Messages of Love at New York City World Pride [SLIDESHOW]

Team Friendly proves: There is victory when we carry the torch of “Love Is Love” and “Love Knows No Status.”

August 21, 2019 By Butch McKay

Upon returning home from New York City World Pride and the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall Revolution, I spent a lot of time reflecting on the experience of being there and marching with the Team Friendly group. As someone who is responsible for documenting the LGBTQ history for my community, I’m certainly aware of the historical perspective of this event. History is the foundation upon which we build our future. I saw our future, and I felt the presence of those not able to march because they had passed or were too ill. I marched with a picture of my deceased husband of 40 years pinned over my heart. He was active before Stonewall, and I know how proud he would have been for us to have marched together. When I took that first step onto 5th Avenue, I stepped off for us both, as well as the thousands of others who were so proud to join this historical moment.



I had the privilege of joining the parade with Team Friendly people from all over the United States and Canada. Team Friendly is a message, and a group of people, that exemplifies the reasons behind why we continue to march together and why we reach out with love to overcome stigma. Under banners proclaiming, “Love Is Love,” “Love Will Win” and “Love Knows No Status,” I saw people of every gender and generation—as well as parents supporting their LGBTQ children—wanting their picture taken with these banners and the message they represent. These are the priceless heartwarming moments that symbolizes the Team Friendly message: “To be there for each other,” no matter our HIV status, gender identity or challenges we face.

As someone who has spent a lifetime fighting for equality and who has worked in the HIV/AIDS field for 33 years, I know a lot about the devastation and side effects caused by the disease of stigma. The Team Friendly message changes attitudes not only in the broader community, but

also within our own communities as well. Created to educate, to seek and bring understanding, to raise awareness and to celebrate our diversity, the Team Friendly message of Love brings us all together with our own unique and special gifts. And when, on Saturday in Central Park, two amazing guys positioned the Love Is Love banner in front of them as they were married, I knew the power this message carried in the heart of those who were there and the crowd that gathered.

As I approach the end of my Rainbow path, I will continue to carry on as long as I have the strength and breath within me. Yet, knowing that there is still a lot of work ahead of us, I am comforted in the knowledge that our community and the friendly messages we promote are strong. I have seen the best and worst. I have seen our victories and our defeats. There is victory when we carry the torch of “Love Is Love” and “Love Knows No Status” for we are carrying some of the single most powerful Team Friendly tools to drive out stigma.

Pride is more than a birthright, it is a commitment. I’m committed and so proud that I have so much company. Happy Pride!

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