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Young Trailblazers

Under-30 activists tackle status quo

Frank Talk

Barney on facing election results

Better Together

Businesses find strength in diversity

Edge of '17

New year, new directions

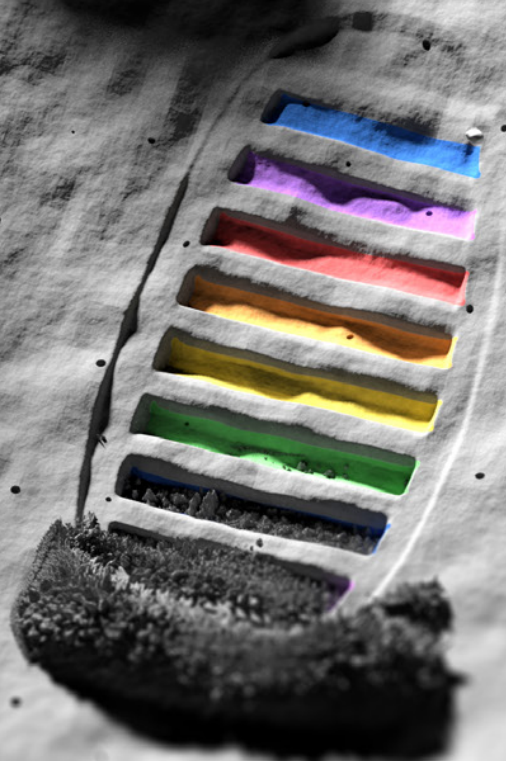



Kathy Griffin
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Progressive Pioneers

With one foot planted firmly
in the future, each of these
LGBT trailblazers is exploring a
universal path forward for us all

“Hey, I’d love to be the first gay president!” says one of these under-thirty-something LGBT power players of New England. “But I’m not going to say that’s my goal. I just want to know that my work makes a difference.” Making a difference is one thing all these millennial movers and shakers have in common. In fact, across an impressive spectrum of personal achievements, they all put community first. And when they speak of community, they’re talking inclusivity, intersectionality; in other words, greater understanding of differences and equality for all. This is what leadership is all about. Taking on the status quo, these progressive young role models are showing us a future we can believe in.





AARON WOLFSON 24

Since the election, many progressive activists have wondered audibly about how to handle the potential threats to civil liberties posed by President Trump's extremist administration. Wolfson has an idea.

"I'm going to fight like hell for the next four years," says Wolfson, who brings heavy artillery to the arena. Wolfson is media relations specialist for the ACLU of Massachusetts, managing press communications for the state affiliate of the major national organization safeguarding Americans' constitutionally guaranteed freedoms. He helps tell stories that can shape public opinion and apply political pressure, protecting individual rights and defending against discrimination based on gender identity, sexuality, race, religion and other markers. For instance, the ACLU recently filed a lawsuit challenging Massachusetts' 20-day voter registration cutoff law, which the organization says arbitrarily disenfranchises thousands of voters, particularly students, the elderly and those from poorer communities.

"I don't remember a time when I wasn't interested in social justice issues," says Wolfson, who was raised in Newton, Massachusetts and attended Simmons College, a women-focused school. During undergrad, Wolfson, assigned female at birth, came out as a transgender

man and worked with administrators to develop trans-inclusive admission policies that the college formally adopted in 2014.

He lobbied Beacon Hill legislators by serving on the policy committee of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition and as policy and legislative liaison for the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth. He was an administrative coordinator for the Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Youth (BAGLY) and public education manager for Freedom Massachusetts, bolstering statewide efforts that successfully passed the transgender public accommodations bill.

At the ACLU, Wolfson continues to stand up for rights—and for what's right—in the LGBTQ community and beyond. Most recently, the ACLU of Massachusetts called on the Supreme Judicial Court to dismiss 24,000 convictions tied to drug chemist Annie Dookhan, who admitted she tampered with evidence at the state-run lab where she worked. The organization is also bracing to fight efforts to repeal the transgender public accommodations bill, which will be put to voters on the 2018 statewide ballot.

Wolfson's work makes headlines. His story, though, is just beginning.