

Rainbow SIG Newsletter

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SIG Celebrates 50th Anniversary in DC!

By Kathleen Sideli

Many of you may remember the first formal meeting of the Lesbigan Special Interest Group in San Francisco in 1993, where we had to confront an obstacle course to find our out-of- the-way meeting room. That momentous meeting, where 60 individuals were in attendance, was the culmination of many years of planning by a dedicated group of NAFSAs devoted to glibt needs and rights. The successes of the SIG to date can only be attributed to the commitment of all its members, many of whom have volunteered their time, efforts, materials and ideas.

Since its inception the SIG has not only complied with the commitments it established in its petition to the NAFSA board of directors in 1992 but also has achieved other goals it set for itself during the first meetings. The SIG today boasts of an active membership of about 100 but has included in its membership almost 300 individuals during the past five years. All this information is kept on a database. We have an electronic listserve to which 60 members have subscribed. There have been a number of workshops and sessions on glibt issues both at NAFSA national and regional conferences and at the national conferences we have established a visible presence with our colorful rainbow stickers. We sponsored, with support from NAFSA, a display of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt at the Phoenix conference in 1996. And the panel we created for that display, which commemorated NAFSAs or their family members, colleagues and

friends, was submitted to the Quilt display in Washington, DC, in October of 1996. With the launch of our own web site in 1997, the SIG achieved its goal of providing resources for the entire international educational community: bibliographies, suggestions and material for orienting and counseling glbt international students and Americans studying abroad, resources for ESL teachers interested in providing a multicultural dimension to their students, information for glbt professionals and links to other resources and organizations.

The SIG invites its members to officially renew their commitment to the group each year and collects an optional activity fee. We publish a newsletter to keep our members informed about activities of the group and to keep them apprized of related international glbt issues.

While we look forward to celebrating our accomplishments as this fifth-year milestone approaches, we need to focus our attention on where we go from here. Come to the business meeting with your ideas about what the SIG needs to do in the next five years. NAFSA has scheduled our business meeting during a time devoted to sessions, so mark your calendars: Wednesday, May 27, 1998, 3:15 p.m. You should experience fewer conflicts since the meeting time doesn't coincide with receptions this year.

Scott King and others on the Local Arrangements Committee inform us that DC has a very large and active gay and lesbian community, and that we will have plenty of opportunity to share in that culture during the conference. The main conference hotels are just one metro stop--or a walk down the hill--to Dupont Circle, one of the glb centers of Washington. Bookstores, gift shops, restaurants and bars which cater to this population can be found here.

Although still tentative, we hope to have a sponsored SIG event at one of the local nightspots. As soon as it is firmed up, we will give information over our listserve and have it posted at the conference.

We hope you can join us in DC to help us celebrate the SIG's anniversary!

Some Study-Abroad Programs Start to Consider Needs of Gay Students: They need warnings about some countries, and may face difficult transitions returning from others

Amy Magaro Rubin

As a college student in San Francisco, Charles de Berry was used to openly expressing his identity as a gay man. Then he spent a year studying in Spain.

In Madrid, he was repeatedly harassed. At times he felt compelled to hide his sexual identity. Mr. de Berry, now a senior at San Francisco State University, wishes that he had known about homophobic attitudes in Spain ahead of time. "I would have been better prepared," he says.

Had he chosen, he actually could have found out quite a bit from his university's study-abroad office, which offers special orientations and has resources for gay students. But many students don't have such an opportunity.

Only a handful of colleges have set up programs to help gay and lesbian students prepare for study abroad. Students in these programs learn that homophobia is common in some countries, particularly in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, and that disclosing their sexual identity could be dangerous. They also learn that there are many other countries - especially in Western Europe - where they can express their identity.

"It's one more dimension in making sure all students are prepared for foreign study," says Kathleen Sideli, Associate Director of Academic Affairs at Indiana University's Office of Overseas Studies. "We're becoming attentive to the whole student."

Even so, sexuality is a topic that makes some advisers feel uncomfortable. "In a lot of offices, it's not a validated concern," says My Yarabinec, coordinator of study-abroad and international exchange programs at San Francisco State. "They don't have any information for gay and lesbian students."

San Francisco State and Indiana, however, along with the University of Minnesota, are cited as models for their attempts to help gay students adjust to foreign study.

Indiana and Minnesota include information on gay issues during orientations held for all students going abroad; San Francisco offers separate sessions to cover the topic. All three universities have reference materials on the subject in their study-abroad offices, and San Francisco has compiled a guide to laws regarding homosexuality in various countries. Each of the institutions also maintains a file of personal experiences reported by gay students who have gone overseas.

The Vermont-based School for International Training, meanwhile, has established a semester-long program in the Netherlands that explores gay life in that country. Most of the students who participate in the program are gay or lesbian, and are from colleges and universities across the United States.

Preparing gay students for what to expect in a particular country can make the difference between a wonderful study abroad experience and an unpleasant one.

Mr. de Berry, the senior at San Francisco State, wishes he had known what he was walking into when he went to Spain two years ago.

Shortly after he arrived in Madrid, he began dating a Spanish man. When they walked down the street, many people yelled "Maricon!" (derogatory slang for a gay man) at them. Once they sneaked a kiss in a park and were chased by two men who hurled threats at them.

"I felt a mixture of anger and fear," Mr. de Berry says. "I wished I had read up." Knowing about the attitudes wouldn't have changed his mind about going to Spain, he says, but he would have been better able to enjoy his time in the country. He says he would have known, for example, that he probably should not hold hands in public or kiss in the park.

Matthew Pitts, a senior at Indiana, says he felt "incredibly fortunate" that his institution advised him on what life would be like as an openly gay man in Germany.

Mr. Pitts, who majors in political science and German, says he was a little worried when he decided to spend last year at the University of Hamburg. "I wasn't sure what to expect. You hear rumors about skinheads."

He went to the overseas-studies office and pored over gay-travel guides and evaluations from gay men who had previously studied in Hamburg. "I was able to get a lot of good information," he says. "I learned that Germany was a lot more open and tolerant toward gays and lesbians, that it wasn't uncommon to see same-sex couples holding hands on the street or kissing in public."

Going overseas allows some gay students to come out of the closet. "They're away from the restraints of their home culture," says Julie Trimpe, assistant director for international exchange programs at Virginia Tech. "They're away from family and friends, and there is no stigma." She is at work on a project about how coming out overseas affects gay and lesbian people.

For gay students who live in conservative areas, or whose family members do not accept their sexuality, going overseas may be the first time they've felt comfortable expressing their homosexuality, says Frank Romanowicz, study-abroad adviser at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "Their sense of freedom is increased. Their comfortability quotient is higher."

That was the case for Mr. Pitts. He was openly gay before he went abroad, and his parents were supportive. But in Hamburg, he was able to experience being gay in a much more open way than at Indiana. He didn't think twice about holding hands in public with the man he dated, or sitting close together and kissing. He attended his first large "Gay Pride" event there, too.

"I could be who I was without thinking twice," he says. "Here in Bloomington, I'm always looking over my shoulder in some respect. It was a very affirming experience."

Then he had to return home. "All of a sudden I had to pull back and kind of go back into the closet. After a year of being used to a certain standard, it was tough. Once you get a taste of liberation, it's hard to shut that part off."

It is vital for gay students to understand how they may have changed by the time they come back to the United States, says Anthony C. Ogden, a graduate student at the School for International Training, who wrote a brochure called "Welcoming Gay Culture: Preparing International Educators for a New Clientele." Mr. Ogden writes that study-abroad offices should have a re-entry program that includes "a discussion prompting these students to think about these changes."

Study-abroad advisers can also help returning students adjust by providing information on gay-and-lesbian support groups on the campus, or just by taking the time to talk with the students, says Indiana's Ms. Sideli.

Some advisers either don't recognize the needs of gay students who study abroad, or don't know how to deal with such needs. This is particularly true at institutions located in more-conservative areas, says Mr. Romanowicz, of Alabama. "This state is very provincial about homosexuality," he says. "You have to be careful."

He doesn't cover gay-and-lesbian issues in orientations or have special travel guides on his shelves. If he did, he explains, other students "might be put off by it." He does try to advise gay students privately. He doesn't "post a sign saying, 'I do this advising,'" he says, but if a student comes to him, he will provide the appropriate information. In Mr. Romanowicz's four years at Birmingham, however, he has advised only two gay students. "I know there are more," he says.

He and several counterparts from other universities are trying to get more people talking about the issues involved. At professional conferences, they have held such panel discussions as "Taboo Topics: Sex and Sexual Orientation - Incorporating Discussion into Student Orientation Programs." They have also started a newsletter and a World-Wide Web site on the subject [NAFSA Lesbique SIG Website](#).

"We need to prepare students and give them as much information as possible," says Al Balkcum, director of the University of Minnesota's Global Campus, which runs study-abroad programs. "We need to provide students with the tools to get the most out of their study-abroad experience." *Editor's Note: Permission to reprint this article was requested from The Chronicle of Higher Education where this first appeared on October 31, 1997.*

Research Project: Glibt Study Abroad Students

By Julie Trimpe, Virginia Tech University

I am conducting research to explore how the process of coming out while abroad or questioning sexual orientation and/or identity impacts the cross-cultural re-entry adjustment process for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (glbt) students. This research is for completion of my graduate degree at The School for International Training. You may have read about this last October in The Chronicle for Higher Education's article, "Some Study Abroad Programs Start to Consider Needs of Gay Students." While the article, I believe, did well to highlight issues for glbt students studying abroad, it did not accurately represent the focus of my research. It also misquoted me as saying "there is no stigma" abroad. Certainly, stigmatization of gay culture exists outside of the U.S. My comment was that students may perceive that there is no stigma, or less, as they are away from family, friends, and the home culture. Being in a new environment, students have the opportunity to concentrate on themselves, their own feelings, and identity. How does such self-exploration while a student is abroad impact their re-entry process?

The goals of the study include:

- validating glbt student experiences and concerns related to the final phase of study abroad (the return home) by gathering information to identify them
- increasing the awareness of future glbt students who study or work abroad that they are not alone in their concerns and experience; and
- increasing the awareness and knowledge of study abroad professionals on issues and concerns identified.

Survey of Lesbian and Gay Professionals in International Education

By Kathleen Sideli

Since the SIG had received some inquiries from glbt professionals in the field of international education about what type of information we could provide them on our web site, we decided to survey our members about the environment in which they work. In February we polled circulated an on-line survey to everyone who subscribes to our listserve, Rainbow, and the response was encouraging.

While the group is somewhat divided over the climate at their institutions regarding glbt employees, the numbers are not as discouraging as one might have expected. A majority (60%) agreed that their institutions show favoritism towards heterosexual employees. However, half of the group (50%) also felt that their institutions were aware of the needs of glbt employees and 55% were of the opinion that their institutions were

not only sensitive to the values of glbt employees but that they treated employees of all sexual orientations equally.

It was encouraging to learn that our members, for the most part, have not found themselves in a hostile environment a result of their sexual orientation. A large majority (68%) have not heard offensive stories, jokes or remarks about glbt employees. Nor have the majority (68%) had a negative experience motivated by being glbt. On the other hand, 62% were aware of incidents motivated by another's sexual orientation.

3/4 of those who responded to the survey were glbt (a number of allies responded as well). It is encouraging that our glbt colleagues provided overwhelmingly positive information about their ability to be open about themselves in their offices. In fact 82% are out to some degree in their work environment and the same percentage of individuals are treated equally in their offices despite their sexual orientation. On the other hand, only 53% are out to students.

The majority of respondents (62%) are from public institutions with 27% from private and 9% from other agencies. There seems little correlation between the responses, and the size or nature of the institution.

Glb individuals who wonder about the climate surrounding sexual orientation in the field of international education can infer from the results of this survey that most of our glbt colleagues are comfortable being out in their office environments. On the other hand, they are more cautious with revealing their sexual orientation to students. Our respondents' personal comments reveal their attitudes about this. As far as our institutions go, US colleges, universities and academic agencies have made great strides in recognizing the rights and needs of non-heterosexual professionals but there is still room for improvement. For the most part, institutions of higher education are not environments where blatant targeting of glbt employees is taking place.

The actual survey questions and breakdown of responses, the bibliography suggested and a list of recommendations and comments directed to glbt professionals in our field are available at <http://www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/survey1.htm>.

Special thanks to Scott King for sharing survey questions with us and thanks to everyone who responded to our survey.

Call for Submissions for ESL Book on Glb Topics

By Susan Carty

Christopher Renner (whose glb ESL materials are included in our SIG's web site) has asked us to circulate this call for submissions for a TESOL book on the topic of glbt issues in the ESL/EFL classroom.

The objectives of the book are to provide:

- 1) US and Western European teachers of English as a Second/Foreign Language a cultural background concerning the topic of homosexuality in Non-Western cultures.
- 2) ESL/EFL instructors with pedagogical examples of addressing the topic of sexual identity within the context of the classroom in a Western cultural setting and awareness of cultural limits to such discussions in Non-Western cultures.
- 3) an opportunity to address the area of English for Sex Workers; including the issue of child prostitution, cultural differences in age of consent, and forced labor of children in the ever expanding sex market.

The book will be in three parts:

I. Understanding cultural differences. Contributions are sought which give an overview of how homosexuality is understood “officially”, in the sense of laws and regulations, and “socially/culturally”, what actually occurs within the society, particularly in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Far East.

II. Pedagogical concerns/methods. Contributors are sought who have addressed the issue in both US/Western and Non-Western settings. Contributions should be methodological in approach and non-academic in presentation. Materials, pedagogical essays and reports can address both adult educational settings as well as elementary/junior high/high school ESL settings.

III. English for Sex Workers. The development of a “sex trade” based primarily on Western tourism to under-developed countries has created concerns about human rights abuses, AIDS/STD education, negotiation skills, forced child prostitution and labor in the sex trade. Contributions to the section are sought which address these concerns.

This book proposal is targeted for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Inc. and its publication division.

Following TESOL guidelines, a publication proposal must include a complete table of contents with authors listed, and at least one completed chapter.

Deadline #1. by May 15. Hard copy and floppies, formatted in Word 5.1 for Macintosh, or Word for DOS, of submission proposals -- completed, in progress, or abstracts, RECEIVED, not mailed! May-June, selection of proposals, presentation of publication proposal to TESOL. Two months after TESOL approval, all final copies must be received with hard copy graphics.

Send submissions and requests for more information to: Christopher E. Renner, Via Kennedy, 38, I-84073 Sapri (SA) Italy Tel. +39-973-603889 Email: renner@cds.unina.it

Research Summary: Glb Japanese in U.S.

By J. Scott Van Der Meid

In Queer Studies, research is beginning to focus on minority and cross-cultural issues, yet little has been done about glb Japanese living in the U.S. The Japanese make up one of the largest groups of international students studying here in the U.S. For glb Japanese who come for academic study, the journey overseas often brings with it different challenges and, many times, a realization that their sexuality places them between two cultures.

For most Japanese, childhood was a time of struggle and growth. Some had a happy childhood, while others did not. The pull between family expectations, the pressures of school and the beginnings of sexual awakening made many feel isolated and unhappy. In their late teenage years, many Japanese began experiencing same-sex desire. During this phase, some found support in their family and others did not. Upon coming to the US, many glb Japanese began building a chosen family, not unlike many glb Americans who leave home and their families. For many, once they have been in the U.S. for a period of time, there is a desire to bring the biological family back into their lives.

Relations with the glbt community prove as complex for glb Japanese living here as experienced by other glb people. In Japan many had initial exposure to other glb people through television, their English language teachers, or friends in college. Most had their first encounter with another gay or lesbian person in their twenties, though most were with non-Japanese partners. The decision to come out or not is very complex for most Japanese. Many feel no need to share with their families since they live in the US and many believe that their families would not understand. In Japanese, there is no word which embodies the meaning that gay, lesbian or bisexual hold here in the U.S. Once in the States, most glb Japanese students report isolation, marginalization and a sense that they are the only one. No major group exists which organizes glb Japanese in the U.S. There are many glb Asian groups, but most Japanese don't feel a connection with other glb Asians. Most Japanese are in relationships with Americans adding the cross-cultural dimension to their relationships.

For glb Japanese living in the U.S., the challenge between exerting their Japanese-ness as well as their sexual orientation is often a new experience. For most Japanese, their strong identification with their ethnicity sets them apart from the mainstream glbt community. The struggles between one's group identity and one's individual identity as they move between countries are also evident. Which aspect of their identity is more salient depends on the person and the given situation.

Racism is another element which glb Japanese, like their fellow citizens, must face for the first time. Living in the U.S. provides glb Japanese with differing experiences depending on their backgrounds, geographic location, academic setting and the support resources available to them. Some students come for academic study while others

come to escape life back home. Some come to pursue academic study and live in a society which values the individual more. Some know about their sexuality before they come, though many discover their sexual orientation while here in the States. Students in Hawaii and California reported more support and cultural diversity within the academic setting as well as the glbt community. In the Mid-West and East Coast, students reported little support as glb Japanese.

The international student advisor (ISA) at the university or college played a role in some students lives, while others found the office and personnel too distant. Most students found orientation worth while, but said resources for glbt people were lacking. ISAs interviewed expressed frustration that time and money prevented many from providing resources to students who they knew needed the support. As one said, "If I can't get [Asian] students to ask regular immigration questions, I don't expect a gay or lesbian Japanese to come to me with their personal issues." Some glb Japanese have been exposed to glb resources by their ISA. The experience for graduate students is a bit different than for undergraduates who are usually just coming out. One student attended a graduate glb group's meeting, but found that his "sexuality was not enough to hold me to this group even though they were fellow glb graduate students." While most Japanese believe that ISAs need not do extra programming for glb students, simply being aware of the issues and pointing people in the right direction would be helpful.

Glb Japanese living in the U.S. come from a variety of backgrounds and childhood experiences. Many come for academic study and then during the time here, have an awakening about their sexual orientation. Issues of identity, family and relations to the greater glbt community impact their experiences here. Life at the academic institution is influenced by geographic location, the institution's support resources, and the ISA present. For many the experience brings them from feelings of isolation and marginalization to new, chosen families of friends and partners. Because no major organization exists for glb Japanese, there is still a sense of separateness from other glb Asian or mainstream glb groups.

This ethnographic study is meant to bring more awareness of another segment of our student population and our greater glbt community.

Editor's Note: J. Scott Van Der Meid is a M.A. candidate in Intercultural Relations at Lesley College.

A Welcome Supreme Court Ruling

Bo Keppel, based on the March 5, 1998 New York Times article

Justice for gays and lesbians has been expanded with the March 4th Supreme Court ruling on sexual harassment in the workplace. The unanimous opinion, written (surprisingly) by Justice Antonin Scalia, defined conduct, not the sex or motivation of the

people involved, as the determinant of whether sexual harassment amounts to discrimination on the basis of sex.

Previous to this ruling, gays who suffered same-sex harassment could not hope for justice through the courts. Lower Federal courts either refused to accept same sex harassment cases or would only consider those in which the victim was a heterosexual harassed by a gay man or lesbian. The Supreme Court's ruling makes the sexual orientation of either the victim or the harasser irrelevant.

It is always good news when the court applies the same standard to all regardless of sexual orientation!

Adventures in Uzbekistan: Queer Woman Puts Away Labyris to "Pass"

Vika Gardner

Note: This article first appeared in the Bloomington Beacon, Southern Indiana's Glb newspaper.

When preparing for an extended stay overseas, one pictures what life will be like and how one will cope with the problems that inevitably arise. For a woman traveling to a Muslim country, especially a queer woman, the number of things that can go wrong begin to increase exponentially. Even knowing that there is little gay life to be found or that homophobia is common did not prepare me for being completely cut off from "gay society".

Having been out for quite a long time, I had forgotten the traps that fear and isolation build. In Uzbekistan, where I stayed during the summer of 1997, being gay means fifteen years in jail. Islam, something of a state religion, as Christianity is in pseudo-secular America, is reviving among many young people whose parents during the Soviet years were never able to study religion openly. While sodomy has officially been stricken from the law books in Russia and some of the other former Soviet states, in Uzbekistan homophobia has well-socialized roots in parts of both Islamic and Soviet culture.

I didn't spend much time worrying about this as my friends who had traveled in Turkey and Egypt reported finding gay bars and queer folk in major cities. I believed that in Tashkent, the largest city in the country, I would find some queers to befriend and be befriended by. After years of dreaming about Uzbekistan, nothing was going to intrude on my excitement.

Islam plays a large part in my re-search; while most Americans thought it would be onerous to conform to the "Islamic" dress standards for women, the shift in clothes was not difficult. I'm used to viewing all clothing as "drag" which needs to be adapted to changing situations. While I could wear my "American drag", wearing a conservative dress helped me blend in. Given that men have to wear long pants despite 115° heat, I thought my skirts quite comfortable. Not all the changes were so easy; for instance, I had to stop wearing my labyris, which I wear it constantly in the US. In Uzbekistan, despite my answers relating it to Kazakh warrior women, I found that many people, particularly the religious, were hostile to its distant similarity a Christian cross. I discovered that Russian women often wear crosses not as a symbol of religiosity, but as an ethnic symbol in a country where Russians are part of the old and disliked elite. Putting it in the back of a drawer became symbolic of my willingness to "pass" as a Muslim girl as my 'brothers' wanted.

A labyris, shaped like a two-headed axe, is a symbol of the Amazons, a "tribe" of women warriors described in Herodotus. The actual history of these women is more interesting than their mythology, for archeologists have been finding remains of women warriors in burial sites in Kazakhstan in the steppe. They apparently did everything the men did in battle and were buried with their weapons. While Herodotus said they took men only to have children, the real women warriors lived in their tribe like any other warrior. Whether they had children or took husbands has not been thoroughly studied.

Lesbians have been using the symbol for some time. It is especially interesting that in Russian, one of the words for "lesbian" is "amazonka."

In Uzbekistan, a man is usually either a woman's family member or her potential lover; the gray area of just being friends is hard to negotiate. Calling someone your "brother" or "sister" means you have a very close friendship, similar in fact to our use of the word in the gay community.

Social life was full of traps. Everyone assumed I was anxious to be married, as an Uzbek woman would be at my age, and most people felt free to question me about bearing children. My 'brother's' best friend, a playboy who was handsome and knew it, was more than eager to score a conquest with the American girl. I was invited to the homes of academics only to feel uncomfortable with their biases against Uzbek businessmen, my 'brothers' occupation. Used to feeling isolated from the urban gay world while in the Midwest, I struggled to cope without gay newspapers, magazines, or movies.

I tried to create my own little queer cultural sphere. For a while I wore freedom rings. They drew questions, too, but the answer, all wrapped up in political activism in the United States, never raised an eyebrow until I started teaching English. I took them off after being taunted by the homophobic Americans who also taught at my school. Fearful of the repercussions in my class and causing problems for my Uzbek family, my "cultural sphere" was rapidly became just my Walkman, endlessly playing a sad song by a Russian group that I had instantly recognized as gay. I made friends with a pirated-

tape vender, one of the few people in Uzbekistan who treated me like just another person, showing him my Ru Paul tape, trying to explain why Ru looks the way he does, until I realized I was alienating one of the few people who didn't see me as a walking bank account.

I also started testing the limits. I asked my 'brother's' playboy friend if he knew anyone gay. My 'brother' had let slip that a touristy restaurant near the center of Tashkent was a gay hang-out, especially in the early evening. How could he know that, I wondered. I walked around the neighborhood and park that adjoined it. With an art school across the street and two bookstores catering to Russian readers, not to mention a kiosk which sold condoms, all the elements seemed right. I began spending time watching people and listening to European dance music in a nearby cafe while I sipped a Coke and read Uzbek magazines. My gaydar went off several times: one group of women "read" like lesbians, but when they sat down to talk, they spoke German and were discussing music; I decided they were just foreign tourists. Around the edge of the cafe were benches where men often sat and smoked. Several times my 'dar went off with them. Sometimes I had no idea why, other times I would notice things like purple shoelaces, which had to be fabulously hard to find, or the way a guy never glanced at any of the short-skirted Russian girls who traipsed by. Unfortunately, I was too nervous to approach any of them, since I had a good idea how uncomfortable they'd feel with someone identifying them, not to mention how insulting I would appear if it turned out I was wrong.

By the time I left, my home life had degenerated: my 'brother' went on a two-day spree of calling me every gay-baiting name he knew in both English and Russian. His older brother eventually forced him to be nice to me. (His elder brother was very accepting, even asking about my former girlfriends.) So he tried to make up, saying he wanted me to "just be normal". I started to cry as I told him I am normal, whether he liked it or not. I couldn't wait to leave the country.

If I am to continue in my Ph.D. program, I have no choice but to go back to Uzbekistan. The research was thrilling, and now I at least know what I'm up against. Just as I will never again take a hot shower for granted, I will never again take for granted just how much gay culture we have access to all the time, even here in the Midwest.

Note: Vika Gardner is doctoral student in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University.

The Gay and Lesbian Movement in Honduras

Gustavo Orellana

My study of gay/lesbian and transvestite organizations in Honduras dates back to the fall of 1996. My interest was based on the fact that we as Hondurans have always

claimed to be of a conservative religious background and therefore, with a history of anti-homosexual acts. Honduran homosexuals are common victims of family, church, political and even police harassment, hindering most from outing themselves. The number of violations of gay and lesbian human rights is increasing more rapidly than the number of organizations protecting them. However, three years ago one of the newly formed organizations carried out a public protest demanding legal recognition for their group and their struggle continues. At the same time other groups were organized and started working on the empowerment of the gay and lesbian community but fear to apply for political or governmental recognition. There was an invisible movement that led to the surge of these organizations, two in the capital city, and other two in the northern city of San Pedro Sula.

These organizations started and continue to work individually, and very few collective efforts have been made in order to become a tangible politically influential force. My thesis research is the first attempt at studying those sociological factors such as historical events, community and identity process, gender roles, and class division behind this movement and specifically from a native's point of view.

In my research gathering, one of the first obstacles I confronted was the lack of data regarding gay and lesbian movements in Central America. There were only two gay, lesbian and/or transvestite studies on Honduras. One of them, authored by Richard Elliot, a Canadian lawyer (1995), was on the violation of gay and lesbian human rights, and the other was a survey research report about knowledge, attitudes and practices among gay men in San Pedro Sula that shape the incidence and prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection. The latter was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID)'s AIDSCAPS program (1996).

The reasons behind the emergence of these groups, which dates back to 1987, were for mere entertainment purposes (parties and social gatherings). In 1985, AIDS claimed the life of a gay man, which sparked governmental campaigns against homosexuals and their behavior until the late 1980's. In 1991 the Honduran Association of Homosexuals Fighting Against AIDS (AHCOS) emerged as a response to the governmental campaigns. Several organizations followed along with different purposes and missions. The most relevant ones include Colectivo Violeta (1995), working mostly with gay men and transvestites; Prisma, (1994) attracting mostly gays and lesbians.

In addition, there is a lesbian organization known as Las Hijas Del Maíz formerly known as the "Lesbian Self Consciousness Group." This group dates back to as early as 1988 though it has not been consistent due to the lack of communication skills, organizational experience, and lesbian consciousness, not to mention society's prejudice against gay women. It seems that people have been more tolerant toward gay men than lesbians. This is observed even in some gay organizations where lesbians have been criticized as problematic and homophobic.

Honduran homosexual organizations have different goals based on gender, geographical location, class, and educational status. The groups in San Pedro Sula are

made up mostly of working class gay men, including transvestites and male sexual workers. These men were the first to "come out" of the closet when looking for a legal recognition, which they are yet to obtain. They consider themselves to be "brave enough" to face society in their fight towards the recognition of gay human rights. They are especially concerned with the risk of HIV/AIDS infection among gay men. On the other hand, the gay and lesbian organization in Tegucigalpa (Prisma), gathers mostly middle and upper middle class people. They claim to have members of a higher educational, financial, and cultural background, which has led them to focus more on the empowerment process than on the HIV/AIDS topic. Contrary to AHCOS and Colectivo Violeta, this organization as such remains "in the closet." Colectivo Violeta is the only group that has stated gay and lesbian human rights as its main concern, although the other ones have started to raise this issue among its members. It is worth mentioning that, all of the groups mentioned above have obtained at one point or another, funds from either foreign development agencies such as USAID's AIDSCAPS and Holland's HIVOS. These funds have been oriented mostly toward the reduction of risky sexual behavior related to HIV/AIDS infection, and the promotion of education and self-esteem. As for the lesbian organizations, they have had different reasons to get organized. They have worked from a feminist-lesbian standpoint, which has involved a more political concern in terms of women's social participation, and coming-out process.

Regarding political involvement, I see very little action from all the existing gay organizations in Honduras. Apparently the plans of these groups are more concerned with their individual work rather than creating a national task force, losing the opportunity to turn the movement into a self-sustainable and influential political force for Honduras.

Note: Gustavo Orellana McCarthy, from Honduras, was a Fulbright faculty development grantee, sponsored by LASPAU. Working toward a master's at Loyola University, Chicago, he has returned to teach at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras to teach and complete writing his thesis.

Information from a NAFSAn in Japan

Tony Ogden

With 174 gay and lesbian bars outside my front door, life in Shinjuku Ni-Chome can be a little overwhelming. I came here in August and at first it seemed really exciting. Packed into a couple blocks here are gay bookshops, cafes, discos, karaoke houses, saunas, ramen shops, hotels and even a small cruising ground. It didn't take long to realize that to enjoy gay Tokyo would require a great deal of money, Japanese speaking ability and sense of adventure.

One has to look outside Ni-Chome, however, to find a supportive glb community. Though it has taken me a while, I have finally discovered a thriving underground

network of house parties, weekend getaways and many other social events. There are several active political groups, volunteer organizations and even an annual glb film festival!

If you have a resource library in your study abroad office, it may be useful for some to know about International Friends and Gay Network Japan.

1. International Friends, C. P. O. Box 180; Tokyo 100-91; JAPAN, Tel: (813) 5693-4569; Fax: (813) 5694-3775, e-mail: ifin@passport.org
For over seventeen years, IF has been serving a community that until recently was largely invisible in Japan. IF was the first organization in Japan to produce and distribute AIDS information brochures and posters in Japanese and English. Today, IF sends a monthly newsletter to a mailing list of over four hundred names, and on the third Sunday of every month, forty to fifty members get together at bilingual meetings. IF holds seminars, counseling sessions, and has support groups. IF does not always focus on serious issues, however. Frequent day trips to parks, museums and aquariums as well as overnight trips to hot springs or Mt. Fuji keep members in touch with nature.

Women of all nationalities living in Tokyo can get in touch with the International Lesbian Community by calling (0422) 56-3953.

2. [Gay Network Japan](#)
For those interested in establishing a link with Japan before coming, this is always a good sight to check out. I hear the classifieds are most effective.

Mexican Institute Offers Special Glb Summer Programs

By Jorge Torres V., Director, CETLALIC Alternative Language School

Called “the city of eternal spring,” Cuernavaca has been known for several decades as a center for the study of Spanish. CETLALIC was founded in 1987 as an alternative school, integrating intensive study of Spanish language with experiential cultural learning and analysis of current issues with grassroots organizations and others who are actively involved in their society.

The Spanish language program is demanding, but in a friendly atmosphere. Paulo Freire’s methodology is applied to the teaching of Spanish as a second language and students are expected to contribute their insights and ask the questions necessary for critical analysis. Our teachers are native speakers with professional training and extensive experience. Classes are limited to five students.

Every morning, there are three hours of intensive language instruction from 9 to 12, followed by a “practica” session from 12 to 2, in which students participate in round

table discussions on a variety of national and international topics. Cultural activities are also offered throughout a week and include excursions, visits with native speakers from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, videos, and participation in local fiestas and other cultural events. CETLALIC is accredited by the Ministry of Public Education (State of Morelos, Mexico).

Living with a Mexican family is an integral part of the program. It provides a unique experience to learn about the people, their food and their customs, as well as an incomparable opportunity for students to practice and refine their Spanish language abilities. We are proud to offer homestay options in which our gay, lesbian, and bisexual students can feel comfortable. There are families which are straight but welcoming of g/l/b students, as well as gay or lesbian couples who receive students in their homes.

CETLALIC is small and the staff is able to attend to the needs of each student. The goal is to promote dialogue between Mexico and Central America and the people of other cultures and, in order to reach that goal, we make the experience of every participant our concern. They welcome all students irrespective of nationality, ethnic origin, race, gender, sexual preference, age, etc.

They offer small, intensive classes at all levels, year-round, as well as several Special Programs every year, each focused on a particular issue or area of interest, which often include travel in the region.

1998 Special Programs:

IN/VISIBILITY: LESBIAN LIVES IN MEXICO (June 26 - July 17, 1998) A 3 week program that includes intensive Spanish classes and a variety of cultural/educational activities (such as trips, speakers, discussions, encounters with local groups and artists, videos, etc.) and a lesbian homestay.

COMING OUT: THE GAY EXPERIENCE IN MEXICO (June 7-26, 1998) A 3 week program that includes intensive Spanish classes and a variety of cultural/educational activities (such as trips, speakers, discussions, encounters with local groups and artists, videos, etc.) and a gay homestay.

CETLALIC Escuela Alternativa de Español/ Alternative Language School, Apdo. Postal 1-201, C.P. 62000, Cuernavaca, Morelos MEXICO; tel: (52) (73) 17-08-50; fax: 13-26-37; E-mail: cetlalic@mail.giga.com; Web: <http://www.giga.com/~cetlalic>

Note: The presence of this information does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement of these programs by the SIG.