



# Speak Out Now

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## Pride – A Celebration of Struggle

This Pride Month, the LGBTQ+ community celebrates their enduring resilience in the face of renewed and coordinated attacks. The surge in anti-queer legislation, hate crimes, and right-wing rhetoric is not random – it is part of a broader strategy by the ruling class to divide, distract, and suppress working people. But queer people will not be pushed back into the closet. Pride was never about quiet assimilation; it has always been a declaration of defiance.

Last year, the number of anti-LGBTQ+ groups increased by about 13% from the year prior. This year, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has been tracking nearly 600 anti-LGBTQ bills in the U.S. These include laws like Florida's expansion of the so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill, outlawing classroom discussions of sexual orientation and gender identity through high school; bans on gender-affirming care for minors in states like Texas and Tennessee; laws targeting drag performances as "adult entertainment" and restricting them from public spaces; prohibition of federal or state funding for gender-affirming care; and legislation in states like Oklahoma and Missouri attempting to erase trans people from legal recognition altogether. These bills are not isolated – they are part of a national campaign to erase queer and trans existence from public life.

But this rise in anti-LGBTQ+ violence and scapegoating is not new. We've been here before. In the aftermath of the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969 – when Black and Brown trans women, queens, and queers fought back against police brutality – there was a brief surge of visibility and hope. The first Pride Parade in 1970, one year after Stonewall, was a public celebration of the LGBTQ+ community's refusal to put up with continued abuse. They marched in the streets openly, with pride.

But the 1970s also saw a sharp backlash, spearheaded by figures like Anita Bryant. Her "Save Our Children" campaign successfully repealed anti-discrimination protections, helping to ignite a wave of homophobic and transphobic repression. But this backlash wasn't rooted in mass rejection of queer people – it was orchestrated from the top, fueled by right-wing politicians, religious

institutions, and media outlets who saw queer liberation as a threat to their control.

During the last election cycle, Republicans spent nearly \$215 million on anti-trans TV ads. Yet, most voters did not see trans issues as an important factor for their vote. Around the country, a conservative, well-funded organization, Turning Point USA, has been going to college campuses to spread their anti-trans hate in talks like "The Truth About Transgenderism." The multi-million dollar right-wing think tank Family Research Council told attendees of its annual conference to "breed out" trans people and immigrants. Yet, trans people make up only 1% of the population. This anti-trans propaganda is clearly part of a fear campaign financed and propagated by the right, to scapegoat a small minority.

Today's attacks follow the same playbook as those in the past. The forces targeting LGBTQ+ people are the same ones gutting workers' rights, criminalizing immigrants, taking away our healthcare, and abandoning poor and disabled people. These aren't separate fights. Queer people live at every intersection of race, gender, and ability. Every blow against the working class is also a blow against the LGBTQ+ community.

And the gains queer people have won – like the right to access gender-affirming healthcare, obtain the legal benefits of marriage, and exist openly in schools and workplaces – are now directly under threat. Many LGBTQ+ people fleeing gender-based violence or criminalization in their home countries seek refuge in the U.S., believing it to be a place of openness and safety. But that promise is rapidly eroding as politicians and their elite funders turn the U.S. into an increasingly hostile place for both immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community.

If there's one lesson history teaches us, it's that our power lies in solidarity and organization. The reason there's backlash is because queer people and their allies have made real gains – through ongoing collective struggle, across ability, race, and gender. That struggle must continue, not just for inclusion in a broken system, but for its complete transformation.