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OK Voices

Pride—An Old Tradition with New Urgency

June 16, 2025

As a young man, I always enjoyed Pride as a celebration of freedom. It was a day of fun and community, and a welcome break from the secret-keeping and persecution many LGBTQ+ individuals experienced throughout the rest of the year. This sort of pride wasn't a feeling of smugness—the pride that “goeth before the fall.” It was a chance to claim for ourselves the dignity and self-worth that were routinely denied us.

As I grew older, pride became a month-long observance and celebrations around the country were infused with new energy and new meaning. The freedom we used to enjoy once a year had become a day-to-day reality. To a remarkable degree, our communities, our workplaces, and even our public policy reflected a new sense of equality and full citizenship. All of us—gay, lesbian, and transgender alike—enjoyed the right to marry and to live free from discrimination.

Although I am no longer a young man, Pride still means freedom, but the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals can no longer be taken for granted. The right to marry the person you love and other hard-won legal protections feel less secure than they once did. Transgender individuals in particular are facing open hostility, and adoptive same-sex families are on edge.

As a consequence, Pride is no longer just a celebration—it is a call to action. It's a sobering reminder that the freedoms we enjoy are increasingly vulnerable. Together with our straight allies, LGBTQ+ individuals need to support each other, especially the most vulnerable among us.

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- Lee Carpenter