

***Transparent* actress honored by Out and Equal**

By Chris Huqueriza

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An actress in the groundbreaking television show *Transparent* was honored at the recent Momentum gala held by Out and Equal Workplace Advocates.

About 400 executives and employees attended the March 26 fundraiser, which concluded a two-day executive conference.



Amy Landecker, left, a star in the TV show *Transparent*, was joined by one of the show's writers, Ali Liebegott, as she acknowledged the audience's applause during Out and Equal Workplace Advocates' annual Momentum dinner. Photo: Rick Gerharter

"The organization's agenda is for executives to come out in numbers in terms of safety," Amy Landecker, an actress and straight ally, said in an interview with the *Bay Area Reporter*. "An open safe place is valuable and people are more productive in their jobs if they are themselves."

For its eighth annual gala, Out and Equal honored Landecker, known for her role as Sarah Pfefferman in the Golden Globe-winning *Transparent*. The show, produced by Amazon.com, has been praised for its portrayal of the transgender community as it focuses on the Pfefferman family and the discovery that the person they knew as their father, played by Jeffrey Tambor, is a transgender woman.

"I'm deeply honored to accept this award on behalf of *Transparent*, a show that continually makes me proud," said Landecker. "Out and Equal's work toward workplace equality for members of the transgender

community is vital and an important step toward full equality for all members of the LGBT community."

Transparent, which was created by Jill Soloway, who has a trans parent, has hired 80 transgender people for its cast, crew and extras, Landecker said. It has also raised the transgender community's visibility with a national audience.

"It's an absolute breakdown of Hollywood when the industry is requesting transgender actors. It's exciting," said Landecker, who sees streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon as the edgier cousins of cable and network television.

In 28 states, employees can still be fired based on sexual orientation while 33 states still discriminate against transgender employees.

At the conference, speakers talked about the importance of equal rights.

"We need to change the frame so people understand this is about discrimination, not religious freedom," Tim Sweeney said during his State of the LGBT Movement address at the executive forum. "Let's set up a narrative that questions the idea of attacks on religious freedom and clarifies how discrimination affects communities."

As Out and Equal was holding its conference, Indiana became the latest state to pass a Religious Freedom Restoration Act bill. The backlash against the state has been fierce by business leaders and many others.

"In our society, corporations determine the climate," said Landecker. "When executives come out, corporate culture will change. It's evolving and we're going in the right direction."

At the self-identification panel, Ken Warner from Chevron and Monica Marquez from Ernst and Young were guest speakers. Straight ally Dawn Willoughby of Clorox and BlackRock employee resource group leader Zachary Buchwald spoke at the executive sponsors panel.

"When I came to BlackRock in 2008, there was no ERG," Buchwald said of the financial planning firm. "We created a network in 2009, and in 2012 introduced an ally program. When people join the ally program, they're saying 'I'm ready to support you in any way.' I want LGBT employees to feel a sense of belonging at BlackRock to have rewarding careers."

According to Marquez, out individuals in the workplace tend to be 30 percent more productive than those who are closeted.

The landscape for the LGBT community will be changing as June approaches.

"Momentum comes at a crucial point for the LGBT equality movement: the Supreme Court is expected to make a definitive ruling on marriage equality in June, yet workplace equality continues to lag behind," Selisse Berry, founder and chief executive officer of Out and Equal, said in a news release. "Although there's still much work to be done when it comes to LGBT equality, *Transparent* is breaking new ground."

Humorist and comedian Kate Clinton emceed the gala, which included entertainment, an auction, and a cocktail reception. Out and Equal's next major conference will be its national summit in Dallas in October.

For more information, visit www.outandequal.org.