

Our Symbol Is The Rainbow, Yet Where Is The Colour In Our Pride Committees?

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Along with millions of other TV viewers I watched history in the making on Sunday May 24th when both Halle Berry and Denzel Washington won Oscars for best actor and actress at the 74th Academy Awards Ceremony. What a moving and powerful moment! A moment though tinged with embarrassment and sadness.

It took 74 YEARS for any woman of colour to win best actress. The last time a black man won a Best Actor Oscar was Sidney Poitier almost 40 years ago. Disgusting! After Denzel won he told the press that he didn't want people to focus on his skin colour, but on his work. The spin doctors in the media started this particular focus on things long before Denzel's win, so he wasn't going to get his wish on that front. The extremely cynical critics say that the Academy gave the Oscars to Halle and Denzel out of a sense of guilt and shame, and manufactured this historic moment knowing that Sidney was receiving a lifetime achievement award that same night. I'm not a member of the Academy, so I couldn't tell you what was going on in their hearts and minds when they filled in their ballots.

This particular debate leads me to examine the lack of colour that is so strangely pervasive in our own Queer Culture. At every InterPride conference I've been to the lack of racial minorities that are involved in our Pride Committees comes up every year. Why don't queers of colour want to be involved? A queer woman of colour once told me in a nutshell the reason: Why the @*?!& would I want to be the token person of colour in your racist environment? Good question.

Still, as a Pride Chair, I want to know how to make our event your event. This is supposed to be about "celebrating the diversity of our community". We want you to enjoy the event whether you are male, female, trans, gay, bi, lesbian, straight, married, single, a parent, a

minor, a senior, black, white, native, south-asian, mixed race, polyamorous, monogamous, disabled, rich, poor, and suffice to say the list goes on and on.

I would never presume to know what it is to be a person of colour. I'm not a person of colour and for me to even attempt to draw conclusions would be insulting and ludicrous. Although I do know that unlike being queer, there is no closet for people of colour to hide in. Queer people can pretend to be straight, but it's a little tougher for a person of colour to pretend to be white.

Why is it that our queer culture is very much a white man's culture? Look at most queer print media and most if not all the ads are directed to a very male and very white audience. Why does the lack of visible minorities exist within our community? Because we still live in a racist society, and being queer does not mean that you are not a racist.

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