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Opinions Founded on Prejudice LGBT HATRED ON THE RISE

By Josh Aterovis



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The great Scottish judge and literary critic Francis Jeffrey once said, "Opinions founded on prejudice are always sustained with the greatest of violence." He was most likely referring to the ferocity of a verbal argument, but his sentiment holds true in every sense of the word violence. As lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues have come to the forefront on an international scale, organized attacks and violence against the LGBT community has increased exponentially.

Several countries saw violence erupt at their Pride events this year. In July, Erik Shkapars, the executive director Latvia's capital Riga, canceled the city's pride celebration, but a judge ruled that the parade could go on. When several dozen brave gays and lesbians showed up to march through the center of the city demanding justice for sexual minorities, they found themselves vastly outnumbered by anti-gay demonstrators. The protests turned violence when the anti-gay crowd began throwing rotten eggs

and insults, and scuffles with the police broke out.

A similar scene played out in Poland a month earlier when more than 2500 people marched through the streets of Warsaw in defiance of the city's mayor, who had also canceled all gay pride celebrations. Once again, eggs and insults were tossed, but that time, marchers were physically attacked by protestors.

Things got even uglier at Jerusalem's pride parade. More than a thousand protestors threw bottles of urine and bags of feces at marchers. Three people were stabbed in a series of attacks by religious extremists.

In Australia, the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby reports that violence and harassment against gays and lesbians in Victoria is increasing to "unacceptably high levels."

According to Human Rights First, in France, violent hate crimes against gay men more than doubled from 2002 to 2003.

Even in Canada, where gay marriage was recently legalized, violence against gays and lesbians has increased. Criminologist and author Doug Janoff says violence against homosexuals in Canada is more "frenzied" and intense than that perpetrated against other victims of violent crime.

Unfortunately, the U.S. is at the forefront of anti-gay attacks. This summer was an especially violent one for the LGBT community. In July alone, there were four separate LGBT-related arson attacks around the country. On July 9, a gay-friendly United Church of Christ

congregation in Middlebrook, Virginia was damaged in a fire set after the arsonist wrote a message on the exterior of the church calling its members sinners. Two weeks later, the only gay club in Fayetteville, Arkansas was torched for the second time in less than a month. Studio 716 was destroyed by the second blaze. A week later, a gay club in Brownsville, Texas was gutted by fire. Then, just days later, a Florida couple were the victims of a targeted hate crime when their home was set ablaze and "Die Fag" was spray painted on their front steps.

It was a violent summer for gays in New York City as well. There were nearly one hundred attacks on gays in the City this summer. In June and July alone there were 85 violent hate crimes against NYC gays and the number rose almost daily in August. According to the Anti-Violence Project, hate crime against gays were about 6% above average in 2004.

In fact, violence against gays is on the rise on a national level. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' annual report released in April, reported anti-gay violence rose 4% between 2003 and 2004. Included in the rise in incidents for the year, was an 11% increase in anti-LGBT murders. In 2003, NCAVP's report on hate violence detailed a 26% increase in anti-LGBT violence.

"This year's report has to be viewed as a follow-up to our report from a year ago," Clarence Patton, acting executive director of the NCAVP said. "In the last edition of this report it became all too clear that with respect to violence, the nation's LGBT communities had entered a very new, and very dangerous era in which all of us were under attack at levels not seen in recent years."

Opinions, Prejudice, page 18

The State of the Milwaukee Pride Parade

Now that summer is almost over and everything has settled down, we can start planning for the 2006 Milwaukee Pride Parade. Let me start out by saying that we only had two months to plan this year's parade and with the combined cooperation with LGBT bar owners, we raised \$8,920.00.

The cost of the 2005 parade was \$4,569.87. The major expense we had were the permits which totaled \$2,359.00, insurance at \$631.00 printing costs of \$974.49 and supplies at \$605.38. This gives us a surplus of \$4,350.13 which will be used towards next year's Parade. I would also like to announce that the Milwaukee Pride Parade is now incorporated in the state of Wisconsin as a "Corporation, Not for Profit." This year the G/L Community

Trust Fund (a 501c3 non-profit organization) acted as the Fiscal Agent for the 2005 Parade. Although we are incorporated as Milwaukee Pride Parade, Inc., we do not have the 501c3 status. If you want to donate to the parade and want your donation to be tax deductible, you can still go through the G/L Community Trust fund. Si Smits has agreed to take donations for the parade. All you have to do is state that you want the donation to go to the Milwaukee Pride Parade.

On Labor Day we had our first fund raiser for the 2006 Milwaukee Pride Parade at Boom. We raised an additional \$351.00, bringing the total parade funds to \$4,701.13. We are hoping to do more fund raisers before the end of the year with a goal of \$10,000 going into 2006. We want to ensure that the Mil-

waukee Pride Parade will improve year after year and that it stays in Walker's Point where it belongs.

We should all be proud of the unity displayed by the LGBT bars in Milwaukee. It shows to all of us what can be done once we unite together to "Make Our Dreams Come True." Special thanks go to the Great Lakes Riders for all their hard work in helping to pull off the parade in such short notice.

A meeting will be held at Fluid on Monday, September 19th at 7pm to discuss what we want to do to enhance the 2006 parade. We invite all who want to GET INVOLVED to come and give their suggestions. Let's make the 2006 Milwaukee Pride Parade better than ever!

Inside This Issue

Crossword Puzzle	5
Outbound Women	6
Health & Fitness	8
Arts & Entertainment	10
Couple of Guys	11
Outbound Destinations	15
Dear Ruthie	17
FYI	18
Cordially Yours	20
Outbound Classifieds	22