

No Pride in Police or Prisons

When we think of the historical context of Pride, we most commonly remember Stonewall - when in 1969 trans and queer community members including street youth, people of colour, sex workers and drag queens fought back against police trying to raid the Stonewall Inn located in New York. While this is highlighted as the beginning of the queer rights movement, this wasn't a one-off event: raids against bars frequented by queer people in the 1960s were routine. In her book *Miss Major Speaks*, Miss Major describes the way those inside the pub assumed it was just another raid, only this time everyone had had enough of police violence and oppression plaguing their communities. Despite days of resistance at Stonewall, in which she describes queer+ people fighting for their lives, she recognises not a lot has changed for her and her gurls. Many of those who played a key role in the initial riots, were nowhere to be seen at the parade celebrating it the next year - likely due to respectability politics which saw predominantly gay, white cis men pushed to the foreground, eager to be seen in the same way as their heterosexual peers. This meant those less welcomed by the community (sex workers, transfems, drag queens, addicts) went back to sleeping on the street, dying earlier than their more privileged peers.

Across the globe, police continue to respond to our communities with disproportionate violence - used as tools of the state to repress and silence us. It is in their interest to quell resistance as it begins - whether that is by clamping down on protests or by setting new laws and making examples of those standing up for their rights (like those unfairly imprisoned for their part in the Bristol riots in 2021) or by collecting information from communities as they come together in solidarity to support one another. The police love to collect information - which is why they will always film people at events, and ask for the names of people involved in organising the event. They will use this information to build profiles of those involved - where they live, who they know and other identifiable information about them.

Queer and trans people are more likely to be unfairly policed compared to their cis/het peers. Not only this but we are more likely to experience insecure housing and income, due to facing difficulties finding accepting spaces to live and work in. When trans and queer people are arrested or find themselves in the prison industrial complex (for example psych wards, secure children's homes, young offenders, the bail and probation systems as well as prisons), we find ourselves more likely to experience assault and profiling. The prison system is a space where trans people face systematic misgendering and institutional sexual violence, placed in prisons where they are unsafe, or forced to medically detransition while inside.

Prisons are built on anti-Blackness and white supremacy - originally built as reform but now used to justify state surveillance and attacks on our civil liberties. Queer people with multiple marginalised identities ie travellers, people of colour, Black people, disabled people - including those with mental health problems, people who are NFA (have No Fixed Address) are even more likely to enter the prison industrial complex, and face many barriers if they are released. Trans and queer youth also frequently find themselves trapped in prison systems - facing insecure housing or no alternative to their unsafe living situations, turning to survival crime when a stable income is inaccessible or impossible to find.

The expansion of prisons and the funding they continue to receive diverts funds away from our communities and towards our oppression. Fueled by capitalism and the government's scramble to silence dissent, prisons continue to expand - creating more jobs and funding more businesses. Businesses like McDonalds and Starbucks use prison labour to make their uniforms or other material goods. Those who work in prison do not earn minimum wage, making as little as a few pounds per week - told that this work will help them "reform" or gain employment on the outside. These very same companies capitalise on Pride month every June, tokenising their queer staff or coming out with Pride month products to make more money. Ultimately big businesses will oppress queer workers, stamping out those who organise in unions or policing the bathrooms their staff use while on shift, refusing to hire trans+ people because we are considered "too difficult". Through this they are able to hoard money, often making billions of pounds each year, funding companies that fund fossil fuels, weapons and bombs for colonialist powers and political campaigns that harm our communities.