



Statement on Restrictions on Flying the Rainbow Flag

Gilbert Baker created the LGBTQ+ Rainbow Flag in San Francisco in 1978. Since that time, it has become the most recognizable symbol of hope and diversity ever created by human hands

The Rainbow Flag celebrates LGBTQ+ visibility and liberation. Therefore, it has drawn scores of detractors, especially in our current era of conservative politics. We have seen a rise in people protesting and demonizing Gilbert Baker's creation. Reactionaries in many countries, including the United States, have engineered a backlash, applying pressure on local, state and federal governments to ban flying the Rainbow Flag publicly.

To bolster their arguments, these factions create a specious argument: They label it "political" and compare the Rainbow Flag to offensive symbols like the Confederate flag and Nazi Flag.

These arguments are wrong on many levels. The Rainbow Flag is not political. Though politicians pass laws to discriminate against, or support, sexual and gender minorities, we are, in fact from all political backgrounds so the Rainbow Flag is apolitical by definition. The Confederate and Nazi flags are offensive because they represent ideas that are antithetical to democracy. The Confederate Flag was flown by a seditious rebellion that attempted to overthrow the United States government and protect the rights of slaveowners. The Nazi Flag reflects a fascist regime that murdered six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of handicapped and sexual and gender minorities. The Rainbow Flag, on the other hand, is a symbol of liberation and hope. There is no similarity.

Since 1978, the Rainbow Flag has inspired sexual and gender minorities to come out proudly. When these people live in shame and fear, this oppression leads to discrimination, depression, even suicide. The Rainbow Flag, instead, urges people to demand full equality, so they can live a free and happy life.

This is why the Rainbow Flag needs to be flown in public. For this reason, the Gilbert Baker Foundation has created numerous educational projects and exhibits to showcase the flag. The Foundation donates Rainbow Flags to museums and

other institutions around the world. We stipulate that these donated flags be on public display. Visibility saves lives.

As soon as you try to ban the Rainbow Flag, or other beacons that celebrate sexual and gender minorities, you put those people back in their closet. You snuff out their pride. You eventually extinguish their very lives.

The Rainbow Flag has gained meaning beyond the LGBTQ+ community. It has international recognition and respect as a symbol of sanctuary and safe spaces. It is crucial that all public institutions be allowed to display the Rainbow Flag freely.

The White House is known around the world as a symbol of freedom and democracy. In 2015, President Barack Obama illuminated the White House in rainbow colors to let the world know that the United States stands in solidarity with sexual and gender minorities. Imagine how life-affirming this gesture was for millions globally.

Dictators also know the power of the Rainbow Flag, and that's why they want it torn down. Earlier this year, Russia invaded Ukraine. The leader of that oppressive government, Vladimir Putin, declared that part of his motivation for invasion was the country's LGBTQ+ organizations and Ukraine's open display of the Rainbow Flag. Putin has vowed to "wipe the Rainbow Flag off the face of the earth"

We at the Gilbert Baker Foundation stand against homophobes when they attempt to ban the Rainbow Flag. From the Kremlin to your local city council, it is crucial to call out haters. Publicly denounce their cruelty. Their actions go against the very principles of freedom and democracy that we in America cherish. Those trying to tear down the Rainbow Flag have more terrible agendas.

Fly the Rainbow Flag openly and proudly. It embodies freedom and justice. Those who are against it oppose freedom and justice as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Charles Beal'. The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial 'C' and 'B'.

Charles Beal
President of the Gilbert Baker Foundation