



From the President
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AARONS WARD

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Pride, prejudice, and the ongoing fight for justice

THERE ARE MANY REASONS TO BEAM WITH PRIDE IN JUNE, THE CIVIL-RIGHTS MONTH

Each month, Advocate offers a platform to examine the legal and societal issues shaping our work and our world. This issue's theme – Pride and Prejudice: Civil Rights and Employment – is especially timely.

June is historically significant for civil rights in the United States of America.

Juneteenth, short for “June Nineteenth” honors the end to slavery in the United States. Though the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued on January 1, 1863, and the Confederate Army had surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, it took a long time for the end of slavery to reach all the Confederate States. In fact, slavery had remained relatively unaffected in Texas. That is, until U.S. General Gordon Granger stood on Texas soil – on June 19, 1865 – and read General Orders No. 3: “The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free.”

After the war ended in spring 1865, General Granger's arrival in Galveston that June finally signaled freedom for Texas's approximately 250,000 enslaved people. Although emancipation didn't happen overnight for everyone, celebrations broke out among newly freed Black people, and Juneteenth was born. That December, slavery in America was formally abolished with the adoption of the 13th Amendment.

Juneteenth was made an official state holiday in Texas beginning in 1980 and became a federal holiday as of 2021.

The end of slavery – Juneteenth – is a great reason to celebrate in June.

The Stonewall Riots

June 28, 1969, the date of the Stonewall Riots/Uprising, is widely seen as a turning point for the modern LGBTQ+ movement. Stonewall Inn was a popular bar in Manhattan where members of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-gender, and other marginalized groups could drink, dance, and socialize. However, on June 28, 1969, the police

raided this “gay bar,” which led to violent confrontation between the bar's patrons/ members of the LGBTQ+ community and local law enforcement. The riots, violence, and ensuing protests lasted for several days with demonstrators calling for an end to the harassment and discrimination the members of the LGBTQ+ community faced.

Following the Stonewall Uprising, LGBTQ+ groups and organizations increased and served as a catalyst for activism, reforms, rights and protections for members of the LGBTQ+ community. What we now know as pride parades began the following year, in June of 1970, in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles to commemorate the Stonewall Uprising. These pride parades have continued ever since.

President Bill Clinton officially declared in a presidential proclamation, June “Gay and Lesbian Pride Month” in 1999 and President Barack Obama expanded the official Pride Month recognition in 2011, including the whole of the LGBT community.

Civil Rights for the LGBTQ+ community is a great reason to celebrate in June.

No place for hate

Sadly, there are numerous other groups that are still victims of hate, bullying, discrimination, and harassment due to their race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, reproductive health decision making, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, or veteran or military status.

There is no place for hate in our society.

Though the Civil Rights Movement fought for and obtained long overdue protection for numerous marginalized groups, there is still work to be done.

Celebrating Pride Month and Juneteenth in June offers a powerful reminder of the enduring legacy and

accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement. These commemorations honor the hard-fought progress made by LGBTQ+ individuals and Black Americans in the face of systemic discrimination and oppression. They also serve as a call to action – reminding us that the struggle for equality is far from over.

As we reflect on the courage and resilience of those who came before us, we are also challenged to continue the fight for justice and dignity for all marginalized communities.

As trial lawyers, we know that the promise of a society free from discrimination, harassment, and one with equal opportunity for all is still far from reality for many. Whether it's discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability, workplace injustice remains deeply entrenched. And while civil rights protections exist, enforcement often falls to the individuals willing to stand up – and to the attorneys who stand with them.

Whether in courtrooms, classrooms, or communities, the pursuit of civil rights remains a shared and ongoing responsibility. That's where CAALA members come in. We are proud to support lawyers who fight for fairness, not only in courtrooms, but in communities, schools, companies, and across California. In a moment when DEI efforts are being challenged and public confidence in institutions is being tested, our work – and our values – matter more than ever.

CAALA continues to grow stronger. Our members are stepping up to mentor, volunteer, and lead. Our events – especially CAALA Vegas – are drawing a wider range of participants from firms of all sizes. And our commitment to inclusion is not just something we talk about – it shows up in who we spotlight, support, and serve.

There are many reasons to beam with Pride in June. Thank you for being part of CAALA and our powerful community. Your advocacy doesn't just change outcomes – it changes lives.