

Celebrating Two-Spirit Pride — for thousands of years!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
June 1, 2019



Perhaps you have heard the term “Two Spirit” used along with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other terms. If you are not Indigenous, this may have made you think that “Two Spirit” refers to Indigenous people who are lesbian, gay or bi. But being Two Spirit does not necessarily mean that someone is lesbian or gay since it does not refer to sexual preference.

“Two Spirit” is a pan-Indian umbrella term that describes Indigenous people who have mixed or non-binary gender roles. The term first began to gain popularity in the late 1980s and is now used widely throughout Canada and the U.S., and other

Indigenous people, such as the Zapotec in Mexico, also recognize the concept.

While the term is relatively new, the concept has existed among hundreds of Indigenous Nations for thousands of years. Some Native Nations have terms for up to 4 or 5 different genders, for instance. Two Spirit people are considered to be nonbinary and to hold sacred elements of both feminine and masculine within them.

These Indigenous understandings came long before and exist outside of the “LGBTQ” terminology that is often used now. A Two Spirit person may be lesbian or gay, but being lesbian or gay does not necessarily make someone Two Spirit.

Two Spirit people have existed for thousands of years. Many tribal nations understood that there were people who were not part of a male/female binary. In fact, some nations believed that there were multiple genders, not just two.

Traditionally, in many tribal nations, Two Spirit people were held in high esteem. They were leaders, warriors, medicine (spiritual) people. They often played a special role with youth, including adopting children and giving special sacred names to babies.

When the Christian Europeans invaded, however, they held Two Spirit people in extreme contempt. Two Spirit people were often killed or forced to hide who they were. The Christian missionaries did their best to teach Indigenous people that being Two Spirit was sinful and wicked, and settler colonial laws and customs forbade the existence of people who were not specifically male or female.

Because of this repression, more and more Native people turned away from their ancient understandings — but not all. However, it became more difficult for Two Spirit people to be who they are, and in many places they had to function in an underground way.



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Challenging disrespect

By the 20th century, some Two Spirit people from reservations left for the cities where there were lesbian and gay communities. Some of them founded urban Native groups, such as Gay American Indians (GAI) in San Francisco, and many of them faced anti-Indigenous racism in the cities, as well. Sometimes white people even told them that Native people could not possibly be lesbian or gay or Two Spirit due to some bizarre stereotypical views held by non-Natives. It could be difficult for Two Spirit people to feel completely at home anywhere.

But increasingly, more and more Two Spirit people have let their families and tribes know who they really are. If they are not treated with respect, they challenge this, especially when it was their own tribal tradition to honor Two Spirit people.

During the 2016-2017 Standing Rock encampments to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline, Two Spirit people banded together and worked on many projects. Two Spirit people at Standing Rock played a very important spiritual role and tried to do everything in a good way to bring healing to the thousands of people gathered there.

With leadership provided by people like Candi Brings Plenty, this was a very important step forward in the overall Native struggle. When some Native people at camp were not accepting of them, others strongly challenged this and reminded everyone of their traditional cultures.

Sometimes non-Native people refer to themselves as Two Spirit. That is disrespectful, since it is an appropriation of a distinctively Indigenous concept and term.

During this month of June 2019, and throughout the year, Pride parades and powwows will celebrate Two Spirit people, from Saskatoon to the Bay Area to the Navajo Pride Parade. Honoring Two Spirit people is an important part of decolonization — washing settler colonial ideas out of our brains and returning to deeper understandings that existed long before the rise of patriarchy, capitalism, settler colonialism and the European invasion of Indigenous lands.



Honor Marielle Franco and Chelsea Manning

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This June marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion against police brutality and anti-LGBTQ2S oppression that was led by working-class, Black and Brown, trans and queer peoples.

The legacy of Stonewall is a fighting legacy that we must study and continue to develop. The corporate control of Pride events must be challenged. Police and military personnel do not belong at Pride and their presence creates an unsafe environment for oppressed peoples that are targeted the most by this system.

We have to honor and remember the veterans of the liberation struggle, especially those that are killed or imprisoned for their organizing efforts. Marielle Franco was a leader against government corruption and police brutality in Brazil. As Brazil was undergoing a right-wing turn under U.S. influence, she was assassinated for speaking out against the oppression that her people face. We have a duty to defend

freedom fighters like Chelsea Manning, another activist leader, who is once again behind prison walls for exposing U.S. war crimes.

Stonewall's anti-war legacy

The history of the trans and queer liberation movement, as well as the liberation movement of women and oppressed genders, has been a legacy of anti-war organizing in the streets. The Vietnam War was raging at the time of the Stonewall Rebellion and Vietnamese resistance to U.S. occupation was one of its inspirations.

U.S. imperialism means death and destruction for oppressed nations throughout the world and this includes the LGBTQ2S peoples within these nations. We have a duty to reclaim these Pride events and bring a message of solidarity with the people of Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and all those who are defending themselves from U.S. coups, wars and sanctions.

Queer and trans peoples have nothing to gain by joining the U.S. armed services in a nation that has only recently allowed for them to have basic rights and protections. It's important to note that these gains have only come as a result of militant struggle against their oppression in the streets.

For many LGBTQ2S people who join the military, it comes as a result of living in a society where they are constantly denied jobs, housing and education opportunities. The system does not care about the liberation of queer and trans people, but only about how they can be used as pawns in the quest to rob the resources and labor of oppressed nations throughout the world.

Black and Brown trans and queer people are being murdered at alarming rates here at home and abroad by the police and reactionaries that serve the interests of the ruling class. The U.S. government has imposed reactionary ways of thinking through colonial tools of domination and forced assimilation throughout the world. It has no

right to position itself as a moral champion of human rights. The struggle for LGBTQ2S liberation is a struggle against racism, sexism and imperialism.

All of these tools of oppression are products of the capitalist system that exploits the workers and oppressed peoples. The struggle against fascism and imperialism is an international struggle. In the U.S., we have a responsibility as revolutionaries to oppose the U.S. government's aggression against oppressed nations of the world.

Chelsea Manning leads by example

Former Army Pvt. Chelsea Manning is a trans freedom fighter who heroically exposed the crimes of U.S. imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan, working alongside Wikileaks. She served seven years in prison before being released after pressure was put on the Obama administration. Democrats and Republicans alike are part of this attack on whistleblowers and journalists who expose what U.S. foreign policy really means for the rest of the world.

Manning was recently sent back to jail after she refused to comply with two grand juries investigating Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. The "Justice" Department has just brought an 18-count indictment against Assange for his role in publishing vital information obtained from Manning and other whistleblowers in the interests of the people.

The capitalist state claims that Assange violated the Espionage Act, similarly to the way they used this act to attack many other anti-war voices, including socialists, communists and anarchists, throughout history. This is also part of the two ruling-class parties' anti-Russia propaganda campaign.

It is important that we bring an anti-war platform to Pride demonstrations all across the U.S. to declare that we support Chelsea Manning and the work of Wikileaks.

Marielle Franco stood up to imperialist influence

In Brazil, a historic vote from the Supreme Court took place May 23 that provided protections for LGBTQ people against discrimination. This victory was the result of the people's organizing efforts in the streets. This is a very important development considering the vile nature of the homophobic, racist president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro.

It doesn't mean that the country is safe for trans and queer people, especially not for Black LGBTQ women. Radical political activists who fight for the liberation of the most oppressed are targeted. This was the story of Marielle Franco.

Franco was a human rights defender, activist and political organizer who was assassinated for her commitment to the liberation of all oppressed peoples. She was a councilwoman in Brazil and member of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL). She was a Black LGBTQ woman who challenged the system directly at its roots.

She was from Maré, a favela neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. Neighborhoods like these, which consist of mainly poor and working-class Black and Brown people, are not properly cared for by the government. She was working to defend the human rights of Black women and other oppressed peoples in Brazil.

Before her death, Franco was exposing police brutality and organizing against military intervention in the city. She worked with various women's commissions and the Lesbian Front in Rio de Janeiro in order to promote a lesbian day of visibility in Brazil. The bill was defeated as a result of the reactionary character of the council.

Franco had bravely stood up at the time when U.S. imperialism was exerting its power to roll back the "red tide" of progressive governments and movements in Latin America sparked by Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution. Washington was instrumental in supporting the frame-up of left-leaning former presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff and the electoral campaign of ultrarightist Bolsonaro.

Franco was slain in March 2018, prompting mass protests throughout the country. After an attempt to cover up the facts in the case, the authorities had to reveal the connection of the people who carried out the assassination as being police officers with ties to the Bolsonaro family.

Let's take a moment to honour this revolutionary hero that was taken from us and make a commitment to continue the struggle that she dedicated her life to.

It is in the interest of all working and oppressed peoples to unite and fight for a better world — a world without wars for oil and other resources, without racism, sexism and anti-LGBTQ2S bigotry. Internationalist solidarity is key to building the struggle in order to smash capitalism, imperialism and all forms of oppression.

Long live internationalist solidarity!



Free Chelsea Manning!

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Just seven days after her release, heroic transgender activist and military whistleblower Chelsea Manning was jailed again on May 15 in Virginia for refusing to testify before a second grand jury in the WikiLeaks case. Manning could be jailed for up to 18 months. The judge also imposed Draconian fines for every day past 30 that she refuses to testify.

[Manning declared](#), "I would rather starve to death than change my principles." The government knows she will not cooperate with their biased grand jury. There is no reason to keep her in jail, except as continued punishment for daring to [expose U.S. war crimes](#).

The [Prisoners Solidarity Committee](#) urges you to join the fight to free Chelsea Manning and all prisoners of the U.S. empire. You can help her continue to resist by

writing letters of support to Chelsea Elizabeth Manning, A0181426, William G. Truesdale Adult Detention Center, 2001 Mill Road, Alexandria, VA 22314. Follow @ResistsChelsea on Twitter for updates.



50 years after Stonewall, the struggle for LGBTQ2S liberation continues

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Talk given by Andre Powell at the “Unity for Socialism and Revolution” conference in Los Angeles on March 16.

This year marks 50 years since the Stonewall Rebellion. The rebellion was sparked by what would have been another routine raid on a gay bar in New York City. But the night of June 26, 1969, something different happened. The patrons of this bar — young transgenders, gay men and lesbians, Black, Latinx and white, pushed to the

edge by endless police raids on their social gathering places — fought back in four nights of street battles.

This began the organizing of a tremendous movement inspired by the Black Liberation and Women's Liberation movements, and taken note of by Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton in August 1970. The rebellion is marked all over the world with celebrations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit pride.

Our community has made many achievements in beating back the institutional oppression from police and both federal and state governments. There has been a sea change in societal attitudes toward the LGBTQ2S community. Gay men have survived the brutal AIDS health crisis with tremendous support from our lesbian sisters, who themselves were battling their own health crisis with breast cancer.

Our community, however, remains under attack, as the right wing uses us as a rallying point. The attacks against the transgender community by laws and violence have reached alarming proportions.

In New York City, there are two Pride marches scheduled this year. The first is organized by Heritage of Pride, which in the last two decades has become so very commercialized by corporate sponsors and even features an LGBT police contingent. The second is called Reclaiming Pride and is led by more radical elements who opposed the corporate commercialization of the march and remind the community that Stonewall was a rebellion against police brutality.

A history of struggle

Stonewall marked the beginning of the modern LGBTQ2S rights movement. But it wasn't the first act of resistance.

In May 1897, Magnus Hirschfield founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, a

German organization specifically dedicated to gay emancipation. The committee's primary focus was the repeal of Paragraph 175, a provision of the German Criminal Code that criminalized homosexual acts between men.

Through its publications, along with public meetings and extensive speaking tours, the committee sought to educate the general public on the issue of homosexuality while encouraging other gay people to join the struggle.

Hirschfield had amassed a tremendous amount of volumes of work and research on homosexuality over the years. These works were destroyed in the 1930s when Hitler and the Nazis came to power. In the Nazi concentration camps, Hitler exterminated an estimated 250,000 gays. They were forced to wear the pink triangle on their clothing to signify they were gay.

"The Gay Question: A Marxist Appraisal" was written by author Bob McCubbin and published in 1976, during the earliest years of the modern LGBTQ2S movement. (It was later republished under the title "The Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression.") It is the first and decades later remains the definitive historical materialist analysis of the development of LGBTQ2S oppression. This oppression is rooted in the development of class society.

The origin of LGBTQ2S oppression

Pre-class society reaches back many hundreds of thousands of years, when the early human societies were structured on a matrilineal basis and tribal organization centered around mothers and their children. Over time, the development of technology to the level where more material wealth could be produced than was immediately needed for the survival of the tribe brought a fundamental change in human relations.

It was on the basis of this surplus accumulation of material wealth that classes

arose. Due to changes in material conditions, men at the top of the new societal hierarchy replaced the egalitarianism of communal society. The struggle against the matrilineal organization of society was over the question of the lineage of children. Private property-oriented men wanted their wealth to go to their own children. This guarantee could only come about by the establishment of patrilineal descent.

With this change, emotions and sexual feelings came under harsh social class scrutiny, with stringent sexual prohibitions. Sexuality in general assumed a negative social significance it never had before. Free expression of sexuality was no longer compatible with the new, rigid limits of the male-dominated family structure. This made homosexuality a social and political issue in class society in a way it had never been before.

But when we take a look at societies built on socialist principles, we see that they lay the basis for honoring and respecting the contributions of every individual. So the elimination of LGBTQ2S oppression, I firmly believe, will come about through the elimination of capitalism and its replacement with socialism, a system meant to value people as they are and to meet people's needs.

SLL photo by Greg Butterfield



End ICE abuse and detention of trans women

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In November, the results of an independent autopsy confirmed what many people had long suspected: Roxsana Hernández Rodríguez, a trans woman from Honduras, [was physically abused before her death in Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\) custody](#) on May 25, 2018.

Hernández had been imprisoned at the privately owned Cibola County Correction Center in Milan, N.M., which includes a unit for trans detainees.

Now the Washington Blade, a newspaper focused on LGBTQ2S issues, has received confirmation from ICE of the existence of a second [detention facility housing 45 migrant trans women](#), this one in rural Texas, raising concerns for the conditions and safety of these women.

The Blade learned of the facility during an interview with Estuardo Juárez Moscoso

of Asociación Lambda, an LGBTQ2S advocacy group in Guatemala, which keeps in close touch with trans people participating in the Central American Exodus — the refugee caravans travelling through Mexico to the U.S. border.

The South Texas Detention Complex in Pearsall, Texas, where the 45 women are detained, is operated by the GEO Group. In Los Angeles, Humanity First, the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice and others [have held protests against GEO](#) over these prison profiteers' extensive collaboration with ICE.

According to ICE, there are currently 111 “self-identified transgender individuals” in detention in 20 facilities across the U.S.

Justice for Roxsana Hernández!

The first reports of Roxsana Hernández's death were bad enough — that she had died of cardiac arrest brought on by complications of HIV, after being held in unhealthy conditions and refused timely access to life-saving drugs and medical care.

Following her detention at the San Ysidro Port of Entry separating Tijuana and San Diego on May 9, Hernández was reportedly held in freezing temperatures and denied adequate food, water and medical care.

[Independent autopsy results](#) released by the Transgender Law Center “disclosed evidence of physical abuse,” including deep bruising of the rib cage and “deep contusions extending onto the back.” Hernández also suffered severe wrist injuries from handcuffs.

The cause of death was “most probably severe complications of dehydration superimposed upon HIV infection. ... As a consequence of her immunocompromised condition, Ms. Hernández Rodríguez was susceptible to the physiologic effects of untreated dehydration, initiated by severe diarrhea and vomiting.

“According to observations of other detainees who were with Ms. Hernández Rodríguez, the diarrhea and vomiting episodes persisted over multiple days with no medical evaluation or treatment, until she was gravely ill.”

This same racist disregard for human life was echoed in last December’s deaths of two Guatemalan Maya children, Jakelin Caal Maquín and Felipe Gómez Alonzo, who died as a result of preventable conditions — including severe dehydration, extremes of temperature and lack of timely medical care — while in the custody of the Border Patrol.

Roxsana Hernández’s death and the dangers faced by other trans migrants in ICE custody cannot be separated from the epidemic of violence against trans people, especially trans women of color, in the U.S.

At least 28 trans people were murdered across the U.S. in 2018. [A report released in January](#) by the New York City Anti-Violence Project and Human Rights Campaign states that almost all were Black and Brown women.

Since 2013, at least 128 transgender people were killed in the U.S. But the real number is likely much higher, since the federal government keeps no official records of trans murders and both police and media frequently misgender the victims.

The revelation of the physical abuse of Roxsana Hernández raises to a whole new level the urgent need for the LGBTQ2S community, migrants’ rights movement and all workers to unite and organize to demand freedom for trans detainees, children, and all imprisoned migrants and refugees.

Free the women at South Texas Detention Complex and all detainees! Justice for Roxsana Hernández!

