



Larry Morris/The New York Times



REFLECTIONS ON

PRIDE MONTH

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I have always been proud, but never really loud about my queer identity. Of course it is a big part of who I am, but because of its intersection with my other identities, my sexuality hasn't always been the place where I experienced the most friction, exclusion, or oppression. I, like many other LGBTQ+ people, have never quite felt "queer enough." So, I am often hesitant to speak on behalf of my community. Nevertheless, my social location as a queer, Latina faculty member at Gonzaga shapes my perspectives, experiences, and teaching. In honor of Pride Month, I want to share some reflections from a speech I gave last fall at the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Lincoln LGBTQ+ Center.



In a bizarre twist of legal history and fate, my same-sex marriage is a big part of the reason I am here teaching Women's and Gender Studies at Gonzaga. When I finished my PhD in 2012, my registered domestic partnership wasn't portable. My job search was limited by Section 2 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which was eventually over-turned by the US Supreme Court on June 26, 2015. My partner and I desperately wanted to stay in Washington State, so we could hold on to the legal protections we had at that time.

When I saw the job at GU, I jumped. But, I admit I was a bit apprehensive about leaving Seattle for a Catholic school in Spokane. It was a time of anticipation and uncertainty.

What I found at GU was a wonderful surprise—a small, but warm, community of other LGBTQ+ and allied faculty, staff, and students—and a university mission that centered social justice. I felt committed to being out in the classroom, especially because we are a Catholic/Jesuit school. That fall, I taught the very

"We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers."
- Bayard Rustin,
1948

first section of my now popular class, WGST 303: The -isms: Racism, Classism, and Sexism with an enrollment of just eight students.

I found myself drawing from my own life to illustrate the effects of structural inequalities for LGBTQ+ people. For example, I shared about the very costly effects that DOMA had on my household taxes the year before. The IRS was not allowed by Section 3 of DOMA to recognize same-sex marriages (overturned June 26, 2013). But, they had decided to tax registered domestic partners like married couples. This required a special technical work-around.

We had to find a tax accountant who specialized in LGBTQ+ taxes, pay a hefty fee for those services, and an additional \$3000 in taxes that year, even though as a grad student my income was just \$11,000 dollars.

My students were appalled. They learned that there were many even greater inequalities still alive and well. The experience illustrated to me the pedagogical value of LGBTQ+ visibility in the classroom. I found myself an unexpected role model for LGBTQ+ students who needed to see themselves represented among the faculty. *That*, makes me proud.



Since my first fall at GU, so much has changed. DOMA has been overturned, the Lincoln LGBTQ+ Resource Center has become a stable and vibrant place for students to find support, and I have taught hundreds of students to think critically about injustice by incorporating the interventions and insights of queer theory into my teaching. What I love about the GU mission is that it allows students of all (or no) faith traditions to cultivate a passion for and curiosity about social justice. Many find their faith enriched by deepening their knowledge of injustices and movements for liberation. Drawing from my own lived experience has enabled me to help students to locate injustice, *and its solutions*, in the intricacies of policies and institutional structures.

Many people have not had the opportunity to learn about the origins of Pride Month which commemorates the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion on June 28, 1969. The rebellion came after decades of criminalization, public shaming, and brutal policing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people—most especially poor and homeless LGBTQ+ people of color. Since 1970, that spirit of resistance and joyful celebration of liberation has been commemorated with Pride parades every year in June, around the world. By coincidence of the SCOTUS schedule, many LGBTQ+ legal victories in the US also share the month of June for their anniversaries.

There is much to celebrate! But, the gains that have been made are incomplete and always precarious. Full civil rights have not yet been won. This June 2020, we await several important SCOTUS decisions. We cannot take for granted that recent victories are permanent. Here at GU, LGBTQ+ students still aren't always safe on our campus or in the surrounding community. We have an obligation advocate for the members of our community that previous movements have overlooked—trans and non-binary folks, queer people of color, and poor, working-class and disabled LGBTQ+ people. For my part, I consider it a sacred privilege to participate in the collective work of affirming and celebrating the beautiful, diverse spectrum of genders and sexualities represented in this community.

"Spirituality which inspires activism and, similarly, politics which move the spirit - which draw from the deep-seated place of our greatest longings for freedom - give meaning to our lives." ~ Cherrie Moraga (1983)

