

Present and Proud: Pride Month
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It's June this month, which means we're officially celebrating Pride around the world in the face of phobia, bias, prejudice, persecution and prosecution. Every year during Pride we tend to focus on the dire situation of LGBTI+ people around the world and the work that is ahead of us to achieve full and unconditional equality for Queer people around the world. However, we decided to keep a celebratory tone by looking back at the strides the world made since we last celebrated Pride. We also want to harken back to the roots of LGBTI+ Pride that grew in Stonewall as a riot and not a celebration.

The Stonewall riots, in a way, marked the beginning of modern LGBTI+ activism in the US. The riots began in the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar serving the Queer community in New York City, when New York Police Department (NYPD) officers raided the bar in the early hours of June 28th, 1969; demanding to perform invasive sex checks to arrest patrons of the bar they perceived as transgender women. Bystanders in Greenwich Village, a heavily LGBTI+-populated area the bar's located in, began to converge and violence broke out after the transgender women refused NYPD's treatment displayed towards them. NYPD officers were heavily outnumbered and were unsuccessful in their aims of penalizing another gay bar after having to call for back-up. The riots continued for several days. In the aftermath, LGBTI+ activism took a crucial turn in the US with pickets in solidarity with Stonewall around the country and the first ever Pride celebrations marking the first anniversary of the Stonewall riots in 1970 being initiated in New York and major cities around the world. The reason the world celebrates Pride every June is these riots and sometimes it feels like we forget how Pride even started. It was a riot against police brutality perpetrated against LGBTI+ people initiated by trans women and Queer people of color. Pride is protest and always will be. There were no corporations and police forces in the first Pride marches in 1970. They featured some of the most marginalized and outcast groups in society that fought their way into mainstream visibility and equality. This tradition and spirit of fighting for full equality for every LGBTI+ person from the beginning is what spread around the world throughout the decades and got us where we are today. Even if things look frightening at times, we owe the progress we've made to people who risked a great deal to fight for their rights and freedoms that were so cruelly denied for ages.

Thankfully in the last year, the world has witnessed many positive changes for LGBTI+ rights in various corners of the world. Although there had been regressive changes in some countries that further limited the freedom of LGBTI+ people, seeing progressive actions especially in some socially conservative countries is indeed promising.

Looking at the US, during the Trump presidency in June 2020, the US adopted pieces of legislation that allowed people in healthcare systems to legally discriminate transgender individuals just because they are transgender. Fortunately, this order was later reversed by the newly elected President Biden in May 2021. Furthermore, in September 2020, Donald Trump signed an order that banned diversity training in government agencies. This was also considered as a vast damage to the made efforts that aimed for ending discrimination. However, in January 2021, this order was suspended right after Joe Biden's inauguration, and he also signed new orders that include more protective measures against discrimination, especially discrimination based on sexuality. At the end of January, Biden also ratified new legislation that made it possible for transgender people to join military service. This move was certainly welcome but some people in the progressive left in the US pointed out the irony in how backwards the thinking about transgender people's employability was and the US military's role in the world and internally.

Moving to South America, in July 2020, Mexico City became a pioneer in both Mexico and Latin America with banning conversion therapy. Later on, in November 2020, Puebla, a state in Mexico, passed amendments that concluded in legalization of same-sex marriage in the state and by the end of December with Tlaxcala legalizing same-sex marriage, Mexico had 22 states in which it is possible for LGBT people to get married.

On the other hand, unfortunately, in July 2020, Russia constitutionally banned same-sex marriage. Furthermore, in Europe, Hungary also introduced a ban on same-sex marriage as well as banning adoption by same-sex couples and LGBT individuals. These actions definitely worsened the conditions for the LGBT citizens of these countries, who are fighting for justice and equality. [\(1\)](#) [\(2\)](#)

We want to end this piece by sending our most heartfelt feelings of love, respect and solidarity to all the LGBTI+ people around the world fighting battles inside and outside; braving ostracization, discrimination, and criminalization around the world. We recognize your pain, your heroism, your diversity, your tenacity and your beauty as a community. We are looking forward to the days when no one will ever have to feel alone because of who they are. We are working towards a world where no LGBTI+ person fears for their life, their rights and their dignity. We dream of seeing a world of no homophobia, no transphobia and no acephobia in our lifetime and we know we will achieve that as long as we never lose our Stonewall spirit. No matter what others think, you always have an ear and an advocate in PRESENT.