

Queer Query

Volume 2 Issue 5

BGSU's LGBTQIA-Q Newsletter

January 19, 2005

No Ketchup Required

By Libby Schreffler

A twelve-year-old girl sits on the couch in her family's TV room, tracing her finger around a mosquito bite on her leg. Her father sits in front of her, his voice shaking nervously, "Your old enough, sweetie, to deserve an explanation for why your mother and I are getting divorced. You see, some men love women. Some women love men. And sometimes, men love other men. I'm one of those people. I'm gay."

That was the conversation that inducted me into ally-hood. Understandably, I was furious. With puberty in full swing, starting junior high, and coming to terms with both my parents' divorce and my father's sexuality, I was distraught. After a few years of normal teen-age angst, I came to understand that I was not angry at my father for being gay, but for deceiving me and my family for so many years. Then, as I matured even more, my anger toward my father became anger toward a society that would force him to lie to us, and to himself.

I became an activist, speaking out when homophobic slurs were used by my classmates. I drew attention to ignorance and misunderstanding. I educated and advocated. In a moment of misguided rage, I threw ketchup on a group of football players in my high school cafeteria when they picked on my gay best friend. It would not be until I reached college, however, that I came to comprehend more productive ways to be an ally. I still corrected the intolerant language of those around me, but I was not throwing ketchup anymore.

When I met my boyfriend, Dave, we seemed like polar opposites. I was a fiery, extrovert, never afraid to voice my opinion. He was a quiet boy, not one to stick up for his beliefs. We fell joyfully in love, and eventually moved in together. Like all couples, we have rubbed off on each other over the years. I have become less aggressive and more tranquil when it comes to voicing my opinion. I do not have to shove my ideas in people's faces anymore. He is more vocal, and has become quite a liberal.

I did not realize how much he had changed until a quiet January night. Dave is a gamer; he plays Final Fantasy XI, an on-line role playing game, where people can advance a chosen character through a myriad of job possibilities and adventures in the mythic land of Vana'diel. He spends hours and hours running about the cities and battling the monsters of the game, often chatting with fellow gamers and forming groups with other people with similar goals and interests. The conversations are not usually about anything other than the game, but occasionally people voice opinions about other players that can be less than kind. Dave knows how much I cannot stand homophobic language, but the ignorance of gamers often comes through in their characters during conversation. I had nearly accepted that some people in the pretend land of Vana'diel were incurable bigots.

Then Dave did something unexpected. As he was playing FFXI, Vobian, another player in his gaming group, shouted, "WARNING! KYOSUKE IS IN THE AREA. ALL DUDES COVER YOUR ASSES!!! I REPEAT, COVER YOUR ASSES!!!" My boyfriend responded immediately, "Shut up, Vobian. If I hear anymore gay bashing, I will leave. Seriously, grow up."

I had never seen him advocate against heterosexism like that before. I looked at him and my heart swelled up with pride. I realized then that being an ally is contagious. Without me realizing it, Dave had absorbed all of my tirades over Ohio's 2004 Issue 1; he had read the papers I had written on the rights of homosexuals to marry; he had heard me and agreed. Though Dave had never been a bigot, he made a decision not to remain without opinion. He chose to be an ally. He got that from me.

Whether one is thrust into ally-hood, as I was, or if one chooses to be an ally (like Dave), all allies continue to stand with the LGBTQ community. Know that we are spreading the word, and insisting on increasing education. We are fighting for equality and we are being heard, no ketchup required.

NBC's "The Book of Daniel" Stirs Up Controversy Nationwide

NBC has released a statement supporting the show and encouraging people to give it a try before writing it off because of its subject matter. "The Book of Daniel is a fictional drama about an Episcopalian priest's family and the contemporary issues with which they must grapple," the statement said. "We're confident that once audiences view this quality drama themselves, they'll appreciate this thought-provoking examination of one American family."

The "one American family" at the heart of the controversy revolves around the lead character of the show. Daniel Webster is an Episcopalian priest who is addicted to pain killers, with an alcoholic wife, a 23-year old son who's gay, a 16-year old daughter who is a drug dealer, an adopted 16-year old son who is having sex with the bishop's daughter, and a lesbian secretary who is sleeping with his sister-in-law. To most people, a show about a man of the cloth having this many problems to deal with is simply a tool the network is using to move certain situations into the mainstream media and show them as being commonplace in American families.

Aidan Quinn, who stars as Daniel, laughs off the criticism of the show. "I think it's a pretty down-the-middle, wholesome show. Quinn actually believes the story presents a realistic message. The American Family Association, based in Mississippi, has staged a nationwide campaign to pressure stations not to air the program.

The show is the brainchild of Jack Kenny, a gay man raised in the Catholic Church. Kenny says his inspiration for the show came from the emotionally guarded family of his life partner Michael, who Kenny says came from a world full of hidden meanings in words and sentences. Insisting that he has never seen "7th Heaven" or "Joan of Arcadia," Kenny is adamant that his show isn't about religion. "This is about family," he told reporters. The church is the backdrop. In an entertainment industry that thrives on controversy, his strategy worked. "Daniel faces the same relatable problems that every father has to deal with," says Kenny.

Apparently "better drama" is more important to Kenny and NBC than creating programs that unite and inspire people. Many people have no problem with the religious setting of the show, but say they don't want to watch yet another drama about unhappy, conflicted, struggling people. They'd rather see programs being developed that show functional families, to give hope to people who feel the strength of the American family is in jeopardy. A spokesman for the North Carolina Family Policy Council said, "Yes, people have problems, marriages have problems, families have problems.

Adapted From: <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/1-5-2006-85608.asp>

Report from the United Kingdom:

Bisexuality and Transgenderism

By Kevin Lano

In contrast to Ellen DeGeneres' comment that "I could have sex with a man again, but obviously he'd have to be a fairly feminine man," many bisexuals still seem attracted to the polarized opposites of gender. They maintain a dual attraction for both traditional male and female ideals of appearance and behavior -- for conventional masculinity and femininity solely. This isolates the many people who don't fit into these categories, in particular, transgender (and other) individuals who don't want to identify as either male or female.

I see the radical aspects of bisexuality as including a rejection of the traditional extremes of masculinity and femininity: the domineering, aggressive, macho man focused on power and material success and emotionally dependent on women, and the passive, appearance-obsessed woman. I don't want relationships with such stereotyped identities, or in such a framework, no matter what their professed sexuality is. I would hope that the bi community could provide a space for alternatives for mainstream gender models and a diversity of attraction to be supported.

However, in the UK bi community, discussion of gender and gender politics -- let alone action -- has in recent years been very limited. Mixed workshops on feminism at the main bi conferences always seemed to generate a lot of animosity and argument, with women and some progressive men trying to contest ignorant or straightforwardly bigoted attitudes from other men. Such workshops ceased to be held several years ago for this reason.

The bi community has also confronted the issues around transsexuality and transgenderism in a rather haphazard way. From the earliest years of the bi community, significant numbers of TV/TS and transgender people have always been involved in it. The bi community served as a kind of refuge for people who felt excluded from the established lesbian and gay communities. But at conferences, a recurrent issue which caused strong feelings was whether ex-male TS or TG people could share women's space, particularly crash sleeping space. Many women felt unsafe around these individuals, and demanded separate space be kept for women born as women. Current conference policy is to allow TS people who have lived in their new gender for at least six months to use spaces set aside for that gender. At the same time, the London bi women's group has been very accepting of the several ex-male TS women who have joined it.

Do the bisexual and TG/TS communities belong together, or should they now separate? Clearly they do need separate organizations and social spaces, but they could also benefit from more significant links and discussions of joint issues than has occurred so far. Bisexuals need to question how their attractions to conventional male and female images may be supporting the system of gender polarity that oppresses many TG and TS people. Bisexual organizations also need to have a consistent policy towards TS and TG people, one which doesn't exclude and isolate the increasing number of people who don't want to 'pass' as either male or female in (what should be) radical and progressive spaces.

On a positive note, the bi and transgender working groups for UK Pride '98 are intending to work together to coordinate their tents and events for this festival to produce a more effective overall presence. Hopefully this can be built on in years to come. Perhaps, given the dropping of the terms "bisexual" and "transgender" from the mission statement of "Lesbian and Gay" Pride, the groups could even coordinate a separate "Bisexual and Transgender" Pride?

Kevin Lano is a UK gay and bisexual activist, involved in the bi community including organization for UK Pride and in safer-sex education. He is a co-editor of *Breaking the Barriers to Desire* (Five Leaves Press, 1995) and *Bisexual Horizons* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), and has had short stories published in several magazines.

Taken from: <http://www.anythingthatmoves.com/ish17/report-from-uk.html>

150 Members of Congress Sign on to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Nondiscrimination Statements

By GPAC

WASHINGTON, DC - 150 Members of Congress have signed a Diversity Statement banning discrimination in their Congressional offices based on individuals' sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The recent additions of Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA) lifted the signatory count to 150. Signatories currently include 127 Representatives, 23 Senators, 132 Democrats, 16 Republicans and 2 Independents.

The Statement is jointly promoted on Capitol Hill by the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). HRC and GenderPAC joined forces at the beginning of the 108th Congress; prior to that, they had each promoted separate Diversity Statements for sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, respectively.

"Congressional support for gender identity and expression protections continues to increase. We hope this reflects expanding support for including such protections in federal legislation like the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and the federal Hate Crimes Bill," said GenderPAC Executive Director Riki Wilchins. Currently seven states (CA, CT, MN, NJ, NM, RI, VT) and more than 60 cities and local jurisdictions have laws banning discrimination based on employees' gender identity and/or expression, as well as 35 major corporations. The newest signatories come in the wake of the efforts of 140 constituents who came together for GenderPAC's 9th National Gender Lobby Day on Capitol Hill this past April 30th. The event helps activists educate their representatives about the importance of gender stereotypes in issues like workplace discrimination, hate crimes, and school bullying.

For more information on the Diversity Pledge please visit <http://www.gpac.org> or <http://www.hrc.org>. For information about GenderPAC's Workplace Fairness project, visit <http://www.gpac.org/workplace>

Taken From: <http://www.tgcrossroads.org/news/?aid=910>

BLOOMBERG NOW AN HONORARY LESBIAN

David Seifman

Of all the honors accumulated by Mayor Bloomberg, it's probably safe to say the one bestowed on him yesterday by former City Councilwoman Margarita Lopez was a first: honorary lesbian. "And I make him an honorary lesbian today." Lopez stated "He has become part of the group of people that I am part — the gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual community," Lopez said during a ceremony at 66 E. 4th St., one of six city-owned buildings being transferred for \$1 each to 10 cultural institutions that are part of the Fourth Arts Block.

Adapted from: <http://www.nypost.com/news/regionalnews/60253.htm>

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404 Saddlemire rainbow@bgnet.bgsu.edu 419.372.3244

Judge scolds pastor for bringing lawsuit over anti-gay remark

Express Gay News Staff

Wisconsin's largest gay rights group was awarded \$87,000 in attorneys' fees by a judge who scolded a Louisiana pastor and his lawyer for bringing a frivolous lawsuit claiming the group defamed him. Grant Storms, of the Reformer Ministries in Marrero, claimed in the lawsuit that Action Wisconsin defamed him by saying remarks he made at a 2003 anti-gay conference in Milwaukee advocated the murder of gays.

But in a ruling last week, Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Patricia McMahon said the group's interpretation of the remarks was reasonable and the lawsuit lacked merit from the day it was filed in February 2004. The judge also blasted Storms' lawyer, James Donohoo of Milwaukee, saying he should have known the complaint was a waste of time.

Storms was one of several speakers at the "International Conference on Homo-Fascism," a gathering of people who railed against gays. Action Wisconsin obtained an audio recording of the conference and publicized remarks that the group said incited violence and hatred.

In his speech, Storms said gay rights' opponents should "start taking it to the streets." He mimicked gun fire, and said, "Boom, boom, boom, boom. There are twenty! Ca-ching," according to a transcript.

Storms says any contention that he was advocating the murder of gays is "ludicrous and ridiculous." He called the judge "liberal" and "insane" and says he'll appeal.

Taken From: http://www.expressgaynews.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=4523

Questioning your sexuality? We can help. Complete confidence

By Christopher Kundmueller

In academia, whenever we are confused, most often we can raise our hand to ask a professor, talk to a friend, parent, religious affiliate, or reference through a book. But sometimes, things are just too complicated. Sometimes we are too scared or embarrassed to ask. Other times, it's just a taboo. In particular people are too frightened to ask questions concerning sexual orientation. That is why the LGBTQA-Q Resource Center is now offering a support group for those individuals needing help sifting through their questions. Out@ BGSU? is an online support group for those questioning their sexual orientation, contemplating coming-out to their family and friends, and for those who simply have questions or need someone to talk to. Out@ BGSU? is conducted online via the AIM chat room. The chats are lead by Nicky Damania, who is a knowledgeable facilitator wanting to help. The goal of Out@ BGSU? is to support individuals and provide guidance for questions one may have. Interested people should not worry that they will leave the chat room gay, but more educated on the issue. The chats are held Wednesday nights at 11:30 PM starting February 1, 2006. Best of all this can be done in the privacy of ones own room for complete confidentiality.

Please understand that this is not a dating service. There are numerous other places online for that service. Also remember that it is COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL. In fact, we recommend that you create an alias screen name to protect your identity. There is no pressure to stay and one can leave at any time. For more detailed information on how to join this chat use this link: http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/cmail/lgbtaq_resource_center/page13638.html.

A Coming Out Story

By Anthony

I am a single father (with custody!) of an 8-yr.old son, in my twenties, and have been out for 2 years. My story is not as bold, maybe, as others, but was very liberating and a refreshing start for me. I knew of my orientation since I was very young, maybe 6, 7, or 8, but did not have a word for it then. I just *knew* I was attracted to other boys and curious about them rather than girls. However, as I was raised in a Christian home, I was taught that gays/lesbians were perverts, deviants, etc, so as I grew I was very, very secretive of my identity. I secretly admired my male friends, while maintaining a safe image with a girlfriend and dates and all of that. My first crush was on my best friend in 6th grade. I haven't seen him in over 8 years, but I know he has never married and has not had a girl friend since HS, and I have a feeling he might be gay as well. Who knows? I graduated HS, married my girl friend of 2 years, though we never were intimate, but was very close friends. She knew at that time that there was something missing from our relationship and in hindsight has often said "no wonder!". We were married for 6 years while I was in the Navy, (and had my first gay encounter when I was 18), but divorced in 1994 after she found someone else (no big surprise). I was granted custody of my son, and she agrees it is best, and we remain close friends to this day. My coming out story starts 2 years ago when I was living in Tennessee and running a small business. I moved my ex-wife up to Tennessee in the hopes that we could reconcile our differences and *remarry* for my sons sake. She was all to thrilled. However, after I moved her in, I began to panic, as all the stressful memories of our marriage and my struggle with trying to keep up the image came flooding back. I thought I was backed into a corner and could not change my mind, seeing I had moved her in, etc. I had gone through so much stress and pain, trying to *condition* myself to be attracted to women while I was married, and obviously was unsuccessful. I could not go through that again. I could not force my self to be intimate with her again. I loved her, but not that way. So, while she was away visiting her mother who was sick, I went to a friend I knew in a local mall, who also ran a business and was a lesbian (she looks exactly like KD Lang! No kidding! hehe) and told her my "secret". She was SO supportive and happy for me. I felt this tremendous burden lift, as I had never before even acknowledged verbally, my secret. I even denied it to myself. NOW I was FREE and felt like telling EVERYBODY! To make a long story short (too late!!) I called my ex-wife and revealed it to her, and she was not surprised, as she felt something was wrong when we were together. The only *bad* thing that came of my story, was the fact that my parents found out through her parents, before I could tell them. I was SO angry. My mom was hurt that they knew before she did. The closest I've come to a bad reaction was when my mom told me, when she found out and called, "you know you'll need to suppress those feelings" LOL. I said "if I was going to do that, WHY WOULD I HAVE TOLD ANYONE??"

Anyway, I have a wonderful relationship with my parents and they are very supportive in their own way.

I went to a candle light vigil for Matthew Shepard not long after coming out, and felt like I was a part of something so important. I felt like I belonged and felt so good being with others like me, as I was not hiding anymore. I am so glad to be FREE.

I now live in a small town and am focusing on raising my son. I don't date much and have no relationships, so don't think that being gay only means doing gay things(whatever that is). I am happy with my life, and my son supports my identity and is learning so much about issues, tolerance, and acceptance. He is truly wonderful. I am so glad to be able to share my story and I hope it gives someone a little courage to do the "unthinkable". It is worth it!

Taken From: <http://www.rslvinson.com/gaylesissues/comingoutstories/blcomeanthony.htm>

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'Pro-family' groups aim at Ford again

By Andrew Keegan

Conservatives say automaker broke promises made to avoid boycott

A coalition of 42 "pro-family" groups issued a joint statement Jan. 11 demanding Ford Motor Co. abandon its support for gay organizations. In a letter to Ford written by American Family Association Chair Donald Wildmon, the groups accused the nation's second-largest automaker of going back on a promise to the AFA to disengage itself from gay causes.

"After meeting with seven homosexual leaders and without any input from thousands of their dealers who stand to be adversely affected by Ford's decision, Ford made their decision to renege on actions they told AFA they would take," Wildmon wrote.

"Ford's support for these groups pushing homosexual marriage can only hurt dealers across the country. Why would Ford put the interests of seven homosexual groups ahead of the interests of all their dealers? Simply because Ford considers seven homosexual leaders more important than thousands of their dealers."

AFA and Ford officials did not immediately return calls for comment. According to Wildmon's letter, Ford "represented" to the AFA that the company would not give cash donations to gay groups based on the purchase of a vehicle, would cease all donations to gay activities, such as Gay Pride events, and cease all advertising in gay publications and websites.

"We can not, and will not, sit by as Ford supports an agenda aimed at the destruction of the family," Wildmon stated. AFA asked Ford officials to respond by Jan. 20. "If we do not hear from you by that date, we will assume that Ford does not intend to honor their commitment. Should you decide to respond, please do so by letter since we can no longer trust Ford's spoken word," Wildmon wrote. Ford's rollercoaster. The conservative groups are upset over a statement from Ford last month after the automaker met with gay leaders.

Ford issued a letter Dec. 14 reaffirming its commitment to diversity that includes sexual orientation and pledging to advertise all of its brands in gay publications. The letter came two days after Ford officials met with gay groups who were upset by earlier reports that Ford made a deal with the AFA to cease some advertising in gay publications and support for gay organizations to avoid a boycott. Media reports said Ford had agreed to not advertise its Jaguar and Land Rover brands in gay publications.

Although the company stated that ceasing advertising its Jaguar and Land Rover brands in gay publications was a "business decision," the automaker later said the matter deserved greater attention. "It is clear there is a misperception about our intent," Ford officials wrote after meeting with the gay groups. "As a result, we have decided to run corporate ads in these targeted publications that will include not only Jaguar/Land Rover, but all eight of Ford's vehicle brands.

"It is our hope that this will remove any ambiguity about Ford's desire to advertise to all important audiences and put this particular issue behind us."

Taken From: http://www.expressgaynews.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=4501

Questions?

Write for Us !?!

Comments?

→ Is there a topic you want to see an article about? Do you want to be a guest writer? Don't hesitate to contact the LGBTQA-Q Resource Center. Submit your Article to rainbow@bgsu.edu.

Suggestions?

Pope Condemns Abortion, Drugs, Gay Unions

By Nicole Winfield

Associated Press Writer for Yahoo News

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI said Thursday that doctors should not give women the abortion pill because it hides the "gravity" of taking a human life, and also said it was wrong to give legal recognition to gay unions.

Benedict reaffirmed church teaching on both abortion and the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman during an audience with officials from Rome and its surrounding Lazio region — touching on two major issues on Italy's political agenda before general elections in April.

Benedict said pregnant women, particularly those in difficult situations, needed concrete help, and said officials should "avoid introducing drugs that hide in some way the gravity of abortion, as a choice against life."

Abortion up to the end of the third month of pregnancy was legalized in predominantly Catholic Italy in 1978, after a long battle between the Vatican and secular forces. Recently, the abortion pill RU-486 became available in parts of Italy on an experimental basis.

The Italian Bishops' Conference has mounted a renewed fight against abortion and the RU-486 pill, turning abortion into a campaign issue for the first time since Italians upheld the law in a 1981 referendum sponsored by the church in a bid to overturn it.

In other comments, Benedict stressed that marriage between man and woman was the cornerstone of society and not some "casual sociological construction" that could be replaced.

"It's a serious error to obscure the value and function of the legitimate family founded on matrimony, attributing to other forms of unions improper legal recognition, for which there really is no social need," he said.

Italy, where Vatican influence is strong, does not recognize unions of unmarried couples. Gay and lesbian associations have been pushing for common law couples to have legal recognition in hopes the move might pave the way for granting legal status to gay couples.

The center-left candidate for premier, Romano Prodi, has said his coalition would give legal status to unmarried couples if it wins the April 9 vote, but he has not supported legalizing gay marriage. The president of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, has said that common-law status might be applied to offer some legal protection to unmarried heterosexual couples — offering a rare exception to the church's condemnation of de facto unions. But he has said any such protection should stop short of envisioning "something similar to a marriage."

Taken From: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20060112/ap_on_re_eu/vatican_pope

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BGSU's LGBTQA-Q Resource Center

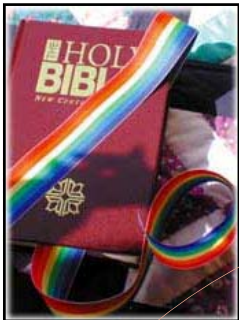
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LGBTQA-Q Resource Center Events

LGBTQA-Q Symposium:

The Intersection of Homosexuality and the Bible

This one-day drive in conference will intersect a controversial issue of religion and homosexuality. The purpose of the symposium is to represent both sides of the debate and allow about a two-hour monitored debate where the audience can ask questions to a panel of speakers. To promote a healthy debate on Queer issues, this event will feature six speakers (TBA) speaking on the issues. Three speakers for and three speakers against the respective issues.



Saturday,
February 25, 2006
8am-5pm

Business – Administration
Building 1007

Drag Benefit

This event, a benefit drag show, is an amazing event. It would raise money through tickets, sales, 50/50 raffle, silent auction, and a huge drag show. People that would be performing include, Fefe Foxx, Jayla Desmond Foxx, Rebecca Richards, and Prissy Devine, as well as Morgan Valentine.

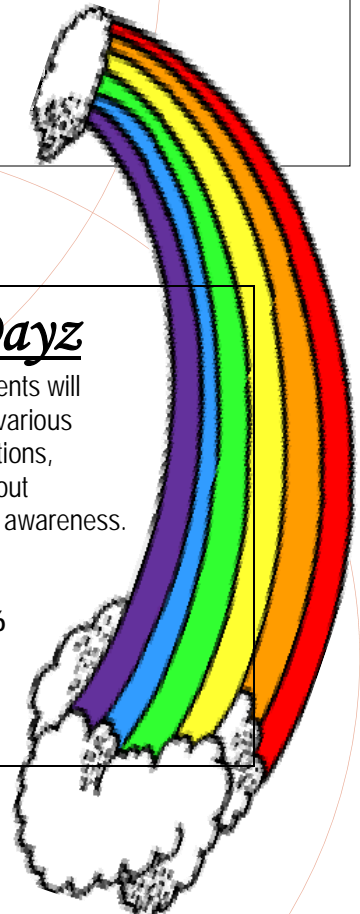
Sunday, February 26, 2006
7pm to 1am

Bretz Bar,
2012 Adams St ,
Toledo, OH 43624

Rainbow Dayz

A week long series of events will include major speakers, various workshops and presentations, and outdoor activities about LGBTQA-Q education and awareness. Three events each day.

Sunday, March 26, 2006
through
Saturday, April 1, 2006
BGSU Campus

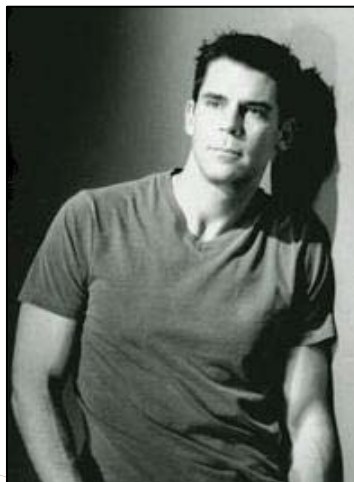


Billy Bean

His personal life and struggles will attract people interested in LGBT issues, while his past profession will attract fans of MLB. Often times sports fans only follow the sport, but do not care to know about the personal lives of the players. This speaker will hopefully create a deeper curiosity for sports fans to know more about the players' lives, not just their talents.

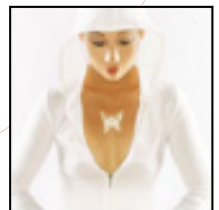
Thursday,
March 30, 2006
@ 8pm

202A Bowen –
Thompson
Student Union
Ballroom



Magdalen Hsu-Li

Asian singer/songwriter who's alluring, sensuous voice and provocative, philosophical lyrics appeal to a diverse audience. Her musical talent and performance has been compared to such popular artists as Tori Amos and Ani DiFranco. Her performances consists of the combination of her smooth vocals, piano, guitar and percussion.



Monday March 27, 2006 @ 9pm
Falcon's Nest in the Bowen-Thompson
Student Union

FOR MORE EVENTS AND INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT:
http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/sa/cmai/lgbtaq_resource_center/

Entertainment

"Brokeback" is Everyone's Mountain

Wayne Besen

Spoiler warning: Plot details, including the final scene of the movie, are revealed in this article.

If it weren't for gay people and gay-bashers, would anyone know about Wyoming? Sure, it is a beautiful state with some fine folks. But Matthew Shepard, Mary Cheney and now the movie "Brokeback Mountain" are the main reasons it makes news. One would think the state would be ecstatic about the national attention generated by the gay cowboy movie. But, though warmly and tearfully welcomed at a Jackson Hole pre-screening, "Brokeback" has yet to be booked into Wyoming theaters. Aren't Wyoming's residents the slightest bit curious why the rest of the nation is talking about the film?

Wyoming isn't alone in miscalculating America's readiness to embrace this cinematic masterpiece. I've been getting e-mails from people who are furious that they are being treated like children and denied the opportunity to share in the "Brokeback" experience. "It would be sad that I would have to get on a plane and travel to larger, distant cities to see this wonderful movie that's long overdue," a man wrote me from South Carolina. "I wonder if it will be on sale when it comes out on DVD, or will I have to special-order it ... (despite) more lewd and sexually graphic straight movies on display for all to see?"

Theater owners who won't show this movie will ignorantly cite "community standards." This reminds me of efforts to close strip joints in small towns for the same reason, yet conveniently overlooking that people who live in the community pack these places. This is not to draw an equivalency between stripping and "Brokeback," but to make the point that the complexion and complexity of communities is far different than is often presented. Having traveled throughout America, I can say that the whole blue/red state conventional wisdom is misleading. In all corners of this nation you find substantial numbers of gay people and thoughtful, progressive straight people. So, to deny a substantial minority enriching cultural opportunities, such as "Brokeback Mountain," does not reflect community standards, but rather tyranny of the slight majority.

Try as some might to suppress the movie, "Brokeback Mountain" is an unstoppable force. The acting is superb, the cinematography magnificent and the message piercingly honest. But most important, it was released in a diffuse media age in which the real impact won't be felt until the movie goes from the big to little screen. As the man who e-mailed me said, he will see "Brokeback Mountain" on DVD if the local yokels deny him the theater experience. The movie will also be available on digital cable's multitudinous channels. And now, people will be able to literally watch the gay cowboys from the closet on their easily concealed video iPods. While the Hollywood media machine's unveiling of "Brokeback Mountain" has been as dramatic as Wyoming's Grand Teton peaks, the long-term effect on American culture will have more in common with the rolling hills of the Great Plains.

Mainstream Americans will watch this movie in the coming years in the privacy of their own homes. Attitudes about gay people will be transformed, and greater acceptance will follow. People will learn how destructive the closet is, not only on gays, but also on the people caught up in the sham families created to protect these closets. It will also help undermine the right wing's promotion of "ex-gay" ministries. The dramatization of shattered families in "Brokeback Mountain" exposes these groups for the divorce mills they truly are. Indeed, "ex-gay" leader Stephen Bennett is quoted in USA Today about how his program is so feckless that merely seeing "Brokeback Mountain" caused one of these arranged marriages to nearly shatter.

"I just spoke with a married man on the telephone who is contemplating leaving his wife and children," said Bennett. "He says he's gay, and 'Brokeback Mountain' has influenced his decision." What has not been talked about is the profound effect the movie is having on the gay community. It has caused many people I know to reevaluate their lives and ponder the meaning of life, love and relationships. Watching the struggle of the two protagonists, Jack Twist and Ennis del Mar, makes today's gay people stop and think, "I really have it easy. Given this freedom, have I lived true to myself and opened myself to the possibility of love?"

The main reason that "Brokeback Mountain" will be a crossover hit is because of its universal message. Its success comes down to the ending scene, where Ennis del Mar is alone in his bare-bones trailer overlooking the haunting prairie. He opens a closet and wistfully touches the hanging clothes of Jack Twist, who has been murdered.

It is a gut-wrenching moment not only for the character, but also for moviegoers. They are forced to confront fears of loneliness and to ask themselves if they have lived life to the fullest and expressed their love to the people who matter most.

Gay or straight, the answer to such questions is all too often "no." In essence, we all have our own secret "Brokeback Mountain," and the movie subconsciously asks people to find their purpose and embrace their passion, because life is short and fragile. It is the searing, powerful message more than the fact the messengers are gay that will ultimately help people understand the struggles of gay people, and more importantly, themselves.

Taken From: http://www.gay.com/news/roundups/package.html?coll=news_feature&sernum=1280&page=2

Inside the List

By Dwight Garner

TRUE PROULX: Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain," the basis for the new Ang Lee film, first appeared in The New Yorker in 1997 and was collected, two years later, in her book "Close Range: Wyoming Stories." Now "Brokeback Mountain" is available in no fewer than three movie tie-in versions. There are slim 55-page editions of the story itself, in both paperback and hardcover; there is also a book called "Brokeback Mountain: Story to Screenplay," which includes not only the original story and the screenplay but also essays from Proulx and the screenwriters, Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. (The paperback edition of "Brokeback Mountain" is No. 27 on the extended soft cover fiction list.) Proulx, who is 70, writes in "Story to Screenplay" that "Brokeback Mountain" began to take shape early in 1997, in a Wyoming bar. She noticed, she writes, "an older ranch hand, maybe in his late 60's, obviously short on the world's luxury goods." This man wasn't paying attention to the women in the room, but rather to the young cowboys shooting pool. "Maybe he was following the game," Proulx writes, "maybe he knew the players, maybe one was his son or nephew, but there was something in his expression, a kind of bitter longing, that made me wonder if he was country gay. Then I began to consider what it might have been like for him." Proulx is a fan of Ang Lee's movie. When she saw it, she continues in her essay, she had to confront "the point that writers do not like to admit; in our time film can be more powerful than the written word." When an Associated Press reporter asked her if she'd ever be tempted to bring her two characters, Jack and Ennis, back in another story, she replied: "They're not coming back. There's no way. They're going to stay where they are. I've got other things to write."

Taken From: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/books/review/08tbr.html>

Mayor's New Policy Values All City Employees

Leigh Anne Richards

Indiana Transgender Rights Advocacy Alliance President

INDIANAPOLIS, IN - Demonstrating his commitment to removing unnecessary barriers that stand in the way of hiring and retaining the best and brightest employees, Democratic Mayor Bart Peterson today announced the addition of gender identity to the city's non-discrimination policy.

The policy, which covers city employees, is now consistent with a policy issued earlier this year by Republican Governor Mitch Daniels that covers state government workers. Both city and state governments have now committed to equal employment opportunity without discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. "INTRAA would like to thank Mayor Peterson for taking this important step towards making Indianapolis a truly progressive, world-class city," said Leigh Anne Richards, President of the Indiana Transgender Rights Advocacy Alliance (INTRAA). "Changes such as this has been needed for a very long time and will make a real difference in the lives of so many people who are simply trying to make a living, support their families, and contribute to the community." As awareness of the need for such policies has increased, other governmental bodies have responded. The Bloomington Human Rights Commission has recommended that the Bloomington City Council add gender identity to the city's human-rights ordinance, which already includes sexual orientation. The recommendation has not yet come up for a vote.

The Indianapolis City-County Council is currently considering an amendment to its Human Rights Ordinance that would protect all Indianapolis citizens and workers from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the areas of employment, education, public accommodations, and housing. Nationwide, 28% of Americans already live in jurisdictions that include gender identity protections. Should this amendment pass, Indianapolis would join the 6 states, 10 counties, and 64 cities that have already recognized the value in having gender identity included in their human rights laws.

INTRAA has been working in conjunction with Indiana Equality, a statewide coalition of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and allied organizations, to educate the Council on this issue and to urge passage of the amendment. "Mayor Peterson is confirming that Indianapolis values the contributions of all its employees," said Richards. "We hope that the Indianapolis City-County Councilors will recognize the direction in which our Mayor is leading the city."

INTRAA is a statewide advocacy organization working through education and legislative efforts to create a society that values and protects freedom of gender expression and the right to gender self-determination for all.

Taken From: <http://intraa.tgcrossroads.org/connections/story/?iid=43&aid=1061>

Education the Greek Community

By Christopher Kundmueller

When someone mentions the word fraternity or sorority, many things come to mind – most of which is negative. Even though most of the stereotypes that come to mind concerning Greek-letter organizations are false, they continue to plague the fraternal system to this very day. One aspect that may not come to one's mind, but is still a big problem for Greeks are sexual and gender minorities. For the longest time these two groups of individuals have been ignored, looked down upon, or worse in the Greek system. To help promote a more accepting atmosphere in the Greek community, Dr. Ron Binder, Director of Greek Affairs, has put together a social group to educate the Greek community - Gay and Greek Group.

Do not let the name fool you; you do not have to be of one orientation to get into the group. Any Greek affiliated individual is welcome to participate in the group. The goal of the group is to foster an education on the issue of sexuality so that current Greek members can better understand their gay, lesbian, or bisexual brothers and sisters. Other topics of discussion include the hazing policy, discrimination, and anything having to do with the Greek-letter community here on campus.

The meetings are held every other Tuesdays at 10:00 PM in 450A Saddlehire. The next meeting is on January 24th. For more information or any questions you may have, email Dr. Binder at rbinder@bgsu.edu.

Pride: The Beginning of it All

It started in 1969 in New York City on the evening of June 17th. The Stonewall Inn, a very popular gay hangout in the Greenwich Village section of the city, was packed with its usual crowd. What was somewhat unusual about the night was that New York City Alcohol and Beverage Control Board agents, along with a group of NYPD officers, raided the bar to enforce a seldom-used law. This action was not uncommon, as raids on gay establishments were carried out around the city with virtually no resistance. Patrons were escorted out of their gathering places, sometimes by force, occasionally beaten, and quite regularly arrested for no just reason. And in fact, the raid on this night was the second on that very establishment in less than seven days.

But there was one thing very different about this night. Lesbian and gay men decided spontaneously and for the very first time to fight the police harassment. The crowd, both inside and outside of the bar, erupted with violent resistance as the officers began to pick and choose which customers would be hauled off to jail. More and more law enforcement officers were summoned, and the patrons became even more united in increased outrage. Word of this event spread like wildfire, and larger throngs gathered on the following nights to denounce and protest the mistreatment. These rallies became known as the "Stonewall Rebellion" and the "March on Stonewall," and were the genesis of the modern gay and lesbian freedom movement. They were directed against the violence and widespread discrimination against the community. Out of these demonstrations was born the gay community's quest for equality, liberation, and basic civil rights.

Pride celebrations today have evolved into an annual ritual and have mushroomed to encompass hundreds of thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender participants throughout the entire world ... and this does not include the countless spectators. The attire of attendees is generally vibrant, and can range from next to nothing to full leather and fetish wear. It is all a reminder to the world that we deserve and are entitled to the exact same rights as other citizens, and should enjoy the freedom to live our own lifestyles without others passing judgment and spewing hatred. As important, the celebrations are a symbol of unity and solidarity, and provide a vehicle to demonstrate the unique personality and characteristics that make up the very diverse GLBT populations of the world.

Gay Pride also allows the community to establish a presence, and create an awareness that hopefully stimulates intelligent discussions. For many it is their very first step out of the proverbial closet. And for all it is an opportunity to participate in some of the biggest events of the year and to share their experiences.

Taken From: <http://www.gayprideneworleans.com/>

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BGSU's LGBTQA-Q Resource Center
404 Saddlehire rainbow@bgsu.edu 419.372.3244

U.S. Military Appears to be Spying on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Protests

By Aaron McQuade
Sirius OutQ News

A secret Pentagon document shows that the U.S. military has been spying on what they call "suspicious" civilian meetings—including protests over "don't ask, don't tell" held at various college campuses across the country.

NBC News was able to obtain only eight pages of the 400-page report, but that small portion showed that Pentagon investigators kept tabs on April protests at the University of California, Santa Cruz; State University of New York at Albany; and William Patterson College in New Jersey. A February protest at NYU was also listed, along with the law school's gay advocacy group OUTlaw, and was classified as "possibly violent."

All of these protests were against the military's policy excluding gay personnel as well as against the presence of military recruiters on campus. The Servicemembers Legal Defense Network says the Pentagon needs to explain why "don't ask, don't tell" protesters are considered a threat.

SLDN communications director Steve Ralls called the surveillance a dangerous threat. "The military has a long history of spying into the personal lives of their service members, including gay and lesbian service members, but they crossed yet another line, and an inappropriate one at that, when they began spying on private citizens," he said.

The database indicates that the Pentagon has been collecting information about protesters and their vehicles, looking for what they call a "significant connection" between incidents. Of the four "don't ask, don't tell" protests listed, only one—the University of California, Santa Cruz, where students staged a "gay kissing" demonstration—is classified as a "credible" threat.

Taken From: http://www.advocate.com/news_detail_ektid23480.asp

A Couple of Guys He Hasn't Got a Prayer

By Dave Brousseau



Taken From: <http://www.planetout.com/content/slideshow/splash.html?coll=520&navpath=/entertainment/comics/>

Margaret Cho

Born: December 5, 1968 in San Francisco, California
Quote: "I love my gay male friends so much. When I was a little girl I always wished that I would be constantly surrounded by gorgeous guys and now I am. I should have been more specific."

From her live appearances to frequent TV gigs, stand-up comic Margaret Cho has wowed audiences for nearly a decade. With queer comics as her close pals, Cho embraces her following, and even makes jokes about her own fumbling flirts with bisexuality.

A resident of Los Angeles since 1992, Cho was raised in San Francisco, where her parents ran a bookstore, which provided fodder for her naughtier jokes, including the infamous "Assmaster" story.

"All-American Girl," her short-lived sitcom, ran from September 1994 through March 1995. Although it failed to rev viewers (with its watered-down version of her comic sense) its cancellation provided more material, allowing Cho to poke fun at Hollywood moguls who asked her if she could "be a little less Asian."

The ribald comic, whose material ranges from S/M sex parties to "camel-toe jeans," has also appeared on the wholesome kid's show "Sesame Street." A filmed version of her hit show, "I'm the One That I Want," was made into a movie that found tremendous success in theaters, breaking box-office records at indie houses across the U.S. Not bad for a self-distributed title with only a handful of prints in circulation. She followed this up with another sell-out tour and hit movie, "Notorious C.H.O.," delivering ample amounts of raunchiness along with her self-empowerment creed.

Fans are delighting in Margaret's current one-woman show, "Revolution," politically fueled in this particularly conservative and militaristic time. And who knows -- instead of Bono saving the world with music, maybe Margaret can do it with laughter. Don't rule her out just yet.

Taken From: <http://www.gay.com/entertainment/celebrities/package.html?sernum=45>