



ATTRACTION

**Bisexuality,
the Rules of Attraction**

***I Know What You
Did This Summer!***

**A look at Vietnam
& San Francisco**

+ *Sizzling* Hot Topics

Double Issue
october 2005
volume 29, issues 1 & 2

LAMBDA

UNC-Chapel Hill's LGBTIQ-Affirming Magazine Since 1976



from the editor



The summer is over, and the fall semester is just heating up. In case the front and back covers didn't give it away, this could be the hottest edition of LAMBDA ever.

For this double issue, we asked people to tell us about their LGBTIQ-related experiences over the summer. Two students shared their summer in San Francisco while another recounted his months spent overseas in Vietnam with AIDS victims. The result was a five-page, picture-filled smorgasbord for the senses.

Also this summer, a study released by Northwestern University boldly claimed that bisexuality doesn't exist. Two individuals have taken the study to task in a humorous attempt to uncover the truth behind sexual attraction.

Last year, UNC introduced the multi-disciplinary Sexuality Studies minor. At some point, we've all asked the question, "What does one do with such a thing?" Fear not, for a long-time staff writer and now alumnus has been kind enough to share his experience as a graduate student in the Human Sexuality program at San Francisco State University, proving that the study of sexuality and gender is a valid field.

Political issues are always hot, and two of our staff writers have examined the GLBT-SA's controversial decision to co-sponsor a speaker from the conservative, LGBTIQ-affirming group, the Log Cabin Republicans. I'll let them speak for themselves.

As you flip through these pages, try to keep cool, and remember: LAMBDA can double as a fan.

In unity,
Robert Wells

Mission

LAMBDA IS UNC-CHAPEL HILL'S LESBIAN-, GAY-, BISEXUAL-, TRANSGENDER-, INTERSEX- AND QUEER-AFFIRMING PUBLICATION, PROVIDING A PROGRESSIVE OUTLET FOR NEWS, ANALYSIS, OPINION AND DIALOGUE. AS SUCH, WE ARE INHERENTLY COMMITTED TO A FEMINIST, ANTI-RACIST AND HISTORICALLY CONSCIOUS PERSPECTIVE IN PURSUIT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL PEOPLE.

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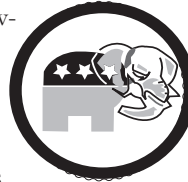
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LAMBDA wants you!

Are you a writer, photographer, or graphic designer who identifies with or considers oneself an ally of the LGBTIQ community? Then come work with the Lambda staff! The LAMBDA team is searching for creative and motivated staff members. If you’re interested, contact Daniel (dcothran@email.unc.edu).



“Penis Clamps and the Nonexistence of Bisexuality”

by Curtis Main and Nicole

Did you hear this headline? “New Study Finds That Humans Do Not Physically Enjoy Sleep.” Or this one? “Physical Evidence from Psychologists at UCLA proves the Nonexistence of Chocolate-Lovers.”

Hopefully you are thinking, “Well that is just pure bullshit, because I love to sleep late instead of going to class, and double-chocolate Ghirardelli brownie batter could give me an orgasm.” But, wait, if a few psychologists “proved,” through physical reactions of 100 randomly-selected Chilean middle-class women volunteer subjects, that these Chilean women do not enjoy sleeping or chocolate, then I guess some of us have just been living a lie.

Now hear this headline: “Northwestern University Psychologist Gerulf Rieger’s Study Finds That Bisexuality Does Not Exist.” What are your first thoughts?

To quickly fill you in, 101 men from Toronto, Canada of self-identified, straight, bisexual, and gay sexualities were physically tested against their own identifications. They were volunteer or paid participants, responding to an advertisement in “gay and alternative” newspapers for a study by Northwestern University’s “Center for Addiction and Mental Health.” That is, “genital arousal patterns” were “measured” by attaching some sort of monitor to their penis or surrounding area when viewing images of females or males. The researchers found that most if not all of the self-identified bisexuals were not physically aroused by both sexes. About 47% of the bisexuals were mostly aroused to same-sex images. 20% were aroused by pornographic images of females. The researchers found that all of the men showed four times the arousal to one sex or the other.

Oops, almost forgot to mention - one third of the men showed no arousal to the imagery.

Having any second thoughts? Who else better to critique this study than a bisexual herself? Nicole, a self-identified bisexual student at UNC, who is majoring in Psychology, has not only enjoyed the fantasies of sex with females and males, but has physically been aroused and had sexual relations by/with both. But wait, Rieger would proclaim Nicole is simply “Gay, Straight, or Lying.” I asked Nicole to read the study and here are her responses.

“I just think this whole thing is really interesting. You cannot have definite results until you do studies on both sexes. I believe that women admit their sexuality is more fluid than men do. I feel like sexuality is fluid anyway. Maybe this study shows that sexual attraction or attraction period is not something purely physical - maybe it is mental as well. I was, however, surprised that the self-identified bisexuals did not show as much arousal to females since they claimed they do.”

Nicole did not object too much to the study because they measured physiological reactions. Yet, when I asked of her response to the claim that bisexuality does not exist, this is what she had to say: “That is bullshit because clearly there are tons of bi people, including myself. I think that both gay and heterosexual people would like to believe bisexuality does not exist because it makes them uncomfortable.”

What a perfect response. As we are both Psychology majors and have read and critiqued stacks of other research papers, Nicole and I have one word for this study’s conclusion: bullshit.

Think about it more. The basic tenets of psychological research were not even met - any “Psyc 10” student could tell you the same. Were the participants a random sample of the population? Can we really identify with and be represented by men from Toron-

to, Canada? Were 100 men enough to claim evidence for all men in the world? Certainly not. If one-third of the participants do not respond to the measurements, most psychologists would try and find better equipment, but these researchers claim that although one-third showed no arousal, their lack of response did not change the findings to: "Same Study that Proves Bisexuality Does Not Exist Now Proves That 33% of All Men are Asexual!"

Yet it does not stop here. Skepticism comes first as a psychologist, whether you are performing research or critiquing it. It seems these researchers did not take the time to review their own work before publishing it, too excited by the "ability" to proclaim that bisexuals do not exist, instantly making biphobic and homophobic people happy and disqualifying millions of people's own sexual feelings and experiences, including Nicole's.

Furthermore, is pornography even a true test of arousal? Most people are willing to accept that some people do not enjoy pornography, and others even find it offensive. Even if an individual does enjoy certain sorts of pornography, it certainly does not follow that they will necessarily be aroused by pornographic images that are randomly selected for them to view.

In our culture of instant gratification, biased research, and "science = truth," you have to take studies like this and just laugh. Anyway, next week some psychologist will claim sexuality is determined by a correlation to watching MTV as a child. Honestly, if you, like all of us, enjoy sleeping though some desperate graduate student in Psychology says otherwise, who gives a damn? Bisexuality exists. Nicole knows it, she enjoys it. Screw the study. If they, like me, are just jealous that Nicole and others get the best of both, then they ought to focus on their own fears and sexuality and stop attacking bisexuality.

HOT topic

When did you come out?



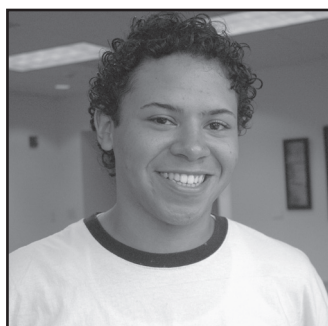
Chris Gaiser, Sophomore

I first came out to myself my sophomore year of high school. I went to a really small, really conservative Catholic school, so being gay was not exactly tolerated. The topic was basically ignored in our religion classes, even though every other socially controversial issue was discussed. I just felt alone, and like no one else could relate. Luckily, I had some amazing friends who stood by me, and made high school bearable. I only completely came out last year.



Rose Darpino, First-Year

I was 15 when I met the girl who would soon become my first girlfriend. I lived in small town New Bern, North Carolina- not a very welcoming place for liberals of any type. When we started dating, the entire school knew and because everyone kept hanging it over my head that they would tell my mom, I decided to beat them to the punch. Her initial response was, 'At least I know you're not getting pregnant' and things went relatively downhill from there. In comparison to so many others, I am lucky because I was not disowned, beaten, or severely mistreated, however 'coming out' is a difficult process no matter what.



Robie Forbes, First-Year

I came out when I was in the 11th grade mainly because I had already been 'outed' by someone that I thought was one of my friends. In the 10th grade I had trusted her with my secret towards the end of the year and then after our Spring Break she came back and told everybody what I had told her. I denied it the rest of that year but still had to live through the constant harassment that most 'out' people sometimes face. At the beginning of my 11th grade year I started going with the first guy I ever went with and he told everybody about us. So after that I just decided everybody knows now so why worry and I came out to friends at school, then my mom, and eventually anybody who asked.

LOST

in saigon

by Tommy Rimbach

I cannot explain to anyone the oddity of watching my own fingers fly across the keyboard at the Communist youth union's crowded internet café in Saigon (officially Ho Chi Minh City), while my Vietnamese counterparts carefully and deliberately poked with only their index fingers in order to chat with their lovers over webcam. I cannot explain how it felt riding on the back of motorbikes at breakneck speed, cutting through the thickness of smog and humidity that choked my lungs, or how it hurt when a Honda Dream nailed me as I tried to cross Pham Ngoc Thach Street.

There is a whirlwind of fragments in my head, although I promised myself I would remember all the details. My eight weeks in Vietnam are a blur of poverty, inequality, and irrationality. It was time spent ducking under live electrical wires that drooped down to the flooding sidewalks in a monsoon rain on my way to visit a young woman in the last stage of AIDS,

who could not afford antiretrovirals. These medications were the only thing that could prolong her life.

Upon arriving on one of my Action Aid International visits to her home, tucked into a narrow alley filled with roosters and dogs in the outskirts of the city, news of her husband's death sent jolts of defeat through my numb body - especially as her seven-year-old son shyly thanked me for the sidewalk chalk and coloring book I had brought him the week before.

I trembled when I called my mother overseas that night, as I told her about this woman and others, like the HIV-positive woman I had met who spent her days peeling eight kilos of garlic for just fifty cents worth of wages to support her family. And the eighteen-year-old under virtual house arrest - stigmatized and isolated because police in Go Vap District fear he will spread the HIV virus if allowed out of the confines of his bedroom.

A mere fifty U.S. dollars would pay for an entire month of generic antiretroviral drugs, but there are 50,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Saigon alone. A year's supply would cost just \$630, but when the annual per capita GDP hov-



An AIDS public health message painted on a board, leans against a wall on Nguyen Du Street

ers at around \$400, it makes sense that only 100 people receive ARV treatment in Vietnam – through drug trials only, according to the World Bank. And being LGBTIQ in Vietnam? “Homosexuality” falls under the government’s category of “social evils,” along with prostitution and drug use. One night, my local friend, Trinh, and I found ourselves in front of Samsura at 11 p.m., only to find that police had raided it early because it catered to LGBTIQ people. Trinh’s family accuses her of being a lesbian (although she is not) because she is unmarried and without a boyfriend at age 22; if she is out past midnight, she faces arrest by police, who believe her to be a prostitute. Video cameras and translators are part of these raids, of which I experienced two, shutting down nearly all bars by midnight.

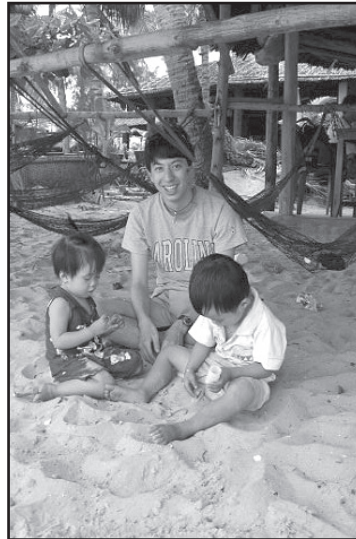
Following the recommendations of an Australian-accented young Vietnamese man on the street, we hopped into a taxi to “Lost in Saigon” in the backpackers’ district, catering to the “social evils” crowd: sex workers, foreigners, and LGBTIQ people mixed freely under signs that read “NO DRUGS” in both English and Vietnamese for everyone’s convenience. I learned that the bars along Pham Ngu Lao bribed the police in order to stay open through the night. Ending the night with a mix of Vietnamese and Westerners at a “sidewalk café” (plastic stools spilling into the street), I listened to stories of homelessness, hopelessness, and confusion: “My roommate just tested positive for HIV. She needs ARVs but was put on a list.” Marginalized gay men and sex workers, both female and male, tell the same recycled story, as well as women married to unfaithful men, teenagers who inject heroin, and others.

When I flew into Los Angeles to visit with friends on my way back to Chapel Hill, I could only describe Vietnam as “a lot smoggier than here.” The Honda Hybrid my friend picked me up in at LAX was unreal, as were my friends’ fascination with posters strewn up all over Santa Monica of the next season’s slew of women in “America’s Next Top Model” (“Who do you think will win?”), and a late night

pool gathering of nonchalant University of Southern California gay men stripped down to their underwear.

Other than an occasional email, like a recent one from Trinh asking me to visit soon (“I hope that at

that moment you won’t see me with a bunch of kids”), I find myself losing what I have seen. Fragmented recollections from across the Pacific, of singing Diana Ross’ “If We Hold On Together” with 20 Vietnamese in a five-story karaoke bar; street children screaming with delight to learn that my name is “To Mi,” meaning “A Big Bowl of Instant Noodles” in Viet-



Senior Tommy Rimbach collects shells on the beach of Mui Ne with residents

namese; and overwhelmingly kind families ravished by AIDS slowly dissipated from my consciousness. Unfortunately, my privilege, in the ultimate scheme of the world, allows for me to forget.



Hard at work on the shores of Mui Ne

A Summer in San Francisco

Two UNC students reflect on their summer experiences in San Francisco

by Win Chesson

As often as I have tried to fully reflect upon my past summer spent living in San Francisco's Castro district, I know I have not completely realized how much this experience will continue to affect me. Perhaps the academic and professional merits of this summer experience will prove easiest to measure. They certainly feel more concrete to me: working at the National Sexuality Resource Center to plan an International Conference on Sexual Rights and Moral Panics, attending a four-week training on "Sexuality, Health, and Society," and writing for *American Sexuality* magazine. Yet while my "9 to 5" San Francisco life has clearly helped to mature my professional aspirations in the human sexuality field, a wholly separate aspect of San Francisco life will forever remain even more dear to my heart—my experience with the queer swim team, Tsunami.

Though not part of my initial plan for my time in San Francisco, joining Tsunami immediately plugged me into a vibrant social network. The team bonded at our meals together and at each workout as we prepared for the International Gay and Lesbian Aquatic Championships. While sick one weekend, Tsunami members cared for me with Chinese takeout and when I moved

from San Francisco State University dorms to the extra room at a teammate's house, teammates helped carry my bags across town. Tsunami became my family.

Swimming with this team was also much more of an emotional experience than I anticipated. I had not prepared myself for an unexpected reexamination of the ending of my swimming career at



Junior Win Chesson poses in front of the Golden Gate Bridge

UNC. Generally I like to think that I am capable of dealing with the filthy stench of homophobia whenever it manifests itself in my life and have had adequate practice. Yet I now realize that though I have always told myself that I quit the varsity swim team at UNC because swimming demanded too much of my

time, this is simply not the case.

The act of joining Tsunami allowed me to revisit these forced justifications. Finally the unexamined sour taste left in my mouth after stopping my varsity career could be identified, and named for what it was: the rejection of a homophobic atmosphere. Swimming with Tsunami, I could accept that the undercurrent of unchallenged homophobia on the men's varsity swim team at UNC is what drove me to quit more than anything else. With this acknowledgment, I have been able to accept the truth, heal, and move gaily forward in peace.

While I was healing this old, yet newly acknowledged wound, I never dreamed of the lovely friends I would stumble upon while training with Tsunami. All I really expected in joining was to stay in decent shape. If I was lucky, maybe I would even make a friend. As one of the youngest swimmers on the team, I realized that at UNC, almost every other LGBTIQ person I know is near to my age. I hardly knew any LGBTIQ people over the age of 25, and certainly never had any such role models.

As I became friends with gay men of all ages, I learned stories about a queer past to which I had never previously been exposed. I became deeply connected to a uniquely queer history that has been silenced and suppressed. It was a history not passed down through textbooks and tests, but through engaging conversations, community networks, and friends. These friends discussed with me their struggles with and success in coming out, strained relationships with biological families, and how it felt to experience death after death of close friends at the beginning of



A rainbow-flag in downtown San Francisco

the AIDS crisis. I learned of the crooked pathways these gay men followed in their journeys to where they are today. No topic was off limits. As I became better friends with these men with whom I trained every day, I began to understand the idea of constructed families, families of choice. I felt at home.

Every time I attempt to comprehend the entirety of how this past summer has affected me, I become overwhelmed and get lost in the many incredible memories contributing to my experience: engaging in passionate work in the field of human sexuality, feeling constantly inspired by my colleagues, healing old emotional wounds and continuing the sport I love, making new friends; discovering a loving family away from home, and living in an environment where my queerness becomes such a non-issue as to cause me to wonder what else about myself might render me unique. All these things became my summer in San Francisco—hopefully, what will have been my first of many.

by John Jackson

This past summer, I was lucky enough to live in San Francisco, interning for the National Queer Arts Festival. I arrived in May and stayed until the end of July. This was quite exciting for me, having only lived in North

Carolina previously. Naturally the move was quite a culture shock, but I adapted well to West Coast living. I lived on Haight Street, noted for its 1960's counterculture and hippie aesthetic. The laid back pace of life, lax views towards chemical indulgences, and appreciation for art and nature were imminently agree-

able. It is my burning desire to return one day, and I would certainly encourage anyone who could, to visit.

I began work for the festival towards the end of May. As one of only two interns, I did work for the festival that ranged from publicity to hanging the shows to the styling of the food and flowers for the opening receptions. (This task was pawned off on me because I was the only gay male at the festival; fortunately my aptitude for floral arrangements is considerable.) The art that we displayed was by turns thought provoking, beautiful, and confrontational. Especially touching were the opportunities I had to meet, engage and learn from the LGBTIQ artists themselves, many whom were local to the area. One particularly memorable encounter was with a theater troupe that the festival flew in from Israel to perform a trans-themed play. After the unexpected opportunity presented itself to spend some time with them at both Disneyland and Universal Studios after the run of their play, I can



Juniors John Jackson and Win Chesson pose with a woman whose shirt reads, "Eat Organic Pussy" at the Dyke March

assure you that LGBTIQ Israelis, are, on the whole, a hilarious and affable people.

San Francisco was, for me, a revelation. Here in Chapel Hill, my persona is John Jackson (a.k.a. Jacki Bitch) the witty, effusive, amusing gay man quick with a quip and heavy on the lip-gloss. There, however, I was treated as an individual, rather than a token. I realized that my personal merits could be attached to my skills and knowledge, rather than my ability to play into peoples' expectations of what a "gay man" should look and act like. Upon returning, I have focused

less on being a caricature of myself and more on cultivating a more authentic, natural human persona who transcends the sum

of the expectations of the people I encounter here, on a daily basis. This is for me not only personally empowering, but profound in the sense of my own evolution and development. It is my sincere hope to maintain the sense of self I gained in San Francisco as a queer person, because although labels establish identities which are convenient and easy to uphold, they can also be limiting. No longer shackled by conventions of my identity label, I feel free to express and actualize myself in a way that goes beyond the dictates of established conventions.



One of the many works of art on the streets of San Francisco

what are you going to do with *THAT*?

An alumnus with the Sexuality Studies minor puts his knowledge to use

by Trevor Hoppe

As a Masters student in Human Sexuality at San Francisco State University, I had imagined our first reading assignment to be from the work of Michel Foucault or Judith Butler or maybe even Alfred Kinsey. So you can imagine my surprise when, at the graduate student orientation, the Director of the program distributed the first xeroxed reading - a speech given by Mark Danner to graduating students of the Department of English at the University of California at Berkeley in May 2005. Its title: "What Are You Going to Do With That?"

As the Director pointed out, this question will echo in our ears for years to come. It is the very same question that filled my parents' eyes when I told them where I was applying to graduate school. I heard it time and time again when I told fellow graduating seniors at UNC my post-graduation plans. Here in San Francisco, when I'm at a bar talking to a cute young gay men (and there are so many of them here), he will inevitably give a chuckle and ask, "So are you here to find fieldwork tonight?"

While the young man's question is certainly engaging, it is not the reason I find myself attending SFSU. When I helped then-junior, Alice Newton, and others to create the GLBT-SA in the spring of 2002, I did not know that I was setting myself up for a series of decisions that would deeply affect my life. It was because of my involvement with them that I took classes like Sherryl Kleinman's "Sex and Gender in Society" (SOCI 24) and Karen Booth's "Transnational Queer Politics" (now WMST 102). Because of my member-

ship in GLBT-SA, I was able to start a conference on LGBTIQ issues and hear such amazing, moving speakers as Urvashi Vaid, Mandy Carter, Suzanne Pharr, Nomi Lamm, and countless others. These women impacted me deeply and shook my values to the core. Had I not been involved in GLBT-SA, I could be doing something entirely boring today like accounting or cell biology. However, the ordinary was not an option anymore. It is at least very difficult, in my mind, to have read great works of feminist theory and continue on to such things. Likewise, it seems downright impossible that someone might have taken a class with Sherryl Kleinman and still be able to dream peacefully of a life dedicated to corporate law. Nor is it possible, at least in my eyes, to read a book by bell hooks and ever look at the world with the same eyes again.

Feminism is just one tool that can give you the thick, horn-rimmed glasses it so often takes to see clearly in America. Once you find yourself with not just one, but many of these critical tools, you too will find yourself losing sleep at night. This very crisis characterized my senior year at UNC. As a graduate of the Department of Political Science, the obvious choice for me was to take the LSAT and apply to a series of law schools I probably never could have gotten into. Having never been a fan of the obvious, I sought out the Master of Arts in Human Sexuality Program here at San Francisco State. It called to me in a way that other options did not. Many of you are probably wondering what graduate school is like, though, and not how I came

Continued on page 23

an unfinished welcome

A Response to the Chancellor

[*opinion*]

by Sarah Carucci

In last month's State of the University Address, Chancellor James Moeser caught the attention of LGBTIQ people across campus as he called for the University to be a place "where gays and lesbians feel welcome." In so doing, he made a seemingly sincere effort to reach out to the campus LGBTIQ community and to send a message, albeit vague, of tolerance. His words were most likely seen as entirely innocuous by the majority of those in attendance at Memorial Hall – a familiar, if not particularly poignant call for the acceptance of another aspect of diversity.

Sexual diversity can be perceived and discussed in a number of distinct framings. At its most base and binary level it can be seen as being composed of the two incompatible parts of heterosexuality and homosexuality. The next level, rhetorically occupied by the Chancellor himself, is that of using the terms "gays and lesbians" to refer to the entirety of those who fall without the typically "straight" field of being. These words are certainly useful for the many individuals who utilize them for their own self-identity but the technical constraints of their meanings simply do not allow for their reference to the full range of sexual and gender diversity. In this instance, the Chancellor blatantly left out bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals from his call for acceptance.

Bisexuality is an oft-overlooked concept, even from within LGBTIQ communities. It is typically often pigeon-holed as a mere shift back and forth between "gay" and "straight" depending on whom someone is currently dating. For the many people who embrace this identity as their own however, it is a legitimate and autonomous sexual identity in its own right. And yet bisexual visibility is intrinsically near-impossible to attain because of the tendency of individuals to label another's sexuality based on how it is being displayed in the present – by the gender of someone's current partner, for example.

Beyond this, the omission of transgender and intersex people from the Chancellor's speech speaks

to something perhaps even more egregious. Gender identity remains an ignored category of identity on this campus and through out much of the greater world. While strides continue to be made towards classifying sexual orientation as a legitimate identity characteristic deserving of protection from discrimination, the same cannot be said for the recognition of gender identity. It is not simply that non-binary and non-static gender identities are scorned, so much as they are refused even the most basic acknowledgement.

At his Open House event at the end of September, the Chancellor admitted the following in respect to the addition of gender identity to the campus non-discrimination policy. "We simply haven't acted on that, but we haven't closed that door." Truly a non-committal statement if ever there was one.

On the whole it is both unproductive and inaccurate to classify the reduction of all minority sexual and gender identities into the cataloging of "gays and lesbians" as being intentionally disparaging. I understand that many would argue that harping on such linguistic technicalities does nothing more than discourage people from even trying to acknowledge and include LGBTIQ individuals in the first place. But truth be told, this is simply not a place where we can back down, specifically on the University administrative level.

On a person-to-person level, I would never resent needing to explain the differences between or my preferences for certain sexual and gender identity labels. I've found that for most people, it is simply a matter of lack of exposure to terms such as "LGBTIQ" or "queer" that prevents them from comfortably using such classifications. But top University administrative officials must be expected to be more aptly versed on inclusiveness, and such shortcomings cannot be simply overlooked as being harmless. They tie directly into a lack of concrete, meaningful, and upheld non-discrimination policies and as such, directly impact the experiences of LGBTIQ people on this campus.

[opinion]

Justice or Just Us?

Why I Oppose Co-Sponsoring the Log Cabin Republican President's Speech

by Nick Shepard

As a sophomore two years ago, I attended a GLBT-SA board retreat, where we debated our mission statement and our future direction. The consensus that emerged from the meeting was that we understood ourselves as a social justice organization focused on the needs, desires, and struggles of LGBTIQ-identified people, rather than simply an apolitical association of incidentally homosexual individuals. Local lesbian activist, Mandy Carter, helped facilitate, challenging us to consider whether, as an organization and a movement, we would fight for “justice or just us.” Our mission statement reflected our answer: we would advocate “for the civil rights of all people,” “networking with campus and community progressive organizations” in order to “create a community of LGBTIQ-identified folks and their allies that supports and affirms all aspects of their identity.” However, two years later at a recent GLBT-SA meeting, the membership voted overwhelmingly to co-sponsor, in name, a speech by Log Cabin Republican President, Patrick Guerriero. I think that this decision was a betrayal of our entire reason for existing as an organization. What follows are several of the points raised in favor of co-sponsorship, and my responses.

Several GLBT-SA members claimed that by deciding not to co-sponsor the event, GLBT-SA would be “silencing” the Log Cabin Republicans. Anyone who lives in the United States and believes that conservative voices are “silenced” cannot possibly be paying attention. Further, the event would have taken place regardless of GLBT-SA’s sponsorship; by opting against co-sponsorship, we would not have prevented him from speaking or being heard, but could have demon-

strated that we are not interested in supporting an incredibly reactionary organization that sees “gay rights” as disconnected from a larger struggle for justice.

But, some students argued, simply because some of us disagree with elements of the Log Cabin platform does not mean that we should not hear what he has to say; a diversity of views is important. First, GLBT-SA has never seriously attempted to attain a diversity of queer perspectives. While I applaud the efforts made by UNITED (United for New Ideas Towards Ethnic Diversity) to address issues of intersecting identities, particularly across racial lines, I have rarely seen events scheduled or speakers promoted by GLBT-SA who could speak to working-class queer experiences, nor lesbian-feminist ideas, nor transgender politics, nor queer anarchist or socialist critiques, nor a whole host of other relevant perspectives. While our campus features an abundance of Republican events and speakers – the vast majority whom actively oppose our most basic human dignity – none of these other queer-affirmative perspectives are considered important enough to be heard by GLBT-SA.

Also, it’s not a question of whether or not everyone agrees with any speaker’s political views; obviously, in a diverse organization there is a diversity of perspectives. The important question is how we should prioritize the use of our collective resources. If we wanted to hear every perspective, why would we not co-sponsor the homophobic speakers the College Republicans bring to campus? We would not because some speakers are opposed to our core values as an organization. If I want to hear a diversity of perspectives including those antithetical to

social justice, such as the Log Cabin Republican party line, I am perfectly able to do so, without spending my organization's resources to promote them.

Others maintained that GLBT-SA is "not a political organization." Not political? When our mission states that we will network with other progressive organizations to advocate for civil rights, how can we not be political? When religious ideologues and conservative politicians (from the party whose member we are sponsoring) declare war daily on our right to exist, how can coming together as LGBTIQ individuals not be political? Whether or not we like it, and no matter how isolated by privilege many of us are, any queer organization is political, and pretending it is not is insulting to those of us who are fighting just to be who we are.

Finally, one concerned GLBT-SA member expressed that if the organization did not vote to co-sponsor the event, that we would be perceived as "a bunch of militant homosexuals." Excuse me? First, none of the rights we, as LGBTIQ individuals, enjoy in the United States would exist at all if not for a whole lot of "militant homosexuals" who struggled for justice against overwhelming oppression, from

Stonewall to the ACT-UP activists. Secondly, since when have we been struggling to be conciliatory and complacent, rather than uncompromisingly declaring what we stand for? And speaking as one of those "militant homosexuals," I think that it is far worse to alienate a constituency dedicated to our liberation rather than a theoretical group of conservative straight people more concerned with seeing that we behave respectably than with affirming our full identities.

Will we, as LGBTIQ students and activists, understand our struggles as single issues in a bubble, as the Log Cabin platform proposes, or as integral parts of a broad movement for social change? Do we want to hear a genuine diversity of LGBTIQ voices, or do we want to promote well-known reactionary speakers with values opposed to the spirit of our organization? Should we worry about straight perceptions of us, or should we boldly affirm that straight people can and should learn from our critiques of gender, sex, and sexuality? Are we about justice, or just us? I know where I stand, but I feel incredibly discouraged by GLBT-SA's cowardly stance in favor of conservatism and assimilation.

Long Division

by Jay Dolan

The issues GLBT-SA deals with are by nature political, but the paradox of LGBTIQ issues is that they are not based on how to run a country, but on how to treat people. By saying that inviting Patrick Guerriero of the Log Cabin Republicans to speak with GLBT-SA's name is detrimental to our cause, we are becoming our own worst enemy. Instead of gaining numbers by uniting on issues that we share in common, we divide our own group, we lose power, and our cause becomes a fight of "us verses them."

Non-heterosexual issues do not necessarily deal with who to go to war with, who to tax, what to do with the environment, and a plethora of other methods of how to run a country. Because of these deviations in methodology, it is logical that some LGBTIQ people would identify themselves as Republicans through their shared views. However, by denying our co-sponsorship to Guerriero's speech, we are cutting off parts of the LGBTIQ community that exist here at UNC.

We are already despised, flamed, segmented, and battled by a throng of individuals and groups outside our community. Must we devour ourselves in a battle because of a variety of beliefs we may never share in common? By discriminating against the Log Cabin Republicans, the virtue of acceptance we uphold is no longer sacred and we become hypocrites in our own cause.

They would come to UNC with or without our blessing. In fact, they are already here. If we raise our arms and fight, we have already lost. To those that oppose and those that are unsure, I offer the advice of Edmund Spenser in his epic "The Faerie Queen," that we must, "See and know, and yet abstain." Abstain from hatred, and instead choose the road of temperance so the good of all people can be achieved.

I, as an Independent, do not wish to support any political party but I am willing to learn from an unsung voice.

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SODOMY LAW

SEX REQUIRES ACCOMPANYING APPROVAL FROM GOVERNMENT

by Antoine Reid

If you appreciate or partake in anal, oral, or extra-marital sex, you just might be a sex offender. In many places in the United States, sex has been the focus of laws that could make your sex illegal. In fact, your sex could even be used against you.

Sodomy laws in the U.S. turn certain sexual acts into sex crimes. You may have heard the term “sodomy” tossed about before, usually in reference to the Lord Almighty’s supposed rejection of non-heterosexual people. Sodomy in the law refers to anal sex, oral sex, and bestiality. You may also be surprised that in this country, sodomy laws impact not just members of the LGBTIQ community, but even privileged heterosexuals.

Even though sodomy laws can be applied to all members of American society, they are most often used and enforced against non-heterosexual men. King Henry VIII first introduced legislation against non-heterosexual sex as early “sodomy laws” in 1553 with the “Buggery Act.” “Buggery,” or anal sex between two men, was punishable by hanging. This punishment was not lifted until 1861.

In the United States, the thirteen colonies adopted most of their laws from England, including the sodomy laws. Each state, due to religious reasons and England’s power, adopted a similar set of laws, which carried its own set of penalties. By 1960, all states had sodomy laws, and most of the other countries England colonized also adopted sodomy laws, such as India and South Africa.

Here are a few examples of U.S. sodomy laws. In Arkansas, if a penis penetrates a vagina or an anus, it is considered sodomy- a misdemeanor. New York defined sodomy as sexual intercourse between

unmarried persons. In North Carolina, in statute 14-177, sodomy was defined as committing a “crime against nature, with mankind or beast” and the offender could be “punished as a Class I felon.” Notice the highly ambiguous wording of the law. This room for interpretation often fuels homophobia.

You see, you could have had, at some point in your life, your sex used against you as a weapon. “Could have” is used because in the last two decades of the 20th century, many states have repealed some if not all sodomy laws. There was also a landmark Supreme Court case, *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003), which invalidated remaining sodomy laws.

Though the “land of the free” has “supremely” repealed sodomy laws, the U.S. is still lacking in protection of its LGBTIQ citizens. Notably, there is still the absence of a national nondiscrimination law for sexuality and gender identity. Outside of the U.S., some legislation is even more horrifying. In a number of Middle Eastern countries, non-heterosexuality is still punishable by death. In Brazil, for instance, police often “cleanse” the city streets of transgender male-to-female sex workers by removing them forcibly, driving them to a remote location, and beating them where they have silicone injections, and then leaving them abandoned. Our movement has a long way to go beyond the repeal of sodomy laws.

Do not be fooled by a few cases that appear to do away with unreasonable laws against sex. Gender, sex, and sexuality are still used to restrict and limit your individual rights today. Somewhere out there, someone cares a great deal about your sex life and in someone’s opinion, regardless of your orientation, you are a sex offender.

“And my mom said, ‘You look like a dyke today’”

Meet **Giovanni Denny**, a first-year student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill studying chemistry. Denny shares what it’s like being an out bisexual woman on campus.



Who is this fresh face with her big grin and charm? Meet Giovanni Denny, a first-year UNC student who told me her BS in Chemistry is still questionable. If most of us abhor chemistry because it is challenging and scary, then Giovanni will have no problem, because she has been through tougher times since she was outed in the eighth grade. Yes, you heard correctly, Giovanni is not only an out bisexual first-year student here, but the challenge and the beauty of being out is old news for her.

Here is her story that she told me, and if you get the privilege of meeting and befriending her, you will understand that her warm personality and bravery are just some of the traits that helped her along the familiar heterosexist North Carolina pathway that still keeps many of us closeted.

“When I was in the eighth grade, my best friend introduced me to her bisexual friend, who later became my first girlfriend. She is the first person I ever came out to. In ninth grade, however, I dated another student who was a little too talkative, and people started finding out about me. But they were not nice or accepting about it, rather, they talked about me being ‘gay’ behind my back but never to my face. I really hate it when people put labels on me, and I do not like being chatted about - people need to just talk to me directly. Other women at school were not as nice

as the men, but then again, those same men were asking, ‘can I watch you and another girl together,’ which makes me really uncomfortable. I actually had some other students tell me that I ‘was too pretty to be gay.’ They did not say lesbian, bisexual, or dyke - just gay.

But my mother uses ‘dyke’ negatively, so much that I really do not like the word; she has scarred it for me. Once she actually said to me, before I left for school, that ‘You look like a dyke today.’ She actually found out about part of my sexuality last year, almost a year ago, when she found a note from a girlfriend. She picked me up from school, with my little sister in the back, and before my sister could even tell me about her day at school, my mom tells me that she found the note and added, ‘This must be why you cannot keep a boyfriend.’ She then threatened to disown me and said kept referring to me as a dyke. She told me that she ‘could not have a daughter that is a dyke.’ We yelled and argued at one another at home for close to an hour and then did not talk for a couple of days. How did we talk again? She texted my phone at school asking me if I needed help or if I wanted her to setup an appointment with a shrink or something. I could not believe what she was saying!

Yet at the same time I could not help but wonder where all this homophobia came from. She tries to be religious, but she has never brought reli-

gion into the sexuality issue. Even when one of her best friends came out to her as bisexual/lesbian, she told me that she would just have to accept it and all seemed fine. I cannot help but compare her to some of my bisexual friends' parents, who are accepting and not so hostile. For the past year, our relationship has waned. She will argue with me about me being bisexual, because she finally knows I like women and men, often. We will argue but rarely talk. She will call back the next day and say, 'I love you.' She has urged me to date my best friend who is a bisexual man. She also makes openly homophobic remarks in front of me, like 'I'd hate it if that was my son and he was gay.' She avoids and denies my sexuality.

I know she loves me, but all of it hurts, it really hurts to have your only parent be like this. I try to avoid arguing now.

Like I said, this was not even a year ago, and here I am now, a first-year student at Carolina who is out to nearly everyone I know. This past summer I worked and stayed away from home as much as possible. Now that I am here, and not Greensboro, my mom actually calls me and tells me she misses me quite often. I find it weird.

I like it here; most of the time I feel welcome. I have had both good and bad experiences being out in the few months I have been at Carolina. I have met a lot of friends that are 'like' me. I came out to my good friends the weekend before school started and one already knew, Aisha. I have known her since sixth grade but we have not become close until this year. She knew about me before I told her and she thought of it as, 'whatever.'

Two of the other women starting distancing themselves away from me and I did not understand why. I have not ever been treated like that by any of my friends who I had come out to in the past. Aisha said some people act differently and I just needed to give them time. I still did not understand the problem because they would talk about me behind my back and it started to make me feel very uncomfortable around them. Eventually they came around and got used to the fact that this is who I am and I am not going to change. One of the two women knew about me in high school and was okay with the fact that I am bisexual but was not fine with me being affectionate with another female around her. She is okay now.

Morgen Wade, my best friend of five years who is heterosexual now knows and accepts it 100 percent. I can talk to her about everything- boyfriend or girlfriend problems.

I am not a big fan of PDA whether it be a homosexual couple or a heterosexual couple. Holding hands is okay and hugging but I am not the type to kiss in public whether I am dating a male or female. Most of the men I tell accept it. My good guy friends say it is another topic we can talk about because we have something else in common. Other guys says it's sexy because they would love to watch, which always makes me uncomfortable.

I do not feel comfortable when people stare when I hug or hold hands with the same sex -it is like I can read their minds.

Whatever, though, as long as my good friends accept me, I am happy!"



"Come out" to the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender - Straight Alliance's weekly general-body meetings, Thursdays at 7P.M. in FPG Student Union Room 3205!

Also, check out their new website at:

<http://www.unc.edu/glbtsa/>

Are We Really In a

“Safe Zone”?

by

Robert Wells

UNC has a reputation for being a haven for liberalism and diversity. While Chapel Hill is certainly one of the more progressive towns in North Carolina, LGBTIQ-identified students still live with fears of verbal and physical harassment from other students. Would you feel safe as a transgender person on this campus? How many same-gender couples do you see holding hands on campus? How often do you hear students using “gay,” “dyke,” or “queer” as insults?

In 2002, Professor Pamela Conover and other University faculty published “The Report of the Provost’s Planning Committee on LGBTQ Climate at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill” to evaluate the needs of LGBTIQ-identified students. Most students would find the report shocking. The report, which can be downloaded from GLBT-SA’s website at <http://www.unc.edu/glbtsa/lgbtqreport.doc>, describes students being physically harassed in residence halls, a cube advertising an LGBTIQ-related event being vandalized, and a bomb threat calling for the university Chancellor to denounce “homosexuality.” The LGBTQ office, the Safe Zone program, and the Program in Sexuality Studies were all created to combat the report’s findings, but has the climate changed much in the past three years?

Thomas Rimbach, a senior and co-chairperson of the GLBT-SA, says the climate has actually gotten worse. Rimbach told *The Daily Tarheel*, “I’ve seen the classroom environment change into a place where queer students are not afforded the opportunity to safely be in the classroom — especially when talking about issues of diversity.”

So how do LGBTIQ-identified students remain safe on campus? One of the largest concerns of incoming non-straight identifying students is disclosing their gender identity or sexuality to their roommate. Coming out to a person you barely know and must live with for a year may seem awkward; however, it is best to know how a roommate will react before bringing someone of the same gender home for the night or revealing that your biological sex and gender are not aligned the way society demands.

Large, busy public spaces on campus such as the Pit, Lenoir, and the Rams Head Center are generally safe during the day for same-gender couples choosing to hold hands and share affection. But Franklin Street and Frat Court on Friday and Saturday nights are another story altogether.

Identifying as transgender or intersex presents even bigger challenges, most notably in bathrooms. Single-stalled gender-neu-

tral bathrooms are located in some of the larger buildings on campus such as Dey and Greenlaw, but this is certainly not acceptable enough. Keep in mind, our university may have a limited nondiscrimination clause on sexual orientation but nowhere does it protect discrimination against gender identity.

Forming a network of LGBTIQ and allied friends is a great way to remain safe. Take initiative to meet people at the LGBTQ office’s “Social Hour and A Half” programs and through the GLBT-SA and its subgroups.

Being safe does not mean accepting second-class citizenship. A great way for individuals to challenge the campus climate is to simply be visible. Do not be afraid to be affectionate with same-gendered partners in public when in a safe area. Wear rainbow stickers. Do not be afraid to play with gender norms in public either, whether it means choosing to cut your hair short if you are a woman or wearing pink if you are a man. Voice your opinion in class when students or instructors make offensive remarks. Simply making people aware that LGBTIQ students are present can affect how people act in certain spaces. Always be polite and respectful to others, but also demand that they do the same.

are you being SERVED?

by Antoine Reid

Is television today marginalizing or mainstreaming gender and sexual minorities? This likely is not a question you ask yourself while watching television, but perhaps it should be. Television shapes society and opinions a great deal. Whether it is what we watch on CNN or listen to on NPR, what we hear Bill O'Reilly or Ellen DeGeneres say, or what we see on the last episode of "Desperate Housewives," television matters.

So how concerned should we be with how television portrays different groups of people, including those within LGBTIQ communities? At some point, "Will & Grace" was considered groundbreaking "must-see TV." Now, many gender and sexual minorities will moan at its mention, proclaiming, "it is not enough." We watched "Queer as Folk," loaded with stereotypes, for five seasons. Was it really all that great? QAF was about a group of white gay men who had their own clique and were each a tad bit effeminate. We should also be asking what took channels like Showtime and HBO so long to begin featuring non-comedic LGBTIQ programming, before cheering that sexual and gender minorities are finally breaking into the mainstream. Now replacing QAF is "The L Word," Showtime's take on lesbian life that really just follows a clique of mostly affluent white women. Once "The L Word" is over, will there be a bisexual-themed show, then a transgender one, or maybe even one that does not just focus on white gay or lesbian people?

LGBTIQ individuals have in fact been on television long before "The Real World," "Ellen,"

and "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" supposedly opened the door to sexual and gender minorities in the media. In the 1970s, non-heterosexuals found their way into television. Billy Crystal played the first recurring gay character on "Soap." On "Dynasty," a television series from the 1980s, Al Corley and then Jack Coleman portrayed Steven Carrington, a lead character who happened to be bisexual. Both of these shows put a face on non-heterosexuals, introducing Americans to some of the issues that sexual

and gender minorities face. Even the long running primetime drama "Dallas" showed the U.S. a successful gay male, acknowledging that they did exist in society, with J.R. Ewing proclaiming, "Women marry homosexuals all the time! Seems to suit a lot of 'em."

It is fine to enjoy shows like "The L Word" that cater to the LGBTIQ community, but it carries a consequence. First, where is the diversity among the LGBTIQ characters portrayed on television? When will we

see a fair portrayal of lesbians, or queer black people, or perhaps a large trans male-to-female woman who isn't there for laughs? Reinforcing stereotypes and leaving out groups in the community marginalizes LGBTIQ individuals and hinders progress.

In a Carrie Bradshaw manner, I'll end by posing a question for consideration. Think about the 2004 Election, the marriage question, transitioning, binary bathrooms, and the many other issues LGBTIQ people are facing today. Now, think about the programming that is aimed at LGBTIQ audiences. How is it really all that different from television that is meant to appeal to heterosexual people? Are you being served?



out of the closet, still in the room

[*opinion*] by Daniel Cothran

The dull burn of annoyance flares up within me every year around the time of Coming Out Week. Inevitably, the obnoxious questions arise: “She has got to be a lesbian, right?”, or “When is he going to stop lying to himself?” These questions are not unique to Coming Out Week, however; at least once per semester someone becomes the target of identity speculation. According to who the person is, a significant amount of hype may develop and be carried along the gossip train. Even though I consider coming out, at least to some degree, a positive thing to do, too much speculation about it becomes harmful.

The first thing to take into consideration is that you, or your source, might be wrong. There are countless anecdotes to confirm this statement: the familiar complaint of lesbians being aggravated by a plethora of interested men; the old story of the (take your pick) lisp-ing or well-dressed guy; or the account a straight girlfriend of mine once told me about how when she shaved her head, only women flirted with her until her hair grew back. You can call it flattery, but getting hit on by those you are not sexually interest-

ed in is frequently just them thinking they can “call” your sexuality like it is a specific outfit or job position. Another man showing interest in me is certainly flattering, but not because he is taking how I look or act as an indication of my sexuality. My interest in women does not stop me from working my best as LAMBDA’s managing editor, but in this position I am often the target of, “oh then he must be _____.”

Nevertheless, we are all guilty of trying to identify the people we see. Why? We do this because it makes us comforted to have strangers appear as potential confidants - within LGBTIQ communities specifically; you might even call it “safe zone guessing.” To some extent, we do it to designate potential lovers and friends, those we would consider in our ballpark. Conversely, though it makes me feel overly cynical, we also try to identify people to figure out who we do not feel bad about ignoring: “Oh, she’s trans - I’m not interested in her.”

Already, you may see a variety of reasons identity speculation is harmful. As was evident in last year’s hate crime, appearing LGBTIQ is dangerous. To false-

ly identify someone may expose them to harassment. Additionally, when the speculation comes from within LGBTIQ communities, there are two probable outcomes: the identified may turn away from or even against the community, or the identified may fit in too well. What I mean by “fit in too well” is that the identified, seeking to fit in, assimilates to the prevailing non-heterosexual culture without retaining much of their former self. In this case, the identified moves from the closet to an only slightly less-confining room. Once again, I am speaking of identity boundaries - where if you are bisexual, then you must be x, y, and doing z.

For me, one of the most beautiful things about LGBTIQ people is they are ubiquitous and yet multifarious. To constrain the limits of identity leads to problems - when you are separate from the rest, you are vulnerable to defeat. For that reason, I see it as a crime to constrain the borders of identities, and if identity speculation has anything to do with it, which I think it does, it is nothing in which I want to be a part.

the problems with PRESUMPTION

[*opinion*]

by Sarah Carucci

The coming out process is anything but straightforward. Depending on the particular individual, it can be a year or even decade-long process with dozens of different stages and turning points. Most would agree that we are constantly being forced to come out (or stay closeted) each time we interact with a new person – in what we say, in how we act, and even how we look. For as long as the vast majority of people continue to assume strict heterosexuality and the static gender binary to be the default norms, this issue will be a constantly reoccurring one for people who fall without those frameworks.

Over the past few years there have been growing trends of young people coming out earlier and earlier right into the still-loving and welcoming arms of parents and loved ones. And this is certainly a trend I find reason for us to rejoice in. Because though the climate of U.S. society as a whole may seem to be turning more and more against us, there are in fact growing numbers of individuals who have come to see LGBTIQ identities as being worth their acceptance and affirmation.

But this ease in difficulty for some may in fact be making it harder on those of us who are still going through more frustrating or wearisome coming out processes. One phenomenon that has

sprung out of these new patterns of earlier and less necessarily traumatic coming out stories is particularly harmful. I am speaking of the primarily lesbian and gay usage of the theoretical “gaydar.”

Yes, gaydar: the concept so many treat as being entirely innocent. It seems to have become incredibly in vogue all of a sudden to be sitting in the Pit, spy someone of interest, and turn to a friend with a coy, “Oh, they are so ‘gay.’” Or perhaps you hear that someone has started dating someone of the same gender when they had previously identified as straight and you somehow, “always knew it.” Comments such as these are certainly not meant to be derogatory and actually can be argued to reflect an only newly applicable increase in visibility of non-heterosexual identities. But I maintain that at their core, no matter how harmlessly intended, they serve to degrade the full range of individual gender and sexual identities among us.

To assume that anyone deviating from a particular gender or sexual norm can be automatically coded as being “gay” or “FTM” or what have you is to not only ignore, but to disparage the range of diversity that is fundamentally at the core of LGBTIQ communities. It condenses beautifully complex layers of identity into pre-packaged, easy-to-swallow molds

of self – sending the message that, “Sure you can deviate from their norm but only so much as you fit into one of ours.” Assumptions that allied individuals are “kidding themselves” presume that the only reason to be engaged in communities that include LGBTIQ individuals is for sexual pursuit. And that is a demeaning proposition if I have ever heard one.

It is one thing to be supportive of someone who is newly out, but it is quite something else entirely to presume that you had some sort of foreknowledge of such an occurrence. Such a mindset supposes that sexual and gender identity is a simplistic code that manifests itself identically in each individual across the board. I am not arguing against the existence of self-denial, but the full coming to terms with one’s gender or sexual identity is the necessary precursor of identifying in any non-straight way. Forcing labels on people runs against everything that LGBTIQ people have fought for over the years. We continue to resist the compulsory “traditional” sexual and gender identities that much of hegemonic U.S. society has imposed on us, and any sort of standardization on our part of what it is and means and looks like to be trans or queer or lesbian spits in the face of this struggle.

the rules of ATTRACTION

by Julian Wootén

In a Summer 2005 LAMBDA article titled “Dealing with Desire,” Trevor Hoppe raised the question of why some gay men are not attracted to certain groups of men, whether feminine, black, or overweight. Hoppe refuted the notion that our attractions (or lack thereof) are biological and reminded us that race, gender, and other systems of identity are all socially constructed. It should be possible then, by analyzing our own views and being sociologically mindful, to reconceptualize our views on desire.

After reading Hoppe’s article, I also began to ponder the de facto rules of attraction held by some gay men. An African-American friend told me that his crush of a different race mentioned casually that he was only into “white guys.” Hearing that in relation to the article made me ask two questions: what role does race play in gay men’s sexuality and where does this racial ideology come from?

A study introduced by Nick Yee evaluates what features each of 400 gay men found attractive. Looking at a variety of features, the numbers showed a prevalent desire for gay men in the 161-175 pound weight range, a 37% preference of lighter to tan skin tone, and a 37% preference for straight, blond hair. In another survey, many gay men preferred not to date gay men who were visibly not white, however exceptions were made for those who were bi/multi-racial. William’s Project of UCLA estimates that a mere 12 percent of gay couples are “mixed.” Of those, the major breakdown is Latino-white (43%), Asian Pacific Islander-white (11%), black-white (9%), and black-Latino (3%)

When we look at the sort of advertisements that target gay men, their contribution to

skewed views on race becomes apparent. Gay interest magazines are littered with images of muscular, half-dressed white men but rarely include racial minorities. In the case of black men, Hoppe puts it best when he says, “...his face is probably cut out of the picture, or he’s in an ad for the latest HIV medication.” Further, when you look to television shows and movies there is an obvious lack of people of color. Each day we are force-fed images of what is considered to be attractive and the theme is the “white ideal.” This is evident in Hollywood’s current A-List of non-white celebrities: Beyoncé, Halle Berry, Alicia Keys, and Mariah Carey, all of who are bi/multi-racial. The fact remains that to be a celebrity, you must have public appeal, which is very often tied into skin color.

Writer Felipe Campos says the following on being a gay Mexican-American: “Every time I go to a gay bar, being the darky looking Mexican-American I am, not one boy hits on me. They all hit on the Anglos.” More evidence of such discrimination can be found in increasingly popular Internet chat rooms. Often gay men are seeking other men not only based on things like age, body type, or sexual position preference, but also on race. Examining such patterns reveals that Caucasian or lighter-skinned bi/multi-racial men are most often desired. One African-American gay man attested to this in an interview: “[I] was in an on-line chat room and someone requested to talk to me. His very first sentence was, ‘Are you white?’ I replied that I was not and he then finished with a, ‘Thank you, bye.’ I was curious and looked up his profile. [He] was Caucasian.”

In assessing what race has to do with gay men’s sexuality, it is important to note that discrimination

based on race is not a one-sided issue. While many gay white men do not prefer to date non-white queer men, this issue also is prevalent within other races as well. The infamous “I don’t date _____ guys” (insert the speaker’s very own race) is quite common. An Asian friend of mine told me he had befriended a gay Asian man at a club but that when he had asked him on a date he replied that he was only into white men.

Author Keith Boykin describes a similar situation about black men who refuse to date other black men. “A few years ago, I met a very attractive, articulate, professional black gay man at a gay event. I was so excited to meet him that I even added a comment about him during the speech I gave later that evening. Following the speech, I eagerly approached him at his table. He smiled and we talked for a moment before he politely introduced me to his boyfriend. I was disappointed that he was involved in a relationship, and to be honest, I was even more disappointed that his partner was a very average looking white man. He did not want to date a black man.”

This summer I was a Resident Advisor at an institution with a particularly high population of gay men, most of who were still in high school. I began to notice that many of them had fallen into the pattern of not finding non-white men attractive. People who were dating a non-white man were given racist labels such as “curry queen” (prefers Indians), “rice queen” (prefers Asians), and “bean queen” (prefers Latinos). These sorts of labels are active and detrimental messages that help to perpetuate racism among gay men.

I write this in hopes of illuminating a broad problem that needs to be discussed. A solution cannot be worked towards until we are willing to admit that the problem exists. One step we can take is evaluating what we find attractive and unattractive and then asking ourselves, “Why?” For some, this task may seem like more trouble than it is worth, but being actively anti-discriminatory can lead to positive experiences and relationships. More broadly, if we want greater societal acceptance at large, we must first learn to accept one another.

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to be here. I cannot easily answer that because my program is just one out of hundreds of options. I will, however, tell you a bit about this Masters Program. Masters programs are generally two years long, and this one is not an exception. I am taking three courses this semester: “Socio-Cultural Foundations in Human Sexuality”, “Research Methods in Human Sexuality,” and a class titled “Sexuality and the Internet.” The first two are required for everyone in the program. The first course provides new students with a history of sexuality in the United States and a theoretical foundation for the field of Human Sexuality. The second is a crash course in the many ways Human Sexuality researchers chose to do their research – including interviews, ethnography, observation, and surveys. The third course is an elective. All three classes meet once a week on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 4:10 P.M. – 6:55 P.M. It is a great schedule. You spend your first year in the program developing a research plan to be executed in your second year of study. This is a somewhat flexible schedule, but most students follow it. Some examples of research topics that second-year students are looking at include anything from burlesque dancers in San Francisco to the effects of online racism on black gay and bisexual men. I am not yet sure of my own research topic.

Finally—to answer the question posed by the title of this essay—there are many options for those who chose to dedicate their life to the study of Human Sexuality. Some students in the program will go on to a PhD program (sociology and anthropology being the most common) and from there will probably teach at a university. Others are interested in policy and hope to work for a “think tank” like, for example, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force’s Policy Institute in New York. At least one student hopes to go on to law school and then do advocacy for LGBTIQ people in the legal realm. More possibilities remain, from reproductive rights advocates to sexual health educators. Though I do not yet know my precise destination, I do ultimately know what I will do with my Master of Arts degree. I know that, whatever I end up doing, I will be working to make equality a reality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer Americans. I may be lobbying to pass a piece of pro-LGBTIQ legislation in California. Or I might be designing a public health campaign aimed at squashing new HIV infections. Who knows – many years from now, I might even be teaching a sociology class on sexuality at UNC. Whatever the case, I know exactly what I’m going to do with “that.” It’s the “how” that gets sticky.

