desirainbow

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Director's Note



Dear Desi Rainbow Friends and Family,

Desi Rainbow Parents & Allies will celebrate our fifth anniversary as a nonprofit organization in 2025. I am deeply grateful to all who have supported this extraordinary journey. It began with my own family, and my efforts to support my own queer and trans child, which has evolved into a Desi American community journey to intergenerational healing and allyship. Today, we are a strong and growing community of LGBTQIA+ people, parents, siblings and community allies united under our shared mission.

Desi Rainbow's mission is to build a community where people of all sexual orientations and gender identities are valued, affirmed and celebrated by all. We are now at a moment in American civic and cultural history when this mission is under serious threat. LGBTQIA+ South Asian Americans and their families are fearful and angry about escalating anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric, the slew of anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation being passed and threats to personal and community safety.

To meet these challenges and ensure that our community has the space and safety to grow and thrive is going to be a difficult task, requiring organizing and joining national and local coalitions, finding and building resources, advocating for change and providing support. This is the work that Desi Rainbow has been engaged in for the past four years and we are ready to continue this work through the next four years with with pride, compassion and love.

Our scope of work encompasses support, education and advocacy. In 2024, we provided direct support to LGBTQIA+ folks, parents, siblings and grandparents. We hosted inter-generational events and celebrations that focus on South Asian cultural experience in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, New Jersey, New York, Seattle and Southern California. We delivered educational modules on serving queer and trans South Asians for community based organizations that support survivors of gender based violence, provide mental health services and advocate for policy and legislative change. We showed up to advocate for trans kids in Edison, NJ and at the Freedom to be Ourselves Rally at the Supreme Court.

We have big and ambitious dreams, and we are clear eyed about the obstacles we face in actualizing them. In this fractured landscape that we are confronted with today, Desi Rainbow's work in creating a safe community that emphasizes the power of intergenerational allyship is more essential than ever.

We invest the bulk of our energies into building on our innovative ideas and doing the grassroots work of community organizing, providing support and education and advocating for change. We ask for your support in helping us expand our capacity in 2025 to create real and lasting change.

DONATE TODAY:

Wishing you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

Aruna Rao

Aruna Rao (she/her)
Executive Director

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MISSION

Building a Desi diaspora where all LGBTQIA+ identities are valued, affirmed, and celebrated.

ABOUT

Desi Rainbow Parents & Allies was started in Fall 2020 by a Desi parent of an LGBTQIA+ child, who saw the need for **culturally competent support** for **Desi LGBTQIA+ people and their families.**

The South Asian population in the USA is more than 5.4 million strong. However, **the South Asian LGBTQIA+ people and their families are vastly underserved**, at risk of depression, anxiety and suicide due to social stigma and misinformation about LGBTQIA+ identity.

Our work has filled a vacuum in the South Asian diaspora, as **there is no other organization with a national focus on providing this safe and nurturing space.** As anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and hatred grow, Desi Rainbow is working for change at all levels - within our families, our communities, government and institutions.

Our programming provides **direct peer support, advocacy, community-building** and **education.**

PROGRAMS

support

virtual peer support calls and monthly support groups, and regional in-person events that affirm LGBTQIA+ Desis.

education

community presentations and our "Breaking the Silence" allyship workshop.

advocacy

opportunities to take action to support the LGBTQIA+ community

community building

reaching folks who need more support and building intergenerational community

2024 BUDGET

- Programs 85%
- Operations 10%
- Fundraising 5%



We are so grateful to have such supportive and generous community members! Through your support as donors, volunteers, and engaged community members, we have been able to work together toward our mission. Thank you for being part of the Desi Rainbow community.

We are excited to share **our accomplishments this year!**

Support Support Groups

MONTHLY VIRTUAL MEETINGS BY AND FOR LGBTQIA+ DESIS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS CREATE A WELCOMING SPACE FOR ALL TO SHARE, LISTEN, MEET AND LEARN FROM OTHERS WHO CONNECT TO THEIR JOURNEYS.

In 2024, our **support groups** have served over **188** **LGBTQIA+ individuals,** and **133** **parents and family members.**

BASED ON OUR 2024 SUPPORT GROUP SURVEYS:

93% agreed it was helpful to talk to others who understand their situation.

94% would recommend this support group to a friend.

88% agreed attending the group made them feel hopeful.

100% agreed that group leaders were respectful and supportive.

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

> Knowing I am not alone in my path or my experiences, remembering all the folks in group and what everyone shared, I feel I can push through the next month with more hope and self-assurance than I've felt in a long while.

> Desi Rainbow was the beginning of my own optimism - that there may actually be a sizable community of people with whom i can feel a sense of safety, comfort, relatability, and connection.

> This group is fabulous and blessings to us. This was lifesaver when we started our journey last year.

Support

Saathi
desirainbow

OUR ONE-ON-ONE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM CONNECTS OUR VOLUNTEERS TO ANYONE IN NEED OF A SAATHI (FRIEND) TO PROVIDE:



LGBTQIA+ DESI RESOURCES



INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT



CONFIDENTIAL CALLS

In 2024, our **Saathi program** has responded to

36

requests from LGBTQIA+ Desis and their family members.

BASED ON OUR 2024 SAATHI RECIPIENT SURVEY:

100% said their Saathi was kind and compassionate.

100% said speaking to their Desi Rainbow Saathi made them feel better.

94% felt better prepared to address their challenges after speaking to a Saathi.

100% would refer a friend or family member to Saathi Peer Support.

100% said their Saathi provided helpful information.

RECIPIENT TESTIMONIALS

> I really needed to speak to someone for Peer Support. It was so validating and so nice hearing from a Desi supporter. <3

> Invaluable support from people who have dealt with the same or similar situations.

> I cannot believe how validating it was speaking to [my Saathi] as they knew and understood where I was coming from... I felt safe to be authentic self with someone who looked like me, who could relate and resonate with my lived experiences. We held trust and compassion for one another.

We create a ripple effect of change by working with organizations with different spheres of influence across the diaspora.

Education

BREAKING THE SILENCE: GENDER & SEXUALITY WORKSHOP

Desi Rainbow provides our original LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and allyship training for community organizations, tailored to the needs and missions of each organization.



Jahajee is an Indo-Carribean gender justice organization in New York.

Sanjeevani is a mental health organization that provides services in Chicago.



WHITE HOUSE INITIATIVE ON AANHPI PRIDE CONVENING

Desi Rainbow was invited to speak on a panel for the annual WHIAANHPI Pride Convening.



IA IMPACT SUMMIT



Desi Rainbow presented an allyship training at the national conference, Indian American Impact Summit. IA Impact works with policy makers to create lasting change.

SAAFC CONVOS FOR CHANGE



Desi Rainbow E.D. Aruna Rao (she/her) and Saathi Coordinator Hima Saathian (they/them)



joined SAAFC for a panel on LGBTQIA+ mental health. This was the live recvording for the first episode of the SAAFC upcoming podcast, Convos for Change.

Campaigns

Education

SOCIAL MEDIA

Creating awareness and a more affirming diaspora through educational campaigns, featuring community member submissions, including those featured below. See all campaigns on our social media accounts:

Our posts reached over **201K** people in 2024.

10.4K Post reactions

8.4K Total fans & followers

DESIRAINBOWPARENTS @DESIRAINBOW1

LESBIAN VISIBILITY


KUNOOR (SHE/HER)

I have been on my journey towards authenticity since I came out at age 15 1/2. I am grateful for my wife, chosen family and community who have been part of my journey and provided me love and support as I have struggled, grown and thrived through discovery of who I am, which includes being a South Asian lesbian. I am active in supporting diverse communities through my role on the Board of Desi Rainbow, as a Co-Chair of the South Asian Bar Association's LGBTQ+ Chapter and my role on CLOC's DEIB Council. What is most important to me is to share my story and provide support for other LGBTQ+ individuals through their journeys. I have learned through my journey that life is better when you can show up as your full, authentic self, whether in your personal or professional lives. I still have my struggles, and what is different is I have a community behind me to remind me that I AM ENOUGH AS I AM.

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY



MASON (THEY/HE)

As a proud transgender man who grew up without much resources or support, I am so grateful to have had access to gender affirming top surgery, which truly was life saving a decade ago now. I wish this for every single transgender or gender non-conforming child and youth - safe and equitable health care for everyone. We are living in a time where being transgender and brown is being policed and I hope that every desi person knows that - we need you here, we want you here, and our community would not be the same without your presence <3

PRIDE



KAVI (HE/THEY)

As a bisexual, transgender South Asian, "pride" to me is when my identities can coexist peacefully rather than being at odds with each other. This balance has unfortunately been hard to strike since the world regularly makes me feel as if being part of one marginalized group is already bad enough. I have internalized this unspoken societal pressure to "pick a struggle," wherein I cannot be unapologetically Bangladeshi in largely white LGBTQIA2S+ spaces, nor can I be overtly queer in groups of cisgender, heterosexual Desi folks. Over time though, I have learned the importance of chosen family and radical ownership over the aspects of myself that I cannot control. In a society that generally shuns individuals like me, there is power in simply being my authentic self and knowing that the people who matter in my life support my choice to be visible and let go of all the guilt and shame that I've carried for years. Ultimately, they drown out the voices of the few hateful people around me.

Advocacy

#DESISSTANDUPFORALLOURKIDS

We have worked together across the nation to create a safer, more affirming world for all LGBTQIA+ people.

SUPPORTING TRANS YOUTH

EDISON, NJ

Desi Rainbow community leaders gathered with other local activists and organizations in support of trans youth in Edison, NJ. The Board of Education was deliberating retaining Policy 5756, which protects trans children from forced outing and affirms their gender identity in schools. After a slew of compelling testimony from queer and trans youth, their parents, and allies, the Board voted 6:3 to retain this gender-affirming policy. There is power in community and coalition-building. Sign the pledge to become a trans ally at tinyurl.com/DesiRainbowTransAlly



SUPREME COURT RALLY

FREEDOM TO BE OURSELVES

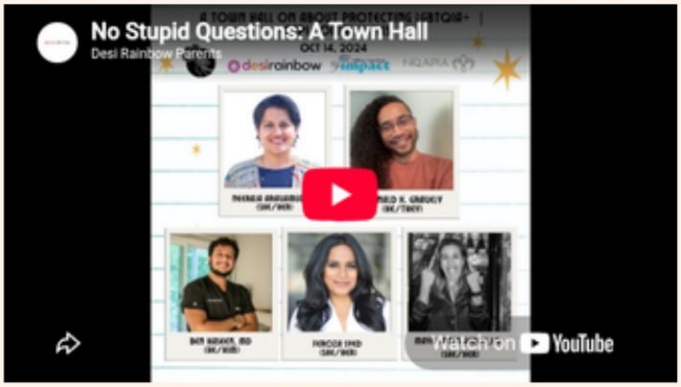
SCOTUS



Desi Rainbow represented Desi support for trans kids at the Rally on December 4th when the Supreme Court was heard arguments for U.S. v Skrmetti, a case that will decide the future of trans childrens access to healthcare. Learn more about the case from the Townhall resources to the right.

NO STUPID QUESTIONS: A TOWNHALL

VIRTUAL



On October 14th in partnership with IA Impact, NQAPIA, and Queer Asian Social Club, Desi Rainbow hosted a panel on protecting LGBTQIA+ rights for AANHPI communities.

WATCH THE VIDEO

https://tinyurl.com/NSQTownHallVideo

READ THE NOTES SUMMARY

https://tinyurl.com/NSQTownHallNotes

Community Building

Our virtual events bring in national and even global attendance, and our in-person organizing has grown in 16 metro areas including Atlanta, California, Chicago, DC/Maryland/Virginia, Georgia, Texas, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York/New Jersey, North Carolina and Seattle. Below are just a handful of photos from events featuring a few of our wonderful community members.

REGIONAL EVENTS



NJ PICNIC



HOUSTON POTLUCK



ATL MEETUP



CHICAGO ONAM & SATRANGI NAACH



SEATTLE RAINBOW GARBA



DMV PICNIC

WHATSAPP

We have grown to **437** WhatsApp members with **28** affinity-based and regional groups



Our WhatsApp community continues to grow into an increasingly supportive, fun, and welcoming space for everyone. We have expanded WhatsApp groups to include:

New Groups in 2024

- DALLAS-FORT WORTH (DFW)
- ONTARIO
- SEATTLE
- SUPPORTIVE SIBLINGS of LGBTQIA+ individuals
- TRANS, GNC & NONBINARY
- QUEER PARENTS
- ADVOCACY





Outreach





Thank you to all our amazing volunteers!

We are so grateful for all our amazing volunteers who have made our work possible. Volunteers have taken leadership in planning/hosting regional events, attending local community events for outreach as pictured above, and contributing to our virtual support programs. Thank you for all you do and we are proud to have such a supportive, kind community!

2025 GOALS

Expand our grassroots direct support work by **doubling our Saathi Peer Support and Support Group capacity.**

Host a **national Desi Rainbow Family Retreat** for queer and trans community members and their families.

Host a **national conference for parents and allies** to gain information on LGBTQIA+ identity, community needs and resources, and how to act in allyship.

Build coalitions to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights in towns and communities with significant South Asian populations across the country.

Expand our capacity to offer **Breaking the Silence Allyship training** to community based organizations serving the South Asian community.

100% **of our funding** comes from **individual contributions** from community members, including family members of LGBTQIA+ loved ones and allies who feel the impact of our work. **Help Desi Rainbow expand** our reach and support LGBTQIA+ folks and families in need.
We can't do it without you, and we **thank you for your support!**

DONATE

www.desirainbow.org/donate

Donate with your employer matching:
EIN: 85-3352073

Checks can be mailed to:
Desi Rainbow Parents & Allies
PO Box 4454
195 Central Ave
Metuchen, NJ 08840-9997

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