

# The Pride Report

by Byron McCrae

I started GLBT Pride 1997 with a fashion crisis. I had about 10 minutes to get to the Dyke March in front of City Hall, but could not find my wire rimmed sunglasses. Dare I search and be late? Well, at 10:14 I arrived at City Hall with my metallic green sunglasses. The Dyke March, like most of the day's activities, was running a little behind schedule.

The actual marching started at 10:24. I learned quickly, though, that the story wasn't with the marchers as much as it was with a group of teenagers watching closely. One of the fold ran over to her three friends hanging out on a bench next to me, she was excited that she had donated a dollar to the march. Her boyfriend wondered aloud what their parents would think.

When the Trans Truck started up with Annie Lennox and the dykes started whistling and hooting their way up Church Street, another one of the girls turned defiant. "I'm not following this," she said, angrily chewing a straw.

But as the parade made it's way up Church Street, so did the teens. They followed the parade, albeit at a distance until the Trans Truck stopped. The marching dykes continued, and the teens stood and watched, our would-be dyke seemingly transfixed by the spectacle.

"Did she put her arm around you?," she asked her friend who had donated a dollar to the Dyke March permit fund. Her friend then gleefully recounted her close encounter with lesbianism. The Trans Truck and the parade crossed Bank Street and the teens finally turned away.

By the time the Dyke March crossed onto Pearl Street, the Trans Truck was belting Neneh Cherry. A large man with a walkie-talkie came running out of the Post Office. With a big smile, he reported to the person on the other end of the walkie-talkie about what was going on. When the March has finally gone down the road a ways, he bent over with laughter and slapped his knee. Spotting me across the street, he pleasantly waved as I scribbled all that had just transpired onto my pad.

I followed the parade down Pearl, past Leonardo's where a group of women nodded their heads in disapproval. "You suit your own, I guess," one of them said.

The Dyke March and the Trans Truck pulled into Battery Park to the tune of Madonna's "Fever." A sizeable crowd had gathered for the Rally, scheduled for 11. I hit up the Free Press writer for info on the Dyke March—she estimated that about 75 people participated, the majority being lesbians with a handful of folks identifying as transgendered also marching.

By 11, I had been mistaken for Craig Mitchell three times. I would be mistaken for Craig again no less than 8 other times during the day, including one time by an African-American woman in front of Pearl's, once by the really cute tall guy who works at The Gap, and once by a tuba (or some other big horn/instrument) player on Church Street.

The proclivity for so many people to mistake me for Craig Mitchell is problematic, especially on a Pride Day when many of the speakers urged their audience to

appreciate the diversity of our community and take up the challenge of battling racism. Of the people who mistook me for Craig, only the lesbians took an interest in actually asking my name and getting to know a little about me. You can't battle racism or appreciate diversity if you allow yourself to become complacent or even smug in knowing one Black person.

Sure, the first couple of times were funny, maybe even a little flattering. But as the day went on, it became evident that more people of color need to be out and active in our community (there were less than a dozen I saw at the rally or part of the March down Church Street) and that people interested in ending racism and promoting diversity need to take advantage of their opportunities to meet, interact, and get to know GLBT brothers and sisters of different races.

The highlight of the Rally was an angry, honest, and direct speech by Peggy Luhrs, who warned us against assimilating into heterosexual culture and envying and emulating the rights to marriage and family. "I want us to have it all," she said, but feared that the GLBT community risks, "making ourselves more like straights." Luhrs, like many of the other speakers, urged that we be proud of our differences and embraces our community's queerness in all of its forms.

Other speakers included Jess Bell, David Curtis, Deborah Lashman, the youth of Outright Vermont, and Keith Goslant. The Freedom Choir was on hand, and proclamations from the governor and the mayor were read by Goslant and Cherie Tartt, respectively.

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