The LGBTQ+ Demographic and the Culture Wars

The culture wars that are designed to denigrate the LGBTQ+ Community remain front and center in our social discourse. As we navigate the early years of the 21st Century, the LGBTQ+ demographic continues to confront an array of false narratives, religious prohibitions, discrimination, and marginalization.

Through its interventions that TLC calls C-ICE, The Lavender Convention will help society develop the equivalent of “herd immunity” to LGBTQ+ fear and hate. A comparison to the campaign to vaccinate our society against Covid 19 is useful. Large numbers of people who resist vaccination can become an epicenter for a potential resurgence of Covid-19. In the case of LGBTQ+ stigma, we have already seen a resurgence of legal prohibitions, escalation of LGBTQ animus, and a concerted effort to use the LGBTQ+ demographic as a wedge to divide and manipulate our larger community.

The Lavender Convention’s grassroots effort to remove stigma will end a circular and destructive process that we call the culture wars. These wars are not only harmful to LGBTQ+ people, they are also harmful to our larger society. The wars are not predicated on reason, thoughtful reflection, scientific facts, or the principles that support our democratic society. The culture wars are energized by exploiting the anger, fears, and irrational beliefs of members of the larger community. The Lavender Convention plans to end these culture war through unconventional means. The Convention’s laser focus on stigma will challenge the culture war narratives that amplify irrational story lines. Through TLC’s use of its engagement platform, focus groups, academic partnerships, and social media, TLC will bring about change. The Lavender Convention’s vision of a demographic narrative as opposed to a moral narrative will result in increasing integration of the LGBTQ+ demographic into American society. This vision reflects a society that is committed to equity, acceptance, and fairness for all who live in our community.

TLC acknowledges that much progress has been made in destigmatizing the demographic traits that have defined the LGBTQ+ Community. This progress is exemplified by a majority of Americans approving of same sex marriages. Over 50% of Republicans now support same sex marriage.

TLC knows that we are the beneficiaries of advocates who came before us. These LGBTQ+ advocates have confronted false beliefs and inaccurate narratives. These advocates have challenged legal barriers, religious bigotry, and exclusionary policies. Their work and advocacy continue to this day. They are the giants that still live among us. LGBTQ+ advocacy has made everyone’s life in the LGBTQ+ Community better with much of this progress occurring over the past few decades. The work of many LGBTQ+ organizations such as HRC, Lambda Legal, GLADD, PFLAG, and so many others, continue to enhance our lives and build a healthier community.

The Lavender Convention now seeks to enhance and support prior advocacy work by adding services that target stigma specifically. The Lavender Convention platform is designed, like vaccinations for Covid, to give ever increasing protection against stigma.

The Lavender Convention’s plan for stigma reduction is expressed in the acronym C-ICE. C-ICE represents the four interventions that will address LGBTQ+ stigma:

1. **Conversation:** Occurring between hearts. An engagement platform called the Lavender Convention will promote a meaningful conversation on LGBTQ+ stigma. These conventions/conversations are planned for local communities across the United States. These events will host local community leaders, LGBTQ+ Community members, straight allies, religious leaders, educators, and virtually anyone else interested in reducing LGBTQ+ stigma.
2. **Immersion:** TLC will use focus groups to take a deep dive into stigma. Focus group members will be recruited at each Convention and meet following these conventions. Focus groups will also set the stage for further research into the subject of stigma and best practices in reducing stigma.
3. **Community Building:** TLC will train local organizing committees across the United States. Trainees will learn to build a local convention receiving support throughout the life of their work. In doing their work, organizing committee members will learn how to frame a discussion of stigma. In addition, they will form a local network of people that will serve as a resource for the greater community.
4. **Education:** As The Lavender Convention matures, it will develop a robust mix of educational platforms. These platforms and work on public education/outreach will impact members of the larger community. This impact and its “Whole Community” approach will drive a sea level change in social attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ demographic.

As a responsible change agent, TLC owes its supporters a way to judge TLC’s effectiveness in confronting LGBTQ+ stigma. While LGBTQ+ individuals form a definable demographic, some LGBTQ+ people continue to conceal their orientation or identity, at least in some aspects of their lives. For example, it is difficult to concretely establish what percentage of the population is actually LGBTQ+ in terms of sexual orientation or sexual identity. How many people in the United States share a same sex attraction, attraction to both genders, or sexual identity that is different than their biological assignment at birth? The answer to the question is we do not know!

To find a solution to the “success measurement” problem, TLC is looking at three areas for evidence of change in LGBTQ+ acceptance in general society. The first is a change in the number of people who self-identify as LGBTQ+. If TLC and other organizations make progress in stigma reduction, we anticipate a rise in the number of people who self-identify as LGBTQ+. We already know that younger people more often than older people self-identify as LGBTQ+. Society should see this trend accelerate over the next ten years. A second data point would be a continued rise in approval of same sex marriage. The Lavender Convention, believes that there remains a sizable “movable middle” of persuadable people who currently disapprove of same sex marriage. Through C-ICE interventions, TLC will influence this “movable middle” to reconsider their position of opposition to the integration of LGBTQ+ people into general society. Lastly, through the work of TLC and others, the LGBTQ+ culture wars will end!

How much movement in society’s attitudes must take place to end the wars? No one knows for sure. The Lavender Convention is clear that LGBTQ+ hatred will never disappear completely! We posit that if we reach a social approval for same sex marriage at the level of 90% the LGBTQ+ culture wars will disappear.