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Network Notes

A Newsletter for Members of UMCP's Rainbow Terrapin Network



Inside this edition:

- Happy Holidays!.....1
- Campus News from Around the Country.....2
- News Update.....3
- Featured Online Resource: Gender Education & Advocacy.....3
- Announcements & Program Notes.....4
- Get Involved.....5
- Did You Know?.....5

Happy Holidays!

Happy holidays, and welcome to another edition of *Network Notes*! The fall semester has been a busy one for many of us, and now we've got just a few weeks to rest and regroup before we do it all again.

And rest and regroup we should. On top of what seems to have been one of the busiest semesters ever, it's been a tough couple of months for LGBT people and our allies. Nationally, this year's elections saw the passage of constitutional amendments in 11 states, making gay marriage explicitly illegal, despite the fact that it wasn't a right in any of those states to begin with. Now some gay rights activists are even predicting that the Bush administration will ultimately push harder for a similar amendment to the U.S. Constitution as a "thank you" for the strong anti-gay marriage voter turnout that also helped elect him. For some of us, all this feels like a war being waged within our own borders, on our own people.

The situation is doubtlessly bleak, and many of us are working to recharge for the coming months and what they'll bring. It will take hard work and perseverance to undo the damage done to LGBT people's freedom and security. But I think it's important to remember, especially at this time of year when so many of us strive to achieve the impossible—preparing the "perfect" holiday meal, buying the "perfect" gift, being the "perfect" Jew or Christian or Muslim or...—that circumstances aren't always perfect, and that sometimes the effort is as important as the outcome. That is to say, I think that many LGBT people and our allies are saddened and outraged by the turn that LGBT freedoms have taken. But I think that that outrage has brought us together like never before. It's an imperfect new coalition, to be sure, but a coalition nonetheless.

And it all reminds me very much of the beauty and strength sometimes generated in the midst of dark times. It reminds me, too, of a favorite poem of mine...Cherrie Moraga's "Loving in the War Years":

Loving you is like living
in the war years.
I do think of Bogart & Bergman
not clear who's who
but still singin a long smoky
mood into the piano bar
drinks straight up
the last bottle in the house
while bombs split
outside, a broken
world.

Continued on page 2

Happy Holidays...cont'd from pg. 1

A world war going on
but you and I still insisting
in each our own heads
still thinking how
*if I could only make some contact
with that woman across the keyboard*
we size each other up
yes...

Loving you has this kind of desperation
to it, like do or die, I
having eyed you from the first
time you made the decision to move
from your stool
to live dangerously.

All on the hunch
that in our exchange of photos
of old girlfriends, names
of cities and memories
back in the states
the fronts we've manned
out here on the continent
all this on the hunch
that *this* time there'll be
no need for resistance.

Loving in the war years
calls for this kind of risking
without a home to call our own
I've got to take you as you come
to me, each time like a stranger
all over again. Not knowing
what deaths you saw today
I've got to take you
as you come, battle bruised
refusing our enemy, fear.

We're all we've got. You and I

maintaining this war time morality
where being queer
and female is as rude
as we can get.

It's an imperfect world, certainly. As allies, I know you're doing your best to make it better for LGBT people, despite the enormity of the struggle ahead.

During this time of year, though, I also hope you'll take a few minutes to rest and make contact and simply enjoy the people who are struggling along with you.

Best wishes for a peaceful holiday season and a New Year filled with the promise of beautiful alliances and an end to the wars that necessitate them.

Campus News From Around the Country

1. "Eight Year Gay Benefits Battle at U. of Pittsburgh Finally Ends"

The University of Pittsburgh's decision to provide health coverage for domestic partners of their lesbian and gay employees ends an eight-year legal battle by the ACLU...

<http://www.365gay.com/newscon04/10/100504pitSuit.htm>

2. "Gay Naval Academy Grads Rejected For Alumni Group"

Multiple efforts at starting a gay and lesbian Naval Academy alumni chapter have failed to receive approval by the Academy's Alumni Association...

<http://www.365gay.com/newscon04/12/120204navyGay.htm>

3. "Gay Students Lead to Homecoming Tradition Changes"

As tension sometimes mounts, colleges and high schools everywhere are rethinking more traditional approaches to homecoming royalty...

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/mld/myrtlebeachonline/news/nation/10287756.htm>

4. "Comedic Uproar" and "Vigil Honors Shepard, Protests Toad's Concert: Activists Condemn 'Homophobic' Reggae Performer"

As these two articles suggest, campus entertainment—whether comedy or music—can be anything *but* entertaining...

<http://www.sovo.com/2004/10-1/view/actionalert/action.cfm>

<http://www.yaledailynews.com/article.asp?AID=26661>

5. "The Sin of Pride"

A new generation of gay and lesbian students is challenging homophobic policies at religious colleges.

http://www.motherjones.com/news/update/2004/10/10_404.html

6. "Gay Book Ban Goal of State Lawmaker"

An Alabama lawmaker who sought to ban gay marriages now wants to ban novels with gay characters from public libraries, including university libraries...

<http://prorev.com/2004/12/alabama-lawmaker-wants-to-ban-books.htm>

News Update

In a previous edition of *Network Notes* (March, 2004), we reported that several law schools had banded together, seeking to overturn the 1995 Solomon Amendment, and amendment which barred the federal government from disbursing money to colleges and universities that in any way made on-campus military recruitment more difficult. The law schools felt that the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was in conflict with university nondiscrimination policies that include sexual orientation.

In late November, a 3-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals (3rd Circuit, Philadelphia) found that educational institutions have a First Amendment right to bar military recruiters in order to protest the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Ironically, the 2-to-1 decision in relied heavily on the 2000 Supreme Court finding that the Boy Scouts of America have a First Amendment right to bar gay scoutmasters.

For the time being, then, campuses which do not allow military recruitment can do so without fear of losing government funding. The government, however, can ask the full appeals court to review the panel's decision, or may as the Supreme Court to hear the case.

Featured Online Resource

Gender Education & Advocacy

GENDER.ORG

www.gender.org

If you're looking for information for or about the transgender community, Gender Education and Advocacy (GEA) is a great place to begin. According to its website, GEA "pledge[s] compassionate support and passionate advocacy on behalf of transsexual and transgendered persons in their journeys toward health of body and mind and in their pursuit of personal freedom, including the freedom to alter their bodies and change their gender roles." The site upholds GEA's mission by providing a variety of materials, including pages devoted to advisories, information about GEA projects, and resources.

The "advisories" section provides notices of interest to transgender people, especially where their health, safety and privacy are concerned. For example, one current advisory cautions about the dangers of silicone injection, most especially the use of industrial/non-surgical silicone. (Because of the difficulties transgender individuals sometimes face gaining access to medical care—particularly where issues of transitioning are concerned—some transgender individuals have turned to unsupervised means of body transforming their bodies, such as injecting industrial-grade silicone to bulk up muscles or accentuate facial features, etc., which will help them "pass" as their target gender. The advisory warns that such a practice can be dangerous and disfiguring.) Another advisory currently featured on the GEA site warns of new airport security systems that can potentially invade a transgender person's privacy.


Gender.org's "projects" pages include information about GEA's special projects. One of these projects, "AEGIS" (The American Educational Gender Information Service), is a nonprofit clearinghouse for information about transgender and transsexual issues. Part of the work of the clearinghouse is to publish a variety of newsletters and magazines. "Transgender Day of Remembrance," another of GEA's special projects, is an internationally-recognized day set aside each year to memorialize those

who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. “Remembering our Dead,” another special project, is a virtual memorial to those victims. “Distributed Gender Education” provides a variety of free, downloadable educational materials about transgenderism. Included there are topics such as “Ethical Guidelines for Gender Education,” a gender variance primer, and tips for healthcare and social workers who work with transgender individuals, and more. Another of GEA’s programs, “The National Transgender Library and Archives” is GEA’s repository for a variety of transgender-related materials such as books, magazines and films.


Finally, the “resources” page includes a wealth of information aimed primarily at those at varying stages in their own gender transition. In addition to web links and local information arranged by state, the resources page includes topical information such as books and videos on voice therapy, popular surgeons, and gender programs. Also included in the resources section is information on child custody cases involving transgender individuals, basic but comprehensive information on FTM sex reassignment surgeries (SRS), resources for intersex persons, citations from court cases and printed materials regarding the use of Medicaid to pay for SRS, employment issues and more.


Gender Education and Advocacy provides a wealth of information at www.gender.org. While the material is primarily aimed at transgender individuals, allies can certainly benefit from it as well.


Announcements & Program Notes

 Welcome to the newest members of the Rainbow Terrapin Network:

Ed Kenny	Yoo Mi Choi
Shannon Buckley-Shaklee	Amy Ockenfuss
Lucas Calhoun	Vern Rogers
Alan Rucker	Zaneeta Daver
Shiva Subbaraman	Joshua Beeson
Jill Engel-Hellman	

 This fall we began a brownbag series intended to help Rainbow Terps and others to further develop their ally skills. In September, Raul Medina and Shiva Subbaraman spoke about “Intersections of Identity” and being an LGBT person of color. In November, Jessica Xavier spoke about “The Realities of Transgender Living.” We plan to continue the series this spring, and are looking for input. What topics do you feel would be most helpful to you as an ally? Please send your ideas to Tricia at SlusserT@aol.com

 Thanks to everyone who helped collect signatures for this year’s Allies List. It was a huge success!

 Thanks, too, to all the allies who turned out for the campus’ first observance of Transgender Day of Remembrance and the rally for transgender protections. In these times of decreasing political support for diversity, your support makes all the difference to one of the campus’ most vulnerable populations.



Transgender Day of Remembrance: Observers reflect on the many lives lost to anti-trans violence

Get Involved

1. *Witness the crisis, honor Our Heroes...* Between now and December 31, a 36-foot panel that alphabetically lists more than 2,000 names of all the official AIDS-related deaths in Washington between 1983 and 2004 will be on display at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Northwest D.C. As part of the "Our Heroes" exhibit, five other locations throughout the city are also displaying a total of 300 paintings, photographs, sculpture, handmade jewelry and poetry which document the impact of HIV/AIDS on residents of the nation's capital. For more information, visit <http://www.washblade.com/2004/12-17/localife/feature/crisis.cfm>
2. *Curl up with a good book...* Consider starting with Lambda Literary Foundation's "30 Books Every LGBT College Student Should Read, available at http://www.lambdalit.org/resources/thirty_books.html. After all, if they should read them, shouldn't we too?
3. *Resolve to Volunteer...* There are many LGBT-related organizations in the area that can always use volunteer help. Here are just a few:

Whitman-Walker Clinic
(www.wwc.org):
<http://www.wwc.org/volunteer/become.htm>

Equality Maryland
(equalitymaryland.org):
<http://equalitymaryland.org/volunteer.htm>

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center of Baltimore and Central Maryland (www.glccb.org)
http://www.glccb.org/Pdfs/Volunteer_Application.pdf

Did you know?

In a national 2003 report released by the FBI last month, hate crimes based on sexual orientation made up 17 percent of all hate crimes, with nearly half of those crimes taking place at schools or on college campuses.

Exactly 1,239 incidents were reported, which kept pace with 2002's numbers.

Half of the hate crimes based on sexual orientation occurred at schools or on college campuses.

<http://www.asuwebdevil.com/issues/2004/11/24/news/689065>

Network Notes is a newsletter for members of The University of Maryland, College Park's Rainbow Terrapin Network. Comments, questions, and suggestions are always welcome, and may be directed to Tricia Slusser, editor of *Network Notes*, at SlusserT@aol.com or 301.405.0734.