

R We Family?

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Abstract

I've been home a little over a week from my vacation on the R Family Vacation summer cruise to the Bahamas. I've had a week to sit back and reflect on the trip. For those that don't know, R Family Vacations is the brainchild of Gregg Kaminsky and Kelli O'Donnell. It's billed as a cruise [...]

Article

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For those that don't know, R Family Vacations is the brainchild of Gregg Kaminsky and Kelli O'Donnell. It's billed as a cruise for GLBT families.

From the R Family Vacation website:

R Family Vacations is truly the most inclusive GLBT vacation offered. All of our vacations are designed for gays, lesbians, their families, and their friends. Everyone is welcome -- singles, couples without children, couples with children, groups of friends, grandparents, and almost any other family configuration you can think of. We have hosted three-month-old babies and 80-something grandparents. R entertainment and programming is designed for various age groups. Some exclusively for adults, some just for teens and kids, and some for everyone. We are mindful that our guests are people of all ages, genders, backgrounds, and sexual orientation. On our vacations, there is sincere acceptance. Please join us and experience the GLBT vacation that everyone is talking about. Be a part of r family.

To see a ship full of gay and lesbian families concentrated in one place was amazing. I had a wonderful time, and the entire trip was empowering. But one thing has lingered with me since I got off the ship was the lack of visible transfamilies.

On a ship of 2200 people, I only saw one transgender family on board. I think it's vital that transgender families be visible. When people know us and our issues, it becomes something bigger, something personal.

Since I got back, I've been trying to figure out why there was such a lack of representation. The first thing that jumps to mind is money. Some estimates of transgender unemployment are as high as 70 percent. But even with high unemployment, I know quite a few doctors, lawyers, and health care workers that make more than a living wage. What is stopping transgender families from cruising?

Another possible answer could be the actual numbers of transfamilies that are intact. Divorce after gender transition is not uncommon, and in less progressive areas the courts can be pretty one sided.

While I do think that some of the lack of representation stems from the nature of the transgender experience, the marketing of the cruise is also an issue. While appearing to be GLBT focused, I found it to mainly focused towards gays and lesbians. The seminars on board were mainly pointed toward gay parenting and all that comes with that process. Even seminars that weren't necessarily parent focused, seemed lacking. I attended a seminar on blogging. It was lead by Dana of Mombian (a lesbian mother) and Terrance of Republic of T (a gay father). I also eavesdropped on the seminar that was given on gender. While the transgender experience was mentioned, it seemed more about educating gays and lesbians about gender and transgenderism.

Do I think Rosie and Company are transphobic? Hardly. On the way back up the coast, I read one of Rosie O'Donnell's books, "Find Me." I really connected and understood some of her childhood struggles. There are many intersections between gender and sexual orientation, and Rosie really appears to gets that. Additionally, I saw Rosie on "The View" interview Jeffery Carlson. She explained how Jeffery's character on "All My Children" could change genders and still be attracted to women. Maybe it's her friendship with Kate Bornstein, but she really does seem to understand our experience.

I'm not sure if the vacations will ever focus more on transgender families, but I do know of a way to affect change. I'm going to take my family and be present and visible. My son is gay, and I want him to experience this. I want him to see positive, happy G and L families. And I want gay and lesbian families to see what happy transfamliies look like as well. Besides it's a wonderful vacation. I hope to see you all on board in March. Maybe my passport will be here by then. ?

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