**GLBT Resources for Bulletin Boards and other use…**

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**GLBT History**

**HOW REAL IS OUR SENSE OF “HISTORY”?**

**By Patricia Nell Warren**

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 Seldom, for example, does mention of our “history” include eras before the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, when drag queens fought back during a police raid on a downtown Manhattan bar. Starting our “history” at Stonewall is like starting a U.S. history book in 1776, omitting three centuries of colonialism and long centuries of native culture—to say nothing of visits to the Americas by early European and Mediterranean peoples, which are usually dismissed as “theory.” Stonewall did not happen like a bolt from the blue! That blaze of drag-queen spirit was sparked by World War II activists who served in uniform, who created our first post-war gay and lesbian networks and publications—in a time when our people still feared arrest if they met in tiny political groups at someone’s apartment. Yet the PC crowd doesn’t like to mention our uniformed forebears, because of left-wing biases against the military. Likewise, Stonewall sprang from a rich and feisty drag culture with deep roots in the Hispanic and black communities. Today anti-drag politics in our community makes it hard for someone to acknowledge the important role that drag played in our pre-Stonewall history.

**Defining Homophobia**

This hierarchical way of conceptualizing sexual orientation setup by heterosexism creates opportunities for homophobic remarks and actions go unnoticed. It supports the prejudice by confusing the issues. If you see homosexuality and heterosexuality in a hierarchical way, with the one being somehow more basic than the other, then you might go along with arguments against legal recognition of same-sex couples relationships—then you might go along with a don’t ask, don’t tell policy—you might say I don’t care if you’re gay so long as you keep it in the bedroom. (I don’t mind heterosexuals, so long as they keep it in the bedroom.) Even though these people may think they’re not homophobic, they’re telling lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to disappear.

**Making Visible The Invisible Minority**

**FANTASY**

**(an exercise for heterosexuals)**

**Close your eyes…**

**Think of the person you’ve been in love with…imagine that you’ve gone out for several months…for some reason you cannot talk about this person or be open about your relationship.**

**It’s Friday afternoon in the residence hall (or your friend’s apartment).**

**People are talking about dates for the weekend, getting ready, you’re in your room listening to the stereo, thumbing through a magazine. Your roommate comes in with several other friends. Your roommate says “I’m going out with \_\_\_ again tonight. We’re going out to dinner then dancing.” The others mention their weekend plans and talk about who they are seeing.**

**One asks you: “ What are you doing tonight? You’re not going to study again, are you?” You reply you don’t have any big plans- you’re just gonna mess around.**

**They try to fix you up with someone. You reply, “maybe some other time.”**

**They continue talking about their dates and plans. Whenever you can, you smile, nod your head and joke with them about love, and sex so they won’t be suspicious.**

**You think about your friend, whom you’ve been seeing for three months.**

**You wish you could tell your roommate and friends about the good times you’ve had, how it feels to be in love, etc., but you know you can’t say anything.**

**Finally, they all leave for their dates. You take a shower, dress and meet in front of the hall.**

**Although you’re really glad to see each other, you can’t hug or kiss each other. You just smile and say hello.**

**After dinner, you decide to see a movie. You both wanted to go dancing but since you can’t dance together in public, you opt for a movie. At least in the movie theater, you get to sit next to each other. But you can’t touch. When you come out of the theater, you’d like to put your arm around your friend—or hold hands, but you can’t. Instead, you clamp your hands behind your back.**

**You wish there were some place you could go to. You wish that you could tell the world about your love, but you are afraid that you’ll get disowned, kicked out of school, shunned by friends and loved ones, or not get the job that you want.**

**Just because of who you love.**

**Action Steps…**

* **Don’t assume that everyone is heterosexual**
* **Avoid using terms such as “boyfriend,” “girlfriend”: try using “partner” or “significant other” instead.**
* **Review the signs/ posters you hang on the walls and bulletin boards. Suggest changes to promote inclusive language and representation of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered.**
* **Avoid homophobic remarks, jokes, and statements. As you feel comfortable, confront these actions. This is challenging—but it makes a big difference to our statements.**
* **Create an atmosphere of acceptance in your surrounding environment through education.**
* **Be willing to talk about difference, but don’t let it monopolize every conversation.**
* **Provide informed referrals by learning the LGBT resources on campus.**
* **If you have identified your affectional feelings as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, when you are ready consider coming out and becoming a role model.**
* **Eliminate sexual orientation statements that are not relevant to evaluations about student, faculty, or staff.**
* **DO NOT push others in your community to come out or come out for them.**
* **View sexual orientation as a positive form of diversity that is desired in a multicultural setting.**
* **Be sensitive and knowledgeable about issues of oppression and appreciate the strength it takes for someone to establish a strong gay or lesbian identity. Provide nurturing support to colleagues and students in all phases of developing a strong gay or lesbian identity.**
* **Be prepared to be teased, argued with, confronted yourself for being an ally. Know how you will respond—remember it is a teachable moment, not a time to react.**

**Becoming an Ally…**

**“By demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die it can introduce the idea that if we try to understand each other, we may even become friends.”**

**-Maya Angelou**

1. **Awareness**

Explore how you are different from gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, AND find out how you are similar.

* Visit the LGBT Center
* Talk to students
* Read
* Ask Questions
1. **Knowledge**

Learn about the coming out process and what challenges gay, lesbian, and bisexual students encounter. Understand how laws, policies, and practices affect gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Learn about the groups and culture that make up the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.

* Attend Safe Space Training
1. **Skills**

Learn to use your growing understanding and knowledge of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people by communicating it to others.

* Carefront those in your community who you hear making hurtful statements- help heterosexual students to understand that LGB people are a presence on campus- they must learn how to live peaceably.
* Offer support to those students in your community who may be struggling with their sexuality.
1. **Action**

Find ways you can affect change for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people within our society, remembering that these changes will benefit all segments of society.

When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you till it seems as though you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up and then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.

*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

**Homophobia**

Homophobia, generally, is a negative attitude or feeling based on a misleading generalized belief about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people it can be internalized, institutionalized, societal, or personally expressed.

Justice denied anywhere;

Diminishes justice everywhere.

*Martin Luther King Jr.*

A friend is a person who knows all about you and still loves you just the same.

*Unknown*

I know we cannot live on hope alone. But without it, life is not worth living.

*Harvey Milk*

Transgendered

Transgendered people have two symbols to choose from. The first and most obvious is a merging of the male and female symbols, rather than interlocking. By putting both the cross and the arrow on the same ring, it symbolizes the male and female parts inherent in one person. This symbol is the most inclusive of the two and most recognizable. In the simplest sense, it indicates some level of androgyny.

**Prejudice**

1954 Gordon Allport

… an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of that group.

**Leather Pride Flag**

The Leather Pride Flag was created by artist Tony DeBlase and was first displayed on May 28, 1989 at the Chicago Mr. Leather contest. It stands as a symbol for the leather community- people who are into leather, sado-masochism, bondage, domination, uniforms, rubber and other kinds of sexual fetishes. This flag is most often found in the gay community, but it encompasses all orientations.

**Working Definitions:**

**Heterosexism:** The individual, institutional, and societal/ cultural beliefs and practices based on the belief that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable sexual orientation.

**Homophobia:** The fear, hatred, or intolerance of lesbians and gay men or any behavior that falls outside of traditional gender roles. Homophobic behavior can be manifested as fear association with lesbian or gay people or being perceived as lesbian or gay. Homophobic acts can range from name-calling to violence targeting lesbian or gay people.

**Heterosexual Ally:** Heterosexual people who take action against homophobia and heterosexism because they believe it is in their own self- interest as well.

Gay, Lesbian, and Feminism

In the 1970s, gay men began using two interlocking male symbols to symbolize male homosexuality. The two, of course, had to be slightly off center to avoid the arrow of one intersecting the circle of the other. Around the same time, some lesbians started using two interlocking female symbols to symbolize female homosexuality. However, this soon ran into trouble because some women in the feminist movement were using the same symbol to represent the sisterhood of women.

Two symbols now stand for lesbianism and three symbols stand for the sisterhood of women.

**Rainbow Flag**

The rainbow flag has become one of the most widely used and recognized symbols of the gay pride movement. The concept of the rainbow is hardly a new one. Rainbows have been used since ancient times in all kinds of cultures- Greek, African, Native American, and Celtic, to name only a few. Even Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition has made use of the rainbow as a freedom symbol.

The Rainbow Flag as we know it today was developed by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978. At the time, there was a need for a gay symbol which could be used year after year for the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. Baker took inspiration from many sources, from the hippies movement, to the black civil rights movement, and came up with a flag with eight stripes. Color has always played an important power in the gay rights movement- Victorian England symbolized homosexuality with the color green, lavender became popular in the 1960’s, and pink from the pink triangle has caught on as well- and the colors of the gay flag were no different. Baker explained that his colors each stood for a different aspect of gay and lesbian life:

Red for life

Orange for healing,

Yellow for the sun,

Green for nature,

Blue for art,

Indigo for harmony,

Violet for spirit.

**Bisexual Triangles**

It has only been within the last decade or so that bisexuals have begun actively organizing and fighting for equal voices. One of the many good things to come out of this movement is a symbol that bisexuals can call their own: the interlocking pink and blue triangles sometimes referred to as the “biangles.”

Unfortunately, in contrast to most other pride symbols, the exact origin of this symbol is quite mysterious. I have polled a great number of national and international bisexual and gay/ lesbian/bisexual organizations, but nobody has been able to give me a definitive source. The pink triangle is obviously taken from the gay symbol. The blue triangle was never used by the Nazis. It may have been added as a foil for pink- pink for girls and blue for boys (because bisexuals have attractions to both), with the overlapping purple triangle (purple has always been a very prominent color in the gay pride movement) representing the middle ground that bisexuals fall into. I’ve also heard it explained that the pink triangle represents homosexuality while the blue represents heterosexuality. Thus the overlap between the pink and blue triangles is the purple triangle of bisexuality. All these are personal explanations that I have gathered through email.

Pink Triangle

Concentration camp prisoners were classified by a set of color triangles; pink was reserved for homosexuals. When liberation came in the mid- 1940’s, most of the survivors were set free. Homosexuals however were taken by the US army personnel from concentration camps to allied prisons.

The triangle has come to stand for gay men and lesbians who vow that the holocaust will never happen again.

**Gay Teen Suicide Awareness Ribbon**

This ribbon, used mainly online, was created by Xavier Neptus, a personal survivor of attempted teen suicide himself. He was inspired to create this campaign after hearing Jason Bolton, a young man who was thrown out of a suburban Detroit high school for being gay, speak about gay youth suicide at the 1997 Lansing, Michigan Pride March. According to Neptus, the color white was chosen to represent the clarity of thought and innocence of youth. Neptus quotes on his site that an American teen attempts suicide every five hours because of the difficulty dealing with the stresses of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. By spreading the word about this campaign and recommending professional resources, Neptus hopes to save other young people from suicide.

**A Beginner’s Guide to Coming Out…**

Questions to ask yourself…

**Are you sure about your sexual orientation?** – Don’t raise the issue unless you are able to respond with confidence to the question “Are you sure?” Confusion on your part will increase confusion and decrease others’ confidence in your judgment.

**Are you comfortable with your sexuality?** – If you are wrestling with guilt and periods of depression, you’ll be better off waiting. Coming out may require tremendous energy; it will require a reserve of positive self image.

**Do you have support? -** in the case of a devastating reaction, there should be someone or a group that you can confidently turn to for emotional support and strength. Maintaining your sense of self worth is critical.

**Are you knowledgeable on sexuality issues?** - People will probably respond based on a lifetime of information from a homophobic and sexist society. You may have to act as an information broker. If you’ve done some reading, you’ll be able to assist others by sharing reliable information.

**Do you have available resources**? - Many people know very little about sexuality issues. Try to have both written resources and personal contacts available.

**What is the emotional climate like?** – If you have the choice of when to tell, consider the timing. Choose a time when they are not dealing with other personal issues such as a death or job loss**.**

**What is your general relationship like? -** If you have a good relationship based on mutual care and respect, chances are they will have a more positive response.

**What is their moral societal view?** –If they tend to see the world in clear terms of good/ bad or holy/ sinful, they may have serious problems with your sexuality. If, however, they’ve evidenced a degree of flexibility when dealing with other changing societal matters, they may be willing to work this through with you.

**Can you be patient?** – Don’t expect immediate responses. Others will require time to deal with this information if they haven’t considered it prior to your sharing.

**What is your motive for coming out now?** – Hopefully, it is for positive and relationship building or reinforcing reasons. Never come out in anger or in an argument, using your sexuality as a weapon.

**Is it your decision?** - Not everyone needs to come out to everyone. Don’t be pressured into coming out if you’re not sure you’ll be better off by doing so (no matter what their response.)

**Are you prepared for a wide range of responses?** – Their response will depend on their relationship with you, their personal “baggage” on the issue, and their supports. Some reactions may be shock, denial, guilt, intense emotions, or acceptance—the stages of grief.

**McKinney’s attorney acknowledges his client beat Shepard**

The defense attorney for Aaron McKinney, whose trial in the beating death of Matthew Shepard began on Monday, conceded in his opening comments that his client beat Matthew Shepard last October. “We’re not going to contest the cause of death or that he died as a result of a beating from Aaron McKinney along with Russell Henderson,” attorney Dion Custis said in the Laramie, Wyo., courtroom. Henderson pleaded guilty earlier this year to the attack on Shepard and was sentenced to two consecutive life terms in prison. Custis told potential jurors that McKinney’s “mental state will certainly be a crucial question for you to answer.” Custis said that McKinney’s judgment was clouded by his use of alcohol and drugs. Custis also told the court that Shepard was not singled out for attack because he was gay. “I don’t think anyone here is going to suggest this is a hate crime,” he said. Prosecutor Cal Rerucha told the jury pool that in the eyes of the law, “whether you’re Catholic or Muslim, if you are straight or gay, everyone is treated equal.” Jury selection is scheduled to continue on Tuesday, the first anniversary of Shepard’s death.

Wednesday, October 13, 1999

**Activists heckle gay “cure’ event in S.F.**

A group of gay activists heckled a meeting held in San Francisco for “National Coming Out of Homosexuality Day,” which featured a satellite address by the Rev. Jerry Falwell. About 60 people showed up for the meeting as well as gay activists, who hissed and booed during the event. “Christian bigots out of our city,” Josh Trenter said after he allegedly threw a blueberry pie at Michael Johnston, head of the “ex-gay” ministry that sponsored the event. Trenter and another activist were cited for battery. “God loves you, and so do I,” Falwell told the audience. “Just as people can come out of the closet, so can people choose to come out against a sinful lifestyle.” Johnston defended the event. “If we really believe what we say we believe, it would be hateful not to reach out and share the Christian gospel with these people,” he said. “If we really hated them, we would leave them alone and let them go on their way.”

**Forums for oppression and discrimination**

* Housing
* Public accommodations
* Employment
* Rejection by family members/ friends.
* Violations of due process
* Limitations regarding freedom of speech, association, and equal protection under the law
* Police harassment
* Court cases involving child custody
* Verbal harassment/ ridicule
* Threats of prison
* Assault/ violence
* Dishonorable discharges from military service
* Difficulty/ inability to adopt
* No access to legal, economic, and social supports of heterosexual married couples, such as:
	+ Joint tax returns
	+ Joint credit
	+ Insurance/ medical benefits
	+ Will
	+ Inheritance
	+ Social security payments/ pensions of partner
	+ Joint custody
	+ Divorce
* Attempts to “cure”: electroshock and aversion therapies, castration, clitoridectomies, pharmacology, and hormonal injections, etc.