

What Are We Celebrating?

✖ President Barack Obama just issued a proclamation declaring June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month. Of course, his declaration poses a problem for most Christians, but his words raise some ideas worth pondering.

In his public statement, Obama said: “LGBT Americans have made, and continue to make, great and lasting contributions that continue to strengthen the fabric of American society. There are many well-respected LGBT leaders in all professional fields, including the arts and business communities.”

True, but does the fact that these leaders identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender have anything to do with the fact that they are talented? Of course not. Their achievements and contributions are entirely unrelated to any label they may embrace. Each was born with the God-given potential for the contributions they have bestowed and the greatness they have achieved. Consequently, I’ve always thought that the evangelical church is missing out on the talented contributions of our missing prodigals, some of whom are in the gay community, and I’m reminded again to pray for their return.

I do agree with President Obama when he says “LGBT youth should feel safe to learn without the fear of harassment.” Most of us would. Every student should have a safe environment in which to learn without fear of harassment regardless of perceived or self-declared sexual orientation.

I wish more people subscribed to that way of thinking when I was in school. I was the fat kid with acne that everyone labeled as “gay.” I endured plenty of ridicule during middle school—so much so that when I think about it today it still hurts. I needed to feel safe and never did. I needed support from teachers and students alike. But so did Andrea, a girl who had no same-sex attraction issues that I knew of—just big teeth and braces.

The girls were so mean to her, and I watched her endure the cruelest taunting and abuse. I will never forget seeing her eyes fill up with tears as she put on a brave

face. I wish that I had stood up for her. I wonder, though, are we not playing playground politics once more by elevating the status of LGBT individuals above those of the equally valuable Andreas of the world?

Ultimately, the biggest problem I have with Obama's proclamation is our difference of opinion on what is truly worth celebrating. I chose to leave gay life more than 18 years ago because the self-indulgent, empty pursuits I encountered there are certainly not worth commemorating. It's the life I live now as a fulfilled husband, father and ministry leader that causes me to look back and celebrate what God has done in and through me. Obama notes the 40th anniversary of riots at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, where many in the gay community resisted police harassment. Some consider it to be the birth of the LGBT movement, but ironically it's also the 40th anniversary of something else.

In 1969, Roberta Laurila, now an 87-year old woman who came out of lesbianism in her 40s, had a dream of a stadium filled with men and women who had come out of homosexuality. She described it as "a spiritual vision of a worldwide ministry" and said it would "reach homosexuals who wanted a close relationships with Jesus Christ and who wanted to be set free from their sin."

Now, 40 years later Laurila's dream has been fulfilled through the ministry of Exodus International. Exodus has seen thousands of individuals trapped by gay life and an all-consuming gay identity experience freedom and new life through the power of Jesus Christ. This message of hope and freedom has been proclaimed in stadiums around the world and on almost every continent, and next month hundreds more will meet in Chicago for the 34th annual Exodus Freedom conference to encounter the changing power of a living God. Now that's worth celebrating!

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