

TENNESSEE REFORMS SODOMY LAWS - GAYS OUTLAWED!

By Sean Boyer

Last year, the gay community apparently lost an unprecedented opportunity to abolish sodomy laws directed at homosexuals in Tennessee. The Sentencing Reform Act of 1989 was adopted last year by the Tennessee State Legislature, completely overhauling the Tennessee Criminal Code. The section of the old law proscribing "Crimes Against Nature" was entirely deleted, replaced by a section specifically proscribing "Homosexual Acts." This change effectively decriminalized all heterosexual activity between consenting adults, while specifically prohibiting homosexual acts, of "unnatural copulation." Although the penalty for such conduct was reduced, the 1989 law represented the first time that homosexual acts were singled out as such for inclusion in the Tennessee Criminal Code.

The Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.), 1982, which was the old law, reads:

39-2-612. Crimes against nature.

Crimes against nature, either with mankind or any beast, are punishable by imprisonment in the penitentiary not less than five (5) years nor more than fifteen (15) years.

The notes indicate that court decisions affirmed that this section applied to any acts involving anal sex, cunnilingus, or fellation.

Acts 1989, ch. 591, the new law, deleted the old Title 39 in its entirety and added, among other sections...

39-13-510. Homosexual Acts.

It is a Class C misdemeanor for any person to engage in consensual sexual penetration, as defined in section 39-13-501 (7), with a person of the same gender. "Sexual penetration" is defined as:

...sexual intercourse, cunnilingus, fellatio, anal intercourse, or any other intrusion, however slight, of

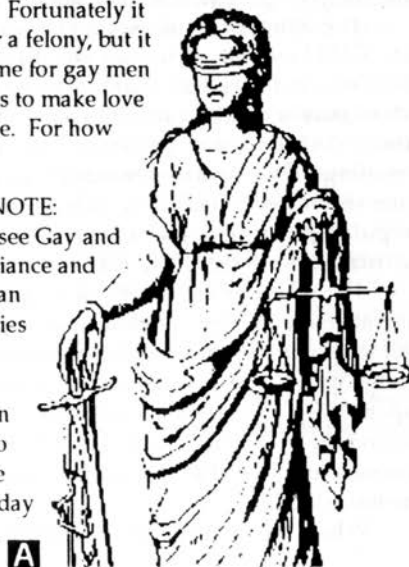
any part of a person's body or any object into the genital or anal openings of the victim's, the defendant's, or any other person's body, but emission of semen is not required...

A Class C misdemeanor is punishable by not more than 30 days or a \$50.00 fine or both. A sentencing commission comment included in the T.C.A. states that "consensual heterosexual acts are no longer criminalized."

The gay community made an effort at political action attempting to get homosexual acts excluded from this legislation, thereby decriminalizing all consensual sexual activity. The Southeastern Conference for Lesbians and Gay Men held in Dallas in April, 1989, targeted Tennessee as a battleground for repealing sodomy laws. Evidently, their efforts were not sufficient. The Sentencing Reform Act was signed into law June 14, 1989, with homosexual acts specifically singled out and prohibited. Fortunately it is no longer a felony, but it is still a crime for gay men and lesbians to make love in Tennessee. For how long?

EDITORS NOTE:

The Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance and the American Civil Liberties Union launched a campaign in Nashville to repeal these laws on Friday October 19.



1990

SURVEY

The Results are In!

by Ace Woodward

The GLSU is a diverse and excitingly large group. Its main focus has been, and still is, to provide an environment where lesbians and gays can explore their feelings, their sexuality, and their selves. With this semester's initial membership participation, the group has the potential to be an exceedingly dynamic and personally fulfilling experience for us all. To better serve the GLSU membership, a survey was recently distributed. The results were compiled and broken down demographically into categories (i.e. whole group, females, students, etc.) so that the group's variety could be supported more completely. Complete survey results were distributed to all committee leaders so that each committee can refer to these opinions when deciding on agendas and schedules for this semester.

The compiled results seem to reflect positively on the GLSU overall. Activities we have traditionally held received very high marks. The group as a whole chose parties, outdoor activities and holiday events as the top three social activities outside of regular meetings. The Aware newsletter, gay and lesbian discussion topics and films received high ratings for regular meetings. These results reflect general satisfaction with the GLSU as an organization.

The 'whole group' results also pointed out that the membership is now divided more equally between students and non students, that there are more womyn in the group, and that interest in hosting parties and sponsoring a fund raiser for Ark (Aids Response Knoxville) is significantly high. You may also be curious to know that the average age of the GLSU membership is 23.

While most of the demographic breakdowns

mirrored the opinions of the whole group, there were a few unique alternatives. Womyn ranked dances high on the list of social activities, placing them second, tied with outdoor activities. For regular meetings, womyn rated the womyn's share group and gay/lesbian films both at first place. Also of interest was that members 22 and older preferred outdoor activities overall, followed by holiday events and parties, respectively.

The results from this survey will not only enable the committees to better serve the interests of the group, but also to better tailor their committees to the segment of the GLSU membership they serve. The

Womyn ranked dances high on the list of social activities, placing them second, tied with outdoor activities

survey will be taken again at the end of the fall semester and then again at the beginning of the spring semester. Each of these tallies will help the committees and officers serve the GLSU better, and in course help the GLSU serve the gay and lesbian population here at the University of Tennessee. If you would like to see the actual survey results, check with a committee leader or any GLSU officer.

NOTE: In response to requests from the womyn's share group, the spelling "womyn" has been used in place of the traditional.

A

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SUBMISSIONS

The editors of AWARE seek to open new channels of communication to the gay and lesbian community at the University of Tennessee. What we communicate is largely dependant upon you. Your thoughts, ideas, and creativity should be the cornerstone of this publication. With your submissions this publication becomes a living, growing document that reflects the concerns of young gays and lesbians. The editors of AWARE encourage everyone to participate in Aware. Recognizing the need for discretion AWARE does not require real names to accompany submissions. If you wish to remain anonymous you may choose to submit your articles either without a name or with a pen name. Due to budgetary and spacial limitations not all submissions may be printed. The editors of AWARE reserve the right to edit all submissions. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author(s).

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LETTERS

from Europe

by Sonny C.

37,000 feet above the Atlantic, I'm listening to old Beatles classics on the inflight radio. I look out the window and see beautiful lacy clouds, floating weightlessly above our great earth. I feel that inner joy of life I often feel when I think back on the past year of my life, a gay Tennessee boy roaming Europe. I was on the International Student Exchange Program headed to Manchester, England via London this same time last year.

Traveling through Iceland, Great Britain, Ireland, East and West Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg I was able to observe gay life in other cultures. I now feel a wholeness of self I've never felt before. No longer is my gayness a dark secret hidden fearfully from the world. To experience life in a more accepting culture where it does not matter with your classmates, employers, and neighbors, opens your eyes to a new life where we can live openly and at peace.

In the Nordic world, Denmark offers the most to gays and lesbians, followed by Sweden, then Norway, then Iceland. Finland is the least progressive of the five because of the influences of the Soviet Union. Denmark and Sweden both have passed national laws recognizing

gay and lesbian marriages. Iceland was settled by Vikings in the 800's (AD).

The gay men there are rugged, but at the same time, half crazed by darkness 24 hours a day in the winter, and daylight 24 hours a day in the summer. I spent two weeks in Iceland as a guest of the incredibly friendly members of Somtka (sp?). The gay and lesbian organization covering social welfare and political activism for the local gay population. They recently changed the age of consent for gays and lesbians to 14 years of age - equaling the age of consent for heterosexuals.

When I arrived in Iceland I had hardly any money, but was armed with a phone number of the Somtkin headquarters in Reykjavik. I phoned the number and reached a friendly voice that said there would be someone named Ingi to meet me in downtown Reykjavik right away. In route downtown, the skies started pelting me with sleet, rain, and hail the size of quarters. I managed to find an awning in downtown near the park where I cowered against the freezing assault. After a few minutes I noticed that I was the only one concerned about the inclement weather. There were strikingly good looking men jogging in the park as if it were a nice spring day. I saw 2 housewives on their way to town each with a baby carriage. Oblivious

to the sleet smashing into their faces and fashionable hairdos. Their infants were protected by plastic sheets draped over the buggy, causing the ice and rain to make music as it bounced back into the sky.

I then spotted Ingi watching swans in the lake about 50 feet away. This is when I first realized the strength and vigour all Icelanders have - gay or straight. I recognized him from the leather jacket and jeans they said he would be wearing - normal attire for all trendy Icelanders. From that point on I was not allowed to spend any money or pay for a hotel room, hospitality flowed forth from everyone I met.

Language was no problem. As a matter of fact, I was once asking for directions and met someone who actually could not speak English. I hate to sound like a pushy English speaker, but I was shocked. After all, Iceland has a 98% literacy rate.

I was taken to the president of Iceland's house out in the countryside. We knocked on the door for a visit and tea but she wasn't home. When my new friends saw my shock, they said she better have tea with us, after the homosexual community helped elect her.

During my stay I did find a little romance. I met a 30 year old sexy Icelandic hunk businessman.

He had some business in the northern capitol of Akureyn. Why not mix business with pleasure? So we loaded up his SAAB and headed north where I was wine and dine. We ate fish fresh that morning from the icy arctic waters (raw), freshly baked breads, and incredible imported wine. On the way back we had a picnic, sitting precariously on the edge of a volcano, overlooking glaciers, mountains, windswept treeless plains of volcanic tundra! I had a fabulous time!

I was also invited to a birthday party for the lead singer of Sugar cubes at a dark post-punk club named Keisarinn, near the university. That's where I first came up with the term "freaky dancin'". Freaky dancin' can be seen at Planet Earth in Knoxville, except freakier.

The Icelandics are very unique. The majority are red headed or blond. I was amazed when I saw three non-white people on the streets in Reykjavik. I assume they were either tourists or were relatives of someone stationed at the US military base outside the city. The US military personnel are not allowed to leave unless they apply for a special pass - can you really blame the Icelanders? The older Icelanders are generally prejudice against minorities, while the young consider minorities chic. I saw some georgously beautiful people during my stay, but also met quite a few people who seemed as if they hadn't weathered winter too well.

The day came for me to leave Iceland and start my year in Manchester. What lay ahead for me was a mystery. I hardly had enough money for lunch, let alone a year in England...

A

From The Top

Dear Friends,

A new year is upon us, and so far I think it's going to be a great one. I would like to welcome all the new members that have joined us in the last few weeks and also to welcome back all the old members.

I am happy to say that all our committees have survived the transitional period from one academic year to another, and I am very grateful to the members who have volunteered their time and effort to seeing that these committees run smoothly. I can only stress how important they are to the functioning of the GLSU; without them it would be very difficult to get anything done.

All I can say is that I'm looking forward to a productive and fun year!

Thanks,
Rodger

President - Gay and Lesbian Student Union

GLSU Calendar

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Oct 25 | Next Social Events Committee Meeting - 8:30pm at Stephen B.'s House |
| Oct 27 | ArK Benefit - Costume Party 8:00pm at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Church |
| Nov 21 | Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner 7:30pm - Location TBA
Bring favorite side dish... |

The Way I Feel



Why I Support Outing

by Tom Jackson

Much has been said about the issue of outing over the past several months. It has been the focus of newspaper and magazine articles, T.V. talk shows and tabloid gossip. No one seems to agree. I am almost sick of debating the issue. However, I want to get my two cents worth in, so here I go...

Part of the reason people are arguing over outing is that there does not seem to be a clear cut definition of what outing is. To me, outing is the exposure of any gay celebrity or public figure, especially those who attempt to discredit the gay community or in any way pretend to be straight. Most everyone seems to agree that gay politicians who vote anti-gay should be outed. The issue of outing celebrities is where I seem to butt heads with most people. The most common arguments are:

1. Everyone has a right to privacy. **WRONG!** It is well known in this country that celebrities' personal lives are constantly invaded. Famous people have no privacy. The majority of performers do not become famous by accident. It is well planned and they should be ready to deal with the consequences.

I am not going to shed any tears for Richard Chamberlain or John Travolta just because they were outed in the tabloids. These guys are worth millions and could retire tomorrow. They have had a bigger moment in the sun than most of us will ever have. So if they have lost popularity, that is too damn bad. I have spent my gay time and my queer dollars watching these guys on T.V. and going to their movies. What have they done for me lately? Where were they on Gay Pride Day? Probably running around with their "girlfriends"!

2. Performers who are openly gay cannot achieve superstardom. Yes, Virginia, but how do you expect this situation to improve if performers keep bowing down to the hetero world and pretending to be straight? Gay performers have got to keep trying if we are ever going to get some of our

Outing is the exposure of any gay celebrity or public figure, especially those who attempt to discredit the gay community

own into the upper echelon of Hollywood. A few gay performers, such as Boy George, Michelle Shocked, Andy Bell (Erasure), and Tom Hulse ("Amadeus", "Parenthood") have achieved a measure of stardom.

Farrah Fawcett stated, in an interview in the early 80's, "If

Americans knew how many of their favorite T.V. and movie stars are gay, their heads would spin." Now, if some of these stars would stand up, we would be seeing more representations of gays on our T.V. shows and in our movies. It is currently estimated that 10% to 15% of the general

Audiences are quite sophisticated these days and I think that most of them could handle a few gay characters

population is gay and lesbian. I do not see this reflected in the media. Where is the episode of "Cheers" where Sam and Woody reveal that they are lovers? Where is the version of "Steel Magnolias" where Daryl Hannah and Dolly Parton get it on? How about a commercial where two guys want to "get a little closer with Arrid Extra Dry?"

Audiences are quite sophisticated these days and I think that most of them could handle a few gay characters, but we rarely see a gay character.

3. People who are forced out do not make good role models. I will agree on this one. Only someone who has the courage to be openly gay would make a good role model. I would not "out" someone because I want to make him a role model, but rather because I want to say to the world, "look, there are more of us than you thought. We are everywhere, even on your T.V. screens and in your movie theatres." As any good activist will tell you, increased visibility is the name of the game. I support outing because of the hypocrisy of these people. A liar is a liar is a liar.

I do not see any reason to out private persons such as the next door neighbor or the postman. However, everyone should be encouraged to come out. People who are cowering in the closet are not helping you, me or themselves. If we took one day, such as National Coming Out Day, and everyone in the nation stood up at a certain time and said, "I am gay and proud," then a lot would change for us all! Think about it. Is the family inheritance really worth the lost pride and repressed anger you feel at family gatherings? Is the uncomfortable atmosphere at work worth it? Isn't it time you came out?

BOYCOTT COORS BEER, MILLER BEER, AND ANY R.J. REYNOLDS PRODUCTS (MARLBORO, KRAFT, JELL-O, ETC.) PHILLIP MORRIS COMPANIES SUPPORT JESSE HELMS!

A

T.V. WITH A BITE:

High Touch Premiers in Knoxville

Combining a bold, provocative, and refreshing blend of current events with insightful guests, *High Touch* premieres with a bang on Channel 33 on Sunday afternoon, October 28 at 1:00pm (in the afternoon).

Revealing a new experimental format that hits home on both a global and regional level, *High Touch* will cover issues from which other programs shy away. It will spotlight local individuals whose progressive undertakings in politics, social and environmental issues and the arts move Knoxville forward into the nineties.

The show will open with a spark-filled discussion on obscenity that will include fundamentalist preacher Bob Bevington, conservative attorney Van Martin, and controversial photographer Christian Lange. The same episode will feature the world premier of Judy Bats' brand new MTV video recently filmed in Knoxville's Old City.

The show will open with a spark-filled discussion on obscenity

Producer Terry Yeary brings to the program the dark, cutting-edge flavor that made his theatre and underground fashion designs notorious in Atlanta's progressive creative scene. *High Touch* is hosted by Lisa Schneider and created in association with Princeton Technical Institute. Upcoming shows will appear each Sunday afternoon at 1:00pm.

A



AIDS Update

Compiled by Ace Woodward

In the month of September more than 5,000 new cases of AIDS were reported world-wide to the World Health Organization (WHO). While most of these cases came from the United States, many of the top ten countries that report AIDS cases did not submit reports for the month of September. According to Dr. Michael Merson who heads the Global AIDS program at WHO, actual totals could be somewhere around 800,000.

Meanwhile, the Kinsey Institute, while issuing the results of a 'sexual literacy' survey reported, "We are a nation of sexual illiterates... no wonder the AIDS crisis has not abated." Of the over 1,900 individuals that participated in the survey, 82 percent received a D or failed all together.

Among the dangerously erroneous perceptions, half the respondents did not realize that petroleum based lubricants, such as baby oil and petroleum jelly could cause holes in condoms and other prophylactics. Only water-based lubricants should be used. The report also pointed out that only 21 percent were aware that one out of every four American men have had a sexual experience with another male. Our region, the south, and the Northeast, scored the lowest with nearly 60

percent failing the test. Those individuals who considered themselves moderate or liberal politically and who were better educated or had higher incomes, naturally, scored higher.

Two recent experimental procedures proved somewhat disappointing recently. The first was a treatment that transplanted bone marrow from a healthy individual into a twin that was infected with the AIDS virus. The expectations were that, in conjunction with medicinal treatments, the transplant would empower the victims immune system to better fight off the virus. Recent work at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, MD indicated that it was a promising technique.

Unfortunately, the procedure has shown no improvement in 15 of the 16 men participating. Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan said in a statement that "... the approach gives us something to build on in our campaign against AIDS... [These] innovative combination therapies... offer the most hope to persons with AIDS." The researchers participating in the procedure agreed that "variations of the approach may produce better results." Further research is under way.

Another experimental procedure was recently found to be ineffective against the deadly virus. Called, hyperthermia, it entailed removing all the blood from the victim and cycling it through a process that heated it and then returned it to the victim. A NIH investigation found that the one and only reported success was not really a success and that "there appears to be no clinical, immunologic or virologic support for use of hyperthermia in the treatment of HIV..." The wife of the doctor who first reported the treatment's success who is also a medical lawyer questioned the NIH investigation's conclusions casting doubt on their intentions, "Maybe it's the people who sell AZT (the only government-approved drug for AIDS treatment) because they make so much money. Maybe it's the people who have grants to study AIDS." Her comments were not the only ones casting doubt on the established medical communities biases.

Black activists recently proclaimed that the white medical community has racially discriminated against blacks by with-holding and doubting the validity of a recent drug developed in Kenya that is claimed to cure AIDS. The drug, called Kemron and marketed by the Kenyan government, is said to have cured 50 people who no longer test positive for HIV infection and to have benefited more than 1,000 others. The drug has been used in the United States, but no documented successes have been reported. Black AIDS and homosexual activists have also claimed that the lack of attention to this drug was caused by the competition in the white medical establishment.

A

A DIFFERENT VIEW

Adventures as a gay audience

By Julian Marr

Gay reference in film can be broken down into three main categories, for those of you who need that. These categories are: All Gay (story is based upon homosexual themes), Gay Aspects (homosexual themes or characters are prevalent in and/or important to the story), and Gay As Device (references and characters seem thrown in and unnecessary, usually for a comedic device). I am establishing these categories to make it easier for someone who is searching for a good film that deals with gay themes.

These films are rare in number, and most are generally scarce when you look for them. It seems the video rental stores are almost as patronizing as the film industry itself when it comes to providing entertainment for the gay community. It's as if they all say "There, there, you have La Cage Aux Folles, what more do you want?". The homosexual has always been the Oliver Twist of the film world, providing a large part of the industry's work force, yet always having to beg for more for ourselves. There is a substantial market for gay literature and film, and it is very hungry.

It is also very uninformed for the most part. Ask someone you know to name ten gay films (excluding pornography, please) and it is usually a struggle. And so here I am. To start with in this column, I am going to provide a general list of gay films, separated into the aforementioned categories. Later, in other columns, I will go more in depth in my dealings with some of the listings. I also plan to delve into all other areas of entertainment (from novels to comics to plays to music) and provide the same service there. If anyone has any suggestions or comments, please direct them to me in care of the editors. Thanks.

THE FOLLOWING LIST IS BY NO MEANS COMPLETE. IF YOU DO NOT SEE A FILM LISTED, IT IS PROBABLY BECAUSE I HAVE NOT SEEN IT, OR I AM UNAWARE OF IT'S GAY CONTENT. I AM, AFTER ALL, ONLY HUMAN (despite what Jesse Helms might say).

Films will be listed in alphabetical order. Release dates and directors are provided if I can remember them. On request, films that deal mainly with lesbian material are noted with an L. My personal bests are noted with an *.

ALL GAY:

A Different Story* '78; A Question Of Love(L)'78 tv; Alyse And Chloc(L); An Early Frost tv; Another Country '83; Bitter Tears Of Petra Von Kant, The(L) '73 d. Fassbinder; Boys In The Band, The* '70 d. Friedkin; Cruising '80 d. Friedkin; Death In Venice '71 d. Visconti; El Deputato* (the deputy) '78; Ernesto '79 d. Semperi; Fox And His Friends '75 d. Fassbinder; In A Year Of 13 Moons(L) '76 d. Fassbinder; Killing Of Sister George, The(L); La Cage Aux Folles* '78 d. Molinaro; L'homme Blesse* (the wounded man) '84 d. Chereau; Lianna(L)* '82 d. Sayles; Making Love '82; Maurice '87; Music Lovers, The* '71 d. Russell; My Beautiful Laundrette* '86; Myra Breckinridge(L) '70; Naked Civil Servant, The* '75 tv; Outrageous '77; Partners '82; Personal Best(L) '82; Querelle '83 d. Fassbinder; Suddenly, Last Summer; Sunday, Bloody Sunday '71 d. Schlesinger; Taxi Zum Klo (taxi to the toilet) '81 d. Riploh; That Certain Summer '72 tv; Therese And Isabelle(L); This Special Friendship '64; Torch Song Trilogy; Trials Of Oscar Wilde* '60 d. Hughes; Windows(L) '80; You Are Not Alone* (danish w/subtitles) '78

...continued on page 11

P O E T R Y

January 31 - Tuesday

Awake in a strange room
The pain is intense
The confusion is intense
Why did this happen to me
People around me - strangers
They advance with comforting smiles, nothing more
What has happened to me
When will it end
What will make it stop
I remember my life before
I should have been more careful

The blue shadows cast by the moon are harsh upon his turned away face. Tonight was another fight. I can't be as open as he is. It scares me to think of the things that people say. Should love be larger than the world you live in? How can it be with everyone judging you? I wish that I understood how to deal with people's reactions. I do love him. He is everything that I want. How can I show the world this wonderful man that I love and tell it that he is mine. Tomorrow the coldness won't be apparent, but it will still be there. I must come to terms with myself before I can share my life completely with him. Do the cold shadows reflect the way I feel?

CHILDREN CAN BE SO CRUEL

Overheard in a bar:

"My God, who does he think he is?"

"He keeps smiling at us. As if we like archaeology!"

"He is old. I wonder how much hair he has left?"

"Who can tell under that hat? You'd think he lives for leather!"

"It looks like he certainly lives in leather."

"I wouldn't be suprised if the lab that spawned him used leather test tubes!"

"Can't you just see the delivery room? 'But doctor, he says he won't come out unless you wear racing gloves!' " (hysterical laughter)

"He really likes you! He just nodded at you again."

"Well, c'mon. Let's see if we can get the tired old thing to buy us a beer or two."

"Wonder what he does for a living?"

"Probably a gynecologist."

I sipped my drink as they slowly walked away.

GAY ASPECTS:

A Little More Than Love '80; A Woman In Flames(L); Beyond Therapy; Blue Velvet* '86 d. Lynch; Cabaret* '72 d. Fosse; Cafe Flesh(L) '82 d. Dream; Children's Hour, The(L); Day Of The Jackal '73; Detective, The; Dresser, The; Entertaining Mr. Sloan '70; Fox, The(L)* '68 d. Rydell; Gay Decievers, The; Girlfriends(L) '78 d. Weills; Glen Or Glenda '52 d. Wood; If...* '69; Indecent Exposure(L) '82; Kiss Of The Spider Woman* '85 d. Babenco; Lawrence Of Arabia* '62 d. Lean; Lion In Winter, The* '68; Liquid Sky(L) '83 d. Tsukerman; Murmurs Of The Heart* '71 d. Malle; Nijinsky '80; Oscar Wilde '60 d. Ratoff; Pixote '81 d. Babenco Ritz, The '76; Rocky Horror Picture Show, The* '78; Rope* '48 d. Hitchcock; Salome's Last Dance* d. Russell; Some Of My Best Friends Are; Something For Everyone '70; Spetters* d. Verhoeven; Story Of Joanna, The '75; The Third Sex Victim; Victor/Victoria* '82 d. Edwards; Walk On The Wild Side(L) '62; What Sex Am I '85 d. Grant

GAY AS DEVICE:

A Chorus Line '86 d. Douglas; A Fish Called Wanda* '88 d. Chrichton; All That Jazz* '82 d. Fosse; Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover, The* '89; Dressed To Kill; Fearless Vampire Killers, The; Fortune And Men's Eyes '71; Lord Jim '65; Midnight Express '78; Nighthawks '78 d. Peck, Hallam; Performance '70; S.O.B. '82 d. Edwards; 10 '79 d. Edwards; Tootsie '82; Warriors, The*(L) '79 d. Hill; World According To Garp* '82

A

EDITORIAL

A letter FROM the Editor

I spent a lot of time debating exactly what I wanted to say in the first editorial for this semester. I debated writing about gay pride, coming out, the potential for the GLSU, and about the changes in Aware. As yet, even as I write these words in English class, no one specific topic has emerged victorious. Perhaps there is a common thread in what I have considered so far, and with just a few moments of introspection I could focus on my intentions, visualizing a much clearer picture of what I want to say here. I feel as if I have an emotional need to fulfill in this editorial, like there's a stray thought I can't nail down, a message to convey. Elements of this 'message' exist in all the topics I debated writing about, but none captures it in its entirety.

Gay pride, for example, discusses my wish to instill a sense of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth into Aware readers. Being gay, and being truly proud of that fact almost means having to be ignorant of the 'gay/straight' distinctions. Not being complacent towards homophobia, not being complacent towards institutional discrimination, but being secure with your

individuality, your creativity, and your ability to overcome great odds and a condescending society to the point that you do not need to justify your sexuality, but rather be at peace with it.

My 'message' also includes an element of respect for the GLSU membership this semester, especially the new members who are coming out for the first time. The process of coming out is a big one. At one point or another we all had to do it. The process always varies greatly. Some of us came out very quickly while, for others, the process was slow and methodical. Which ever way we ultimately chose, it was most likely a difficult realization. Difficult especially in a region where small towns and dogmatic religions are predominate. To eventually begin that process by attending GLSU meetings is a respectable, healthy alternative to the traditional bar scenes and damaging self-repression.

This respect, however, extends to the group as a whole as well. Our membership has expressed excitement and an interest towards participation which, if we can maintain and encourage, will make this semester a tremendous one. Our group is very young, and yet we

have various special-interest groups preparing exciting activities for the GLSU membership and large numbers of people showing up for each meeting (a rare occurrence for groups such as ours).

I still don't know if I have expressed this 'message' well or not, and talking about changes in Aware really won't develop it any further. I guess if you read between the lines you'll feel my sense of excitement, my sense of pride, and my sense of respect for the GLSU. Be confident in the friends you have and of the GLSU as a place for positive experiences. But more importantly be confident of your own self. You are a unique and independently significant person. You have overcome great odds and thought at great lengths about your identity. Your conclusions are far more significant and unnecessary of justification than your heterosexual counterparts. Be proud by being self confident, self assured and self motivated. We are a community of unique individuals, creative, intelligent, and fun-loving. We need not justify our sexuality for what we know it to be - we need only be at peace with it.

- Ace Woodward

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