impact of Overturning Roe v. Wade on Bodily Autonomy for LGBTQ+ People* | 2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

William Langston (he/him; moderator), Professor of Psychology, Middle Tennessee State University, **Patrick R. Grzanka** (he/him), Professor of Psychology and the inaugural Divisional Dean for Social Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, **Francie Hunt** (she/her), Executive Director of Tennessee Advocates for Planned Parenthood, **Theodore Baker** (he/him), Youth Organizing Fellow for Rutherford County with Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and Northern Mississippi, **Antoine Dandridge** (he/him), founder of the “Black Lifestyle Advocates for Culture and Knowledge” Organizer Program, Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi

Please join us for an important panel discussion on the implications of the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* for bodily autonomy rights for LGBTQ+ people. We will be hosting representatives from Planned Parenthood and members of the LGBTQ+ community to explore how the rollback of abortion rights could further enable restrictions on healthcare access and procedures related to gender affirming care, potential legal challenges to medical treatments for transgender youth, discrimination in reproductive healthcare, and other threats to self-determination over one's own body and healthcare decisions.

Sponsored by Planned Parenthood of Tennessee and North Mississippi

Strategy Session—*Building Structures for Belonging and Engagement* | 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

William Langston (he/him; moderator), Professor of Psychology, Middle Tennessee State University, **María C. González** (she/her/ella), Martha Gano Houstoun Research Professor in Literary Criticism, University of Houston

After the Texas legislature passed Senate Bill 17 (Texas SB 17), higher education institutions in Texas were required to end diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. The purpose of this strategy session is to develop resources for students that would still be available if a law like Texas SB 17 were to be passed in Tennessee.

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University Center for Fairness, Justice, and Equity in the College of Education

LGBT PLUS COLLEGE CONFERENCE GAME NIGHT

6:00 p.m. | Student Union Building – Game Room

William Langston (he/him; host), Professor of Psychology, Middle Tennessee State University

Conference participants will gather for an evening of interaction and fun with a variety of games and activities.

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University Intercultural and Diversity Affairs Center

Day 3: Saturday, April 6

Student Union Building – Ballroom

Registration Begins 8:30 a.m.

Day Host **Beverly Mangan** (she/her), President of MTSU Lambda Association

Welcoming Remarks | 9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.

Dr. **Michelle Stevens** (she/her), Professor of Educational Leadership, Director of the Center for Fairness, Justice, and Equity in the College of Education, Middle Tennessee State University

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University Student Activity Fees Committee

Plenary Discussion—*Personal Reflections on Standing Strong* | 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Beverly Mangan (she/her; moderator), President of MTSU Lambda Association, **panelists** selected from conference attendee volunteers

Sponsored by Connect

Community Keynote—*My Beautiful Black Hair: 101 Natural Hair Stories from the Sisterhood* | 10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

St. Clair Detrick-Jules (she/her), award-winning filmmaker, photographer, author, activist, and public speaker, introduced by **Danielle Rochelle** (she/her), Director of Intercultural and Diversity Affairs, Center for Student Involvement and Leadership, Middle Tennessee State University

"When my little sister Khloe was just four years old, with tears running down her face, she told my dad that she hated her afro because her white classmates were making fun of it. My anger turned into sadness, which quickly turned into joy: this was an opportunity for me to teach my little sister that her curls—just like everything else that comes from our Black ancestors—are beautiful. I spent the next two years photographing and interviewing 101 Black women with natural hair."

Sponsored by Middle Tennessee State University Distinguished Lecture Fund

Lunch Break, Networking, and Religious and Community Organizations Fair | 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Conference attendees will have an opportunity to network with participating religious and community organizations.

LGBT Plus College Conference Lavender Celebration of Graduates | 1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Michelle Conceison (she/her; host), Chair of the Recording Industry Department, Middle Tennessee State University, **Allie Sultan** (she/her; host), Associate Professor of Media Arts, Middle Tennessee State University, Dr. **Marisa Richmond** (she/her; keynote), Lecturer in History and Women's and Gender Studies, Middle Tennessee State University

The Lavender Graduation Celebration recognizes LGBTQ+ students of all backgrounds and acknowledges their achievements and contributions. Sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee

Strategy Session—Addressing Loneliness: A Dialogue on LGBTQ+ Older Adults' Needs and a Vision for an Inclusive Community | 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
phil cobucci (he/they), inclusion tennessee, **Gretchen Funk**

This panel, developed in collaboration with inclusion tennessee and Fifty Forward, is divided into three parts, each focusing on critical aspects of LGBTQ+ older adult experiences. The first part is a discussion on the occurrence of loneliness among LGBTQ+ older adults and the needed programming for this demographic. The second part is a segment featuring a panel discussion with local LGBTQ+ older adults and organizers. The final segment will be an interactive Q&A session where attendees can ask questions and engage directly with the panelists.

Sponsored by inclusion tennessee and Fifty Forward

Conference Closing | 4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

2024 LGBT Plus College Conference Awards Dinner
April 6, 2024 | 7:00 p.m.

Student Union Building – Ballroom

Join us in a celebration of the conference attendees and presenters and help us recognize the remarkable achievements of our nominees and award winners.

The 2024 LGBT Plus College Conference is a partnership between MTSU Lambda Association and the Middle Tennessee State University College of Behavioral and Health Sciences.

Conference editing services provided by Trent Jackson (they/them). Conference graphics and artwork by Taylor Watson (he/him)