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editorial

**Gross stupidity at a great parade**

by Jeff Epperly

This space was originally going to be used to congratulate the Pride committee and everyone else who organized last week's events on a job done well and smoothly. Sadly, current events dictate otherwise.

If you were on the sidelines of last weekend's Pride march, you probably caught a glimpse of two of the stupidest things to appear in that event in years. One was a man on stilts who thought inexplicably that march onlookers wanted to see what no doubt he has not been asked to show in years: his genitals. The other was those pesky Lesbian Avengers gyrating on a roll-away bed while simulating cunnilingus and other sexual acts within eye-shot of the Mayor, tourists, and disgusted gay men and lesbians. I have received more angry phone calls and letters — from conservatives and progressives — regarding these incidents than any other event in the last eight years.

The flasher on stilts is as yet unidentified. He is probably an aberration who simply escaped

from somewhere or forgot his medication. (If you know who he is, feel free to call me.)

But the Lesbian Avengers we do know. They are the same outfit that handed out gay Valentines at a western Massachusetts grade school in early 1993. The problem? The Valentines had a telephone number for a gay phone sex line on them — a number some of those kiddies and their angry parents happened to call. The Lesbian Avengers said it was a mistake, but I am beginning to believe that excuse was simply a dodge in the wake of an idiotic act of guerilla theater gone bad.

These girls — and they are little girls, not mature women — seem to have an aching need for attention. Perhaps Daddy didn't buy them a pony when they wanted one. Maybe they've had one too many sane lovers dump them after discovering their neediness. Whatever the reason, they are like little kids who tramp through Momma's flower bed because being the focus of anger is better than being the focus of nothing at all. How utterly ridiculous.

Anyone who reads this newspaper regularly knows that Bay Windows does not blindly follow or give respect to any politician. But Boston

Mayor Tom Menino's presence at the head of that march was an act of respect toward this community — and he deserved respect in return. (The Lesbian Avengers literally slipped that bed into the parade, apparently with the purpose of being directly behind the Mayor.)

This newspaper has also been critical of the Boston Police Department. But, for the first time in the history of the march, the department's Mounted Patrol, Honor Guard and other officers — most of them not gay men or lesbians — showed us some respect by taking part. Judging from the applause that followed them, that act of respect was met with great appreciation. How sad that it was sullied by the willful childishness of a few.

Of course, the Lesbian Avengers are now saying that the rest of us are co-opted; we just want to emulate straight people. How convenient for them to frame the debate so narrowly. But if I wanted to emulate straight society, why am I working at a gay newspaper? If the rest of the parade participants were apolitical assimilationists, why did they show up for the march at all? I watched as people applauded and cheered risqué drag queens, gyrating bar floats, and

radical political organizations — just as they did with the Log Cabin Club and lesbian mommies, gay daddies, and their kids. That's assimilation? The premise is ridiculous and illogical on its face.

At no time is this community more accepting of differences than during the march. Mostly we politely applaud just about everyone, regardless of political ideologies. Too bad others could not enjoy the day in that spirit of cooperation.

The main point here is *not* that the man on stilts and the Lesbian Avengers did what they did — both basically classless but harmless acts on their face. The point is that they showed profound disrespect for the other 150,000 people who now find parade organizers and community leaders having to defend that day — our day to celebrate.

And, to the Mayor and the Boston Police Department, I will end with this: Judging from the calls I've fielded over the last few days, there are a lot of people in this community who would like to apologize.

The same goes for me. ▼

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Member:  
National Newspaper Association  
Associated Press  
New England Press Association

1523 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02118  
Voice: (617) 266-6670  
Fax: (617) 266-5973

James G. Hoover  
jhoover@baywindows.com  
Publisher

Jeffrey S. Epperly  
jepperly@baywindows.com  
Editor

Rudy Kikel (x 211)  
rkikel@baywindows.com  
Arts, Lifestyles Editor

Loren King (x 216)  
lking@baywindows.com  
Asst. Editor, News

Fred Kuhr (x201)  
Staff Reporter

Penelope Harrison (x 203)  
PJHarHar@aol.com  
Office Manager

Jason Huang (x 204)  
Art Director

James Poitras (x200)  
Administrative Assn.

Jill Wittmer  
Production Assistant

Craig Bailey  
Marilyn Humphries  
Photographers

Contributing Writers: John  
Dennis Anderson, Peter  
Cassels, Meryl Cohn, George  
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