



MID-ATLANTIC

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The ONYX Code

ONYX is an organization formed and operated by People of Color who enjoy the leather lifestyle. Our goal is to provide an informational and social organization to address issues specific to people of color who chose to project the positive aspects of the leather lifestyle and support our community and economic initiatives.

Support, spirituality, safety and saneness are keys to attaining our goals. Toward this end, it is the principle aim of ONYX to develop in its members the highest standards of loyalty to the laws and established code of ONYX and to treat all in society with honor, unselfishness, and tolerance.

It is the responsibility of each member to uphold the traditions, standards and practices of this organization as well as the time-honored principles of democracy on which this country was built.

It is the fundamental belief of this organization that no finer means is offered for the achievement of these aims than the brotherly association of persons with similar tastes, inclinations and goals.

A Commitment to Diversity



Brother Brian Swilling (Dominion ONYX) is credited with the creation of this motto, which has since been adopted nationally by ONYX

ONYX centers on the needs and desires of Queer Men of Color in our activities and policies. Although a majority of our Brothers identify as African-American/Black, ONYX is for ALL People of Color, including our members of Latinx/Latine, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American heritage. We are committed to ensuring the unique cultural experiences of all communities of color are incorporated into the life of ONYX.

Our Brotherhood is open to people of all genders. We recognize and celebrate the unique journeys that bring each of us to humanity. It is the responsibility of all Brothers to support and stand for one another and to educate ourselves about Brothers whose experience is different from our own. This means standing up (when necessary and/or asked for) for our transgender Brothers, our fem-



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presenting Brothers, our Pearl siblings and others in traditionally queer male spaces, and in places and locations where transphobic, fem-phobic, or anti-woman language or behavior is exhibited.

Our Brothers bring differing levels of ability, and we believe that these levels should not restrict their ability to participate fully in the life of ONYX. Some of our Brothers are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, so we strive to provide sign language interpreters to our events. Other Brothers have mobility challenges, and may use canes, crutches, wheelchairs, or other mobility devices. We work to ensure that venues where we have events are wheelchair-accessible. Where that is not possible, we see it as our responsibility to ensure all of our Brothers and guests can access our events.

The members of ONYX come in all shapes and sizes and hues. We exist along a continuum of masculinity and femininity. Our Brothers represent men of many different generations. Through our imagery, programming, and policy, we continue to ensure that ALL members of ONYX are represented.

The larger ONYX family includes the ONYX Pearls and our Associates of all genders/ gender expressions and ethnicities. The members of ONYX are committed to participation in the larger community of kinksters, fetishists, and leatherfolx, while continuing to center Men of Color specifically, and all People of Color generally, in our words and actions.

A Commitment to Education and Community Service



The T.E.A.C.H. program concept is credited to Brother Rod McCoy (HotRod ONYX) and has since been adopted nationally by ONYX

For many People of Color in our region, ONYX Mid-Atlantic (ONYXMA) is an introduction to Leather/Kink/BDSM through our bar nights, parties, events, and kink demonstrations. Our lecture and demonstration program, called T.E.A.C.H. (To Educate and Cultivate Hotness) provides education on various Leather, BDSM, and Kink topics including temperature, impact, and ass play, as well as poly relationships. As a part of the program, we have partnered with educational institutions including Widener University, Bowie State University, and Muhlenberg College, and the DC Black Pride organization.

We are committed to serving our community. Since 2010, ONYXMA has raised money for a number of charities during our Cocktail Party and Gear Show, part of Mid-Atlantic Leather Weekend. We have marched in support of queer rights, equal rights for women, and transgender rights. Our Brothers, Associates, and Pledges make a specific point to support the LGBTQ+ and



People of Color-owned and -operated business and organizations that support us. Lastly, we support our community through service as titleholders.

Standards of Conduct

The following Standards of Conduct are applicable to all Members of ONYX Mid-Atlantic, including Pledges, Brothers, and Associates. When Members are found to be in egregious violation of or consistently refuse to abide by these Standards, they may be subject to any and all actions permitted in the By Laws of ONYX, Inc., Mid-Atlantic Chapter. The procedure for bring charges against Members, fact-finding, and resolution of the charges are set forth in Paragraph 6 below.

Members are reminded to follow proper etiquette and exercise discretion in their actions and communications. Always remember that you are a steward of the organization's brand and reputation, whether or not you are wearing your patch.

1. Members of ONYX operate with a sense of personal integrity

- a. We strive to be true to our words.
- b. We are honest and truthful in our interactions.
- c. We do not lie, cheat, or steal.
- d. We do not misrepresent our abilities and experience to others.
- e. We strive toward a reciprocity of affection and a mutuality of respect with our siblings.
- f. We believe in mutual support for the larger LGBTQ+ community.
- g. We model our values and the behaviors we stand for in public and private.
- h. We hold each other accountable.

2. Members of ONYX value, respect, and model Consent as a core value

Consent is one's own personal agency and ability to agree to some proposal or activity. Permission is the authority one has to give their consent for another to interact with someone with whom they are in a relationship (BDSM/kink or otherwise).

- a. We understand that consent **MUST** be freely given before engaging in sexual, kink, romantic, or any other activities or relationships.
 - i. Consent must be given with a clear mind and without the threat of consequences.
 - ii. Consent cannot be given while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or under duress.
 - iii. Consent must be specific to the activities under consideration. Things are expressly consented to or they are not, especially when engaging in kink activities.
 - iv. Legally, consent cannot be given for activities such as castration, removal of a limb, suffocation to unconsciousness, rape, or murder.
- b. We understand that consent may be freely withdrawn or modified at any point during a sexual or kink encounter.
 - i. Consent must be considered withdrawn if participants are no longer able to respond due to unconsciousness or lapsing into incoherency.



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- ii. We are bound to respect that withdrawal and govern ourselves accordingly.
- c. We respect and value Permission as a related critical value in interpersonal relationships.
 - i. Permission does not supersede someone's ability to grant/deny consent.
 - ii. We respect permissions granted/denied by parties known to us.
- d. We do not take private photography, videos or electronic media involving other people without their expressed consent.
 - i. We recognize that it is immoral (if not illegal) to take/create media of people engaged in sexual contact in clubs/bars, sex clubs, private events, etc. without their consent.
 - ii. We may not share or distribute them without expressed consent. Remember that there is no expectation of complete privacy on any form of social media (such as private groups, message boards, text chains, etc.) and posted content can be the basis of civil and/or criminal prosecution. This includes transmission via text, email, or mobile applications.
 - iii. The proscription against taking such imagery/media includes taking images and/or audio of people encountered in public places or in places where one might have an expectation of privacy, including bathrooms, gyms, locker rooms, etc. Such imagery is already considered illegal in most jurisdictions. The intent behind the taking of the image is immaterial.
- e. We do not share private play date / play activity information/images (past, present or future) without the consent of all participating parties.
- f. We do not share the personal statistics, proclivities, or kinks of play partners or intimates without their permission.
- g. We observe and respect the privacy of individual's health information.
 - i. We do not share any details of another's physical and mental health without permission.
 - ii. We do not share details of another's HIV or other STI status, medications they may be taking, hospitalizations, etc.

3. Members of ONYX observe interpersonal protocol standards.

- a. We do not touch or engage others without permission. This includes hugs and any other touches, whether sexual or non-sexual in nature or intent. This includes touching their apparel, harness, head gear, jewelry, etc.
- b. We respect the visible signs and symbols, such as collars, of a BDSM dynamic. We never touch these symbols unless expressly invited to do so.
- c. We do not attempt to circumvent, subvert, or sabotage someone's dynamic or relationship.
- d. We resolve conflicts and disagreements in a manner based on mutual respect for one another and the best of intentions.
- e. We never interrupt a play scene unless you strongly feel one of more participants are facing impending health or safety concerns. This should be done in only the rarest of circumstances. Do not attempt to talk to participants during a scene.
- f. We never join a scene uninvited.



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4. Members of ONYX communicate respectfully and accurately.

The members of ONYX understand that our words and actions must reflect our collective values and principles. We exercise thoughtful and restrained behavior. We think before we speak or act.

- a. We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on sex, race, color, creed, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, disability, marital status, or any other recognized group.
- b. We refrain from inappropriate or mean-spirited communication, including both in-person and social media communications.
- c. We do not bully with our words or actions and we avoid spreading gossip.
- d. We treat everyone as equals deserving of the same rights, respect and dignity.
- e. We seek out the facts before offering an opinion on relevant issues, preferring to speak from a place of knowledge rather than emotion. We accept and value critiques and positions different from our own.
- f. We advocate for all within the LGBTQ+ community when necessary or asked.
 - i. We hear and respect the voices of our siblings from marginalized communities.
 - ii. We believe their stories even if they are radically different from our own experience.
 - iii. We are careful in our advocacy never to center our voice over theirs.
- g. We do not use toxic gay male language.
 - i. We do not value masculinity and masculine ideals in ways considered toxic.
 - ii. We do not prefer the masculine at the expense of the feminine.
 - iii. We do not express negative opinions of femininity or of female genitalia.
 - iv. We do not use terms such as “Gold Star Gay” or “Platinum Gay”.
 - v. We do not use coded language to refer to or shame those who prefer to be penetrated, nor do we apply value judgements to those who prefer penetration vs. being penetrated.
- h. We do not use transphobic language or support transphobic ideals and attitudes.

We value our cisgender, gender non-conforming, female AMAB, and male AFAB siblings and community members equally. We espouse this equality in our words, actions, and advocacy.

- i. We do not use racist language or support racist ideals and attitudes.

We recognize the diversity of People of Color within the ONYX family. If we are not part of a particular group within the community of People of Color, we refrain from using racist or coded language to describe them or espousing attitudes and opinions used to marginalize them. We promote this diversity in our words, actions, and advocacy.

5. Members of ONYX conform to our personal appearance standards.

- a. We avoid the use of excessive deodorant or cologne at leather events or in leather spaces.



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- b. We observe the follow ONYX gear standards:
 - i. Wear your colors on the back of your bar vest. The patch is attached between the shoulder blades, approximately 3 inches below your collar. This placement can be adjusted up or down if the vest back is too narrow.
 - ii. Wear your ONYX name badge on the left side of your vest, above your heart.
 - iii. Wear your run pins and other accessories in a ranked order. Those with the most special meaning go closest to your heart.
 - iv. Wear your ONYX wrist band on your right wrist, indicating submission to ONYX. The words should face outward so as to be easily read by others.
- c. We do not wear clothing or other materials identifying ourselves as members of ONYX at public play sessions.
 - i. This includes wearing your bar vest in dungeon spaces or in bar backrooms, even if it is an ONYX sponsored event.
 - ii. This prohibition extends to taking images in private play sessions that will be posted via social media.

6. Violation of the Standards of Conduct

- a. An accusation of a Violation of the Standards of Conduct shall be presented to the Executive Board of ONYX Mid-Atlantic in writing.
 - i. The Accusing Member(s) shall prepare a written statement on the nature of the Violation, including the parties involved, relevant dates and times, and other pertinent data on the Violation.
 - ii. The Accused Member(s) shall be informed of the receipt of the accusation within five (5) business days from its receipt by the Executive Board, and offered an opportunity to prepare a written rebuttal, although one is not necessary as the burden of proof of the violation rests with the Accusing Member(s).
 - iii. The Executive Board may ask for or require clarifying revisions to either or both statements.
- b. Resolution of the Violation will follow the approved Membership Disciplinary / Termination Processes.