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Practice, and Activism*

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## Pride Started with a Riot!

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## Pride Started with a Riot!

**Cameron PajYeeb Yang**

*Coalition of Asian American Leaders Minnesota (CAALMN)*

Trigger warning: Description of death by police brutality

June is Pride Month. I celebrate it each year to say loudly that LGBTQ+ folks should be able to be out and open about their sexuality and gender without fear of arrest, and to honor the Stonewall Riots. This means that my rights as a Queer and Transgender individual began with a riot started by Black and Brown Transgender women (#SayTheirNames #MarshaPJohnson and #SylviaRivera). My Black and Brown siblings have often bore the brunt of police brutality, and it's our time to be in solidarity with them.

As I watched George Floyd's killing, and joined the actions that have followed since, I also began having conversations with my family and friends. I was often met with anti-Blackness and transphobic rhetoric, and found myself emotionally drained. Some frequent questions that come up are "What about us? The Asian community?" or "They don't care about us so why should I care about them?" moments like this remind me that my entire livelihood and liberation is tied to the justice and liberation of the Black community. As a Queer, Transgender, Hmong individual, I am often challenged with this mentality of exclusion and separation of all my identities. Intersectionality is important. I can only fully show up as myself if all of my identities are recognized, validated, and liberated.

Below shows a small yet important table of the rate per 100,000 Black Transgender folk are killed in 2016/17. These transgender women are a part of my community, and I refuse to erase this part of my identity.

*Homicide rate per 100,000 people*

	EVERYONE	TRANS FOLK
TOTAL	6	13
BLACK	23	1170
HISPANIC	5	55

Sources: Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2016.  
American Journal of Public Health, 2017.



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Stonewall's legacy is a reminder that ending the violence and harm of policing on Black and trans communities should matter to all of us. Yet there have been many moments where I was the only Asian individual in police brutality or violence against people of color organizing spaces. In this moment, as Asian communities across the country are confronting their role in anti-Blackness, I hope we'll honor the fact that the first Pride was a riot and be spurred into showing up and taking action. Celebrate Pride with me and CAAL by working for a world where all Black people—including Black trans women—can be free and thriving.

### **About the Author**



They are a Queer Transgender Second-Generation Hmong American Citizen; and their professions consists of being a secondary education English teacher, visual artist (2D/3D mediums), radio producer, and community organizer. As a Gates Millennium Scholar, Yang recently graduated from Augsburg University with a Secondary Education in Communication Arts and Literature Bachelor of Arts degree.

Under their film production company, PY Production, Yang produced their first feature film, *Taboo*; depicting a groundbreaking love story with a vision to inspire and change the perspective of love in the Hmong community. They are also a co-producer of Nplooj Radio, a Hmong LGBTQIA+ radio show that provides a brave space for marginalized/underrepresented communities through arts, music, culture, and dialogues.



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