

# GEARING UP FOR CHANGE

David Morgan, Founder of MENinGEAR.com talks about *Cruising, Sex, & How the Leather Community Turned into a Bunch of Professional Beggars*



“Get up off your ass, get off that damn computer, get geared up, go out, find some men.” I start all the emails the same way. It’s pretty basic. A very simple idea. I moved back to the city I’ve always called home in September of last year. It didn’t take long to become pissed off hearing so many guys telling me that the leather/bdsm/kink community was dead and will never be the same. *Whatever.* I was meeting all these hot, young gear pigs. I was meeting older, experienced players too. Both kept talking about why they don’t go out, blaming anyone and everything. AIDS. The internet. What? Did someone just stop giving the community a reason to gear up and go out? I’ve always said – give them a reason and they will come. Did the bars stop giving the community a reason to come out?

My city has a tremendous leather/bdsm/kink history. But where’s it going? Blame the fucking internet? That’s too easy. Don’t get me wrong. After I moved back I realized there was a lot of activity in the community. But as with everything – it’s constantly changing. The bars that are still around that kind of cater to this crowd have changed too. They have hosted countless fundraisers for the community. But do you want to go to a fundraiser every night? Does there have to be a reason to head out other than getting geared up and hoping to get some ass?

For those here back in the day – remember when you got geared up and went out for some face to face cruising, a few beers, new faces, some familiar faces – and maybe even hook up for the night? Did the bar scene turn from pure sexual energy to helping their brothers who started coming down with a sickness that nobody really knew anything about. Chuck and Ron opened Chaps Bar here in San Francisco at the start of the decade that was to bring us Reagan, Duran Duran, and AIDS. Within one year of opening this “sickness” (AIDS, not Duran Duran) took many lives and scared many others away. Soon, Chaps and every other bar started holding fundraisers to help their community. And it never stopped.

The leather/bdsm/kink community has always been on top of the needs and wants of the gay community, especially in taking care of their own leather/bdsm/kinky brothers. But

what happened to the days where you could go to a bar for some of that *face to face cruising, a few beers, new faces, some familiar faces – and maybe even hook up for the night?*

Did the community start depending on fundraising, contests, discussion groups, leadership and political correctness? Actually, yes. Don’t get me wrong. I attend and support a lot of these “organized” activities. And I like to. But this is not sex. Leather/bdsm/kink is not all about getting “dressed up” and supporting



a specific cause. It’s about sex. It’s about play. It’s about all that fucking gear everyone has at home that they aren’t using anymore. Thankfully, not everyone forgot that.

Take Chuck and Ron – they’ve been kinky fucks for over 40 years. Chuck is double my age – and when I grow up I want to be just like him. He has more stamina and more experience than most of us ever will. Did they die off or stop kinky sex or stop gearing up? No. So why did our “community” disappear or go into hiding? Was it the bars? I say yes. The bars changed, and the community found a new way to meet and hook up. The internet.

Mama’s Family raises a lot of money every year, and that woman, along with countless others, deserves a medal for the commitment and endless support of anybody and everybody in need. LDG (Leathermen’s Discussion Group) keeps the community enticed with new speakers and topics several times a month. LLW (Leather Levi Weekend) organizes a weekend of play up in the mountains. The contests groom the community leaders of tomorrow. I can go on about all the different

“organized” activities in our community.

But let’s look at this as “organized” vs. “unorganized”. We have a lot of organized leather/bdsm/kink activities. And we don’t have so much “unorganized.”

Is it wrong to get off work and gear up and not attend a fundraiser or a committee meeting or a discussion group? Fuck no. All these things are good. But let’s even this out! Let’s be sure that we divide up what is being offered to our community. Everyone

complains that the younger or newer community doesn’t get involved. Hell – it’s all work! Everyone works hard for a living and not everyone wants to work another “job” attending committees and activities that are not purely social and sexual. Some people are into this community because they want to play and have sex and gear up. There’s always the 5% that does all the organizing, and that’s great. But, some folks are into this for just sex – not anything else. Gearing up and heading to a bar, sex club or party. Attending a fund-raiser doesn’t do it for them. For some, it’s about standing there in the bar, the body language, the eye contact, getting a fucking wood right there.

So what to do? Stop the fundraising. No. Stop the discussion groups? Fuck no. They are both good activities and spaces where newer and experienced community members meet and explore.

But damn, start placing an emphasis on the purely sexual part of our community. Let’s plan more gatherings. Put the microphones and clipboards down once and awhile. I want to have someone grab my crotch without asking for money in trade for raffle tickets.

I didn’t move back home to become the next generation of professional *beggars*. I aim to stand with the next generation of gear pigs to give them something that might actually entice them to want to help raise money during the next crisis. And one day I hope to have as much gear as Chuck and Ron...and use it just as much – if not *more*.

