

for LGBTQ people of color. Last summer, the organization launched the Safer Action Support with Stonewall (S.A.S.S.), a team of volunteers focused on providing safety at protests and other local events led by people of color. Stonewall also established the QT*POC Direct Aid Fund to provide emergency financial support to queer and trans people of color. Since then, Stonewall has granted approximately \$8,000 to about 17 people, according to Larson, paying for essential needs such as transportation, one-time rental assistance and energy bills.

Stonewall received seed funding from United Way to establish the QT*POC Fund and just received another grant from the organization to expand its efforts. It will be collaborating with local leaders and teachers who are people of color to create a cultural competency training on anti-racism. This will be similar to Stonewall's cultural competency training centered on LGBTQ issues and identities, which it offers to local businesses, non-profits, government offices and classrooms.

These issues are important for the organization, Mox said. She had already hit the ground running two weeks into the job by attending a digital conference with LGBTQ center leaders across the U.S., sharing best practices and ideas on how to improve and grow their programs, including a focus on intersectionality and serving people of color.

Mox says advocacy work is far from over, especially in rural towns like Chico, where representation, inclusivity and the safety of LGBTQ community members is still a significant issue.

Stonewall must prioritize creating welcoming, safe spaces for LGBTQ people of color, Mox said, "but we have to do it in a way where we're not just putting another emotional tax on that population."

Moving forward, Mox says she is a cautious optimist when it comes to the strides that are being made with the causes that Stonewall supports. She was thrilled about last year's "rainbow wave," when a record-breaking number of LGBTQ people ran for political offices and the United States saw historic political wins among transgender people and LGBTQ people of color.

"To me, that is so exciting, to see some actual representation that mirrors what our society really is. And my hope is that, absolutely, we kind of have broken a little bit of that glass ceiling ... and maybe we're actually going to be coming into a space where that will start becoming more of the norm and we will see more representation across all of our communities," Mox said.

But advocacy work is far from over, she continued, especially in rural towns like Chico, where representation, inclusivity and the safety of LGBTQ community members is still a significant issue.

"This is life or death for some people, what Stonewall does and what we provide," Mox said. "I really believe that Stonewall is headed in the right direction. ... We definitely want to educate and do it in ways that will gain positive momentum for us, but yet we also want to, I think, stand our ground where we need to stand our ground and be OK with that as a center, and be prepared for any kind of potential repercussions from that. And I think as a strong center, as long as we are committed and focused on what our mission is, then we can stand that ground." □

Drag star J Lau makes her way to the stage for a performance during Chico Pride 2019.
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