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Tanya Domi:

Hello, this is Tanya Domi. Welcome to The Thought Project, recorded at the CUNY Graduate Center. In this space, we talk with faculty and doctoral students about the big thinking and big ideas generating groundbreaking research, assisting New Yorkers and informing the world.

Tanya Domi:

During Pride Month, and over the course of the next few weeks, The Thought Project will host conversations on CUNY activities, research and engagement on LGBTQ issues. Thank you for listening to The Thought Project, and Happy Pride.

Tanya Domi:

Dr. Jacqueline Brashears has been involved in transgender advocacy since 2014, and has worked with youth organizations since 2012. She is the current Director of LGBTQ Programming for the LaGuardia Archives, and is also the director of the CUNY LGBTQIA+ Consortium, an associate professor at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY. She has a PhD in evolutionary physiology.

Tanya Domi:

Her research interests focus on evolutionary biology, education, and LGBTQ advocacy. She previously served as the Director of Graduate Partners in Science Education at Arizona State University, mentoring junior high school students.

Tanya Domi:

JC Carlson is the Associate Director of the CUNY LGBTQIA Consortium as well as the student life events manager for LGBTQ programs and coordinator at Queens College. In 2018, JC founded and organized CUNY Pride Fest, now in its fifth year.

Tanya Domi:

CUNY Pride Fest is CUNY's largest celebration of LGBTQ Pride. In 2019, JC created the queer collection at the Benjamin S Rosenthal Library at Queens College, a collection currently featuring 221 LGBTQ titles and growing. In addition, JC represents Queens College on the CUNY LGBTQIA+ director's council and advises the Queens College Gender Love and Sexuality Alliance, a student club at Queens College serving LGBTQ students. The CUNY LGBTQIA+ Consortium began as the Queens LGBTQIA+ Consortium in 2017, as a means to bring campuses together to preserve LGBTQ history. Its mission quickly expanded to include a focus on not only making history through programming, exhibits, events and training for CUNY students, but also includes faculty, staff and the New York public.

Tanya Domi:

In the fall of 2021, the Consortium expanded to include 14 CUNY campuses across all five boroughs of New York City. And next year, the Consortium hopes to continue this expansion.

Tanya Domi:

While preserving LGBTQ history remains a core component of the Consortium's mission, it also supports activities that raise awareness, training workshops such as safer space, safe zone, training, bias, and hate crimes prevention, to strengthen the CUNY LGBTQ community.

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Tanya Domi:

Welcome to The Thought Project, Dr. Jacqueline Brashears and JC Carlson.

JC Carlson:

Thank you for having us.

Jacqueline Brashears:

Thank you for having us. It's great to be here.

Tanya Domi:

It's great to have both of you to kickoff Pride month at The Thought Project. So both of you have been actively engaged. Jacqueline Brashears is the director of the CUNY, LGBTQI Consortium. And JC Carlson is currently the associate director of the Consortium. Tell me Jacqueline, to start with you. What is the purpose and mission of the CUNY Consortium?

Jacqueline Brashears:

Yeah, thank you again for having us, Tanya. So this started with a core mission in 2017 of preserving LGBTQ+ New York City history. And so at the core of the mission is a historical preservation of the record of LGBTQ+ lives in New York City. It's expanded to making history. And so it now supports exhibits, LGBTQ safe zone trainings, it supports programming around queer culture and queer lives. And so it's expanded beyond its initial mission of preserving LGBTQ history now to all sorts of trainings and basically supporting LGBTQ+ lives and education within the CUNY system.

Tanya Domi:

And JC Carlson. You've been in this genre for a very long time. Talk about how you've seen the Consortium expand and what have been your objectives and activities associated with that.

JC Carlson:

Great, thank you, Tanya. Yes, I've been on board since 2017 coming into the Consortium as a campus liaison representing Queens College. So I was the recipient of a portion of a grant award to create the programming on my campus, which was a really exciting time for us at Queens College. But it did allow me to become more involved with the other CUNY schools in the borough of Queens who also benefited from the grant award and the leadership at LaGuardia Community College. So the first few years were really getting my feet under me and developing these programs I always wanted to develop, listening to what the students needed, trying to keep my finger on the pulse. And then the role grew into working more closely with the other Queens-based schools to help them along, give them a little guidance, a little support, invite them into my space, get into their spaces.

JC Carlson:

And it was really an exciting time. And then to fast forward, this past year, we were fortunate enough to be able to expand the Consortium beyond the borough of Queens and recruit schools from the other boroughs. And currently we have 14 schools representing all five boroughs of New York City in what is now known as the CUNY LGBTQI+ Consortium, which was formerly, prior to this year, the CUNY Queens LGBTQI+ Consortium. So basically what we've done is we've recruited the schools through an application process and then we've awarded funds to carry out the LGBTQI+ programs and initiatives that they've

proposed. We advise the schools, we provide the necessary support for them to succeed. And we also coordinate CUNY-wide, and often citywide, promotions of their work. It's been an amazing journey to see the handful of programs, panel discussions, Pride celebrations, spaces in which students can express themselves on my campus and watch those programs grow and expand not only throughout the borough of Queens, but now throughout the five boroughs of New York City.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. And this has only been done in the past five years and two of those years were during the pandemic, so kudos to both of you. Let me just also hear about the fact that Jacqueline, I'd like you to address this. And I know both of you work together on this, but you actually go to City Council to solicit funding. Tell us a little bit about that process and what kind of support have you had?

Jacqueline Brashears:

Well, the Consortium really started with the support from former council member, Danny Dromm, as well as former speaker Corey Johnson. Those were key supporters of the early initiative who recognized that not only should there be funding that supports a LGBTQ program, but there should be a strong support for LGBTQ+ history and particularly in the outer boroughs.

Jacqueline Brashears:

So a lot of the efforts are typically focused on Manhattan and inclusion of other boroughs who have been vital to the LGBTQ+ movement was really what they wanted to focus on and why we gained their support. With the new group of city council members in the LGBTQ+ caucus, the last year has been really letting them know who we are and just meeting with them so that they understand what it's about and understand why it's important to the city and to CUNY. And so far, they've all been enormously supportive and really it's as simple as gathering the connections and then submitting the application. And of course, it's always a guessing game what's going to happen before the final budget, but so far everybody's been a strong supporter of the program.

Tanya Domi:

Thank you. And JC you've been really instrumental, you talked about your original grant, tell our audience how you went about getting that original grant and what kind of support have you had within Queens College itself?

JC Carlson:

Well, the support of Queens College has been amazing. That first year, LaGuardia Community College contacted Queens College then president Félix Matos Rodríguez, who's now our CUNY chancellor. And then president Matos Rodríguez was right on board with his team. And then they brought me into the fold and said, "Hey, we have an opportunity here. Let's see what we can do."

JC Carlson:

And it was a little scary first because some of the programs I had been doing and trying to scrape together the funding to do it, but I wound up with lots of support from the team at Queens College and from LaGuardia. And I began offering panel discussions and programs where we would unpack difficult topics and explore solutions. Many of those solutions were actually little think tanks with students involved. And then making sure that we were also including workshops and identity to make sure that

students could see themselves represented in the programs that we were doing and that others can learn more about the diversity in the LGBTQI+ community trainings had to happen, whether they were safe zone trainings, safer sex trainings, anti-bias and hate crimes prevention trainings.

JC Carlson:

And then we had remembrances. I mean our communities always is at risk and started with stepping up our World AIDS Day programming, our Transgender Day of Remembrance programming. And whenever tragedy would strike, we would have to have those conversations so that then we can identify, highlight the pain, and then heal. Those safe spaces, they grew. And just to fast forward to 2020, March 2020, we had a lot of physical safe spaces, the club room, my office, others that I had safe trained, but now what happens, everybody has to leave and go home during COVID. So March 2020 started the first virtual online safe space called Queer Connect, which is still in existence today. And then creating those support spaces were critical. And then making sure that we were providing the online programming and now we've learned and we've grown and we've thrived in spite of COVID, we're not only continuing to do online programming, but now we're doing some hybrid programming as well.

JC Carlson:

We're building up resources. In 2019, I took some of this funding and I started at the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library at Queens College, what's called the queer collection, which now houses 221 LGBTQI+ titles. I partnered with our women and gender studies program here, the manager of our LGBT minor, of course, the student club that I advise on campus, and others to make sure that we included the titles that they wanted to use in the classroom or just have at their disposal. So these are just some of the ways, and I'm sure I'm forgetting many of them. And then we can't forget celebrations of Pride, those are huge. And what started out is an idea in 2018, which is the annual CUNY Pride Fest hosted by Queens College has now become an annual tradition. So in all of this is thanks to the support of the New York City council, LaGuardia Community College, and where we've come in terms of building out this Consortium

Jacqueline Bashears:

In case you haven't realized that JC's amazing.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. I can tell that. Wow, that's a lot of work. A lot of programming. Got to have a lot of energy to do that. Jacqueline, tell us about your role at LaGuardia and your responsibilities also to the LaGuardia & Wagner Archives and the queer archive that is hosted there. I'd like to hear more about that for this conversation.

Jacqueline Brashears:

Yeah. The LGBTQI+ collection at the LaGuardia & Wagner Archives is fantastic. It's really built originally around two collections, the Danny Dromm collection, Danny Dromm was a school teacher until coming out in 1992 and then founded the Queens Pride Parade in 1993. And it's also built around the Thomas Dwayne Collection. Thomas Dwayne was the first openly gay state Senator. And so we have all of their papers and artifacts.

Jacqueline Bashears:

The LaGuardia & Wagner archives itself is giant. It's something like 100,000 digitalized photos. And over two and a half million digitalized artifacts. It was started in 1992 to preserve the history of Queens, as well as the history of greater New York City, particularly marginalized groups and the mayor's office. So a lot of the collection focused around collections from mayors LaGuardia, Mayor Wagner, Mayor Koch, and also it's the official repository for the city council documents.

Jacqueline Brashears:

And we have city council documents going back to the '50s. But in terms of the LGBTQ+ collection, there's a lot done with it. So as the director, my job is really to coordinate and collaborate. And for example, historian Stephen Petrus at the LaGuardia & Wagner Archives has been working on fantastic exhibits that I help develop and we work on. One of those is Generation Z. It's a focus on LGBTQ+, basically queer LaGuardia students. And all of these, it's not just the historian Stephen Petrus and myself, it's other faculty members, and always students are a part of this process. So for example, the Generation Z exhibit, which is now featured at the Leslie-Lohman Museum, you can find it online there. The photography is done by students, were part of the interview process, interviewed other students. And in the last year we've been doing a project called The Seat at the Table, which will be featured during Pride month at the New York Historical Society.

Jacqueline Brashears:

And that is a set of oral histories of LGBTQ+ city council members and New York state senators going back to the 90s, I think it's 28 elected officials. I think it's every openly LGBTQ+ elected official in those two bodies since the '90s, but really I do a lot of collaboration. So I work with Nathan Tosh, who is director of the Safe Zone Hub. I work with Deema Bayrakdar, who's the director of The Women's Center, to develop programming. I work with Chelsea Del Rio, who is head of The Lavender LaGuardia, and I'm a founding member of that body. It's an openly LGBTQ+ faculty and staff group, so that students know who the openly LGBTQ+ faculty and staff are, so they can reach out. We work with faculty members and students to design Pride t-shirts for Queens Pride for the contingent every year. So most of my work is collaborative and trying to find the resources and the funding to support good efforts on campus.

Tanya Domi:

That's amazing. So Queens Pride, one of the big Pride celebrations in New York City has always been Queens Pride. And it seems to be that it's instrumental, perhaps for both of you, it's significant for both of you that brought together, it may have something to do with the Consortium itself. JC, can you address Queens Pride and how that has infiltrated, so to speak, Queens College, how it affected the community, what does it have to do with the Consortium itself?

JC Carlson:

Yeah. It's all about partnerships and relationships and boy have we created many along the way. And that first year, 2017 and 2018, was just a relationship building time in our history as a Consortium. And it just made perfect sense to get out in the street together and share some moments of Pride together with each other as the five Queens-based community schools, but also walk in tandem with the New York City council and others in the community and letting them know who we are and that CUNY's a great place for queer folks to learn, work, teach, and grow. So it was a no brainer at that point to really take it to the streets. And we did. Especially, really learning more about Danny Dromm and his connection to the parade as a co-founder, we just really wanted to spend that time with him.

JC Carlson:

And it's grown. 2018, we were a huge contingent of all five Queens-based CUNY schools and our student dancers, Pride dancers, they won in 2018, the coveted Rainbow Award. They had these beautifully choreographed dancers and dance routines that were led by faculty member and choreographer at LaGuardia Community College, Jermaine Rowe, who continues to put together that piece of our Queens Pride contingent. Fast forward to this year, we are now not only registered to March again as a contingent in Queens Pride in Jackson Heights in June, but also Brooklyn Pride and in New York City Pride in Manhattan. So we're out there. We're a full CUNY, a Consortium, and we need to really be at all five boroughs showing people that CUNY is the place if you're queer, to come and learn.

Tanya Domi:

Thank you. Allie, tell us about Queens Pride and how that intersects with LaGuardia and the work that you've done.

Jacqueline Brashears:

Yeah, well, I think that there is a strong connection because two reasons, really. The first one is Danny Dromm is the centerpiece and Danny Dromm's work around LGBTQ+ activism has been instrumental. So Queens Pride is I think the largest Pride parade in the boroughs and the second oldest. And it was begun as a response to several things, but one was the gigantic pushback against the Rainbow Curriculum that was being instituted in schools. It was a very small piece of curriculum that just recognized that there are different types of families. And there was a huge public outcry against this.

Jacqueline Brashears:

And then you have the 1990 murder of Julio Rivera in Jackson Heights. And the early '90s had so much antagonism against LGBTQ+ that Danny Dromm started the Queens Pride parade with Maritza Martinez in 1993. And that sort of activism is not only central to, it's vital to recognize that Queens and other boroughs have played such vital roles in LGBTQ+ activism. It hasn't just been Manhattan, although Manhattan certainly should be celebrated for the roles that it's taken.

Jacqueline Brashears:

But also that the LaGuardia & Wagner Archives is dedicated to documenting this history and to preserving the history of these records and other boroughs that are often overlooked with a Manhattan-based focus. And so I think that confluence makes Queens Pride a really integral part for the Consortium, as well as the other Pride parades. But I think Queens Pride is really a centerpiece.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah, that's what it really looked like as I was learning from both of you. What's also a point I wanted to ask each of you to address, is that in your roles as the director, Allie, and the associate director, JC, what's so interesting to me about the Consortium that's I think is also unique to CUNY, is that not only do you work across all the boroughs now, but you're working with faculty, staff, and students and both of you, in your case, Allie, you're a faculty member and a staff member. And in JC's case, he's a staff member, but that's an exception that creates an intersection that I think seems to be really dynamic. Can you talk about that, JC?

JC Carlson:

Thank you, Tanya, for asking that and what ordinarily happens, on my campus anyway, is that you have your student affairs side of the house and you have your academic affairs side of the house. And not very often do those two groups come together. The Consortium has created this environment where we have a little bit of funding. We have great ideas on the student affairs side of the house. And well, in my case at Queens College, and I said, you know what, let me reach out to my women and gender studies program at Queens College. And let's talk a little bit with Dr. JV Fuqua, dear friend of mine, who is the director of the women and gender studies program, and also leads the LGBT minor on our campus and see how we can come together and partner and bring some of these conversations that we're having in the corridors, into the classroom and in the classroom into programming space. Once that was established, then it was easy enough to go and bring in a film filmmaker to screen an LGBTQI+ themed film, and then bring European languages and literature in and have an author come in to speak on a panel and include the English department, attach a writing assignment to it.

JC Carlson:

And then there were so many ways in which we got creative and we started to really reach across and develop these partnerships. And it's been wonderful in my experience, because I'm here almost 18 years at Queens College. There are students that never go to a student life event. Or they never show up for an extracurricular activity, but a faculty member can encourage them to do so because they'll be present or they'll be sitting on the panel or their logo is on the flyer or maybe they offer an extra credit assignment. That has made such a big difference. And we've seen students interacting with one another that hadn't traditionally interacted with one another before. And again, that's a byproduct of the good work that we're doing at the Consortium and trying to figure out new ways in which to partner with one another and make the most use out of the funds that are awarded.

Tanya Domi:

Great. Allie, what's going on at LaGuardia in that way of faculty, staff, and students coming together around the issues of our lives?

Jacqueline Brashears:

Yeah, we do it a lot. It's built into our practice. And so the LaGuardia & Wagner Archives has a ton of fantastic staff with whom we work. And so that's under director Richard Lieberman, who's a faculty member, but also staff. And deputy director Soraya Ciego-Lemur who's staff. And this idea of collaboration has been built into the archives, and I think has spread out. Every year we recruit faculties, for example professors Leanna [inaudible 00:25:29] and professor [inaudible 00:25:31]. And they are designers and artists who work with students and they work with faculty and staff to produce designs for flyers, designs for Queens Pride shirts. And it's amazing the buy-in you get when you start to bring those two groups together. And I think there's constraints because faculty and staff are sometimes looking at things in two different ways. And the way they operate, the constraints they have are different. And so bringing them together takes a little bit of work, but when you do, you can get some real magic going.

JC Carlson:

Allie's being modest, but Allie also has had so many wonderful ideas on how to create these interdisciplinary partnerships as well.

Tanya Domi:

That's very important. And speaking of faculty and activities for this upcoming Pride month, I'd love for both of you to talk about, because I was able to meet both of you at least on the internet so far, Zoom, virtually because of what's happening at the Graduate Center with those Center for Gay and Lesbian Studies. JC, could you start by talking about what's planned here with respect to the Consortium and partnership with the Graduate Center?

JC Carlson:

Yes. And I'm going to give you a broad stroke because Allie has really been the one to develop those partnerships there. We have been working very closely with the team at the Graduate Center since they've come aboard and become part of the Consortium and they're doing fantastic work at the Grad Center. We will be holding a retreat for the Consortium members at the Grad Center in June, which will be a great opportunity for us to really get together in the physical space, share what we've been working on, celebrate our successes and hopefully develop some additional partnerships among all of the leadership at the different schools within the Consortium. And yeah, so that's what's in front of me right now, but Allie can probably speak more on the relationship.

Tanya Domi:

Allie, please.

Jacqueline Brashears:

It's been amazing working with the Graduate Center. One of the key programs that we're sponsoring is a programming series under Dr. Annie Valk, who is Director of the American Social History Project. And she's doing a fantastic job. I think there were several well-attended workshops just recently Dr. Stacie Brensilver Berman, when she talked about her book and they also did a teaching workshop. And then I know author Jonathan Ned Katz and his book on the, I think it's the-

Tanya Domi:

The history-

Jacqueline Brashears:

I know it's on Eve Adams, but I think the title's like the Dangerous Times or Eve Adams. Fantastic. We're working with CLAGS on an oral history project. So they're interviewing CLAGS members and I think former board members. And we're working on digitalizing the archival collections and turning it into an online exhibit. And that's really being headed up by Elvis Bakaitis.

Tanya Domi:

Who's a staff librarian.

Jacqueline Brashears:

Staff librarian, exactly.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. At the Graduate Center. Yes.

Jacqueline Brashears:

And so there's a lot going on. I think they're working on a Making Queer History Public podcast series that they're putting together. I don't think it's up and running, but it's hopefully going to be moving soon or at least being set up for next year. So there's a lot of fantastic work. And we just had a meeting with several other faculty members over at the Graduate Center, I think three weeks ago. And they were just brimming over with ideas for what's coming up and what we can do next year. So I think the proposal is already written for next year for the Graduate Center.

Tanya Domi:

Oh, that's fantastic. What other activities that you all know of, I mean, the month of June is after most of all the colleges have had graduation ceremonies and of course we go into summer school, but what kinds of activities does the Consortium know that's happening this coming month? Allie, could you start?

Jacqueline Brashears:

Yeah. So there's a lot of different workshop series. I made some notes about what's been going on around at the different campuses and I just thought I'd share that so we give you an idea of what we're doing.

Tanya Domi:

That's fantastic, yes.

Jacqueline Brashears:

For example, at Baruch College, under the Representative Gary Dillon, who's our person on the campus. Gary's amazing. He's been building a queer LGBTQ+ library collection. They've been doing workshops like on queer and trans people of color unite. Brooklyn College under Anthony Brown has been doing safe zone trainings in spring. Bronx Community College under Emalinda McSpadden, who is also a whirlwind of energy, has been doing film screenings. The most recent one was on Bayard Rustin, which was fantastic. City College, Jake [inaudible 00:30:36] and Jasmin Salcedo have been just going strongly. They actually just opened a new LGBTQIA+ Student Center and the funding supporting activities for the new student center. At College of Staten Island, Jeremiah Jurkiewicz did a transgender health video event that had 154 people attend, which is incredible, a vital issue right now. CUNY School of Law, L. Camille Massey, and Arpita Vora are doing their Sorenson fellows, which are training lawyers in social justice.

Jacqueline Brashears:

At Guttman Community College, Chris Roth and Yoel [inaudible 00:31:11] have been doing drag show events. Hunter College, [inaudible 00:31:16] Adam, who is fantastic, has been doing panels like Walking While Trans, panels that feature Senator Brad Hoylman has come down. John J Dominique Menendez has been doing workshops. I think one just happened, Panel of Color and Queer.

Jacqueline Brashears:

Lehman College, we have [inaudible 00:31:34], and Matt Caprioli who are doing a speaker series that I think is running into June. And at Queensboro, we have professor Jeff Hall, who's been doing workshops and book lectures. And there was one that was super interesting that I couldn't make. It was hosted by Dr. Danny Sexton and Dr. Jake Newsome about Jake's book, The Pink Triangle on coming out in the shadow of the Holocaust. So it's hard to put them all together. Those are just small examples. I just

picked out one out of five of each campus, but they're posting constantly on the CUNY calendar. So if you check the CUNY calendar with the LGBTQI+ tag those events will come up for June. In addition, there's almost every weekend, we're participating in a Pride event.

Tanya Domi:

That is fantastic. JC yes, please. Make an addition, please.

JC Carlson:

Well, I'd like to highlight something that recently happened only to show the strength of this Consortium when we all come together and pool our resources and our talents. On April 1st, we held, well, well we funded, the first inaugural LGBTQI+ Student Conference, which was held at John Jay College. And that was the brainchild of Jeremiah Jurkiewicz over at the College of Staten Island and my colleague here, Dr. David Rivera at Queens College, although it was proposed by College of Staten Island, and also Dr. Rivera as the Director of the CUNY LGBTQI+ Council, Consortium partners from nearly every Consortium school participated in some way, they either helped organize it, they volunteered to work for it, or like me, they presented at it. And those students were just amazing to work with. And we were looking to make this another annual CUNY tradition. So again that's the power of this Consortium. It moves beyond the individual schools and we can really work with one another from campus to campus and borough to borough, to do the most for our students.

Jacqueline Brashears:

I was going to say, I was crunching some numbers of the last three months, just for a quarterly report. And between January and March, the end of March, there were 27 programs across all the campuses, but those are 27 programs that include many workshops within each program. So that might be seven film screenings within one program. So we're actually talking about probably 100+ programs or workshops. I was looking at the number of people who attended these workshops was over 1400, just the last three months across all the campuses. So it's pretty impressive the work that they're doing, the campus members are really on fire.

Tanya Domi:

Really sounds like it. And both of you have been so instrumental to this, I'm sure you have discussions about your long-term planning about what you foresee or how you want to proceed into the next five years. That sort of thing, that's how we think at universities, try to think strategically. What are your thoughts on that, Allie? And I want to hear from JC about what are your strategic goals for the Consortium?

Jacqueline Brashears:

Yeah. So the long term goals, the first one is just to bring in a couple more campuses. We're at 14 campuses out of 25. And I mean, pie in the sky, we'd like to have all campuses join the Consortium. We're hoping to add at least four more. Next year, we already have Medgar Evers, hopefully ramping up. We have a fantastic person there, Christina Chala who wants to join. So the first goal is just expansion. The second one is become more streamlined and institutionalized. So help campuses do their program. So not just support the funding, but really help them enact them. And the third one is really streamline the archiving process and help campuses either develop an LGBTQ+ archive of their own, or streamline the process by which they can submit those materials to the collection at the LaGuardia &

Wagner Archives. So that we're really preserving across New York history what's going on with the LGBTQ+ lives.

Tanya Domi:

JC.

JC Carlson:

Yeah. Allie pretty much covered the major points. And I just would like to say again, a goal that has been and will continue to be is building those partnerships throughout the university system and beyond. They're so vital and critical. I think we're perfectly positioned to do all the things that we outlined.

Tanya Domi:

I just want to say it's inspirational to hear about all the work that the two of you are doing in your leadership roles in the Consortium. And what's actually possible at the City University of New York. I'm sitting in Manhattan at this moment and we look out across America at this time. And we're seeing really systematic attacks on trans youth. There's over 20 states that have passed laws that are attacking trans youth. And now these Don't Say Gay bills, which was signed into law in Florida. And not to bring a negative aspect to this conversation, because there's nothing negative about what CUNY's doing, through both of your leadership roles here.

Tanya Domi:

But what's your reaction to this? New York is affected by what's going on in the country. We are on an island for sure, but we're still affected by the broader messages of intolerance. We go to work on subways, we're on buses, we're walking in our neighborhoods and people are vulnerable. Even if we do live in this wonderful, incredible city. So in your roles as leaders, can you talk about watching, witnessing these actions by people who really want to cause harm and how does that inform your work or your thinking about what you do every day? Allie?

Jacqueline Brashears:

Sure. So I'm not a New Yorker. I grew up in rural Southwest. So New Mexico and Arizona and Colorado, and also taught upstate New York for a while. And so to me, this feels, we all lived through the '90s. So this isn't terribly new to me. This feels very much like the way that I grew up. And I think that New York has always served as a beacon of what is possible for LGBTQ+. And my goal for the Consortium is that we strengthen that light. And we strengthen that beacon. And the way that New Yorkers change their policies, the way that New Yorkers exemplify LGBTQ+ acceptance, is something that resonates throughout the country. And that I think people see throughout the country. And so we are a part of that national conversation because we show what can be done. And I think the Consortium should be a leader in making sure that every borough has access to that sort of light.

Tanya Domi:

Thank you. JC.

JC Carlson:

Yes, I am a New Yorker and I want to piggyback off of what Allie just said. Yeah, New York really inspires hope throughout the nation. Just like I believe CUNY inspires so much hope in our students who are

directly impacted by what's going on in the world. And we do raise awareness. We raise lots of awareness with the programming that we fund and that we each individually organize because we're creating a form to discuss these issues. And we're also creating the spaces for students to heal. So it could be a range of things. It could be those panel discussions when something terrible happens or a policy changes or it could be just making sure that we're always providing the training like we've done on my campus, and I believe that Baruch also did it this year, we did an anti-biased and hate crimes prevention workshop. We each did one in response to what's been going on and we just really need to make sure that we're listening. We're listening to what's going on in the world and we're listening to how our students are responding and reacting to it. And that we're providing the programming based on the needs of the students that we serve.

Tanya Domi:

Thank you. Any final thoughts, Allie?

Jacqueline Brashears:

My only final thoughts are that our Consortium members have been doing amazing work and I am incredibly proud of the work they're doing. And I am incredibly proud that I have been able to support that work in a small way. And so I really just want to give a shout out to everybody that's working in the Consortium. They've been fantastic.

Tanya Domi:

JC.

JC Carlson:

Yeah. When we started this journey in 2017, then council member Danny Dromm said we're saving lives, we're really saving lives. And that is exactly what we're doing by creating these partnerships and creating opportunities to promote LGBTQI+ programs and initiatives throughout the university system and then preserving our own history, the history that we're making as a result of these Consortium efforts.

Tanya Domi:

I want to thank both of you for being on The Thought Project today. And I wish both of you a Happy Pride.

Jacqueline Brashears:

Thank you very much. Thanks for having us.

JC Carlson:

Thank you. Happy Pride month.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. And a Happy Pride Month. Yeah. I look forward to meeting both of you in person.

JC Carlson:

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Come to PrideFest.

Tanya Domi:

Thanks for tuning into The Thought Project and thanks to our guests, Dr. Jacqueline Brashears of LaGuardia Community College and JC Carlson of Queens College, CUNY.

Tanya Domi:

The Thought Project is brought to you with production engineering and technical assistance by audio engineer Kevin Wolf and CUNY TV. I'm Tanya Domi. Tune in next week.