

On Queer Liberation

Released on the 55th Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots (June 28, 2024)



Today, The Louisville Workers Brigade honors, celebrates, and remembers the Stonewall Riots, the first Pride, a watershed moment in the history of the struggle for Queer Liberation.

The patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in NYC, were no strangers to violence, harassment, and abuse. On June 28, 1969, facing another raid by NYPD, patrons watched as a young Black trans woman was being hauled off to a cop car, being arrested for “sexual deviancy,” as she pleaded with the onlookers: “Aren’t any of you going to do something?”

Whether it was the sweltering heat, the particular violence of the evening, or just the pent-up rage the Queer Community harbored, the crowd heard that woman’s pleas and they decided to do something.

Patrons rushed the police, hurling bottles and whatever else they could find at their oppressors, and forced the cops to retreat into the bar. Barring the doors from the outside, the crowd lit the bar on fire and threw bricks at the cops trying to escape.

Ultimately, no one died, but the riots of that night continued and a year later, the first pride parade marched in NYC. This historic event at the Stonewall Inn, not a parade, but a riot of oppressed people, is recognized as the birth of the Queer Liberation Movement.

The Queer Liberation Movement has seen the magnificent activism of radical organizers who tied the oppression of Queer folk to the exploitation all working people endure under our present economic ordering.

The Brigade joins their voices with our own in proclaiming the truth that the same cops who routinely raided Queer establishments—bashing brains in, arresting the innocent, and sexually assaulting their victims—are the same cops who shed the blood of striking workers, who protect the owning class and their class traitor scabs, and have murdered countless Labor organizers for daring to struggle against the bosses who the cops exclusively “protect and serve.”

These are the same cops who broke into Breonna Taylor’s home and killed her in her sleep, the same cops who gunned down David McAtee as he served food to his West End Community, the same cops who routinely and systematically surveil, harass, abuse, and kill Black, brown, and poor working people.

For this reason, the Brigade does not organize with cops, recognizing the truth that policing in the U.S. is designed to protect the owning class and to oppress the working class. Cops are traitors to their class and have made an unholy alliance with our exploiters. Supposedly “good cops” should resign, reveal the systemic abuses within the policing industry, and seek productive work that strives to make our communities safer, more unified, and better.

But the Stonewall Riots were not just a response to oppression by rabid cops. The event was also a product of years of economic, political, and social oppression. Denied jobs, forced to remain in the closet, facing repressive legislation against their very existence, enduring cruel ex-gay therapy treatments, and suffering from ostracization from their families and communities, Queer people have struggled against unbelievable odds.

The same corporations and their political lackeys (of both major political parties) who crafted this unjust system of oppression have also been the source of all other forms of social chauvinisms: from sexism to nativism, from racism to the targeting of political dissidents.

Underlying all of these societal sicknesses is the root cause: the class system that has made the minority owning class immensely wealthy off of the labor of the majority working class.

This owning class will and has killed to retain this exploitative system and will continue to do so until their class and their system are abolished and replaced with a new system that is designed by and for working people.

This is the class struggle that all working people, regardless of gender identity, race, nationality, sexual orientation, or industry, must engage in for our collective liberation.

The Louisville Workers Brigade is proud to struggle in this class war and to stand in unwavering solidarity with all exploited and oppressed workers. We celebrate the legacy of great Queer and working class organizers and activists who have come before us and hope to honor their legacy by educating, supporting, and uniting all working class forces within our community.

Like the class struggle, the struggle for Queer Liberation is far from over. Like the Stonewall rioters, we must fight against exploitation and oppression everywhere we find it. We must continue to break down barriers and strive for a world where all working and oppressed people may know freedom, peace, and true democracy.

Solidarity with and Victory to All Working and Oppressed Peoples of the World!