

Disabled equality campaigners refused entry to gay Glasgow nightclub

Monday 17 June, 2013

Civil partners Robert and Nathan Gale attended the Scottish Charity awards and won an award for their work on the Marriage Equality campaign before leaving and heading towards one of gay Glasgow's most popular night spots, the Polo Lounge (Polo).

With the intention of celebrating with a friend the couple approached the door of Polo and had their chances of entry scuppered by a member of the door staff who advised that cerebral palsy sufferer Robert and his arthritis suffering partner Nathan couldn't come in. The member of staff advised him 'you are in a wheelchair, you can't come in' and cited the lack of disabled facilities, he fetched his manager who concurred; the couple would not be allowed entry.

Out of sheer frustration, Robert pulled himself from his wheelchair and seasoned equality campaigner Nathan watched in horror as his partner of eight years humiliatedly crawled up the stairs to convince security staff that he didn't require a wheelchair ramp. What was to be a night of celebration after years of campaigning culminating in a charity award soon turned into a nightmare as Nathan, who is in chronic pain from arthritis, sat down on the side of the stairs at Polo while his partner tried to reason with management at the top of the stairs. The couple have attended Polo many times before and advised the door staff that both of them could ascend the stairs without use of the wheelchair. The couple spent fifteen minutes trying to reason with the management team and were told the police would be called. Shortly before the police arrived, a member of the Polo security team lifted Nathan from the stairs and sat him down on the street away from the building while his partner Robert sat on a cold marble floor at the top of the stairs.

'The police were rude and unhelpful' said Robert 'they just didn't want to listen, they spent most of the time talking to the manager and spoke over us or ignored us when we tried to speak.

'We cooperated with the police; we just wanted them to know what had happened. We were not abusive and I was told to leave by the police. With my wheelchair at the bottom of the stairs I had to crawl back down the stairs onto the street.'

Robert and his partner spent the next few hours tweeting and sending out Facebook messages to let people know what had happened. Robert has setup a Facebook page at: <http://j.mp/12OMdkw> which has attracted over 2,240 members.

Rob McDowall the Chair of the LGBT Network responded to the incident by saying

'I am appalled to hear of Robert and Nathan's experience at the Polo Lounge, although I am not at all surprised. G1 are hardly known for their open, inclusive attitude and Stefan King's empire is no stranger to negative press and reports of discrimination and intolerance. I wrote to G1 and Polo Lounge in April 2013 regarding three other disabled patron's experiences, to date I have received no reply. You only need to look at all these cases and the case of the blind customer discriminated against at G1's Dundee establishment and you will see this issue runs deep through King's G1 empire. Accessibility appears to be the least of G1's priorities.'

On the issue of making adjustments at Polo Lounge for disabled people, Robert Gale said 'what is reasonable for a corner shop when it comes to accessibility and making adjustments is different than what would be reasonable for a multimillionaire property tycoon like Stefan King'.

NOTES TO EDITORS

The LGBT Network is a collective of human right activists and is a registered charity in Scotland which campaigns and lobbies for true equality for the LGBTQ community. LGBTQ is an acronym of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer or Questioning.

The letter sent to G1 and Polo Lounge in April 2013 can be accessed here:
http://www.twitlonger.com/show/n_1rkqu4q

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Details of the Dundee incident are available here: <http://j.mp/159q4bg>

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