

PEER HEALTH EXCHANGE

PRESS RELEASE—

For more information contact:

Adriana Díaz

773-459-1941

adiaz@peerhealthexchange.org

Peer Health Exchange's First "Liberation Day" kickstarts annual tradition

June 21, 2019—San Francisco, CA—Peer Health Exchange, a national nonprofit that works to advance health equity for young people, observed their first Liberation Day, Friday, June 21, 2019. The organization's new paid holiday was created to honor the shared work required of all staff, volunteers and supporters to realize a world where every young person has access and opportunity to a healthy, happy life.

An initiative of Peer Health Exchange's Diversity and Equity Working Group, Liberation Day was chosen to fall on the third Friday of each June, intentionally straddled between two historic days on the calendar: Juneteenth and the Stonewall Uprising. Many young people are still not taught the importance of Juneteenth—which commemorates the emancipation of enslaved Black Americans throughout the former Confederate States of America—or the Stonewall Uprising—which sparked the modern movement for LGBTQIA+ rights.

"The fight for freedom didn't stop on the 4th of July," said Osayuwere "Tina" Engabare, Vice President of Talent and Equity. "It's ongoing. Our shared liberation will only come when our most marginalized communities are free from the systems of oppression that hurt us all—but them the most."

Liberation Day culminated in a week of health equity chats facilitated by members of the Diversity and Equity Working Group. Participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of freedom, oppression, happiness and health.

"I'm proud to work for an organization that prioritizes time for introspection," said Diversity and Equity Working Group member Xaelah Jarrett, Senior Manager, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. "Each of us has a unique lived experience that shapes how we understand privilege and oppression. It's not enough to acknowledge that white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity...exists. We have to commit to understand and challenge them every day."

Peer Health Exchange strives to promote and support each student they work with through their culturally appropriate, trauma-informed program. The curriculum span over the course of 14 workshops. Workshops are facilitated by college health educators that focus on building the knowledge, skills and resources ninth grade students need to make healthy decisions about substance use, sexual health and mental health.

"Young people of color, queer and trans young people, genderqueer young people and young women, young people from low-income socio-economic backgrounds or with different abilities, and especially those at the *intersection* of these identities often don't get to access the health, knowledge and resources that they need and deserve," said CEO and Co-Founder Louise Langheier. "We will continue to invest in Liberation Day, not only as an opportunity for each of us to care for ourselves and those closest to us, but to remember why as health educators we must continue to show up in our communities in whatever ways we can."

Empowering young people to make healthy decisions

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Over the last 16 years, Peer Health Exchange has grown to provide their health workshops to more than 150,000 young people across the country. To read more about their commitment to equity click [here](#).

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About Peer Health Exchange Peer Health Exchange's mission is to empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and resources to make healthy decisions. We do this by training college student volunteers to teach a skills-based health curriculum in under-resourced high schools across the country.