

# February

## NEWSLETTER



UNITY  
— for —  
EQUALITY

### Learn More About:

Eat Ice-Cream for  
Breakfast Day  
Valentine's Day  
Shrove Tuesday  
COVID-19 Vaccine  
Face Masks and  
Sanitizers Distribution

Unity for Women An  
Initiative of Women  
Empowerment

Unity for Equality  
Chapter Morocco

# Eat Ice-cream for Breakfast Day

Eman Khalid

Eat Ice-Cream For Breakfast Day is celebrated every year on the first Saturday of February. The holiday is celebrated in a very simple, yet eccentric way: just grab your favorite flavor of ice cream from your nearest grocery store and enjoy it in the cool air of spring. This being said, Eat Ice-Cream for Breakfast Day is more than just a holiday. It is also about enjoying and appreciating the little things in life, and about trying something new. But where did this tradition come from? Keep reading to find out.

According to an article by Days of the Year, it was a snowy day in Rochester, New York in the 1960s when the holiday was invented by mother of six, Florence Rappaport. That morning, her children kept complaining about how it was too cold to do anything fun. To dissipate this feeling of boredom, she said, "Let's have ice cream for breakfast!"

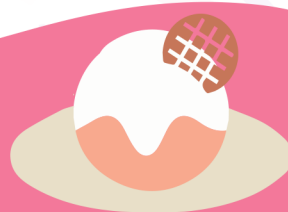
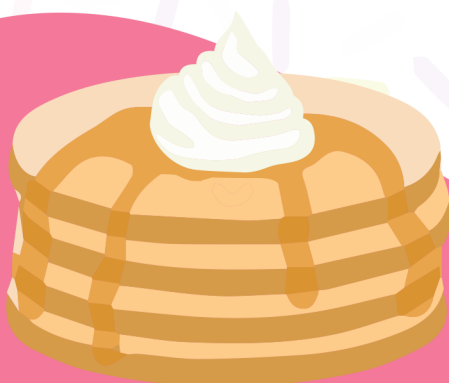
The tradition went on and on for the next couple of years, and as the children went to college, they'd invite their friends over to have ice cream in February. The boys and their mother did not know that their simple trend would end up being so important for so many people! This was not only for Americans, but in different parts of the globe as well. Soon, Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day spread to Germany, Honduras, Nepal, Namibia, and New Zealand. This was mainly thanks to Florence's grandchildren. They traveled extensively and spoke about their grandmother's tradition to people from different cultural and racial backgrounds.

They'd also often host intimate family celebrations or large parties in honor of the auspicious occasion of Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day.

According to a blog article, by Alisha Valerie, in 2003, Eat Ice Cream For Breakfast Day was celebrated, for the first time, as an official holiday in China, and was featured in the local magazines of Hangzhou, and in various major publications as well, such as in the Chinese Edition of the Cosmopolitan Magazine. Furthermore, in 2013, the day was reported to be celebrated in Israel and, in 2014, it was officially celebrated in England too. A tradition that begun as a source of entertainment and joy between a mother and her children has now become an official day celebrated globally. In the past few decades, ice cream shops, worldwide, have

used this day as an excuse to attract customers who love devouring a delicious scoop of ice cream on a cold February morning. Also, according to an article by Anyday Guide, various non-profit organizations also use this day as a means of raising money for charity as well.

You can celebrate Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day in whatever way you please; whether it is to raise money for a charity campaign, or simply to enjoy the early spring weather, whilst digging into a tub of Ben & Jerry's. It's up to you, as long as you are eating ice cream on the first Saturday of February to keep up with the tradition!



# VALENTINE'S DAY

## Jennifer Brooks

For many of us, with romantic partners, Valentine's Day is the perfect way to celebrate our love, with cards, candle lit dinners, and plenty of chocolate. It is important that we have a day to do this. We are all so consumed by getting ahead these days, in our careers and our achievements, that it is easy not to take a minute to celebrate our loved ones. This being said, not everyone feels validated this time of year. For those who are single, seeing those around them celebrate Valentine's Day with their partners can make them feel incredibly lonely. Similarly, those in the LGBTQ+ community often find themselves invalidated this time of year, as celebrations tend to be focused on straight couples. This being said, it doesn't have to be this way, and many people are finding new ways to make the holiday more inclusive. Keep reading to find out ways in which you can celebrate Valentine's Day in any way you choose.

According to a Cosmopolitan article, by Rose Stokes, the romantic films we settle down to watch on Valentine's day rarely cater to an LGBTQ+ audience. They are almost always about cis men and women overcoming obstacles to be together. As a result, queer couples often feel unrepresented in these narratives. This being said, Francesca Forristal, a 24-year-old bisexual drag performer, says that the trope of overcoming adversity in order to be together is actually more relevant to queer people. The LGBTQ+ community literally have to fight to be accepted in a world that still degrades and belittles them over who they choose to love. With this in mind, Forristal states that this knowledge has allowed her

to see that Valentine's Day is relevant to her, even if it isn't obviously apparent, which has allowed her to celebrate who she is, even if she sometimes feels underrepresented.

Nonetheless, not everyone wants a romantic partner, and for those of us who don't experience this kind of attraction, Valentine's Day, a day mostly used to celebrate our significant others, can feel even more irrelevant. This being said, according to Stokes, many aromantic people, such as Yasmin Benoit, are using the day to celebrate platonic love as well. Being able to do this is important; even though romantic relationships are often glorified, the relationships we have with friends and family are just as important in terms of building us up, and making us feel safe and accepted for who we are.

However, there's another kind of love that often goes unacknowledged this time of year: self-love. Although it might seem indulgent, spending some time appreciating ourselves is actually the most important love story we can ever be a part of. This is because, whether we like it or not, we can't depend on anyone else for our own happiness, and we can't expect them to, because they aren't in charge of our lives; we are, and it's up to us to live accordingly.

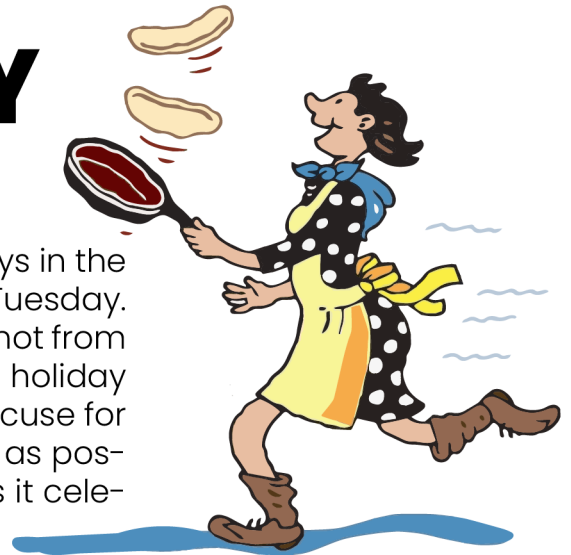
So, this Valentine's Day, I think it's high time that we thought a little bit more generously about what love actually is, and celebrate each form in its own individual, glorious beauty.



# SHROVE TUESDAY

Jennifer Brooks

On the **16th of February**, one of the most beloved days in the Christian calendar will be upon us again: Shrove Tuesday. Although it may not ring many bells for you, if you're not from a country, like the UK, who actively celebrates it, the holiday is worth knowing about; not least because it is an excuse for us to have another day where we can eat as much as possible. So, what exactly is Shrove Tuesday, and how is it celebrated? Keep reading to find out.



In the UK, Shrove Tuesday, also known as Pancake Day, marks the last feast day, before the start of lent on Ash Wednesday. According to an article, by Ellen Castelow, lent is a time of fasting, so that Anglo-Saxon Christians can cleanse themselves, before Easter. Christians also traditionally went to confession, where they were "shriven" or absolved for their sins, and a bell would be rung in order to call people to church. This was typically known as a "pancake bell," due to the fact this is what people ate on that day, as it was the last opportunity for them to use up any eggs and fats they had lying about the house, before fasting. This tradition is still a much-loved part of Shrove Tuesday, and many UK citizens still use the day as an opportunity to eat as many pancakes as humanly possible.

Castelow also notes that UK citizens are also known to partake in pancake races, which involves large groups of people racing down streets, whilst flipping a cooked pancake in a frying pan. This tradition was made famous in 1445 by a woman in Olney, Buckinghamshire, who heard the pancake bell whilst she was still making pancakes. As a result, she had to run to church, clutching her frying pan, still wearing an apron! Due to this, pancake races are still a beloved part of the holiday, and many participants like to compete in the race dressed like housewives.

Nonetheless, according to an article by Simon Meechan, even though Pancake Day traditions are very exciting for British people, they do seem a little lowkey, when they are compared to how other parts of the world celebrate Shrove Tuesday. In Rio De Janeiro, for instance, the holiday is traditionally celebrated with an extravagant Carnival. Similarly, in New Orleans people celebrate Mardi Gras, and citizens will mark the holiday with parties and parades. According to an article, by Emanuella Grinberg, celebrations resembling Mardi Gras are thought to go back to Roman festivals, such as Saturnalia; a winter solstice celebration of Saturn, the god of agriculture. During this time, people would bake beans into cakes in order to celebrate the harvest season. Traditionally, whoever found the bean would be heralded "king of the day." As a result, instead of pancakes, the sweet staple of New Orleans' Mardi Gras is known as the king cake.



So, if you are celebrating Shrove Tuesday this year, I hope that you enjoy it, and I hope you take advantage of your last chance of indulgence before lent begins. I know I will.

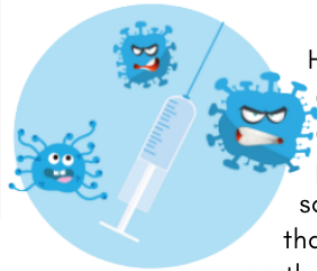


## COVID-19 Vaccine

Jennifer Brooks

Since March, when the world went into lockdown, we have all been waiting for the light at the end of the tunnel. Although none of us were naïve enough to assume that everything would go back to normal overnight, we were hoping that eventually there would be a glimmer of hope, that let us know that the pandemic wasn't going to last forever. As a result, when we got the news that the Coronavirus vaccination program had begun, many of us were thrilled. Nonetheless, even though this is brilliant news, others remain fearful. COVID-19 is a completely novel illness, so how will we know for certain that the vaccine is safe, if we are still learning about how the disease works?

One of the main reasons that many are fearful that the vaccines are unsafe is due to how quickly they were developed. According to the Wellcome Trust, a vaccine can take up to 10 years to be fully developed, so it is easy to assume that the COVID-19 vaccine has been rushed. Nonetheless, according to Dr June Raine, the chief executive of the UK's medicines regulator, the MHRA, states that even though the vaccine was developed quickly, no corners were cut, and it was tested in the same way as any other vaccine would be, with the same group size and testing time frame. As a result, even though it was produced quickly, it was still put through an extremely rigorous review, before being given public approval, meaning it is just as safe as any other vaccine is.



However, although scientists and medical professionals are keen to reassure the public that the vaccines are safe, many are still convinced that they are dangerous. This is partly due to the misleading claims that we are currently hearing from anti-vaccine activists. According to an Atlantic article, by Renée DiResta, within 48 hours of the first people in the US receiving the Pfizer vaccine, many were already amplifying stories about allergic reactions to it, on social media, in order to scare the general public. To combat this, many authority figures are trying to dispel these myths. This includes the current US president, Joe Biden, who, according to the Guardian, received the Pfizer vaccine live on TV, to prove to US citizens that it is safe to use.

Nonetheless, even if Biden, and public health authorities are raising positive awareness, there are still many things that even scientists don't yet know about the vaccines. After all, according to a BBC article, by James Gallagher, the Pfizer vaccine is a new type of jab, known as an RNA vaccine. Although it is a revolutionary treatment, it is the first RNA vaccine to be approved for human use. Also, as the vaccine is so new, only time will tell if it will provide long lasting protection against the disease, or if we will have to keep taking these vaccines annually, like we do for similar diseases, like the flu.

This being said, public health authorities wouldn't have approved the vaccine if they didn't think that the risks outweighed the positives. Therefore, it's important to listen to the facts, rather than get consumed by misinformation designed to perpetuate fear. So, when your turn comes, and you are able to, I hope that you'll get your jab. I know I will.

# UNITY FOR EQUALITY DISTRIBUTES FREE FACE MASKS AND HAND SANITIZERS IN ASTORIA, QUEENS

Eman Khalid

With the rapid spread of COVID-19 and a significant rise in mortality rate, there has been a decrease in the availability of masks for community members across the states. Unity for Equality distributed approximately 1,000 face masks and hand sanitizers from 11 am till 1pm on 24th January, Sunday, in the local community of Astoria, Queens, along with volunteers Matthew Poepoe, Weyuan Liang, Dr. Anthony Pappas, and our Chairman, Mr. Neil Trivedi.

With the closure of companies, businesses, and firms during the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic along with a significant rise in unemployment globally, purchasing even the fundamental and basic necessities have become unyielding for people of the lower-middle-class communities.

Similar to Unity for Equality, various non-profit organizations in the states were generous enough to donate food, clothes, masks, and hand sanitizers to those heavily affected by the pandemic. Other than the distribution of free masks in Astoria, Queens, Unity for Equality has also created a COVID-19 Relief Fund that aims at supporting the elderly, the minority communities, and the ones who face food insecurity during the pandemic.

For the first time in 20 years, Global Poverty is expected to rise at a disrupting rate and is estimated to have affected between 9.1% and 9.4% of the world's population in 2020 and is likely to push 150 million people into extreme poverty by 2021. According to the New York Times, healthcare workers across the state are still facing a daunting shortage of masks. However, with the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines, there seems to be a sheer sense of optimism and hope for a change in the world's current situation. In 2020, Unity for Equality distributed over 4,000 masks to healthcare workers. And in 2021, we aspire to help and assist many more individuals and communities who were substantially affected by the pandemic negatively.



# UNITY FOR WOMEN

## An Initiative of Women Empowerment

Eman Khalid

Despite living in the 21st Century, women are facing crises, violence, injustice, and abuse at an intense rate. According to UNICEF, around 650 million women across the globe were married before the age of 18, and more than 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic abuse against women has intensified. Amongst some of the pressing issues faced by women today are; gender pay gap, digital gender divide, workplace or academic harassment, period poverty and stigma, job security, limited opportunities to own land, poor working conditions, and underrepresentation as leaders in healthcare. However, women's rights organizations have played a substantially contributing role in history in initiating gender equality movements and educating women about the rights they possess as human beings.

Women still suffer from unequal rights and domestic violence in many developing countries and are often considered second class citizens compared to their male counterparts. Despite the fact that many women are successful and empowered in their respective fields of work, many women are also silenced, and face injustice on a regular basis. Unity for Women has seen the need to address this issue. We aim to empower women all over the globe by providing them with the much-needed support, motivation, and opportunities to grow in the corporate world. Unity for Women is a new group under Unity for Equality.

Unity for women aims to break the stereotype that a woman's place is solely confined to a kitchen or a house; *men and women are partners who should walk hand-in-hand to play a contributing role in positively impacting the lives of minority communities and help those who suffer in poverty, war, and oppression.* Unity for Women recognizes the achievements that women and girls have made over the years, and plan to continue recognizing their significance, talents, and accomplishments for many years to come.

Unity for Women is lead by the Press Director of Unity for Equality, Eman Khalid. Eman Khalid is a journalist, writer, storyteller, and researcher. Khalid says, "Why is there a need for empowering women? Because there are many countries, states, and communities globally where women lack the basic requirements and needs to live their lives freely and conveniently. Women in developing countries are not given the chance to educate themselves." She adds, "Women who might be more talented and capable than I am are not given the opportunities to use their skills. However, even if they are given the chance to utilize their skills, their achievements and success stories often remain buried under the weight of patriarchy or toxic masculinity. Women of minority communities, especially women of color, are often underrepresented and underappreciated in their respective fields of work. We do not celebrate a woman's success unless it is an engagement or pregnancy. Unity for Women aims to celebrate the success stories of women whose achievements are not brought forth in media. Every woman, irrespective of her culture, race, or religion, deserves to have her accomplishments and success stories recognized, and Unity for Women aims to do that."

**Unity for Women is a community of women, it is a movement - a movement of equality, a movement of humanity, a movement of empowering women of all origins.**



# Unity For Equality Chapter Morocco

EMAN KHALID



Unity for Equality has launched its new initiative-chapter Morocco which will be led by Soumaya El-Joundi. Soumaya El Joundi is a 22-year-old journalist and aspiring human rights activist. Born and brought up in Morocco, Soumaya always believed in the power of writing for the right cause. Her passion for learning led her to pursue a bachelor's in English Literature with a focus on cultural studies. During her bachelor's, Soumaya developed an extra interest in journalism and media. Interning with Morocco World News, Soumaya published an extensively researched article on child marriage and the effects it had on young girls in general. She is currently pursuing her Master's in Digital Communication and Media.

Soumaya El Joundi is appointed as the President of Chapter Morocco of Unity for Equality by the Chairman of our organization and the Board of Directors. Through the chapter Morocco initiative, Soumaya aspires to positively impact the Moroccan community, especially those residing in the rural areas and those who belong to the minority community. Despite the improved condition of Morocco's economy, poverty is still an issue that is faced by many households and families. In our latest interview with Soumaya El-Joundi, she portrayed her dismay in the lack of non-profit and humanitarian organizations in Morocco and how the minority communities are suffering from the lack of food, shelter, and proper clothing in extreme weather conditions. She says, *"we do not have enough associations and organizations in Morocco that want to contribute to the betterment of the community. People do not really want to invest in projects. In Morocco, we have rural areas, and we have people who die due to extreme cold, and they don't have enough food nor do they have enough blankets to sleep well. Having the possibility to help these people through Unity for Equality - Chapter Morocco, I will use this opportunity to help children who deserve to have a happy childhood, one devoid of poverty and hunger."* She adds, *"there are children, there are women, different people are suffering in different ways."*

*Through the chapter Morocco of Unity for Equality, I want to help young children reach their dreams because getting a chance to working with an American organization, and studying in a good university is something that everyone deserves."*

According to the World Bank Organization, 40% of Morocco's population resides in rural areas, and amongst that 40% are people who need our help. Soumaya El-Joundi has seen the need to address these issues and aspires to positively impact her country through educating the youth and providing equal opportunities to the vulnerable population, such as women and children. Due to the lack of awareness on Mental health issues, Soumaya El-Joundi wishes to educate the masses regarding the importance of addressing specific social issues such as depression, and the causes and effects of abuse. Other than establishing gender equality and ensuring a proper system of education for everyone, Soumaya El-Joundi also aims to inspire young girls in Morocco to follow their passions and dreams with diligence, courage and hard work.



# New Merch!

Check out the new merch we just dropped!



## CLOTHING

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Every purchase goes towards efforts to address the challenges we face today, from climate change to extreme inequality. When you purchase Unity For Equality's merch, you will turn your action into a real, lasting impact.

If you want to help, check out our merch website at:  
[www.unityforequality.org/shop](http://www.unityforequality.org/shop)

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