

PAULINE PARK

b. October 1960

TRANSGENDER ACTIVIST

“It’s important that trans people of color come to the forefront.”

**She is a prominent
NYC-based transgender
rights activist and
cofounder of NYAGRA.**

Pauline Park is a transgender rights activist based in New York. Among other significant contributions, she cofounded NYAGRA, New York’s first statewide transgender rights advocacy organization, and successfully campaigned for the passage of the 2002 New York City Transgender Rights Law.

Born in South Korea, Park was adopted by European American parents in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Growing up in an all-white neighborhood, she faced bullying for her race and gender expression. By age 4, Park identified as a girl but told no one due to her evangelical upbringing. In high school, she realized she was attracted to men.

In college, Park came out as gay to her brother, who came out to her. She left the house for the first time in gender-affirming clothes on Halloween in 1979.

In 1982, Park graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and entered the London School of Economics and Political Science to pursue her master’s degree in European studies. There, she began publicly presenting as a woman.

Park later attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she received a Fulbright fellowship in France before earning her doctorate in political science in 1994. That summer, she attended the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising in New York City. She cofounded Gay Asians & Pacific Islanders of Chicago (GAPIC) a year later.

Park subsequently moved to Queens, New York. In 1997, she cofounded Queens Pride House and Iban/Queer Koreans of New York and began using the name Pauline with her Korean surname, Park.

In 1998, Park cofounded the statewide New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy (NYAGRA). She helped promote “LGBT” as a more inclusive term and spearheaded a campaign to protect New Yorkers from discrimination based on gender identity and expression, leading to a groundbreaking 2002 amendment to the city’s Human Rights Law. In 2005, she became the first openly transgender grand marshal of the New York City Pride March. She successfully advocated for the inclusion of gender identity and expression in the Dignity for All Students Act of New York State in 2010.

Among other honors, Park was recognized as one of 50 Transgender Icons for Transgender Day of Remembrance and as The Most Influential LGBT Asian Icon by the Huffington Post. She is the subject of two documentary short films, “Envisioning Justice: The Journey of a Transgendered Woman” (2008) and “Coming Full Circle: The Journey of a Transgendered Korean Adoptee” (2015).

Park is the board chair of NYAGRA and leads workshops, trainings, and discussions on transgender-related topics.

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