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EDITORIAL

It's Not A Drag, Girl Friend!

A lot has been written lately, once again, about the appropriateness of drag queens. Those who criticize often do so with an arrogance that makes me want to vomit. Recently, another publication editorialized on what a drag queen should look like, walk like and talk like. Give me a break! Not only



PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Tony V. Zampella

does this smack of a self-righteous arrogance but, female impersonators, or drag queens, are getting a bad rap. I am sick and tired of certain "leaders" in our community redefining what it means to be gay.

We just celebrated yet another gay pride event in San Diego. The purpose of this event is to celebrate our diversity - not hide it. Yes, drag queens are part of our community. In fact, they are an integral part.

Members of our community who criticize drag queens must be so fragile and insecure that they have forgotten how to laugh at themselves. We in the gay and lesbian community have been known for our keen sense of humor. Some call it camp, some witty. Whatever it is called, it is part of our history and must not be lost.

A couple of years ago, one of "The Livi-

the answers, but people who say that they are offended by drag queens remind me of the homophobes who say that they are offended by the mere existence of gays and lesbians.

Our community has a lot of double standards and this is one of them. We at *Bravo! News magazine* took a phone in poll last week to address this issue. The results — displayed on our cover — showed that roughly one-half of you disagree with me and find drag queens offensive. It's worth stating that this poll received the most responses of any of our weekly call-in polls. The numbers clearly demonstrate that drag queens are a hot topic in our community.

For those who are offended by the drag community here is a little food for thought.

First, it was the drag queens who had the guts and courage to take action in 1969 at the Stonewall Inn and thus begin what is now known as our modern movement. Second, drag queens were the original leaders in raising money for all our social and political advancements. Those include our Center, the defeat of the Briggs Initiative and Prop 64, just to name a few. Their work continues every day. Over the last eleven years these individuals have consistently raised thousands of dollars for the AIDS crisis.

Every time our community has a crisis or obstacle to overcome, it is the drag community that takes a lead in showing us the way.

Bars like the Brass Rail have been supportive of the drag queens for years. The Drag Queen Show has helped raise

Robbing these individuals of their just due, and their well-deserved praise, by ostracizing them is the real crime here. Those who feel it is their duty to commit this crime are the ones that need to be examined.

This year's Coronation, the annual drag ball sponsored by the Imperial Court de San Diego, is nearly sold out. Hundreds will attend the August 1 event.

This year's court has raised and dispersed, in just one year, over \$30,000.

Hello, out there, does anybody know how hard it is to raise \$30,000 in a year that has been hit with the hardest economic times since the depression? These individuals have given nearly all of the monies to worthy organizations in our community.

This is the type of community involvement we need more of.

I am proud to have drag queens on the staff of *Bravo! News magazine*. In fact, one of those staffers, Queen Eddie, received tons of applause and support as he rode in this year's Pride Parade. He has helped hundreds of people through the years with his JUST ASK QUEEN EDDIE column and is respected by members of both the gay and non-gay communities. Few leaders have the influence he has.

Moreover, I am proud to be a part of such a diverse community which includes drag queens as part of that diversity.

It is human nature to criticize that which we do not understand; to destroy that which we fear. We as a community have an

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EDDIE CONLON

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Whatever it is called, it is part of our history and must not be lost.

A couple of years ago a new show "In Living Color" challenged our sense of humor. The skits about our community were just plain funny. But, time after time, I kept reading articles criticizing the show for making fun of us. Let's face it, the show was funny, and so is the humor in our community.

It's time to let our hair down folks, time to laugh at ourselves. Our humor and our drag queens are part of our gay culture and I for one am damn proud of it.

As for those who are offended, did you ever think that maybe something is wrong with their perspective? I do not claim to have all

way.

Bars like the Brass Rail have been supportive of the drag queens for years. The Dream Girls Show has packed them in now for nearly two years. Before that, Clint Johnson and the Showbiz Bar reached national acclaim for their shows. Johnson and his "girls" were constantly doing benefits for our community, and calling attention to the many needs that existed.

This is part of our history. In fact, at one time this was all that existed in our community. No one is saying that we should go back in time, but why is it so easy for some in our community to simply discard the important contributions made by these individuals.

It is human nature to criticize that which we do not understand; to destroy that which we fear. We, as a community, have experienced this fear. Why must some fear those within our culture? Isn't it better to educate ourselves, open our minds, and become a tolerant community celebrating all our diversity? After all, this is what the gay and lesbian community seeks from the society as a whole.

To the drag community in San Diego, thank you for being a bright facet on our gay and lesbian diamond. I, for one, am proud to make your acquaintance. My life is richer for it. As for those who are ignorant, I guess we must all be tolerant.

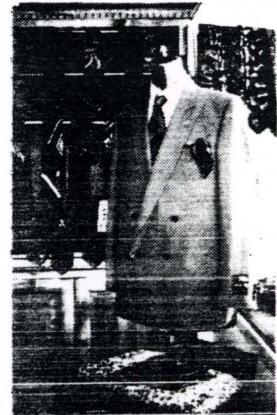
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