

<< **Naked Curiosity**

Visibility's Clear View

By Dennis Scott-Bush

It all started with tinted windows.

In our previous car, we had a static-stick rainbow strip that was clearly visible through the rear window. With our new vehicle's tinted glass, the same strip looks like a long brownish smudge. So, other drivers don't view us as proud gay people, they think we're too lazy to break out the Windex.

I've suggested a new strip stuck on the outside of the window but my partner, Martin, has a visceral aversion to all stickers and decals. While we negotiate this issue, our Buick suffers from a dearth of gay recognizability.

Does a sticker on a window make a difference? Is visible pride really that important?

When I pull up to a stoplight next to someone with a rainbow sticker on their car, I feel a kinship. I always offer my proud sibling a nod or wave of acknowledgement and unity.

In the same way, I feel a certain sense of discomfort when I'm surrounded by a veritable fleet of Christian-fish-flaunting vehicles. I don't begrudge them their display of pious pride. I wish gay people were as organized and overt as the religious right.

In our community, there's so much focus on coming out. I think being out is what's important. Coming out, as it's usually practiced, gives all the power to the people with whom we're sharing the news of our orientation. In fact, the very essence of coming out, as we know it, is a confession.

"Mom, Dad, I have something to tell you—I'm gay."

They hold all the cards. They can

either spurn us or say, "We still love you no matter what you are." I don't think either is acceptable.

Do we say, "You were born with frizzy hair, Mom, so I'm going to stop speaking to you?" Do we tell someone with blue eyes that we love them even though we had hopes and dreams for them to have brown ones?

I think that people who don't share their sexual orientation with family or friends because they don't want to lose the bond they feel they have are only fooling themselves. What kind of bond do they really have other than small talk and a common desire to avoid and deny?

I know a man who considers himself to be openly gay, though, he's never come out to his parents nor introduced them to any of his boyfriends—even when he had a lover for seven years. He remarks, "They would shut me out and be weird about it."

His parents have many gay friends and another one of their children is also gay. Who's being weird? Who's shutting out whom?

My friend Dana's partner of nearly two years doesn't want her parents to know that she and Diane are anything more than friends. If I were her parents, I think it would hurt my feelings that my daughter didn't want me to know that she'd found someone special and was happily partnered. I know, if I were Dana, I'd feel like a dirty secret.

I think it's very helpful to be clear with family and others. If they know what to call the person we bring home for Thanksgiving,

it makes for a less awkward situation. I sent my parents and brother a letter telling them,

"Partner, life partner, lover and husband are acceptable; friend and roommate are not." For good measure, I also articulated that I expected Martin to receive the same amount of Christmas and birthday money given to my brother's wife. All my requests were met without any fuss.

People—ourselves included—rise to the challenge when given the chance.

Let's be bold. Let's make friends with straight people. Studies show that folks who are acquainted with or related to a gay person are more likely to support our issues. If we hide our same-sex reality, doesn't that add to the tinge of shame that some people already project onto us? Shouldn't being out mean more than wearing pride T-shirts to gay bars or community activities?

I'm not saying that openness is always easy. Some people are afraid of losing jobs or parents' financial support. It often seems more comfortable being in the closet. But there's safety in numbers. There's power in being out.

Our sense of self-respect must be stronger than our fear. We need to bring our pride out from behind tinted windows.

Be strong. Be proud. Be out.

Dennis Scott-Bush's work appears in publications throughout the country. E-mail may be directed to him at NakedCuriosity@aol.com



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GAY TELEVISION
IS HERE

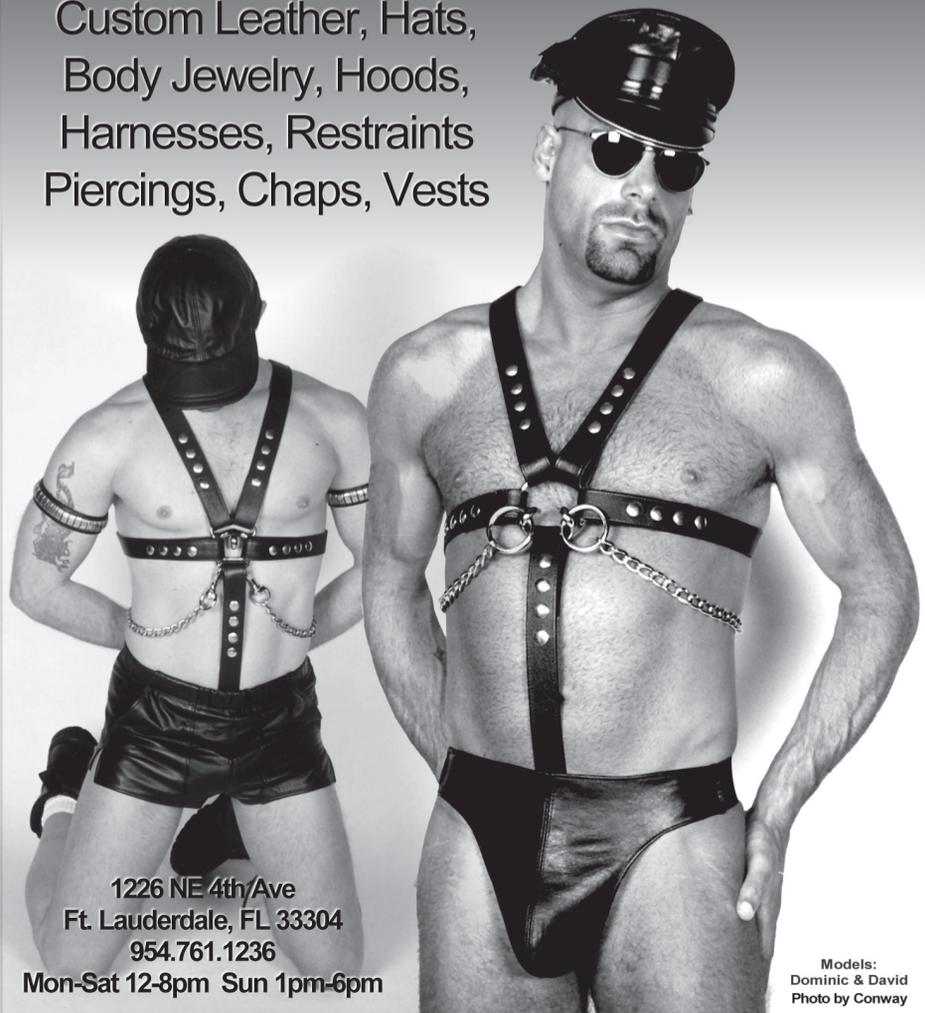


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