

Mx Rahi Tea: This year, the Eugene Pride organizing body was informed by a city liaison that they should not file for a march and rally permit, and that if an un-permitted march were to happen, EPD would be there to cite people for engaging in disorderly conduct. Luckily, nobody tells these queers where to go and what to do! Folx mobilized for a Rad Pride March & Rally anyhow: No permits! No cops! You were among the queers who threw down for this to happen!

Cassie: There were a handful of us who heard in late May or early June that there wasn't going to be a Rad Pride this year. That was really disappointing because Rad Pride has a long history—not just in Eugene, but as part of Pride's broader tradition of resistance.

At first, we assumed there just wasn't capacity to organize it. Then things changed. It became clear that Eugene/Springfield's nonprofit Pride organization wasn't going to hold the traditional march and rally. That announcement came out only five days before Pride. A friend and I saw the news at almost the same time. We started texting each other and our reactions were basically, "This is an incredible opportunity!"

Obviously, the circumstances that led to the cancellation were frustrating, but it also created space for the community to reclaim Pride and return it to its roots.

Mx Rahi Tea: What does "returning Pride to its roots" mean to you?

Cassie: Eugene hadn't had an unpermitted, explicitly radical Pride march in at least five years, maybe longer. There had been Pride events, but not marches organized around that history of direct action.

Previous Pride rallies at Kesey Square brought together a mix of people. There were certainly radical voices, but there was also a more assimilationist vision of queerness—the idea that liberation looks like queer people joining institutions like

the police or the military.

For us, radical queerness means something different. It asks bigger questions about systems of power. It's rooted in abolition rather than inclusion within oppressive institutions.

So this became an opportunity not only to organize an unpermitted march, but to build a rally where speakers could talk about the interconnected struggles affecting queer communities.

We wanted speakers who could talk about Black, Brown, and Indigenous liberation. We wanted Palestine and the genocide in Gaza to be front and center because these struggles aren't separate from queer liberation—they're connected.

We didn't want the conversation to stop at, "Donald Trump is bad." That's true, but queer people weren't safe before Trump, either. The problems run much deeper.

One of the things that made it possible was that there had already been so much momentum around unpermitted marches over the past year.

No Kings II in October was unpermitted. The May Day march and rally were unpermitted. The October 7 commemoration for Gaza was unpermitted.

There had also been that Charlie Kirk march the previous September. Seeing white supremacists march without permits while EPD blocked intersections for them, shook their hands, and treated them respectfully made the double standard impossible to ignore.

It created a clear contrast: if they could march freely and police accommodated them, then any attempt to suppress an unpermitted Pride march would expose that double standard.

All of those events laid the groundwork. They demonstrated

that unpermitted marches have happened, can happen, and should continue to happen.

We don't need permission from the people or institutions that oppress us in order to march, take the streets, and exercise our rights.

Mx Rahi Tea: That's goddamn right. I know Rad Pride in Eugene has historically been organized by RWC (Revolutionary Women's Committee) baddies, so props to those folx holding down that legacy. Stonewall didn't have a permit. Compton's Cafeteria riots didn't have a permit. Just like our queer ancestors, ain't out here asking for permission to exist.

Cassie: Exactly. It's especially important right now because many people are reconnecting with traditions of struggle that exist outside established systems. They're realizing those traditions are still necessary.

The intersectionality of Rad Pride extended beyond the issues we talked about—it shaped who we invited to speak.

Mx Rahi Tea: Oh, love that.

Cassie: We didn't want to legitimize state systems by presenting EPD as a partner.

What often happens when organizations work closely with law enforcement is that the police can later point to those relationships and tell the broader community, *"We're good partners. We worked with Pride. The queer community trusts us."*

That does real harm. When those same departments later brutalize, assault, or wrongfully arrest queer people, that narrative becomes easier for them to deny. They can say, *"No, we're friends with the queer community. We worked with Pride. We supported their march."*

That kind of relationship lends legitimacy to institutions

that continue to harm our communities.

So we wanted to be intentional about not contributing to that. We also wanted people to understand that partnering with those systems inevitably legitimizes them.

Our politics are rooted in abolition. We navigate existing systems when necessary for harm reduction, but we don't celebrate them or build our movements around them.

Mx Rahi Tea: Respect for that. Real Time! Who ended up coming? Was it the same kind of crowd that would normally show up at Kesey Square, or did it feel different?

Cassie: It was actually a really good mix. There were families with young kids. There were older folks I'd previously seen at more liberal or Democratic Party-aligned events who came out as allies. There were people reconnecting with a more radical queer identity who hadn't attended an event like this in years but were genuinely excited to be there.

I heard several people thank the speakers afterward. One person told us, "I used to march in events like this thirty years ago in the Bay Area. I didn't think people did this anymore." Having the opportunity to participate again meant a lot to them.

Of course, there were also people you might expect to see—folks who are already involved in liberation work, mutual aid, harm reduction, community distribution projects, direct action, and protest organizing. They were excited because this march aligned with their politics and values.

But what was especially meaningful was seeing so many younger queer and trans people who had never attended an unpermitted march or public demonstration before.

For many of them, this was their first experience.

They told us they felt genuinely safe. They felt surrounded by

community. They said the event was eye-opening and gave them a stronger sense of identity and belonging.

Several people reflected on the history of queer liberation, recognizing that public expressions of queerness weren't something society simply granted permission for. They came from people organizing themselves, taking direct action, making themselves visible, and creating safety through collective struggle.

Hearing younger queer people make those connections was incredibly moving.

Overall, it was a wonderful mix of people. I'd estimate there were around 150 to 200 participants at the height of the march, with roughly 100 people at the rally itself. More people joined as the march got underway, and others stepped in from Saturday Market as we passed by. It felt joyful.

Mx Rahi Tea: Ugh, LOVE this. That's so wonderful. Were the pigs following or monitoring the march in any way?

Cassie: Yes. EPD's Mobile Response Team—their bike and protest unit—was monitoring the event. They're the officers who regularly police demonstrations. The lieutenant for that unit was parked about a block away, watching the march through binoculars from his truck. At one point a drone flew overhead, and throughout the march people spotted bike officers moving parallel to us a block or two away. As far as I could tell, though, they didn't provide traffic control. One reason the march was able to operate safely was because of the bike brigade.

The bike brigade was incredible. There were probably twenty to thirty cyclists: experienced Critical Mass riders, people who regularly support demonstrations, Dykes on Bikes, and other community members who simply showed up ready to help. They kept the march moving safely and did an amazing job protecting participants. I honestly don't think a radical, unpermitted

Pride march would've been as safe—or perhaps even possible—without a strong bike brigade. Ours emerged somewhat organically, and it made an enormous difference.

Given the rise in vehicle attacks against protesters over the past decade, that's become increasingly important. Since the attack that killed Heather Heyer in Charlottesville, people driving vehicles into demonstrations has become an all-too-familiar tactic. We experienced that here in Eugene as well. On February 28, two motorists drove into protesters downtown, sending one person to the hospital. That's the reality we're organizing within. Having a well-organized bike brigade dramatically reduces that risk. Huge credit goes to everyone who showed up on bikes. For anyone organizing these kinds of events in the future, building relationships with bike brigades and cycling communities is incredibly important. They're an invaluable community resource, and when those relationships exist, people show up for each other.

Mx Rahi Tea: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Cassie: I do want to acknowledge something. For all of its limitations, I think the nonprofit Corporate Pride organizers made a good decision when they stepped away from organizing the march and rally, opened that space to the community, and shared the autonomous flyers afterward. That was meaningful. I don't think every nonprofit Pride organization around the country would have done that, and I think it showed a willingness to support community organizing even when they weren't leading it. I actually think both spaces are important.

My hope is that, over time, the twelve thousand people who attend Corporate Pride also become comfortable attending Rad Pride, the park events, No Pride in Genocide, mutual aid projects, and other grassroots community spaces.

Also, Jewish Anti-Zionist Eugene (JAZE) did an incredible job

organizing a No Pride in Genocide fundraiser for a Palestinian family the Sunday after pride. The overlaps between queer liberation, anti-racist organizing, Indigenous sovereignty, and Palestinian liberation aren't incidental. They're deeply connected.

The same is true when we look at policing and militarization. The tactics used by the Israeli military, militarized federal agencies, local police departments, and immigration enforcement all reinforce one another. Those systems share strategies, training, and political logics. Recognizing those connections is essential.

Ultimately, I'd love to see the people who currently participate in Corporate Pride also feel at home in Rad Pride, No Pride in Genocide, Share Fair, mutual aid projects, and other community-led spaces. We often describe those spaces as "radical," but really they're only radical relative to the political baseline we've accepted.

In my view, they shouldn't be considered radical at all. They should simply be part of what community looks like.