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# CIRCUIT TRIBES: THE EVOLUTION OF TRIBALISM

by Steve Kleine

Critics of our dance floor culture will tell you that the friendships we make on the dance floor are shallow and meaningless. Certainly, one does make many, many more dance floor acquaintances than true friends when traveling the Circuit, but many of us have experienced the joy of becoming a part of a gang of dance floor buddies whose love and support has sustained us both on the dance floor and beyond.

Many of us have called these gangs a "tribe". Part of the reason for this comes about because our tribes generally form by dancing together – a tradition with much history. But are we really justified in using this term to describe our extended dance floor gangs?

I found this definition of a tribe:

*A unit of sociopolitical organization consisting of a number of families, clans, or other groups that share a common ancestry and culture and among whom leadership is typically neither formalized nor permanent.*

Let's take a look at each of these aspects to see if we really do qualify:

## ***"sociopolitical organization"***

The Circuit was formed, among other reasons, to give gay men (and women) a safe place to gather and to celebrate. There is no doubt that the Circuit is a social scene. The main draw for most attendees is to join a celebration where they can explore

their gay identity. The Circuit was formed as a protest as well as a fundraising vehicle to combat HIV/AIDS in a time when the government was ignoring the plague. Presently, the Circuit has lost a little of its political edge, especially since the Circuit "feel" has been mimicked in weekly clubs. However, there are still many events that raise money for vital gay causes. Many of the gay culture's social and political needs are still funded by the Circuit.

***"consisting of a number of families, clans, or other groups that share a common ancestry and culture"***

It is obvious that the Circuit has created a common culture, and tribes tend to create even more specialized styles of dressing, communication, traditions, rituals, diet, and approved and disapproved behaviors. We have created our ancestry through generations that span only a few years. Those of us that have been on the Circuit for ten years or more can point to a line of people we have introduced to this magic world, who in turn have introduced others. I am proud that I am a Circuit great-granddad! Like most social