

Christine Feldman: Join us for the Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival | COMMENTARY



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Christine Feldmann

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On Saturday, thousands of people will take to West Street with Pride flags, rainbow shirts and plenty of glitter. They will be marching and celebrating the strength and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community in the [second Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival](#).

Pride Month is celebrated each year in June to honor the memory of the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City. Members of the transgender, bisexual, lesbian, gay and queer community (more specifically, transgender people of color) had grown angry at the continual police harassment they received across the city. Tensions rose and one night at the Stonewall Inn, a popular bar in Greenwich Village, members of the LGBTQ+ community, led by Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, fought back against this abuse of power. Police reinforcements arrived and beat the crowd away, but the next night, more than 1,000 people returned to protest. For hours, protesters rioted outside the Stonewall Inn until the police sent a riot-control squad to disperse the crowd. For the next several days, similar demonstrations took place throughout the city. The riots are widely considered the watershed event that became the modern movement for LGBTQ+ rights.

Why does a riot that took place in 1969 still matter today? While we may have made important strides in securing equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community through same-sex marriage laws and anti-discrimination efforts, we clearly still have a long way to go. In these times of “don’t say gay” legislation, criminalization of gender-affirming care, blocking of access to reproductive health care, LGBTQ+ book bans in school libraries, and black and brown people being systematically killed, Pride celebrations are more critical than ever. These events provide visibility to and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, while providing a platform to highlight the continuing inequities many still face.

Anyone who attended the first Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival in 2019 saw the sheer joy and acceptance felt by countless LGBTQ+ youth and adults. The cheering crowds, people giving out free mom hugs and countless “love is love” signs will last in my memory forever. But many of our LGBTQ+ youth don’t experience this kind of validation beyond one day a year. In fact, more than 40% of all LGBTQ youth and more than half of all transgender and nonbinary youth who were asked said they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year according to The Trevor Project’s 2021 national survey. These statistics represent a crisis we must address.

This year’s parade and festival theme is “Many Faces, One Pride.” The LGBTQ+ community is made up of a variety of identities, experiences and stories. Those are differences to be celebrated, valued and recognized. Annapolis Pride is committed to speaking up for the voices of all marginalized communities — especially our transgender and members of color. We see you, we love you, and we are committed to being an anti-racist organization.

This parade and festival could not happen without the hard work of the board of Annapolis Pride and the tireless efforts of founder and parade organizer Jeremy Browning. We are grateful for the countless volunteers, participants, performers, supporters and local city and county officials who made this event possible. Together, we unite under the same goal — to create a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant community where all people thrive. We hope you will join us.

Feldman is a board member of Annapolis Pride.