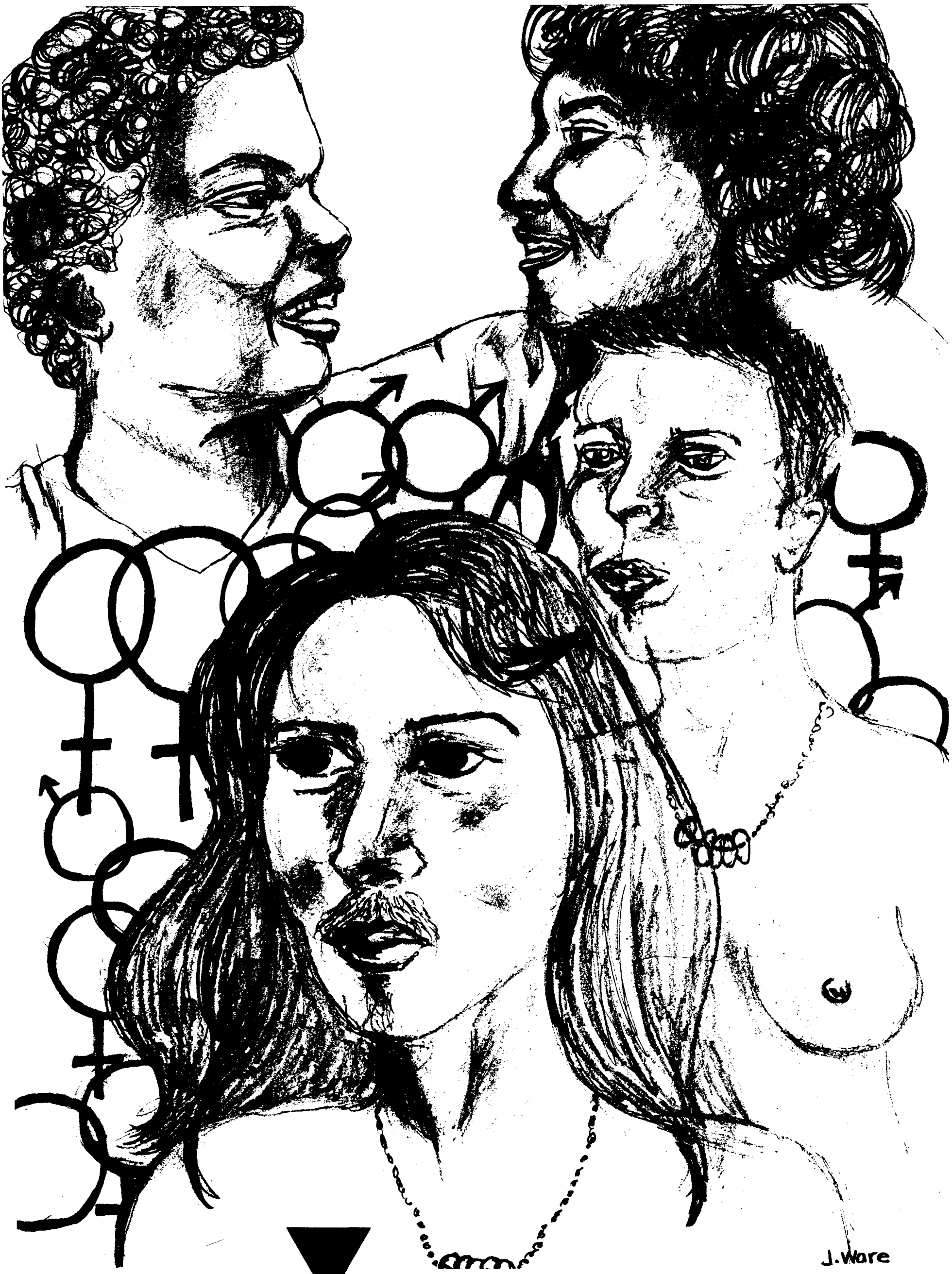

vol. 78 iss. 34

pride

lesbian gay bisexual transgendered queer

a *ubyssey* special issue

absolutely fabulous since 1918, dahling

the ubyssey

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Avail. Mar. 1 2Br. grd. level newer hse. 44th + Victoria. $635 + 1/2 util. No smoking, no pets. Suits quiet, mature upper grad students. Ph. 435-3411.

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Scrubby,
Show me a duck!
- Webby
♥♥♥
A.J.M., Be My Valentine.
With Love from your Evil Landlord.
♥♥♥
Scotty - Beam me up into your long, tight leather pants. WD.

♥♥♥
If my actions ever fail you, keep this: You will never be alone.
♥♥♥
Neal - May the long time sun shine upon you and the hum of the Kelvinator guide your way on. love you chunken. Faith.
♥♥♥
To Ubyssey's #1 photo editor, thank you for lighting up my life. Happy Valentine's Day. I love you. Georgina.
♥♥♥
You are so beautiful each time you smile and laugh. I am so happy to be in love with you. - Jessica.
♥♥♥
To my Mexican Amigo: Your muscular body gets me excited. Grow the fur back on your face: its sexy.
- Dicky
♥♥♥
To GC - You have a lot of special gifts. You are my hero and my inspiration. But you're too busy watching basketball to ever notice. JC
♥♥♥
Christine, I hope you'll be mine on this, our second valentines together, and on all the others for the rest of our lives. Love Scott.
♥♥♥

Georgie: Thanks for your patience and understanding.
Love you lots.
- Freddy the Frog.
♥♥♥
Ron K.: Saw you photographing at the Volleyball games. Love to get together for a photo-shoot.
- J.O.

♥♥♥
Wolf: You look great behind the SRC counter. I get chills when I talk to you. Thanks for giving me that warm fuzzy feeling - Sweaty.
♥♥♥
Chris N-S: You have sexy blond hair and stunning blue eyes. Let's talk- Guy in English Class.
♥♥♥
Scott - Let me brand your long, , blond hair around my neck. I still have dreams about you and your leather pants. Let's menage. - Wolf
♥♥♥
Wolf: Your tender firmness makes me shiver all over - let's do it again.
- FX
♥♥♥

Hey FX - you are the mailman who doesn't need to ring twice. WD.
♥♥♥
Dicky Boy: Waking up next to you has changed my life - let's go wild again - shoot me shoot me - FX
♥♥♥
Hey Dickie Boy: I love your short hair cut and thanks for those hard long rides. WD.
♥♥♥
Hyon-Jong: "If I see eleven, you say it's seven - still wish you heaven"
- Federico
♥♥♥
To my slovanian Macho Man: Happy Valentine's day! Wish you could keep me warm up North!
- Love S.
♥♥♥
To my best friend Shelby, and mom too, love Cookie

♥♥♥

Sarah, marvellous editor you are. Smart, funny and oh so radiant. Eine Schünheit du bist. And boy, those soccer outfits. What a treat. WD.
♥♥♥
Richelle: your short fuzzy hair is sexy. Let's slip into those overall together. Are you free sometime for coffee and talk dirty - FWR

'Tween Classes

Vegetarian Lunches in Buchanan
Every Thursday, 12:30-2:30 PM
Great Food, Very Cheap (by donation). Very delicious, Nice 'n Filling. Buchanan D223

1997 Winter Legal Clinic for Women
Battered Women's Support Services and UBC Law Students Legal Advice Program are co-sponsoring free legal clinics for women to be held every 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on the following dates: February 25, March 4. To make an appointment please call the UBC Law Students Legal Advice Program at 822-5791.

UBC Pacific Rim Club Speaker Series
"Recent Political Changes in Taiwan"
Dr. Nina Halpern, Political Science Dept.
Buch B323, 12:30 pm - 1:30pm, Feb.14, 1997

Out with Pride Week Feb.10-15
Fri. Feb.14 - 12:30pm *Lilies*, Sub Theatre, Free
Sat. Feb.15 - 8:00pm Cupid's Coming Out Ball, 2nd floor, Grad Centre

Marxist-Leninist Study Group, Friday, February 14, 7:30 pm Buchanan D-201. Topic: Youth A Force for Revolutionary Change. All welcome.

Amnesty International Youth Conference on March 1st, 8:30-4:30 in SUB. Registration cost is $10, which includes pizza lunch, juice, coffee. Workshops on Intro to Amnesty, Women and human rights, Death Penalty and more. Panel Discussion with panelists from various youth groups on campus sharing their views on "Models for Action". To pre-register or for more info, contact Susanne @ 929-6731

'Tween classes are free event listings for upcoming **on-campus** events **only**. If you would like to advertise your upcoming event, fill out a Tween Classes form in *The Ubyssey* Editorial Offices, SUB 241K. Deadline for the Friday issue: Wednesday at Noon.

the ubyssey

pride

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Letters to the editor must be under 300 words. Please include your phone number, student number and signature (not for publication) as well as your year and faculty with all submissions. ID will be checked when submissions are dropped off at the editorial office of *The Ubyssey*, otherwise verification will be done by phone.
"Perspectives" are opinion pieces over 300 words but under 750 words and are run according to space.
"Freestyles" are opinion pieces written by Ubyssey staff members. Priority will be given to letters and perspectives over freestyles unless the latter is time senstitive. Opinion pieces will not be run until the identity of the writer has been verified.

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The 25 people involved in the creation of this issue decided to make the letters of the alphabet out of their bodies. Grover from Sesame street coached us. Alan Woo arrived all a buzz to give us an A, Bec brought a beautiful B, crazy Craig Bavis crafted the C, Doug Sanders did a dandy D, Ed Yeung eagerly yet effortlessly erected an E, Federico Araya Barahona fraught with fright freed F, Ian Gunn gave us a gorgeous G, Claudia Hanel hung the H, Laura Baskin invented I, Jessica Ware jumped up to do J, Kalev Hunt would have killed if he didn't get K, Leanne Drumheller laboured over L, Melinda Jette managed to make a marvelous M, Namiko Kunimoto gave us a nifty N, Sarah O'Donell really went over the top with the O, Arran politely pulled down a P, Mike Botnick's Q was definitely queer, Rick Heffernan razzle-dazzled us with his R, Scott Hayward slid slyly sideways to show us S, Thomas Fitt tore out our hearts with his tempestuous T, Michael Standingwolf's U was utterly unique, Stanley's V was virtuous yet very vibrant, Wah Kee Ting worried about his wonderful W, David Mak was our X-man, Joe Clark yoddled while yanking out a Y, everyone helped make a zany Z.

Canadian University Press

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BEAUTIFUL BABES in the San Francisco Pride parade in the summer of 1996. CRAIG BAVIS PHOTO

What's in a name?

Queer. Dyke. Fag. Lesbian. Bisexual. Gay. Homosexual. Same sex. Whichever label you prefer to use for that part of the population which is non-heterosexual, realise that these people are your neighbours, professors, classmates, parents, sisters, brothers, friends, roommates, and even your lovers.

There are as many points of view about the "non-straight" population as there are labels for it. Identifying ourselves (non-straight people) is as difficult as finding consensus on an acceptable term to represent us.

"Queer" is too politically charged for many, while lesbian, gay and homosexual fail to represent those of us that are attracted to both sexes or cross traditional gender boundries. Furthermore, the queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered members of our society do not speak with a single voice, nor should they be expected to do so. Some have come to a compromise, an anagram which attempts to include a diverse group of people, LGBQT. But even this awkward construction misrepresents those that feel sexual orientation is not the primary, central component of their being. These people believe that they should not have a sexual identity imposed upon them. No group of individuals, nor any one label, can truly represent such a large amalgamation of people.

This newspaper was produced by some of the queer, gay, lesbian, and bisexual members of the UBC community and our friends at *The Ubyssey*. We are well aware that many others will not share the views represented here, or even agree that a special issue is necessary. We, ourselves, feel it is important for us to have an issue devoted to the exploration of themes focusing on non-heterosexual identity and orientation. This is not simply for the purpose of informing the general public, but also for educating ourselves. It is crucially important that both straight and non-straight people that know that we are out and about.

In publishing this issue, we are reminding the university community of the diversity of its members, exploring a number of issues, and giving ourselves a voice. As a minority that, even at this liberal institution, suffers discrimination, we look hopefully to the day when our voices will be heard. On such a day, there will be no need for an issue like this.

As you read this, realise that we are sitting beside you on the bus, lecturing you in class, marking your lab assignments, pouring your coffee, and swapping notes with you. Realise that we are queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, "intersexual," and not represented by labels. But most importantly, know that we are here, learning and working on the same campus as you. ❖

queer alchemy

i'm okay with the word "queer," so it seems a bit distressing to me that the community is spending so much time and energy on internal terminology debates, but for the record i do consider "queer" to refer predominantly to the radical political element and not to the whole glbt community.

i justify the use of the word "queer" with the basic philosophy of reclamation, which in my view is as follows:

hateful terms are effective because they identify a quality which the target group does in fact have, and then give it such a negative connotation that the targets come to believe that the quality actually is shameful. their essential purpose is to take qualities which might otherwise be merely neutral, and apply to them a powerful value judgement which the target then internalises.

in this way the individual comes to see being gay, having a certain colour skin, or speaking a foreign language not as objective description, but instead subjectively associates them with negative emotions and negative beliefs about his/her own self-worth.

the process of reclamation is the reverse of this, and may be thought of as intentional mental reprogramming. we do not call ourselves "queer" to promote self-hatred or self-abuse; we call ourselves "queer" because we are consciously trying to strip the word of its negative value judgements until we return it to its original neutral state.

this is perhaps one of the most subtle ways to disempower an enemy, because the only power the word "queer" has is the power we ourselves assign it when we agree to be offended or hurt by it. when we refuse to be offended by a mere word, then it loses its emotional impact, and becomes nothing more than an unremarkable objective description.

from here we can take it even one step further, and having removed its negative connotations we can then consciously assign it a positive one. thus a word which was once used to degrade and humiliate us now becomes a symbol of our pride in ourselves, and just as we have one more weapon in our favour, our enemy has one less. reclamation is a form of psychological alchemy in which the lead of shame is consciously and intentionally converted into the gold of pride, and my repeated use of the word "pride" may give some clue as to why reclamation is such a big thing in the glbt community.

for me it's all about power. homophobia is a power struggle—do we let them decide our destiny or do we decide it for ourselves?—and reclamation is about seizing that power for our side. every time you agree to be offended by the word "queer" you are giving your opponent power over you, power to determine how you react and power to determine what you will and will not do. all i have to do to keep anyone who dislikes the word 'queer' from contributing to the glbt issue of *the ubyssey*, and to ensure the advancement of my own seditious agenda, is call it "the queer issue." now am i forcing them away, or are they choosing to allow me to force them away? all they would have to do to seize their power back is say, "'queer' is just a word. i'm going to write my opinions anyway and be heard." then they would be contributing their unique voice to this unbelievably diverse community and there would be nothing i could do to stop them.

what i find strange is that while essentially everyone will agree that a symbol can be turned from positive to negative, they will not admit that the reverse can happen. the swastika is an ancient buddhist symbol representing the wheel of the buddhist teachings, which of course was stolen by the nazis and is now—in the west anyway—one of the most detested of symbols (in the east it is still used as a symbol of buddhism). now are we going to allow the nazis the power to steal sacred symbols and pervert them to their own ends, but we will not allow ourselves the same power to appropriate a tool of the enemy and purify it? why will they allow contamination but not purification? they must realise that if we hold this attitude we are giving our enemy a greater power than we will allow for ourselves.

on u2's *rattle and hum* album, bono says of the song "helter skelter": "charles manson stole this song from the beatles. we're stealing it back." that's what reclamation is all about.

—michael standingwolf

UBC Faculty of Law *out*-standing

by Laura Baskin

The respected international journal *Corpus Juris Sexualis* has reported that the Geneva based Equality Committee of the International Federation of Juridical Instruction Facilities (IFJIF) has released its first report on sexual orientation issues.

The IFJIF surveyed course content on lesbian and gay issues and the numbers of out lesbian and gay professors in law schools around the world. The Lavender Law Oscar will be presented to the UBC Faculty of Law on the first of April, 1997.

Well, if the IFJIF existed, and if there was a Lavender Law Oscar, the above story could be true. UBC's law school has eight openly lesbian and gay professors; 20 percent of its 43 full-time faculty.

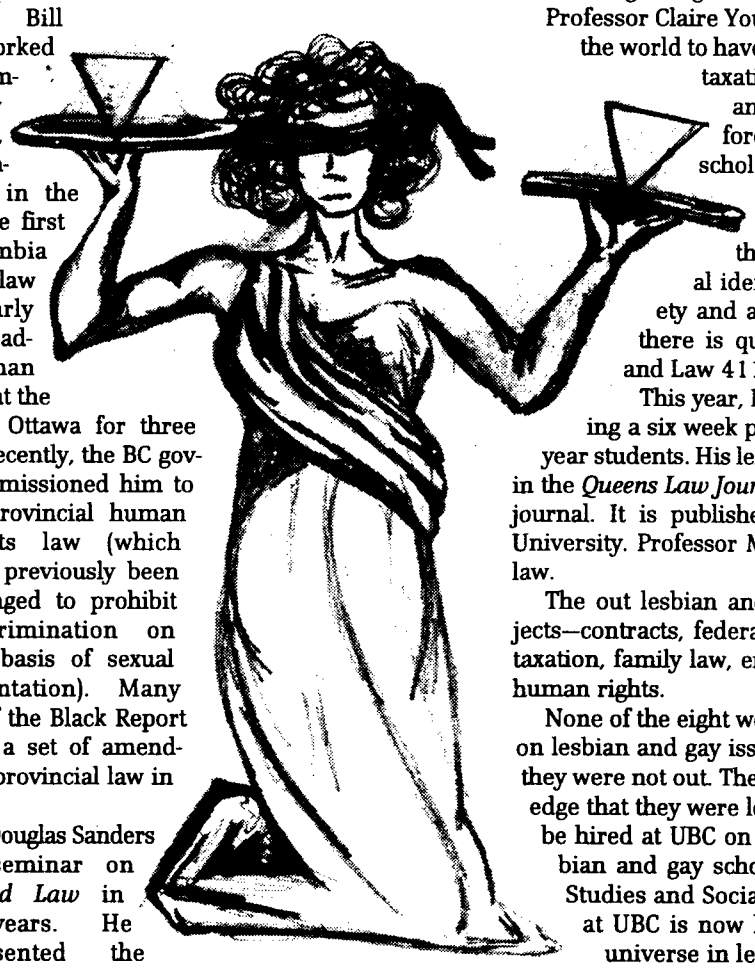
What competition is there? The law school at the University of Melbourne in Australia is also in the running. High level investigations concluded that there are also eight out lesbian and gay professors at Melbourne. But since Melbourne has over 60 full time teaching faculty, UBC wins handily on percentages.

UBC's law school has eight openly lesbian and gay professors; 20 percent of its 43 full-time faculty.

The 'UBC 8' are all full-time faculty, so the number doesn't include half-time professor Bruce Wooley, whose story (and availability) was splashed all over the front page of the *Vancouver Sun's* lifestyle feature "West Coast People" a couple of months ago. He was also the first UBC law professor to be described in the public media as cuddly.

Professor Susan Boyd holds the Chair in Feminist Legal Studies. Her writings include a detailed analysis of the Ontario NDP government's failed bill to end discrimination in 74 separate provincial laws. She recently wrote about the M v. H case, the first Canadian case to apply the law on spousal support payments equally to same-sex couples.

Professor Bill Black has worked on anti-discrimination law for decades, playing an important role in the drafting of the first British Columbia human rights law in the early 1970s. He headed the human rights centre at the University of Ottawa for three years. More recently, the BC government commissioned him to review the provincial human rights law (which had previously been changed to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation). Many have heard of the Black Report which led to a set of amendments to the provincial law in 1996.



Professor Douglas Sanders teaches a seminar on *Sexuality and Law* in alternate years. He has represented the International Lesbian and Gay Association at United Nations human rights meetings, and recently published an article "Getting Lesbian and Gay Issues on the International Human Rights Agenda" in *Human Rights Quarterly*.

Professor Claire Young may be the only law professor in the world to have written a detailed article on income taxation issues as they relate to lesbians and gay men. Her work demonstrates forcefully how feminist, lesbian and gay scholarship have moved away from ghettoisation in the fields of family law and human rights to the recognition that assumptions on gender and sexual identity run through all aspects of society and all parts of the legal system. At UBC there is queer content in Law 407: Taxation, and Law 411: Tax Policy.

This year, Professor Bruce MacDougall is teaching a six week perspectives class on sexuality to first year students. His lengthy article on outing was published in the *Queens Law Journal*—yes, that is the real name of the journal. It is published by the Faculty of Law, Queen's University. Professor MacDougall also teaches commercial law.

The out lesbian and gay faculty teach all sorts of subjects—contracts, federalism, secured transactions, income taxation, family law, environmental law, aboriginal rights, human rights.

None of the eight were hired on the basis of scholarship on lesbian and gay issues. When the first four were hired, they were not out. The last four were hired with the knowledge that they were lesbian or gay. The first out faculty to be hired at UBC on the basis of already established lesbian and gay scholarship are in Sociology, Women's Studies and Social Work, not Law. But the law school at UBC is now leading the country, the world, the universe in lesbian and gay legal scholarship. ❖

The 1997 Graduating Class is looking for innovative legacy gift proposals to leave for future students. A maximum [illegible] $3000 per gift is available [illegible] with the number of [illegible] determined. [illegible] will be voted on at the Grad Class AGM on March 7 1997 in the SUB Partyroom

GRAD CLASS COUNCIL

[illegible]posals are welcome [illegible] individuals, clubs [illegible] constituencies [illegible] a 150 word [illegible] & budget to: [illegible]ad Class Gifts [illegible]UB Room 238 [illegible] for application [illegible]day Feb 25 @ 4pm

Turning the tide

High school can be a trying experience. For students who are gay, lesbian or bisexual, however, school can become a nightmare, which is why one group of Vancouver educators are trying to help schools become gay-positive.

by Alan Woo

Given the choice between the classroom and the street, Joan Merryfield will pick the classroom every time.

That is why Merryfield, a Grade 5, 6 and 7 teacher at Vancouver's Charles Dickens Elementary School, and an outspoken member of GALE BC (Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia), is doing all she can to combat prejudice and teach respect for gay and lesbian issues.

"For students who are gay and lesbian, school is hell. They don't ever feel that they belong," she says. "Every kid needs a sense of belonging. If they don't feel that they belong, they'll never be able to aspire, reach their potential or find out what their goals are. They can get stuck there even until adulthood."

This is just one of many reasons why she feels addressing homophobia and gay issues in the school system has become increasingly important.

Faggot

"Move over faggot," Merryfield recalls one student saying to another boy. "Kids don't have any other way of communicating," she says. That is why she takes on the problem of name calling and discusses it with the children, who don't realise how hurtful they can be.

But name calling is just one of the many problems that gay youth must face. There is physical violence as well as emotional and psychological stress.

"The kids know a lot," she says. "They're very mature and they need a place to talk about these issues."

And the classroom seems like an ideal forum for such intelligent and educational discussion. Aside from sex education, Merryfield tries to integrate gay issues into all aspects of her everyday teaching routine, from talks about Remembrance Day and adoption, to casual conversation with students.

Homosexuality is not what is being taught here; the lessons being learned are valuable ones that acknowledge and accept differences, and adovocate respect for all people.

Slow progress

At this year's Vancouver International Film Festival one hopeful little documentary, *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School*, took an in-class look at how kids respond to talking about gay issues, from having same-sex parents to being influenced by Hollywood. Overall, the film makes the future look bright—in the US at least, which was where the showcase schools were located.

Vancouver, BC, however, is a different story altogether. "We're getting somewhere, but we're very slow," says Merryfield.

Aside from workshops and individual teachers who talk about gay issues with students, Vancouver schools lag behind their American counterparts. Merryfield, who recently attended a conference in San Francisco about making schools and curricula more gay-friendly, says that whole school boards, districts and even students turned out to learn more about these issues. She'd like to see all educators, not just gay and lesbian ones, go out and "get training and start to see it as their issue."

Dale Essar, another member of GALE who teaches at Sir Sanford Fleming Elementary, has done many workshops in the Vancouver district about how to handle gay issues in the classroom. He feels "elementary teachers are further ahead than secondary teachers in terms of organised professional development."

Unfortunately though, he says, GALE members continue to encounter homophobia.

"GALE members speaking on issues of homophobia often encounter homophobia amongst students in the UBC Education Department. These future teachers state strongly that gay and lesbian issues have no relevance to elementary teachers and students," he says.

Merryfield agrees that UBC Education students have been "extremely homophobic." For them, she says, it is a moral issue; they believe it is promoting homosexuality. But it isn't about that, she claims. "It's about safety for the children."

Vancouver school board trustee Sandy McCormick says that in order to make changes, the board would have to know what the community wants and needs.

She says that although she needs to do more research on gay issues to educate herself, there hasn't been a need to so so far since no one has approached the board about the issue. Calgary and Toronto already have Gay and Straight Alliances in their high schools.

"Vancouver is behind," sighs Merryfield. "We just have to catch up." ❖

Coquitlam schools progress

by Wah Kee Ting

Coquitlam schools may be breaking new ground on gay and lesbian issues if a motion currently before the district's school board is passed.

Murray Warren, a Coquitlam elementary school teacher, presented a motion at his school board's meeting last Tuesday asking that a committee be established to address issues of safety and inclusion for sexual minority students. "Protection," he said, "is one part of the picture."

The committee will research and investigate discrimination against gay, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered students, and recommend measures the school board and district partner groups can take to provide appropiate support services for those students.

Although there was no discussion among the school trustees on the motion, the subject came up again during question period.

Carlo Meadows, a Maple Ridge resident, described his experiences as a closeted gay student.

"I was beaten up by guys from Grade 6 to 11," he said. "I dropped out at Grade 11. I'm a living proof of the discrimination against gay and lesbian students."

But not everyone at the meeting was in favour of the motion. Teacher and parent Erma Vietorisz said she was concerned about the message the committee would be sending. "We don't need to encourage pre-sexual sexual activity, and I'm thinking that this program just may be doing that."

"When you have this kind of education in our schools [it] may be slanting or giving [students] the idea that they are homosexuals when perhaps they are not," she explained. "We got to be very careful of what we teach our children.

"I can't understand how a gay student could know that they are gay and because this is something that is of a sexual matter—I would assume that children are not expected to be sexually active," she said.

But Warren said the motion has nothing to do with promoting homosexual sex. "What the committee can do is try to assess the extent of the problems. It is very difficult for many gay and lesbian students to talk about what situations they face, and gathering evidence might prove to be some kind of problem," he explained.

"Unless somebody does something, nothing's going to be done." Warren said.

School trustees will vote on the motion at the next meeting.on February 25, at 7:30pm at Coquitlam School District. ❖

Drag Royalties strut their stuff

by Alan Woo

Vancouver's drag scene could be one of the city's best kept secrets. Secrets, however, are meant to be told and the drag scene is slowly but surely coming out of the woodwork.

At 20 years old, Corriander is one of the city's youngest drag queens. Although he has only been in the scene professionally since Grade 12, he says drag has intrigued him since childhood. "I've always been a performer and I guess it just came naturally," he says.

Drag, he explains, is a lot of fun, especially since he was taken in by the House of Venus, "the new breed of Vancouver's drag queens," who perform at Mars Night Club on Friday nights and at the after-hours club The World on Saturdays. "Since becoming a part of the Venus girls, I've met peoples with whom I have more in common," he explains.

In his act, Corriander has covered No Doubt, The Cardigans and Donna Lewis. The best part, he says, is "the attention."

But not everything about drag is glamourous. "It takes a lot of time," he says, referring to the loads of make-up he applies before stepping onto the stage. "[The tuck] can also be quite painful."

The biggest misconception about drag, according to Corriander, is made by straight people who think he wants to be a woman. "We don't. Basically, we're just performing and entertaining. It's all a character act. We're like clowns but with better make-up," he says.

For drag king Rebecca, aka Mr. Bec, the high from doing drag stems from entertaining the audience and enjoying herself. Rebecca has been involved with drag since September 1996. After attending her first show, she decided to give it a try. Once she did, she was hooked.

CRAIG BAVIS PHOTO

"The community is very supportive of first-timers and the whole show in general," she says. "It takes guts to get out there."

And aside from mixed reactions from family and friends, Rebecca says the experience has been a positive one. She's become more confident and is more aware of transgendered issues. "I'm more interested in advocating inclusiveness because of this," she explains.

The transformation to drag isn't much of a challenge for Rebecca. With added sideburns, enhanced eyes, the occasional wig, socks and a pair of jeans, she begins to look more like a man.

Her act has included parodies of Neil Diamond, James Brown, the Odds, and possibly in the future, Bruce Springsteen. She did a hilarious rendition of "The Heterosexual Man" at Celebrities' Performer of the Year show last month. "It's good to see the drag community merging together as one rather than being separate (kings from the queens)," she says.

"It's about having a good time, fun, and feeling good about yourself." ❖

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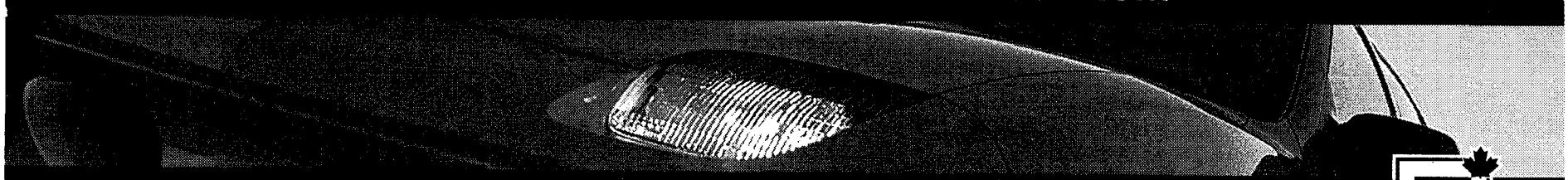

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by Rick Heffernan

Canada, like all great societies has national pastimes which help define its identity. The Russians have chess, the Chinese have mahjongg but we Canadians have something far more exciting—we have BINGO! Cruise the main drag of any town in Canada on a Saturday night and you are sure to find a church or a Lions' club hosting a traditional night of early-bird bonanzas and frantic bingo dabbers.

Bingo has had to change in recent years and cultural watchdogs may be concerned that the game cannot survive in this, the cyberspace age. Anti-smoking bylaws now mean the smoke-filled bingo parlours of the past are gone and competition for gambling dollars is getting more serious with bigger prizes and better venues.

Despite the changes, bingo hasn't become a hot ticket event for the young and hip; the monotone voices of bingo callers continue to drone on in church halls filled with gray-haired grandmothers methodically dabbing their bingo cards while complaining about young people and that horrible music they listen to.

This is all being changed right here in Vancouver and wouldn't you know it, gay men are doing for bingo what they have already done for pierced ears, work boots and funky furniture from the 1950s. The hottest ticket in Vancouver's gay community right now is Friends for Life's Gay Bingo. And just as gay men transformed boring, functional work boots into a camp commentary on urban living, Gay Bingo is shaking up one of Canada's national pastimes.

The Friends for Life Society kicked off Gay Bingo at the West End Community Centre last month and has met with unconditional success. Tickets for the weekly Saturday night bingo extravaganza have been selling out fast.

Why has this game, so inextricably linked with gray-haired grannies, taken the ultra-hip gay and lesbian community by storm? Well, let's just say that Friends for Life has taken the basic structure of bingo and energised it with a good dose of gay humour and sensibility. The end result is a wildly successful fundraiser which is also a heck of a lot of fun.

Gay Bingo would probably be just plain old bingo if it wasn't for Joanie, the drag queen who hosts the evening and keeps the bingo players rolling in the aisles.

On the night that I went to Gay Bingo, Joanie was joined by her drag queen gal pals Justine Tyme, Penny Tration and Ammeta May Santos. While the serious work of calling out the bingo numbers is left up to one of Friends for Life's volunteers, Joanie keeps us entertained with her crazy monologue and jokes.

More often than not one of the other 'ladies' are the butt of Joanie's jokes, but they are willing participants in Joanie's ongoing sexual innuendoes and double entendres. Justine, who is a stunning bleached blonde, at least six feet tall, is razzed constantly about being less than lady-like and there are more than a couple of blonde jokes directed at a poor, slightly confused Justine.

Added to Joanie's shtick about blondes, lesbians, and sex-crazed gay boys are a couple of other details that make this event "gay". First off we are told at the start of the night about O-69. Every time the caller announces O-69 the bingo players are supposed to tap out the tune to "a shave and a hair cut" with our bingo dabbers. Other nights O-69 has meant bingo players have had to stand up and kiss the person across the table—I have obviously come on the wrong night.

Friends for Life hopes to raise $60,000 in the first six months of bingo for two specific projects. Terry Howard, coordinator of the Diamond Centre for Life explained how the main goal of Friends for Life is to improve the quality of life of people with a life threatening illness.

The Centre's clients include AIDS patients, women with breast cancer, people with eating disorders and Cystic Fibrosis patients. The organisation receives no government funding, but through a substantial donation by Leslie Diamond and the organisation's other fundraising efforts like "Art for Life" and "Dining Out for Life," Friends for Life has been able to establish the Diamond Centre for Life at Weeks House in the West End's historic Barclay Square.

Howard also explained that the money from Gay Bingo will be split evenly between the Diamond Centre's food bill and Friends for Life's new outreach program which is being targeted at residents of the Downtown Eastside. The Centre serves over 500 meals a week and thus has substantial operating costs, while the outreach program seeks to bring services to this part of the city which is where a large chunk of new HIV diagnoses are originating from.

But the serious and meaningful work of Friends for Life is not in the spotlight on Saturday night. Instead, the emphasis is on entertaining the bingo players. I spend most of the night sitting with Marcel and Len who have won tickets for this evening. Marcel played Bingo the week before and won a "Bingo makeover," a regular feature of Gay Bingo. Justine is going to transform Marcel into a woman backstage between Joanie's digs about Ms Thyme's hair colour.

Marcel is being a good sport about his makeover and Len, his boyfriend has brought a camera to take lots of pictures. The couple seem typical of the crowd; they see Gay Bingo as a good way to spend the evening and aren't taking the actual bingo game too seriously. Before heading backstage for the makeover, it is hard to imagine Marcel in pumps and a cocktail dress; there is nothing feminine about Marcel at all who was introduced to me as the "hunky guy Justine is going to make over tonight."

Despite Joanie's best efforts at keeping us all entertained, the audience eventually quiets down after five or six games of bingo. It is still bingo and you do have to pay attention to dab off all your numbers. ❖

Girls in love

films about lesbian and bisexual women

by Melinda M Jetté

Film represents social values and contributes to the formulation and perpetuation of these values. With the changes wrought by the feminist and the gay liberation movements, celluloid images of queer people have begun to change. In the past twenty years, lesbian and bisexual women have brought their stories to the screen, stories which reflect their experience: their loves, their suffering, and their triumphs. These films, often produced on miniscule budgets and in the face of significant opposition, give us images of gay women which are celebratory, yet complex. The following list provides a sampling of recent movies about lesbian and bisexual women.

***Bar Girls* (1995) by Lauren Hoffman.**

This film follows the dating adventures of several women in Los Angeles. It is a romantic comedy on the theme girl meets girl, girl loses girl, girl gets girl. A warm and funny look at contemporary lesbian relationships.

***Desert Hearts* (1976) by Donna Deitch.**

Based on Jane Rule's Desert of the Heart, Donna Deitch's work was a breakthrough in the mid 1970's. Although it would seem conventional by current standards (uptight Eastern college professor falls for carefree Western gal), this is a sensitive love story which speaks about the need to assume one's identity.

***Everything Relative* (1995) by Sharon Pollack.**

Premiered at the Sundace Film Festival last year, this movie relates the story of a group of women (all gay save one) who reunite after years apart. A smart, engaging reflection on identity, sexuality, friendship, and family.

***Female Perversions* (1995) by Susan Streitfeld.**

Twilda Swinton is Eve, a bisexual lawyer on the eve of being appointed judge. In chronicling Eve's search for a place in the sun, Streitfeld explores the issues of gender identity, sexuality, and the struggles of women in a patriarchal world.

***Forbidden Love* (1991) by Mary Pettigrew.**

A National Film documentary about the history of lesbians in Canada from the 1940's to the present. It is based on interviews with women from Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.

***Framing Lesbian Fashion* (1992) by Karen Everett.**

An exploration of lesbian styles over the past several decades. This informative documentary examines the femme/butch conventions, the lesbian "uniform" of the 1970's, lipstick lesbians, and lesbian S&M culture.

***Go Fish* (1994) by Rose Roche.**

One of the miniscule budget flics to make it big. Guinevere Turner captured dyke hearts around the globe with her quirky quest to find a girlfriend. A snappy comedy about Generation X'ers looking for love.

***Henry and June* (1990) by Phillip Kaufman.**

A drama based on the diaries of erotic writer Anais Nin. Although this is an artsy Hollywood production, it portrays one woman's attraction to men and women with sensitivity.

***The incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*(1995) by Maria Maggenti.**

Evie, an uptown black girl falls for Randy, a white working-class tomboy. This is a story of teenagers finding their first love. Maggenti puts a positive spin on the experiences of queer youths in high school.

***Lianna* (1980) by John Sayles.**

An early work by Canadian independent filmmaker John Sayles. While it is somewhat dated, Lianna explores a woman's journey of self-discovery. She begins a relationship with a female college professor and thus begins the unraveling of her life as a middle-class housewife. This is a tale of love, loss, and liberation.

***When Night is Falling* (1995) by Patricia Rozema.**

Although Rozema's plotline suffers from the same conventions as Desert Hearts (uptight white theology professor falls for eccentric black circus performer), this film has a luminous quality. The underlying theme is the importance of taking the leap into the light - following one's heart and coming out. ❖

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Joe Average Extraordinary

by Thomas Fitt

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies in us."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Boldness builds beautiful dreams and unique lives. It takes a brave person to strive for their true dreams without compromising themselves. I was twenty years old before I met an openly gay individual, which is an unfortunate but all too real commentary on western society in the 1990s. Perhaps that is why I value 'outness' as much as I do. Perhaps that is the reason that a good number of my heroes, role models, and mentors are openly gay individuals.

Joe Average is a Vancouver artist whose "contemporary pop" style of painting can be described as innovative and uplifting. His most well know piece, "One World, One Hope," a striking image of overlapping faces composed of bright colours and bold lines, was commissioned for the 11th International Conference on AIDS, held in Vancouver this last July. It was this painting, reminiscent of a stained glass window, that has given him his greatest exposure. How has he achieved these many wonderful things?

"I don't know much about art," explained Average, when asked about his training. "I never did the art school thing." Joe grew up and attended school in Victoria. "School was not a great thing for me...[I felt like] an alien in many ways." Both at school and at home Joe was continually alienated.

"The verbal and physical abuse I got in elementary and Jr. high for being obviously gay was just too much for me to handle."

It was slightly before his sixteenth birthday that his parents approached him with the question, "Do you engage in homosexual activity?" Halfway through grade eleven, Joe left home and quit school because "it was just not working."

As I approached his apartment I feared that my positive image of this man might be altered by actually meeting him. I left the interview with an armload of gifts for the children that I work with and a huge smile on my face. His positive attitude is somehow contagious. "I've often been quoted as saying that HIV is the best thing that ever happened to me, because it's forced me to become me."

Very few people would resort to art as their final means of survival.

"I figured out what I was good at since day one and I decided, this has got to be it... because it was my drawings taped to the refrigerator when I was a kid, not my report cards." But Joe has not always worked as a professional artist.

After leaving home Joe did what he felt he had to in order to survive.

"I've done just about every job under the sun...everything from cooking to managing apartment buildings," he explained. "It wasn't until I was 30, three years into being diagnosed with HIV... and I was without a job that I challenged myself to survive on my art. [Until then] I sort of doodled with no future in mind, but I didn't think I'd even make it to 40, so what did I have to lose?

"It was my 30th birthday...and I thought to myself, I don't want to wake up when I'm 40 and wonder if I could have done the stretch...I looked at it like camping. My survival tools were my brushes and my pencils."

Surviving as an artist is not an easy thing to do. Surviving as an openly gay artist living with HIV can be far more difficult. "It's a hard job [but] I have to prove to everyone that I can do it on my own. All of us have a huge survival mechanism in place, and when you're threatened that survival thing pops up and starts to work," Joe continued, "but I love it... I don't think I could do anything else now.

"I have to be in a life situation that I enjoy or I wouldn't want to live. The only advice I can really give to others is: take apart what it is you desire to do, if you love it and it makes you happy, challenge yourself."

Role models are the people who positively influence our lives and inspire us to be more than we are, so that we can become the people we truly want to be. Growing up in small-town British Columbia I had many wonderful role models: kind teachers, media figures, local artists, etc. Unfortunately many of them also told me, through their actions and attitudes, that gay behavior is unnatural and unacceptable. I began to feel unworthy of my dreams, as if I could not obtain them because I was abnormal and inherently flawed.

Joe Average is not my role model because he is gay, or that he has become successful in spite of the fact he is HIV positive. I love his paintings, and I love his positive attitude toward life. He is one of my role models because of the fact that he is a great artist, living and working in Canada, working passionately in spite of great adversities. As a theatre student, I am encouraged by each and every individual that challenges themselves to earn a living through their art. I would be lying, however, if I were to say that I didn't take great satisfaction in the fact that he is an openly gay man. The fact that his beauty and passion appear to grow daily is inspirational. Perhaps the many voices saying that he couldn't achieve great things because he was different, are what ultimately inspired him to achieve great things. Now his success inspires me.

I have come to believe in the power of positive role models, and it is no small coincidence that the majority of my own role models are openly gay individuals. I know without their stories of courage and strength I wouldn't be the person I am today. ❖

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Queercore?

by Namiko Kunimoto

Initially, the task sounded easy:

"Would you be interested in writing an article on queer bands?"

"Sure. Yes. I would like to write an article on queer bands."

But when it comes to sexual politics and underground music, nothing is straight-forward, if you'll excuse the pun. The entire category of Queer Bands is offensive to a lot of people. It suggests that a homogenous sound exists between artists whose only common frame of reference is that they are not straight. It immediately identifies a difference between the said bands and every other band out there—and that difference can mean a strong, supportive following or it can result in homophobic avoidance or gay-bashing.

Team Dresch, an all-dyke, "lesbionic" band from Portland Oregon, was gay-bashed outside a gig which was publicised as "pro-queer."

Many out bands have received threats or hate messages in some way. Most of the hockey players I went to highschool with in Southern Alberta would never be caught dead listening to "a bunch of fags."

Another consequence of the "queer band" caption is the creation and commodification of novelty bands. Has anyone ever written a review of Pansy Division without using some form of the word "queercore"? It is true that they aim for the in-your-face sexuality, but most reviewers and Muchmusic VJs seem to have forgotten that Pansy Division does produce music.

Obsessive media attention to an artist's sexual attention just furthers the notion that these people are not normal. Do bands want their sexual identity to be their shtick? (Well, maybe Pansy Division does...)

Dividing bands as queer or straight excludes bands that include both queer and straight people in their membership.

"Do people consider my band to be a 'queer band' when I am the only queer person in the band?" asks Meeghan from the Vancouver hardcore band Puncture.

Because her lyrics are out, loud and proud, and because Meeghan is involved in political activism, that may be the case. But she is quick to point out, that all the members make the band what it is. She also wants straight people, youth and everyone else out there to have a chance to hear her message—not just the "queer band followers"—whoever they may be.

Other lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people may not be comfortable being out on stage or in their lyrics. Should they be chastised by the queer community?

Attempting to focus this article on local bands was difficult. Only a small number of so-called queer bands came to mind. These are the bands like Puncture, Sparkmarker, and Kinnie Starr who are out publicly. Kinnie Starr, a lyricist/guitarist/artist extraordinaire, recently discussed her bisexuality with the Georgia Straight; not surprisingly, that was the information that subtly graced the headline.

There are many more local artists who are queer, but is it fair to out them in a publication? If you want to know who and where they are, just remember queers are everywhere! Read zines like Outpunk and Bamboo Girl, check out bands released on record labels like Kill Rock Stars, Chainsaw and Candy-Ass Records, or listen to queer-positive shows like Queer FM, Meat-eating Vegan, Lady Deathstrike's Lunchbox or Pink Kitty Power Hour on CiTR 101.9FM. There's more to queer culture than kd lang! ❖

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Vision quests:

by Stanley L. Tromp

"Strange country this, where males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex!"
Edwin Thompson Denig, 1855

The berdache natives of North America were cross-dressing, cross-working - and usually homosexual - persons who were highly honoured in their various tribes. Because of their sexual ambiguity, berdaches have been neglected by squeamish academics, but their achievements as religious leaders and peace negotiators provide valuable insights on Canadian native and colonial history.

Some natives believed the berdaches' ability to mediate between the two sexes indicated their power to mediate between the physical and spirit worlds.

In his landmark book on the subject, *The Spirit and the Flesh* (1992), Walter Williams argues that unlike Christian cultures, which tend to view gender and moral issues in rigid black-and-white dichotomies, most native groups are far more tolerant of gradients, seeing gender diversity as part of a continuum. On the whites' condemnation of gays, Cree native M. Owlfeather writes (in an analogy to white vs native forestry use), "We don't waste people, like white society does. Everyone has their gift."

Native nations so respected the berdache because only the Great Spirit could explain the mystery of this androgyny, which they believed recovered the original unity of human beings. Some natives, in fact, believed the berdaches' ability to mediate between the two sexes indicated their power to mediate between the physical and spirit worlds. Thus, when Europeans tried to crush the berdache tradition, ostensibly for sexual morality reasons, they also caused incalculable spiritual weakening in the tribes.

The berdaches were initially mistaken for hermaphrodites by early explorers. The reality is far more complex and elusive. The essential factors in the berdache role are gender reversal and androgyny, not one's biological sex or homosexual activity.

"It is clear that gender was not primarily defined by biology, but rather by the type of work done, and there was not always a direct link between gender and sexual activity," writes Canadian gay Marxist historian Gary Kinsman. "Furthermore, cross-dressing and cross-working did not always signify same-gender sexual acts. Changing one's clothes and one's work in the prevailing division of labour was enough in some tribes to transfer one's gender."

The Christian suppression of native androgyny per se is most unfortunate, for June Singer insists it was a common experience to both groups. The ancient Greeks worshipped the bisexual god Dionysus, in which masculine and feminine opposites are united. Carl Jung contended that the Christ figure is clearly androgynous throughout medieval iconography. But when the Hebrews penned the book of Genesis, writes Singer, "they expunged all references to creation as the product of an androgynous god-goddess."

The high status of the berdache was partially a result of the equality of native men and women, for unlike in white societies, "since women had high status, there was no shame in taking on feminine characteristics," writes Williams. Significantly, the decline of native women's equality during the white expansion of the late 19th century accompanied the fading of the berdache.

The forming of a berdache had similar patterns among tribes. A pre-pubescent child would have dream in which the female deity (the moon) or the male deity (the sun) would summon the child to take a berdache role. Or the parents would arrange a test, laying a "masculine" item such as a bow or a "feminine" one such as knitting needles before the child; whichever the child would chose would determine his or her gender role, which was usually retained for life.

The functions of the male berdache described by various observers include: shamans, weather predictors, seers, dream interpreters, prophets, warriors, peace mediators, artists, dancers, singers, healers, nurses, expert cooks and sewers, pottery and basket makers, and guides and interpreters for white traders (such as Henry and Thompson in B.C. in 1801).

The berdache's androgyny made him an ideal go-between in marriage disputes, and a romantic matchmaker among young people. As part of the extended family, berdaches cared for children, and also served as teachers due to their reputation for higher intelligence.

Families regarded themselves as extremely fortunate to have a berdache with a vision quest, believing

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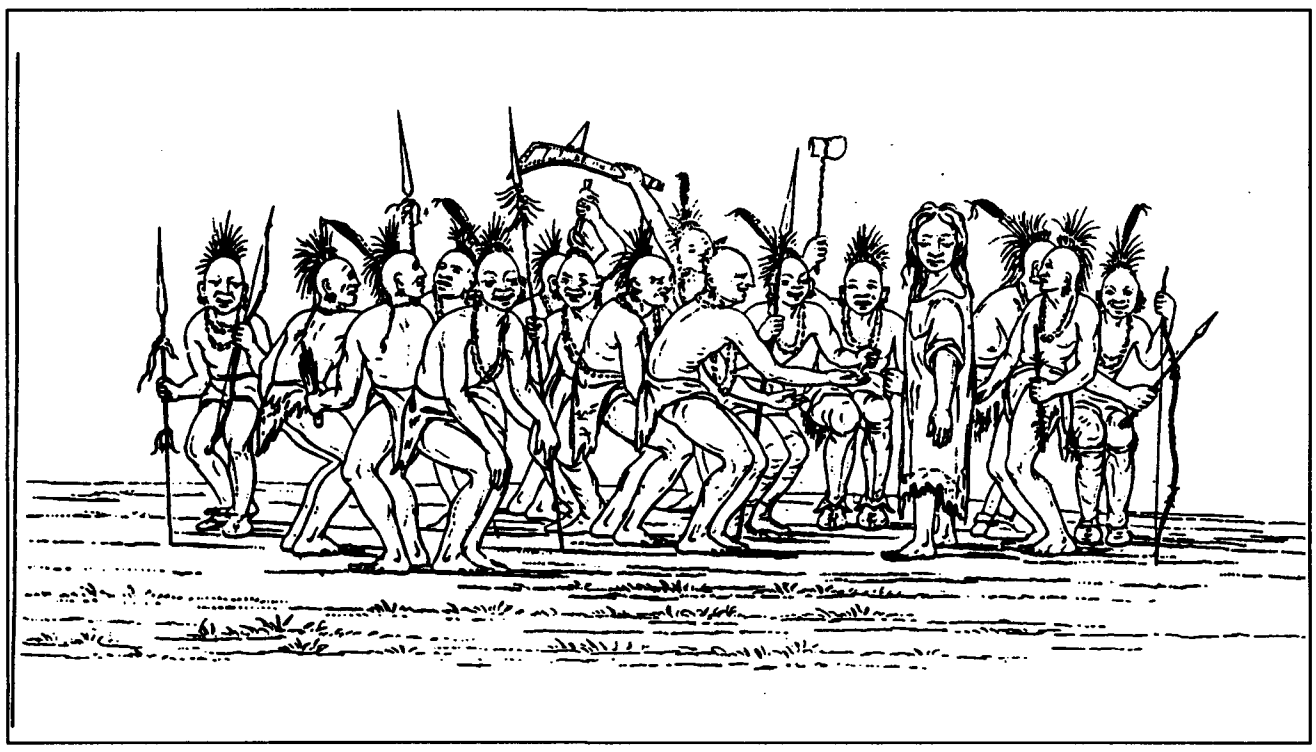
OUT

Rediscovering the berdache tradition in early Canada

this might bring them good luck and riches (an interesting contrast to the attiitude of non-native parents when their gay child comes out). Some tribes honored berdaches with a yearly feast and dance, they were cited in myths, and their wrath was dreaded. When they died, the tribe buried them in a mixture of male and female clothes and mourned the loss.

Female berdaches, of whom much less is known, were famous as brave hunters and warriors. Explorers also noted much lesbian behavior among non-berdache women. In many tribes a woman instead of her husband was considered to have ownership of her body, and provided she fulfilled her duty of bearing children, her sexual activity was considered her private affair. "Individual inclinations are usually seen as due to a direction from the spirits," writes Williams. "This spiritual justification means that another person's interference might be seen as a dangerous intrusion into the supernatural."

Countless variations on the berdache role have been noted around the world for centuries, in Asia, Africa, ancient Greece and the Middle East. Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette was the first to note berdaches in Canada, in 1673. Not surprisingly, considering the explorer's social backgrounds, the Europeans were not only shocked but stupefied as to why the natives treated berdaches as sacred. French missionaries considered it paradoxical that the berdaches (whom they called "Manitous") were, as they put it, "honoured by debasing themselves" and "gioried in demeaning themselves."



DANCE TO THE BERDACHE. A drawing by George Catlin, 1866, from his *Illustrations of the Manners, Customs and Traditions of the North American Indians*

In the 19th century, vast numbers of settlers, farmers and miners moved west in Canada, and the power of the church ascended. The state enforced white sexual standards on natives (although more strictly in the United States), outlawing native spiritual practices. Officials cited tribal "sexual perversity" as one excuse to move children to Christian boarding schools, a tragic irony considering the widespread sexual abuse there. Androgynous and potentially berdache boys were forced to act "masculine."

Tribes split into Christian and non-Christian factions, and many tribes became embarrassed of the berdache tradition. The shame inculcated in berdaches, especially by zealous missionaries, led some of them to commit suicide. But the most effective pressure to reform came not so much from the whites as from the converted natives, for the berdache valued the latter's opinion more.

To continue in their roles, some merely put on men's clothing while remaining berdache in every other way. Others disguised themselves as women so carefully that whites mistook them as women for many years.

A Kwakuitl chief in B.C. recalled what happened when his berdache lover was investigated by the government in the late 19th century: "The Indian agent wrote to Victoria, telling the officials what she was doing [dressing as female]. She was taken to Victoria, and the policeman took her clothes off and found she was a man, so they gave him a suit of clothes and cut off his hair and sent him back home. When I saw him again, he was a man. He was no more my sweetheart."

The chief broke off his relationship with the berdache. Yet even when whites knew about cross-dressing, the Indians sometimes used ploys to fool them. For example, a Catholic missionary near Vancouver in the 1840s wrote that an Indian man of the Nisqually tribe "was disguised as a woman for a long time past. For a man to disguise himself as a woman was not unusual among natives, who claimed the ruse offered them greater safety in travel and spy activity."

The suppression of native religious and sexual culture is a little-known and fascinating chapter in the tragedy of Canadian history. M. Owlfeather wrote that berdaches were barely remembered by the tribes until recently, and then were mainly recalled with scorn due to the influence of Christianity. But in spite of these efforts, the berdache tradition still survives today, although modified, in many Canadian tribes. ❖

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Fractured Gay Liberation Movement needs Leadership

by Michael R. Botnick

A growing rift between HIV-positive and HIV-negative gay men could kill the gay liberation movement.

Disasters tend to create organisational solidarity, but the AIDS crisis has operated in reverse, spawning a variety of competitive AIDS service organisations. Seropositive gays have been alienated from the mainstream gay community, while seronegative gay men have been disenfranchise as human and financial resources are redirected toward persons living with HIV and AIDS.

***Serostatus**—whether one has tested positive or negative for HIV—has effectively become a marker of social status.*

Seronegative gay men experience discrimination from within the gay community as funding for and services to this sector diminish. The seropositive community has culturally, economically and socially dismissed many of the needs of seronegative gay men in favour of providing social and resource-based services to seropositive gay men.

As the disparities in service and advocacy increase, so does the social distance between the gay movement and the AIDS movement. If this trend continues, the social gap will serve further to push HIV-positive and HIV-negative gay men into polarised camps, resulting in a wider separation of the gay movement and the AIDS movement.

The result will be greater stigmatisation of HIV-positive people, both within and outside the gay movement, reversing the stigma of HIV such that to be HIV-negative will be widely seen as a marker of non-gay identity.

Chances of presenting a unified Gay Liberation front will correspondingly diminish.

This can be avoided if the gay community re-establishes itself as one that helps itself, an idea that was the hallmark of the earlier days of AIDS activism.

This will require, in part, a de-bureaucratisation of AIDS service organisations, coalition building between AIDS service organisations and gay liberation organisations, and an attitude shift by the whole community regarding HIV status as a medical, rather than a social phenomenon.

While numerous seropositive communities other than gay men make up the whole of the HIV-positive population, the virus has affected no single group (with the possible exception of intravenous drug users) more profoundly. Except gay men, no other HIV-positive population subgroup can be considered a significant component of an overall social movement.

So what the gay male community faces is the convergence of a medical phenomenon and a social movement. My concern is the ability of the social movement to sustain itself in the face of a fractured community.

While scholars have written many articles on the dynamics of race and gender in fragmenting the gay and lesbian community, very little has been written on the growing cleavage between HIV-positive and HIV-negative gay men, and the impact of this disunity on the sustainability of a cohesive gay liberation movement.

There are growing tensions in the gay community and the HIV/AIDS community, especially with regard to professional and personal reactions to the health epidemic, individual responses to HIV and AIDS and the notion of serostatus as a marker of identity.

Fears of contagion and intimacy have served to fracture community solidarity, and social deviance has become a social and psychological tool employed within and outside of the gay community to build barriers that prohibit communication and coalition building.

Our community can go about rebuilding itself, but not without a return to the grassroots model of service delivery we saw in the early 1980s.

Such a rebuild will also force the mainstream communities to disassociate the gay community from the AIDS community so that HIV/AIDS is repositioned as a medical phenomenon, rather than as a social one.

The task of re-inventing AIDS as an epidemic apart from the gay community—an equal opportunity disease if you will—is not easy. For many it is also not desirable. But if the gay community expects to survive as a cultural and social entity, it is a necessary task.

We must take back that which we have lost: our community. There is precious little time to waste.❖

The Challenge of Inclusion

by Leanne Drumheller

Discrimination towards non-heterosexuals exists both within society at large and within the gay community itself. In the past year, both the Vancouver Gay and Lesbian Center and the Gay, Lesbians and Bisexuals of UBC student group (GLBUBC) have changed their names to The Centre and Pride UBC respectively, embracing the diversity within our community. This open-minded action shows a more accepting attitude toward those who are not specifically gay or lesbian (e.g. bisexual and transgendered people).

The ongoing debate about who is eligible for inclusion in the homosexual community is disappointing. Although we have fought against the heterosexual biases imposed on us, we, the "discriminated against", discriminate against the "others" among ourselves. Many of us hold tightly to the images of strictly gay male and lesbian female, echoing the binary setup of heterosexuality. Issues of race and class compound the difficulties for the non-heterosexual, non-white individual. It is easy for me to overlook issues of race and class as a white, middle class woman. I hold a falsely acquired position of power in relation to women of color and women living below my financial level.

Financial comfort allows one greater freedom to challengethe norm with less fear of backlash. Mercedes Steedman, in "Who's on Top," says that "our social class experiences as women shape the degree to which we are free to act sexually." To clearly understand the plight of the "other" requires a full realization of one's own privileged position.

When the greater homosexual community rejects subgroups like bisexual and transgendered individuals, we are engaging in the same "childish" exclusionary tactics that the dominant heterosexual community use against us. As a homosexual, I have felt the sting, anger, and hurt of oppressive rejection by the heterosexual community. Yet, that is what I see being done within our own commmunity.

Bisexuals may be one of the easiest targets for internal discrimination. The most common phrase that I hear for bisexuals is "fence-sitters." D. Bell, in "Bi-sexuality: A place on the margins," expresses a common stereotype of bisexuals, as "simply 'tourists', taking trips into 'gay' subcultures, having our fun, then going home with a few snapshots and some fond memories." This image angers many gays and lesbians who take their sexuality seriously; but it should hold as much weight in our community as the trite notion that all lesbians are car mechanics.

Another "gender-warrior" is the transgendered person. Where do they belong in our community? There was even resistance within what was GLBUBC to include the transgendered in our name. This may be due to the stigma attached to the transgendered community.We have an obligation to accept people outside of our narrowly-defined "norm."

We have been the subjects of intolerance and should beware of continuing the legacy. Hierarchies exist in every aspect of society, and the homosexual community is no exception. We are handicapped by the intolerance of others and of ourselves. For us to gain strength as a community, we need to empower the disenfranchised among us and ensure that all voices are heard. ◆

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Too Unlimited

by Rebecca

I hate Monday mornings almost as much as having the pizza guy deliver the wrong pizza. However, come lunch, Monday takes on a special brightness. From 12:30 to 1:30 a group of women get together to recaffinate and regroup for the week.

We are Unlimited II, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered women of UBC. We are undergrads and grads from all faculties, as well as occasional visitors. I would like to say we have a format, an agenda or even a dating service, but all we have is whatever the hour turns out to be: mostly laughter, occasional support, and, at other times, fervent discussion. This is a collection of excerpts from a few of our meetings. To those who've joined in, I am sure you may remember differently—but being the overworked student type with the mind of a sieve, this is the best I can do.

Boys: Do you mind if we get something from the closet?

Boys enter closet and close the door behind them as to not intrude on our meeting.

M: Gee, you guys have it all wrong. We are all trying to come out of the closet!

T: So here we are at the dinner table; my Dad, who had been complaining about how hungry he is, is about to take a bite. My mom is in mid chew. I decided to let the bomb drop. "So, just so you guys know, I have decided that I am a lesbian." You should have heard the forks drop. My Dad didn't eat a bite. As soon as he was able to pick up his jaw off the table he tried to convince me I was wrong—it didn't work, but it sure was a good try.

K: I think we should all go out again, but not bowling. I refuse to be humiliated like that again.

B: What are you complaining about? I got the lowest score and fell flat on my face, after the line.

T: Even though I have a boyfriend, I still consider myself queer. So it is cool to come here and explore that part of myself.

P: Having the word "bisexual" on the poster really helps. I am writing a screenplay with characters of all orientations. Even though I mentioned to my friend that I was attracted to women as well as men I don't think she believed me. Then I let her read the script. So she asked me how I knew about all the queer culture—I reminded her I was bisexual. She looked at me for a second, then started telling me about this love she had with another woman back when she was in university. It's weird how all those confessions come out once they know you're not exactly straight.

K: I think we should talk about attraction to straight people.

M: Yeah, like when you see that really cute dyke and it turns out to be a guy.

L: I think we should talk about relationships.

B: What kind of relationships? Family? Friends? Lovers?

L (with obvious discomfort): Well, like how to make that first move when you see someone you like.

B: So, you want to talk about how to get a date. Hmmmm—is she cute?

J: I finally decided not to cover up for my brother, not to hide, not to make excuses like falling down the stairs. So I called the nurse back over and told her what happened... It was the first time. I am finally making decisions for myself and doing what is right for me and not my family.

C: Way to go. I understand. My brother used to hit me. It's hard. I know what you are going through, so if you want to talk after...

M: Do you think you can really tell if someone is queer walking down the street?

K: You mean gaydar?

S: Not always, but I think you have a pretty good chance. It's like this: you are in the supermarket and a cute girl walks by. You want her to know you're gay, so you look at her in that "hey I'm a queer" way. Then, if she is queer she will recognise it and shoot you back that look—see, gaydar. However, it doesn't work if you are too tired, have a headache, or are so madly in love that you forget there is anyone else out there.

S: What makes this lunch so nice is that you don't have to think about who you are. You just talk—no double talk, no hiding. It's cool. ❖

Unlimited II takes place every Monday starting at 12:30 in SUB 215. All women are welcome and coffee is supplied (unless I am late, in which case a good excuse is all you get). So come out! We have new faces every week. Make your Mondays a little brighter!

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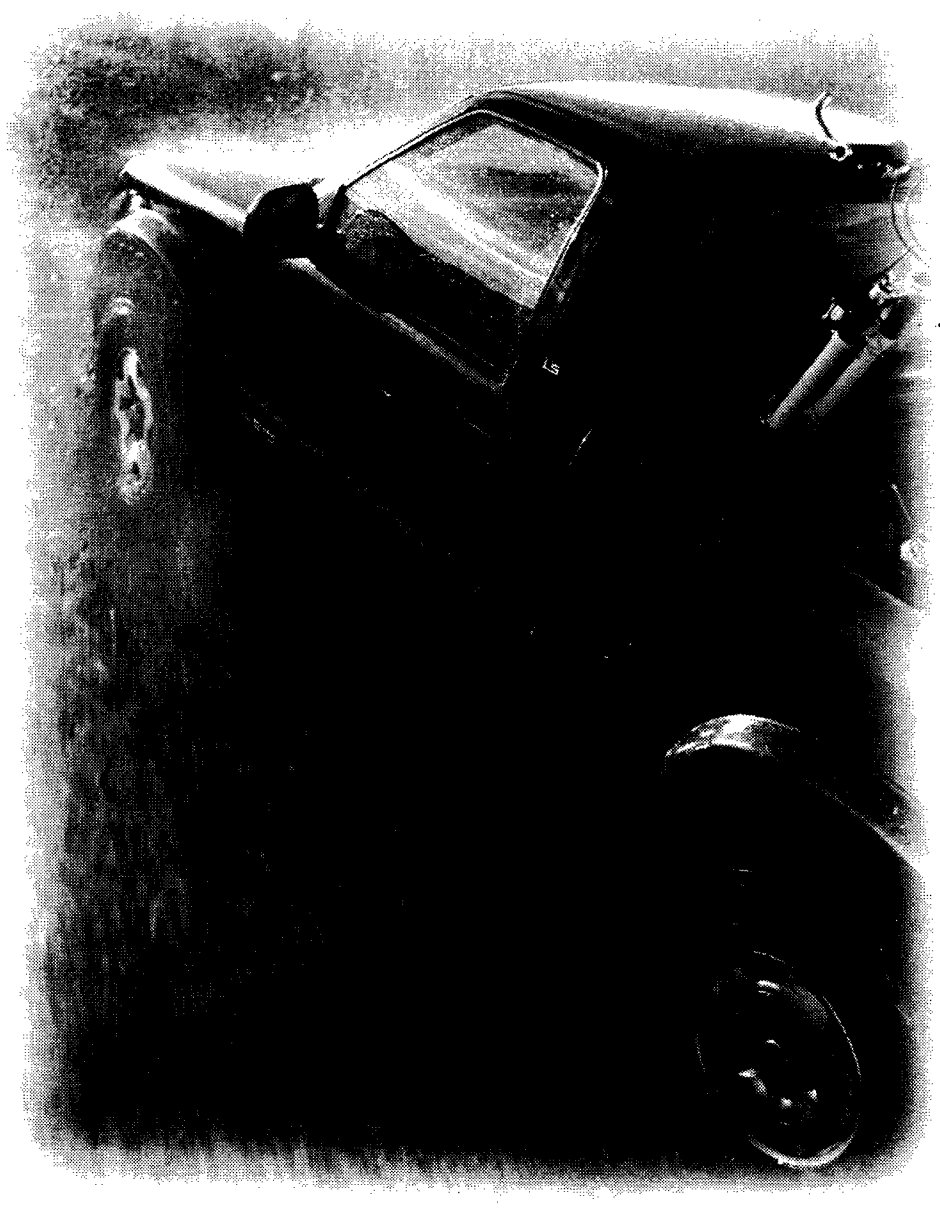

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The global queer legal year in review

What was the top queer legal story of the last year?

—by Doug Sanders

Runner-up:

British Columbia

British Columbia became one of the few jurisdictions in the world to openly allow same-sex couples to adopt children last year.

It did so in November 1996, when a new adoption law came into effect with the simple wording that *one or two* individuals could adopt children.

With the change, BC surpassed Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Iceland which all have registered partnership laws but they do not allow same-sex couples to adopt children.

Twenty years ago Anita Bryant campaigned in Florida against gays with her* Save Our Children *crusade. Concerns with children have always been used to rationalise bigotry against lesbians and gay men. Now British Columbia has the legal framework in place to protect lesbians and gay men* and *the children in their families.

Winner:

South Africa

South Africa approved the first constitution in the world to expressly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in 1996.

It did not come from white liberals, nor did it come from foreign supporters.

It *did* come from the Freedom Charter of the African National Congress, and stemmed from the work of Simon Nkoli, an openly gay black man who was a key fighter in the long struggle against aparthied.

The idea that lesbian and gay rights represents some odd western decadence, an idea promoted by leaders in Singapore, Malaysia, Zimbabwe and Namibia, has had to face the reality that South Africa's black liberation movement decided that ending discrimination meant ending all forms of discrimination. It meant fighting racism, sexism* and *homophobia.

Israel

An Israeli district court in January ordered the military to pay a monthly pension to the surviving same-sex partner of a deceased soldier.

The decision came on the heels of a storm of controversy over Israeli President Ezer Weizman's description of homosexuality as abnormal, and three years after the Israeli Supreme Court ordered El Al airlines to extend benefits to same-sex partners. ❖

Netherlands

The Netherlands is moving towards becoming the first jurisdiction in the world to validate same-sex marriage, which goes well beyond the registered partnerships pioneered in Denmark. ❖

Colorado

The US Supreme Court struck down a voter approved amendment to the Colorado state constitution which would prohibit any laws that protect homosexuals from discrimination.

The Court had never extended human rights protection to homosexuals, and in its decision in *Bowers v Hardwick*, it upheld criminal prohibitions on homosexual activity in Georgia.

In the Colorado case, the Court ruled the constitutional amendment had no rational purpose or function other than to discriminate against homosexuals. Even with the most minimal standard of scrutiny it could apply to the law, the Court could not find any justification for it other than bigotry.

The dissenting minority argued that if it was legal to prohibit homosexual sex, surely it was legal to allow homosexuals to be fired.

The logic of that proposition has led many to see the Colorado decision as a reversal of the older Bowers decision. ❖

Canada

Canada has added sexual orientation to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. But that change came through the courts, not by legislation.

Justice Minister John Crosbie first promised to amend the grounds for discrimination in 1986. Every justice minister in the ten years since has repeated the pledge, but no government to date has dealt with the issue.

Technically, an amendment became unnecessary in 1992 when the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled in the Haig case that the Canadian Human Rights Act had to be interpreted and applied by the courts as if sexual orientation was included. Otherwise, the Court ruled, the act itself would be discriminatory and in conflict with the Canadian Charter or Rights and Freedoms.

But even with the Haig ruling backing them up, federal politicians continued putting off any legislative action. *Extra Newspaper* regularly ran the number of days since Minister of Justice Allan Rock promised to introduce the change.

The Liberals did make the change in 1996, but not the way they said they would. First, Prime Minister Jean Chretien said the amendment would be put off until after the next election, citing concerns from Liberal caucus members representing rural ridings.

The Canadian Human Rights Commission blasted the government for its delay, and Chretien agreed to hold a free vote, something he had promised not to do on this issue.

In the Vriend case, Alberta Court of Appeal rejected the logic of the Haig decision in Ontario by deciding that homosexuals can be fired from their jobs.

The lead judgment claimed homosexuality has been condemned in *all* religious traditions at *all* times. The appeal should be the next lesbian and gay rights case to go before the Supreme Court of Canada. ❖

San Francisco

Roman Catholic Archbishop William Levada publicly proclaimed that he is *not* anti-gay—could it have been a new San Francisco law which pushed him to do so?

Last November San Francisco passed a law which requires companies that do business with the city to extend spousal benefits to same-sex partners who had registered their partnerships with the city.

That law applies to Catholic Charities operating in San Francisco because they receive 40 percent of their budget from the city. An AIDS hospice run by the Roman Catholic Church had already extended benefits to same-sex partners, but Archbishop Levada asked Mayor Willie Brown for an exemption for the others.

Brown, who was photographed last year beaming with brides and grooms at the inauguration of city-sanctioned same-sex weddings, flatly refused. The Catholic Church will allow all employees to name one person in their household as eligible to receive spousal-equivalent benefits, a solution that actually goes beyond the San Francisco ordinance in recognizing relationships.

The law also caught United Airlines, which uses San Francisco Airport as a major hub. News stories have reported that United currently provides benefits in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. But United decided last week not to extend those benefits in the US, at least not yet.

But by the end of last week some compromises were being worked out. United Airlines will receive a three year lease on its facilities, and if it brings its policies into line by the end of the lease it will be eligible for a 25 year lease. ❖

Hawaii

A trial level decision in Hawaii last September legalising same-sex marriages has rocked the US more than any other single lesbian and gay issue this century.

Two years ago the Hawaiian Supreme Court ruled that the denial of marriage to lesbians and gay men was discrimination on the basis of sex. Although it avoided dealing directly with homosexuality, the Court decided this sexual discrimination violated the Hawaiian State constitution.

The case was sent back to the trial court to give the state government a chance to show compelling state interest sufficient to justify the discrimination. Hawaii lost that case in September 1996, making same-sex marriages legal. However, until the appeals are completed, same-sex couples still cannot get married.

Anti-gay forces are now pushing for a constitutional convention to amend the state constitution to restrict marriage to heterosexuals. In addition, many other States are in the process of passing laws to ensure that Hawaiian same-sex marriages are not recognised in their jurisdictions. US President Bill Clinton has signed legislation so that the federal government will not recognise same-sex marriages.

Washington State has also introduced a bill to recognize same-sex marriage, which has the support of both the past and current Governors. ❖