

For Those Who Didn't Get It: "Bedgate, 1996"

One feature of the Lesbian Avenger/ Kiss Me Now Productions contingent in Boston Pride was a mobile bed, complete with sheets, pillows and lesbian lovers. The Bed inspired much debate and controversy about sexual content in Pride and what boundaries Pride, Inc. should construct in terms of personal expression. I write this editorial as a participant of the Dyke March, as a Lesbian Avenger and as a pusher and passenger of The Bed. Yet, I am not an elected spokesperson for any of these groups; regard these beliefs only as my own.

The Radical Right scapegoats the gay community by asserting that to be gay is "all about sex". The gay community retaliates with the declaration that to be gay is not about sex. Both are false and extremist. To reduce homosexuality to "sexuality" ignores the power of gay culture, the ways gay people revolutionize gender norms, artistic expression and definitions of family and community. But, to suggest that homophobia is divorced from sexuality is as ludicrous as stating that classism is divorced from money or that anti-Semitism is divorced from religion. When we are gay bashed, it is for what we look like, where we work, who we love *and* how we fuck.

To be pro-sex, lesbian and unashamed is difficult in a sex-phobic and sexist society. Hence, The Bed was a perfect outlet for my Pride and my politics. To help create a blatant image of lesbian sexuality for public consumption is both an artistic and a political act. It is political because all women are raised to fear their lust and hate their bodies. It is political because lesbians are invisible in the mainstream world where no one can figure out what lesbians do in bed (except when lesbian sex is exploited for straight male jollies). It is political because lesbians have been too busy (staying out of debt, keeping custody of their children, fighting the AIDS crisis) to flagrantly celebrate their sexual expression in Pride as gay men have done for decades.

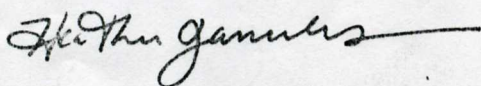
And beyond politics, Gay Pride is an opportunity to employ a sense of humor, to laugh at our enemies and ourselves. We're here, we're dykes, we're in bed, get over it.

Pride, Inc. has apologized on television for the sexual nature of some contingents in Boston Pride, including The Bed. This disappoints me. The emphasis on gay marriage, and the hypervisibility of straight-looking, straight-acting gays and lesbians, in Boston Pride suggests that Beantown queers are emulating the straight world for acceptance. To truly exist "without borders", we must stop apologizing for those who share our umbrella in an attempt to please those in power. To create true unity, we must regard living "without borders" not only in terms of identity (gay, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual, etc.) but also in *expression* of identity (doctors, lawyers, bankers, prostitutes, leathermen, country line dancers and club rats). As activist Sarah Schulman observes, the more radical the gay community becomes, the further left, the closer to democracy, the center shifts.

Channel 7's coverage of Boston Pride stated that "most contingents were tasteful and *responsible*, while some were too sexually explicit for television". If I knew that I were to be held "responsible" by the mainstream world for my sexuality, I wouldn't have bothered coming to Pride. I wouldn't have bothered risking familial disdain, ostracism, violence and discrimination by coming out at all. When we permit straights in suits to define us, chastise us or credit our good behavior, we lose power and the qualities that make us beautiful.

I am *not* sorry for my pro-sex stance or for my public affirmation of The Bed. I made my bed and I would lie in it again. Unlike some participants in the Dyke March, I joined Pride, Inc.'s march to align with both the feminist/activist/freak community (where I socialize, worship, fall in love and organize politically) and the more conservative factions of Boston's gay community (where I work and financially support gay business). I ask that Pride, Inc. be brave enough to do the same.

HEATHER JANULES



225 N SUN