



# IN THE PINK PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

When someone tells me they aren't politically correct, I get confused. It's a bit like, but more intense than saying, "I don't believe in manners." Does this mean you like to raise your hand and say "how" to people that appear Native American? Do you ask angry ladies if they're on the rag? Or instead, do you generally enjoy the playful use of language with those you know?

The issue of sensitivity is complicated enough that it seems to annoy people into a haze of insensitivity. We also enjoy the taste of blood, and will chase it into any dark alley off the map. All of the sudden, we're huddled over the kill, and as our adrenaline subsides we look down at the fallen and realize, "Hey, I know this kid!"

Wah-waaaaah

In PDX we have a lot of politically charged performance art. We have drag that obliterates gender, glamorous slut-pride, and amazing fat fierceness.

I have a friend named Rachel Palmer that performs at queer dance events, and has toured with CJ and Dolls, a killer Q-Pop group based in Portland. Rachel shares something with a lot of the successful queer performers here. She isn't afraid of controversy. She's completely charismatic, and shock value isn't necessarily the goal, but she isn't afraid of silent prudish judgment.

So, the envelope shoved Portland, and feathers ruffled. Not everyone sees the art in modern dance numbers garnished with strap-on dildos and facial hair constructed of snipped pubes. I get goose bumps, the good kind, just thinking about it. I'm rarely shocked anymore, but I always surf the crowd for a face in awe to enjoy vicariously.

Just as some performances are cliché, some antics perhaps overstep the line. It's hard to quantify the appropriate amount of controversy. In fact, you just can't. Some artists are insatiable, and scream for more as a synthetic fetus is pulled from the legs of an unknown gendered performer, and flung with much goo into a bewildered crowd. Others balk at a poet's attempt to reclaim derogatory labels at a reading.

It isn't as simple as saying, "Well, if someone's feelings get hurt or feels oppressed by the performance, then that's going too far."

It can be that these experiences that force a dialogue that was hanging out in the dark corner of the auditorium with my yearbook picture. These issues are here, and denying them doesn't make anything better.

In all of the crossfire that occurs between minority groups, you would think we'd all have each other's back. This simply isn't true or possible. Being queer is unacceptable in many minority groups, and there are racist queers that don't see the hypocrisy of their prejudice. It seems desperate, as if they're frantically trying to step on someone else at the bottom of the barrel. Mid-barrel isn't so great when you're on top of people that could've pulled you out.

We face so much drama in the pursuit of equality that we forget to treat our community with respect, forgiveness, and the benefit of the doubt. That last one is vital. Anyone willing to confront issues on stage is, if nothing else, brave. However, I have seen flat out character assassination from people that I respect and care for. Labels thrown out casually can torment and ruin a person. If you are going to publically accuse someone of being a sexist pig, for example, think before you speak, and make sure you know what you're talking about. Prejudice requires confrontation with care. Rage-filled drama never healed a wound. That would be change and compassion.

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I want all of you amazing performance artists to keep bringing the spandex and the glitter into the limelight. You make cheap beer taste like champagne, and body hair look flaxen in its well-earned sweat. Let's all take care of each other, because I'm hoping you're going to continue to push that envelope, and I think the messengers are damn sexy. ■

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