

Why Dolly Parton Won't 'Pass Judgment' on Gay Fans

In a candid interview with *Billboard* magazine, country-music legend Dolly Parton offers some blunt observations on why the self-described Christian embraces the LGBT crowd that is a big part of her fan base.

Billboard asked to what she attributed her large gay following. Parton's response: "They know that I completely love and accept them, as I do all people. I've struggled enough in my life to be appreciated and understood. I've had to go against all kinds of people through the years just to be myself. I think everybody should be allowed to be who they are, and to love who they love. I don't think we should be judgmental. Lord, I've got enough problems of my own to pass judgment on somebody else."

The magazine also asked, "Dollywood [her Tennessee theme park] attracts lots of church groups, but it has also become a draw for the LGBT community. What does that say about you?"

"It's a place for entertainment, a place for all families, period. It's for all that. But as far as the Christians, if people want to pass judgment, they're already sinning. The sin of judging is just as bad as any other sin they might say somebody else is committing. I try to love everybody."

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Parton's arrival in Nashville after growing up poor as the fourth of 12 siblings who shared a one-room cabin.

The day after her high school graduation, Parton left her east Tennessee home for Music City, where she shepherded her career from singing on *The Porter Wagoner Show*, a syndicated music-variety series that aired from 1960 to 1981, to winning seven

Grammys and scoring 25 No. 1 songs on *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs chart—a record for a female artist.

Billboard's interviewer observed: “In person, the legendary entertainer possesses a down-home, self-effacing charm—disarming for someone who helms an empire that includes the Pigeon Forge, Dollywood theme park, which annually hosts nearly 2.5 million visitors, and a valuable publishing catalog of such songs as ‘Jolene’ and ‘I Will Always Love You,’ which she took to No. 1 long before Whitney Houston.

“In 2014 alone, Parton’s 42nd studio album, *Blue Smoke*, debuted at No. 2 on Top Country Albums and No. 6 on the *Billboard* 200—marking her highest-charting solo album on the latter list—and wrapped a successful world tour that included performing for 170,000 people at the United Kingdom’s Glastonbury Festival.”