

OFF THE CUFF

# Q & A With the co-chairs of the Pride Committee

*The theme of this year's gay pride march in Boston was "pride without borders." It is more likely to be remembered, however, for criticism that erupted over two unregistered entries: a man on stilts who exposed himself to the crowd and partially nude women on a rolling bed. The co-chairs of the Pride Committee, Boston residents Gregg Fraker and Sabrina Taylor, convened a meeting last week at Arlington Street Church to discuss the parade and its purpose. City Weekly member Ellen Clegg interviewed them last week.*

**Q. City officials have blasted the "lewd acts" at Pride, and segments of the gay and lesbian community have also been critical, saying Pride leadership wants the parade to be too conservative. What is your response?**

**GF:** The parade has resulted in a way for the community to take a look at itself. To me, it's a way for us to get together and discuss among ourselves how our community has evolved. We put a starting point at Stonewall [a 1969 riot at a gay bar in New York], and we remember that. But we have come a great distance in 25 years. Not that there's not a great distance to go. Movements change, and everyone needs to be respectful of all the positions our movement takes.

**ST:** This has been a way to bring the community together and look at what Pride means to them and the community as a whole.

**Q. What does the parade mean to the community?**

**ST:** I think it's a time for people to come together with individual feelings and personal styles. For some people it's a celebration. For others it's a time to unite and protest.

**GF:** We're having a community meeting to find out more about what it means to everyone so it can be representational. We try to provide a forum and permits and everything that goes with that. In the letters



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Committee co-chairs Sabrina Taylor and Gregg Fraker.

we sent out, we encouraged people to do something around election year, same-gender marriage, or around our theme, "pride without borders." We encouraged people to take a stance on things in a way that showed their pride.

**Q. But what about the public nudity? Was that an acceptable way of taking a stand?**

**GF:** That's where we get into questions. If it's unlawful in the straight, bisexual or gay community, then it's unlawful. But we're also not going to condone homophobia and unequal rights when they don't apply across the board.

**Q. What about criticism within the gay community that Pride is in danger of becoming too watered down, too conservative?**

**ST:** You know what's ironic? We have a number of recent college graduates on our committee this year. Their point of view is diverse. Some would like to see pride be more political. Some feel that the things it represented 25 years ago have been resolved and they don't need to be political for those reasons any more. It seems to be becoming more of a holiday. As with any holiday, you remember where it started. It started as a struggle. I think there's room for both. I'm not seeing it move to a more conservative level.

**GF:** As more Prides happen and more generations take it up, it changes.

**Q. Do you think city officials overreacted?**

**ST:** I don't think the mayor overreacted, but others did. Mayor Menino said it best: There are always a few that mar the sentiment of the parade. He chose to focus on the positive. Three people out of 180,000 do not make the parade. I think society has lost that point.

**Q. What lessons have you learned for next year?**

**GF:** That's going to be an ongoing discussion. We need to find out where our community does stand and find out some guidelines. As long as there is homophobia in our society we can always be pointed out for doing something wrong. There is an overreaction when we had 45 church groups, 13 colleges, more than 25 corporations represented, and two contingents are represented as our entire community.

**ST:** Pride has been here for 26 years and it's going to be something for more than 26 more. It's a time when everyone in the community can come together and celebrate and acknowledge how far we've come and who we are. We really don't get to do that that much as a community.