

Rainbow SIG Newsletter

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Lesbigan SIG Hosts NAMES Project Display in Phoenix and Contributes a Panel to the Quilt

by Kathleen Sideli

Amidst the hustle and bustle of the Phoenix conference, there was one room which stood out for its unusual combination of crowds and silence. In that quiet place, the only sounds discernible were tears and whispers. Many NAFSAns witnessed there, for the first time, a display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. The NAMES Project Foundation has found that quilt displays are an effective tool for imparting AIDS education and awareness and encourages colleges and universities to host displays at their institutions since college-age students are in the highest risk group. Over 500 conference goers, assisted throughout the day by 28 volunteers, visited the nine blocks exhibited on Wen., June 5. The blocks contained 72 panels including several which commemorated the lives of NAFSAns or their family members, colleagues and friends. In the center of the room was a special panel designed for the conference by JoAnn Wallace of Antioch College, with the NAFSA logo. Visitors to the display were invited to add the names of individuals who had touched their lives who have died of AIDS. By the end of the day, there were 48 names on the NAFSA panel.

Volunteers and visitors at the display experienced a variety of emotions. Deborah Gibson, Univ of Wisconsin-Madison, observed that "almost every one who had a panel was in my age group ... these people had undoubtedly come to the same point and had so much ahead in life, but at mid-point their future was stolen. Who were they? What might have been? Why so soon?" Dana Bresee, MIT, commented that the room was full of love and memories. For her the panels were "tangible signs of interwoven lives... a

record of conversations, of sorts, from loved ones to those lost." Dana visited a panel, for the first time, which had been made for her stepbrother, who himself was a quilter and in whose panel his own patchwork was incorporated, and said she "was struck by the juxtaposition of creativity and a destructive illness." Susan Carty, Indiana Univ, assisted someone who stumbled into the room without ever having heard of the NAMES Project yet spent an hour examining each panel carefully and inquiring how she could bring such a display to her own campus. Susan was impressed by the overwhelming power the display can have on one individual and realized the importance of making the display available as widely as possible. Bo Keppel, East Stroudsburg Univ, who coordinated the volunteers for the display, said that "for some, it was the first time they had seen any panels and they were overwhelmingly moved. For others, who attend a Quilt display every chance they got, it was once again a reassurance that those they lost to AIDS have not been forgotten."

In conjunction with the display, NAFSA offered a session entitled 'Integrating the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and HIV/AIDS Prevention.' Skeeter Buck and Gene Yuson from the NAMES Project gave an overview of how to effectively use Quilt displays on campuses. I explained how the death from AIDS of two of my closest friends, one who had been on a study abroad program with me 25 years ago, resulted not only in my making panels for them but in my becoming an activist in this area. Those who attended the session were touched by the stoicism and determination of the last speaker, Lisa Thomas, who has been HIV+ for eleven years. As the daughter of a NAFSA member, she had volunteered to come to Phoenix just to share her story so that NAFSA members could better understand the impact and threat of HIV on youth in our society.

I submitted the NAFSA panel to the NAMES Project display in Washington, DC the weekend of October 12-14 so it could be presented along with the other 45,000 panels which form the AIDS Quilt. Accompanying the panel was a letter written on behalf of the SIG, identifying the 48 individuals, along with a contribution of \$50 from the SIG to help maintain the Quilt. At the new panel check-in point, Mark Seaman (former SIG co-chair instrumental in hosting the Phoenix display) and I serendipitously bumped into each other. I also met Joe Murnan (SIG member) and Archer Brown, Deputy Executive Director of NAFSA, who were submitting panels for Kevin Schieffer and Robert Mashburn, both from the NAFSA staff. It was a great moment of pride, as well as pain, for us to see our panel become part of the Quilt. Anyone who followed news of that eventful weekend knows how extraordinary it was. I'm sure it is some consolation to us, albeit small, that our dear colleagues and loved ones have been remembered in this way by us.

We will have photos of both the Phoenix and Washington displays at this year's SIG meeting.

Note: This article has been adapted from one that appeared in the NAFSA August/September 1996 Newsletter.

For information about hosting displays, contact:

NAMES Project Foundation

310 Townsend St.

San Francisco, CA 94107

phone (415) 882-5500

fax (415) 882-6200

info@aidsquilt.org

www.aidsquilt.org

Update on NAFSA Vancouver Conference

Peter Voeller

Plans for the 1997 NAFSA: Association of International Educators conference in Vancouver are coming along nicely. It will be from May 20 to 23 at the Vancouver Convention Center, on the water near downtown Vancouver. I'm glad I chose to be on the Local Arrangements Committee (LAC), as far as I know, I'm the only 'queer folk' on it. I did some research for our section of the Hospitality booklet and the people in charge of it are running it by the University of British Columbia's Lesbigan group to get their input. As a result, there should be a wide variety of information for a good cross section of our group to take advantage of. It was nice to see we've gone beyond the days when a 'gay and lesbian things to do' section had to be 'discussed' as an addition.

The theme for this conference is 'communities living together' and it's appropriately set in Vancouver which has a thriving lesbigan community. From my experience, Canadians view the lesbigan issue (as they view other issues, like immigrants and 'racial minorities') in a somewhat different light than their southern neighboring Americans, and it will be an education for us all to see these differences.

As part of the opening gala, we are planning various entertainment groups, representing different communities, moving in and out of the crowd. Of course there are the usual ethnic groups represented, but as we were discussing it, I was imagining some kind of 'gay group' being included ... twirling drag queens, clogging wimen, I don't know ... I'll check around. If you have any groups in mind, let me know!

I've booked my favorite gay-owned bed and breakfast which I hope to use as an off-site meeting place and home away from home. I'll lead a gay restaurant hop early in the week to orient the conventioners to the 'hood' which unlike Phoenix, IS within walking

distance from any of the many conference hotels. If you're planning your stay based on the proximity of gay owned businesses, restaurants and bars, anything along Davie and Robson between the convention site and Howe Street would be in the vicinity. You may e-mail me at psv@u.washington.edu if you have further questions. Also, if a group of you would like to do a 'family outing' before or after the conference, let me know and I'll see what I can arrange. A couple of you came up to me in Phoenix and asked about this, so I'd like to see if there is enough interest to plan something. Send me your name, contact information, and suggestions on places you'd like to see. The LAC is planning a trip to Victoria and an Alaskan cruise for after the conference, plus a number of trips before, so check those out too when you get the conference information.

In conclusion, this conference promises to be a great time for all of us. I'll be in touch with the day and time of the Lesbigen SIG meeting, we requested earlier in the week, so we can orient ourselves sooner. Does everyone still want to do the rainbow stickers on the nametags? Let me know about that, too. I'll have some on hand and you can see me early on for those. I'm in charge of the students coming to the conference group, and I'll be at the Student Table at registration. Hope to see all of you there!

'Taboo Topics: Sex and Sexual Orientation' Named Best of Region VI

Susan Carty

I had the great pleasure of chairing a session at the NAFSA Region VI Conference, held in Erlanger, Kentucky from October 27 to 29, 1996. The panelists included myself and two colleagues from Indiana University-- Kathleen Sideli, Associate Director for Academic Affairs, Office of Overseas Study, and Marlin Howard, Director of the Intensive English Program, Center for English Language Training.

In our session we tried to offer advice and encouragement to colleagues interested in exploring ways of incorporating information about the "taboo topics" of sex and sexual orientation into student orientation programs and materials.

Some topics can be difficult to raise with students since they are delicate. This is particularly the case in relation to the subjects of sex (sexual activity) and sexual orientation (hetero-sexuality/homosexuality/bisexuality). Information can be complicated by differing social, religious, political and cultural mores of students. Our session identified some effective means of incorporating these topics into student orientation programs in study abroad pre-departure programs and orientation programs for international students and ESL students. A primary focus was the identification of resources.

Marlin Howard recently reported over the Rainbow listserve that, as a direct result of the session, the Indiana University Intensive English Program of the Center for English Language Training had adapted a health services AIDS-information pamphlet to be handed out to students at orientation programs.

We were notified recently that the session had been nominated as Best of Region VI and was accepted for inclusion on the program for the annual NAFSA conference in Vancouver.

What Would You Have Done?

Frank Romanowicz

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Advising two gay US students going abroad and one gay international student in the US has caused me to think hard. I decided to err on the side of affirming the dignity of the individuals I am counseling, affirming their honesty and comfort with me, and opting to give advice about being careful.

Case 1: Although I have undoubtedly advised other gay students from my university about issues international, these two students were the first where the 'issue' presented itself. They were going on one of our study abroad programs and early on, my 'gay-dar' told me that each was gay. Weeks later, I saw them at a local Gay Pride event so the cover was apparently lifted. We saw each other, but there was no contact. Later, after the final pre-departure orientation session, I asked them to remain after all others had left. I simply counseled them to be careful about the bar scene. The same program was one I had attended six years ago and I had visited a bar or two. They had already obtained a Spartacus type guide and had plans to enjoy some of the night life in Mexico City. I counseled them to be safe in all aspects of their program playtime. Later, the program director, who had noted that I had called them aside after the meeting, affirmed my counseling by adding that she had wanted to do so herself but just hadn't gotten around to it. She had 'figured out' their orientation and thought that I was wise in talking with them. After they returned from abroad, one of the students came to my office to say thank you for all the coordination and advice I had given him. I had risked being vulnerable and I believe then, as I do now, that I did the right thing. Have you been in a similar advising situation? Did you risk being vulnerable or not?

Case 2: In the case of the international student here, in our very first office visit after his arrival, he let on with a comment/question about whether or not there was any lesbian organization on our campus. I gave him the contact information. At another meeting, the student raised the issue of night life places to visit and how difficult it was for him to get around. He also indicated that in some forums he rather comfortably says something

about his orientation. He is very open and comfortable, so I cautioned him about it, especially in this Bible belt, awfully fundamentalist, state where a law recently existed on the books (until declared unconstitutional in federal court) prohibiting any gay organization from being allowed to meet on or in a state funded facility, because it was construed as promoting sodomy. I have not told him that I am gay. As open as I am in certain circles, especially in my Episcopal settings, I have not come out to him, or otherwise offered to invite him to any Episcopal related gay functions or services or socials. His 'gay-dar' may tell him I am gay, but I don't know. What do you think I should do?

(Note from the editor: Frank would like to engage SIG members in a discussion about these two incidents. The Rainbow network is the ideal place to share your e-mailed comments [rainbow@indiana.edu] since everyone won't be at the Vancouver conference. If you refer to this article on the network, please mention that you read it in the published Lesbigan SIGnals.)

NAFSA's Committee on Diversity

Bob Ericksen

The NAFSA Committee on Diversity is a key channel for our SIG concerns. The committee has grown from our Association's diversity efforts in the past decade, particularly the Task Force on Cultural Diversity. In the new Association structure, it is now represented at the Board of Directors by the Chair of the Committee. The purpose of the Committee on Diversity is, "...to recommend to the Board of Directors plans and policies to develop an inclusive and respectful professional climate through educational programs" and is pledged to "foster opportunities for professional development and leadership within NAFSA and the field of international education."

Committee members are: Clay Ballard, UC Davis, Chair; Helen Easterling Williams, Health, Education and Welfare International; Bob Ericksen, CSU Fullerton; Peter Li, W. Virginia University; and JoAnn Wallace, Antioch College.

The Committee had its first meeting at the Fall Leadership gathering in October 1996. It was a very intense, very productive time. The Committee's primary task at this meeting was to develop a clear mission, one which is inclusive and action oriented. Lesbigan SIG concerns are prominent in the Committee's deliberations. Bob Ericksen, has been designated as the Committee on Diversity's liaison with the Lesbigan SIG, and is please to receive your suggestions for specific ways in which NAFSA can be proactive in fostering a more inclusive climate for our SIG members. He can be reached by phone at (714) 773-2787 or by E-mail at rericksen@fullerton.edu.

Forum Discusses World Views of Homosexuality

Renee Bovy

(Reprinted from the Daily Iowan of November 4, 1996)

In Yugoslavia, "lesbian" is a term synonymous with "ugly." In the Netherlands, "coming out" has taken on the religious significance of being "reborn." In Malaysia and New Zealand, attitudes are changing as homosexuality is discussed in schools and government. A panel of homosexuals from other countries discussed the dilemmas of being gay in their homelands at a forum in the Union on Friday night.

Approximately 25 students attended the forum, titled "There Are No Homosexuals Back Home: This Mentality Meets Global Reality" and co sponsored by the African Association and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Union.

Rebecca Lueth, secretary of the African Association, said she received negative reactions while organizing the open forum. "I had one member say he wasn't coming because he was afraid that breathing the same air as homosexuals might turn him into a homosexual," Lueth said. Lueth said she organized the event because she has many gay friends who are also international students and many foreign students from Africa are homophobic. "I wanted this to be a discussion where people could learn about something that carries so many stereotypes," Lueth said. "When you actually listen to someone tell their story they become more human." Lueth said she believes the turnout from the African Association was low because many foreign students from Africa are afraid or ignorant of homosexuality.

The panel featured gay, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered persons from New Zealand, Malaysia, Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Japan. Many of them said being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered is not as accepted in their countries as in the United States.

A gay man from Malaysia who requested to remain anonymous said it is very difficult to be gay in his country, where the majority of marriages are arranged. "What is it like to be gay in Malaysia? It sucks," he said. However, he said the attitude in Malaysia is changing and that more newspapers are paying attention to the issue, and high school students are being educated about homosexuality. "The trend is toward a more liberal attitude, but most people are still scared," he said. He started to realize how easy and open homosexuality can be in other countries from the tourists who visited Malaysia.

Stephan Sanders from the Netherlands said being gay is a Western definition that becomes problematic if you want to talk about homosexuality in other parts of the world. He said the idea of coming out is a Christian concept of being reborn and then having one's life revolve around one's sexuality. Sanders said the whole world does not share this understanding of homosexuality. For many people, he said, homosexuality is just an act that does not carry all the additional stigmas given to it by the Western world.

William Taylor of New Zealand said his country had taken major steps to reform attitudes toward homosexuality. Taylor said that before the reforms were passed he was mayor of a town and part of his task was to oversee the public meetings about homosexual reform laws. The meetings were a terrifying experience. They were jam-packed with fundamentalists with Bibles, and when anyone spoke of reform they would open the Bible to any passage, particularly in the Old Testament and read aloud, Taylor said.

After the law was reformed, Taylor wrote a book for adolescents titled *The Blue Lawn* and a book about the relationship of two young boys. Taylor said the revolutionary book received awards and good reviews in New Zealand.

Amnesty International Selects Daniel Soto

Last month, Daniel Soto (long-time SIG member from Bloomington, IN) was elected co-chair of Amnesty International's Steering Committee for Gay and Lesbian Concerns. He had just been appointed to the committee in August after a year's "courtship" by a nominating committee.

The latter group had learned of Daniel's work with the Costa Rican Coalition of Gays and Lesbians, his help in translating Spanish-language documents for the Human Rights Commission, and his successful mediation between Amnesty and a group of Uruguayan lesbians concerned to have the murders of lesbians under the former military dictatorship included among political crimes needing investigation. Daniel's computer expertise, his public service experience, and his wide-ranging contacts within Latin America also impressed the nominating committee.

Congratulations to Daniel for this extraordinary honor!

GLB Study Abroad Debriefing Questions

My Yarabinec

- After having studied/lived abroad, how has your concept of yourself as an American changed? As a GLB-American?
- Were people's reaction to you as a GLB person different overseas than in the US? Were they positive, negative, or neutral?
- Being a GLB person overseas has been described by some as a second "coming out." Please comment on your own experiences and feelings regarding this.
- With respect to matters of sexual preference, how did people's attitudes in the country of your overseas experience differ from those in the US?

- How did you feel that people's conception of your nationality in general affected their reaction to you, especially with respect to your sexual preference?
- How did stereotypes about sexual preference differ in your country of experience from those in the US?

The following is a list of Web links that have been recommended by members of the Rainbow SIG. We have sought to identify sources of information on cultural, lifestyle and legal information.

We welcome your comments and encourage you to inform us of additional resources that might be added to the site.

[Action Without Borders](#)

Action Without Borders is a global network of individuals and organizations working to build a world where all people can live free and dignified lives in a healthy environment. AWB is independent of any government, political ideology or religious creed. Its work is guided by the common desire of its members and supporters to find practical solutions to social and environmental problems, in a spirit of generosity and mutual respect.

[Alterheros](#)

This is a Canadian resource-based bilingual web site (English and French) concerning sexual diversity. Its goal is to eliminate prejudice and discrimination, to improve the image of homosexuals and bisexuals, and to halt homophobia so that youth can feel proud to be equal members of society. The site includes interesting articles about cultural minority groups and sexuality, including first person narratives by internationals living in Canada, as well as ethnic minorities living in Canada.

[Amnesty International](#)

Found in London in 1961, Amnesty International is a Nobel Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with over one million members worldwide. Amnesty International is dedicated to freeing prisoners of conscience, gaining fair trials for political prisoners, ending torture, political killings and "disappearances" and abolishing the death penalty throughout the world. For international GLBT issues check the OUTfront Human Rights and Sexual Identity section on Amnesty International's Issues page.

[Behind the Mask](#)

Behind the Mask is a web magazine devoted to lesbian and gay affairs in Africa. The site includes a country listing that includes legal and social status of homosexuality in each country, as well as links to news items and articles (sometimes in a variety of languages) on that country. There are also message boards, information about arts & culture, specific information for women, and an extensive section devoted to HIV/AIDS in Africa.

[Gay Asian Pacific Support Network](#)

The mission of GAPSAN is to provide supportive environments for gay and bisexual Asian Pacific Islander men to meet, network, voice concerns, foster self-empowerment, and to advocate on issues of significance to the gay Asian Pacific Islander community.

[Gay Lesbian Arabic Society](#)

Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society (GLAS) serves as a networking organization for Gays and Lesbians of Arab descent or those living in Arab countries. GLAS aims to promote positive images of Gays and Lesbians in Arab communities worldwide, in addition to combating negative portrayals of Arabs within the Gay and Lesbian community. GLAS also provides a support network for our members while fighting for our human rights wherever they are oppressed.

[Gay-MART Gay & Lesbian Travel & Resource Guide](#)

Gay-MART's Travel and Resource Guide is intended to be an accurate, up-to-date, city-by-city guide to resources and places of interest for both residents and travelers.

[GLAAD: Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation](#)

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate, and inclusive representation of individuals and events in all media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

[Immigration Equality](#)

Immigration Equality is a national organization fighting for equality under U.S. immigration law for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV-positive individuals. Founded in 1994 as the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force, Immigration Equality provides legal aid and advocacy for LGBT and HIV-positive immigrants and their families.

[Indiana University's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Student Support Services](#)

The IU GLBT Student Support Services office provides local, state and national resources for GLBT students, faculty and administrators at IU.

[International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission](#)

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission's mission is to protest and advance the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse based on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status. IGLHRC's constituency therefore includes people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and anyone living with HIV or AIDS. A U.S. based non-profit, non-governmental organization, IGLHRC responds to such human rights violations around the world through documentation, advocacy, coalition building, public education, and technical assistance.

[The International Lesbian and Gay Association](#)

The International Lesbian and Gay Association is a world-wide federation of national

and local groups dedicated to achieving equal rights for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people everywhere. ILGA focuses public and government attention on cases of discrimination against lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people by supporting programs and protest actions, asserting diplomatic pressure, providing information and working with international organizations and the international media.

[International/National/ Gay/Lesbian Rights Groups](#)

The Institute for Global Communications' (IGC) mission is to advance the work of progressive organizations and individuals for peace, justice, economic opportunity, human rights, democracy and environmental sustainability through strategic use of online technologies.

[Japan AIDS Prevention Awareness Network \(JAPANetwork\)](#)

Japan AIDS Prevention Awareness Network (JAPANetwork) is a group of volunteer educators throughout Japan who are interested in teaching about HIV/AIDS in the EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom. JAPANetwork offers free AIDS lesson plans, articles, games, a video library and a newsletter. Web site has information for teachers and work pages for students containing reading passages, quizzes and project ideas for the classroom.

[Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Peace Corps Alumni](#)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Peace Corps Alumni is an organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and others who are Peace Corps volunteer alumni, current volunteers, former and current staff members and friends. The organization promotes Peace Corps ideals and the legal, political and social rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people around the world. Organization has online newsletter and listserv.

[NASPA: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators – Network on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues](#)

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Issues Knowledge Community provides avenues for both social and professional involvement. Knowledge Community activities allow for personal and professional growth, increased awareness and acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender professionals and students, and promote understanding of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender professional and student needs.

[NGLTF: National Gay & Lesbian Task Force](#)

NGLTF is the national progressive organization working for the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people, with the vision and commitment to building a powerful political movement.

[PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#)

PFLAG: Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, their families and

friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal rights. PFLAG provides opportunities for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

[Rainbow Educators' Network](#)

Rainbow Educators' Network is a group of educators around Japan who deal with glb issues in the English language classroom. There is also an e-mail list, and the group gets together socially at the JALT English teaching conferences held in Japan in the fall.

[World Legal Survey](#) by The International Lesbian and Gay Association

From its inception in 1978 The International Lesbian and Gay Association has always attached great importance to the sharing of information about LGBT rights. Their World Survey is firmly grounded in this tradition. It is primarily intended as a resource for those working to promote LGBT rights, whether they be activists, lawyers, people working in the media, or academics.

AIDS Education Information:

[AIDS and Study Abroad](#)

[American Red Cross](#)

[CDC: Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[NAMES Project Foundation](#)