

Boston Pride Parade

- By Ramón Bannister



Figure 1: The small but proud Bentley University group. ©2010 Ramón Bannister

While doing the music series, I had the chance to participate in an event of MASSive proportions. I was invited by Professor Kristin Sorensen of the Global Studies Department to walk in a parade, but not just any parade. It was called the [Boston Pride Parade](#). Thousands of people participated, and even more watched from the sidelines, cheering us on in support of equal rights for GLBTQ persons. I was part of a small but dedicated contingent of Bentley University undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff. It was a fun and very interesting experience. Besides, as a researcher I know that where there is a large group of people advocating for a cause, there is music.

What made it interesting were the myriad ways people dressed to express themselves. Talk about pride – there were drag queens in beautiful, elaborate outfits. Two of them were so complex – huge head ornaments – that a dog got scared and barked at them like they were strange animals from Pluto. But the guys didn't care. They smiled, absorbing the attention from everyone around them.

There's one thing I noticed while standing in the middle of all this chaotic, positive and fun excitement. It was one of those feelings you get, like you have a sixth sense, a vibe that your body tells you something is in the air. It didn't matter who or what you were. You were you. That's what was important. It was an acceptance of everyone. I don't normally feel that in everyday society. This event was a parade to "come out" and show your pride for being gay, bi-sexual, heterosexual, whatever you are, show it without apology. Before I arrived to the Bentley University meeting place, I told a friend that I felt like a nerd, different, like I would stand out and be frowned upon for sporting my chicken legs and safari hat. When I got there, I realized that I fit in quite well, not because everyone was nerdy, but because no one cared how I was dressed. I was somehow important in a sea of equality. And half the people there were in costumes anyway, so wearing shorts and a nerdy safari hat was just the tip of the iceberg!



Figure 2: People watch band rehearse before start of parade. ©2010 Ramón Bannister



Figure 3: Governor Deval Patrick posing for fan photos. Security Guard at right. ©2010 Ramón Bannister

Everyone was an equal member of society at the parade. Even the Massachusetts State Governor Deval Patrick was there, uniformed security guard only about five feet away (who was in constant communication with someone else watching the crowd). I thought about going up to him and introducing myself. But I figured he had his hands full with everyone else introducing themselves and having their picture taken with him. As I watched, I saw that his handshake was different as compared to those disingenuous

politicians you see on TV, though I'm probably biased. Still, he seemed sincere, genuine, guileless. He has made it a tradition to march in the Pride Parade and show his acceptance of every individual, whether gay or straight.



Figure 4: A relaxed Governor Patrick. ©2010 Ramón Bannister

I had never before been three feet from such a powerful man – dressed in kakis and a baseball cap. *He was one of us*, at least momentarily, a bona fide man of the streets, a layman, a supporter of the GLBTQ movement, who just happened to be surrounded by admiring fans, and an intimidating guard likely packing a 9mm. I found myself questioning my negative view of him, that view that came about as the result of his great error when he used tax payer money to buy a couple of curtains and a chair for tens of thousands of dollars, something I

could have bought for \$50 bucks. Sure, he reimbursed the state with his own money, what someone at his level would consider pocket change. It was still a mistake. Now, this millionaire, this seemingly shallow man, was not shallow at all. **He was one of us.**

[<Video posted to YouTube>](#)

But the subject of the politicians attending the parade wasn't actually the point. The goal was to show the rest of the world that it doesn't matter how you define yourself: millionaire or not, powerful or not, gay, straight, or transsexual; we are all human. There were a few religious people holding signs that said, "Jesus forgives sinners." That was about as effective as the democrats who protested during John McCain's and Sarah Palin's speeches on national television. It made no sense. In fact, wasn't Jesus seen as blasphemous, wasn't he harshly criticized, for spending much of his adult life with tax collectors?

Everyone at the parade was proud. That's what mattered. And it was exciting to be in the middle of the marchers, surrounded by people who were cheering us along the streets of Boston, playing music and dancing, all the way to City Hall. That's Boston pride.