

Hi, my name is Carrie Pizzillo-Stare and I serve on the board of LGBT Equality Alliance of Chester County. Our organization envisions a safe, supportive environment for the youth and adult LGBTQ+ community in and around Chester County. We aim to remove barriers of communication between Chester County LGBTQ+ residents and the greater community. Rather than create a community center, it is our focus to unify the greater community so that all LGBTQ+ community members feel at home and supported in their living environments.

Prior to Friday my speech would have taken you more through who we are, introduced you to what we do, and what peace means to us. But then as the sun was setting on Friday evening the news broke that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had died. She was my hero, and a national treasure. My previous speech no longer felt right, so I started over.

We as a nation knew 2020 would be a challenging year, simply because it's a Presidential election year. What we didn't know is that we would be faced with the worst pandemic since the Spanish Flu in 1918. We have been faced with even sharper increases in racial violence and the deaths of too many black men, black women, black trans women. It feels like our heroes: Kobe Bryant, John Lewis, Chadwick Boseman, the Notorious RBG are being stolen from us.

Writing a speech about peace this year was difficult, especially for me after Friday. Until I remembered the theme of today's International Day of Peace: Shaping Peace Together. Together through talking, together through listening, together through education, together through equality. When we remember that we are all human beings trying to get through this thing called life in the best way we know how, when we remember that our neighbors might have different opinions than us, when we remember how to talk to each other respectfully, when we remember that we need to educate people about why black lives matter, about why LGBTQ+ equality is important, why equity for all is important, about how we can have different backgrounds but still come together through love, compassion, kindness, and hope.

Too often we have been distracted by that which divides us. We can learn from each other. And we can learn from the legacies of those that have left us. Congressman John Lewis and the Notorious RBG taught us to make good trouble and to fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you. If conservative stalwart Justice Antonin Scalia and liberal lion Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg can be best friends, well, then there is hope that the rest of us can shape peace together.