U.S. Supreme Court Ruling: A Major Victory for LGBTQ+ Rights

On June 28, 1969, a routine police raid of a gay bar called Stonewall Inn sparked the fire that fueled the first wave of the Gay Pride Movement in New York City’s Greenwich Village. That evening in 1969, approximately 400 people occupied the bar. The Stonewall Uprising was followed by several days of demonstrations in New York and formed the impetus for the formation of the Gay Liberation Front as well as other gay, lesbian, and bisexual civil rights organizations. The next year, in 1970, New York commemorated its first official Gay Pride parade setting off from Stonewall and marching up 6th Avenue. In 2019, the New York Police Department formally apologized for its role in the Stonewall Uprising and for the discriminatory laws that targeted gay people. June was designated LGBTQ+ Pride Month to commemorate the uprising.

Fifty-one years later and the month of June again marks another forward gain for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) people and communities. On June 15, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) rendered a landmark decision to prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the workplace. The decision, Bostock v. Clayton County, holds that firing an employee because they are queer or transgender constitutes unlawful sex discrimination under federal law. Colorado state law has forbidden this type of discrimination for over a decade now, and the University of Colorado system has had protections in place for LGBTQ+ employees for many years. The SCOTUS decision reinforces and strengthens our ability to protect queer and trans members of our community—and it protects our LGBTQ+ students once they leave CU.

Social and legal gains for LGBTQ+ people have been numerous since 1969; the declassification of sexual orientation and gender variance as mental illnesses, the legalization of same-sex marriage nationwide, and the growth in employment and housing protections for LGBTQ+ people are all the benefits of decades of activism. But at the same time, these benefits have reached the community unevenly and have sometimes served to deepen inequalities and fueled debate about how to set priorities, how to allocate resources, and how to shape the discourse around LGBTQ+ rights. An example of how inequity still exists for our LGBTQ+ community comes after two black trans women—Dominique "Rem'Mie" Fells and Riah Milton—were murdered last week. Recent protests, led and centered around black trans women, have taken place amid global demonstrations in support of Black Lives Matter and also followed the Department of Health and Human Services announcement that it was going to eliminate certain health care protections for transgender patients.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) celebrates the SCOTUS decision with the LGBTQ+ community and also realizes that much more work needs to be done. The Stonewall Uprising was led by trans women of color. ODI recognizes the deep intersectionality of racial justice, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Our work will continue to challenge discriminatory acts and the myths and biases that hamper the rights and opportunities of LGBTQ+ people, especially LGBTQ+ people of color.