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Pride – the Struggle Continues

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In honor of Pride Month, we reached out to friend and former colleague at Procter & Gamble, Michael Chanak, Jr., asking him to help us celebrate Pride Month by sharing thoughts about his LGBTQ+ journey.

Michael Chanak, Jr. -- The year is 1986, and I'm a relatively new hire at P&G. I went to "gay pride" in Cincinnati and managed to get photographed kissing a friend from University of Cincinnati. After the clip was broadcast for several days, my life was forever changed --not just at P&G but personally as well. There's always something very powerful in manifesting your genuine self in a complete sense.

Such was risky business then, but things change with time change and the issues once in the forefront of the daily news, acquire a different emphasis. Then, the HIV pandemic and lesbian/gay liberation were headlines news. Fast forward nearly 40 years, HIV is not cured but tamed. LG was joined by the BTQ+. We can marry, serve in the military and can't be fired simply for being "gay."

There is plenty to celebrate this Pride season. Yet, the old hatreds and misunderstandings now grab the news in a different cloth. They are alive in the battles over: transgender rights, health care for trans youth, don't say "gay bills" and drag luncheons with children are now weaponized. It is the nature of progress, one step forward and a half back.

My community thought we were safe, just like we felt we were seeing progress before the HIV pandemic in the late 70s. Yes, today many states, municipalities and corporations have specific statements of legal inclusion. But laws don't create equality -- only the vague promise of enforcement.

We need inclusion and vigilance. The work seems to always fall on the impacted group. But we must and we will see it through. All of us, through our actions can make change.

In 1970, the first Gay Pride took place in New York City. I've seen many changes, however the statement "we are always in the struggle" still resonates with me today. There is work to be done and it is ours.