

Dear Board members of Toronto Pride:

First, let me say I was very flattered to learn that a jury of former Grand Marshals and the Pride Board had chosen to honour me with the position of Grand Marshal for Pride 2010.

Unfortunately, after serious reflection I have decided that I must decline this honour.

I have been actively involved in many social justice movements locally and internationally for the last thirty years. I was a keynote speaker at the second Pride celebration in 1982. I thus remember very clearly our community's battles against censorship that attempted to invalidate our concerns, minimize our struggles and silence our voices. I remember struggles to ensure that the many diverse voices in our community were heard.

Pride's recent decision to ban the term "Israeli Apartheid" and thus prohibit the participation of the group *Queers Against Israeli Apartheid* from participating in Pride celebrations this year is a slap in the face to our history of diverse voices. Pride's choice to take preemptive step to censor our own communities' voices and concerns in response to political and corporate pressure shows a lack of backbone to stand up for principles of inclusiveness and anti-oppression. It also allowed Toronto City Council and other levels of government to evade their responsibility to engage in public debate to promote awareness and understanding on this critical human rights issue.

The strength of our movement has always been in our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness and the courage to stand up for our principles. Your decision to cave into homophobic bullying is unacceptable and betrays the essence of what Pride stands for.

I would urge Pride to rescind your decision banning the term "Israeli Apartheid" and take a courageous stand to advocate to City Council and other stakeholders for the principles of true inclusiveness, respecting diversity and anti-discrimination. I am certain that a principled approach will win Pride more allies and supporters in the long run. Until then, I do not feel that I can accept the title of Grand Marshal with a true sense of celebration and pride.

With deep regret,

Alan Li, M.D.