

think for us what's unique is [that] we're not a part of anything, we're just volunteers and we try to bring everyone together."

Each year, "everyone" seems to include more people, and from farther-flung locations.

"We've been growing each year and I think this year, with what we're doing, we're expecting to continue to draw [people] and become a destination for folks throughout the nation," Martinez adds.

PLGP already draws people from the greater Portland area—Multnomah, Washington and Marion counties—as well as contingents from Seattle and Los Angeles. Portland is in a unique position to put on such an event—its Latino LGBTQ population is large enough to organize, but not so big that it overwhelms the greater LGBTQ community. That's the case in cities such as San Jose and Los Angeles, Martinez says, where there is often a Latino tent and a Latino event as part of the main pride celebrations.

"I think in Long Beach someone commented, 'Well, it's Latino pride all the time because of the sheer numbers,'" Martinez

shares. "Here, I think we need to have this very specific focused celebration because the population numbers aren't as high.... To have a very targeted celebration and to bring [the] community together around the Latino gay pride experience is important."

PLGP is strengthening the community behind the scenes, too. In the process of planning an event to unite the Latino LGBTQ population, new leaders (like La Torre, who is in her first year on the committee) emerge to make significant contributions to the celebration.

"What I'm most excited about, actually, is the volunteer planning committee," Martinez says. "To me, personally, that is what inspires me. As long as there's that energy, that interest and that pride—'cause that's the other part—we can all throw great parties, but this is more than a party for us, this is an opportunity to have our Latino gay GLBT experience shine. And that's why we do it."

For more information on ¡CelebrAcción! visit latinogaypridepdx.com or search "Portland Latino Gay Pride" on Facebook.

¡CelebrAcción!

La Lucha 2011 at a glance

Thurs., July 14

Voz Alta: Amor Indocumentado

An evening of music and poetry with Edna Vazquez and Joaquin Lopez.

7 p.m. reception, 8 p.m. performance at The Little Church, 5138 NE 23rd Ave. \$15-\$25

Fri., July 15

La Lucha Dance Party

9 p.m. at Boxxes, 1035 SW Stark St. \$5

Sat., July 16

Chicas Celebration

11 a.m. brunch at Q Center, 4115 N. Mississippi Ave. \$10-\$15

'Cycle Ride: Motorcycle & Bicycle Scenic Ride

2:30-4:30 p.m., start at Q Center, 4115 N. Mississippi and end at Colonel Sumner Park in SE (20th and Morrison)

Dance Party and Social

6 p.m. social, 9 p.m.-2 a.m. dance party at Crush, 1400 SE Morrison St. Co-hosted by Chicas and Chocolate City

Sun. July 17

La Lucha Latino Gay Pride Festival

Featuring performances by entertainers including Los Gallos Rumba, Tryniti La-Croix, Ballet Folklorico Lo Nuestro, Chi-Chi and Chonga and Meesha Peru, live music, a deejay, an Under U4 Men fashion show, vendors, an exhibit area, food carts and a beer garden.

Noon-9 p.m. at Eastbank Esplanade, Waterfront Park (SE Water Ave. and Hawthorne Blvd.). \$5 donation, all ages welcome.

To get involved, contact David Martinez at 503-307-9143 or email laluchachair@yahoo.com.

Eyes On The Prize

Portland Latino drag world gets international spice with Latin Look

Portland's Latino drag circuit is shooting to be more than events for locals. It's going international.

The annual pageant run, called Latin Look, is a competition for local crowns, of course. But organizers are attempting to expand it to other parts of the country, and the world. In addition to crowns for Miss and Mr. Gay Oregon Latin Look, another pageant, now in its sixth year, is held for International Latin Look. In 2011 the global event will have its first truly global contestant—a performer from Mexico City.

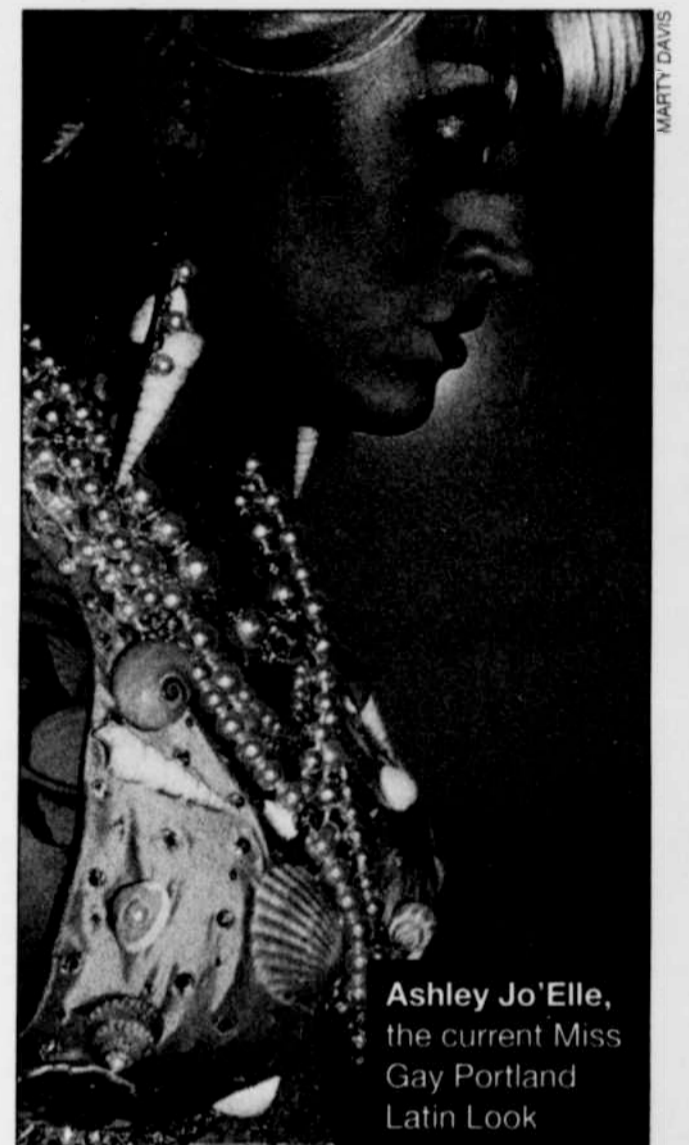
Pageant producer David Zambrano, 48, is excited that the international pageant is gaining momentum. Contestants have come from other states before and from Puerto Rico. The winner of Miss International Latin Look 2010 was a New Yorker, Eva Zanzler. A few small preliminary pageants have even been held in other states.

Zambrano aspires to one day produce a U.S. pageant in Portland and the international event on an island like the Dominican Republic. An international location would make it easier for contestants from other countries to participate, he says.

"It takes time to prepare papers for people coming to the country," Zambrano explains. "We have to send letters to embassies and immigration and do a lot of paper work."

Closer to home, though, the Oregon Latin Look pageant enters its 14th year. The name "Latin Look" is a sign that the pageant is open to all contestants, not just Latinos. Latinos look different all over the world, Zambrano says, so no particular "look" is a standard.

But Jeffrey Rivera, 21, who as Ashley Jo'Elle was named Miss Gay Portland Latin Look 2011, says the event is about "being spicy."



Ashley Jo'Elle, the current Miss Gay Portland Latin Look

"It's not necessarily about looking Latin," he says. "It's just about looking beautiful."

As for Miss Gay Oregon Latin Look, this year's champ says he was shocked he won—it was his first competition.

"It was a total surprise for me because I saw some really pretty contestants," says Isabel Castillo, 32, who competed as Ebony Welch. "And, like, I'm a little, um, big, so I was kind of intimidated by all the girls."

Castillo adds, "I'm really thankful to these people who are doing the pageant because there are a lot of people like me that want to do it, and sometimes there isn't an opportunity."

—AARON SPENCER

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