

Revolution Now aims to 'Rise Together' to support youth making social change

As 2SLGBTQ+ see their lives becoming increasingly politicized, a local group is striving to create platforms where they can be celebrated and loved.

Revolution Now was founded four years ago by local teacher Megan Glanfield with an aim to create visibility, opportunity and community for marginalized and racialized people and, since its inception, has raised tens of thousands of dollars to support youth through scholarships and donations to non-profits.

This Friday, January 9, their work along with works of the individuals they have supported will be in the spotlight as Revolution Now partners with Royal Rose Gallery to host Rise Together. Running from 6 to 9 p.m., the event will showcase work of scholarship winners Justin Gray, Ava Dedier, Alyssa Morgan, and Michael Freitas, and raise much-needed funds for their 2026 scholarship program.

Revolution Now started four years ago as a social enterprise that was built out of a response to homophobia and transphobia in public schools, says Glanfield, noting she witnessed this firsthand as a teacher. Since then, we've generated over \$32,000 for marginalized youth, either through scholarships or through non-profits that we've donated to, [focusing] on Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ youth and artists who support those communities.

I think we live in a time where people feel they don't have agency. I think we often turn on the news and we're discouraged and disheartened by the time and the news around us, and I think Revolution Now is the counterbalance to that. Our organization reminds people that we have agency all the time, and that we can develop and envision the world that we want to be a part of. Through the arts and learning about people from different life experiences than maybe our own, we can share in creating something that's really beautiful that envisions something better.

This is shaping up to be an exciting year for Revolution Now as they pivot away from their origins as a social enterprise to a non-profit model that will help them rise to the next level.

As they work towards that long-held goal, Friday's event will be a celebration of the journey thus far and the individuals helped along the way.

I'm super-excited about this event and it's something we haven't done this way before it's a showcase of our first four years and the people who are in it, says Glanfield, turning her attention to the youth. I think the world needs to see their work, needs to see their message, needs to see their vision of what the world can be. Justin Gray has been amazing and with our organization for a long time, and was one of the winners of our Black Excellence Scholarships. Now he's a student at OCAD University and is an amazing artist who is going to take the world by storm. He's one of those people where, if you go to the event, you're going to say, I knew him before he was big.

Dedier, another winner of the Black Excellence Scholarship, has just started a non-profit of her own, while Freitas, a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, is a visual artist, fashion designer, and author who has served as Poet Laureate for the Rainbow Awards, a key initiative spearheaded by Revolution Now.

We're really excited about our fourth-annual Rainbow Awards and we're very thankful to the York Regional Police and the York Region Catholic teachers who have traditionally funded scholarships with us, says Glanfield. The Rainbow Awards are a celebration of 2SLGBTQ+ youth and I think in a time where and I am going to use the word 'queer' as an umbrella term that represents all those letters in the alphabet at a time where queer youth are often having their lives politicized, what we're doing is the opposite. We're creating platforms where they can be celebrated and loved, and encouraged to be exactly who they are, where they are right now.

?I think when we start talking about creating the world we want through the arts, it's done one small step at a time. We're a very grassroots organization that's just starting to grow and we appreciate all the people of Newmarket and Aurora who have helped us start, who believed in us and believed in what we were talking about: that the world can be better and can be better through community, visibility and opportunity. The more we get to know each other, the better we can make the world around us.?

For more information on Revolution Now, including tickets to the January 9 event, visit revolution-now.ca.

By Brock Weir
Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter