Ricky Martin Comes Out

March 30, 2010 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

When I heard that Ricky Martin officially outed himself, I paused. Was it true? Only after I read his blog post did I believe it. And he did it not under threat of outing, but on his own terms. I immediately knew this would make headlines.

What I couldn't believe were the reactions on Twitter and in the blogosphere. The so-what attitude that was so prevalent was not only a surprise, but I found it offensive (and trust me, I'm not easily offended). I will try to explain.

Martin didn't sustain his crossover into the English-language music scene, but his megastar power in Spanish-language music has remained undiminished. He continues to sell millions of records worldwide. He won a Latin Grammy as recently as 2007.

His appeal is obviously limited in the United States, but I was still shocked at how culturally ignorant most people commenting were about Martin's status as a top-tier celebrity on the rest of the planet. Such lack of understanding, whenever it reveals itself, saddens me.

To LGBT youth in Latin America, Martin's coming out has the potential to break down a huge chunk of the remaining homophobia and transphobia.

To LGBT youth in Latin America, Martin's coming out has the potential to improve their self-esteem and thereby diminish their risk for HIV.

To LGBT youth in Latin America, Martin's coming out is, to borrow Joe Biden's phrase, a big fucking deal. Millions of people have been moved.

And to the critics who say that he is only coming out to boost sales of his upcoming memoir and albums, I say: Really? He was doing fine financially without coming out.

Damned if you do and damned if you don't. No wonder celebrities hesitate to come out. The immense good that Martin's coming out will do far outweighs any criticisms.

Check out this blog post at Blabbeando for a comprehensive review of reactions and this blog post at Blabbeando for an excellent in-depth exploration about why Martin's coming out matters.

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