

OUT & EQUAL
2024 SOUTHERN STATES
FORUM

RETROSPECTIVE

Presented by AIRBUS

Advancing Inclusion and Belonging Throughout the American South

Out & Equal has a vibrant legacy of bringing people together to create powerful, long-lasting impacts rooted in community, inclusion, and unapologetic Queer joy. The 2024 Out & Equal Southern States Forum remained true to our tradition of curating spaces for professionals to hone their leadership skills, examine emerging trends, build their network, and surface powerful blueprints for advancing inclusion and belonging in the workplace and beyond.

This year's Forum reinforced the significance of resilience, community, and valuing difference. In the context of an [ongoing, historic wave of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the United States](#), with a particular prevalence in the American South, Out & Equal convened nearly 200 workplace advocates, changemakers, and leaders from close to 90 Southern-based companies to reinforce, equity, inclusion, and belonging are the right things to do and smart business practice.



Photo credit: Mark Morinil, 2024

[Southern CEOs: Don't just celebrate Pride, catalyze it](#)

When employees know they belong in their workplace, they are more motivated.

By Erin Uritus

Beyond inspiring attendees, the Forum served as an opportunity to highlight relevant and impactful thought leadership from Out & Equal. Findings from our recently released [Talent on the Move Report](#), which examined how the changing policy landscape in the US has impacted the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and allies, provided important insights and opportunities for reflection throughout Forum programming.



Photo credit: Mark Morinil, 2024

Spotlight: Building Community and Radiating Pride

This year's Southern States Forum kicked off with Out & Equal's five-city *Radiate Pride Reception Series* in Atlanta, Georgia. The vibrant LGBTQ+ capital of the American South and historic cradle of our modern-day Civil Rights Movement set the stage for a day-long convening with programming designed to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities facing the LGBTQ+ community in the South.

Attendee Highlights



~50 Partner Organizations

Inclusive of the world's most notable Fortune 500 companies

Attendee Identity

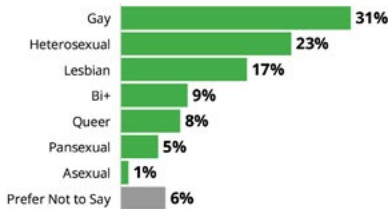


● Women
 ● Men
 ● Nonbinary and Gender Queer
● Transgender
 ● Prefer Not to Say/Not Listed



Nearly 200 attendees

Sexual Orientation



Around 1/3
of Attendees Identify as a
Person of Color



80%
of attendees are
from across the
American South

To download this chart hover in the upper-right corner and click the download button.

88%

of attendees agree/strongly agree that their organization will benefit from the knowledge they gained at the Southern States Forum

90%

of attendees agree/strongly agree that the knowledge they gained at the Southern States Forum will help make their organization a stronger and more inclusive place



Photo credit: Mark Morini, 2024

Intersectionality, Inclusion, and Action

Through a powerful program centered on intersectionality, inclusion-building strategies, and action-oriented solutions, we brought together leaders, practitioners, and changemakers for inspiring keynotes, dynamic discussions, and insightful learning sessions. The objective: explore the unique challenges and opportunities businesses face in creating truly inclusive workplaces in the American South and beyond.

Program highlights include:

- **Key Findings from Out & Equal's Talent on the Move Report:** Leveraging data from Out & Equal's recently released research, which examines how shifting public policy has impacted LGBTQ+ individuals and allies, this session spotlighted the specific DEIB action steps employers can take to effectively respond, with a specific emphasis on the American South.
- **Race and the Queer Community:** This panel explored the complex and often overlooked intersection of racial identity and LGBTQ+ experiences, and the need for urgent collective action to address systemic disparities.
- **Gender and the Queer Community:** This panel provided insights into the unique barriers and opportunities facing nonbinary, Queer, and transgender individuals in leadership roles.

Through the discussion, participants gained a deeper understanding of how gender diversity can enhance organizational effectiveness, drive innovation, and create a more equitable workplace culture.

- **The Business Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in the South:** Valuing difference and creating workplace cultures rich in inclusion and belonging are smart business practice. This panel highlighted the DEIB strategies and frameworks used to create cultures of belonging that ultimately help advance key business strategies, improve talent retention and attraction, and increase brand loyalty.
- **A Strategic Action Plan for DEIB Leaders:** How can leaders and change agents achieve meaningful impact that results in lasting change? In this session, attendees gained valuable insights including techniques for leveraging their workplace spheres of influence and for increasing awareness around personal bias through a strategic, 5-step process that centered the power of storytelling and helped attendees develop concrete strategies for advancing workplace equity

Alongside compelling keynote addresses, insightful learning sessions, and unmatched opportunities for networking and community-building, this year's Southern States Forum was a resounding call to action: the principles and values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging must be reaffirmed and recommitted to.

"Living 'Out & Equal' is better than the alternative! And I love myself—I love how I identify and I stand in solidarity with anyone who's ever been 'othered.' Yes, our strength is in our individuality, but our force is in our collective power and intentional effort. We are aware, we are engaged, we are supported by our allies! And together, we'll continue to stand with pride and radiate joy—no matter what!"

E. Monique Evans (She/Her)

DEIB Thought Leader, Consultant, and Public Speaker

As agents of change, it's critical that we fully commit to embracing the diverse and intersectional identities within our community. We must recognize that true inclusivity thrives at the intersection of every unique experience and perspective. It's from there that workplace cultures of belonging can be built and individuals can show up as their authentic self and thrive.

"Together we can effect positive change but only if we commit to taking action that extends beyond the confines of our corporate walls to ensure everyone is free to live, work and express themselves, as their amazing and authentic selves."

Denise Rodgers (She/Her)

Office Manager, Enterprise PRIDE ERG Co-Chair at Trane, Nonprofit President at Taylor Pride

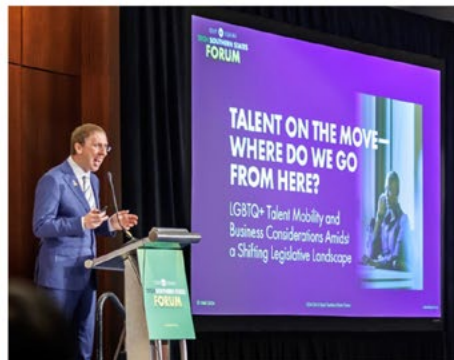


Photo credit: Mark Morinil, 2024

Feedback from Our Attendees

"Thank you for putting on a fantastic Forum! I learned valuable information, which I will be sharing with my ERG leadership."

"I really enjoyed the conference; I will take what I have learned to leadership and keep bringing change."

"I found the Southern States Forum to be extremely engaging and loved the all-day conference setting where we were focused in on the one theme."

For the complete Forum program, be sure to view the [2024 Southern States Forum Agenda](#).

