June 13, 2020

Dear FSU Community,

June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month.  We cannot talk about Pride without acknowledging the intersection of LGBTQ+ equality and racial justice.

The modern LGBTQ+ civil rights movement began on June 28, 1969, when police raided the Stonewall Inn, a routine occurrence as the Stonewall Inn was a known meeting place for LGBTQ+ people in New York. When the police attempted to do “sex verification checks” on trans women, another common occurrence, the patrons protested, throwing items such as glasses, bottles, and bricks.  At the forefront of those protests were trans women of color like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Pride Month owes its very existence to a riot against police brutality and the radical acts of those most oppressed by societal systems and structures.

In June 1970, 50 years ago this month and one year after the riots, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade took place in New York to commemorate the uprising and continue political activism for LGBTQ+ rights.  The Christopher Street Parade is hailed as the first Pride parade.  By the following year, Pride marches were taking place across the country and throughout Europe with more and more cities and towns hosting marches in support of LGBTQ+ rights in the decades since.

In many ways, the civil rights movement of the 1960s for Black rights was the well-spring for the LGBTQ+ rights movement and modern women’s liberation movement.  Success in those subsequent movements relied in part on the lessons learned from and approaches developed in the civil rights movement.  And yet today, LGBTQ+ people of color navigate a complicated network of systemic oppression and injustice, often left on the fringes of the conversations about both LGBTQ+ rights and racial equity.  Anti-trans violence disproportionately impacts young trans women of color.  In 2019, at least 26 transgender or gender non-conforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means.  91% of them were Black women.  We say at least because too often these stories go unreported or victims are posthumously misgendered, their authentic identities erased with their deaths.

In 2020, at least 12 transgender or gender non-conforming people have been fatally shot or killed by other violent means.  The 12th was on May 27 of this year, just two days after the murder of George Floyd, when police shot and killed Tony McDade, a 38-year-old black transgender man in Tallahassee.

We say their names and mourn their deaths.

* Dustin Parker
* Neulisa Luciano Ruiz
* Yampi Mendez Arocho
* Monika Diamond
* Lexi
* Johanna Metzger
* Serene Angelique Velazquez Ramos
* Layla Pelaez Sanchez
* Penelope Diaz Ramirez
* Nina Pop
* Helle Jae O’Regan
* Tony McDade

Yesterday also marked the four-year anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub shooting in which 49 lives were taken, almost all of them LGBTQ+ and people of color.  We remember the [names and stories of the victims](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/06/12/481785763/heres-what-we-know-about-the-orlando-shooting-victims).

Nelson Mandela said, “To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”  There is no LGBTQ+ equality unless there is also racial justice.  We must make explicit commitments to embrace anti-racism and end white supremacy, which are integral to the objective of full equality for LGBTQ+ people. This Pride, let us be proud when we speak out against the violence facing Black people in our country every single day.  Let us be proud when we act to change the systems that oppress and discriminate against Black people and all people of color.  Let us be proud when we show up for trans and gender non-conforming people when they face hate, violence, and systemic discrimination.  And, in the truest spirit of Pride, let us be proud we lift up the voices and celebrate the lives of Black people, trans people, and Black trans people.

Please consider taking the time to read [Dismantling a Culture of Violence: Understanding Anti-Transgender Violence and Ending the Crisis](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/2018AntiTransViolenceReportSHORTENED.pdf?_ga=2.48908902.1345515268.1591632339-180378653.1591202835) by the Human Rights Campaign, outlining conditions and causes that perpetuate anti-trans violence.  The report also offers 39 different action steps we can take to address factors increasing the risk of violence for trans and gender non-conforming people.  You are also invited to review additional information and resources through the [Anti-Racism LibGuide](https://libguides.framingham.edu/anti-racism) and [LGBTQ+ LibGuide](https://libguides.framingham.edu/lgbtq) created by the Whittemore Library.

Today would have been the day of the Boston Pride Parade and Festival if not for the COVID-19 pandemic.  It is important to recognize that we are still managing this public health crisis in which there have been increased risk factors and disproportionate impact on the LGBTQ+ community and communities of color.  Attached are slides from the May 8th CIE Virtual Processing Space on supporting LGBTQ+ students during COVID-19.  The slides contain information on risk factors, direct resources, and other ways to support the LGBTQ+ community.

While we cannot gather together to celebrate Pride this year (nor does celebration feel appropriate in this moment) here are just a few virtual events available to mark and honor Pride Month:

* Anytime - [Watch the Boston Pride Flag Raising and Pride Lights Virtual Ceremonies](https://www.bostonpride.org/2020-virtual-pride/)
* June 20 - ['Reel In The Closet' Documentary Screening and Q&A](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pride-event-reel-in-the-closet-documentary-screening-and-qa-tickets-108768952866?aff=1stNewsBlast&fbclid=IwAR3PILrk6j4l_EczTznS4oJ0nG76SGq5qlpDxGnwfnE-kwn0tZaeFsMHTYY)
* June 23 – [Art with Impact: Colonialism and LGBTQIA+ Mental Health](https://www.facebook.com/events/725982098202401/)
* June 27 - [Gen Silent, LGBTQI Aging Film + Q&A](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pride-event-gen-silent-lgbtqi-aging-film-qa-tickets-108768030106?aff=erelpanelorg)
* June 28 - [NYC Pride Special Broadcast Event](https://www.nycpride.org/events/nyc-pride-march) featuring performances from Janelle Monáe, Deborah Cox, Billy Porter, Luísa Sonza and others

It may not feel right to celebrate right now but this is not the way it will always be.  It gets better.  We can make it better.  We will make it better.

In solidarity,

Kim

Kimberly R. Dexter  
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Pronouns: she/her/hers