

Don't Stop Marching!

Solidarity with Queer and Black Communities

By Brian Halderman

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When I came out to myself, close to thirty years ago now, I knew little about the gay community or being part of the “tribe.” All I knew at the time was I found men attractive and needed to understand what that meant for me and my future. In those days the internet was not as helpful as it is now, so I ventured to the library on campus and checked out a book title [“On Being Gay”](#) by Brian McNaught. I recall reading it quickly as I identified with his experience of a Catholic upbringing and being very involved with church ministry.

McNaught detailed his own struggle with understanding his sexuality in spite of what his faith and family told him. It opened up new insights and new questions for me. I started reading more and digging into moral theology. I sought out a campus minister for conversation and a year later began coming out publicly to family and friends.

As I look back, I feel blessed to have been embraced and accepted for who I am. I never experienced outright rejection because of my orientation. Self-acceptance and affirmation are so important for people coming to terms with their sexuality and embracing a new life in the LGBTQ community where they experience acceptance and pride.

As I was writing this reflection, the news broke around the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police. Mr. Floyd’s death is one among many under police brutality and racism when interacting with the black community. While protests and objections have happened with past incidents, this one seems different. It is as if a collective exhalation of hurt, anger, frustration has been released and we are breathing for all those who could not breathe.

As I thought about the anger, hurt, and in some cases violence that has happened over these recent days, I was drawn back to the origins of LGBTQ pride, which was a riot! It was the gay community’s exhalation of enough is enough. [In the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, the Stonewall Inn was raided by the police and patrons fought back.](#) They were tired of years of police hostility and unfair treatment for no reason other than their sexual orientation or gender identity. The riots lasted several days until July 1st and a year later on the anniversary of that infamous night the community marched in what became the first pride parade in the United States. The marches continued each year and spread to other cities and countries.

Similarly in the 1960’s Dr. King and others lead marches for racial justice in the civil rights movement. While these efforts shifted some and led to the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, the struggle continued. While racism is a much deeper systemic injustice than homophobia, they both tarnish our efforts to be a more compassionate society. We must be allies in the struggle for equity, inclusion, and equal rights under the law.

While it is hard to have a lot of “pride” this year, given that there will be no parades or public celebrations due to the coronavirus and now we are struck by the untenable images of systemic violence against the black community. It all seems surreal, but unfortunately it is very real. As the LGBTQ community marks pride month, let us remember the tenacity and purpose that the patrons at the Stonewall Inn had on that hot summer night in 1969 and the days after. Recall how the marches of the civil rights movement sent a powerful message, of visibility and strength. And yet 50 years later we are still marching for justice. There is power in allies joining the march, we are stronger together!

What part can we play in the exhalation of nonviolent resistance? How can we collectively breathe signs of affirmation and pride? How do we celebrate the authentic and purposeful lives of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters? Of our black sisters and brothers? How do we all stand together in the common struggle for human dignity?

Take time this month to let those you know and love in these communities of struggle know:

- that you see them,
- that you hear them,
- that you love them, and
- that you celebrate them with pride and dignity.