

The Pride of NYC Shows No Prejudice

It goes without saying (well maybe it does) that there is a lot of pride here in NYC. From Chelsea to the barrios of the Upper East Side, people are proud of who they are and where they come from. The media exaggerates this notion, which only leads to more hyperbolic behavior exuded by Manhattan's tenants. It's not unusual to find people of all kinds barking about how proud they are to be of a certain culture, sexual orientation or denomination. Parades and subway rants lose their shock value over time and slowly you begin to become desensitized to the most outrageous form of self-appreciation. But on a quiet Saturday afternoon in April, as I slowly made my way past Herald Square toward my work on 23rd and 8th, I noticed something different about the extent of the pride that I was proud to criticize. Maybe the sudden change in season allowed me to bud a whole new appreciation about how proud New Yorkers can really be of themselves. This older woman, who had to have been born at least 70 some years ago, was looking frantically in and out of her purse on the corner of 31st and 8th avenue. I found this to be nothing out of the ordinary. But as I continued to focus in on her movements, I began to notice that the woman was carrying around something else. On her neck she sported a pattern of discoloration, which I assumed to be a birthmark. After investing too much curiosity to walk away, I began to redirect my path so that it could quietly pass by her. Now within a closer proximity (roughly 12 feet to my right) I began to stare in wonderment at this landmark discovery. The discoloration, was indeed a marking. A "212" area code that had been freshly tattooed on her neck, due to it's glossy protrusion. Frozen in wonderment, I became immobilized and failed at grabbing my phone in time to capture this unimaginable discovery. And like many witnesses to tales of the Loch Ness monster or Bigfoot, I was left with just a memory as she slowly passed into the nearby subway terminal.

Why did she have this?, I continued to ask myself. It was truly out of character, in my opinion, for a woman of that age to carry such a visible display of self expression. But maybe it wasn't out of character, especially within a city of such characterizations. An island of iconoclasm.

Despite my loss for a reasonable explanation, I resorted to the notion that here in New York there are many questions to be answered. I was also left with an added appreciation for what it means to be a New Yorker. Sure they can be fast-talking-stubborn-money hungry-prideful people, but at least they know who they are. There aren't coated with this people pleasing façade that most of us wear to get what we want. Instead they are covered in confidence, sometimes blind, but nonetheless evident. I guess that's why people are attracted to it in the first place. There is magnetism that radiates from this city that draws us to it. And even when the reality of life deadens your soul, the hopeful pulse of the city seems to bring you back. A city of second chances, where zeroes can become heroes and the energy of Time Square pronounces the hope that Mr. Sinatra once sang about. And the more that I hear that song or see it's lyrics in the eyes of those who pass by me, the more I begin to realize that I don't want to make it anywhere else but here. New York, New York. A city so great we say it twice. Where anything is possible, like finding a grandmother with an area code tattooed on her neck.

Wedding Speech to My Wife

I first met Linmarie in the summer of '03, when it was just my Dad and me, all the way from PA to VA to George Mason University. A day of orientation, filled with upmost hesitation. But amongst the masses, as I scheduled my classes, I met this girl with dark hair, bright personality and no glasses. I was a wrestler, she was rowing, I was immature but still growing. We danced, we sang, we studied things we were assigned. We ate and stayed out late when we had some down time. I was a 225lb guy stuck in a slimmer mentality. Big or small, my goals remained tall and she never made my dreams seem less than a reality. We served each other just as much as we did ourselves. Waiters employed at the same love lounge. Here's a tip: If you're going to have a best friend of the opposite sex, don't get depressed when your love lines get mysteriously connected.

We became partners in crime, a Boriqua Bonnie and a Gringo Clyde, minus the catastrophe of course. Our togetherness, a pending masterpiece. At first we were just dating, she was committed while I was still debating on how serious I was planning to get. But like any tunnel toward love, there's always that chance for traffic jams. Bumper to bumper "boo hoo's" and "be gones" and "be with me's" were buzzing all around our travels. Until one day I got stung at work by my soon to be honey, when she slammed the door, let her eyes poor and told me that this love game was no longer funny. "It's all or nothing" she barked, no bones about it as she threw all her chips onto the table. She was all in and at first I had my doubts, afraid to step away and cash out. But I dropped my pride and eventually said my bachelor goodbyes. And let me tell you, my choice was wise because I walked away with the jackpot.

And now looking back it seems stupid that I would forget to return those calls from Cupid. But instead you called me out and got all buff about me being hush with stuff regarding us. And you had every reason to be were steaming. But since I'm in the mood for revealing, let me remind you that your love was always in the air that I was breathing. Sorry for constantly keeping you guessing. But deep down I was never messin'. Just taking smaller breaths. So take a vegetarian approach and don't have a cow over this afterthought. Your left hand makes this story much more refreshing.

Allow me to HOP onto a quick story that further defines the contents behind Easter of '09. There once was a guy who took that day, not only to pray, but to respectfully ask to take someone's daughter away. This guy was me and what's funny you

see is that I decided to pop the question with the upmost in discretion. I asked Jorge, my father-in-law, permission to marry his daughter while he was holding a chain saw. Whys that you ask,? As you hold your laughs. Well, I though to seem more caring, I should ask him at a time that seemed most daring. And as you can see, he eventually said yes. Which literally was worth the amount of stress.

And now the wedding day. When it comes to arrangements, Nanny sure knows her engagements. She sure does emphasize the LAW behind being the other mother to me. Thanks to you and Jorge for this wonderful reception and handling the preparations with utmost discretion.

And to my direct family, Mom Dad Katie, Pop, Carol, Steve, David, and Grammy, for being all you are, having come from a far to celebrate today. I love you all in every which way, with all that I have and more than words can say.

And I can't forget the friends of my family even if I tried, without you today your seats would remain unoccupied. And the space in this place would be less filled, but you're here so guess what? I'm thrilled!

And to the bridesmaids for being so pretty. And to Antonio, all my groomsmen, who a week ago made this cheap date feel a little shitty.

And to Linmarie's family who have done the same, whether you drove a few miles or flew on a plane. And to all the other unsung relations, be it old or new friends, or those who knew Linmarie and I when we went to George Mason. Thank you all for your attendance. It's truly incredible. You have all made this weekend, and today on the 30th of May that much more memorable

Now if you all can sit back and relax, enjoy your alcoholic glass, because I would like to address this final part to my better half. Baby...with each day that shall pass by in our busy lives I'll try to practice more hi's than goodbyes Tell me... What's a bird without the sky? What's a star without the shine? What's the boogie without the board?...It's just a boogie.
(PAUSE) Oh come on! That was funny, you know it's true! Oh brother, ok, here's another: Out of all the words in the English dictionary, nothing compares to YOU.

And I have to request something, get it off my chest, before my ability begins to vanish, please encourage me to help learn Spanish. I was good at one time and I want to get better. Because having bilingual children together means a lot to me...

And hopefully to the college admissions people too... I want to be honest and tell you that I promise to treat your presence like everyday is Christmas. 365 moments with you as my Mrs. and sloppy moments with our puppy Fonfita giving us kisses. Oh and I forgot to tell you...I'm also part genie, so your set when it comes to future wishes.

I will forever admire your patience and persistence and for being strong when we had that one year of distance. You remained focused on the path with such devotion and care, like a missile with wild black hair. And to think that somewhere out there my dreams did come true. Because I thought my life would lead me out west, but fate my GPS, seemed to always lead me back to you.

From friend to husband, not much difference between the two if I may mention. But lets discuss each word separately and review their letters for a figurative definition. The word FRIEND, just so happens to have an END in it you see. Which explains why they come and ago often unexpectedly. Now a HUSBAND, holds a little more value, ending with AND suggesting a continuation. So what I'm try to say is ...I'm in it for the long run,... ok end of explanation.

I am now your husband and I look forward to what's to come and with that THIS over thoughtful rhyme is now done. But let me say one more thing before I'm through:

My heart and my tears were always meant to fall for you.