

Report Back on Defending Hamilton Pride Right

By Northshore Counter Info - June 19, 2019



Report from so-called Hamilton, Ontario on the defense of Pride celebrators by anti-queer religious groups.

June 15, 2019: By 2pm the group of bible-thumping homophobes and white nationalists who crashed pride were escorted out of the park by an ensemble of late-to-the-party boisterous crowd of jeering queers. Their visit to Hamilton Pride 2019 lasted just a few minutes and was filled with some of the most confrontational behavior we've seen from

By the time they left the park they were missing several of their twelve-foot sci-fi go-pro cameras, and some body armour. A few of them were bleeding and likely covered in goose-eggs and bruises, but it seems they sustained no serious injuries. We can't say the same. While some of them simply called it a day after leaving, others decided to wander the neighbourhood seeking out faggots and sinners to target

Footage emerged of them chasing a teenager who had left Gage Park down a residential street, calling them a "sodomite," a "pussy," and laughing at the way that they ran away

allegedly took shelter in a familiar gym where they knew they would be safe.

These “haters” – as they’re now widely known – also posted a video that night of their “loss.” They hadn’t done what they set out to do, which was to spend the day at the festival.

So, what happened?

If you believe the Pride Committee’s statement, the reason for this queer victory was our cooperation with authorities and clever spatial planning on the part of organizers.

In truth, the Pride Committee had no plan to deal with the haters. The Pride Committee was simply hoping the cops would take care of the situation, and when that didn’t happen, they were too cowardly to even acknowledge what had really gone on: that more than 70 queers and allies put their bodies on the line to confront the haters and, after sustaining serious injuries and running our voices ragged, had demoralized and beaten them so badly that they decided to leave – something they rarely do.

The story of Pride 2019 is not one of an orderly and colourful celebration with controlled chaos by the organizers. It’s one of brutal homophobia and awe-inspiring community resistance.

Rewind a couple weeks. Pride in Dunville, Ontario was an awful experience. Six hours of being verbally abused with targeted sermons about childhood rape, pedophilia, and eternal damnation was too much. We had dealt with these people last year in Dunville, and Toronto. We wouldn’t do another stand-off. We couldn’t handle another day of trying to out-scream and out-chant a pack of homophobes on a day when we’re celebrating our collective empowerment against such things. And so, in anticipation of Pride 2019, people started strategizing for something different. This planning happened far from the Pride Committee, far away from cops, and relied on the trust and camaraderie within Hamilton’s queer and anarchist circles over the past decade.

In coordination with other tactics (banners holders, drum players, medics, etc.) we decided to experiment with a new tactic. What if the haters’ strategy of showing us their twelve-foot scriptures and calling us all sinners while screaming in our faces all day fell flat? What if instead of getting to stand face-to-face with Pride and speaking our truth, they were forced to stare at a black wall all day?

So, we built one. A “Black Hole” for the haters to disappear into. A thirty-foot wide black banner reinforced by seven pieces of 2x2 lumber. In the days leading up to the event, we talked about comfort levels, and practiced moving as a team. On the day of the event, we formed a pink bloc with t-shirt balaclavas, and as soon as we got word that the haters had arrived, we marched our banner across the park and met up with dozens of other people who had been anticipating them. We unfurled the Black Hole and placed ourselves between the haters and the Pride celebration. The crowd erupted in applause that had temporarily been erased. While several people confronted the haters directly, we stayed focused on blocking them off from the festival and kept them contained and out of sight. We were being assertive, even pushy if they tried to get around us, but we intentionally weren’t throwing fists. We wanted to see how this tactic played out. It had agreed that we weren’t going looking for a fight, but were ready if they started one.



What ensued over the next hour was an absolute mess of brute violence, resolved by a spontaneous solidarity. One by one, people who were part of our original affinity group moved themselves to the other side of the banner to tend to serious injuries. A few of us were hit in the face by a helmet-wielding maniac named Christopher Vanderweide, a white supremacist from Kitchener, Ontario. One of our crew got knocked to the ground and kicked by John Mark Moretti (aka Ylli Radovicka) – a Toronto creep from a radical street project called Servanthoods. The only thing that saved our friend from a serious head injury was the fact that he was wearing a helmet.

elder in the community who happen to see him, tossed her cane aside, and thrashed a friend to stop the attack. (Again, this is the kind of queer courage Pride I talk about). Several others got punched repeatedly, tackled, and kicked. Many that day report being taken aback by how brutal they were being – whereas we when faced with an opportunity to kick someone while they're down, the haters: ruthless haste. Ultimately, our tactic of trying to hold the black wall while simultaneously protecting ourselves in this fight proved ineffective for our pink bloc crew, and we choose between dropping the banner or fighting with one hand.

But it didn't ultimately matter.

What matters is the fact that when I had to drag myself away from the fight with blood tumbling out of my face, I looked back and saw the black wall still standing. A group of people, some of whom I didn't even know. People who knew the value of trying to do, and stepped up when we couldn't do it any longer.

The Black Hole stayed intact and standing until the haters left the park.

What matters here is that instead of sitting back and praying for the police to save a group of people rallied together and drew a line – that Pride was not a safe space for preachers.

That feeling I got looking up at the banner still standing overwhelmed any pain I experienced that day or in the days after. That feeling makes me completely unsure if or not the police are looking for me or any of my friends. It makes me unafraid to be out there are planning for next year.

I'm going to go ahead and call that feeling PRIDE. I feel proud of my queer community, my anarchist community, maybe even proud of Hamilton on the whole. We know each other and stand up for ourselves, even if we don't often get a chance to shine. Because the haters are so deeply obsessed with obtaining footage of every miserable pathetic lives in order to make themselves into youtube celebrities, we have more video documentation of the events. Scuffles recorded from multiple angles, the helmet against bone caught from multiple mics. We know what happened. Pride was attacked by a group of homophobic men, people who had come equipped with weapons, and a readiness to queer-bash anyone who crossed their paths. We saw we fought back, and we sabotaged their efforts to spend the day in the park. We

an hour of skirmishes – the police decided to step in, there wasn't anything left. They knew they couldn't sustain their presence any longer, and welcomed the police to the park. The haters can be heard on film saying "we have to leave" over and over, and heard shrieking to police about their stolen cameras, and eventually can be seen leaving the park.

The official Pride statement, and much of the mainstream media coverage, has an absence of police intervention. We know from direct sources that the Pride Committee, they couldn't openly invite the police to Pride (a decision long fought for by the community), did make a deal with them that they would be there to intervene if necessary. When the Black Lives Matter, Yellow Vests and Preachers showed up. The police knew they would be there, the Pride Committee knew it, anyone who's been paying attention over the past couple years knew it. But they didn't follow through. Why?

One person overheard a cop offer a simple explanation: "Don't you remember how we got to Pride? We're just going to stand here, not my problem." It was a perfectly honest answer and demonstrates the level of indifference police have always shown towards communities. If you think about it, police aren't invited to any of the places they do their work. They show up drug-trafficking rings, it's not because they were invited by anyone. It's because they're allegedly tasked with protecting people. Friendliness is not supposed to be a part of police interaction. But police in North America and beyond have always shown a cruelty towards queer people, and it's not because we're not friendly enough and don't invite them to Pride. It's because it's not their job to protect us. It's their job to protect power. The power and wealth in this world does not rest in the hands of queer people, indigenous people, etc, the police have no motivation to protect.

Which is why making backroom deals with them and hoping they show up is a terrible idea. Which is why making excuses and continuously hiding from the problem of a rapidly growing violent-right-wing movement that wants to smash our skulls is a terrible idea.

Which is why Pride was historically, and should always be, about queers standing up for themselves, other against the police, against fascists, against homophobes, against anyone who would take any way of us being here and being fantastically queer.

The Pride Committee, as in previous years in this city, demonstrated a willful neglect of the community in Hamilton, preferring optics over gritty truth, preferring stories of empowerment, preferring stories of rainbow and glitter over stories of solidarity.

This isn't just about everyone needing to hit the gym and get ready for a fight. of the people who helped drive the haters out of the park didn't have to throw a punch. But those people had our backs when we did, and they were brave enough to hold their signs, screaming their truths, and waving their tits around in the faces of the haters. Some people stayed well back and helped hide their signs when we threw them away. Some people helped bandage us up when we needed a medic. Reviewing the footage confirms an unbelievably diverse range of people and tactics that confronted the haters. Showed rowdy teenagers who showed so much bravery, to the unmasked people who pushed the haters off of us if we were getting pummelled, and to the Flamingo Mutiny Brigade for playing loud music down your epic beats to drown out their nonsense and to keep morale high.

The queer community has too often directed its energies towards state-implemented solutions. More hate crime legislation and more cops aren't the solution. Queers looking for community and building empowerment is the solution and has always been the solution. If we had more Pride this year, we never would have been able to kick those haters out of the park. We would have formed a line between us, protected their "right to free speech," and we would have protected a queer who tried to escalate. We would never have been able to rip down their signs, smash their cameras, or push them back more than forty feet from where they tried to protest. The first thing the police did when they arrived on scene was try to force us to take off our masks, which would have exposed us to the far-right and threatened our safety (and we know our friends have been doxed and threatened with intense violence).

More cops at Pride will always mean a more dangerous situation for us. That's why we're not talking about the aftermath of this be about trying to "hold the police accountable" or calling for more police protection. They aren't accountable to us and they aren't here to protect us. We're not advocating for them to have more resources or more authority. Ever.

We didn't need the police to do something. We did something.

And that's worth more than a hundred half-hearted televised police apologies to the community about bathhouse raids and public sex stings and disappeared Trans people and killers left to pick us off for years.

Thanks to every one of you who was out there. From the bottom of my heart. That day will stay with me, forever reminding me of what being a proud queer is.

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