



THE JUNETEENTH INTERSECTION

Juneteenth recognizes the final emancipation of African-American slaves on June 19, 1865. Marginalized and abused solely because of their race, these men, women and children were demonized by their white owners as chattel. And although independence was technically granted to this community over 150 years ago, we continue to experience the lingering effects of racial injustice and institutionalized discrimination in the 21st century. Keene Pride condemns the historical travesty visited upon our brothers and sisters of color.

The fact that Juneteenth occurs during Pride month provides a special opportunity to recognize the contribution an African American hero who fought for LGBTQ+ equality. Marsha P. Johnson was a transgender activist who helped to lead the Stonewall uprising on June 28, 1969 during a police raid at the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in New York City. At that time, New York would not grant licenses to bars that served gays and this allowed the police to enter with a warrant to arrest the crowd which was largely comprised of trans people of color and drag queens.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons rioted as a result of the raid and the event is considered the tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. The following year, Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were compelled to found the first trans-youth organization known as STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) which fed and housed homeless youth. <https://libguides.pratt.edu/star> In the 1980s, Johnson remained an outspoken protestor and joined the work of ACT UP, the organization that stood on the frontlines of AIDS activism.

Johnson was found dead in the Hudson River in 1992. She was only 46 years old. Initially considered a suicide, her case was reopened in 2012 and officially remains an unsolved murder.

The common thread between Juneteenth and the fight for LGBTQ+ equality is the intersection between homophobia and racism. It is tragically mind-boggling to know that society continues to struggle with the concept of basic human rights for all regardless of race, color, creed or sexual orientation. Keene Pride invites individuals, organizations and corporations to examine their stand regarding social justice and equality for all by asking the following questions. Is your effort merely performative? Do you say yes to supporting the LGBTQ+ community because you hope it will improve your bottom line? How do you strive to make a sustainable difference in the lives of marginalized individuals? If your son or daughter comes out to you, or expresses their desire to transition, what will you say or do?

For more information, visit the Keene Pride resource directory <https://www.keenepride.org/resources>

Adam Toepfer, Board President
Keene Pride
POB 371, Keene NH 03431
603-696-2927
adam@keenepride.org
www.keenepride.org