

True Colors

Rainbow flag deserves to be regarded as more than a marketing tool

Welcome to June, a month noted across the nation, with perhaps the exception of the entire middle part, as Gay Pride Month. June was selected for this honor in commemoration of the historic Stonewall uprising June 28, 1969. Pride Month, however, is not to be confused with October, which is Gay History Month. October was chosen as history month in that it holds the anniversaries of the 1979 and 1987 national marches on Washington, D.C., for gay and lesbian rights. As an aftermath of the 1987 rally, Oct. 11 is now recognized as National Coming Out Day. Portland has not done much with National Coming Out Day in the past several years.

Long story short: We get two months of visibility. We deserve them both, so let's celebrate.

The cover of this issue of *Just Out* displays a rare, for us, visualization of the universally recognized rainbow flag. I am resistant to publish rainbow images in *Just Out*, not out of disrespect or disinterest, but because the symbol is in danger of becoming overused and overmerchandized. My concern is that we are losing sight of the original intent and meaning of the flag and her colors. Something as dramatic and historical in context as this flag deserves to be regarded as more than a cliché and marketing tool.

As we go through a month of Pride events, we will see the rainbow colors produced on virtually every item known to gaykind. Bumper stickers started it all, and now the colors are everywhere. Cups, hats, logos, key chains, underwear, toilet seats, condoms, dishes, artwork, dog collars, people collars—there is virtually no product available that can't have a rainbow splashed across it.

By merging Pride and history together we can, and should, stop and acquaint ourselves with the history of the rainbow flag.

The original rainbow flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker, a San Francisco artist. The most common attribution is that Baker created the flag in response to a local activist's call for a community symbol. Using the five-striped "Flag of the Race" as his inspiration, Baker designed a flag with eight stripes: hot pink, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. Legend has it that Baker dyed and

sewed the material for the first flag himself—in the true spirit of Betsy Ross.

Baker then approached San Francisco's Paramount Flag Company about selling his "gay flag." Unfortunately, he had hand-dyed all the colors, and because hot pink was not commercially available, mass production of his eight-striped version became impossible. The flag was thus reduced to seven stripes, then ultimately six.

Each stripe color represents an essence or concept. The colors and their associations are:

hot pink - sexuality

red - life

orange - healing

yellow - sunlight

green - nature

turquoise - magic

blue - serenity

violet - spirit

The six-stripe flag is flown with the red stripe on top, showing the natural color occurrence of a rainbow.

At the same time that Baker was working on his flag, San Francisco's gay community was rocked to its core when the city's first openly gay supervisor, Harvey Milk, was assassinated. Wishing to demonstrate the gay community's strength and solidarity in the aftermath of this tragedy, the 1979 Pride Parade Committee decided to use Baker's flag. The committee eliminated the indigo stripe so they could divide the colors evenly along the parade route—three colors on one side of the street and three on the other. Soon the six colors were incorporated into the six-striped version that we know and love today. As a mark of its significance, the flag is recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers. The flag was on its way to making history—as was, to a lesser degree, Gilbert Baker. On the *Just Out* blog ("Blog Out," found at www.justout.com) I have posted a link to a video clip of a fairly recent television interview with Baker.

Today in San Francisco, and gay districts in other large cities across the nation and the world, the rainbow flag is everywhere and not simply during months of celebration and recognition. I do

find myself wondering how well Baker did with royalties and license fees.


The rainbow flag celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2003. During the Gay Pride celebrations in June of that year, Baker restored the rainbow flag back to its original eight-striped version and has since advocated that others do the same. However, the eight-striped version has seen little adoption by the wider gay community, which has mostly stuck with the better-known six-striped version. Our cover displays the eight-stripe version, including violet and hot pink. Hot pink does, after all, represent sexuality, and how on earth could you have a Pride Month without sexuality? And spirit?

There you have it, the history of the rainbow flag. Closing with another bit of Pride and historical trivia, let's hearken back to June 2000 and these words of President Clinton:

"Gay and lesbian Americans have made important and lasting contributions to our nation in every field of endeavor. Too often, however, gays and lesbians face prejudice and discrimination; too many have had to hide or deny their sexual orientation in order to keep their jobs or to live safely in their communities.

"This June, recognizing the joys and sorrows that the gay and lesbian movement has witnessed and the work that remains to be done, we observe Gay and Lesbian Pride Month and celebrate the progress we have made in creating a society more inclusive and accepting of gays and lesbians. I hope that in this new millennium we will continue to break down the walls of fear and prejudice and work to build a bridge to understanding and tolerance, until gays and lesbians are afforded the same rights and responsibilities as all Americans.

"Now, therefore, I, William J. Clinton, president of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2000 as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. I encourage all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies and activities that celebrate our diversity and recognize the gay and lesbian Americans whose many and varied contributions have enriched our national life."

Party on, people. 



FEATURE

17 JUST OUT'S GUIDE TO PRIDE

"Keep Portland Queer!" on the waterfront and beyond

NEWS

8-15 NORTHWEST

HRC chapter defines itself; Q Center names first executive director; Hambleton Project closes; national chamber gets local; Socketeer realizes dreams; home and garden on display; PABA represents at Pride; exclusive look at Jerry Falwell; Thomas Bruner explains controversial blood ban

46-47 NATIONAL

Judge rules for same-sex adoptive parents; city in Kansas might register domestic partners; Nebraska defeats gay civil rights bill; AIDS Walk breaks records; Vermont enacts nondiscrimination law; Cheney's welcome baby boy; judge finds discrimination by fire department

ARTS AND CULTURE

53 CULTURE

Women of size rally and celebrate



55 THEATER

Will the Drammys find something queer to honor at this year's ceremony?

58 NIGHTLIFE

Shanghai Surprise

61-63 FILM

Gus Van Sant directs segment of *Paris, Je T'aime*; historian curates monthlong series of queer-centric cinema

64 MUSIC

Portland Gay Men's Chorus premieres brave new work

COLUMNS

45 MS. BEHAVIOR

Mommie Dearest

50 OUT GOING

Democracy in Action

51 OUT OF MY MIND

First-Timer Regrets

54 EPIQUEEREAN

Eat Smart à la Cart

57 GET DIRTY WITH DAN

Sustainable Gardening

66 JIM'S CLOSET

The Church of Bob

reflections

5 Years Ago in *Just Out*... Volume 19 Number 15, June 2, 2002

- A 44-year-old man was arrested May 21 after threatening to bomb the predominantly gay Metropolitan Community Church of the Gentle Shepherd in Vancouver, Wash., and kill the senior pastor.

- Salem Mayor Mike Swaim debated Lon Mabon, Oregon Citizens Alliance chairman, during his *Who Cares* cable access program May 20. Dozens of people came to City Hall to listen in on the war of words and ask questions. The crowd seemed to be split evenly between the pro- and anti-gay sides.

- Last month the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force announced the appointment of four co-chairs to lead the Creating Change 2002 Host Committee: trans activist Lori Buckwalter, community organizer Ron Glanville, health educator Anisah Miley and Brother to Brother board member and ordained minister Cecil Prescod.

- The Portland Area Business Association will celebrate its 10th anniversary during its monthly networking luncheon. The event promises to be an informative, fun look to the past, present and future. The organization will honor its founders and past presidents, elect its board members and officers, and unveil its new logo, Web site and Portland Pride 2002 plans.

- The Oregon School for the Deaf honored KGW-TV's Hank Stack with a Lifetime Achievement Award during commencement ceremonies May 31. In March he was one of seven gay and lesbian seniors saluted during the Portland Gay Men's Chorus *Vintage Voices* concerts.

- Frameline, the leading distributor of gay and lesbian cinema to academic and institutional organizations, recently hired Maura King to be its new distribution associate. King spent five years with the queer film festival based in Portland.

- The first-ever Black Gay Pride in Portland presents Ebony Knights at the Fez. Gay and bi African American men can dance to old- and new-school grooves at the Fez Ballroom.

- Support your favorite WNBA team and Pride Northwest at the same time during the Portland Fire's Pride Group Night at the Rose Garden. Partial proceeds benefit Pride, and the Portland Gay Men's Chorus sings the national anthem.

