

# 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) acknowledges the significance of "Pride". LGBTQ+ Pride Month is observed in June to commemorate the Stonewall Riots, a series of demonstrations against police harassment of the NYC gay and trans community. These riots were the start of the queer liberation movement in the United States.

This Pride Month in 2020, our nation is in crisis. A period of mourning the loss of those lost to COVID-19 and lack of action to protect its citizens against a virus worthy of a pandemic. Many LGBTQ+ college students were sent back home and into environments that were unsafe, unwelcoming and non-affirming, causing increased trauma and anxiety. The community is mourning the recent loss of Larry Kramer, ACT Up NYC Founder and AIDS Activist, remembering the 49 people who were killed and the 53 injured at the Pulse Night Club in Orlando, FL on June 12th, 2016 and the continual fight to be seen, heard and respected.

During this month, while this is a time to celebrate and be proud, we MUST acknowledge and understand the concept of intersectionality for folks who hold multiple marginalized identities. Acknowledging the increased bias, racism and discrimination towards folks of Asian Descent, mourning the lives of Black and Brown trans womxn taken by transphobic violence and the continued instances of institutional violence experienced by Black members of our community.

This year's Pride is cause for mourning, remembering the legacies of those gone before us, and cause to lean on our community for support. During this time of justified anger, pain, and anxiety about the uncertainty of the future, there still reason to continue this acknowledgment. Pride cannot be cancelled. It isn't limited to a physical space. It isn't just drag performances and rainbow confetti filled parades. It's a public demonstration against systems of oppression that impact the community members of various identities in several ways. Each time you speak up against homophobia and transphobia, combat systemic injustice, you are continuing the tradition of activism so entrenched in the Queer and Trans community's history...choosing "Pride" rather than shame and social stigma.

Millersville University is making strides to become more LGBTQ+ inclusive and we should continue to celebrate our efforts and examine how we can better support and serve our LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+ 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 our hope that we all find opportunities to uplift the Queer and Trans community this month. Please continue to abide by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines of social distancing at least six feet apart, wearing a mask outside and in public places, and frequently washing your hands. May this month bring joy, reflection, education, understanding and unapologetic PRIDE!

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