

When I was first coming out to members of the conservative religious community in which I was raised, many of the responses I received were not what I had expected. They went something along the lines of, "I don't mind gay people as long as they're not flaunting it, like those ones in the parades."

Often when Pride is referred to outside the LGBTQ community, it is synonymous with extremism. Pride is over the top. Pride is hyper-sexual. Pride is threatening. So it's left me to wonder: where did Pride celebrations come from, and how did they get the reputation that they have now?

Queer History 101 takes us back to New York City in the summer of 1969. It was a pretty shitty time to be queer, to put it mildly. But in NYC there was a thriving underground scene, mostly centered around bars. In June 1969, the police attempted to raid the Stonewall Inn, but instead of going peacefully, the drag queens, bulldaggers and everyone in between resisted. With the Stonewall Riots, the modern Gay Rights Movement was born.

Starting in 1970, and every summer afterward, marches have been held around the country to remember the Stonewall Riots and to push for an end to discrimination against LGBTQ people. As the years went by, organizers began to call the marches Pride Marches instead of Gay Liberation Marches, rejecting the more radical elements of the early movement.

These days, Pride in most cities is part political protest, part community celebration, and in my experience, a lot of fun. Yet there are allies and community members who argue that Pride is counterproductive, unneeded, and doesn't accurately

represent the LGBTQ community.

As with most things in life, I would argue that the best path lies somewhere in the middle of the extremes. I believe that there are problems with some elements of Pride parades, but I also believe that ending Pride as a tradition would be a great loss for the LGBTQ community. Now just as much as in 1970, there are plenty of people who need to be reminded that we're here, we're queer, and that they're just going to have to get used to it.

Without embracing sex-negativity, I think that some displays of sexual behavior at Pride events have crossed lines. A good rule of thumb? If I wouldn't want to see a straight

person or couple do it, I don't want to see y'all doing it either. It's not that you shouldn't do it. It's just that the middle of Main Street might not be the best place.

We need to recognize that the leadership and demographic makeup of many Pride events is overwhelming controlled by white and male-identified members of the community. We pay lip service to diversity, but our Pride parades rarely show it. For Pride to be a good representation of

LGBTQ people, it must represent all of us, not just those of us with the most social power.

I think Pride is part of what keeps us, well, us. It's the one day of the year where we can be as queer as we want, openly and fabulously, without reservation. It says we're not willing to slink quietly into the night and live our lives like good little gays who don't demand any change or any recognition. Pride is a time of catching up with old friends and making new ones. It's a time of remembering and celebrating those who've come before us.

Some people may claim that they don't have a problem with most gays, just the ones who march in Pride. But as someone who marches in Pride, I call BS. They're threatened by our very existence, and Pride reminds them of it all too clearly. Let's not give them scapegoats like public sexual displays and infighting to hide behind. Let's make Pride even more beautiful, and make them own up to their bigotry.



Photo Taken By Brandon Young