



## Welcome to the Table

I have been the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer of the Fire Department of New York City for a little over two months. During this time, I've realized that FDNY has already begun the process of creating and sustaining a workplace that celebrates New York City's kaleidoscope of differences. One of my goals is to assist the Fire Department in realizing and reinforcing conduct that supports its view that we are one family with a unified vision, mission and goals – regardless of those with different life experiences, cultural connections, political allegiances, sexual/gender expressions, or racial/ethnic/religious backgrounds. As a Fire Chief explained, we are without color or gender or race because we are one.

Over the last few months, I've not only spoken about diversity and inclusion with the representatives of about a dozen affinity groups and others with voices that wish to be heard, but I have also met with most of the leadership of the Department – including the leadership of the Divisions, Battalions and Special Operations – over 100 Chiefs in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island. During all of our discussions, a common theme emerged: we already have the tools to support an inclusive workplace, we just need to focus our energy in utilizing these tools better.

One important tool of "inclusion" is the firehouse table. Firehouse tables are places where not only meals are shared but where bonds are either strengthened or broken. Some would say that "diversity" is being invited to the table. "Inclusion," then, is being able to partake of the meal and be fully satisfied with your portion.

We are "fully satisfied" when we are appreciated for the unique contributions that we as individuals make – regardless of our roles. We are fully satisfied when our voices are heard as part of the continuous dialogue that represents our service, accomplishments, bravery, honor, and courage. We are fully satisfied when we are equal partners of the excellence for which the FDNY stands – in united commitment to reflect the best practices in not only responding to emergencies but to everything that we do.

Diversity whets our appetites but inclusion blesses each morsel that we bring to the table, giving us the ability to create a more dynamic workforce by what we contribute together, as opposed to what we offer as individuals. Our vision, mission and goals (see FDNY Vision, Mission and Goals for Diversity and Inclusion to the right) invites everyone to partake of a satisfying meal that expands beyond the limitations of the past, inspires the present with new purpose and fulfills the future with greater opportunity for all.

**Welcome to the table.** Everyone is invited. The only requirement is that you cook a meal that will not just be enjoyed by the few but savored by the many. My door is always open to collaborate with love, respect, honor, and humility so that FDNY can show the world that – as one Chief said – "there is no problem that we cannot solve." In other words, we all look forward to establishing that we are not only the "gold standard" when it comes to preventing and responding to fires and other emergencies but also when it comes to diversity and inclusion.

**Cecilia B. Loving,**  
Deputy Commissioner  
and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer

## We Can All Take Pride in the Fullest Expression of Who We Are

The FDNY held its first LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) PRIDE Month celebration on June 13, 2016, at the New York City Fire Museum, honoring Lillian Bonsignore, Deputy Chief of EMS Training; Tanya Koifman, a clinical social worker at Harvey Milk High School; and the inclusive ministry of Marble Collegiate Church. Commissioner Dan Nigro opened the celebration by expressing the FDNY's grief over the senseless violence that occurred against members of the LGBTQ community in Orlando, Florida. Commissioner Nigro said "[w]e mourn those killed, and our hearts and prayers go out to their families... We have witnessed this kind of hate before, including when our city was attacked 15 years ago... And while the goal of the haters is to stop us from celebrating who we are... [FDNY] respect[s] the rights of all people to be who they are – and... celebrate[s] all that that means,

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## Vision, Mission and Goals for Diversity and Inclusion

### Vision

The excellence of the New York City Fire Department is enhanced by the ability to recruit, hire, retain, and promote highly skilled, talented and motivated members from diverse backgrounds. FDNY prides itself in attracting candidates of diverse gender, age, culture, race, religious preference, economic, sexual orientation, as the expression of unique ideas provide for better productivity, efficiency and service to a diverse and multi-faceted community.

### Mission

FDNY's mission is to maintain its high standard of excellence by accomplishing our recruitment, retention and inclusion goals.

### Goals

FDNY's goals are to uphold all federal, state and local laws, and the FDNY rules and regulations regarding employment; to attract and retain qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds who are committed to the continued excellence of FDNY; to achieve and accept a diverse work force in terms of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, race, religious preference, sexual orientation, and the expression of unique philosophies and ideas; to provide all employees the opportunity for development and growth at every rank in FDNY; and to expect that all employees will treat each other with dignity and respect regardless of perceived differences.

## Chief of EMS Training Honored at FDNY's First Ever Pride Celebration



**Full of Pride!** On June 13, 2016, Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro and Chief of Department James E. Leonard honored Deputy Assistant Chief Lillian Bonsignore, Chief of EMS Training at Pride Event.

### We Can All Take Pride *(continued)*

including diversity in race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.”

In the book *Coming Out Spiritually: the next step*, Christian de la Huerta, the founder of Q-Spirit uplifts the power of the LGBTQ community in supporting diversity and inclusion. He says that the LGBTQ community “holds up a mirror so that in its reflection society can better see itself.” De la Huerta teaches that when we “exist at the margins of society” as outsiders, we are able to clarify our perceptions and deepen our ability to understand and emphasize with others, which is the heart of being inclusive. LGBTQ PRIDE Month is an opportunity for us all to do what De la Huerta says, to “search deeper than ever before, and reach higher than we ever have before, to discover who we really are, what we are here for on this planet, and what contributions we are here to make.”

Chief Bonsignore, who said sometimes she forgets that she is gay due to the inclusive nature of her experience at FDNY, is one of the Department's highest-ranking women.

She was quoted as saying that in her 25 years at FDNY, she has “never felt that my orientation [as a lesbian] has ever been an obstacle... It just mattered that I did a good job. I think we are moving forward as a department. They are more open to celebrating our differences, and this has been happening over the past couple of years.”

Brooke Guinan, an eight-year veteran, who came out as a transgender woman about two years into her FDNY career, organized the successful FDNY PRIDE Celebration. Brooke is the LGBTQ outreach coordinator for the FDNY, as well as the LGBTQ consultant for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. FDNY is grateful for Brooke's support and for her humble spirit in helping to teach the Department how to take pride in the fullest expression of every aspect of who we are, as well as how to be better as agents of change for the support of all humanity.

Please join the FDNY for the PRIDE Parade on Sunday, June 26, 2016. For further details, please contact Sol Rivera at 718-999-0327.

### Additional Resources

Please access our web-based materials on the FDNY's Intranet.

We welcome your opinions and thoughts on what you would like to see in our newsletter.

Please send us any articles, upcoming events and accomplishments that you would like for us to place in our newsletter.

We would do our very best to try to accommodate you. Our e-mail address is: [Diversity.Inclusion@fdny.nyc.gov](mailto:Diversity.Inclusion@fdny.nyc.gov)

### The New EEO Office:

## More Proactive and Transparent

The Equal Employment Opportunity (“EEO”) Office is an equal partner with both the employment staff and management to provide education, guidance, and counsel on how Department employees are to respect each other's differences in the workplace. In the coming months, various changes to the EEO Office will be instituted: new policies, procedures and informational pamphlets will be distributed; panels will be organized to increase understanding of the law and to promote best practices; transparency about the process of investigating cases will be provided; the investigation, disposition and determination of all matters will be more efficient; and eventually, an EEO Counselor Program will be launched in the field, creating another avenue and resource to provide confidential insight and guidance about the EEO process.

The EEO Office is in the process of meeting with management and employees at all levels so that sound decisions can be made regarding all employee interactions within the workplace. All employees are welcome to contact the EEO Office – not only if there is a dispute, but also if there is a question or a need for clarification. Guidance by the EEO Office is important when it comes to educating ourselves to be as diverse and inclusive as possible. Not only must we strive to comport ourselves in full compliance with the law, we ask that you be proactive in using the EEO Office's resources for its advice, guidance and counsel. Oftentimes, earlier EEO guidance allows the FDNY and its employees to intervene in interpersonal disputes before they grow into EEO violations and complaints.

Many discrimination and harassment claims start as personality disputes which can and should be resolved by improved communication, respect, and understanding our differences.

The EEO Office helps us resolve disputes in-house by listening to both sides, gathering the facts and by taking decisive action through counsel, teaching or – if necessary – referring the matter for discipline. Even when there is no finding of discrimination, harassment or retaliation under the law, the EEO Office may still provide guidance so that everyone understands what conduct is appropriate or protected under the law.

For some employees at FDNY, it has become acceptable to tell their colleagues that they will be “EEO'd,” but the purpose of the EEO Office is not to use policies that protect against harassment as a form of harassment itself. While EEO is a vital tool that is deeply embedded in our country's system of justice on the federal, state, and local level, it is not meant to be abused nor used to shield misconduct from legitimate, non-discriminatory discipline, nor is it merely an investigatory body intended to place employees in trouble.

Because of the 24/7 schedule that first responders must work, the EEO Office is available 24/7 through its hotline (see contact information below). Part of the EEO Office's 24/7 diligence is devoted to EEO training on a daily basis and random compliance inspections.

The EEO Office is expanding its staff, training and resources to assist with the important vision, mission and goals of diversity and inclusion – not as part of the problem but as part of a more proactive and transparent solution.

**EEO Hotline Contacts**  
Assistant Commissioner  
Don Nguyen, EEO Officer

- (718) 999-1446
- (718) 999-1447
- (718) 999-1448

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