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*Author of *Stuck Rubber Baby*, *Wendel*, and founding editor of *Gay Comix*

In a Family Way: Just Like Growing Up in (with) Queens

It is truly amazing how 400 queer families can completely transform a small seaside fishing resort! Yes, 400 queer families have once again descended on Provincetown for the 10th anniversary of Family Week. Gay dads with one, two, three, and even seven, yes seven, children in tow. Lesbian moms pushing double strollers holding twins, couples round with babies on the way. Babies held in carriers close to their bodies, toddlers up on shoulders bouncing, small children pulled in bicycle carriers behind fast-pedaling dads trying to figure out how to stay fit while parenting.

And oh those teens and pre-teens: many have that classic teenage bored look, as if standing on street corners with drag queens who are in heels and make up and flashing pasties encouraging people to come to their evening performance, is just so regular, so blasé, so "whatever" that it's not worth discussing. Others have that absolute directed intensity of activist youth; they make fierce eye-contact while offering to shake your hand and discuss the need for sex education in the public schools, or how sad and painful it is to have your gay dad die of AIDS, especially when your school doesn't want you to talk about it. Our children, growing up and taking on the world.

Family Week, produced by the Family Pride Coalition (www.familypride.org), has been a refuge for LGBT families, one of the very few places we go where our rainbow families are bell-curve normal. Same-sex headed families, mixed-race families, gender-bent expressions are the norm; kids play on the beach, digging for crabs, rafting on the ocean, while their parents discuss how to raise issues of diversity and homophobia within the school systems.

As we were leaving this year, friends crowded around the van, yelling "drive safe" and "see you next year," blowing kisses and waving, a friend playfully asked, "What about this scene is like saying goodbye when I was kid growing up in Queens, and what is so very different?" We all laughed (a group of expatriate ethnic New Yorkers); indeed, much was the same forty years later. We all talked loudly and at the same time, we had left over food packed up to take home (albeit in coolers, not shopping bags), we said goodbye about 50 times before we actually left (and then came back because we forgot something). We



had taken the best of our family gatherings, legacies from the old countries our grandparents fled, seeking a better life. We had given our children that same wonderful summer feeling we remembered from our youth of sun, and water, good food and wild fun, and lots of loving parental arms to run to when the inevitable children's squabbling began or to wipe away the tears when a boo-boo happened.

But, for all our regular-ness, we are not just an average group

lovingly protecting their Black daughter, her long hair neatly plaited, painting a new portrait of the American family.

During Family Week we attended synagogue services. We sat with LGBT families, representing all colors of the rainbow, forever changing the face of Judaism. We also attended the COLAGE (Children of Lesbian and Gays Everywhere, www.colage.com) dance, watching our children all dressed up, one young boy in outrageous drag, madly, crazily, dancing with joyful, youthful abandon. Our children are safe here in P-town, in this little town on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, playing, praying, dancing, and even doing drag — not because children of queer people want to do drag anymore than any other children might, but because they can if they want to.

They can collect hermit crabs (as long as they throw them back in the water afterwards); they can play competitive baseball (even if they are girls with neatly braided

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of dads and moms. My friend who asked the question has been in a 30-year relationship with his male partner. They are two white men who adopted their African-American daughter at birth, a wild and strong-willed child, who plays baseball with a fierce intensity, challenging boys years older. Their daughter has a pen-pal, an older African-American girl who is leaving for college this year. She too is the daughter of a white gay male couple who have also been together for 30 years. Her parents were the first gay couple to adopt in New York State, paving the way for all of our families, and their daughter is now a fierce advocate for gay-parented families. My friends pose for pictures, two white dads, their arms

hair); they can wear yarmulkes on their not so neatly dreadlocked hair (and not be the only one); and they can dress up in heels and wigs with their parents cheering them on, making fashion suggestions. That is quite different from the way it was when I was growing up on the streets of Queens! (Okay, it was really Brooklyn).

So the queens and dykes, from Queens and Brooklyn, are in a family way, keeping the best from the past, and building a future for our children. ▼

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