

# NAFSA Rainbow SIG SIGnals Newsletter

Rainbow SIGnals is published once a semester by the Rainbow Special Interest Group (SIG) of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. The Rainbow SIG is comprised of diverse NAFSAns whose goals are to combat homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia within NAFSA, to counsel international students and study abroad students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, and to support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered professional in international education.



Comprehensive  
Internationalization:  
Vision and Practice

## NAFSA 2012 ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO

MAY 27-JUNE 1, 2012 • HOUSTON, TEXAS • GEORGE R. BROWN CONVENTION CENTER

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**ONLINE** REGISTRATION IS NOW CLOSED.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

- *75% of US students have no state laws protecting against harassment & discrimination for their sexual orientation.*
- *There are still 11 known countries in the world that officially enforce the death penalty if found "guilty of homosexuality".*

Source: [www.ranker.com](http://www.ranker.com)

### RAINBOW SIG Schedule of Events at NAFSA

**\*For exact locations, please check your Registration Program**

- **Advisory Board Meeting:** Mon., May 28<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 PM – 4:30 PM
- **Communities of NAFSA Fair:** Tues., May 29<sup>th</sup>, 9 AM – 11 AM  
(We'll have a table).
- **Rainbow SIG @ NAFSA Pavilion:** Tues. May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1 PM – 3 PM  
**AND** Wed., May 30<sup>th</sup>, 11am – 1:30PM (We'll be promoting).
- **Annual Rainbow SIG Open Business Meeting:** Wed. May 30<sup>th</sup>,  
2:45 PM – 3:45 PM. **ELECTIONS** for Co-chair and Co-Editor will  
take place. You may nominate or self-nominate. **See pg. 3.**
- **Rainbow SIG Reception:** Wed. May 30<sup>th</sup>, 8 PM – 10 PM  
At "The Mink" / 3718 South Main St., Houston, TX 77002  
Tel: 713-522-9985 / [www.minkonmain.com](http://www.minkonmain.com)

#### Sessions of Interest:

- **LGBT Issues and Dynamics in the International Education Workplace:** Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup> at 9 AM

## Location & Identity: A Perspective on LGBT Bi-Cultural Identity

By: Andrew Coleman and Jose Rubio Zepeda

Cultural influences defined by geographic location help shape one's identity over time. Many people exist in a world of slight variations, which only reflect the social norms of their hometowns and local regions. While these norms may vary to a greater extent across one's home country, questions arise when considering extreme cultural differences between countries. How does one's identity morph between geographic and cultural extremes?

Jose Rubio Zepeda, a gay man born in Honduras, immigrated to Wisconsin, USA when he was six years old. Jose's early childhood developed his Latin American identity. Later, he experienced the influences of US culture on his base identity and faced the challenges of maintaining his Latin American culture in a predominantly white community. Jose's determination to maintain his native heritage took concerted effort, but through using Spanish at home, visiting family in Honduras, and participating in Latin American cultural organizations and events, he succeeded.

In 2011, after accepting himself as a gay man and coming out, Jose's identity changed again; his identity evolved further encompassing two cultures and the intricacies of "coming out" in North America. Jose found being a gay Latin American man in the US vs. in Honduras quite different. While US culture challenged Jose's Honduran cultural origins, he found the American environment, in general, to be safer and more accepting of his sexuality. However, the freedom to express himself as a gay man diminishes when he travels to Honduras and is suddenly immersed in the Latino culture again as a gay man.

Homophobia and intolerance are significant in Honduras. Gays and Lesbians are oppressed, and transsexuals have become almost invisible, primarily due to religious factors. Oppression exists in part from community members and is reinforced by the government and military. Those who identify as LGBT in Honduras are at risk of violence or even murder in some cases. Jose explains that his identity exists on a "sliding scale" or continuum. Therefore, where his sexuality is concerned, he must modify that part of his identity based on his location.

Despite an environment of muted, location-based sexuality, Jose's reports being able to accept himself first as a Latin American and second as gay. Jose reflects the desire of most people - to find community, acceptance within that community, and validation of one's truest form. He states, "The goal changes from being accepted to *being authentic*." Finding self-contentment, which also leaves room for *authenticity*, has led Jose to be of service to others. Here in the US, he can be an advocate who creates awareness for both Latin Americans and the LGBT community.

### In Jose's words:

Perhaps the evolution of one's identity continues in tandem with cultural evolution in geographically divergent locations also. As a 1st generation, Spanish speaking Honduran immigrant, I have learned to embrace my multiple identities. My unique background has fostered appreciation of my two cultures and increased my interest in this area of study. Since my freshman year, I have been involved in various extra-curricular activities such as the Activities Coordinator for my residence hall, attendance at various conferences, membership in the US Student Association, and Wisconsin United Residence Hall Association. Likewise, being a member of "Awareness through Performance" (a social justice troupe) sponsored by the Campus and Climate Diversity Office, and serving on the board of the Latin American Student Organization, has provided me with the tools to express diversity and also share with others as a gay man of color. More importantly, it has allowed me to contextualize my story into the greater narrative. Currently, I'm a junior at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, but my future plans include graduate school. Eventually, I want to become a professor/scholar of comparative theories and practices of race, class, gender, sexuality, transnational culture and politics—particularly of the Caribbean and Latin American regions. Persistence, a hard work ethic, and a relentless spirit are characteristics that have helped me in the past, and they continue to do so in all aspects of my life.

### Rainbow SIG Officers:

#### Co-Chairs

- Terry Crouch (Middlebury College)  
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#### Newsletter Co-Editors

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#### Listserv Manager

- Daniel Soto (Indiana University)

#### Web Content Manager

- Paul Geis (Elon College)

#### Recording Secretary

- Ismael Crotte (Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico)

#### Treasurer

- Rick Russo (UC, Berkley)

#### Membership Coordinator

- Susan Carty (Indiana University)

## US PRESIDENT MAKES HISTORIC STATEMENT & WORLD REACTS

By: Andrew Coleman

**On May 9, 2012**, U.S. President Barack Obama expressed his support for same-sex marriage on national TV. The first U.S. President to ever officially endorse same-sex marriage, Mr. Obama is being praised and criticized. Considering 2012 is a US Presidential election year, reactions have been far more numerous domestically. People around the world are also reflecting on his statement; however responses, specifically by heads of other governments, are few in number so far. We can certainly expect more opposing views. Internationally, those in support of the President's new stance have been more forthcoming.

**MITT ROMNEY, US Presidential Candidate:** *"I have the same view on marriage that I had when I was governor...I believe marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman...this is a sensitive topic."*

**HARRY REID, US Senate Majority Leader:** *"My personal belief is marriage is between a man and a woman, but in a civil society...people should be able to marry whomever they want, and it's no business of mine."*

**NANCY PELOSI, US Representative:** *"Today, we took another step forward in our march toward equality."*

**JARED POLIS, Openly Gay US Representative:** *"I thank the President...and look forward to working with him to strengthen the institution of marriage by securing the right of all Americans to marry the person they love."*

**SUZANNE NOSSEL, Amnesty International US Director:** *"This is a signature example of a president leading the people in a direction that is right and inevitable, even though some may not feel ready for it."*

**JOSE MARIA Di BELLO, Argentinian Activist:** *"Gay marriage is a matter of respecting the concept of equality."*

**JULIA GILLARD, Australian Prime Minister:** Vowed to vote against legalization of same-sex marriage when the bill comes before the Australian Parliament later this year.

**GUIDO WESTERWELLE, German Openly Gay Foreign Minister:** *"Obama's statement is a courageous step."*

**JULIA MOREIRA, President of Brazilian Gay Rights Group, Arco-Iris:** *"The US is a global leader on everything, and that includes gay rights."*

**EUSEBIUS MCKAISER, South African Political Analyst:** *"The majority of S. Africans are opposed. We had a revolutionary break with the past in 1994, which is why our gay rights [officially] are so much more progressive, even though they are ahead of social attitudes. In America by contrast, civil rights have always been won in an evolutionary way."*



### RAINBOW SIG ELECTIONS

Are set for the annual open business meeting on **Wed., May 30 at 2:45**. Please see NAFSA program for exact location. Open positions include: Co-chair, Co-Editor, Recording Secretary and Web Content Manager. These will be 2-year positions. For a description of duties, look under "governance" at <http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/sig.htm>

**You are encouraged** to get involved and put this leadership feather in your hat! You may nominate others or self-nominate at the meeting.

*You are Invited!*

to the  
**Rainbow SIG Reception**

**Wednesday, May 30<sup>th</sup>**  
**8:00pm – 10:00pm**

at “The Mink”  
3718 South Main Street  
Houston, TX 77002

**By Metrorail:**  
Fannin South  
Then walk 225 ft. south,  
same direction as tram.

Tel: 713-522-9985  
[www.minkonmain.com](http://www.minkonmain.com)

#1 phrase spotted on  
graduation caps this year:

**“Thanks Google!”**



**ADVOCATE**

**LGBTQ Scholarship:** The inaugural winner of the 2012-2013 Fund for Education Abroad (FEA) Rainbow Scholarship is Abraham Martin of the University of Wisconsin at Platteville.

FEA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. To donate, or for more info >> [www.fundforeducationabroad.org](http://www.fundforeducationabroad.org)

- **Find My Elected Officials:** Quickly use interactive maps and zip codes to locate any US official or agency you need. >> <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>
- **Sign a Petition:** Mobilize instant online campaigns anywhere on Earth in your language, or join one you think is important >> <http://www.avaaz.org/en/>
- **Stop Uganda’s anti-gay death bill:** More than 1.6 million have signed this petition across the world. It’s working. >>[https://secure.avaaz.org/en/uganda\\_stop\\_homophobia\\_petition/](https://secure.avaaz.org/en/uganda_stop_homophobia_petition/)
- **HRC Local:** View your state’s LGBTQ issues and actions. >> <http://www.hrc.org/states>
- **NAFSA:** “Be a voice for international education”. Use NAFSA’s comprehensive advocacy resources. More info at >> <http://www.connectingourworld.org/>

**CONNECTCONNECTCONNECTCONNECTCONNECTCONNECTCONNECT**

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