



Dayenu Celebrates Bar Mitzvah

by Kim Gotlieb

DAYENU - Sydney's Jewish GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) Group has been marching in the Mardi Gras Parade since 2000, so this year we are celebrating our Bar Mitzvah, with rainbow coloured tallitot and pink kipot.

I am Kim Gotlieb, the President of Dayenu, and I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the significance of being part of a congregation which celebrates diversity, and welcomes people with a range of sexual orientations. I will use the term "gay", for convenience, without meaning to offend those with more politically-inspired views of inclusion.

I want to invite you to consider the meaning of Tikkun Olam - repair of the world, as it relates to our communities relationship with GLBT folk.



Is it enough, to have a tacit acceptance? Are we each required to make steps to understand "the other"? Many gay congregants have no family in this town. Personally, I had to leave my country of origin, New Zealand, in order to find a more gay-friendly community to live in. Many have simply found that they have become estranged from their birth family. In gay culture, we sometimes talk about our biological family, and then our "logical" family - meaning those relationships we develop along the way, who can truly celebrate who we are, the lives we live, the stories we have to tell.

Youth culture has developed a slang use of the word gay, to refer to anything which is somewhat less than or derogatory. "How gay!" Many, both gay and straight, do not see this phrase as being at all related to homophobia. But I remain troubled by its usage. Linking the word gay to something less than, is an historic slight against my identity, and though I may not say it, it hurts....and I think it hurts many, and keeps them from speaking out.

We all have a responsibility to act against injustice, unfairness, lack of equity, lack of voice and a diminished sense of place.

In the spirit of "welcoming the stranger", which is the phrase most mentioned in the torah, I invite each of us, to step out and make links with those whose lifestyle choices may differ from our own. Take a leap to invite a gay man or lesbian to your home for Shabbat or Yomtov (festivals). Maybe it is time to take the risk of talking about gay issues with someone you suspect is gay, to let them know it is "safe" for them to come out to you. This is especially true if the person is your son or daughter.

DAYENU is totally committed to marching in the parade, partly because it is fun! But more importantly, we want to be sure that the conversation about GLBT matters - concerns about awareness, matters of inclusion, hiv, and youth suicide should be relevant agendas for all of us. Talk with your friends, tell people where you stand. This year, we are inviting our friends and supporters to march with us. Email: parade@dayenu.org.au for further details.

Jewish life revolves so much around lifecycle events - Birth, Bar Mitzvah, Engagement, Marriage, Parenting, Death, which gay people are rarely involved in. Congregants need to make an effort to learn more about gay culture, and become more thoughtful about ways of inclusion. The success of your endeavours will show, because we will see more gay people seeking to be part of Emanuel, and many will become more outspoken about gay issues, and our youth will have an engaging voice in this discussion, which will allow those ready to come out, to do so with grace and dignity.

We warmly invite you to attend the Mardi Gras Shabbat service on Friday March 1, the day before we proudly march up Oxford St., knowing that we belong to a gay-friendly synagogue which continues to walk beside us, in addressing issues of inclusion and acceptance. Mazeltov to all.