

John Arcediano

Freedom From Discrimination



In April 1991, Rev. Dr. Jim White of First Congregational Church attended a public hearing on a proposed municipal civil rights ordinance. He recalled hundreds of people in the audience rabidly opposed to the measure. Only a few dozen people were in favor, and White was one of them. On his way inside, he ran into his dental hygienist who asked, “What are you doing here Reverend White? You don’t want to speak to that (anti-discrimination measure) do you?” He replied, “Yes, I certainly do.” Shockingly, she declared, “Reverend White, you’re not even a Christian!” How did it come to this?

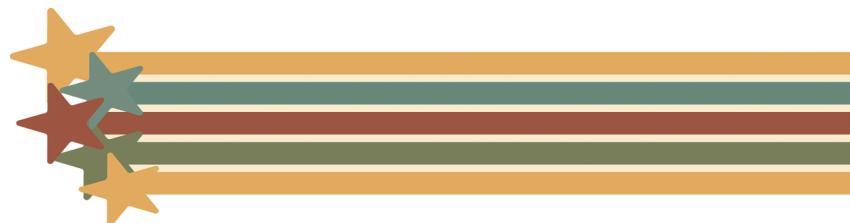
Amidst the Civil Rights Movement, in 1967 Colorado Springs created the Human Relations Commission (HRC) to address discrimination in housing, employment, and public facilities. Less than a decade later, calls to abolish the HRC began despite ongoing discrimination complaints. After drafting the civil rights ordinance in 1991, the commission received immediate pushback, most centering on the “anti-discrimination based on sexual orientation,” clause. Opponents mischaracterized the ordinance as “special rights for gays” and organized a movement to ban legal protections for LGBTQ+ people.

The effort was led by local car dealership owner and conservative Christian Will Perkins. In November 1992, Colorado voters approved Amendment 2, a measure barring any anti-discrimination laws in Colorado based on sexual orientation. Public outrage was immediate, and a boycott of Colorado followed. Colorado Springs was branded “the capital city of the hate state.” Ultimately, the Colorado Supreme Court struck down Amendment 2 in 1994. And on appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 in *Romer v. Evans* in 1996 to strike down the measure as a violation of the 14th Amendment.

Originally from New York, John Arcediano moved west for a job – arriving in September 2021. His job turning around failed restaurants took him to cities across the country and he was great at it. He excels at communication and connecting with others, noting, “People want to be heard, understood, and valued.” But Colorado Springs was a culture shock. John encountered homophobia and observed a lack of LGBTQ+ resources. And then came Club Q. After surviving the heinous mass shooting, he changed careers but not his belief in or empathy for people. John is now the Programs & Outreach Director for Prism Community Collective — and is devoted to ensuring “LGBTQ+ folks live celebrated and liberated lives, being authentically themselves.”

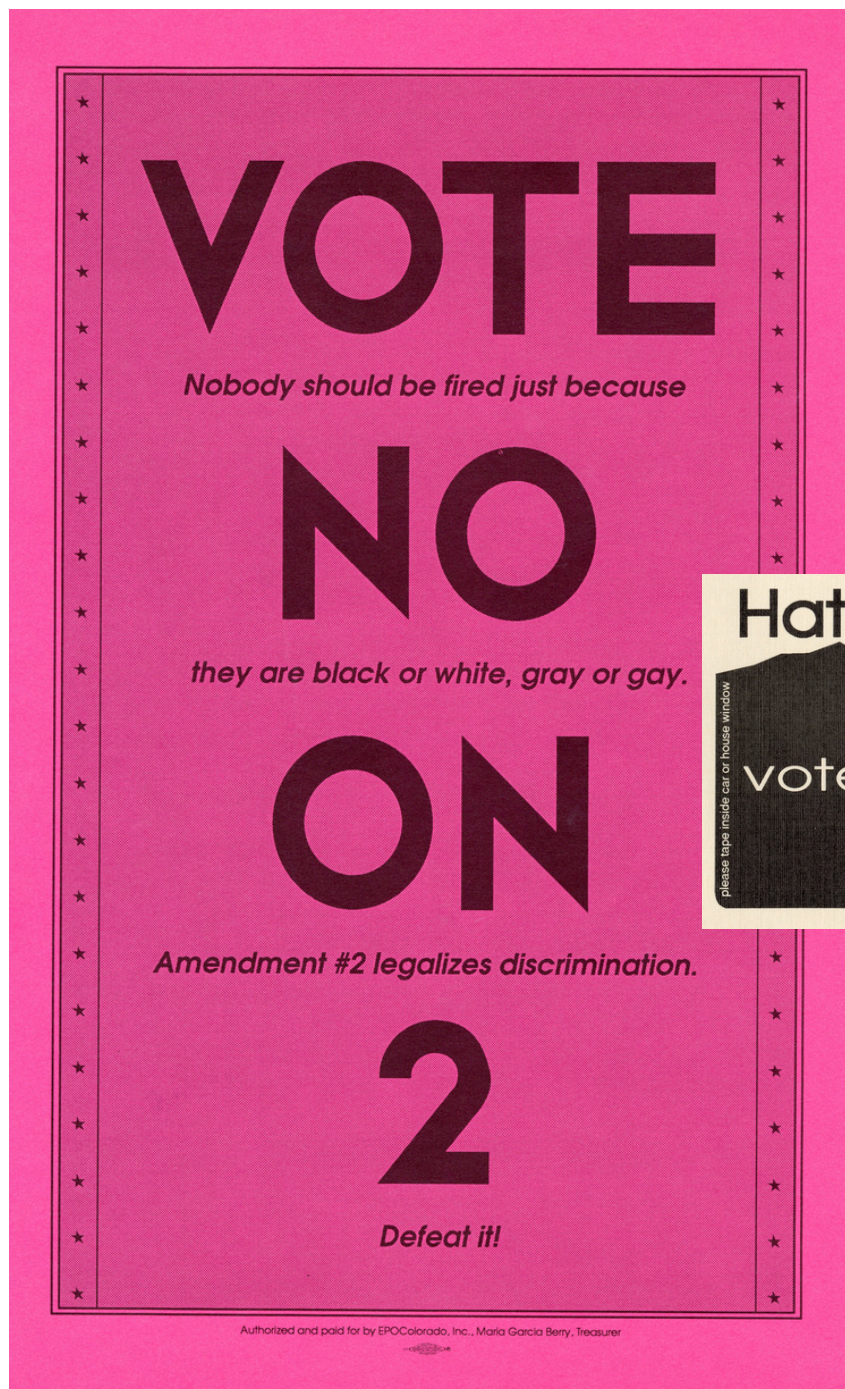


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PIONEERS MUSEUM



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Vote No on 2 sign and pamphlet, 1992
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