

Gays, Jews and the next generation

Chantal Abitbol asked young members of the community their views on Jewish participation in Saturday night's Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.



Loren Pogroske, 21, Media Law student, Macquarie University:
"It's great that people proudly affiliate with being both Jewish and gay, but I don't agree with being flamboyant and displaying it to the rest of the world. With the antisemitism that exists, we should not give the broader community more reason to defame us. When people stand on a Jewish float, they represent all Jews. It makes a statement on behalf of the entire community, which I don't think is good."



Kathy Karlikoff, 21, Environmental Engineering, University of NSW:
"It's wonderful. If you're strong enough to have the courage to come to terms with your gay sexuality publicly and also cherish your Judaism as important pieces of your identity, so be it. Society makes it hard enough for people to come out, why not give those who have tackled the hurdles an opportunity to celebrate being gay, Jewish and proud? We must offer support, whether as family, friends or just fellow-Jews. We must accept that we're all humans with different identities. Considering what the Jews have been through, history should teach us to accept differences and celebrate diversity, which is what the parade is about. Happy Mardi Gras to all participants and supporters!"

Ruth Layman, 22, Social Work graduate, UNSW:
"It's great that young Jewish people can stand on a float and feel proud to identify as both gay and Jewish without fear of persecution. My concern is that the persecution they may face comes from their own community. I look forward to the day when the



Ruth Layman
Jewish presence in the Mardi Gras does not create a splash in the *Jewish News*. We accept that these people are Jewish, but we still find it difficult to believe they could also be born gay and have no choice in their sexual orientation. I'll be there cheering them on."



Mark Franklin, 21, Media, Communication and Arts, UNSW:
"It's a double-edged sword. I respect the fact that participants are proud of their sexuality and want to maintain their Jewish identity, but it seems contradictory to have a Jewish float because Jewish values and a gay lifestyle are opposites. Perhaps a better approach than condemning the float would be to find an environment in which gay Jews can combine their homosexuality and Judaism. I don't see the point in openly displaying ideologies which are diametrically opposed, but in no way would I stop them."



Ben Blasina, 19, Science/Communications, UNSW:
"I'm a strong believer in individuality, and it's good that people can be proud of being both gay and Jewish. It's free-

dom of speech; people should have the freedom to be who they want to be. It's fantastic."



Danielle Goot, 22, Education, University of Technology, Sydney:
"It's really good that there is a Jewish float. We have a lot of celebrations in the community, but we don't celebrate the diversity of Jews. Everyone who is Jewish has to be comfortable being themselves; this is the time for homosexual Jews to do so."



Este Regos, 19, Arts, UNSW:
"I fully support a Jewish float. These are proud Jews, the community should be supportive. Last year's trouble started when some felt it was shameful and represented the community in a bad light, which is understandable. However, I felt ashamed to read some of the letters in the *A/N* slamming the event. It horrified me because it's the same line of thinking our people have experienced for generations. Jews died next to homosexuals in the Holocaust; for us not to accept them because of their differences is a sad irony."



Terence "Toffee" Foltyn, 22, Arts, University of Sydney:
"Despite qualms that sections of the community might have, I applaud it. I was lucky enough to have been brought up in a very open-minded household where pride in what you believe in and in what you do as an individual was encouraged. Last year's negative comments came down

to antiquated interpretations, fear and ignorance. As a community, we have to surmount our fears, educate ourselves where understanding is lacking, open our minds to facilitate this understanding and embrace Jewish gay pride for what it is: a vibrant and proud part of Jewish consciousness."



Greg Segal, 20, AUJS president, Commerce/Law, UNSW:
"If they're doing what makes them happy and it doesn't infringe on anyone else, fine. Times have changed sufficiently to warrant their having a float. They've found their niche; it shouldn't be an issue for anyone else. It's inevitable that there was controversy, but as the years pass people will become more comfortable with the idea. It takes time for attitudes to change, and that's understandable."



Gabriel Sassoon, 20, Commerce/Law, UNSW:
"I'm a big fan of private morality, which means people having the right to do what they want insofar as their choices don't affect others. As soon as it affects others' space, as is the case with Mardi Gras and the Jewish float, it becomes problematic. But I wouldn't be so presumptuous to judge others or tell them what to do. We live in a democracy."



Liz Mason, 18, Psychology, UNSW:
"It's great. People are being proud of who they are. They're saying we're proud of being Jewish, and the community should stand behind anyone

who is proud of their Jewish identity. They're doing a service to members of the community who are not open about their sexuality by showing that there are homosexuals within our community who can offer support."



Bianca Dubb, 19, Social Work, UNSW:
"It's a good way to express who they are. I believe in equal rights for everybody. I support this float and will cheer them on. Negativity on this issue only causes division within the community and should be overcome by maturity and tolerance."



Justine Turner, 19, Social Science, UNSW:
"It's a fantastic way to get people to open up. This being the second year, hopefully more people will be aboard, with heterosexual people joining in and accepting them for who they are."



Ilana Mendels, 21, Veterinary Science, University of Sydney:
"It's fantastic. Everyone should be able to express their personality and sexuality in whatever way they feel comfortable. Last year's controversy was related to ignorance and traditional mindsets. But times and traditions change. I respect the religious belief that homosexuality isn't appropriate, but the community is more than religious; it's also cultural. So within all those strands, it is understandable that there are Jewish homosexuals and we should support them."

Dave Brodaty, 21, Arts, UNSW:
"It's a positive because it's better to have Jews willing to identify with their



Dave Brodaty
Judaism than to have no connection. Last year's controversy was unwarranted. There are too many divisions within the community; we don't need another."



Marissa Frydman, 20, Betar Australia, Digital Media, UNSW:
"I strongly believe in standing up and being proud of who you are. In the words of Jabotinsky, 'Every Jew is a prince'; they should act and be treated in such a way, most importantly by their fellow-princes. We should be proud to support Jewish homosexuals. The parade is an expression of being proud of who they are, rather than hiding their Jewish identity behind other floats, scared of the backlash they may receive from their own community."



Yotam Weiner, 21, Arts, UNSW:
"I wholeheartedly support it. Community leaders should keep our community united. I don't respect leaders who encourage discord. They should encourage youth to have more of a moral and social conscience and not be prejudiced."



Gary Pajor, 23, gardener, former Habonim member:

"Such displays should be encouraged at this point in our collective social development, so that we may work towards avoiding further discrimination in generations to come. Rather than teaching our children that people are different because of unwanted traits, we should encourage constructive discrimination in recognising our differences, whilst letting them know how many similarities we have and celebrating what makes us who we are. We must stop lying and step out of those comfort zones. Change is always a constructive learning experience."

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