

Tehran dances for freedom while Sydney Mardi Gras marks hollow celebration

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While Sydney ‘celebrated’ the overrated, and ageing, gay sexual revolution last night, Iranians were dancing for authentic joy after being freed from genuine tyranny.

If you want a microcosm of world affairs, you could do worse than compare the people [dancing on the streets of Tehran](#), the capital of Iran, with the people [dancing in the Mardi Gras down Sydney’s Oxford Street](#), the gay capital of Australia, last night.

Iranians were dancing to celebrate the death of the Ayatollah Khamenei, whose regime not only banned music but also punished women who allowed strands of hair to escape from their hijabs with state-sanctioned rape, torture and even execution.

The Sydney Mardi Gras, meanwhile, included a group of “78ers” — gays who claim they were in the original Mardi Gras in 1978 — holding a banner saying, “[Stop Police Attacks on Gays women and Blacks](#).”

After decades of supposed “empowerment”, this bunch of whiny queens are still as addicted to the victimhood of their youth as some of their contemporaries were once addicted to poppers and mandies.

Besides, these blokes know as well as anyone that if gays are being attacked these days, it's not by the police, who, like the rest of mainstream society, bend over backwards (if you'll pardon the expression) to make gays, lesbians and other sexual deviations feel "included" while also exercising their right to shove their precious and unique identities down everyone else's throat (again, pardon etc).

Rather, in a case of religiously cosmic coincidence, the gay bashers of today are conspicuously similar to the religious thugs from whose tyranny the people of Iran are now escaping and celebrating.

But while the thugs in Iran operated (until today) mostly in secret, their counterparts in Australia use mobile phones to film and share their exploits, and enjoy the benign approval of the ABC, which [sat on a story about them for two years](#) while it calculated the complex intersectionality of publicising the alleged crimes.

When American feminist writer Kate Millett coined the term sexual politics in 1970 to describe the "power structures" of intimate relations, she could hardly have imagined that these structures would one day include a [public spat between Palestine-loving gays and Jewish gays](#) over the right to join the rest of the gay "community" wearing sequined bikinis down Oxford Street in Sydney, as happened this year.

Nor could she have envisaged the conundrum faced by Anthony Albanese, who has marched in the Mardi Gras so many times he may as well be gay himself, since becoming Prime Minister.

You have to feel sorry for him, really. As the leader of a government that is entirely reliant on the Muslim vote to remain in power, the timing of the Mardi Gras during Ramadan is a challenge that even someone as "inclusive" as him isn't able to solve.



It was with somewhat of a raised eyebrow that the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported [Albanese's absence](#) at this year's parade.

"Federal Sydney MP Tanya Plibersek has made an appearance, dancing alongside Rainbow Labor. Right next to her was NSW Environment Minister Penny Sharpe, the first open lesbian elected to the NSW Parliament. We caught a glimpse of the pair before they dashed away.

"NSW Opposition leader Kellie Sloane has led the Liberal Party float. "It is amazing to be here and to see so much support," she said.

"Notable politicians who were absent were Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who participated in last year's parade and made history as the first sitting PM to march in Sydney's Mardi Gras parade in 2023, and NSW Premier Chris Minns, who has also previously marched."

Perhaps they were being prudent. I have lived near Oxford Street for the past three years and can't help noticing that the strip is being reclaimed by straight people. The few gay bars that remain are frequented by men who mostly look like 78ers — old and haggard. Their liberation almost half a century ago was meant to open the door for younger gays to flaunt their sexuality. But it hasn't happened. Maybe the whole gay liberation thing was nothing but the final flourish of postwar boomer liberalism, based on an injustice that was never as big as we were told.

The parade itself was once reserved for mostly good-looking dudes flaunting bodies they'd spent the previous six months honing in the gym. These days it's a rainbow coalition of flabby old introverts, many of whom are on floats provided by their public service employers. It's now about as radical as afternoon tea at a Country Women's Association.

I walked along Oxford Street at 7:30am this morning. The rubbish left behind on the street by the revellers, being picked over by seagulls and ibises, was depressing enough.

The stragglers eking out the last out of whatever fuelled them through the night while still trying to look fabulous were even less edifying.

Meanwhile, in Iran, the people are dancing with pure, authentic and ecstatic joy.

Trump's intervention in Iran marks a change in postwar geopolitics as clearly as the pathetic stragglers on Oxford Street signify a departure from what little oppression the "78ers" were fighting against. Unlike previous interventions, when the West felt the duty to spread its freedom and democracy across the world, President Trump is clear: he wants to topple the regime, not replace it.

"When we are finished, take over your government," he told the Iranians in a live broadcast. "It will be yours to take."

If they do take over their government, and they can refrain from turning on each other (which isn't guaranteed), Iranians will soon be enjoying the freedom the West once took for granted, and is now squandering.

Fred Pawle is an independent journalist, author and filmmaker who has worked in the past at The Australian, Sky News, Menzies Research Centre and ADH TV. His world view is as much influenced by sensible conservative principles as it is by the ratbag surf culture in which he grew up. To access more of Fred's perspective and insights, please visit .