

June is PRIDE MONTH

June is Pride Month! Here at Millersville University, The Dr. Rita Smith Wade-El Intercultural Center within the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management(SAEM) is proud to display the Inclusive LGBTQIA+ Pride Flag outside of the Student Memorial Center throughout the month of June. This symbolism at Millersville University will not only give the members of our campus community an opportunity to reflect, but also provide much needed visibility and affirmation for those who identify as being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The month of June was chosen for LGBT Pride Month to commemorate the Stonewall Riots, which occurred at the end of June 1969. As a result many pride events are being held during this month to recognize the impact LGBTQIA+ people have had in the world. The Stonewall Riots were a flash point in LGBTQ+ history and this pride season commemorates the 50th anniversary of the riots. After the riots that took place at the Stonewall Inn at the end of June in 1969, the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement went from handfuls of pioneering activists to a national movement mobilizing thousands under the banner of Gay Liberation.

Pride month also brings a time for deep reflection and remembrance. One June 12th, 2016 we lost 49 people and 53 were injured at the Pulse Night Club in Orlando, FL. We also remember the numerous trans women of color who have been murdered. Most recently, four women were killed: Michelle "Tamika" Washington in Philadelphia, Muhlysia Booker in Dallas, Claire Legato in Cleveland, and Chynal Lindsey in Dallas. This summer, while many will celebrate PRIDE by attending festivals and entering spaces that allow them to show up fully and authentically, we must not forget the current climate as it relates the acceptance and respect of members of the LGBTQIA+ community and the continual fight for Queer and Trans Liberation. We must not ignore the daily struggle for many in the community and we must examine the privileges that some members of the community have. We must understand the concept of intersectionality and how many identities within the Queer and Trans community are continually fighting to be recognize, heard and ultimately safe. While the perception may be that we have come very far, many still live in fear and there is always work to be done! For those who plan to attend various pride events this season as an *ally*, there are a few things to consider. Check out this article that WorldPrideNYC created to help allies navigate pride festivals: <https://www.nycgo.com/articles/pride-tips-for-lgbtq-allies>.

Millersville University is making strides to become more LGBTQIA+ inclusive and we should continue to celebrate our efforts and examine how we can better support and serve our LGBTQIA+ community members. The President's Commission on Gender and Sexual Diversity, The Gender and Sexuality Alliance, the Title IX office and the Office of Diversity and Social Justice are all resources that work to bring awareness of and support for the LGBTQIA+ community. At the Dr. Rita Smith Wade-El Intercultural Center, we will continue to center our efforts on supporting marginalized identities, creating a sense of belonging through intentional programming and resources, empowering and uplifting students to take action, in addition to educating the larger campus community.

It is my hope that you find opportunities to uplift the Queer and Trans community this month and strive to dismantle cisgender-heterosexual(cis-het) practices that permeate our systems and structures. Please stop by the center during the month of June for buttons, flags, and information. May this month bring joy, reflection, education, and unapologetic PRIDE!

Jas Whitlow

Pronouns: They/Them

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Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

*This letter was put together in collaboration with the Office of Diversity and Social Justice(ODSJ), Title IX, and the Presidents's Commission on Gender and Sexual Diversity (PCGSD).