

RUNNING ISN'T SAFE UNLESS IT'S SAFE FOR EVERYONE

BY
TAYLOR
DUTCH

**Every community needs a voice.
That's why these Runners Alliance
ambassadors are speaking up. →**



Tony Luong (Su); Devin Whistone (Daniel); Caleb Alvarado (Bracy, Green); Parker Feierbach (Snell)

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The last time professional trail runner Addie Bracy feared for her safety, she was on a run with her girlfriend, Corey Conner. The couple was logging miles together in the dark when they paused at a stoplight, where Bracy gave Conner a hug and a kiss. A woman pulled her car alongside them and gave them the nastiest look Bracy had ever seen. “[It was] just disgust,” Bracy says. “She shook her head at us like she was disappointed.”

The encounter left Bracy feeling vulnerable and uncomfortable. She realized she wanted to take action.

“Women’s safety is already a big issue,” Bracy says. According to a 2019 *Runner’s World* survey, 84 percent of women have been harassed while running. “But when you add any kind of extra layer of ‘other,’ it increases the likelihood of something happening,” she says. Groups that typically experience discrimination—including LGBTQ+ and BIPOC people—often don’t feel safe while running.

Last fall, we partnered with *Women’s Health*, Hoka One One, and Garmin to create the Runners Alliance, a powerful initiative that offers concrete, real-time solutions to reduce harassment and improve the safety of the places we run.

There’s more work to be done. As the world and running have awakened to the way under-represented communities are more vulnerable to harassment and violence, our focus this year is to develop programming centered around diversity and inclusion with the end goal of making running safer for everyone. We’ve partnered with influential women in the running community who are as dedicated to finding solutions as we are. By bringing in leaders who are committed to improving runner safety, increasing representation, fighting for inclusion, and empowering individuals within the running community, the Runners Alliance seeks to help women and all people who experience harassment reclaim their run.

Meet the five ambassadors over the following pages as they share their plans for making a difference as part of the Runners Alliance.

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Bracy cofounded OUTrun, a group that supports LGBTQ+ runners.



ADDIE BRACY CELEBRATES LGBTQ+ RUNNERS

34, DENVER



For Addie Bracy, running is a source of empowerment and community, which was critical for her in the years before she came out as LGBTQ+.

“No matter what was going on or how much I felt like I wasn’t being authentic in my life, in running I have always felt like the purest form of myself,” Bracy says.

After a frustrating 2016 professional track season, Bracy decided to come out on a public platform for the first time. Now, along with her partner Corey Conner, she helps other LGBTQ+ individuals find empowerment and connection through running.

“We want to use our last few years in the sport to make a difference, and hopefully leave it better than it was when we got here,” Bracy says.

Bracy and Conner started a nonprofit called OUTrun in May 2019, which connects and supports LGBTQ+ individuals through group runs, collaboration with race directors, and a large ambassador network. The goal is to empower LGBTQ+ people within the running community and encourage members of the LGBTQ+ community to embrace the sport.

And on a personal level, Bracy and Conner made the decision to be visible as members of the LGBTQ+ running community. For example, if Conner is on Bracy’s support team during an ultra race, Bracy will give her a kiss at the aid station. It may seem like a small gesture, but it sends

a message of inclusion and acceptance for LGBTQ+ runners. The couple often receives emails and messages from people thanking them for their openness, which inspires more LGBTQ+ individuals to show up fully within the running community.

“The number of emails we got signifies to me there probably are a lot of LGBTQ+ people in the running community who maybe just aren’t open about it,” Bracy says. “We want to keep spreading that message of courage to be yourself and be comfortable in that space.”

In addition to forming OUTrun chapters in cities around the country, Bracy and Conner are working with race directors to generate awareness and develop more inclusive policies at events to create a more welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ runners.

They ask race promoters a series of questions. “Are you promoting your event, brand, or race in a way that feels inclusive to everyone?” Bracy says. “That could be the registration process and gender identification options, transgender policies, really anything that shows an open-arms approach to any kind of runner.”

Bracy hopes to foster collective empowerment within the running community so women and those in marginalized groups can run without feeling afraid.

“When you talk about the issues and challenges, you don’t want the result to be fear,” Bracy says. “You want the result to be empowerment and strength.”

HOW TO MAKE YOUR RUNNING GROUP MORE WELCOMING TO LGBTQ+ RUNNERS

► BE INTENTIONAL

Adopt an actively inclusive approach to welcoming LGBTQ+ runners, Bracy says. Make a concerted effort to invite a diverse group of people to meetups.

► SHARE PRONOUNS

Use pronoun preferences on running group websites, marketing materials, and personal social media platforms. For example, Bracy shares the pronouns “she/her” on her Instagram page. “By sharing [pronouns], you’re letting them know that’s a space that’s welcoming to someone who might not identify with the gender you would assume,” Bracy says.

► CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Plan meetups for runners of all abilities. LGBTQ+ and BIPOC runners can feel conspicuous in predominantly straight or white running groups, Bracy says, and may not want to draw attention to themselves further by falling off the pace. By including options for pace and distance within the group, runners will be less intimidated to join.

► PROVIDE RESOURCES

If LGBTQ+ runners feel unsafe in your area, find out how you can change that. To start, Bracy suggests that organizations create an email list of volunteers that people can contact if they don’t feel safe and would like a running buddy. “That way runners have more ways to reach out, versus having to run alone.”



JORDAN MARIE BRINGS THREE WHITE HORSES DANIEL WANTS JUSTICE FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

32, LOS ANGELES

➔ At the 2019 Boston Marathon, Jordan Marie Brings Three White Horses Daniel had a goal beyond just a time on the clock: She was running to call attention to the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). On some reservations, Indigenous women are more than 10 times more likely to be murdered than the national average, according to Justice Department data. With a red painted handprint over her mouth to represent the women silenced by violence, and the letters MMIW painted on her body, Daniel said a prayer every mile for a different Indigenous woman or girl taken from her community. “I felt so proud and so honored to be able to run for those 26 women and girls and for my grandfather,” Daniel says. “None of it had anything to do with me. I just had to provide the body to run those miles. That was the very least that I could do.” Since then, Daniel has continued to run for justice. Through these efforts, Daniel has raised awareness, brought in allies, rallied support, and pursued solutions to

the crisis of Indigenous people who have been silenced by violence. As a fourth-generation Lakota runner, distance running has always connected Daniel to her family. Her grandfather, Nyal Brings Three White Horses, ran for the University of South Dakota and her mother, Terra Beth Brings Three White Horses Daniel, was an accomplished sprinter who was training for the 1988 Olympic Trials until she learned she was pregnant with Jordan. In high school, the Kul Wičasa Lakota athlete wanted to continue the legacies of her mother and grandfather and share in that family history, and ultimately she earned a spot on the track team at the University of Maine. In the years after college, Daniel began to participate in prayer runs—a practice in which runners honor, support, and interact with lands—organized by groups of Indigenous tribes who raised awareness about environmental and human rights issues, like the protection of Bears Ears National Monument in Utah and the MMIW epidemic. Since she was a child,

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WE REALLY NEED TO CENTER ON KEEPING WOMEN AND OUR RELATIVES SAFE AND PROTECTED.

Daniel wanted to advocate for her people and fight for a better future for the next generation. She works as a consultant for native tribal communities, where she focuses on community development through environmental and energy sustainability, access to quality healthcare, and more. And she founded Rising Hearts, a grassroots group that elevates Indigenous voices and promotes efforts across all movements in the fight for racial, social, climate, and economic justice. For years, she kept her competitive and activist sides separate, until the lack of national visibility for MMIW became too difficult to bear. That’s when she decided to dedicate her Boston Marathon to the cause. “It felt exhausting that so much work was going into this movement to find answers and solutions and justice, and it still was not getting any sort of attention,” she says. “No one cared about the deaths and murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and our relatives. That’s when I took the opportunity to run in prayer, run for them rather than for me.” By running for justice, Daniel hopes to create a better future for Indigenous people, the BIPOC community, LGBTQ+, two-spirit, and non-binary individuals so that members of marginalized groups are represented and respected. “I believe we can have a better world that is more inclusive and diverse and more supportive,” Daniel says.



Daniel advocates for the rights and visibility of Indigenous runners.

HOW TO HONOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WHILE RUNNING

► **CONSIDER LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** Land acknowledgments are formal statements recognizing Indigenous people as traditional stewards of the land and celebrating the relationship that exists between Indigenous people and their territories. When event organizers present these before an event, Daniel believes it gives the running community a better connection to the land and its history, and helps runners recognize the Indigenous communities who remain.

► **DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH** Daniel recommends runners research the Indigenous names of native lands they occupy, and share their findings on social media. By including the Indigenous language spelling with the English name of the territory and sharing a historical fact about those communities, you create a stepping stone in a continuing conversation toward education, understanding, and respect.

► **GET STARTED** A new SMS bot developed by Code for Anchorage with info provided by the nonprofit Native Land can tell you whose land you’re on. Just text your zip code to (907) 312-5085, and the bot will respond with the name of the tribe that originally occupied that area.



HOW THE RUNNING COMMUNITY CAN EMBRACE DIVERSITY

► GET COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE

“We need to recognize that [standing up for diversity] is going to come at a cost. It might be as simple as discomfort, but it might also be loss of relationships with people in your life, a loss of followers, or conflict with bosses,” Su says. She encourages people to accept the feeling and make sure your efforts are rooted in empathy and compassion.

► INVENTORY YOUR RUNNING LIFE

Ask yourself: Who’s in your running group? Who are the authors of the books you read? Who are the most influential voices you consider on a daily basis? Do they represent different points of view? If not, be intentional about learning from other cultures.

► EDUCATE YOURSELF

To learn more about American history from a BIPOC perspective, Su recommends watching the film *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* and reading *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon, and *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, by Cathy Park Hong.

When Su didn’t see BIPOC runners represented in media, she started an Instagram account to change that.

“WE ALL BENEFIT COLLECTIVELY WHEN EACH PERSON INDIVIDUALLY IS ABLE TO SHOW UP FULLY IN ALL ASPECTS OF WHO THEY ARE.”



Join the Runners Alliance!

Sign up at runnersworld.com/joinrunnersalliance for updates and information on how to make your community safer for runners.

CAROLYN SU SPOTLIGHTS UNDERREPRESENTED ATHLETES

37, BOSTON



Carolyn Su has devoted her life to supporting underrepresented groups, whether it’s showing up as a female in a male-dominated work space and speaking up for women, or sharing the perspective of Asian Americans at her children’s school or sports activities.

“That’s my mindset,” Su says. “For our whole life, we bear a responsibility to advocate for voices that are minimized, ignored, or unheard.”

After noticing a lack of BIPOC representation in running media, brands, and groups, Su reached out to several influential podcast hosts in the running community and asked them to consider covering a more diverse range of athletes. In the conversations that followed, it became clear to Su that creating a more inclusive environment was not a priority for most. In response, she decided to build her own platform. She launched the Diverse We Run Instagram account in 2018 to elevate the experiences of the BIPOC runners. In weekly posts, she features a runner from the BIPOC community and shares their journey to running.

“[Representation] helps to broaden our worldview, but then it also helps each person dream bigger and know that they’re not alone in the struggles or the challenges they face, and that their experience is valid,” Su says. “We all benefit collectively when each person

individually is able to show up fully in all aspects of who they are.”

Since launching Diverse We Run two years ago, Su has collaborated with followers on community events, amplified fellow BIPOC platforms, fostered discussion about building representation, been interviewed on several running podcasts, and made lasting connections with runners around the country. She’s also received countless messages thanking her for featuring BIPOC runners.

By sharing these unique stories, Su hopes to make runners of different ethnic, cultural, and racial groups feel welcome.

Su also hopes to encourage more BIPOC individuals to feel empowered to be themselves, which she believes will create a safer atmosphere within the running space. To emphasize the significance of representation, Su quotes Marian Wright Edelman: “It’s hard to be what you can’t see,” she says. “It’s work that happens within the minority right now, but it’s also work that needs to happen by the majority of people who are more predominantly represented in the sport.”

“[In running media, marketing, and groups] I want runners who are not just that main image of a thin, white runner,” Su says. “I want runners who don’t often see themselves as represented to be able to feel like they can show up at a running store or a running group and they belong.”