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# 51 years after Stonewall, Queer Liberation March confronts police violence

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New York, June 28 — For the second year in a row, the Reclaim Pride Coalition held a protest march on the last Sunday of June, traditionally the day of the city's massive LGBTQ2S Pride March marking the anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion.

This year, according to the coalition, an estimated 50,000 people marched from Foley Square in Lower Manhattan, past the Stonewall Inn and ended in Washington Square Park.

Despite the official Pride parade being cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Reclaim Pride decided that it was essential to march this year in support of the Black-led uprising against racist police killings. This year's protest was proclaimed the "Queer Liberation March for Black Lives and Against Police Brutality."

Tens of thousands gathered in Foley Square, where many of the city's courts are located, including the United States Courthouse, where communists Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were sentenced to death 69 years ago. They marched out past New York City Hall, in support of a weeklong occupation demanding defunding of the New York Police Department.

Many marchers held signs saying "Black Lives Matter" or proclaiming the role of Black and Brown trans people like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera in launching the modern struggle for LGBTQ2S liberation. Giant puppet images of Johnson, Rivera and other LGBTQ2S leaders of color towered over the colorful demonstration.

Since mass protests began, following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the NYPD has been on a rampage of brutality. Today was no different. As the march approached Washington Square Park — just a few blocks from the Stonewall Inn — police charged into the crowd, swinging batons, punching and pushing protesters, and using pepper spray. They claimed to be trying to apprehend someone who had written an anti-racist slogan on a police vehicle.

Eventually, the massive, angry crowd was able to push back the police. Several people were detained by the cops, including a vendor working at a neighborhood fruit stand. Four people were arrested.

Protesters were outraged to learn that at the very same moment that the NYPD was attacking LGBTQ2S people, pro-cop Mayor Bill de Blasio's twitter account was sending out "congratulations" to the community!

For decades, Heritage of Pride, the nonprofit organization that heads up the official Pride events, has been dominated by upper-class white faces catering to Big Business and capitalist politicians. Many in the LGBTQ2S community grew weary of the commercialization, promotion of mainstream politics and uniformed police being allowed to march in an event that is supposed to celebrate a rebellion against police brutality.

So last year, Reclaim Pride called for a real protest march on the 50th anniversary of Stonewall. At least 35,000 came out to that historic action. The explicitly anti-racist character of this year's march made it historic as well.

