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June 2024

## A Prideful Port



Dear Friends,

I was born in Tehran, Iran, and roughly two years into the Iranian Revolution, I immigrated to the United States. I was 18 years old when I moved to this country, and I did not know a lick of English. As a queer, young immigrant of color, I was both excited for this move and terrified.

During my first couple years in the U.S., I experienced isolation and marginalization, but I also discovered the power of community and voice. In my early twenties and through a series of fortunate events (a great story for another time), I connected with a community of other queer Iranians while I was living in California. This was my first experience of truly being seen for who I was, and today — decades later — I am still connected to this community. Through these relationships, I have felt a deep sense of belonging and validation.

I share this to acknowledge the profound significance of Pride Month. For my fellow members of the LGBTQIA+ community, Pride is a time for us to

unapologetically celebrate who we are, to find community and be seen, and to recognize the incredible work and sacrifices of our country's queer leaders who made Pride possible. In that vein, I am honored to share the voices and perspectives of Port employees — LGBTQIA+ members and allies — commenting on the significance of Pride.

### **Teddy McDonald — Human Resources, he/him**

“It’s important to me that the Port publicly celebrates Pride and commits to protecting, securing, and supporting not only outwardly queer policies and metrics, but also gender-expansive needs for all participants engaging with the Port. It has been so easy to find allyship and community at the Port because of the many employee resource groups working for change in workplace culture and policies. My first few months here were filled with so much comfort because of how much space the LGBTQ+ community was given to exist and bring their whole selves to work. I love that I can say to people of all ages, ‘I’m here! We’re here! And you can be here too.’”

### **Jessica Brown — Maritime Environment and Sustainability, she/they**

“If we don’t want history to repeat itself, we have to remember the past struggle of prior generations to secure our rights. To me, Pride is about fostering courage in community, enabling everyone to bring their whole selves to all aspects of life, striving for inclusion, and celebrating the joy and learning that comes from diverse perspectives. Life is chaotic and busy, it can feel like I spend most of my time working, but Pride month is an opportunity to be intentional about sending love to LGBTQIA+ friends and family.”

### **Nic Longo — Aviation Planning, he/him**

“As a gay dad with three kids, married to my wonderful husband, Pride is deeply important to us. For the past three years, our family vacations have coincided with Pride celebrations, turning this time into a cherished tradition for us to reflect on the progress we've made. Marriage equality is still fresh, and the ability for gay men to become parents is a significant and vital milestone. While we celebrate, I can't help but think of other countries where being gay is still a significant struggle, like Italy, my home country. My hope is that my kids can one day also be proud Italian citizens. Though society may be ready, the political landscape still has a way to go, and Pride reminds me of the fragility of the rights we've fought for.”

### **Megan O'Connor — Design Services, she/her**

“Finding pride and queer joy has been a long personal journey as I sought to better understand myself, find self-acceptance, and live authentically. Pride, for me as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, signifies love, acceptance, dignity, and celebration, not just of myself but my family and an entire community of people I am so very proud to be a part of. Pride is not just a month but a lifelong celebration highlighting both the personal and collective achievements and struggles for queer folks.”

**Brandon Klett — Waterfront Project Management, he/him**

“To me, Pride means celebrating and embracing an important part of myself! It was a long, hard road to come to love every aspect of myself. So now I want to show that I am proud of who I am and being a part of the LGBTQ+ community! I think it’s important for the Port to celebrate Pride and the LGBTQ+ community to encourage people that may be closeted to embrace and celebrate themselves wholly too!”

**Nani Moa — Aviation Maintenance, she/her**

“Port Pride is important to both employees and our community. It shows that the Port of Seattle is welcome, open, and has a place for everyone. Port Pride gives us as employees a sense of belonging and demonstrates to our community that the Port of Seattle ROCKS!”

LGBTQIA+ rights and acceptance in our country have come a long way since I immigrated. In many places across the country, queer people are accepted, loved, and included in their communities in ways that were unimaginable for previous generations. I believe that the Port is a great example of this, and while we still have room for improvement, we are fostering a culture that is truly accepting of all.

In closing, please join your Prideful Port in celebrating love, creating inclusion for all people, and building a strong, healthy community. Happy Pride!

In Unity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Nani Moa', written in a cursive style.

**Bookda Gheisar**

Senior Director, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

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## Centering Equity and Taking Action

### Creating pathways to careers in aviation



The Port of Seattle, South Seattle College, and Port Jobs are partnering to develop a Ground Service Equipment (GSE) mechanic program in Seattle, Washington, which will launch in Fall of 2024. This program will support entry-level airport workers to advance their careers by becoming GSE mechanics. The full two-year course at South Seattle College will also be available to the public. This program is replicating the success of [our Aviation Maintenance Technician](#)

[training program](#), and it is believed to be the first GSE mechanic training program in the nation!

[Learn more →](#)

## Grant program awards over \$226K to South King County organizations for environmental improvements



The Port of Seattle will award \$226,631 to six community-led organizations with projects that improve the environment in communities around Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA). This is the [South King County Community Impact Fund Environmental Grants Program's](#) fourth cycle of funding.

Since the fund was established, approximately \$7.2M has been committed over a four-year period to 44 South King County nonprofits and community-based organizations. These equity-based partnerships empower organizations to engage local communities around the issue of environmental sustainability, and the selected projects aim to improve the environment and access to green space. [Read more →](#)

## Celebrating Juneteenth with events, soul food, and books

Juneteenth, which is short for June Nineteenth, commemorates the ending of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth is also known as Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day, Liberation Day, and Freedom Day. It marks the final enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas at the end of the American Civil War.



In this blog post, LaTonja Brown (Northwest Seaport Alliance) shares about the history, culture, and celebrations of Juneteenth. [Read more →](#)

## Port of Seattle begins study to assess noise compatibility of SEA with surrounding communities



The Port has begun a study to evaluate the noise compatibility of SEA with the surrounding communities and current and possible new efforts to reduce the effects of aircraft noise on the surrounding communities. The [Part 150 Study](#) has been conducted roughly every 10 years since 1985. Check out a [recent story from KING 5](#).

## Take Pride in our champions

This year commemorates the 50th anniversary of Pride celebrations in Seattle. In June 1974, LGBTQIA+ individuals, inspired by the spirit of the Stonewall uprising, gathered in Seattle for the first time. To celebrate this milestone, we republished a blog post from 2021, honoring LGBTQIA+ champions over the years and celebrating their achievements and activism. [Read the full post →](#)



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