



Charlotte's Premiere High Energy Dance Club

1202 Charlottetowne Avenue Charlotte, NC
Open Friday / Saturday 9pm-2:30am

For reservations call 704-375-1777
www.ClosetNightclub.com
www.360charlotte.com

upcoming events

- May 29 Twirlicious ft. DJ Chris Griswold
- May 30 Tyler and Robbie's After Tea Party
ft. DJs Viktor K and Ed Jones
- June 4 Latin Night
- June 18 Sherry Vine
Legendary Parody Performance Queen
- June 25 Charlotte Royals Rugby Pageant
- July 2 Pajama Party
Benefiting Angela & Artists against AIDS
- July 9 Pride Fundraiser ft. DJ "Superstar" Keohi

Straight ally

Charlotte leader discusses social justice, the role of a straight ally
by Matt Comer :: matt@goqnotes.com



Charlotte Coalition for Social Justice staff (l-r): Lacey Williams, Marcela Guerrero, Thanh-Thu Luong, Setu Raval and Nyala Hunt.

Nyala Hunt, executive director of the Charlotte Coalition for Social Justice (CCSJ), says she had a bit of culture shock when she waded across the pond from her native Scotland and England.

"Coming here and finding that it was okay that elected officials would use derogatory language about gay people just blew my mind," she says. "People here feel so free to be homophobic and heterosexist."

As a teenager in Britain, Hunt first became involved in social justice work during a time of epic social and class struggle.

"I grew up in a culture where it was very normal for working class people — I was part of a working class family — to recognize oppression, to recognize that the system was oppressive and to organize to challenge it," Hunt says. "I was just one of those young people just like the young people in CCSJ who felt passionate about injustice and wanted to do something about it. I was fortunate enough to be born in a time and location when there was a lot going on and a lot to be involved in."

Hunt's early involvement in social justice work ultimately shaped the person she is today and her career. She studied community engagement and went to school for community education. Thirteen years ago, she came to Charlotte — hired at CCSJ's predecessor in 2000 and promoted to executive director in 2001.

In her time here, Hunt has had a unique impact on matters of social justice and inclusion as CCSJ works with young people across the region and teaches them the importance of equality and inclusion. Charlotte, she says, still has a long way to go.

"I think Charlotte is like the U.S. and the rest of the world; it's struggling to work out how to embrace all sections of the community and treat everyone equally," Hunt says. "That's essentially what CCSJ is working for — a community that is inclusive and just for everyone and Charlotte is not."

Hunt says the Queen City's history doesn't always lend itself to large-scale movements of grassroots activism. "Charlotte's history is

very much top-down leadership. People at the top decide change needs to happen and they determine how it will happen."

It's an unfortunate circumstance, she says, especially considering the history of social change.

"Throughout history, young people have led every major movement for social change," Hunt notes. "It's not been the aristocracy. It's not been church leaders. It's not been CEOs. It has been young people, grassroots activists that pushed for change."

And, she adds, that while established leaders have supported change movements, and allowed those movements to push them, the "impetus has always come from the grassroots and from young people specifically."

The role of an ally

Upon coming to America, Hunt says the culture shock she felt was a "wow" moment. She'd always considered herself a straight ally, but her new environment kicked her awareness up a notch.

"I think recognizing the need to really become a vocal ally, to be willing to stand up and publicly support is something that I think has become clearer to me over the years...and I think probably more so since I've come to Charlotte...because the homophobia seems so much worse."

Her experiences as a newcomer led Hunt to speak out more often and more forcefully.

"When I first came here people thought I was outrageous because I would 'name' everything," she recalls of her tendency to point out oppression.

Fortunately, it's a tendency that's continued to this day. After the California Supreme Court upheld Prop. 8 last year, Hunt was one of few straight ally community leaders present at a grassroots protest march and rally in Uptown Charlotte. Organizers of the event — the Charlotte Rainbow Action Network for Equality (CRANE) — asked her to speak, but she took only a couple minutes to recognize her role as a straight ally and thank LGBT community members for inviting her. [Ed. Note — This writer is an organizer with CRANE.]

Parliament Resort Augusta, GA Ph: 706-722-1155 www.p-house.com

Augusta Pride

June 18th & 19th
www.prideaugusta.org

Pride Room Specials
Stay both Friday & Saturday
Starting at \$45/night*

"College Student" Special

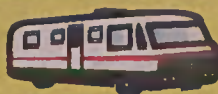
Ages 18-30
This Summer
Get a Single Queen Room
For Only
\$30.00* Fridays
\$40.00* Saturdays

*Does not include tax, Key Deposit, & membership

Birthday Weekends

June 25 & 26th
July 23 & 24th

Get \$25 Off Rooms
(\$25 Off Each-Night. Your birthday must be
in birthday month to receive the discount.
Cannot be combined with other specials.)



RV Park!

12 Month Long-Term Spaces
Only \$125/mth plus Electric
All Sites-Full Hookups!