

An Interview with Harlem Pride Co-Founder Lawrence Rodriguez

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There is a pulsing underground culture in Harlem, says Lawrence Rodriguez, gallery owner and co-founder of [Harlem's first gay pride](#). Contributor Mathew Rodriguez interviews Lawrence about the creation of Harlem pride and what we can expect from uptown's inaugural event.

Mathew Rodriguez (MR): What do you believe is the role of Harlem and Harlem Pride in the New York City LGBT community?

Lawrence Rodriguez (LR): When I think of gay pride, I never think above 100th Street. Harlem Pride is a symbol of pride uptown. It's also a symbol of pride [for people] of color. Harlem should be represented. You often have Harlem represented in not-so-favorable conditions. This is where we live; it's our home. I want it to be beautiful and creative. Harlem Pride is becoming a beacon, and it's the first time I feel like I'm being represented in the community.

MR: The ["Coming Out" art show](#) opened Harlem Pride this weekend. What was the process of getting it together?

LR: Once one LGBT organization said yes, the rest [of the 25 I contacted] fell in line. I sent word of this event to different news sources, both print and online. Most magazines are geared towards those under 25 with hot bodies, which is great, but there's a lot more to learn through art that's positive about the community. People of so many cultures and communities are coming together.

MR: What are the festivities and events associated with Harlem Pride?

LR: The "Coming Out" Art Gallery is the opening art show. Friday, June 25th is the official Launch Party [at Billie's Black Bar/Restaurant]. The Harlem Pride Block Party is Saturday, June 26th and it happens right here on [119th Street]. The closing event is Sunday night, June 27th and it's a bowling party at Harlem Lanes with about 1500 people, so that's really exciting.

MR: What do you want people to take away from this art show and Harlem Pride?

LR: When I first took the initial step to found Harlem Pride, I was alone. Then, I was joined by more people and we took steps together. Now, together, we don't have to take any steps back, only forward.

For more information on the Harlem Pride calendar, or to get involved in the organization, please visit www.harlem [Prev](#)[rg](#)[Next](#)

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