

# Mailbox

## Pride and prejudice

There was a time, 20 years ago or so, when marching in the Pride parade was a political act. Over time it has become a celebration of our gay lives — a less militant, less provocative, ready-for-prime-time event. We seem to be saying “we’re just like straight people,” rather than asserting our right to be different and our right to fair treatment. Celebration might be appropriate were it not for the fact that there are still those who are unable to be openly gay and lesbian except in large numbers. We are still an oppressed people, and until that changes, I don’t understand why we are so accommodating to those who condescend to tolerate us once a year. The controversy surrounding some of the marchers in this year’s parade points up the issue.

By now we’ve all read in the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald* about the “shocking” conduct of an allegedly “nude man on stilts” and two women on a moving bed. Apologists for the gay community are disappearing up their assholes to distance themselves from these “tasteless” displays. I saw the now-infamous stilt man at the Pride parade and it was, frankly, not a big deal. He wasn’t nude — he wore a loincloth that he occasionally lifted, providing a few moments of relief from what was an otherwise dreary event. And the stilt man was no more a representative of the entire gay community than Mayor Tom Menino, the other politicians, the police-department representatives, the high-school students, and the companies, bars, and other organizations and people that participated.

As for the other scandal — so two women rode in a bed together? Horror of horrors! We make some people feel uncomfortable? Well, that’s tough. I’m made uncomfortable by the conduct of many straight people on the street (and on television, and in schools, and in the workplace). But I appreciate the fact that we are different — boy, do I ever!

Unfortunately, the Gay I’m-not-as-embarrassed-as-I-used-to-be Pride Parade has become bereft of almost any political significance. We march through our own neighborhoods and we avoid even the symbolism of marching past the State House and City Hall. What has become of militant gay activism? As wrong as it is for gays to be kept from the military and prevented from legal marriage, are these really the issues that affect the day-to-day lives of most gays and lesbians and our families? Or have we allowed our oppressors to choose our battles for us? Have we lost the fire in the belly and the passion that we celebrate each June? To me it seems that we have become like the pre-Stonewall gays who didn’t understand what all the fuss was about — “our bars have always been raided, it’s our cross to bear . . .” Frankly, as long as Pride remains “nonpolitical,” we’re bound to see our unchanneled energies bubbling up in displays like that of the stilt man and the moving bed.

The interesting question is why Mayor Menino, who in the past has worked hard to cultivate support in Boston’s gay community, is pandering to the gay-baiting columnist from the *Boston Herald*. Talk about strange bedfellows! Could it have anything to do with the fact that his liaison to the gay community, John Affuso, and his pal, Jim Kratoville, were effectively deposed by the Pride parade’s current organizers, Sabrina Taylor and Gregg Fraker? According to the *Globe*, a meeting was immediately scheduled to establish standards of conduct for future gay parades. Was the idea of hauling Taylor and Fraker in and holding them accountable for the actions of others (over which they clearly had no control) too delicious to resist?

— Peter Brennan

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