

Civil Unions in New Jersey

High court says same-sex couples must have rights of marriage, not necessarily the word

by Anthony Glassman

Trenton, N.J.--The state supreme court has ruled that New Jersey cannot deny same-sex couples any of the rights and responsibilities of marriage, but that it can reserve marriage itself for opposite-sex couples.

The court gave the legislature 180 days to either change the marriage law or create a separate structure to extend the same rights and benefits enjoyed by opposite-sex couples to same sex ones. It found New Jersey's present domestic partnership law inadequate.

"Denying committed same-sex couples the financial and social benefits and privileges given to their married heterosexual counterparts bears no substantial relationship to a legitimate governmental purpose," read a summary with the 60-page opinion. "[C]ommitted same-sex couples must be afforded on equal terms the same rights and benefits enjoyed by opposite-sex couples under the civil marriage statutes. The name to be given to the statutory scheme that provides full rights and benefits to same-sex couples, whether marriage or some other term, is a matter left to the democratic process.

The justices noted a lower court opinion that separated the right to marry from the rights of marriage.

"In conducting this equal protection analysis, we discern two distinct issues," wrote Justice Barry T. Albin in the October 25 ruling. "The first is whether committed same-sex couples have the right to the statutory benefits and privileges conferred on heterosexual married couples."

"Next, assuming a right to equal benefits and privileges, the issue is whether committed same-sex partners have a constitutional right to define their relationship by the name of marriage, the word that historically has characterized the union of a man and a woman," Albin continues.

On the first issue, the court concluded, "Although under the Domestic Partnership Act same-sex couples are provided with a number of important rights, they still are denied many benefits and privileges accorded to their similarly situated heterosexual counterparts. Thus, the Act has failed to bridge the inequality gap between committed same-sex couples and married opposite-sex couples."

It notes matters like name changes, property, inheritance and other rights that do not fall under the domestic partnership law.

The decision also notes that New Jersey laws on same-sex couples already put it more in line with states like Massachusetts, which has full same-sex marriage, and Vermont and Connecticut, which both have civil unions, than with most of the other states in the country.

The court said that there are two ways for the state to rectify the matter.

"The legislature could simply amend the marriage statutes to include same-sex couples, or it could create a separate statutory structure, such as a civil union, as Connecticut and Vermont have done," the majority ruling reads.

Three other justices joined Albin in the opinion.

Retiring Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz, who retired the next day, wrote a separate opinion than concurs with much of the main opinion, but dissents in that she believes that the equal protection clause of the New Jersey constitution requires the state to allow full same-sex marriage.

She was joined in that decision by Justice Virginia Long and her replacement, new Chief Justice James R. Zazzali.

"I can find no principled basis, however, on which to distinguish those rights and benefits from the right to the title of marriage, and therefore dissent from the majority's opinion insofar as it declines to recognize that right among all of the other rights and benefits that will be available to samesex couples in the future," Poritz wrote in her opinion.

The court heard the case on February 15. It involves seven same-sex couples who argued that denying them marriage violated the guarantees of equal rights and due process in the state constitution.

The state did not attempt to argue that procreation was one of the goals of marriage, a common argument in such cases.

Three lawmakers will introduce a bill to enact full same-sex marriage, announced Garden State Equality the same day. Marriage advocates in the state are backing it up with a Zogby-Garden State Equality poll showing 56 percent of New Jerseyans favoring "full marriage equality."

Proponents of LGBT civil rights in Ohio held up the ruling as another indication of how far the state is slipping behind.

"Today, the Supreme Court of New Jersey told their state legislature to address the discrimination that is currently taking place in that state," commented Lynne Bowman, executive director of Equality Ohio. "We urge elected officials there to do what is right and provide full marriage equality for loving, same-sex couples. 'Separate but equal' is not an American value, and it simply does not work."

Taken From: <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories06/october/1027061.htm>



Coming-Out for the First Time - Need Help

By Nicky P. Damania
(Bowling Green State University)

The term "Coming-Out" refers to the process of developing a positive lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity. Before an individual "comes out" they are commonly in a period of "questioning," in which they are curious about and either actively or inactively exploring their sexual identity. It is a long and difficult struggle for many questioning individuals because they often have to confront the phobias that they are socially instilled with while growing up. Before they can feel good about who they are, they have to challenge their own acquired beliefs and move from a negative attitude of repulsion and pity to feelings of appreciation and admiration. It often takes years of realization to develop a positive LGBT identity.

Coming out is a process that can be very difficult- however, in addition can also be extremely liberating and thus relieving- but queer individuals can't decide when and to whom they will disclose their sexual identity. The easiest way to come out would probably be to advertise on international television- instead of having to endure the constant agony face-to-face conversations and wondering how someone might initially react, especially a loved one- but of course, that idea is preposterous to anyone who doesn't have thousands of dollars for advertising purposes. There are many ways an individual can come out, but most choose to relay the information in person.

Be comfortable with yourself. Learn more about the queer community. Find resources about the queer community and resources on personal identity. It is very common for "questioning" individuals to have a personal identity crisis involving personal culture and religion. I strongly encourage individuals to join a coming-out support group. These groups give an individual a support network, protection, and help with working out a plan of action. Once you know you are comfortable, make a plan of action. Remember once you come-out, there is no going back.

The first one. Choose an individual to be your first. This individual should be someone you trust, love, respect, and admire and who you can tell. Confiding in the first person can start a negative or a positive chain reaction.

Choose the medium of communication. Face to face is the best way. Coming-out is a very personal matter and needs to be done in a comfortable environment. Choosing another medium like email, letter, or IM may not be the best way as many written communications can be misinterpreted.

The time and place. A public bar may not be the most appropriate place to come-out to an individual. Choose the place where you feel the most comfortable. Remember you may feel valuable during this experience and so will the individual. A calm and personable environment is needed. You and you only will be able to know when the suitable time is.

Ask permission to confide. Coming-out is a very personal matter. Once you tell someone they now have a part of your identity; this may be a burden for some individuals. By asking the individual for their permission you will also set the scene that what is about to happen is serious.

Come out. Less is always more. The fewer the words the better the comprehension will be for the individual. You are being fully honest with them for the first time about your sexuality. Do not be afraid of silence. There is a lot of power in silences. You need to remember that the individual maybe in shock at first and it took you a long time to discover your identity, so give them the time they need.

Ask and answer questions. Be prepared with answers to some of the common questions individuals ask queer individuals like, "Are you sure," "When did you know," "How do you know?" Keep cool and answer all of their questions honestly. The pace and the level of emotion is now in your hands. The more calm you are the better the conversation. They are learning what you already learned. This is their time to understand you. Take the time.

Saying thank you. Whatever the reaction maybe from the individual, remember to thank them. The two little words, "Thank You," can mean so much to them at the time. You have confided to them a valuable piece of your identity.

Drag King Rebellion started off in 2002 as N'Drag, a small group of friends lip-syncing and performing to the ultra poppy tunes of N'Sync. Since their membership has grown and evolved, as has their name and purpose. They all have their 'first-time' stories to tell, and they all have their reasons for doing what they do. In the end, they are all having fun doing it and that is apparent from the crowds' responses to their shows. Drag King Rebellion ever-expanding fan base is what inspires them to keep going and keep coming up with more creative ways to educate and entertain other individuals.

Please visit them at:

<http://www.geocities.com/dragkingrebellion>



Drag King Rebellion is Michigan's premiere gender performance troupe made up primarily of kings and bio-queens. Their members are folks who integrate all kinds of identities and experiences into a medley that turns out original, quality, and socially and politically conscious performances of gender. Whether they are doing dancy pop songs, sultry ballads, cheesy musicals, beat-blasting hip-hop, or intense rock, the purpose is to entertain, educate, and always have the realities of power, privilege, and oppression in context.



Big on the Small Screen

TV's lesbian and gay figures are still small in number,
but deep in character

by Gail Shister

When looking at the history of gays on television, size doesn't matter. Though the raw number of gay and lesbian characters on prime-time series is still miniscule--particularly on broadcast TV--the depth and richness of their portrayals has grown exponentially. Call it personality tube lube.

Hard to believe, but it's been almost 30 years since Billy Crystal played the first gay running character on a series: Jodie Dallas, on ABC's then-controversial satire Soap. We've come a long way in three decades, babies. Their numbers may be small, but gays and lesbians are playing large with mainstream America.

We're not talking niche networks here. We're talking NBC, for one. We're talking big, boffo hits like Will & Grace, which ended its eight-season run in May. The first mainstream-network smash with gay lead characters, Will & Grace proved that Americans would embrace a straight-looking queer who never had sex and a goofy-looking queen who never stopped--as long as they made them laugh.

The key? Characters with layers. Texture. Nuance. Playing to and against type. Created by great writers and producers, many of whom were gay. At Will & Grace's height, more than 17 million viewers tuned in each week to watch the queer boys. Advertisers paid top dollar. Will & Grace's success made it cool to be queer on TV. And premium cable, with no restrictions on language and content, was off and running.

There was Showtime's Queer as Folk, featuring a cast of gay studs in heat. Then it was the girls' turn, with beautiful lesbians bumping uglies on the The L Word, also on Showtime.

The moral center of HBO's Six Feet Under was a gay undertaker. Even TV's butchest show, HBO's The Sopranos, got into the act last season with Tony's top earner turning out to be a closet queer. In the reality genre, the boys of Bravo's Queer Eye for the Straight Guy became media darlings. Reichen and Chip, then a couple, won season four of CBS's Amazing Race.

Gays are routinely included in Bravo's Project Runway (duh) and Top Chef. There are even two gay cable networks--Logo and Here. Pre-Will & Grace, two major factors increased gay visibility: The integration of gay characters into popular mainstream shows, and the proliferation of gay writers and producers pushing the envelopes on their own series.

ABC's Roseanne (1988-97), a breakthrough comedy, featured a gay wedding and a bisexual character played by Sandra Bernhard. Innkeepers Ron and Erik tied the knot on CBS's Northern Exposure in 1994. The same year, HIV-positive gay man Pedro Zamora became a cult hero on MTV's The Real World. In the numbers game, however, gay characters continue to barely register a pulse on the TV landscape.

Only 1.3 percent of all scripted-series regulars on the 2006-07 schedules of the six major broadcast networks are homosexual, according to an analysis by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Last season, it was a whopping 1.4 percent.

In cable and unscripted shows, GLAAD counts 25 series regulars, one fewer than last year. Lest we forget, it was a woman who broke open the doors. Remember what a huge deal it was when Ellen DeGeneres and her sitcom character both came out in April 1997? The "Puppy Episode" drew a mondo 34 million viewers, but the next season, Lesbianism 101 replaced comedy and the show tanked.

Now DeGeneres is a hugely-successful daytime chat show host. She never talks about her sexuality. Coincidence? You decide.

Taken From: <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories06/october/1027067.htm>

Coming-out Process still Complicated for Gay Youths

In time for National Coming Out Day, a new four-year study of LGBT youths shows that the average age a teenager comes out is now 13, reports the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Sun-Sentinel newspaper.

The study, conducted by clinical social worker Caitlin Ryan of San Francisco State University, highlights how LGBT youths are feeling more comfortable coming out at earlier ages than their older peers did.

With a variety of books, magazines, and Internet sites geared toward gay teens, along with television programs like "Degrassi: The Next Generation" that feature honest portrayals of queer youths, and gay-straight alliances in nearly 10 percent of high schools nationwide, there are more options than ever for young gay people to express themselves.

However, studies have also found that one out of every four teens who comes out faces family rejection. The Safe Schools Coalition Web site notes that research done for the FBI in 1998 found that these LGBT teenagers make up 30 percent to 40 percent of the nation's homeless youths and that usually the gay youths' coming-out conflicts with their families' moral and religious beliefs.

Even LGBT youths who don't face rejection at home usually face some at school. According to the National Mental Health Institute, the average secondary school student hears an anti-gay slur 26 times a day. And 31 percent of kids who are gay or are perceived as gay were physically harassed or assaulted last year at school.

Taken From: http://www.advocate.com/news_detail_ektid37444.asp



Coming Out Day makes Heterosexuality the Norm

By Hanna Ricketson

National Coming Out Day celebrated its 18th anniversary on Wednesday, but I'm not so sure that's a good thing. In fact, I'd like to make a suggestion that will probably be as unpopular with the community I want to support as it will be popular with the people I disagree with: the LGBTQ community should stop celebrating National Coming Out Day.

While I'm wildly supportive of all people feeling comfortable enough with their sexuality to share it, and while I would never want to encourage a reversion to a culture of secrecy and silence among the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning community, I have to wonder if National Coming Out Day is helping or hurting the situation.

It seems to me that naming a day of the year when society expects anyone who's not heterosexual to profess their sexuality does two primary things. First, it encourages the LGBTQ community to not be silent, and that's good.

Second, it normalizes heterosexuality. Here's my problem. In asking the LGBTQ community to speak out, National Coming Out Day assumes that there's something different or unusual about being gay, bisexual or transgendered.

It implies in its very existence that if you don't announce to the world that you're not heterosexual, then you must be heterosexual. On Wednesday night, I went to a National Coming Out Day event on campus. I watched a presentation called "Hate," which was comprised mostly of the photos and stories of victims of hate crimes based on sexuality and of members of the community who had committed suicide because of the societal difficulties that accompany nonheterosexuality.

I was also handed a questionnaire for heterosexuals, featuring questions like: "What do you think caused your heterosexuality?" "When and how did you decide you were a heterosexual?" "Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase that you may grow out of?" The questionnaire also asked, "Do your parents know you are straight? Do your friends, co-workers and/or your roommates know?"

I was struck at the time by how clearly this questionnaire illustrates the way society normalizes heterosexuality. Straight people aren't ever asked to rethink their straightness. They never have to tell their family or friends that they are straight.

It seems like creating a day where nonheterosexuals announce their sexuality does more to contribute to the normalization of heterosexuality than it does to erase bias against homosexuality. National Coming Out Day is caught up in a kind of catch-22. It tries to erase the bias against the LGBTQ community by having the community speak out, but in doing so, it also reinforces some of the negative aspects that the community struggles against.

So what's an LGBTQ community supposed to do when it's caught between a rock and hard place?

Adapted from: <http://www.statepress.com/issues/2006/10/13/opinions/698242>

7 of 10 Americans Know Someone Gay

As gay men and lesbians celebrate another National Coming Out Day on Wednesday, a new survey reports seven out of 10 straight adults in the United States say they know someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

The nationwide Harris Interactive online survey of 2,932 U.S. adults also found that 83 percent of those who self-identify as gay or lesbian consider themselves out.

When LGBT respondents were asked if they considered themselves open about their sexual orientation, 92 percent said they are out to their close friends, and 78 percent said they are out to their parents.

A majority also indicated they are out to other people in their lives, including grandparents, cousins, acquaintances and casual friends, and coworkers and colleagues.

"If seven out of 10 heterosexuals know someone who is GLBT, then many gays and lesbians are making their identity apparent as a natural part of their lives -- just like their age, height, hair color, or personality," said Mark Shields, director of the Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project.

"For most people, coming out or opening up to someone starts with a conversation. And for those interested in fostering strong, deep relationships with their friends and family, living openly often allows for closer relationships with the people they care about most."

Still, more than half of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender said that concern about being the victim of a hate crime remains a deterrent to coming out. Other concerns that LGBT adults cite as to why a person might not come out include rejection by their families and friends and the threat of losing their jobs.

The survey was conducted Sept. 7-14 by Harris Interactive in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications Inc., a strategic public relations and marketing communications firm with special expertise in the LGBT market.

Taken From: <http://www.gay.com/news/article.html?2006/10/10/2>



10 Ways to Get Through Tense Family Gatherings

By Tolerance.org

Family rifts during the holidays aren't restricted to the gay and lesbian community. Interfaith and interracial families also feel the sting of ostracism.

Rachna D. Jain, a Maryland psychologist, recalled a client who fit the latter category.

"I worked with a Caucasian woman dating an African-American man, and her family was very uncomfortable with it," Jain said. "She ended up not going home for Thanksgiving. Her family attempted to make her feel guilty about that, but she felt her future was with this man, not with her family of origin."

Regardless of the cause of your familial tension, use the following tips -- compiled by Tolerance.org from experts like Jain -- to address family rifts during the holidays.

1. Make a list: When deciding whether to attend a holiday family gathering, make a pro-and-con list, then clear your head, seek a calm moment and decide what is best for you. "Too often, we make ourselves feel horrible about something, get ourselves into the worst possible mental state, and then try to make a great decision," Jain said.

2. Educate yourself: Seek out books, brochures and other publications on the issues around which the rift is centered. Offer such materials to other family members. Seek to understand the views of the relative(s) with whom you disagree.

3. Consider smaller portions: Plan to visit only for appetizers or only for dessert. Shorten your stay to decrease your discomfort.

4. Call a friend: Debrief after the visit with someone you trust.

5. Adjust your view: "It feels like us vs. them," Jain said, "but what it really is an ostracized person against a limited belief system. Try to see it that way, and see if that makes it easier to deal with."

6. Discuss the issue(s): Family counselor Sharon Ellison, author of "Taking the War Out of Our Words," advises her clients to ask meaningful questions in a relaxed, open, non-defensive manner. "We cannot be fully honest if we're not willing to be vulnerable."

7. Be prepared: Recognize that holiday-related emotions may arrive early -- around the time you'd be booking airline tickets, if you were going home -- and linger long after the actual day. Tying emotions (anger, loneliness and so on) to the appropriate source can help you deal with them more effectively.

8. Take care of yourself: If the atmosphere isn't safe or you know you aren't ready for a possible confrontation, by all means stay away. Find a suitable alternative, gathering with friends, doing volunteer work or pampering yourself.

"Ask yourself what you can do on that day that won't involve other people having judgments or power over you," Ellison said.

9. Be patient: Real change takes time, and your first or second -- or third or fourth -- efforts at reconciling may feel awkward and unsettled. If the rift still feels irreparable, allow yourself time to grieve, mourning the loss and moving forward from there.

10. Be gracious: Jain said people should aim for maturity and compassion in dealing with these situations. "If you're the injured party, and you show grace, people will admire that in you. What you're asking of them is to be tolerant of you. What more powerful way to show that than to be tolerant of them?"

Taken From: http://www.tolerance.org/news/article_tol.jsp?id=63

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However, studies have also found that one out of every four teens who comes out faces family rejection. The Safe Schools Coalition Web site notes that research done for the FBI in 1998 found that these LGBT teenagers make up 30 percent to 40 percent of the nation's homeless youths and that usually the gay youths' coming-out conflicts with their families' moral and religious beliefs.

Even LGBT youths who don't face rejection at home usually face some at school. According to the National Mental Health Institute, the average secondary school student hears an anti-gay slur 26 times a day. And 31 percent of kids who are gay or are perceived as gay were physically harassed or assaulted last year at school.

Taken From: http://www.advocate.com/news_detail_ektid37444.asp



FBI Report Shows Anti-Gay Hate Crime Down, But is it Really?

by Anthony Glassman

Washington, D.C.--The Federal Bureau of Investigation's hate crime statistics report, released on October 16, showed a marked decrease in violence against LGBT people in Ohio. However, that decrease is illusory, according to Gloria McCauley, executive director of the Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization. The FBI statistics, compiled by the Criminal Justice Information Services Division, showed a total of 1,017 reported incidents against LGBT people nationally.

In Ohio, there were 23 incidents reported to the FBI in 2005. Over half of there were in Columbus, which had 12. Cleveland showed one. The 2004 report had Columbus with 25 incidents and Cleveland with five, and 57 total anti-queer incidents in the state. The question immediately arising from the report is, did the number of incidents actually drop that precipitously from 2004?

According to McCauley, the answer is no. Looking at the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' 2005 hate crime statistics, Columbus had 201 incidents that year, which is similar to what the numbers have been since the late 1990s. "There's a lot of different factors," McCauley said of the disparity. "Only crimes determined to be a hate crime by the police will be included in those statistics, so if a victim doesn't report it as a hate crime to the police, it will not be included." Another problem is the lack of hate crime legislation in Ohio.

"In jurisdictions where sexual orientation is not covered by any hate crime law, obviously the police are not going to be looking for that motivation," she explained. Moreover, she added, ethnic intimidation ordinances in Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, Lakewood and Athens don't cover all crimes. "Under Columbus' ethnic intimidation ordinance, it only covers misdemeanors, so felonies would not be included," she noted. The problems with the report are not limited to statistics dealing with sexual orientation. The Anti-Defamation League, which deals with prejudice and violence against Jewish people, noted that figures for crimes against Jews are far below their assessment. "The fact that New York City and Phoenix did not report hate crime data to the FBI makes the 2005 report clearly incomplete and marks a setback to the progress the bureau has made in the program," said Deborah M. Lauter, civil rights director for the ADL. "It is also disappointing that thousands of smaller police departments across the country also did not participate in this data collection effort."

Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, said that the statistics underscored the need for hate crime laws that include LGBT people. Anti-gay bias was the third highest motivation for hate crime in the report, behind race and religion, both of which are much more commonly included in hate crime laws.

"The numbers of anti-gay hate crimes also indicate the need for state and local governments to do more to prevent and investigate hate crime," he said. "Bias-motivated crime requires a comprehensive response at every level of government."

"While providing valuable data, today's hate crime report is incomplete," he continued. "It is critical that all jurisdictions treat these crimes seriously and report hate crime statistics to the FBI and the public." A federal law requires that hate crimes, including LGBT ones, be reported to the FBI. But there is no money backing up the law.

"There is a federal mandate, but it's one of those unfunded mandates, so there's no component for training," McCauley said.

"Unfortunately, the type of response I think would be appropriate in law enforcement does not seem to be a priority in many jurisdictions," she explained. "It's only going to get worse, even here in Columbus, because the Columbus police have done away with the bias crimes unit."

McCauley noted that, while the strategic response bureau of the Columbus Police Department took over hate crime duties in early 2006, "It doesn't seem to be working very well. I would not be surprised to see an even greater discrepancy in the Columbus numbers."

The dissolution of the bias crime unit was part of a reorganization of the department, but it may have set BRAVO's work with the police back years.

"I think we have to have a coordinated set of efforts to educate law enforcement, not just in urban areas but all law enforcement in the state, because having a hate crime law is not going to be effective if law enforcement don't know how to utilize it and prosecutors don't know how to utilize it," she said. Ultimately, however, not all of the blame for the disparity in statistics lies with the cops. McCauley notes that only 30 to 45 percent of her clients report incidents to the police.

"The rest don't want to file a report, won't work with police," she said. "Lots of education needs to happen before we can bring that statistical data somewhat closer."

Until a few years ago, three organizations contributed to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs reports: BRAVO, the Cleveland LGBT Center and Stonewall Cincinnati. Stonewall Cincinnati is now mainly inactive, operating primarily as part of Equality Cincinnati. The Cleveland center still does hate crime reporting, but BRAVO is the only organization in Ohio specifically dedicated to advocating for LGBT victims of crime.

Taken from: <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories06/october/1027064.htm>



Column: LGBTQ 101

Editorial By Lance Gallop

To my irritation, everyone I meet automatically assumes that I am straight. Of course, I am not actually bothered by this, except on a bemused and superficial level, since - having been out for some time - I am quite comfortable with myself, and anyway if I were concerned with what most people think of me, I would not be a columnist.

However, it is puzzling to me, since I have outed myself in this newspaper on five separate occasions (albeit, usually in fairly subtle ways), and still people who have read my column, and with whom I am otherwise well acquainted, continue to assume my heterosexuality. It seems that I neither look nor act like I should be gay, and this plays a nontrivial role in how some people interpret what I say and do. I wonder if my years at Notre Dame would have been more complicated if I had been less straight-acting.

It is because of these subtle biases, like those that people have about a gay person's appearance, that I fear that the vast majority of people on this campus are not equipped to have a remotely profitable discussion about gays and lesbians, their emerging role in society and the pros and cons of contemporary gay culture. Some lack the proper vocabulary, or have only the most rudimentary idea of what being gay means to a gay person or worst of all, get their stereotypes from Bravo, Showtime or Genesis. Given all of this, it is no wonder that the level of discussion about gays in this paper almost never rises above dogmatism and heterosexist sophistry, with the occasional childish rant.

There is not a great deal that I can do about all this from the vantage of a newspaper, but at the very least I can give a basic lesson in vocabulary and then address one extremely common underlying misunderstanding.

First, for those who find themselves confused, the preferred terms for referring to persons who are attracted (physically, romantically and/or emotionally) to members of the same gender are "gay" (adjective), "gay person" (singular) and "gay people" (plural). These forms are useful because they are gender neutral and implicitly include bisexual subjects; however the gender-specific terms "gay man" and "lesbian" are also acceptable in any situation. The increasingly common term "queer" is slightly more dangerous, since it is still seen as offensive by some. It is usually a synonym for gay, however if used in reference to a person it can also mean "gay in an undefined way."

Obviously terms like "fag," "homo," and "dyke" are always highly offensive. However, the term "homosexual" is also derogatory and should never be used, as many - myself included - increasingly find it offensive. Likewise avoid any propaganda terms like "gay agenda," "avowed homosexual" or "gay lifestyle," which are laced with false assumptions.

Probably the most common, and unfortunate, assumption that people have about gays is that their lives revolve around sex, and that accepting oneself as gay is a fundamentally erotic definition. One would think, to read the opposition, that gay rights is a matter of fighting over who gets to [have sex with] whom and how, and possibly the right to post pornography on billboards outside of grade schools. (Mind you, some of the opposition would consider two women holding hands to be pornography...)

Accepting oneself as gay is a sexual definition, but only for a given value of "sex." Sexuality is a profoundly holistic concept that touches every aspect of life. For example, Notre Dame's basic social building block is the gender-segregated dorm, and the most intimate passages in the Hebrew Scriptures frame spirituality as a conjugal union with God. Sexuality runs more broadly and more deeply through the human person than many are willing to admit.

It is also more complex. Consider the definition of a gay person I gave earlier: someone who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to the same gender. Psychologists distinguish between physical and emotional attraction, which together make up most of a person's sexual orientation. Emotional attraction is the desire to build a lasting and intimate relationship with another person.

It may surprise you to learn that there are a growing number of people, some of them gay, who refer to themselves as asexual and who are not physically attracted to others in the classical sense. Yet these people are still compelled to seek out lasting and intimate relationships with others - certainly ones that go beyond mere friendship - even though the relationships have little, if anything, to do with physical sexuality. This is an example of emotional attraction operating independently of physical attraction.

My point in all of this is that the landscape of human sexuality, for both gay and straight people, is more complicated than is usually appreciated. It defies simple or narrow definitions and touches many different aspects of a person's life.

On a side note, Tuesday, Oct. 11 is National Coming Out Day. If you are planning on making an entrance, I wish you the best; if you are not - well, consider it.

Lance Gallop is a 2005 graduate of Notre Dame. His column appears every other Wednesday. He can be contacted at comments@tidewaterblues.com

Taken from: <http://www.ndsmcobserver.com/media/paper660/news/2005/10/05/Viewpoint/Lgbtq.101-1009125.shtml>

Books—Fiction

- The Perks of Being A Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
- Dress Codes by Noelle Howey
- Around the House by Amanda Boulter
- Max and Sven by Tom Bouden

TV

Coming Out Stories—Available through the iTunes Store and on LOGO

Brothers and Sisters: ABC Sunday nights at 10pm

In the Life—Available online at www.inthelifetv.org

Music

Ani DiFranco—Check out the song "In and Out"

Rufus Wainwright—Check out the song "One Man Guy

Bitch and Animal—Check out the song "Best Cock On The Block"

Jill Sobule—Check out the song "I Kissed a Girl"

Film

- But I'm a Cheerleader
- Latter Days
- In & Out

Books—Nonfiction

- Transgender Warriors by Leslie Feinberg
- Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us by Kate Bornstein
- A Woman Like That: Lesbian and Bisexual Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories by Joan Larkin
- Bi Lives: Bisexual Women Tell Their Stories by Kata Orndorff
- Coming Out of Shame : Transforming Gay and Lesbian Lives by Gershen Kaufman and Lev Raphael
- Outing Yourself: How to Come Out as Lesbian or Gay to Your Family, Friends, and Coworkers by Michelangelo Signorile



Dayton Schools add Sexual Orientation to Non-Bias Rules

by Anthony Glassman

Dayton--The Dayton City School Board on October 17 voted unanimously to add sexual orientation, along with two other categories, to the protections it offers to students, staff, parents and contractors. Joe Lacey, the first openly gay school board member in Ohio, introduced the measure, which passed 6-0.

Disability and status as a parent were added by other board members, "which is fine," said Lacey. "I have no problem with that." "I thought it really needed to include sexual orientation. Someone else thought disability and status as a parent was needed," he explained. The policies include the nondiscrimination code covering students, staff, job applicants, the general public and individuals who do business with the school district, as well as equal opportunity employment, retention and advancement and the equal educational opportunities code.

The nondiscrimination policy also explicates the board's view that harassment is a form of discrimination, so barring anti-gay harassment is explicit in the code. The changes take effect immediately, covering the 16,700 students and over 2,000 employees in the district. Sexual orientation, disability and status as a parent joins race, national origin, citizenship status, religion, sex, economic status, age and other factors in the district's policies.

Lacey did not view the passage of the measure necessarily as a display of acceptance of gays and lesbians among members of the school board. "Nobody really felt like taking the charge of being against it," he opined. There are currently no plans for specific programs to educate employees and students about the changes at this time.

Taken From: <http://www.gaypeopleschronicle.com/stories06/october/1027063.htm>

Coming Out: The Role of LGBT Music, Film, and Literature

By Bethany Nanamaker,

Why would I EVER want to come out when I see all these LGBT stereotypes when I turn on the TV? I don't match these stereotypes. I don't even like these stereotypes!

Why would I EVER want to come out when I see all these films with LGBT characters that experience horrible tragedies? I don't want to be another Brandon Teena (*Boys Don't Cry*) or Jack Twist (*Brokeback Mountain*).

Coming out can be especially nerve-wracking if a person feels as though she is the only LGBT person in her family, her group of friends, her hometown, or her other communities. A person may turn on the TV or watch a movie with a LGBT character and feel even more apprehensive; the images of LGBT people in popular culture are frequently one-dimensional stereotypes, such as the neurotic fairy or the masculine bulldyke. Even more apprehension arises when a person sees the abundance of queer tragedies on the silver screen, such as films about hate-crimes committed against members of the LGBT community or LGBT suicide and depression.

Simply put, a questioning youth or a youth who is considering coming out may be apprehensive about coming out as he does not want to be labeled a stereotype nor does he want to be victims of the queer tragedies he sees on the silver screen. What is important to remember is that popular culture and media CAN be very positive resources to a person who is considering coming out or questioning their sexual identity or sexual orientation.

If you are a person who wants to come out or is considering coming out to a loved one or loved ones, or if you know a person who is struggling to come out, this list of artists and authors may encourage you to embrace the LGBT aspect of your identity through non-threatening, non-tragic voices and stories.

Intern Student at Bowling Green State University's LGBTQA-Q Resource Center

Alphabet Soup 2007
Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay
Transgender Ally College
Conference 2006
<http://www.alphabetsoup2007.org>
February 16th to 18th
Minneapolis, Minnesota

BGSU's LGBTQA-Q Resource Center Second LGBT Symposium:
Marriage Vs. Gay Families
Date: Sat Feb 25 2006
From: 9am to 5pm
For more information please contact Email: nickyd@bgsu.edu
Website: <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/cmali>

Theory Corner

Cass Model of Gay and Lesbian Identity Formation

Coming-Out is a life long process of exploring one's sexual orientation and Gay/Lesbian identity and sharing it with family, friends, co-workers, and the world. Coming-Out means recognizing, accepting, expressing, and sharing one's sexual orientation with oneself and others.

Identity Confusion – Personalization of information regarding sexuality.

- Recognizes thought/behaviors as homosexual, usually finds this unacceptable
- Redefines meaning of behaviors
- Seeks information on homosexuality

Identity Comparison – Accepts possibility she/he might be homosexual.

- Feels positive about being different, exhibits this in ways beyond orientation
- Accepts behavior as homosexual, rejects homosexual identity
- Accepts identity but inhibits behavior (ex: heterosexual marriage/anonymous sex)

Identity Tolerance – Accepts probability of being homosexual and recognizes sexual/social/emotional needs of being homosexual.

- Seeks out meeting other Gay/Lesbian people through groups, bars, etc.
- Personal experience builds sense of community, positively and negatively

Identity Acceptance – Accepts (vs. tolerates) homosexual self-image and has increased contact with Gay/Lesbian subculture and less with heterosexuals.

- Increased anger toward anti-gay society
- Greater self – acceptance

Identity Pride – Immersed in Gay/Lesbian subculture, less interaction with heterosexuals. Views world divided as “gay” or “not gay”.

- Confrontation with heterosexual establishment
- Disclosure to family and co-workers

Identity Synthesis – Gay/Lesbian identity integrated with other aspects.

- Recognizes supportive heterosexual
- Sexual identity still important but not primary factor in relationships with others

Adapted from “Homosexual Identity Formation: A Theoretical Model” by Vivienne C. Cass from the Journal Of Homosexuality. Vol 4 (3), Spring 1979

D’Augelli’s Model of Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Identity Development

D’Augelli identified six interactive processes (not stages) involved in lesbian, gay, and bisexual identity development.

Exiting heterosexual identity

Recognition that one’s feelings and attractions are not heterosexual as well as telling others that one is lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status

A “sense of personal socio-affective stability that effectively summarizes thoughts, feelings, and desires” (D’Augelli 1994).

One must also challenge internalized myths about what it means to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Developing a personal identity status must be done in relationship with others who can confirm ideas about what it means to be nonheterosexual.

Developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual social identity

Creating a support network of people who know and accept one’s sexual orientation.

Realizing people’s true reactions can take time. Reactions may also change over time and with changing circumstances.

Becoming a lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring

Disclosing one’s identity to parents and redefining one’s relationship after such disclosure.

D’Augelli noted that establishing a positive relationship with one’s parents can take time but is possible with education and patience.

This developmental process is particularly troublesome for many college students who depend on their parents for financial as well as emotional support.

Developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status

This is a more complex process than achieving an intimate heterosexual relationship because of the invisibility of lesbian and gay couples in our society.

“The lack of cultural scripts directly applicable to lesbian/gay/bisexual people leads to ambiguity and uncertainty, but it also forces the emergence of personal, couple-specific, and community norms, which should be more personally adaptive” (D’Augelli, 1994).

Entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community

Making varying degrees of commitment to social and political action.

Some individuals never take this step; others do so only at great personal risk, such as losing their jobs or housing.

Adapted from: Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice (pp. 96-98). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

What is Sex?

- Refers to the cluster of biological, chromosomal, and anatomical features associated with maleness and femaleness in the human body

What is Gender?

- Gender is separate from biological sex. Gender is a combination of behavioral, cultural, and psychological traits that are typically associated with one sex or the other.
- Gender is used to classify individuals as being male, female, both, or neither
- A complicated set of socio-cultural practices whereby human bodies are transformed into “men” and “women”
- Refers to that which a society deems “masculine” or “feminine”

What is Gender Identity?

- The internal sense of one’s own gender, which is typically male or female in accordance with one’s biological sex

Gender vs. sex

- Although the two terms are related, they should be defined separately to differentiate
- The biological (“sex”) from
- The socio-cultural (“gender”)

www.genderpsychology.org

www.gender.org

Toward a Policy on Gender Identity. Ontario Human Rights Commission

www.ohrc.on.ca/english/consultation/gender-identity-discussion-paper.shtml

What does it mean to be a Transgender individual?

- A person’s gender identity differs from the strict expectations of their biological sex as assigned at birth
- A transgender individual is someone whose gender identity differs from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity.

What does it mean to be a Transsexual individual?

- A transsexual individual is an individual who strongly dis-identifies with their birth sex and wishes to utilize hormones and sex reassignment surgery (or gender confirmation surgery) as a way to align their physical body with their internal gender identity
- A transsexual individual can be male-to-female or female-to-male

Adapted from: www.hbiqda.org/soc.cfm

Hot Seat Questions About Transgender Individuals

Aren’t transgender individuals just flamboyant homosexuals?

Some are gay, lesbian or bisexual, but most transgender individuals consider themselves to be heterosexual. However, transgender individuals are often perceived as gay, and thus are discriminated against in similar ways.

Aren’t transgender individuals mainly prostitutes and shoplifters?

Transgender individuals are mainly law-abiding, hardworking folks who pay their taxes, own homes, and support their young children and aging parents. Some are doctors or lawyers, and some are sex workers or thieves. All transgender individuals, however, suffer unfairly from society’s pervasive stigmatization of them. Judging them on that basis is like judging other minorities using common negative stereotypes.

What makes a transgendered person want to change sex?

Very few transgender individuals actually go through sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Only transsexual people do this, and many of them cannot afford the costs of these surgeries. Most transgender individuals do not want to change their anatomical sex, but many modify their bodies by taking hormones or by undergoing various cosmetic procedures.

Aren’t transsexuals just men who want to be women?

There may be just as many transsexual men and people born with female bodies who feel their gender identity or expression is masculine. The Female-To-Male (FTM) half of the transgendered community ranges from stone butch lesbians and passing women to transsexual men, who go through hormonal and surgical transformation of their bodies.

Isn’t a “man in a dress” just out to solicit sex from other men?

Some are. Most aren’t. Many cross-dressing males are heterosexual, married men who are faithful to their wives. This common misconception is due to the media’s mislabeling of any man who appears cross dressed in public as a gay prostitute. Most cross dressers are simply being themselves and have no interest in having sex with other men.

Aren’t transgender individuals just drag queens?

Some are. Most aren’t. Drag queens and kings cross-dress as performance art. It’s a common mistake to confuse drag queens and kings, who receive a great deal of media attention, with those who cross-dress for gender identity reasons. Drag performers, whose flamboyant personas are part of their acts, practice the art of female or male illusion. Many do not self-identify as transgendered.

Are Transgender individuals Gay?

Most transgender individuals identify themselves as heterosexual. Their intrinsic difference is their gender identity, not their sexual identity.

© 2001 Gender Education and Advocacy, Inc. *GEA is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of all gender variant people regardless of their social identities*

Living Openly on Your Terms...

As you continue to live openly, here are some other points to consider:

- It's important to remember that the journey from "Coming Out" to "Living Openly" is ongoing, and unfolds at your own pace.
- Living openly is something that becomes easier with time, it will often take a little energy when you tell someone new even after you've been open for years — but it gets exponentially easier with time.
- Living openly as a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or straight-supportive person can help to make it easier for young GLBT people who will follow this generation.
- Living openly can be a passive expression of who you are — such as not hiding a rainbow or equality sticker or a loved one's photograph — or it can be a deliberate process involving a planned conversation or the decision to always be ready to affirm your sexual orientation or gender identity should a situation arise.
- Living openly doesn't mean that the sole, or even primary, aspect of your identity is being GLBT. It means making this part of your life a natural piece of you — just like your age, height, hair color or personality.
- Living openly lets other people know, especially those who are judgmental or biased, that their attitudes are theirs alone.
- On a daily basis, you will face decisions about where, when and how to come out — or where, when and why not to. Always remember, this is your journey. You get to decide how to take it.

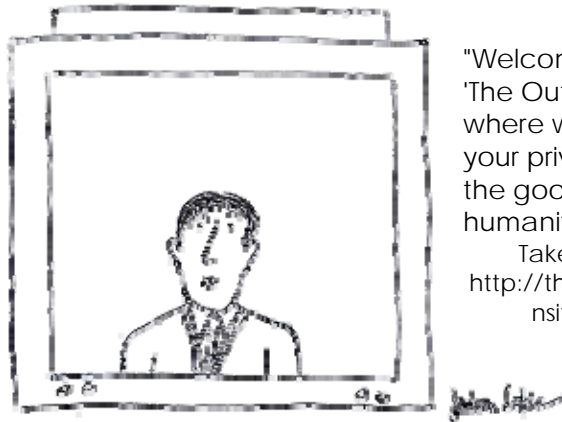
Taken from: http://www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Coming_Out3&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=32380

The Benefits of Coming out:

- Living an open and whole life.
- Developing closer, more genuine relationships.
- Building self-esteem from being known and loved for who we really are.
- Reducing the stress of hiding our identity.
- Connecting with others who are GLBT.
- Being part of a strong and vibrant community.
- Helping to dispel myths and stereotypes about who GLBT people are and what our lives are like.
- Becoming a role model for others.
- Making it easier for younger GLBT people who will follow in our footsteps.

The Risks of Coming Out:

- Not everyone will be understanding or accepting.
- Family, friends or co-workers may be shocked, confused or even hostile.
- Some relationships may permanently change.
- We may experience harassment or discrimination.
- Some young people, especially those under age 18, may be thrown out of their homes or lose financial support from parents.



"Welcome to the 'The Outing Show,' where we invade your privacy for the good of humanity."

Taken From:
<http://thegaycartoonsite.com>

You're in charge:

When you weigh the benefits and risks of being open about who you are, it's important to remember that the person in charge of your coming out journey is you. You decide who to confide in, when to do it and how. You also decide when coming out just may not be right, necessary or advisable.

Keep in mind that:

There is no one right or wrong way to come out or live openly. Choosing to come out or to be open does not mean you have to be out at all times or in all places — you decide how, where and when based on what's right for you.

Your sexual orientation and gender identity are important pieces of you, but they do not have to define you. Living openly doesn't change all the many unique things that make you, you.

Taken From: http://www.hrc.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Coming_Out/Get_Informed4/Coming_Out3/Deciding_to_Tell_Others/Deciding_to_Tell_Others.htm



EqualityToledo Launches "Safe Schools Project"

Raises \$20,000 in 3 Months to Fund Project

Did You Know?

- More than 84% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students are verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and nearly 40% report being physically harassed at school.
- More than 90% of LGBT students regularly hear anti-LGBT comments at school.
- More than 28% of LGBT students missed one day of school in a 30-day period because they felt unsafe.
- 55% of transgender students reported being physically harassed.
- Nearly 85% of LGBT students report that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time.
- All students have the legal right to be safe at school.

In order to stop the harassment, bullying, and physical abuse of our youth, the University of Toledo College of Law Legal Clinic, Rainbow Area Youth (RAY), and EqualityToledo are working with local schools to implement the Safe Schools Project, educate the community about the need for Safe Schools, and advocate for the rights of LGBT students and school employees.

During the fall, this collaborative force will implement a pilot project at Whitmer High School that will be replicated at other sites. Team members will provide LGBT educational training sessions for school employees and identify supportive individuals who will be asked to display a "Safe Space" sticker on their classroom or office door. Law students will share their specialized legal knowledge with educators, and RAY leaders will help set up Gay / Straight Alliances and invite students to their weekly meetings.

Currently, LGBT youth and youth perceived to be LGBT are routinely harassed and physically assaulted in Northwest Ohio schools, and school employees fear the loss of their employment. The Safe Schools Project will work toward changing the culture of schools in order to make them safe spaces for LGBT students, faculty, staff, and administrators

Taken from: <http://www.equalitytoledo.org/main.htm>

Lots to learn for students on gay rights

By: Roberta DeBoer (Toledo Blade reporter)

Pop culture may have gone Queer Eye-friendly, but too few teens got the memo. For gay and lesbian kids, school is still often hostile. Ask Brenda Spurlin, who knows this all too well. The veteran teacher, who retired last year from DeVeaux Junior High, is the mother of an adult gay son and a founder of Toledo Rainbow Area Youth, a social and support group for gay teens.

"It's always the same thing: A lot of defacing of lockers and cars with words like 'fag' or 'lezzie.' And then, of course, the verbiage kids hear in the hallways," said Ms. Spurlin, who has known several gay teens beaten by their classmates. If you're tempted to write her off as overly sensitive, don't. Her anecdotal observations are backed by data. The national group GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) commissioned a Harris interactive survey, and its 2005 Ohio report confirmed gay kids are targets.

Sixty percent of bullied students said their perceived sexual orientation was the reason, but 66 percent who were harassed never reported it to their school. Now, a local coalition is preparing a training program for teachers and administrators. "[Toledo Public Schools] already adopted language that's protective of not only [gay, bisexual, and lesbian] students, but transgendered students as well. It's one of the few school districts in the country with that kind of broad policy. Now, the real issue is to get the word out," said Rob Salem, of the University of Toledo law school faculty.

"Just having a nondiscrimination clause does nothing in a school setting," added Kim Welter of Equality Toledo, an equal-rights advocacy group. "We're going to be working with adults - staff, faculty, administration, any parent groups who want to see what we're doing. And we'll do training around how to stop kids from bullying," said Ms. Welter, an ex-teacher. During student anti-harassment training, she said, "kids say, yeah, [bullying isn't] nice. And then they turn right around and we hear them saying 'fag' in the hallways. They tell us, 'Well, that's what the coaches talk like. That's what our fathers say.'"

Michelle Stecker, a Presbyterian minister and law school student who's working to bring in teacher training, doesn't expect much resistance. "No one can say they don't want safe schools for kids. It's not a morality issue, it's a safety issue," she said. But if doing the right thing isn't motivation enough for school districts, there's always the cold reality of law. With lawsuits ending in million-dollar awards, she said, "School districts are just starting to realize it's in their best interest to give kids a safe environment. The law is very clear."

Taken From: <http://www.equalitytoledo.org/media.htm>

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SOAR Reports was created and compiled by Nicky P. Damania (Bowling Green State University) for the 2006 GLACUHO Conference