

NEWS

US Embassy raises rainbow flag with Pride

JANELLE DE SOUZA 11 HRS AGO





A rainbow flag flies alongside the US national flag outside the US Embassy in Port of Spain on Saturday. The rainbow flag was raised to celebrate Pride month and the LGBTQI+ movement. - PHOTO BY SUREASH CHOLAI

With the encouragement of the Biden-Harris administration, on Saturday the United States Embassy raised a rainbow pride flag on its building in Port of Spain to mark the start of TT's Pride Month.

According to a press release, the flag also marks the celebration of June as Pride Month in the US, as well as the anniversary of the 2015 Obergefell vs Hodges Supreme Court decision which ruled that the fundamental right to marry was guaranteed to same-sex couples.

Chargé d'affaires Shante Moore said, "In June, Americans celebrate LGBTQI+ Pride Month by showcasing outstanding examples of diverse, inclusive communities. Today is an historic day. This is the first time we are flying the Pride flag over the US Embassy in Port of Spain. We chose this date, June 26, as it coincides both with a significant Supreme Court landmark decision in civil rights, and is official Flag-Raising Day to mark the first weekend of Trinidad and Tobago's Pride Month, which runs through July 25.

"Pride movements across the globe have made tremendous progress over the past 30 years. We confirm the benefits of recognising individuals' LGBTQI+ status as an inherent aspect of one's identity. Diversity is strength, and the US

diverse communities everywhere.”

PrideTT’s director Josh Ryan expressed the organisation’s excitement about the Pride flag-raising at the US Embassy. He said the US continued to show solidarity with the local community by partnering with TT on foreign policy and advancing human rights, as well as with PrideTT’s LGBT+ Film Festival this year.

He noted that the theme for the 2021 festival is “powHER.”

community and sustain the movement. This also highlights the intersectional experience of cis-gender women, lesbians, trans-women, non-binary folks and all those who either do not meet the patriarchal definition of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’ For too long in our country toxic masculinity has resulted in gender-based violence, homophobia and hate crimes of staggering proportions which, ironically, exists even within the LGBTQI+ community.”

He said just as the national community united in memory of Andrea Bharatt, Ashanti Riley, and other women lost over the years, the LGBTQI+ community has hosted its annual Pride Memorial for over 30 years. The memorial continues to mark the victims of intolerance, abuse, violence, and hate who have been murdered or lost to suicide.

These include designer Marc Anthony Singh, transwoman activist Sasha Fierce, theatre director Raymond Choo Kong, and theatre producer Gregory Singh.

He added that PrideTT conducted a needs assessment within the local LGBT+ community and among other issues, the majority of respondents wanted to see representation by an open LGBT+ politician in the Parliament, protection against discrimination in the Equal Opportunity Act, and access to health services for mental health issues.

“Pride is a form of protest for the LGBT+ community. It represents an active decision to own our identities and be true to ourselves and our nature in the face of discrimination in many sectors of society. It is also a platform for visibility and making known to the national community that we exist, we're here, our issues matter, and we should be respected and protected.”

For the upcoming Pride season, all activities and events will be virtual. They include talk shops on a range of issues such as gender-based violence, legislative activism, and guidance for parents of LGBT people. There will also be virtual panels on health, youth issues, mental health, and women's issues; virtual interactive activities featuring yoga, a games night, and a poetry

New this year will be a panel discussion on fashion in the local LGBT+ community.

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