

35TH ANNUAL GAY PRIDE PARADE
SAN FRANCISCO
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Chronicle / Lance Iversen

UNSUNG PSALM

There is this lovely song on Tracy Chapman's excellent CD "Telling Stories" in which she laments the rejection of her by the "church people".

*There would be cherubs with tiny harps arrows and bows
I'd have a halo and a flowing white robe
I'd be enfolded by a celestial light
If I'd lived right*

*But I'm feeling hot and bothered under the collar
I feel the sweat breaking out on my brow
I feel the heat and I know it's the passion
The love I can't disavow*

Well, "the love that dare not speak its name" spoke it loud and proud in Babylon this weekend at the 35th annual Gay Pride Parade, which was attended by thousands of people, both hetero and gay, who came from all over to witness this annual tradition in commemoration of the Stonewall riots in 1969.

The riots began in response to police harrassment of gay bars and nightclubs. A group of cops entered an establishment with the intention of rousting the patrons for a beating with riot sticks, but that special night the squad was repelled. The violence spread out into the street and beyond the borders of the small upstate town of Stonewall in New York. When police began riding into groups of men with horses they only ignited widespread rioting in which police cars were overturned and set on fire. Police were knocked from their horses and beaten by gays enraged by the long time mistreatment in a series of pitched battles in New York City.

The riots served to unify the disparate gay groups into a cohesive political force and many repressive laws and practices were overturned, although the battle still continues on many fronts and many sections of the country are still physically dangerous to anyone who appears "a little bit different."

As a measure of how things have changed here is Police Chief Heather Fong marching along as a participant.



Gay pride parades now occur all across the country, including -- as reported in the SF Chronicle, Muncie Indiana.

"If you had told me 20 years ago that we would have a local pride event, I would have never believed it," said Mike Sullivan, a member of a Unitarian Universalist congregation that supported the event attended by hundreds of people.

In many other cities, reports are coming in that this year the parades featured more men in business suits and t-shirts than the flamboyant feathers and g-strings of yesteryear, indicating a sort of mainstreaming of the gay culture and the general mood is one of dogged determination in a time of numerous setbacks caused by the rise of the Evangelical extremists to political power in the

US. In Babylon, Mayor Gavin was greeted enthusiastically by parade participants.

