

My identity, Our Hxstories Tour

Hi everybody! Welcome to LYRIC's virtual open house tour - My Identity, Our Hxstories! Our purple house doors have closed, but our virtual doors are open. Today we'll be giving you the inside scoop on what goes on inside the big purple house - sharing our history, some trivia & fun facts, and what it's like to enter the house as a youth, like us!

We hope that this brings a ray of positivity in this difficult time. Even though we aren't physically gathering together, we are still connected and you are not alone. Community stands stronger together.

LYRIC was founded in 1988 by two young queer women, Donna Keiko Ozawa and Beth Kivel who started a committee for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth with other youth and adult allies. They had a vision of community building, bringing to light LGBTQ youth issues, and prioritizing our needs in the Castro.

The committee's first event was a dance for queer youth. About 30-40 youth attended the first dance! To this very day LYRIC youth & staff host dances for LGBTQ youth. This picture is from our very first dance.

At reception you are greeted by a LYRIC staff member who will tell you their name and pronouns and ask you the same and offer you some water or coffee. This simple gesture is rooted in LYRIC's youth-adult partnership that has existed since day one.

This floor is the first space you will be introduced to in the LYRIC house. It is where you will make your appointments & and can find general resources. The house is broken up into different work and meeting areas with nature-inspired names like "The Cove." Some are collaborative work spaces, some are for one-on-one meetings, and some are for quietly working. Be on the lookout for all 9 posters throughout the house.

[Kitchen] The kitchen is where you eat, get something to drink, kiki with your friends while you wait for your appointments or group or internship to start. Something special about LYRIC is that the whole organization and programming is for LGBTQ youth and allies, not just one part of it. You can come here for many different things and come as who you are.

Now the stairs and plants are leading us to the 2nd floor, home to the “Beehive” collective workspace and the Butterfly Club, one of our youth spaces. This is where I usually come for community building groups and my YA appointment. The community building groups include, Whats The T, Sex Talks, and Treat Yo Self. This is where you can also come for youth advocacy meetings to get one-on-one support on everything from PrEP access to housing. Some of the work the YA’s do include outside work, like in our school-based Q groups.

Do you know what LYRIC means? *Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center*. Lavender is a really cute color, we all love a shade of lavender or the scent to calm us, but it also holds significant meaning to our community.

Before there was a rainbow flag, lavender symbolized LGBTQ community. The color is a blend of traditionally gendered colors-- pink and blue and was used for us to recognize each other. The word was turned on us to be used as an oppressive insult. The 1950’s was a time of interrogation and mass firings of LGBT people and associates. That time is now called the Lavender Scare. This set the stage for 40 years of workplace discrimination. Check out the history of the word lavender and the LGBTQ community, you will find many things.

You’ll notice our current logo says “LYRIC LGBTQ Youth Center.” Instead of listing the meaning of each letter, we choose to center our work with youth in our name. Even though we are ever evolving as an organization, the Lavender part of our name is something we will always have with pride.

Last, but not least, we are entering the ground floor of the house. The first room is a small space that is used for therapy sessions and is part of a major collaborative with the Dimensions Clinic, which was created with five agencies including LYRIC back in 1998. It’s really unique to have therapy in this youth-friendly, non traditional setting. Next we are entering LYS, our LYRIC Youth Space. This is our big gathering space and often you will find our Sequoia Leadership Institute internships happening here. Sequoia is actually the name of a beloved former staff member and queen – Miz Sequoia. The Sequoia Leadership Institute supports paid internships throughout the seasons including Castro History Tour, and UndocWorkforce interns who created the theme and colors for My Identity, Our Hxstories, this virtual Open House. You might also see our Community Leadership Program, our Mentorship Program and Artistic Resistance Program for Transitional Aged Youth meeting in this space.

A lot of the groups have been created or made out of the needs of the youth at that time. Even though many things have changed since our first groups we all have similar questions and want to be in a space where we can talk and not feel ashamed or different because we have these experiences that are not often talked about. Some things change and some things never change, like the creative ways we name our groups.

In 1993 , LYRIC purchased this house! Because of this, we have stood our ground through all the changes and are a steady place for youth 24 and younger to be in the Castro.

Now as we exit this virtual tour, we want to thank you for joining us on this journey through the house and history. We hope you will check out the rest of the virtual Open House, and take a look into the youth projects in the My Identity, Our Hxstories Gallery full of 'zines, the Castro History tour, and more and check out how to get involved!

