



***CHENNAI RAINBOW PRIDE MARCH IS ON JUNE 25, 2023 (Sunday)
begins at 3:30 pm from Rajarathinam Stadium***

***SUPPORT LGBTIQ+ INCLUSION IN ACCESS TO JUSTICE, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE,
EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS IN TAMIL NADU***

MEDIA RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sunday, June 25th 2023, marks the 15th year since Chennai Rainbow Pride began in 2008. It is time to renew our pledge to change social norms that deny us our rights because of who we are or whom we love. The oppression, rooted in binary genders, patriarchy and heterosexist norms that begin in our homes, continues in various institutions, including educational and healthcare settings, employment and public places. The Rainbow Pride march is a way of asserting our presence, dignity and self-respect, and seeking realisation of our rights to exist as full citizens.

Since 2009, Chennai's Rainbow Self-Respect Pride series has taken place in June, with the exception of 2020 and 2021 when offline Pride events were not held as the communities were grappling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and responding to the crisis by mobilising food rations and financial support to the most marginalised among us.

A lot has changed in India's landscape of LGBTIQ+ rights since 2009. The Supreme Court NALSA verdict (2014) asserted the rights of transgender persons to self-identification of gender identity; the Navtej Johar verdict (2018) decriminalized consensual sexual acts between same-gender and transgender adults in private, and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and Rules, 2020, enabled transgender individuals to legally identify their true gender as male, female or transgender and made provisions to safeguard their rights. At present the Supreme Court is to deliver its verdict on the subject of Marriage Equality.

In Tamil Nadu, we have the amendment of state police rules to cover harassment of LGBTIQ persons by police (following Honourable Justice Anand Venkatesh's orders in the Madras High Court), and interim verdicts that have resulted in the National Medical Commission declaring conversion therapy

by allopathic doctors to be professional misconduct; and asking for changes in the medical curriculum to provide accurate and current information on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

However, despite these progressive developments, LGBTIQ+ community members continue to face violence, discrimination and exclusion in various walks of life, starting from home, educational institutions, healthcare institutions, legal service providers and institutions, employment etc. The Pride walk is an occasion for rendering visibility to the community and asserting our rights to full citizenship.

We members of the LGBTIQ+ communities and allies in Tamil Nadu, call for the following changes to be implemented in the state:

1. Introduce and implement horizontal reservations in education and employment (private and public sector) for transgender women, transmasculine persons and intersex persons.
2. Alter the Tamil name of the Transgender Welfare Board to Thirunangai-Thirunambi Nala Vaariyam or Thirunar Nala Vaariyam; as the current name “Thirunangai” refers only to transfeminine persons, and does not include transmasculine persons (thirunambis).
3. We ask that the social welfare measures for transfeminine persons available from the state of Tamil Nadu be made available for trans men.
4. Engage members of all subgroups (lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, intersex, non-binary, trans men and trans women) in developing a state LGBTIQ+ policy that promotes inclusive measures and combats discrimination, violence and exclusion in families, educational institutions, workplaces, healthcare, sports and other domains.
5. Respond to the Union Government’s request to states to give their feedback on the Marriage Equality issue, by recognizing relationships among individuals of the same gender, as well as relationships involving transgender persons, via the Special Marriage Act, and ensure rights of parenting, adoption, surrogacy and inheritance are available to all.
6. Recognize that marriage rights will not end family violence, and take steps to ensure safety of LGBTIQ+ community members and couples facing harassment from natal family members.
7. Ensure that the transgender clinics in Tamil Nadu follow standardised client-centred protocols that respect the dignity and agency of trans persons, do not require physical examination as part of psychological determination of self-affirmed gender, do not ask adult trans men to obtain parental consent for gender-affirming therapy, and clearly explain the requirements of post-operative care. Experiences from transgender community members seeking care at GH in Chennai and Madurai have reported practices such as insistence on parental consent for adults, and insistence on exposing breasts and genitalia when these are clearly not needed for psychiatric or endocrinological assessment.

8. Further, we ask that the practice of Government hospitals mandating Tamil Nadu Transgender ID card for medical transition procedures be relaxed, as the process is tedious and imposes more stumbling blocks. They should also accept the Central Transgender ID card and the acknowledgement of application.
9. Train staff of educational institutions (teaching and non-teaching) on issues of LGBTIQ+ and gender-nonconforming children and youth, and use school Parent Teacher Association meetings to sensitize parents, as directed in the Sushma vs. Commissioner of Police orders. Such sensitization has not taken place but in reality, even though reports to the Madras High Court have stated 100,000 people have been sensitized through a virtual training.
10. Consider adopting the NCERT teachers' training curriculum developed in 2021 for sensitizing teachers across State, Matric, International, Montessori and Central boards.
11. Address mental health issues facing LGBTIQ+ persons, including suicidal attempts and suicides. The LGBTIQ+ inclusive mental health policy developed by the TN State Mental Health Authority has yet to be implemented.
12. We ask for sensitive media coverage of LGBTIQ+ issues, using the state-approved glossary; and further that hate speech on social media be stopped immediately.
13. We ask for support from the private sector in ensuring inclusive workplace policies and practices, and support LGBTIQ+ community initiatives through CSR activities.
14. We ask that restrooms, hostels and other facilities in public and private sector establishments include gender-neutral options in addition to male and female options. People should be free to use facilities that align best with their gender identities.
15. LGBTIQ+ inclusive content should be expanded to curricula in law, psychology, social work, nursing and other fields.
16. We ask that shelters such as the one-stop shelters run by the government be made inclusive of lesbian and bisexual women fleeing family violence, and the Garima Greh-s (transgender shelters) be made inclusive of all LGBTIQ+ persons.
17. We ask that the District Collectors across the state be made aware of the procedures for issuing identity cards as male, female or transgender as per Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 and of the non-requirement of surgery or physical examination to identify within the binary (under Section 7 of the Act) as per the final Rules of 2020.
18. We ask that the Government of Tamil Nadu adopt the same identity categories (male, female and transgender) in the state transgender ID cards as the national ID cards, and that all these categories be recognized by Gazette publication by the Department of Publications.

19. We ask the Department of Public Instruction allow current and former students to change their gender marker on their academic records as male, female or transgender as per the national ID and not insist on the state ID or proof of surgery.

20. We extend our solidarity to those fighting to end social injustice based on gender, sexuality, class, caste, disability, ethnicity, religion and other factors, across the country and globally.

Who we are:

The Tamil Nadu Rainbow Coalition is a network of formal and informal groups of LGBTIQ persons and allies that organizes Pride walk and related events annually. View the Frequently Asked Questions at <http://orinam.net/faq-chennai-pride-march/>

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