

Have Pride, or else?!

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Yes it's that time of year again; the sun is shining and everybody is outside enjoying themselves. It is almost officially summer and with the summer comes the many Gay Pride events and marches the world over. From London and Manchester and New York to Sydney Gay men and women take to the streets to wave that rainbow flag and stand up to be counted. However, how representative of the whole gay community are those who join in at these events? Are we as gay youth interested in what Gay Pride has to say? Ultimately, do we need to dance and sing in the streets to prove our worth; prove our pride?

This year EuroPride comes to London, already infamous for putting on a good weekend of entertainment club nights and processions all with the view to encourage acceptance and demonstrate gay men and women's pride. However, there is something potentially grotesque about the extremes of gay pride events, something perhaps too proud? Acceptance is of course paramount and should always be the ambition of the gay community. However, gay pride events have a tendency to become impassioned by angry members of the gay community who use the rainbow flag as a weapon. EuroPride involves a diverse range of events over a hot June weekend and tries to offer all sections of the gay community an opportunity to get involved. From the more political march to the street carnival and an evening of Cabaret and specialist club nights, the event organisers have clearly tried to offer as much as possible. This is definitely commendable and provides the chance to be as involved or uninvolved as you like. Whereas we should of course be glad that such events gain the endorsement of the Mayor of London and funding from large corporate sponsors, do today's gay youth feel inclined to stand up and be counted? The danger perhaps comes from those who use the Pride event as an opportunity to simply drink excessive amounts, take drugs and over indulge generally. Does this then give the wrong impression of what it is to be gay and proud? As a gay youth it is so important that you have a sense of pride and above all respect for yourself. Hopefully this extends to feeling part of a community. Being gay is definitely a wonderful thing and growing into one's sexuality although potentially a struggle can be so exciting. This means that gay youths will certainly show an interest in gay pride so that they too can feel part of a community. What should be made a priority then is tailoring gay pride events to look out for the younger members of gay society. The emphasis should be taken away from spending one weekend solidly partying and walking topless around the streets and put more on being able to be yourself and feel relaxed into a larger group of people. What certainly shouldn't happen is for a gay youths to be exposed to the views and opinions of certain more politically aggressive gay men. At some events gay men have verbally and physically abused those who protest against homosexuality. This should be dealt with seriously as by encouraging violence towards those who are opposed to gay individuals lowers us to the intolerance we are trying to escape. Gay Pride should resemble a positive attitude towards sexuality; it should enable younger gay men and women to feel accepted and normal in society. Therefore Gay Pride events should always try to focus upon wider integration into society. The rainbow flag should not be used as an aggressive symbol but one that exposes diversity in the gay community, it should be used to symbolise a pride in oneself not solely for being gay, but for being comfortable with everything you can be. Gay Pride events follow a similar pattern across the globe, with most major cities offering gay men and women a platform to demonstrate their views on their sexuality and express their desires for being accepted into society. However, these events also provide corporate sponsors the opportunity to cash in on the power of the pink pound. By endorsing these events, larger corporations are seen to be "gay friendly" and therefore hope to encourage gay men and women to spend their pink pounds in their stores, or on their cars. Those in the entertainment industry also are quick to perform at the larger of these events as it is realised that gay men and women can dramatically increase record sales, however these same artistes are also quite happy to add lyrics to homophobic attitudes and then sell these to their straight audience and not recognise their hypocrisy. With all of the complexities of being a gay youth there should never be the pressure from the gay community itself to conform or show your pride in a particular way. In fact at the time of coming to terms with your sexuality one of the last things that you are feeling is usually pride. However, as you develop emotionally and begin to enjoy being Gay, a certain pride often develops; it is this that should be held onto. However, remember there is no need to aggress those who may have opposing views to ours; the Trojans weren't beaten in one day. Persistence is needed, but prejudices are hard to change and only with the powers of peaceful persuasion can we hope to achieve healthy integration into wider society. By all means stand up and be counted, have Pride, but always stay true to yourself and don't feel that to be accepted you must take your rainbow flag and attack those who disagree with you.