The PRIDE of Black Lives Matter

A look at how BLM has created a sense of unity within the LGBTQ community

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A sense of Pride.

I was sitting on a bench enjoying the nice weather. It was a respite from the recent protesting over the death of George Floyd and a call of action declaring that Black Lives Matter. For weeks, I had been watching the people gathering in unison and calling for change. It was uplifting to witness, but I couldn't be part of the gatherings because as a person living with HIV, I was at risk. Although the importance of the rallies is valid, it doesn't dismiss the fact that the world was still dealing with COVID-19. Yet as an activist, I wanted to be part of this movement, so I considered myself there in spirit.

As thoughts about current events went through my head, from the distance I heard voices yelling out in unison. As I was at the bottom of a hill, I looked up and I saw placards held high in the air. I had yet to see faces but they soon appeared. Like a synchronized wave, the street, which was empty, now had a sea of people coming down.

With the many voices yelling out, it was made clear that Black Lives Matter. It was an uplifting image to see them approach, as it wasn't just black bodies carrying signs, but white bodies, Asian bodies, Latin bodies. And within the crowd, you were reminded that Black Trans Lives Matter; LGBTQ bodies were included within the march, standing shoulder to shoulder with everyone else. It was truly a rainbow community banded together to fight hate.

Even more powerful was to see this happen within Pride month, another event that was created to bring greater awareness of the gay movement, a movement that started remarkably similar to the current protest. A fight back against the policing of our lives.

Seeing the unity in front of me gave me hope. I hope there will be greater cooperation from the gay community at large. When gay marriage became legal, our white gay brothers and sisters left the battle, leaving us unmanned for other challenges we faced, such as inequality as it relates to health care and the justice system, plus other issues that poorer LGBTQ face.

LGBTQ people of color had been left on the battle field to fight against systems that were not created for them. It was a bitter sting coming from within the LGBTQ community at large, who made it known that LGBTQ people of color were often not welcomed at the rainbow table.

Yet here it was before me. A change. Is it permanent? One can be hopeful. But the current environment of HIV and now COVID-19 have made clear to the world the inequalities endured by those of color. This same inequality is showing up in other areas, and we all need to let go of our self-interest and join the fight.

Perhaps there is hope more people will see our similarities and join other battles as well, even if it falls outside of their personal identity box—just as others who identify as straight joined us as we marched during Pride. We must also leave our comfort zone and remember we're not free until we're all free.

That to me is a sense of Pride and hope.

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