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Posted on Advocate.com July 20, 2011 07:55:00 PM ET

OP-ED: Why I Dream of Madrid Pride for America

Commentator Jimmy Nguyen hopes for the same freedoms that many LGBT and straight people alike enjoy in Spain.

By Jimmy Nguyen, op-ed contributor

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Earlier this month I went to Madrid Pride for the first time. A good friend told me that I need some controlled chaos in my life right now, so I made an impromptu decision to meet him and his group for five days of Spanish adventure. Controlled chaos is a perfect description for Madrid Pride, which happens the first weekend of July. At Saturday's main Pride Parade down the Gran Via, an estimated 1.5 million people line the streets and plazas of Madrid to celebrate. That crowd is so large throngs of straight people join LGBT revelers in what is more a citywide street party than just a gay Pride festival. As I watched masses of Spanish straight people equal if not outnumber the gays, I wondered whether this could happen one day in America. Can we get to a point where straight people flood Pride parades to celebrate gay life? I sure hope so, and that's why I dream of Madrid.



First, I dream for the day when the U.S. catches up with Spain on LGBT rights. Spain is one of about 10 countries that give same-sex couples the right to marry. It also has a broad range of antidiscrimination laws, permits adoption of children by same-sex couples, and allows openly gay and lesbian people to serve in the military. While there is, of course, more to achieve for full equality, modern Spain (especially in its urban centers) is a terrific model for the integration of LGBT people into society. Perhaps that is why Madrid's Pride event is less political and more celebratory in nature. In a country where LGBT people have most of the major equal rights they want, Pride in Spain is more jubilation about gay life than a political demonstration. I hope for that day in America.

Second, I dream for a time in the U.S. when straights outnumber gays at Pride events. I've been to many Pride festivals across our great country. They can be great fun and very uplifting. Certainly, straight friends and allies come out to support us at Pride events, but not quite like in Madrid. In Madrid, I saw an entire city emerge for several days and nights to rejoice. The straight crowds dwarfed anything I've seen at any Pride event in America. At night, they filled plazas for a city block party. During the main Pride parade, they engulfed the 1.2-mile route down the Gran Via from Puerta de Alcalá to Plaza de España in the city center; some 1.5 million people — many of them heterosexual — lined the streets to swarm around marchers and the occasional double-decker bus filled with dancing gays. Sure, there are probably many Spanish people who just want any good excuse to party or drink on the streets. Many straight partyers wanted to be doused with water by gay onlookers in balconies overlooking the parade route. Fun craziness, but then I realized there's nothing wrong with that. Straight people came out for a city's celebration of LGBT Pride — turning out en masse to equal, if not outnumber, the gay folks. That's quite remarkable, and it should be our vision for the U.S.

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Jimmy Nguyen is nationally recognized as an award-winning lawyer, new media expert, LGBT leader, and diversity advocate. In 2008, Lawdragon named him one of the 500 Leading Lawyers in America, and in 2010, the National LGBT Bar Association recognized him as one of the Best LGBT Lawyers Under 40. Nguyen also writes for his own website at JimmyWin.com. You can also follow him on Facebook.

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READER COMMENTS

Name: Un particular
Date posted: 8/2/2011 7:45:32 AM
Hometown: Toledo

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Comment:
 Creo que debería informarse mejor sobre el Orgullo en Madrid y conocer los problemas que el Orgullo tiene y que no todo es brillo y color.

Name: Luis de Cairo
Date posted: 8/1/2011 10:05:24 AM
Hometown: Segovia, España

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Comment:
 There is everything and in pharmacy. Anyone who is intolerant it is everywhere. But not all locations outside of Madrid are very intolerant. In general, in Spain, we enjoy a good level of tolerance. The intolerant are isolated cases, although they make most noise than the tolerant.

Name: Stefan
Date posted: 7/31/2011 9:07:29 PM
Hometown: Duluth

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Comment:
 The article mentioned regarding Rajoy and gay marriage was misleading. He said prior to said article he would see how the Constitutional Court rules on gay marriage and also listen to the people (which support is in the 60% range BTW), and that he would change the abortion law (lessening the gap in which a women could have one). Either he mixed up the questions or the author did. He previously said he would not support the law even if ruled constitutional, but he has backtracked significantly.

Name: atty79
Date posted: 7/31/2011 8:29:06 PM
Hometown: Lafayette, LA

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Comment:
 My spouse and I were in Barcelona for the Gay Pride parade; we saw much of the same thing. It was less of a "we're here, we're queer, get used to it" parade as a "here's some of what makes us, as a people, diverse and better for it. Come take a look." They have an acceptance for diversity far more than our American culture will ever see--at least in the next 100 years. We've become too much of a cesspool of stagnant hypocrisy held back by a wall of aberrant homogeneity.

Name: Robert
Date posted: 7/31/2011 11:42:48 AM
Hometown: Kansas City

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Comment:
 It's a nice vision, but the gay identity is dissolving. Pride is supposed to be a celebration of GAY Pride, not an excuse to have a big party. Heterosexuals should certainly be welcome, but if all the focus is on everyone else in the name of diversity, gays will once again be marginalized. Young gay people need to learn to care about more than having a good party.

Name: John
Date posted: 7/31/2011 9:08:35 AM
Hometown: Sitges

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Comment:
 Ynot, even the headline of the article says that he's waiting on the court for the abortion law, not the gay marriage law "Rajoy dice que cambiará la ley de matrimonio gay y esperará a lo que diga el TC sobre la del aborto" - it's saying he'd use his position in the legislature to change gay marriage.

Name: John
Date posted: 7/31/2011 9:04:56 AM
Hometown: Sitges

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Comment:
 Ynot, I could be wrong but the article you posted wrote "El presidente del PP, Mariano Rajoy, ha



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asegurado que "cambiaría la Ley de matrimonios homosexuales y que esperará a lo que diga el Tribunal Constitucional y escuchará a la gente para tomar una decisión con respecto a la Ley del aborto" which, I think, means that he would change gay marriage (unilaterally) and is waiting to hear what the constitutional court says about the abortion law (not the gay marriage law). Am I wrong? Is it both issues? If I'm wrong, how could they take over 6 years to decide a challenge to a law? That sounds crazier than what goes on in the US Supreme Court LOL :).

Name: Ynot

Date posted: 7/31/2011 8:12:05 AM

Hometown: Madrid

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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Comment:

John, the PP have not removed the Constitutional review from the Supreme Court, so it could come up as soon as tomorrow if they really want it to. Conservative party leader Rajoy has kept quiet on the matter, but, regardless of what Catalan courts might say, gay marriage is still being challenged by Spain's Partido Popular. As early as January of this year, Rajoy said he would "change" gay marriage. See this article from 'La Vanguardia'.
<http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20110117/54102877449/rajoy-dice-que-cambiara-la-ley-de-matrimonio-gay-y-esperara-a-lo-que-diga-el-tc-sobre-la-del-aborto.html> I am not making it up. I wish to God I were.

Name: Fabio

Date posted: 7/31/2011 12:07:51 AM

Hometown: Buenos Aires

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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Comment:

I live in Argentina and here, if much less numerous, the parade was changing from "gay" to "diversity". I think that is the trick for the support and participation of so much straight ppl. It is not just a "gay" issue. With the respect to "sexual diversity" (including heterosexuality), everybody parties!...

Name: Fabio

Date posted: 7/31/2011 12:06:38 AM

Hometown: Buenos Aires

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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Comment:

I live in Argentina and here, if much less numerous, the parade was changing from "gay" to "diversity". I think that is the trick for the support and participation of so much straight ppl. It is not just a "gay" issue. With the respect to "sexual diversity" (including heterosexuality), everybody parties!...

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Since the late '80s, there have been many ups and downs for gay-straight alliances, both at public and private schools. *The Advocate* takes a closer look at some of the landmark cases that have rocked the United States and paved the way for LGBT equality in American schools.

GOOD SEX

[Op-ed: When Will Gay Men Shut Up And Listen?](#)

Writer Stephanie Schroeder says it's time to end the myth that lesbian relationships begin with a U-Haul truck and end in sexlessness.

COMMENTARY

[Op-ed: Diagnosing Fear of HIV](#)

No matter how manageable HIV is now, if David Michael Conner had to choose his diagnosis, he'd pick multiple sclerosis and lose the ability to walk.

TRAVEL

 [Rediscovering Hollywood and Loving It](#)

It's not the usual Hollywood tour with screaming kids and megaphones. It's more like a great conversation with a very clever friend who can transport you back to the birth of modern-day entertainment.

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Silva, a self-taught Los Angeles artist, draws a sensitive line that connects the sensual and the political in his finely rendered works.

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The top 10 entertainment highlights on our gaydar this week: Neil Patrick Harris smurfs up with Tim Gunn, Jane Lynch talks about pussies, Andy Warhol gets a pricey tribute, Jake Walden gives back to his fans, and more.

COMEDY

[The One-Woman Show](#)

Lesbian comedian Michele Balan discusses her role in the LGBT community and how she got her comedy start as a Bette Midler drag queen.

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Op-ed: Where to Find "The Gay Gospels"

A new book by Christian gay activist Keith Sharpe makes a religious argument against the Bible's clobber verses — which have become a litmus test for the religious right's evaluation of politicians.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Wedding Album: Nirvana and Ruth

In a series of photo albums, we share stories of couples who got married in New York. Nirvana and Ruth flew in from California, where same-sex marriage is not legally recognized.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Wedding Album: Adam and David

In a series of photo albums, we follow New York couples on their wedding day. Adam and David got married on their seven-year anniversary.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Wedding Album: Rhonda and Debra

Denver-based photographers and marriage equality supporters Jessica Bergthold and Kristy Rowe journeyed to New York to document some of the first same-sex ceremonies in that state. In a series of photo albums, they share stories of the couples they met.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Wedding Album: John and Mike

In a series of photo albums, we follow New York couples on their wedding day. John and Mike were bullied as kids and say that if their younger selves could have known they'd get married some day and that their families would be there, "it would have made a world of difference."

COMMENTARY

OP-ED: Larry Kramer Says "I'm Being Tarded for Something I Did Not Say"

The famed author and veteran gay activist responds to criticism created by his skeptical reaction to gay marriage, at least as it was printed in *The New York Times*.

COMMENTARY

OP-ED: What It Will Be Like on the Day After DADT Expires

A gay airman explains how he knows it gets better for troops who come out.

MUSIC

Olivia's Magic Spell

Thirty years after the release of her smash "Physical," Olivia Newton-John is still going strong and captivating fans. The iconic singer pays tribute to her favorite female vocalists, recalls the gay couples in her groundbreaking video, and tells why she's excited about marriage equality.

TELEVISION

TJ Brings His A Game

TJ Kelly, *The A-List: New York's* sassy sidekick, gets real about the controversial show's scarlet letter, jealous haters, and costar Reichen Lehmkuhl's package deal.

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David Bromstad Paints for a Cause

HGTV's celebrated color guru talks about coming out, getting that first HIV test, and the misconception about interior designers.

FILM

Justin and Mila: More Than Just Friends

Friends With Benefits superstars Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis discuss their racy new comedy, "gay cock hounds," and how they both want federal marriage equality.

NEWS

FAQ: Getting Married in N.Y.

Thinking of getting married in New York? Check out the answers to some frequently asked questions.

COMMENTARY

What to Expect at a Gay Wedding

The author of *Steven Petrow's Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners* offers his advice on how to navigate a new milestone — the gay wedding.

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