

OPINION: Yes to Kink at Pride — It's about sexual liberation, not public sanitization

 bearworldmag.com/opinion-yes-to-kink-at-pride-its-about-sexual-liberation-not-public-sanitization/

Kyle Jackson

4th June 2021



It's that time of the year again: LGBTQ Pride Month.

Despite the fact that Pride was started as rebellion against systems of oppression, over the years Pride has evolved into something other than what it was intended to be. Corporate sponsors have taken up more space than the LGBTQ community, and it's become more of an "everybody's included" event rather than a space for a marginalized community to raise its voice in promotion of dignity, equality, self-awareness and sexual liberation. Yes, Pride is a party but even more than that, Pride is a protest.

But every year, the straights have seemed to find a way to question the validity of Pride in today's society. "Why do you still need Gay Pride," they ask. "If you can have Gay Pride, then surely we can have straight pride." They ask this as if getting the right to marry (which still isn't legal in many places) was the end to all LGBTQ suffering.

They ask this despite the fact that, in the last few years, the number of Black and Lantix Trans women who have been murdered is constantly rising; or the fact that LGBTQ people around the world are still being forced into conversion therapy. A young man in Iran was just brutally murdered and beheaded by his own family last month. Violence against LGBTQ is still an every day occurrence throughout the world. And still, they ask why.

The blatant ignorance of those questions, at this point, doesn't even warrant an answer. Quite frankly, just as many white people still refuse to acknowledge systemic racism: If you can't see that LGBTQ people are being discriminated against, then you just don't want to see it.

However, in recent years, a new group of people have emerged as somewhat of a pariah — a subgroup within the LGBTQ community that many only feel should exist in the dark shadows and dungeons of seedy sex clubs: The kink and fetish community.

Recently, a conversation that seems to be the hot topic of discussion in recent years, has reopened on social media platforms: Should kink be allowed at Pride? What's most interesting about this question in particular is that it's not being asked by straights. Rather, it's being asked by people within the LGBTQ community who feel that public displays of kink push the limits of public decency and decorum.

But why are we concerned with public decency and decorum at an event that was literally started as a rebellion against respectability politics? In the 1950s and 1960s, police raids on LGBTQ bars in America were common, for very obvious reasons. LGBTQ people were considered gross and indecent and homosexual acts, in most places, were considered a crime.

Yes, the queers could be arrested just for even pursuing sex. A police raid of this nature is what caused the uprising at Stonewall in June of 1969, which marked the beginning of the yearly protest that has become LGBTQ Pride. Pride is LITERALLY a rebellion against sexual oppression.

Some seem to argue that if we allow the LGBTQ community to march through the streets half naked with whips and chains during Pride marches, it does nothing but reinforce the negative stereotypes that the rest of society has about the LGBTQ community. While this is a valid concern, the unfiltered truth is that the rest of society will most likely see you as a freak whether you're marching up the street fully clothed and covered in rainbows and glitter, or wearing nothing but a jockstrap, nipple clamps and an insertable puppy tail.

This is the same society that will accuse LGBTQ people of flaunting our sexuality in front of them because we gave our partner a peck on the lips in public, but see no problem with the straights being allowed to have full on drunken make out sessions, complete with ball and tit grabbing, on a 2:00 a.m. subway ride from the club unbothered. It doesn't matter if you're just holding your partner's hand on that same train, though. As far as they're concerned, you may as well be rimming him as he hangs upside down from the subway stanchions.

The moral of the story is: Who cares what they think?

Another reason why kink at Pride is questioned is because of the number of families who attend the event. This is not just a concern from the straights, but from LGBTQ parents as well. While this concern is valid, this discussion is also more nuanced. But, to offer my opinion on the matter, I will say this: If your children are being raised in a household with queer parents, then it is your responsibility to teach them the history of Pride and what it means. It is not your responsibility to police the actions of others.

If they can understand the meaning of pride, then surely they can understand why people parade around half naked. And if they are not old enough or not able to understand this, then quite frankly they shouldn't be at Pride.

No, Pride is not a “family friendly” event. It was never meant to be. This is not Disney World. It’s a protest promoting sexual liberation. But, even with that being said, I have personally never seen anyone having sex in the middle of the street at Pride. I’ve seen half naked bodies. I’ve seen whips and chains. I’ve seen dildos hanging from floats. But I’ve never seen full on penetration.

Maybe people are getting Pride confused with the Folsom Street Fair in San Francisco, a completely separate event. If someone goes to Folsom Street Fair, an event that’s notorious for explicit public displays of sex, and expects Disney World... Well, who’s fault is that?

Another concern I’ve seen is that some displays of kink at Pride push boundaries of consent. They feel it’s unethical to display or participate in a kink in public that others have not consented to. This is also a valid argument, and one I discuss a bit in my [article about race play](#).

Yes, some kink or fetish displays may push the boundaries of consent, but these are usually very few and far inbetween and involve very specific kinks that may push certain boundaries, even within kink spaces. Therefore, we should deal with these instances on a case by case basis, instead of making a blanket judgment about the kink and fetish community.

But again, MOST people are not having sex in the middle of the streets at Pride. Someone wearing a jockstrap and cracking their whip on the ground is no different from someone in a feather boa clacking their colorful, oversized fan. These are both examples of people expressing their freedom in different ways, and they both should be welcome. And if someone is having their ass paddled in front of a crowd at Pride and that’s not your cup of tea, is it a matter of consent or a matter of you just looking the other way?

So yes, I believe that kink belongs at Pride. For over 50 years, Pride has existed to give LGBTQ people space to be ourselves for one weekend, in a world that silences and devalues us and our sexual identity constantly. It is not a circus for the outside world to attend. It is not a place to reinforce respectability politics. For LGBTQ people, it’s a protest. It’s a place of refuge. It’s our space, and we do with it what we please.

,