



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Pride rings out in New York streets: 'Stonewall still means fight back!'

written by Greg Butterfield

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What a weekend! From Friday, June 28 — the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion against police terror — through Sunday, June 30, protests, parades, meetings, festivals and celebrations took place in New York to mark the dawn of the modern movement for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) liberation.

Like any movement that has survived for half a century, experiencing both tremendous victories and tragic setbacks, the 50th anniversary of Stonewall was messy, challenging and full of contradictions.

But what stood out above all the noise was the sense that the tide of struggle is

rising again.

Despite the takeover of New York's large annual Pride Parade and other celebrations by corporations and capitalist politicians, and in the face of a hostile national political climate of intensified terror by white supremacists and bigots in both official and unofficial capacities, LGBTQ2S people declared: "We will not go back!"

And many of those who came out under hot, sunny, late June skies understood that solidarity with the most oppressed, inside and outside the LGBTQ2S community, is not only desirable. It is essential.

You could read it on the signs that said "Fuck ICE" and "Black Lives Matter" and "Unite to Stop the Murders of Trans Women." You could see it in the multinational, multigender and multigenerational crowds that flooded the streets and parks and subways.

Thousands of people from across the U.S. and around the world came here to celebrate five decades of fightback and renew their commitment to continue the struggle for liberation. Among them were members and friends of Struggle-La Lucha newspaper and the Socialist Unity Party from Atlanta, Baltimore and San Diego, who made the journey to speak and march alongside their New York comrades.

They had a message to share, one both simple and profound: Stonewall still means fight back!

Lifting voices of most oppressed

On June 29, Struggle-La Lucha sponsored a panel discussion featuring revolutionary veterans and young organizers of the LGBTQ2S struggle. The theme was "Lifting the Voices of the Most Oppressed."

This powerful meeting, held at the offices of Project REACH, a multinational youth organizing center in the heart of Chinatown, was also live-streamed around the world. It was chaired by Miranda Bachman of Youth Against War and Racism.

Opening the event, Baltimore organizer Andre Powell, a retired AFSCME delegate and founder of Labor for Reparations, declared that, "We are light years away from the days of the Stonewall Rebellion. However, all is not perfect. Employment discrimination, along with discrimination in housing and health care, is too common in the LGBTQ2S community.

"LGBTQ2S immigrants crossing the border have found themselves held in detention centers for long periods of time, in unsafe conditions, and are at a far greater risk of sexual violence than the general population in those concentration camps."

Powell added: "ICE has shown disrespect and utter contempt for the transgender community. They are housing transgender immigrants in unsafe conditions. Trans women have been forcibly housed in the men's housing units. Many have been denied their hormone treatments and have been kept in solitary confinement, which the United Nations says is a form of torture.

"It is crucial that the LGBTQ2S community continues to show its solidarity with its immigrant siblings," he concluded.

Reece Evans, a revolutionary youth organizer from Los Angeles and producer of Struggle-La Lucha Radio, spoke via pre-recorded video. Evans discussed the early LGBTQ2S movement's links with the anti-imperialist struggles against the Vietnam War and for women's, Black, Latinx, Native, Asian and Arab liberation.

Evans also emphasized the special contributions of two queer internationalists: Marielle Franco and Chelsea Manning. Franco, an Afro-Brazilian lesbian and socialist, fought against racist police terror and the growing power of the U.S.-

backed ultraright in her country. She was assassinated in early 2018 by police linked to current Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.

Manning, a trans woman who spent seven years in military prison for sharing evidence of U.S. war crimes with WikiLeaks, is back in jail today for refusing to testify before a grand jury targeting Julian Assange.

“It’s in the interest of all working and oppressed peoples to unite and fight for a better world — without wars for oil and other resources, without racism, sexism and anti-LGBTQ2S bigotry. International solidarity is key to building the struggle against capitalism, imperialism and all forms of oppression,” said Evans.

On the shoulders of giants

Lizz Toledo from Atlanta, a queer Latinx communist and anti-police brutality organizer, spoke about the lives of Stonewall participants Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson. “The leaders of our movement come from the most oppressed. They come from communities of color. They come from the poorest of communities.

“At every turn in the story of our movement, poor LGBTQ2S people like Sylvia and Marsha have been in the front lines of all fights for liberation,” Toledo explained. “From the women’s movement to unions to any fight for working people here or anywhere in the world, it has been poor, queer people of color in the front lines, before Stonewall, during Stonewall and today.

“We have thrown the first brick and the first bottle in the fight against police terror and racism, defending migrants from the brutality of ICE, fighting for reproductive health for all women, for our trans sisters, for equal pay in unions across the country, and against imperialist wars, from Iraq and Afghanistan to the ones these warmongers are itching to start right now against China, Venezuela and Iran,” declared Toledo.

“We threw the first stone in saving the planet from climate change, to stop the destruction of Native land — and we stand on stolen land right now. We continue to fight on the front lines of these movements,” she said.

“We have never wavered, but we have been silenced and pushed to the side. The first Pride parade refused to let our trans siblings march, even though they threw the first bricks.

“We stand on the shoulders of giants. But our best is yet to come,” Toledo said. “When all of us — men, women, trans, Black, white, Brown, gay, straight, working and poor, united — throw the first brick to bring this rotten capitalist system to its inevitable death.”

Solidarity opens path to liberation

Bob McCubbin of San Diego, author of “The Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression: A Marxist View” and formerly an activist with the San Francisco Gay Liberation Front, stated that “Solidarity opens the path to liberation and justice for all the workers and oppressed.”

McCubbin used the life of Leslie Feinberg, author of the acclaimed novel “Stone Butch Blues” and groundbreaking nonfiction works on transgender liberation, to illustrate his point.

“Leslie was a communist activist and a fierce opponent of racism, a transgender warrior. But Leslie entered adulthood in the late 1960s as a somewhat forlorn, profoundly oppressed factory worker in Buffalo, who asked, ‘Why am I so hated for being different?’ This was a very difficult question with no existing reasonable answer. Leslie would only find the answer years later, using the tool of Marxist analysis,” said McCubbin.

Over the years, McCubbin explained, Feinberg “amassed an impressive amount of

the anthropological and historical evidence that makes clear the ubiquitous existence of trans and nonbinary people and their acceptance and special contributions to society" prior to the development of class society.

"Leslie found that prior to the development of society into distinct classes of rich and poor, hatred of transgender, gender-nonconforming, nonbinary people didn't exist," said McCubbin.

"But that discovery came later. What came first" and what laid the basis for those later achievements, he insisted, was Feinberg's "introduction to and enthusiastic embrace of a revolutionary organization, where Leslie was given every opportunity and much assistance to develop as an extremely skillful and supremely articulate activist, talented journalist and novelist."

45,000-strong Queer Liberation March

McCubbin added: "We believe that collaboration with the racist police and promotion of commercial enterprises at our sacred march is wrong. This is not what Stonewall is all about. The message our contingent will bring to the Queer Liberation March will affirm the need to struggle, in solidarity with the most oppressed, both in this country and around the world."

And what a powerful march it was — 45,000 strong, one of the largest political protests on the streets of New York in recent memory.

The Queer Liberation March stepped off from Sheridan Square, just south of the Stonewall Inn, in the early morning of June 30, and marched uptown to Central Park. Organized by the [Reclaim Pride Coalition](#), the march was in the spirit of early Pride parades — a protest against social injustice and a celebration of the fight for LGBTQ2S liberation.

There were no corporate-sponsored floats and police were not welcomed. Along the

route, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) held a “die-in” to protest the deaths of at least 17 HIV+ people in ICE custody.

The Marielle Franco and Chelsea Manning contingent organized by Struggle-La Lucha and the Socialist Unity Party was in the thick of it with beautiful banners and signs. Activists led chants like “Migrant rights are under attack! Shut down concentration camps!” and “No war for big oil profits! Free Chelsea Manning!” Along the way, contingent members distributed hundreds of copies of a special Pride issue of Struggle-La Lucha newspaper.

Several times along the 4-mile march, members of the Brazilian LGBTQ2S community stopped to pose for photos with signs and banners of Marielle Franco and thanked the contingent for honoring her. [A message from Chelsea Manning](#) was read at the closing rally on the Great Lawn in Central Park.

“As I marched it felt like the early years in the 1970s — everyone marching proudly without floats or cops. It was so alive and filled with energy.” Andre Powell told Struggle-La Lucha, adding: “Our strength as a new revolutionary party came through loud and clear.”

SLL photos: Greg Butterfield and Leon Kofax

Watch livestream of “Lifting the Voices of the Most Oppressed” panel

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