Top Events This Pride Season

TransNation

By Jacob Anderson-Minshall | 06/19/08 | 12:40 AM

June has become the month for Pride celebrations, and for trans folks, this year offers more venues than ever to show your pride or protest the current political environment. A few events (past and future)

New England Trans Pride March

With their slogan (“Romarom Stonewall? That was us!”) recalling the 1969 New York City riots, the First Annual New England Trans Pride March was held in the Pride season June 7th when Northampton, MA—the lowest known area as ‘Lesbianville’—played host to thousands of people and the only fun in town. The following rally featured trans entertainers and speakers like folk singer Joe Stevens (of Coyote Grace) and Cathy Worthley, and activists Gunnar Scott, Monica Roberts and Demi Rose. One of the event’s organizers, Beat Power, Director and Curator of the Sexual Minorities Archives—urged lesbians and gays to “intensify their support of the transgender community.”

Fresh Meat Festival

Years before the debut of dedicated trans marches, San Francisco’s Fresh Meat Festival provided an annual outlet for transgender artists and their supporters. Launched in 2001 by choreographer Sean Dorney, Fresh Meat Productions supports established and emerging trans and queer artists. Seven years later, they’re still the only festival of their kind in the US, but they’ve gained such a following they’ve had to move to a larger theater.

The Transcendence Gospel Choir does exactly what Fresh Meat is all about,” Dornay contends. “[They] inspire, offer, open hearts and minds—all while making really good art. People are moved to tears. [It’s a] joyful, powerful, deeply moving articulation of the beauty, talent, courage and strength of our community.”

This year Fresh Meat had the financial wherewithal to commission five pieces by groups creating “cutting-edge work in traditional art forms,” such as gospel music, hula, hiphop dance, and classical music. Dorney adds: “I want to have trans and queer communities. We’re facing really strong resistance in traditional culture, to reclaim our place in history as important culture bearers and leaders.”

The 7th Annual Fresh Meat Festival runs June 19-22. This year’s performance include the festival’s first open, trans performers Scott Turner Schofield, Ysuhito W. Lewis and Ryki Ande La Cruz, trans girlband Lipstick Conspiracy, award-winning MC Kuitstrafft and trans rockers Shawna Virago. During the festival the Fresh Meat Gallery will exhibit work by transgender and gender variant visual artists.

San Francisco Trans March

The Fifth Annual San Francisco Trans March will be held Friday, June 27th, with the theme, “Marching for a Future Inclusive STOP!” Festivities start at 3 p.m. in Dolores Park where thirty trans and gender-variant artists, bands, artists and performers will be featured on stage, and former HRC board member Donna Ross will give the keynote speech. Nearly 7,500 people came out last year, and organizers are expecting over 10,000 participants in the march, which begins at 7 p.m.

Trans Day of Action for Social & Economic Justice

On the opposite coast, New York City will be celebrating the fourth annual Trans Day of Action for Social & Economic Justice June 27 at City Hall Park. Although the Northampton Trans March has been lauded as, “the first trans-organized march in the country that mainly belongs to the New York City March organized by the Audre Lorde Project’s TransJustice project.”

Aiming to develop solidarity with other civil rights movements and social justice organizations, the Day of Action organizers call for an end of discrimination, demanding, among other things, equal access to employment and education opportunities, and proclaiming, “We stand in solidarity with all protesters... We call attention to the criminal justice system... We oppose the Bush administration’s ‘War on Terrorism’ as an excuse to legalize the expansion of the US. We demand justice for the many TNGC people who have been beaten, assaulted, raped, and murdered.”

Trans Day of Action (mp.org/transjustice) organizers say they want to let the world know, “The Stonewall rebellion is not over and we will continue fighting for social and economic justice, raising our voices until we are heard.”

Twin Cities Trans March

On Saturday, June 28, Twin Cities Trans March organizers hope to avoid last year’s snafu, when 200-250 people were stopped by Minneapolis police, who insisted the marchers disperse or face arrest—despite a permit authorizing the event. The stand-off reportedly lasted forty-five minutes before organizers agreed to suspend the rally.

Supporters beat the second annual march, (1 p.m. in Stevens Square Park), as an alternative to Pride festivities they criticize for “commercialization” that draws attention away from vitally needed activism and political education. We protest transphobia within the queer community, particularly within the Twin Cities Pride Festival.”

An all ages after-party at Pi Bar will feature entertainers like “queeromicon” band Tough Touch Skin, drag performers Enne Rodriguezes and Kyra Bong and the Androgynous Kings.

Although Trans Marches have hardly spread across the land, you can find them on either coast and in a sprinkling of locations in between, where they serve as inspiration for future events. Expect even more options for supporting transgender pride next June.

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