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A Time For Pride

There's a lot of early this year. As I write this column, summer has arrived early, making it unseasonably hot in Portland. Rose Festival 2009 started early, in turn moving Portland Pride up to a one-week-earlier-than-usual start. This will be good news for all those who have bemoaned for years that the Pride Parade always fell on Father's Day. This year it doesn't meaning also that some of you will be needing another excuse to escape the trip home for Dad's Day Dinner.

If you haven't already heard, Portland Pride is June 13-14 this year. That's why you're reading a special, late May issue of *Just Out*. We timed our Pride coverage to appear two weeks before the big event. We will be in print again for Pride weekend, with a June 12 issue. We're then taking a lovely post-Pride week off and will return with a July 3 issue brimming with Pride photos and memories. We will be back on our regular first and third Friday schedule for the remainder of the year.

Pride is a Thanksgiving Day kind of affair. It comes with preset conversations. Around the holiday table the topic invariably turns to, "Uncle Burt, what are you thankful for this year?" You don't have to go far during Pride season to hear someone ask one of two questions, "Do we still need Pride?" followed by, "What does Pride mean to you?"

Being the thoughtful person that I am, I have gone ahead and taken care of this questioning task for you already. I've asked the questions about Pride; I've got the answers. You may now use the time you would have spent on Pride introspection for more pressing topics such as, "Should Adam Lambert take the Queen gig, or hold out for a celebrity boxing match against that other second-place dude, Clay Aiken?"

So, what are the peeps thinking about Pride this year? Here's what one 23-year-old Portland State University student, Omar N'Gadi, had to say:

"Gay Pride means a lot to me. It's a place where Queers can come from all over to get together and simply be Queer. To some, that might not sound important, but if you aren't out or you aren't out to everyone, or if you feel that being Queer is impossible because you can't be married, or that the religious right is holding you down, Gay Pride means everything. Gay Pride is your opportunity to embrace the authenticity of who you are in a world that wants you to be something you simply aren't.

Gay Pride is about being honest about who you are. It's about having the opportunity to share a part of your authentic self with likeminded individuals. It's a cultural icon and 'melting pot,' it's where the Queer community meets and evolves, year after year. Gay Pride is about standing up against all types of oppressions; it's about standing up and empowering those who may not be able to do so. Gay Pride is for everyone, by everyone who wants to participate. Civic service, integrity, charity and authenticity are the pillars of the yearly event."

On the heels of the California Supreme Court ruling on Proposition 8, many are feeling the freshened sting of inequality. Portland entertainer Jennifer Lanier believes that "Gay Pride is a time to remind folks that we are good with who we are. To remember that equal rights for me never means fewer rights for you."

Beki Safar brings another perspective to the dialogue with, "For me it's a celebration of community and who I am.

It's a chance to get out with others who have similar feelings. It's no different than when I attend the Jewish festivals or the other celebrations relevant to me and my friends."

My favorite grouchy Bear, Mark Brown, growls, "Pride is for visibility. A chance to see everyone. A reminder that we're here and aren't going to settle for anything less than equality. Remembering and honoring those brave homos who first fought back."

Turning the topic to a more specific local angle, there are still hurt feelings in the community over the changing of the parade route several years ago. More than once I heard, "It still angers me that they moved the parade route away from all the gay bars. Have they forgotten why we have gay pride in June? It's called Stonewall. Not to mention that a great deal of the fundraising happens at the bars and by moving so much of Pride away from those establishments it kinda feels as if that part of the community has been put back in the closet."

I'm going to conclude this with a memory from Dixie Rupt, of Portland's Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.

"My first Pride parade was in Richmond, VA over 20 years ago—it consisted of a few people marching down the street, with the rest of us running ahead on the sidewalk just for them to have some spectators. Things have changed, but not to the point that many of us still don't feel 'different.' For me, Pride is that one day a year when being 'different' is the best feeling in the world."

Dixie's Pride memory makes me smile. For me, that's a good enough reason to keep having Pride. Smiles, friends, sharing old memories while making new ones.

Have a good one.

just out

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