

How the LGBTQ Community Is Supporting One Another Virtually This Pride Month

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Covid-19 has affected everyone, but some groups have been more negatively impacted than others. Beyond health indicators and the factors that seem to affect its severity, socioeconomic inequality is as consistent with the novel coronavirus as it is with job security.

Research shows that the trans and gender nonconforming (GNC) communities are more affected by the virus, especially people of color within these groups. The way inequality and power structures work, those in minority groups are often the most vulnerable, including during major disasters and pandemics. As such, the LGBTQ community finds itself in a precarious position on many levels.

But adversity often inspires creativity, community and action. Though Pride festivals around the world may be splintered, Covid-19 has brought our community together in new ways.

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Being queer and online during quarantine

The queer community has needed to be resilient over the years in order to combat forces like homophobia, transphobia and racism. With a large creative community and many that work as part-time or contract employees or in an informal economy, this has been a time of adaptation and survival.

Based on unemployment, the entertainment and service industries have been hardest hit by Covid-19, and those who

work in these fields have flocked to social media and digital outlets in order to offset lost income. This has led to a series of virtual LGBTQ events in the lead-up to Pride, including Instagram Live drag shows like Brigitte Bidet's Tossed Salad performance, ticketed Twitch performances like the Sickening Drag Event, ticketed Zoom club parties like Susanne Bartsch's On Top, morning coffee sessions with trans actress Angelica Ross, Bingo fundraisers with drag queen Alyssa Edwards, the Corona Kitchen cooking show fundraiser with trans activist Feroza Syed and queer-hosted live talk shows like Legendary Talks with Legendary Damon.

The virtual drag show has been one of the most innovative and, hopefully, lasting concepts of quarantine. This format is consistent and provides access to everyone. Performers announce a lineup, drive an audience to a live platform and then provide tip information for electronic payment such as Cash App and Venmo. Dozens of drag shows have popped up every week, and especially for RuPaul's Drag Race fans, this has been an exciting opportunity to watch some favorites on a regular basis. Virtual cash tips are essential in keeping this new type of event alive.

Virtual Pride of 2020

As Pride month and June's Stonewall celebrations creep up, these national events face a major question: How will they pivot in the time of Covid-19?

Many, like Los Angeles' Pride, have chosen a virtual format. A virtual Gayborhood Pride Phoenix Edition occurred on April 18. It was an exciting translation of the real-world format into a virtual experience, complete with a star-studded main stage and an exhibitors hall that had sponsors and nonprofits.

Without a hallmark moment to gather around, many Pride celebrations are expanding typical programming throughout the year, allowing for extended activities and access for folks

who are not local and may not have been able to attend physical events.

Additionally, nonprofits will miss out on landmark dates to fundraise for their annual budgets. It will be important for leaders to remember these organizations and instead ensure that they are woven into new events and content platforms.

Brands and Pride in 2020

Pride will also be different for brands. With no Main Street to march down and no pool parties to sponsor, brands must find new ways to connect with the LGBTQ community.

It's as important as ever for brands to recognize that Pride is not just a celebration but a moment that has deep meaning for the LGBTQ community. In 2020, there is a reflective tone to Pride as we face some large hurdles, not the least of which it being an election year that will determine the fates of many in our community. This year, brands must step up to support causes, protect the livelihood of the queer and trans creative community, find a deeper connection to the movement and extend with new ways of connecting.

We are seeing activists continue to speak up and performers finding new ways to connect with audiences around the world. As we continue to (virtually) congregate and, most importantly, while the LGBTQ community continues to echo the phrase "Pride is year-round," the year 2020 will reflect that mentality.

Editor's note: This article was written before the Black Lives Matter protests.

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