

Paper Mache for 5-6-25 by David Read

My social media feeds this past week blew up with posts about Pride Month. Colorful rainbow flag imagery has been everywhere along with profound, emotional statements about diversity, equity and inclusion. Will I be fired for writing that? Let's consider the history of all this including the rainbow Pride flag created in 1978 by artist and activist Gilbert Baker, a friend of Harvey Milk, one of the first openly gay elected officials in the U.S. Baker designed the flag as a symbol of hope, pride, and diversity for the LGBTQ+ community. Speaking of Harvey Milk, did you know a Navy ship had been named after him? Readers of the A-D learned earlier this week that Milk joined the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. He served aboard the submarine rescue ship USS *Kittiwake* as a diving officer. The US Navy ship *Harvey Milk* was christened and launched in 2021. A "renaming" decision was ordered by Secretary of Defense Hegseth this week to "reestablish the warrior culture."

Pride Month, celebrated every June, honors the LGBTQ+ community's struggle for equality, visibility, and rights. Its origins are rooted in the events surrounding the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in New York City when there was a police raid at the Stonewall Inn—a gay bar in Greenwich Village—that sparked spontaneous protests from the patrons and the surrounding community. At the time, such raids were common, as LGBTQ+ people faced widespread discrimination and criminalization. The resistance that erupted over six days at Stonewall was unprecedented. In the wake of Stonewall, LGBTQ+ advocacy groups quickly organized and demanded visibility, dignity, and change. The first anniversary in 1970 saw Pride marches in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, marking the birth of what would become an international movement. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Pride events grew in number and significance, even as the LGBTQ+ community faced the devastating AIDS crisis and ongoing legal and social persecution. During these years, activism helped bring attention to public health, civil rights, and cultural representation.

While living in the Washington, DC area, I joined friends from Los Angeles who came east for the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. It was a huge, empowering political rally that took place in the Capital on April 25, 1993. While not officially a Pride event, it drew hundreds of thousands of us to call attention to these same issues. In 1999, President Clinton officially declared June as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. President Obama expanded the recognition to LGBTQ+ Pride Month in 2009, acknowledging the diversity within the community. Today, Pride Month is marked by parades, art exhibits, concerts, and memorials across the globe. While the month is celebratory, it also serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggles against discrimination, violence, and legal inequities. Pride continues to amplify queer voices, particularly those of historically marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Locally, the Tri-County Diversity non-profit organization does important work throughout the year providing guidance, resources and social events for LGBTQ+ individuals in Yuba, Sutter and Colusa counties to fulfill their mission of "Uniting Our Community." The Yuba Community College District and some of our local high schools offer Pride events this month and host Gay/Straight Alliance clubs year-round. Pride Month is more than a celebration; it is a commemoration of resilience, a tribute to those who fought and continue to fight for equality, and a call to action to build a more inclusive and just world for all. The good news is this progress cannot be taken away by Executive Order.