

## **“The popular kids are in charge, that’s ok they are nice”**

Written by Mark Smith

Until we can comfortably declare everyone has equal human rights, Pride events have a purpose. The question we must ask is; how is success influencing Pride’s purpose?

As we continue to gain rights, and Pride events experience growth, the focus shifts toward maintaining successful events. Planning a successful event is a goal, but it is not the purpose.

How does success affect the continuing fight for equal human rights, locally and globally? Time and time again we witness how a local benchmark of success clouds the ability to see that others are still struggling.

Prides, for the most part, have risen from anger and a strong focus on a purpose. In this time frame the people who step up to take the leadership roles do not commit the time and energy thinking of it as hard work, they commit because they have purpose. They do not lay out a plan or a growth strategy.

Slowly, as our rights continue to get locked in, and our organizational experience grows, a new leadership takes over, many are attracted by position rather than motivated by purpose. This is not a wrong motivation, or true for all of them, or reason to discourage them taking on a leadership role.

As organisers, with any level of tenure or reason for involvement, we need to continually remind ourselves, how personal experience affects the decisions we make, and we must ask ourselves “how do we insure that decisions made do not adversely affect others or unintentionally leave others standing on the outside or having to continue their fight alone”.

If we have never had to fear losing a job, how does that influence our organizational goal setting? Personal experience often overrides our capacity to understand broader concepts.

Recently, news stories have surfaced regarding Trans\* groups having their involvement restricted at Pride events, “this is a celebration and your signs are too political”.

In the past few months, one Pride organization removed the LGBTTI2Q2SA from its official planning paper, reducing the alphabet to the words “our Community”, reasoning that it is more inclusive.

How does this happen?

We easily fall into the mindset, “if things are easy for me, it must be easy for everyone”. When personal perspective and experience influences decision making, and that decision making is

done by a group that collectively shares the same life experience, this is called “privilege” [def: rights and advantages enjoyed by elite].

Prides grew from anger; the “privileged” of the time, the status quo called us freaks, the status quo restricted our rights, the status quo told us how to dress, how to act and what we could say and who we could love.

The status quo is what we have been fighting. To be successful, Prides cannot become the status quo.

Pride, at its root and in its heart, is political. If our goal is producing a successful event with a solid bottom line, and we maintain that by excluding a group, or diminishing the importance of individual opinion, or unintentionally indicate to someone that their voice is not welcome, we push them away rather than embrace them.

Removing, rather than adding letters to our alphabet, limits our reach and removes a simple gesture of inclusion that someone may be looking for. A single letter, can mean so much to a single person, it gives them hope and a feeling that they are not alone.

Prides must continually remind themselves that there is still purpose in what we do, and that is to nurture and include everyone, especially those who desperately require some support.

Think outside of personal experience, because as soon as we limit the perspective, or look for shortcuts to success, or maybe we just try to make it easy and fun for ourselves thinking that is what everyone would want, we unintentionally limit inclusion and Pride loses purpose.

If we cannot accomplish a balance of inclusion, and participation locally, how do we effectively support and/or understand the needs of others just starting their struggle?

Bio:

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