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Dyke March a show of unity

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True to form, the 10th annual Boston Dyke March on June 11 drew a spirited mass of roughly 1,500 lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people who took to the streets in a boisterous display of dyke visibility that pierced the early evening calm of the Back Bay neighborhood.

March organizers have striven in recent years to create an event that reflects the diversity of the area's lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities and their efforts are apparently paying off. Graying suburbanites and grad students marched alongside pierced and tattooed teens and twenty-somethings;

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stickers identifying participants as dyke musicians, dyke teachers and dyke softball players were affixed to various body parts.

Meanwhile, handmade signs proclaiming a variety of politics and preferences were hoisted overhead as marchers paraded off the Boston Common, onto Charles Street and into the surrounding area. "I dig older chicks," one young woman broadcast. "What if I don't want to get married?" queried another. "Kiss me I vote," one marcher urged. Yet another slogan, with which a presumably straight male bystander was heard expressing agreement, was: "Lick Bush in 2004."

Author, activist and transperson Leslie Feinberg, the featured speaker at the rally that followed the march, also took note of the march's inclusivity. "[Y]ou know, it's been a lot of years since I've been to a dyke march because as someone who is butch, as someone who is transgender, I have been to dyke marches where I left feeling angry and shamed by people who came up and challenged me for being on the march — and knew better. It was gender baiting, and you made a dyke march so big and so strong that it's open for everybody. Look at this power," said Feinberg, gesturing to the throng that had gathered at the Common's Parkman Bandstand.

"This is the power of Stonewall. We're together here. Now this is a dyke march to be proud of."

"There's more sense of a unity," said Yang, who was attending her first Dyke March. "[It's] more homogeneous."

And though dyke march emcee Kristen Porter noted the large number of "hotties" among the crowd, Yang was not there looking to pick up chicks, as many others undoubtedly were. "No, no, no," she said. "I picked up my chick three years ago."

Anne Pollock, a 29-year-old MIT grad student with a "Geek Dyke" sticker affixed to her thigh, also was not looking to score that night. While she cryptically described the Boston Dyke March as the best place for catching up with old friends "and seeing people who might be new ones," Pollock quickly clarified that she already has a girlfriend. "I'm not into the poly scene either, although there's nothing wrong with that," she laughed.

Further clarifying her statement about meeting new friends at the Boston Dyke March, Pollock explained that, "sometimes Boston can seem so transient, and just to see that there are new women coming out here every day, and you know, for someone like me that's been living in Boston a long time ... I've seen a lot of people go. So it's really exciting to see new young women showing up and showing their faces and their excitement and bring that energy."

Pollock, who has attended just about every Boston Dyke March since its inception and is a past member of its organizing committee, was personally responsible for bringing some of that energy to this year's march through her on-campus recruitment efforts.

"[A] lot of people feel kind of afraid to come to the dyke march, they think it's some kind of radical, scary thing," she explained. "And it is, but in a good way." What Pollock tells them is that in addition to its political emphasis, it's some of the best fun they'll have all year.

"What I do say is that I think that it's some of the most fun energy that you'll find in Boston," said Pollock. "We don't often have kind of a real feisty scene in this particular town. And so that if they missed out on this particular event, they might not have another opportunity in Boston for a whole year." ▼



"This is the power of Stonewall. We're together here," Feinberg said, raising an ear-splitting cheer from spectators. "Now this is a dyke march to be proud of."

Other attendees also saw the march as uniting the community. Joyce Yang, a 29-year-old biologist from Boston observed that unlike the annual Boston Pride parade, which attracts a large number of spectators and curious onlookers, the dyke march offered "more of a sense of purpose."

Top Left: Kelly Campbell draws an important distinction. Left and below: Marchers made their way from the Boston Common through the streets of Boston. Photos by Marilyn Humphries

