

## Rainbow SIG Newsletter

### Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2002

These articles appeared in the Spring 2002 edition of Lesbigan SIGnals.

- Yeeha! The Cultural Mosaic of San Antonio
- Gay Rights: Still a Debate?
- A Transformation for Transgender
- LGBT Issues in Many Cultures

#### • **Yeeha! The Cultural Mosaic of San Antonio**

• *by Susan Carty, Indiana University*

- NAFSA will hold its 54th annual conference in San Antonio from May 26 to 31, 2002. The conference, whose theme is "Enhancing Leadership and Learning in a Cultural Mosaic," will take place at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center with the San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter serving as the headquarters hotel. Additional information and forms for registration and housing can be found on the [NAFSA Web site](http://www.nafsa.org) [www.nafsa.org].

#### • **Accommodation**

A few SIG members will be staying at the Painted Lady Inn (tel: 210-220-1092), [www.thepaintedladyinn.com](http://www.thepaintedladyinn.com), a B&B located within walking distance of the Convention Center. Also check out the NAFSA Web site.

#### • **SIG Business Meeting**

Please plan to attend our annual business meeting on Wednesday, May 29th at 1:45 p.m. Location has not yet been assigned, but it will be listed in the final conference program.

#### • **SIG Social Event**

Join us on Wednesday, May 29th from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Painted Lady Inn, 620 Broadway St. (tel: 210-220-1092). Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be provided by the SIG. Come and mingle.

#### • **Conference Program**

Scheduled workshops and sessions cover an incredible variety of topics and issues. Please make note of the following two programs. Your SIG colleagues seek your input and support with these events:

#### • **Are Human Rights Endangered by Globalization?**

Wednesday, May 29, 9:19 - 10:15 a.m.

- Abstract: Our panel will discuss the changing human rights environment in the age of globalization and its impact on international education. The rights of children, prisoners, gay and lesbians, women, for example, differ vastly and confusingly from one culture to another. Are we paying a human rights price for globalization?

#### • **LGBT Issues in Many Cultures: Insights for International Student Advisors**

Thursday, May 30, 3:00 - 4:15 p.m.

- Abstract: This interactive session will focus on cultural norms affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students in their home countries and what

impact these norms might have on students' expectations, behaviors and cultural adjustment while studying in the United States. Participants will leave with a better understanding of how they can successfully advise LGBT international students on their own campus.

- Additional conference workshops and sessions with a diversity focus include:
- **Workshop #28: Redefining Whole World Stereotypes: Gender, Globalization & Popular Culture** (focusing primarily women's issues abroad in non-traditional locations) Monday, May 27, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- **Discrimination and Harassment: How these Impact International Students** Wednesday, May 29, 9:15 a.m.
- **Celebrating Women** Wednesday, May 29, 3:45 p.m.
- **The Changing Faces: Diversity in Study Abroad** Thursday, May 30, 4:30 p.m.
- **Multicultural Faces of the US: Who are We?** Thursday, May 30, 4:30 p.m.
- **SIG Information Table: Volunteers Needed**

NAFSA will again be arranging for a SIG information table. With thanks to the high level of participation from our SIG last year, the info tables were a key to success in Philadelphia. As the table will be located in a highly visible area near registration, this is an excellent way to provide information on our SIG to the larger NAFSA community, while also connecting with our membership throughout the conference. Your help will again be appreciated to staff the table and show our rainbow visibility throughout the conference. E-mail [jtrimpe@iesabroad.org](mailto:jtrimpe@iesabroad.org) to volunteer for one or several 1-hour shifts.

- **Call for Nominations**
- Lesbian and Gay SIG officers include: two Co-Chairs (overlapping terms), Listserve Manager, Membership Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, Treasurer, and Web Site Manager.
- Officers serve for two-year terms. An individual may hold up to two positions simultaneously. Officers must maintain membership in the Lesbian and Gay SIG. The officers are elected at the annual business meeting of the SIG held at the annual NAFSA conference. Nominations should be sent to Julie Trimpe [jtrimpe@iesabroad.org](mailto:jtrimpe@iesabroad.org) no later than May 17, 2002.
- **San Antonio on the Web** Check out information about San Antonio at the sites below:
  - Out In San Antonio
  - [www.outinsanantonio.com/](http://www.outinsanantonio.com/)  
Gay San Antonio
  - <http://gaysanantonio.net/>  
San Antonio Visitors Bureau
  - [www.sanantoniovisit.com/](http://www.sanantoniovisit.com/)  
GO San Antonio
  - [www.gosanantonio.com/](http://www.gosanantonio.com/)  
Alamo City Guide
  - [www.www.alamocity.com/](http://www.www.alamocity.com/)  
SanAntonioTourist.com

- [sanantoniotourist.com/](http://sanantoniotourist.com/)

## Gay Rights: Still a Debate?

*By Peter Voeller, University of Washington*

I was dismayed to see "Gay Rights to be Debated" on the front page of the UW student newspaper. Somehow I think we should be beyond that. It is 2002 after all. The GBLTC on campus thought the same way and didn't support the debate. GBLTC director Malena Pinkham said, "We decided not to endorse the debate because it legitimizes gay rights, and they shouldn't have to be legitimized."

The debate was organized by the student senate vice chair, a sophomore in political science. His goal was to find out what different political ideologies think about gay rights.

To make things interesting, or maybe to try to illicit the same tired arguments, the Washington State Christian Coalition was invited to present the conservative opinion along with a local radio station commentator to present the 'liberal' opinion and Dr. Nigel Ashford of George Mason University to present the libertarian. Only the religious right opinion was quoted in the paper along with comments from two students, one who said that she was "pleased to hear different ideologies on the same stage peacefully discussing issues."

I hesitate to include the Christian Coalition's rantings, but it is still out there and though we've heard it all before, it always takes on a new absurdity for me. The speaker started out by saying that gays should not be allowed to marry out of respect for heterosexual couples. "Where does a society draw the line?" he asked, adding that if two gay men are allowed to marry, nothing is stopping three gay men, or a father and his daughter, or a mother and her son to do so. Imagine. Legalized Menage a trois, Electra and Oedipal relationships running rampant. This is what they fear. Thankfully, bestiality and the usual addictive/alcoholic analogies were left out this time.

So that's the state of GBLTC affairs in higher education circles in Seattle. Disappointing to say the least. Should I be thankful that it's even being debated at all? I think I am with the GBLTC by ignoring the debate and having a party instead. This is not avoidance, but just not giving credibility to a debate which in an ideal world, shouldn't even have to be taking place.

## A Transformation for Transgender

*By Ted Burnes, University of California at Santa Barbara*

I was recently eating lunch with a colleague, a bisexual professor of higher education in a graduate school setting, when the topic of transgendered individuals came up. "I don't really focus on transgendered individuals that much," my colleague told me. "I mean, I definitely look at lesbian/gay/ bisexual/stuff, but the transgendered thing isn't really applicable. I mean, there are hardly any transgendered kids out there, and I want to make sure I cover what my students are going to use right away." The topic of conversation was politely changed.

I left lunch with my mind whirling. "...the transgendered thing isn't really applicable..." I began to question that statement. Was that statement what educators and higher education staff were saying about the LGB population ten years ago? Because there were not many gay or lesbian or bisexual students that were "out" in the 1980s and early 1990s, did colleges and universities think that there weren't any of these students out there? I began to think about how many transgendered students are out there and don't come forward because they're simply scared to approach their university's faculty and staff. Many staff and university may claim to be LGBT-friendly, but are they really approachable for all four letters...or really just three?

For example, do university administrators know that transgendered youth have one of the highest statistical percentages of suicide and/or HIV/AIDS infection? When a transgendered student walks into his/her study abroad advisor's office, does the study abroad advisor have any idea what it's like for the student who doesn't know which box to check on the application ¼ male now, but female yesterday? My guess is probably not. With these ideas in mind, my questions became statements, and statements joined to form paragraphs. I write this short blurb with hope that its reader might begin to re-examine its services for transgendered-identified individuals.

"Re-examine?" you're saying. "Why? I'm completely comfortable with everything!" I have to tell you that I'm wary of anyone who is completely comfortable with everything...in fact, I pride myself on NOT being comfortable with everything because it gives me the opportunity to learn and question and grow. For example, you're comfortable with the word "transgendered" ¼ but are you comfortable with the idea that 'transgendered' is an umbrella term for many different gender identifications, such as butch, femme, drag kings, drag queens, masculine women, feminine men, gendervariants, transsexuals and many many others? If the word "transgendered" sends questions through your brain, don't be scared of it...simply acknowledge that the questions exist and start finding some answers.

Another way to re-examine our services might be to look at our special interest group within NAFSA. The Lesbigan SIG, we call ourselves. Is it me, or are we missing something? This topic was brought up at our last Lesbigan meeting, and again I began to think of more questions. If a transgendered-identified student is to look at our Web site, what message does that student receive? If a transgendered-identified member of NAFSA wants to join our interest group, how does the member know that (s)he will feel

welcome and included? As the struggle for civil rights for sexual minorities continues, it's apparent we need all the community we can muster...if we as an interest group are not inclusive of transgendered individuals, why should we expect them to endure our struggle?

The list goes on and on. As the twenty-first century continues to unfold, perhaps it's time for a little spring cleaning, a transformation for pro-transgender. Let's include and build community rather than divide and waste energy. Let's not tack the "T" on the end of "LGB" as window dressing, but rather really educate ourselves on supporting the rights of transgendered students. With our self-education and growth as the world around us grows, I hope to make the comments like the one made by my colleague obsolete.

**NOTE:** *Ted Burnes is a Ph.D. student of Counseling Psychology at the University of California at Santa Barbara with a concentration in counseling sexual minority adolescents. Always willing to answer questions about everything from his study abroad experience in Spain to the true meaning of "transgendered," Ted can be reached at [tburnes@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:tburnes@education.ucsb.edu).*

**ADDITIONAL NOTE:** *Ted Burnes is currently conducting assessment research to construct scales for competency with LGBT-identified persons. Upon completion, one will be able to use these scales in the future with counselors, administrators, and other providers to ensure that they are competent in providing services to LGBT students, clients, etc, and to point out areas of growth for existing providers. While background research for competency with transgendered-identified individuals is not as strong as its lesbian/gay/bisexual counterparts, Ted hopes to develop beginning scales so as to make the research as inclusive as statistically possible.*

*Also, Ted would like to thank many Lesbigan-SIG members who contributed information about their experiences with LGBT issues in curricula through anecdotes, research, and course curricula throughout the '00-'01 academic year. This information was used in a manuscript entitled "Incorporating LGBT Issues into Higher Education Curricula" and was well-received by its funding source. Quotes and curricula from various SIG contributions were incorporated into the project, giving readers a great overall perspective of USA-wide curriculum options.*

*Please e-mail Ted directly at [tburnes@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:tburnes@education.ucsb.edu) for questions about either project*

## **LGBT Issues in Many Cultures**

*By Joe Murnan, Hariri Foundation*

During the 2001 Region VII conference in Pittsburgh, three Lesbigan SIG members joined a GLBT former international student in presenting a panel discussion entitled,

“LGBT Issues in Many Cultures: Insights for International Student Advisers.” The presenters: Bo Keppel, East Stroudsburg University; Scott King, Old Dominion University; a Hariri Foundation alumnus; and myself, Joe Murnan, Hariri Foundation, focused on cultural norms affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students in their home countries. We also took the opportunity to show during the session what impact these norms might have on students’ expectations, behaviors and cultural adjustment while studying in the U.S.

Bo began the session with a review of the Official Attitudes Toward Sexual Relationships Between Adult Men from “The Third Pink Book” edited by A. Hendriks, R. Tielman and E. Van der Veen. The document lists by country if homosexuality is legal, legal and tolerated, legal and repressed, illegal, illegal and repressed, illegal but tolerated, and finally not specified. The survey lists treatment of gay men in 194 countries.

Scott King then discussed female students from India studying in the United States. He noted that several of the female students had developed lesbian relationships. He explained that when these female students completed their studies and returned to India they then were married to men selected by their families. These women followed their cultural and family duties to marry and have families. There were no opportunities for them to continue their lesbian relationships.

I first discussed the climate for GLBT students in Korea where I had lived and worked for 4 years. Before the Korean War, any mention of sex was taboo in Korean society. Public discourse on sexuality has really only started in the last ten to fifteen years, but there is still very little hard information about sexuality in Korea. In this environment, discussions about homosexuality have hardly flourished. But for all of this, being gay or lesbian in Korea is in some ways easier than in the West. In part, because the possibility of homosexuality is denied by most people, there is an enormous tolerance for intimacy between same-sex friends. The situation in the law is similar to the situation in the society in general. Homosexuals have no established tradition of overtly discriminatory laws to struggle against. There are no sodomy laws proscribing oral or anal intercourse, largely because these acts have traditionally been considered utterly unmentionable in any public forum or documents. This may soon change. The number of homosexuals coming out of the closet is growing every day. Korea witnessed its first lesbian commitment ceremony on November 27, 1995.

I then went on to discuss GLBT issues for students from Moslem societies in the Arab World - Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Visitors to this part of the world will note that in general men are more intimate with each other than in the West. It is not uncommon to see male friends holding hands in public. It is also not uncommon to see men kiss each other on the cheeks during their greetings.

I noted that Jeffrey Weeks wrote in his introduction to the book, “Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies” that, “Men may have sex with other males, without social damage, as long as they are the penetrators, and their partners are boys, or in

some cases effeminate men (that is, just like the Western pattern, men who are not “real” men). There is, however no concept of ‘the homosexual’, except where it has been imported from the West, no notion of exclusive homosexuality, and no gay way of life.”

I also mentioned that punishment for same gender sexual encounters in these countries run the gamut of imprisonment not exceeding one year to public flogging and even death. In one country recently 9 young men were sentenced to up to 2,600 lashes and four to six years in prison for “deviant sexual behavior.”

The audience then heard from a gay former international student who was sponsored for his undergraduate and graduate studies in the U.S. by the Hariri Foundation. The student received asylum from the INS based on sexual orientation. He noted that upon his arrival in the United States in 1985 he was struggling with his sexual identity and looked to the International Student Office (ISO) as his only resource for social and emotional support. He also looked to the ISO as a source of information about what could help him adapt and adjust not only as an international student, but also as a gay man in a foreign country. He found none of the above.

He noted that he found ISO lacking in information or resources that help GLBT international students understand the following:

- It is OK to be gay.
- American GLBT cultural knowledge.
- It is OK to talk about sex and have a resource to talk to.
- Where and who to go to for specific questions and information.
- Information about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). He noted that many high schools abroad, especially in the Muslim world do not discuss sex as no one is supposed to have sex before marriage.
- Learn how and when to say “no” and “yes”.

He encouraged International Student Offices to:

- Offer a section on their Web sites related to international GLBT students, just as they have specific sections for Latin, African, Asian and Middle Eastern students.
- Invite foreign GLBT guest speakers to address international student events.
- Have brochures and flyers in their offices and Web sites about GLBT resources on their campuses, in their cities, etc.
- Include a brochure about student clubs that are available on campus including a GLBT club that may be available on campus in the international student admission application.
- Introduce international students to psychotherapy or counseling. In many countries psychotherapy or counseling are considered a treatment for crazy people only.
- Anonymously survey all international student upon their arrival at school about things they are looking for from the International Student Office. He recommends

that the ISO re-evaluate and ask for feedback on a regular basis from international students.

After the presentations the session was opened up to a question and answer period. One major issue raised by the audience was information on and procedures for applying for asylum based on sexual orientation.

The audience was referred to the Lesbian Gay Immigration Rights Task Force link on the Lesbigan SIG Web site. The site has a section where visitors are given information on ordering a free booklet prepared by the LGIRTF which outlines the procedures for applying for asylum based on sexual orientation. The booklet is entitled "Sexual Orientation-Based Asylum Claims".

*This panel discussion will be presented by an expanded group of panelists at the NAFSA conference in San Antonio, Thursday, May 30th, at 3:00 p.m.*