

# Purim parade replaces 'unJewish' mardi gras

SYDNEY'S Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is "unJewish and inappropriate" because mardi gras originally marks the beginning of the Christian time of Lent, the Council of Orthodox Rabbis has declared.

But Jewish leaders have made it clear they do not want to be seen as anti-gay and are therefore sponsoring a Purim parade which will welcome participants from across the ethnic and sexual spectrum.

"We've got nothing against gays, it's the Christian undertones of the thing that concern us," declared Rabbi Orange, spokesman for Rabbis Supporting Queens, a support group which began to aid transvestite Esthers at Purim but has expanded its work to take in other participants in the fringe world of fancy dress.

"Dressing up is an old Jewish tradition and drag queens are welcome in any synagogue at Purim. In fact, children are taught from a young age how to dress as queens in ways which are creative and entirely culturally acceptable," Rabbi Orange said.

"Judaism is naturally tolerant. I challenge you to find another religion where the clerics themselves dress up as Pokemon or politicians. You won't find priests, ministers or imans displaying such a modern attitude growing out of ancient traditions."

Rabbi Orange also pointed out that the old Jewish tradition of drunkenness on Purim went very well with the original mardi gras concept. "Frankly we've been onto this for years. Getting drunk, dressing up, making a noise and being queens (and kings) is what Purim is all about. Combining it with the mardi gras is natural, and in multi-cultural Australia we would be

expecting other religions to follow suit [or preferably spangly ball gown]."

Rabbi Orange's colleague, Rabbi Moshe Sputnick, added that the idea of a gay parade at Purim had its foundation in ancient Talmudic sources which had advised separation of the sexes and encouraged same sex friendship as a source of purity and joy.

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"The very fact that these people use the word gay is a confirmation of what we've said all along. Blatant heterosexuality contravenes the laws of *tzniut* [modesty], where men who concentrate their attentions on men and women who focus on women, gain a much higher spiritual level."

Progressive Jews, however, have expressed some concern about the proposed Purim parade. "We prefer our Judaism to show a measure of self-control and orderliness. Besides its hard to play an organ on parade," said Rabbi Dee Korum. "Tradition clearly has its place but going to the Middle Ages with all this same-sex garbage is really not progressive."