

Sermon

# “Dreaming of Rainbows”

Pride Sunday – June 7, 2020

June... Pride Month... is a joyous time most years.

It is easy to forget, amid all the parades and colors and music and wild costumes and exuberant, kissing couples that Pride is a celebration commemorating a *riot*... the Stonewall Riots in 1969.

Up until that point, LGBTQ persons resided in a sort of inner-city subculture and were regularly exposed to persecution and intimidation, even in the secretly gay bars and restaurants.

And, that is not the only time the LGBTQ community rioted. This is just the most famous.

Now... I am white... every single one of my ancestors came here from either Eastern or Western Europe, so let me state here and now that I have always, my entire life, known the benefits of white privilege. I do not know what it is like to be black in America.

But there *is* something I can share with you from my own *personal* experience.

I remember the Stonewall Riots. I was only 13.

However, by 1984, my lived experience was much different.

By then, I had been welcomed with open arms by a whole new group of friends: my “Gay Family”.

And, it just so happened that I came out the same year as AIDS, and *my* entire experience was colored by the truth of my dearly beloved gay brothers dying from a disease that was relentlessly fatal.

In January of 1984, I got a phone call at work from one of my more radical friends. She opened the conversation with “They just paroled Dan White. We are going to march in West Hollywood tonight.”

“Ok.” I said. And she proceeded to tell me how to be ready in case there was rioting that night, and in case we got arrested.

I do not know what it is like to be black in America, and I never will, but I can tell you how I felt at that moment.

You see, I also remember the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, and I was fully aware that Sirhan Sirhan was *never* going to leave that prison. But Dan White, who killed Harvey Milk and Mayor Moscone... did.

I don’t know what it is like to be black in America, and I never will, but I can tell you what a difference *perspective* can make, because I *felt* the Dan White parole in a way that I could *never* have felt it if I had not come out.

What I saw at that moment, was that the violence done... and seemingly condoned... against Harvey Milk, was also violence against me... the people I loved.

What I *saw*, was, that we were *perceived* as less than human.

But, in 1986... 2 years later... I saw something else. I saw my first Rainbow flag.

It was *enormous*, and it was being carried down Market Street during the Pride Parade, and people were throwing money into to go to AIDS charities.

The Rainbow is a powerful symbol.

And the LGBTQ community has fully embraced it.

Churches are powerful symbols, too.

The church I belonged to before coming out *still* does not recognize same-sex marriage or the ordination of LGBTQ clergy.

Yet, here I am, legally married to my partner *and* Intern Minister at UU Wellesley Hills. Sometimes, I feel like I have found that place "somewhere over the rainbow".

UU Wellesley Hills has been a Welcoming Congregation for 20 years. The Gay/Straight Coalition started the work informing and transforming the congregation in 1997, planning for a vote in 2000. It took 3 years for people to agree on this new congregational identity.

Quoting the pamphlet: EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BECOMING A WELCOMING CONGREGATION...

*Much of the justification for anti-gay feelings, legislation and violence has been and continues to be couched in religious language. Even churches that have been neutral in their stance toward non-heterosexuals have often been viewed warily by these minorities.*

Yes. The first impulse by many in the LGBTQ community is to be "wary" of churches... and religion in general. Much of the negativity that has been directed towards us has been based in religious traditions.

Put another way... there is absolutely no reason to deny *any* member of the LGBTQ community *any* or the rights or privileges of a fully human life experience... that is not based in religion.

We, as Unitarian Universalists, make a *powerful* statement when we say that we believe in building a WORLD COMMUNITY WITH PEACE, LIBERTY, AND JUSTICE FOR ALL.

It is hard to live lives of compassion when there is *so much* anger and sadness in the world! It is a hard time to be a person of conscious!

Here is what I learned from being a part of the LGBTQ community...

Take care of yourself, first.... Then you can care for the world.

And, *while* you are caring for the world, never give up... but, at the same time, do that in the most joyous, loving way as possible.

Let us wrap ourselves in Rainbows. Author Rita Mae Brown once said, "An army of lovers shall not fail."

May we be that “army of lovers”. Let our rainbow be the sign of a new covenant, that we shall Love One Another. May we *all* take that message with us and we go out into the world and add our voices to Black Lives Matter!

May it be so.