

16th Annual Out & Equal Workplace Summit

By Melanie Barker

October 28, 2014



The marriage equality war may be halfway won, but there are still 29 states in which LGBT employees can be fired for their gender identity or sexual orientation. And while being “out and equal” is not an option for many LGBT employees, some companies embrace and reward their LGBT executives. Where do you fit into this workplace equation? Where can you turn for help, information, guidance and career advice?

On November 3-6 in San Francisco, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, the world’s largest nonprofit organization dedicated to ending workplace discrimination for LGBT employees, hosts its 16th Annual Workplace Summit in San Francisco at Moscone Center West. Oscar-nominated director, Lee Daniels will deliver the gala keynote address, and Billie Jean King and Olympia Dukakis will be two of the award-winning, LGBT activist attendees. During the conference, Out & Equal will also announce the recipients of its annual Workplace Awards, “The Outies,” which honor individuals and organizations that are leading the way to advance LGBT workplace equality, while providing the community with successful leadership strategies.



Also attending the summit will be working professionals, Fortune 500 executives from companies ranging from Deloitte to Walt Disney, employee resource group leaders, diversity managers, individuals and allies. “The Out &

Equal Workplace Summit represents a global commitment to building a world free of discrimination,” says Selisse Berry, founder and chief executive officer of Out & Equal. “With strong support and assistance of our corporate partners, we will continue to work tirelessly to eliminate this blatant discrimination.”

Curve caught up with Berry on the eve of the summit:

The Workplace Summit this year boasts 78 workshops, 12 panels, 12 roundtables, 6 global series and 6 case studies, with 14 learning tracks, an amazing lineup. But what are you particularly excited about this year?

I am particularly excited that our work is global. Nearly 3,000 attendees are expected at the 2014 Out & Equal Workplace Summit, representing over 30 countries. I’m also thrilled that Billie Jean King, Olympia Dukakis and Lee Daniels will be speaking.

There has been a lot of discussion this year about the gender wage gap. Women make up a good portion of LGBT; do you address the wage gap in the summit?

Out & Equal was built on the success of both the civil rights and feminist movements. At Out & Equal we carry on the principles of fairness – the right for equal pay for equal work and the right to be judged for our work, not who we are or who we love.

Coming out is becoming easier each year, but how much work is left to be done when educating Fortune 500 companies?

When I started Out & Equal 18 years ago, only 5 percent of Fortune 500 companies had non-discrimination policies for LGBT employees compared to 91 percent today. Gender identity wasn’t even discussed 18 years ago, but now 61 percent of Fortune 500 companies include gender identity in their non-discrimination policies. There has been so much progress. However, there is still work to be done to provide workplace equality for members of our LGBT community. LGBT employees can still be fired in over half the country for being LGBT. In fact, Out & Equal recently released a PSA addressing this very issue, which can be found [here](#).

Are you supporting trans rights?

Inclusion and acceptance is at the heart of our mission at Out & Equal. We are focused on building workplaces and communities where we can all be our true and authentic selves. Out & Equal has a Transgender Advisory Committee, which designs educational programs throughout the year to address issues such as this one. We offer LGBT diversity training, with a program specific to transgender issues.

Bisexual visibility is another issue. Do you have anything specific this year for bisexuals?

Out & Equal does have a number of sessions and workshops at this year’s Workplace Summit that address specific issues for bisexual men and women. Sessions and workshops also address steps that companies can take to be more inclusive of bisexual men and women. Out & Equal’s Bisexual Advisory Committee plays a key role in developing these education programs, both at the Out & Equal Workplace Summit and throughout the year.

Info: Out & Equal Workplace Summit: Mon, Nov. 3 - Thurs, Nov. 6, 2014, Moscone Center West, 800 Howard St., San Francisco, Calif. 94103. For further information, please visit www.outandequal.org.

<http://www.curvemag.com/Events/16th-Annual-Out-Equal-Workplace-Summit-244/>