

# Reflections On Pride

from a straight ally

By Erin Black

The bus was nearly silent as we returned back to the University. As I sat there, wearing a rainbow flag around my waist and a shirt that proudly proclaimed "Chapel Hill GLBT-SA — ALLY," I began to understand, at least to a small degree, how it might feel to be out as something other than the socially-acceptable heterosexual.

It seemed as though the entire bus was staring at me, at us, and it made me feel, well, different. An Outcast.

The reaction that feeling provoked was distinct — I wanted to get up in their faces and ask what their problem was.

If one of them had asked me if I was a lesbian, I would have belligerently replied "So what if I am?"

The silence dragged on as I sat there anticipating a confrontation, and I didn't feel comfortable until I was back in my dorm.

Although the bus ride back to campus affected me more than the other events of Pride in September, and will stay with me for a very long time, it is hardly indicative of my first-ever Pride experience.

As a straight ally, I had no idea what to expect, and the most anyone else could tell me was that I would love it; it would blow my mind.

Our ride dropped us off in a corner parking lot, the closest he could get to the parade. I wasn't sure where we were, but we knew that all we needed to do was follow the rainbows and we'd eventually end up at the UNC-CH float.

In the words of a friend, "I've never seen so many queer people and allies in my life!"

As we walked we passed brightly colored floats, signs, flags and flowers. The parade refused to be discreet, and so did the participants. When we finally found the pickup truck that was to be our float, we gathered together to start decorating it.

My personal task was coloring in a sign that read "Save a horse,

ride a drag king!" and time flew by as I worked to get everything in order. Before I knew it, it was time for the parade to start.

As we marched, I found myself amazed by the variety of people lining the streets. There were families with small children, church groups handing out water, high school students and retirees.

As we passed a local hair salon, an older woman having

her hair permed on the porch waved at us. Although I had known going into the festivities that Pride would be a completely new experience, I was surprised by the levels of acceptance demonstrated at Duke.

Seeing just how many people supported Pride and the friends I was marching with renewed my flagging faith in humanity.

After the parade, I roamed the booths. I was surprised at the variety among them: although I expected those urging safer sex and publicizing equality groups such as the Human Rights Campaign, I did not expect the booths with artwork or clothing.

It was more than a little overwhelming at first, but reminded me that the LGBTIQ community is a community, and one that I am proud to support.

That fact was further driven home when we went to Elmo's to eat lunch - it seemed as though the entire restaurant was filled with Pride participants! Unfortunately, we spent most of the rest of the festival eating.

When I made it back to the booths I was to hand out fliers for Transcendent, and most of the crowd had already left.

Pride was over, but there'll be one next year. Maybe someone on the Robertson bus will make a snide remark and I'll get to tell them off, or maybe our campuses will have progressed enough so that no one even notices the rainbow flag I'll be wearing around my waist.



photo courtesy of Erin Black

University students representing GLBT-SA gather in Durham for the annual Pride weekend held in September to celebrate and affirm the greater LGBTIQ community.