

June 2023 Diversity Message – Arkansas Wing

We all know what month June is, and while I thought I might talk about something else this month, I felt it a bit apropos to avoid the topic this month, so I want to talk with you about labels. Now, I will get very personal with this message, so I appreciate your kindness and understanding.

As a child, I never enjoyed the baby dolls my grandmother always got me. They sat in the back of the closet with all the barbie dolls my mother insisted I needed. Instead, I spent my time riding bikes and horses, skateboarding, and climbing trees. On those rainy days indoors, I had my complete set of hot wheels, army men, GI Joe and tonka trucks. Even growing up, I never enjoyed things most girls did. Hair salons, nail color, makeup, shopping, dresses, oh they were just not for me. They called me a tomboy, maybe it was meant derogatory, but I wore/wear that label proud.

The labels assigned to young boys that weren't into boy things, was very derogatory, and I won't use it here, but know it was and is something meant to shame.

For me, Pride Month is about acceptance for who I am. I am a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. For me, it's not about what I do in my bedroom, that's no-one's business but mine. My letter is represented in the + because I just don't quite fit the letters, even though many keep getting added to the mix. I still call it Tomboy, but I'm sure in today's vernacular it has a different name.

Some of you will remember: Greasers, Jocks, Beatniks, Hippies, Bikers, Nerds, Peanut Gallery, Preppies. All names that identify people by a group. Many were labels that were used derogatorily, but labels, nonetheless. There have been labels for as long as there have been people.

Should I tell you that I'm a mathematician, you might think, brainiac, nerd, smart or stupid depending on your love/hate of math. My maiden name Huskey is French and English, that would tell you one thing about me, my grandpa was Cherokee would tell you something else. Black Irish would tell you my hair is not red, and my skin gets darker in the summer than yours. I am an introvert, which means I value my quiet time, and need it to recharge. It also might tell you that I'm going to sit quietly in a room full of people because I get overwhelmed very easily in large groups.

All these labels tell you something about me. My sharing them, is a hope to help you to understand how to better interact with me.

The current generation of teens and young adults, rather than allowing others to label them, have chosen to label themselves. Many of those labels have absolutely nothing to do with sex but are a way to share their identity with others. We may not understand, we may not like it, but the way I view it it's their way of telling us how to interact with them, and I plan to listen.

I hope this helps a little, I hope I've made you think, I thank you for taking the time to read it through.

Major Janice Podgurski