

Uprise of Pride movement in Mexico

Written by Emmanuel Temores

In 2015 more than 70 LGBT parades took place in Mexico. The number of cities that celebrate sexual diversity in the streets has had an exponential increase this past decade. Mexico places third in the world with the highest number of Pride celebrations after the U.S.A. and Brazil as shown by Pride Radar, InterPride's inventory of almost 800 Prides worldwide.

In the 1990's, there were only three cities with registered LGBT demonstrations: Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Tijuana. A decade later, the new millennium welcomed an additional 24 registered demonstrations, resulting in more than half of the Prides in Mexico emerging as of 2010. "It is the proof of how vibrant the Pride movement has become in Mexico and is setting an example for other Latin American countries" Frank van Dalen, one of the Vice-Presidents of InterPride and author of the Pride Radar says.

In 1979 the first group of people proudly manifested their sexuality in Mexico City as a way to confront aggressions from society. It was the first collective claim from the LGBT community recorded in Latin America. From then on, every year Pride has been celebrated in Mexico City, with over half a million people attending the last edition. Mexico City is the gay-friendliest city in Mexico, and was the first state to legalize same-sex marriage in 2010. However, governmental commitment to the LGBT community is not the same in the remaining states.

Guadalajara is the second most populated city in the country and that is where the second largest Pride is celebrated. In 2015, an estimated 50,000 people participated. Like many cities in Mexico, governmental support of Prides is limited to logistics and police presence as a security measure. The government doesn't provide anything else. The Pride committee looks for sponsors to cover event expenses, but most of the sponsors are the same bars and clubs from previous years.

Multinationals like Hewlett-Packard and Oracle with presence in Guadalajara are a few of the companies that encourage their LGBT personnel to march in the parade, but these groups don't support as sponsors. "The biggest problem that we have as a committee are the parade expenses," Karina Velasco, president of the Guadalajara Pride explains. Guadalajara is known for some as the gay capital of Mexico, home of a vibrant gay scene since the eighties, despite the reputation of being a very conservative city.

Many Pride parades call for the performing without restrictions of same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption, and call out discrimination and homophobic crimes. Same-sex marriage is legal and recognized throughout Mexico, but in 26 of the 32 states, it's necessary to present a legal request so that couples can get married. But things are changing for the good. After the approval of same-sex marriage in Jalisco (Guadalajara is the capital of Jalisco) activists from the Catholic Church went out to the streets to protest against same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples. This is not the first time these kinds of protests took place. The LGBT activists call these protests "Anti-Gay Parades". In 2011 the first protest that supported the "traditional family" took place, but the number of participants did not surpass those of Gay Pride.

In the meantime, Puerto Vallarta and Cancun compete for the best gay beach in Mexico since their Pride events are very anticipated and impeccably organized. The Vallarta Pride of Puerto Vallarta is celebrated

in May, and takes place during an entire week full of events for tourist and locals. It's one of the few Prides in Mexico that have international artists in their lineups.

A Pride in Mexico could be a big and colorful celebration as well as a small demonstration. Even small and conservative cities celebrate Pride, where anywhere from 30 to 500 people walk in the streets. While some people protest and other ones are party, the phrase *banquetera únete* (onlooker, join us) is heard in all the Prides in Mexico. It's a sarcastic invitation to join to all the people who only watch curiously or thoughtfully.

"What is visible cannot be ignored and has to be dealt with. This is key for the success and impact of the Mexican Pride movement," Van Dalen says. Each victory of the Mexican LGBT community deserves celebration, but it remains important to unite and continue fighting for equal rights. And with the growing number of Prides and with that its impact on society, the Mexican Pride movement has become a movement that is not easily ignored nor that here demands can be set aside or rejected.

Emmanuel Temores is affiliated with Pride United and is member of the Human Rights Committee of InterPride. He is actively contributing to Pride Radar with a focus on Mexico specifically and Latin America in general.