

6/8/25

Coming Out Is an Inside Job

Rev Nina Clark

Happy Pride!

Pride Month is dedicated to the uplifting of LGBTQ voices and the support of LGBTQ activism and culture and rights and is a celebration of the progress made by the LGBTQ community.

Pride traces its origins back June 28th, 1969, where patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in New York City decided to fight back rather than succumb passively to yet another raid, to yet another night of being treated as subclass citizens, as non-people.

This month, we honor those brave souls of the Stonewall uprisings - and those who came before and those who came after who were committed expressing their divine wholeness in and as their lives and for their courage in advocating for the freedom to do so.

Their willingness to stand up for a better world paved the way for those who followed and continued their work, changing laws, educating, demanding equality, working to normalize that which should never have been labeled as not normal.

A little history here: in 1952 The American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance.

In 1953 President Eisenhower signed an Executive Order banning homosexuals from working for the federal government or any of its private contractors. The Order lists homosexuals as security risks, along with alcoholics and neurotics.

Up until 1962, being Gay was considered a criminal offense in every Canadian province and in every US state. In 1962 Illinois became the first state to decriminalize homosexuality. That's just a little over 60 years ago!

And so many people who were Gay went underground. They passed as "straight" in order to survive. Gay men and women lived in the closet, pretending to be heterosexual in order to avoid persecution, in order to keep their jobs, in order to not be harassed, beaten, ostracized and even killed.

As far back as 1903 in New York City, establishments that catered to the LGBTQ community, long before that acronym came into use, were raided regularly, and patrons were arrested and imprisoned.

On average, Gay bars were raided once a month, and often more than that. Police would flood the bar, trapping the exits, viciously handcuffing those inside, and hauling them off to jail.

And, as for many marginalized people, these arrests were not gentle or respectful. Those arrested were assaulted and beaten among other atrocities, all for being born Gay.

Because there were and are those who are committed to a belief in separation from the Infinite source of All That Is, and that belief in separation created an 'us and them,' and the 'them,' in this case, were Gay.

Because that belief in separation couldn't fathom that the Infinite Creative Source could and did individuate in Its infinitely creative way as a Gay human being as one of the many beautiful human ways that the Divine individuates.

And so in the early morning hours of June 28th, 1969, the Stonewall Inn was raided for the second time in the same week. And this time, the power of God expressing said, "enough" for this raid did not go as planned.

As though there was an unspoken agreement, first one patron, then another refused to show their IDs, refused to comply with police procedure. It was decided to just arrest everyone in the bar. By this time, a crowd of bystanders had grown outside of the bar.

And then a woman, Stormé DeLarverie was hit over the head by a police officer's stick when she complained that her handcuffs were too tight, and as she was picked up and shoved into the patrol wagon, she cried out, "Why don't you guys do something!"

Her words were like a spark to tinder.

Through a New Thought lens, there is a Presence that is Whole, Perfect and Complete. This Presence is our true nature, and it is expressing as each one of us on purpose, intentionally.

We are all individuations of this Divine Presence. Butterworth says there is a flow, and we can work with the flow or frustrate the flow.

In the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, the flow was done with being frustrated and burst forth in Its desire to express fully as what it is - Love and Wholeness, creative expression and freedom - and it found willing vehicles through the crowd present outside of the Stonewall Inn.

The uprising lasted until July 3rd, and out of this event, the Gay liberation movement was birthed. Within months, organizations formed to promote gay and lesbian rights.

A year later, citizens of New York City marched through the streets in recognition of the Stonewall Uprising in what was called Christopher Street Liberation Day and is now considered the first Gay Pride parade.

People interviewed said things like "the way forward was to finally come out of hiding and rather than denying the Truth of who they are, it was time to claim and celebrate the truth of who they are."

Four years later the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.

Within 10 years, several openly Gay LGBTQ individuals were elected to public offices. In 2003 homosexuality was decriminalized in the US, and in 2015, same-sex marriage became legal in the United States.

In 2017 the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Civil Rights Act prohibits workplace discrimination against LGBTQ employees.

As of March 2023, 34 countries now recognize same-sex marriage. There is more work to do, but I think that this is outer evidence that once we claim our divine inheritance, the universe moves in support of us.

Last year I joined other Unity of San Antonio volunteers at a booth in downtown San Antonio for the 2024 Pride Festival. As I watched people pass by, and chatted with more than a few, and because I tend to look at life through a New Thought lens, I could see evidence all around me that Pride is about freedom and wholeness: freedom to be fully who we are, without fear.

The crowd was multi-ethnic, and that underlined for me that this freedom and wholeness that Pride is about extends beyond Gay rights, because there are LGBTQ+ people from every walk of life. We are Gay in every ethnic group, every race, every country, every class, every gender. So Gay rights end up being about the rights of human beings.

And so, for me, Pride boils down to all of us supporting everyone in having the freedom to be whole. Supporting standing up for the right to be fully ourselves.

And this is what we teach in New Thought - the release of all false ideas and thoughts that would keep us believing that we are separate from that All That Is and from each other. We release these false beliefs so that we can fully express ourselves as Love, as Whole, as unlimited creative beings.

I'm so proud to be part of a spiritual teaching that both knows and declares that we are all equal in God - that this same divine substance is what we all are made of, that we are each divine and equal, perfect and whole.

And to that end, I'd like to share with you a personal story that relates to this revealing of our wholeness and how the universe responds. My story begins at a potluck...

...balancing a paper plate heaped with some sort of casserole and a few mystery salads on my knees, daydreaming out loud with another mom about a fantasy trip to Greece in which we the moms could sit by the pool and reacquaint ourselves with our kindles while the rest of the family wore themselves out in constant activity.

Unbeknownst to us, a woman sitting across the room had taken an interest in our conversation and suddenly shouted out: "It's called LAM!"

What? Why was this woman calling us sheep babies for wanting to relax and read?

“L. A. M. Lesbians after marriage. Women who realize that they are lesbians after marrying a man.”

The conversation moved on, but I didn't. Some part of me recognized myself in her words. I felt like a yawning crevasse had opened at my feet and I was in a slow free fall.

The rest of the evening is a blur, only coming into focus again when I was at home, on the couch, curled up with my laptop, a cup of tea and Google as I read story after story of women who had, one way or another, discovered that they were lesbians after years of marriage, and when they did, suddenly everything made sense.

While my backdrop was a potluck rather than a beach or a mountain meadow this memory lacks nothing in profundity. For it was the night when I looked back at my life and so much fell into place.

It was the night I became whole, or more whole; fragments of myself that had been torn apart by something buried deep in my subconscious were stitching themselves back together with every story I read.

Why do I share this with you today? Because it is an object lesson of what can happen when we make ourselves available to a greater, fuller version of ourselves.

I'm not saying making yourselves available to a greater version of yourselves means that you will discover that you're gay, but that you will become more of who you really are. You will be more whole, more free and full of courage to express the you that you truly are.

In his book, *The Untethered Soul*, Michael Singer describes how we “build a house” made up of self-concepts of who we are, and that this house, for most of us, becomes a prison that limits us, that closes us off from the Light of the Divine.

I had built such a house, and I was living in my own self-made prison.

This opening happened for me during a time of deep and consistent spiritual work. Through that work I made myself available to a greater version of myself.

I was open to being more whole, willing to surrender my small self. I was open to releasing the fears that had bound me to a smaller version of me. This work guided me to the door of my self-concept house and flung it open wide.

And with this self-acceptance, with this bringing more parts of me home, with this claiming of my wholeness my life changed in amazing ways. My life became more filled with love, abundance and freedom... expanding in ways that exceeded any vision that I had held for myself.

Truth be told, none of us should have to live in world where we are afraid to be whole. And in my opinion, wholeness is the deeper message of Stonewall.

There is still more work to do, for even with all the work that has been done there are still far too many of us who are still in the closet, afraid to lose their jobs, their children, their status or their lives, the most recent and local example the murder of actor Johnathan Joss outside of his burnt down San Antonio home last Sunday.

I stand on the shoulders of those courageous souls who pushed back during the Stonewall uprising with that bone felt truth: we are all beautiful and miraculous and unique emanations of a perfect Life, and we all deserve to be free to live and love and be loved.

It is because of them, and those that followed them, that I can share my coming out story with you here, in the open, in this beautiful sanctuary. We honor their memory by continuing the same efforts working to stand as one people, lifting each other up when we fall, loving ourselves and each other just the way that we are.

In truth - we all stand on the shoulders of all of those courageous souls who have worked and continue to work for the rights of all people, for that bone felt truth: to live with dignity and to walk without fear through the world; that we deserve to be free to live and love just the way we are, and that is whole and free and perfect.

If we will let them, they can inspire us to become more of who we are meant to be, for in a way, we are all coming out. Most of us have been hiding who we truly are for fear of judgement, or abandonment, or rejection. How many of us conform to social identities so that we feel accepted on the outside, even while we are screaming on the inside.

As in everything we teach, coming out is an inside job. We go inside and claim the Truth of who and what we are, and as our confidence in that Truth grows stronger, our consciousness shifts and we find the courage to begin to express as truly ourselves, whatever that is for you.

I find myself reminded of what Unity co-founder Myrtle Fillmore spoke: "Unity's mission in the world is to help people release those fears and hurts that bind and confine, that we may experience and express the love that we are."

This is what we teach in Unity and in all our New Thought spiritual communities: We are all beautiful and miraculous and unique emanations of a perfect Life and deserve to live in a world where we can express our full selves.

We all deserve to love who we choose, and to be loved just the way that we are. We are created whole and perfect and complete.

I invite you to claim your divine inheritance and live your best life.

When we join in a Pride march or join the throngs on Martin Luther King's birthday marching in his memory and in support of the work that he did and the work ongoing, we are taking our spirituality to the street, we're letting the rubber

meet the road in support of wholeness, in support of freedom, in support of the releasing of fear based laws and behaviors.

Some beautiful individuals of Unity of San Antonio are coming together to share Unity with San Antonio at the upcoming Pride Festival.

I encourage you prayerfully consider joining in, showing up in support of the freedom to be whole, to express as our true and full selves whatever that looks like for you.