LGBTQ+ and Marquette

With October comes a string of special events. Marquette University’s Homecoming festivities, followed by midterms exams, and of course the end of October is marked with the beloved holiday of Halloween. October, however, also holds a critical amount of significance for many Marquette students, alum, and staff. October is LGBTQ+ History Month, and with this important time of remembrance comes a look back into Milwaukee and Marquette’s unique and important past with the LGBTQ+ community.

In 1969, America was shaken by the Stonewall Riots. The Stonewall Riots marked a significant changing point for the LGBTQ+ community as they, who had functioned almost entirely in secret up to this point, gave their first response to the intense discrimination, scrutiny, and abuse that the community suffered up until this point. In this was the marking of a continuous fight for equality, rights, and normalcy in American society. For the first time now LGBTQ+ citizens were beginning to slowly and hesitantly break into the public eye and out of hiding.

As change was slowly forming across America due to Stonewall, Milwaukee LGBTQ+ community was already breaking free with 35 gay bars, astonishing as only places such as New York City and San Francisco had such a vast multitude of gay bars and clubs at this time. In fact, The Mint, a popular gay bar, was around from 1949 to 1990!

Compared to many cities at the time, Milwaukee was a progressive and more inclusive space, but many Marquette students may question how far inclusivity at a Jesuit institution would go even with its location of Milwaukee. Strong statements on Marquette’s own views have only been stated to public until relatively recently.

Several years ago, issues came to the forefront as an openly gay professor was offered a position as a dean and the offer was rescinded causing distaste amongst the community as it was speculated by the majority that this pulling of the dean was due to her sexual orientation. Further outrage prevailed as an officer of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship was asked to resign, many were under the impression that it was due to his sexual orientation. These two incidents with little explanation from the university caused an uproar, invoking change. Soon, the LGBTQ+ Resource Center was put into place. For many, this felt like the university’s way of welcoming students and ensuring that there was no exclusion.

Today Marquette states that “…as a Catholic, Jesuit university, Marquette recognizes and cherishes the dignity of each individual regardless of age, culture, faith, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, disability or social class…” For LGBTQ+ History Month the resource center will be holding a multitude of events including guest speakers. In the future Marquette will be hosting its first ever Pride Prom in April of 2018!

With the university’s newly found more positive and welcoming tone towards LGBTQ+ students many may feel satisfied, but many may feel more action needs to be taken. As the month ensues, students continue to celebrate, remember darker pasts and look towards brighter futures for Marquette, Milwaukee, and America.