

Rainbow SIG Newsletter

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Five Years of the Lesbigan SIG - A Personal View

Scott E. King, Director, International Student & Scholar Services, Old Dominion University

When I started to write the history of NAFSA's Lesbigan Special Interest Group, telling it as a factual story seemed dry and uninteresting. Perhaps more than any other involvement I've had in NAFSA, the SIG story is one of people--people who were proud of who they are and who have been willing to work to make our association more open to all. So, this has turned into a more personal view of how the gay and lesbian movement--and the SIG--have become part of the NAFSA culture.

Like many, I was excited when the Portland, Oregon conference in 1990 included a program on advising gay and lesbian international students. Less than thrilling were the time and place for the session. Not only was it scheduled for the first session of the last day of the conference--a morning when many of us wanted to sleep in just a little bit from all the social events of the prior week--but the room assignment was so isolated that you had to go through a construction area to get to it! Nevertheless, a packed room of NAFSA members were excited that sexual orientation was even being discussed at a national conference.

The next year's national meeting was held in Boston, and we were in for a week of GLB social events, coordinated by Paul Kreuger of Northeastern University. A small announcement in a preconference newsletter let us know that "special events" would be taking place, although lack of official recognition meant that nothing could be published in the conference materials. However, there were many great memories--especially the

closing brunch that Paul and his partner hosted to support a local AIDS service organization.

The following year our conference was in Chicago, and Mark Thackerberry of Northern Illinois University again made sure that there were activities for GLB members to enjoy. What stays with me most from this conference was that in Chicago we had mastered the art of unofficial communication, and thus we had quite a few of the newer, younger members of NAFSA come to the events as well as a sprinkling of international students. Both groups were affirmed by our existence and growing visibility within NAFSA .

Without recognition from NAFSA, however, the GLB community was hindered in promoting our events in any official way. The logical step was to form a Special Interest Group, and this was a task I decided to undertake for the next conference--conveniently located in San Francisco. An inquiry of interest was put out over Inter-L, NAFSA's electronic discussion board, and with very few exceptions the response was overwhelmingly supportive. As I look through the messages I received at the time, I am amazed at the number of heterosexual leaders of NAFSA who encouraged the development of the SIG, several of whom signed our official petition. When presented to the NAFSA Board of Directors in 1993, the SIG was approved with little controversy. We weren't "in the closet" any more!

The first official meeting of the Lesbigan SIG was held that May in San Francisco, and we almost immediately started the tradition of suspending our bylaws to allow more flexibility in our leadership. A SIG coordinator and advisory board were elected, however, so we did keep a bit of structure. Included in SIG activities that week was a trip to the AIDS Quilt offices, where we viewed panels of friends and colleagues, and I was able to leave a panel I had completed for my partner who had passed away the prior year.

Well, it wasn't long before the SIG was called on for action. In September, 1993, an ad-hoc committee was formed to look at how NAFSA chooses conference sites and how we would deal with discriminatory laws in these decisions. Of immediate concern was the possibility that Arizona, site of the 1996 conference, would pass a provision forbidding the inclusion of sexual orientation in any anti-discrimination statement. Contracts had already been signed for this site, so a financial penalty for NAFSA was a real factor in the decision. The Board of Directors of NAFSA did pass a resolution that issues of inclusion would be considered in the selection of sites for national conferences, and fortunately Arizona failed to even put an initiative on the ballot so the question of moving out of Phoenix was never necessary. (I would like to note that it is up to the various interests of NAFSA to make the Board of Directors aware of conference sites that are not in compliance with the resolution.)

The Lesbigan SIG has developed over the years into a very important group within NAFSA. We were one of the first SIG's to get up a Web page. We are one of very few that publishes regular newsletters.

Many regional and national leaders have developed from the SIG membership. Perhaps our greatest accomplishment was the moving display of AIDS quilt panels in Phoenix, along with the preparation of a NAFSA quilt panel. I sincerely feel that the Lesbigan SIG is now viewed within NAFSA as a source of education and information, as well as support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered colleagues who may not always receive affirmation in their professional lives. Many students and new professionals who attend NAFSA conferences are amazed at the open display of the rainbow flag on name tags and the almost matter-of-fact acceptance of various sexual orientations. We are not all the way there--we still have a lot to do at the regional levels, for example--but we are far closer to an accepting society in NAFSA than we were five years ago.

As I close this article, I would like to dedicate it to the memory of an individual who gave us a true beginning to the lesbian movement within NAFSA. Paul Krueger from Northeastern University started us off with meetings and events in Boston. Paul died of AIDS in November, 1996. One of the blessings I have had in life was to share a room with Paul at his last Fall Leadership Meeting in late September of that year. Although visibly ill and weak, he still had the spirit and humor that defined Paul, and I enjoyed our time together. This, to me, is what community, and ultimately our Special Interest Group, is all about.

New Challenges and New Leadership for the Lesbian SIG

By Bo Keppel

It was with surprise and pleasure that I learned from our past co-chairperson, Kathleen Sideli, that I had been elected to serve the Lesbian SIG as co-chairperson with David Roseberry. What a trusting group of folks you are, electing as one of your leaders a woman who could not even make it to the annual meeting! But then, you all know that crises do occur on our campuses, and mine (a non-international education related one, thank goodness!) occurred just in time to cancel my attendance at NAFSA's 50th Anniversary celebration. Seriously, both David and I would like to thank you for electing us to serve as your co-chairs for the 1998-1999 academic year.

We are well aware of the first rate act we are following, with the leadership of Kathleen Sideli and Peter Voeller. They did an excellent job making the Lesbian SIG one of the most active in NAFSA. We thank them and appreciate their offers to assist us in serving you well. We'll do our very best!

However, YOU, the SIG members, are the key to keeping us at the forefront of NAFSA. We thank those of you who have written articles for this edition of the newsletter, and of course, Susan Carty, its editor. We are also grateful to those of you who have sent

additions to the homepage to the SIG homepage manager, Kathleen Sideli, who continues to give so much. With this kind of involvement on your part, David and I will have an easy job this year.

Speaking of the homepage, David reports that he spoke with many of you at the Annual Meeting who suggested additions to the homepage of items which are already there. That suggested to him that many of you may not have visited your SIG's website. Please do. I think you will find articles useful to both CAFSS and SECUSSA members. For example, I was impressed by a brochure I found there developed by the University of Oregon, entitled HOMOSEXUALITY: A US Perspective for International Students. I modified it for use with my in-coming students, giving credit, of course to U of O! Also on the homepage are links to gay and/or international gay-related websites, as well as a number of comprehensive bibliographies. So, if you haven't already done so, check out the SIG's homepage at www.indiana.edu/~overseas/lesbigay/ and bookmark it for easy access.

Another contribution to the SIG several of you have made is preparing proposals on international lesbian/gay issues for the national and regional conferences. I know of at least three, two for the national and one for a regional. In addition, there will be a poster session for the Denver conference and Kathleen Sideli would welcome anyone's contribution to that.

At the annual meeting, you had an opportunity to make suggestions with regard to future activities you'd like to see the SIG conduct. I'd like to address those here, asking your help with some of them.

1. Inform People of Resources to Help them Better Serve Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Students.

I will send out a notice on Inter-L and Secussa-L, the two electronic listserves for NAFSANS, about our website, for as I indicated above, it contains articles and resources to help in serving GLBT students better.

You can also help to get the word out by announcing our SIG at your regional conference. If someone from each region would volunteer to be the conveyor of the information, we certainly can whip up some jazzy handout on our address on the net and get it to you before the conference. The first person to volunteer from each region wins! (Wins what? – the brochures to take to the regional!) My email, snail mail, telephone and fax numbers are below.

2. Increase visibility ...

- **... At National and Regional Conferences <**

Also as indicated above, there should be more visibility for the SIG at the national and one regional this year through presentations. We encourage all of you to consider a proposal for the 2000 national or regional conferences, if the deadline for this year's regional has passed.

- **... In the International Education Community as a Whole <**
We'll have to do some brainstorming work on this one. Perhaps we can interest some of the other international educational organizations to include an article on GLBT issues in their newsletters. Any other suggestions?
- **... Through Publications**
Kathleen Sideli, who co-wrote a chapter in the recent NAFSA's Guide to Study Abroad for Advisors and Administrators, is willing to work with any SIG member who is interested in submitting a research article in the GLBT international education area to NAFSA for its review.

3. Connect To Other Related GLBT Groups

I understand that we have SIG members who are active in at least three groups we will want to network with, ATESL, Peace Corps' RPCV, and NASPA. David and I will be touch with them to see how they think we can best interact. We would also like to connect with AACRAO, so if any of you are members, please get in touch.

4. Advocate and Lobby

We will be working with NAFSA at large and with the Diversity Committee on this issue. The new chairperson of the Diversity Committee is John Eng-Wang. We have been in touch, and I expect we will be able to establish a more active relationship with that group. It will be our job to keep that committee advised concerning such issues as persecution of GLBT folks abroad and immigration issues, including asylum for victims of homophobia (see Peter Voeller's article in this issue). Again, David and I would welcome knowing who might be interested in working on these issues with the Diversity Committee.

In response to the concern NAFSA conference should be held only gay-friendly sites, you will find the NAFSA resolution to that affect passed in 1993 on our website under the Newsletters section, Fall 1993.

5. Enhance the Listing of GLBT-related Resources on Our Website

This one is really up to you! When you come across a website which you think belongs in our list of web resources, send it along to Kathleen Sideli. She is always ready to upgrade our site.

6. Increase Opportunities for Networking, Professional and Social Exchange Within the SIG ...

- **... At Conferences**
We will certainly take this into consideration when planning for the SIG in Denver next year. We may be able to arrange another formal event, such as a reception or dinner, or, perhaps some less formal ones, depending on what Denver has to offer for its gay community. The wonderful, relaxed open house at a gay owned guest house in

Vancouver was ideal for getting to know new people. Do we have any Denver natives who can clue us into such an opportunity there?

As for increased opportunities at the regional conferences, is there a SIG member from each region who would work either (1) formally with the regional conference planning committee to schedule a regional SIG meeting or (2) informally to inform SIG members at the regional conference of a social gathering at some welcoming public place? The formal arrangements may only be possible for regions whose conferences are scheduled for the spring, but the informal should work anytime if there is an announcement board at the conference. Again, she or he who volunteers first for the region wins! (Wins what? – the pleasure of meeting new GLBT-friendly colleagues!)

- **... Mentoring**

This was a suggestion that seems to fit into the concern for increased networking and professional exchange. I think it can be done, most easily at the Annual Meeting, but certainly, if we have volunteer mentors, through the Rainbow listserve or the website. David and I will get this started by a call to you here and now to send us your name, email and snail mail address, phone and fax number if you are willing to serve as a mentor to a new SIG member OR if you are looking for a mentor. Watch for further information on Rainbow and on our Homepage in the fall.

Wow!

You've asked a lot from us, but if you noticed, we've thrown a good deal of it back to you! No organization works because two people co-chair it. It works because members are committed and are willing to do an extra bit to make it go. Find one of those "offers" of extra work and commit to it. We know you're overworked. We know that because David and I are barely getting everything done in a ten hour day. But as my wise mother said, there is always time for what you really want to do, and we know the SIG is important to you. We don't ask you to take on a lot. Just do what you can and our SIG will continue to do important work for the people we care about – our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students and colleagues.

Here's to a good year!

A Flag Raising

Anthony Ogden, SIT Alumnus

Faculty and students of World Learning's School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont* joined in celebration to raise the "rainbow" flag as a symbol of the SIT commitment to diversity. The rainbow flag now flaps alongside a multitude of other flags from countries around

the world on the front lawn of the school. The flag-raising ceremony was preceded by pro-diversity speeches from members of the schools's many diverse groups, including GLoBe, (Gays, Lesbians or Bisexuals everywhere) and Amnesty International.

About a month prior to the flag raising ceremony, a meeting of the campus Diversity Committee was held to open discussions for seeking an all encompassing and inclusive symbol of diversity. GLoBe faculty advisor, Ryland White proposed the rainbow flag . As a year end salute to diversity, Thomas Lavenir, SIT student and GloBe member, then petitioned the SIT Diversity Education Series Committee suggesting a flag raising ceremony.

On the noon hour of Friday, May 22nd, the ceremony began with an introductory speech on SIT's commitment to diversity and to the rainbow flag. A history of the flag followed.* World Learning President, Judy Hendren Mello and the new SIT President, James R. Cramer presided over the ceremony. The flag was raised with the accompaniment of local bagpiper, Dan Toomey. Not everyone supported the flag raising, however. Though most recognized this event as a great sign of the commitment by World Learning and SIT to diversity, some expressed feelings that the rainbow flag has stood as an important symbol particular to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. The fact that some people feel they have an inherent right to alter that speaks to the kind of privilege that the rainbow flag is standing in opposition to.

Contributions from Thomas Lavenir, Carol Morales, Ryland White, Linda Gobbo, and the Brattleboro Reformer.

* In 1978, Gilbert Baker of San Francisco designed and made a flag with six stripes representing the six colors of the rainbow as a symbol of gay and lesbian community pride. Slowly the flag took hold, offering a colorful and optimistic alternative to the more common pink triangle symbol. Today it is recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers, and is flown in lesbian and gay pride marches worldwide.

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/scotts/bulgarians/rainbow-flag.html>

*The School for International Training (SIT) is the accredited college of World Learning, founded in 1932 as The Experiment in International Living, one of the oldest private, non profit international educational service organizations in the world. To day, SIT is a global leader in the field of language teaching, management of non-profit organizations, community activism, human resource training and development, international educational exchange and sustainable development.

Senator Paul Simon Uses Inclusive Language in NAFSA Address

by Kathleen Sideli

Those fortunate enough to be at Senator Simon's plenary talk at NAFSA's annual business meeting in DC heard a heartwarming anecdote about what international educators can learn from a group of Special Olympian runners with mental retardation. He recounted that when one of the group fell during a race, all the runners stopped to assist the individual and then the group linked arms to complete the race, crossing the finish line together. Senator Simon asked us to contemplate this wonderful image as we stride forward to advance our goals and causes. And when he asked us to imagine such non-competitive cooperation, he specifically included 'those of all sexual orientations' among the varied groups who should be linking arms together. For SIG members in the audience, that spontaneous inclusive comment was more empowering and reassuring than an entire NAFSA session dedicated to our issues.

DC SIG Activities

Kathleen Sideli

NAFSA's Lesbian SIG began announcing its presence at NAFSA's 50th Anniversary conference by having a stack of rainbow-framed promotional flyers available at the hospitality desk in the registration area. In this way conference attendees had a faster introduction to the SIG than is normally the case. This probably accounts for the unprecedented attendance--over 100--at the SIG annual meeting, including many first-timers. Since a crowd that size hadn't been anticipated the room was overflowing and very hot! Nevertheless, the group had an animated meeting where many issues were covered, including a review of the past five years and a brainstorming session to plan for the next five (see minutes enclosed here).

Following the meeting, a few dozen SIG members ambled down to the Circle for a reception. But instead of the planned private terrace party out in the DC humidity, we socialized more cozily in the air-conditioned bar, munching on chips and tuna salad which were on the house (it's a long story). Since generous SIG members have expanded the group's bank account, we guarantee more delectable treats for next year's social event! Those who hadn't yet finished their conversations paraded down the street to a 'close by' French restaurant which must have been almost a mile away. Luckily La Fourchette just happened to have an empty reception room upstairs which accommodated the 22 hungry SIG members who dined on fine food and wine for hours before walking back to the conference hotel.

From reports of various SIG members we understand that a number of small groups of SIG members met socially around the city during the conference. Clearly there is a need for more opportunities for collegial interaction early on in the conference and the '99 planners are already considering a restaurant hop for the SIG in addition to the social get-together and the annual business meeting. Please send us your ideas for

these or other venues. What is clear is that the SIG brings together the most affable, fun-loving and congenial NAFSAns!

A Sort of Gay Success Story

Peter Voeller

A couple of years ago, we had a young student from Russia come to study for a quarter. Studying English was not his strong suit and he didn't return the following quarter. I kept hearing from him over the months, encounters with the 'Russian Mafia' in town, working illegally, living by the airport ... he'd call from time to time for advice on his crisis of the day. Then one day he came in with an older man he'd been living with and announced that he wanted to file for asylum based on sexual orientation. This news widened my eyes in that I had no clue that he might be gay. I gave him the information I had on the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force and the names of some decent lawyers who might be willing to take on his case.

Over the next few months, I was able to help by getting a letter from his family translated into English for use in his appeal and find him a translator who could help during the hearing. His family had suffered greatly because of their son's perceived sexual orientation. His grandfather suffered a heart attack after being beat up and his father lost one eye in a similar bashing. Feces were smeared on their house and anti-gay graffiti written on the walls. It seems that the family sent him to the U.S. as a last resort that he could find a life here .

The student found himself in a couple of unhealthy living situations and asked me where he could meet some decent people. I suggested Gay Bingo, a local nonalcoholic, no-bar social event which has become quite popular. After that, things started to look up for him. The next thing I knew, he was calling saying he'd met someone nice and was in love.

Later, he had his hearing and the lawyers believed that it had gone well and he had a good chance of getting the asylum. He marched with the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force in Seattle's June Gay Pride Parade with his new partner, carrying a big ole American flag.

In July, he had a commitment ceremony with his new partner, with my partner and I attending and me being one of the witnesses to sign the document. He is currently having a background check in both countries, which is the final step to being granted asylum. It has been an interesting series of events and the outcome is much more positive than I would have dreamed at various points along the way. It really is a success story of sorts for one young gay man in the United States.

Transgendered in the News

by Peter Voeller

I just read an article in the recent edition of Time magazine on transgender issues, which confirmed the general SIG impression that transgender referred only to cross dressers and future transsexuals. "Was I off base?" I asked myself, in promoting 't ransgender' as an all encompassing term, obviously whose time had not yet come. Fortunately, Judy Osborne, the self-identified transgender person on the Seattle Police Chief's Sexual Minorities Community Advisory Board, sent out the following article, whi ch I present for your more balanced reading pleasure.

Transgendered Like Me

by Gabriel Rotello

From the Advocate, December 10, 1996. Copyright 1996 by Liberation Publications Inc. Reprinted with permission.

Editor's Note: Photo not included.

TAKE A LOOK AT THE PICTURE ON THIS PAGE. Do I look transgendered? By the standard definition of that term, probably not. Yet I increasingly believe that I am transgendered. What's more, I believe that if you are lesbian or gay or bisexual, you are too. And I believe that an emerging definition of all gay people as transgendered is the wave of the future.

This idea stems in large part from the growing body of research into the "cause" of sexual orientation. The jury is still out on whether that cause is biological or environmental or both or neither, but this much can be said: Researchers have found th at the heterosexual majority and gay people differ in a key respect. Most heterosexuals tend to feel and act and desire and respond and present themselves to the world in a fairly "sex-typical" way pretty much all-male or all-female. Gay people, on the ot her hand, exhibit a whole range of "sex-atypical" characteristics, meaning characteristics that are most commonly associated with the opposite sex, at least among the heterosexual majority. These traits obviously include our attraction to members of the s ame sex, but they also include our inner feelings of maleness or femaleness, our outward appearance as butch or femme, the unconscious way we speak and move, even the way we throw a ball or change a fire.

For some reason most gay people exhibit sex atypical traits most dearly when they are very young. Many gay boys, for example the vast majority in some studies, report that they identified strongly with girls when they were very small. Some even though t of

themselves as more female than male. The opposite seems true for most lesbians. As we grow older these feelings tend to subside, at least for many of us, so that as adults the only major sex atypical trait that we retain is our sexual orientation. But not for everybody. Some of us grow up to be mannish women or femme men. Some become occasional cross-dressers or drag kings or queens. Some become transgenderists (people who live full-time as the opposite gender without desiring surgery) or pre- or post-operative transsexuals. Researchers now think that this is all connected, that all gay and transgendered people occupy places on a continuum between the two main genders. At one extreme are masculine gay men and feminine lesbians, whose only obvious sex-atypical trait is their sexual orientation. At the other extreme are people who are so gender-atypical in so many ways that some choose to have an operation to bring the body in line with the soul. But what distinguishes us is that we all, to some degree or another, have major traits that place us somewhere between the two primary genders. In that sense we're all transgendered.

Not only does this idea offer a more expansive definition of what we really are, but it also better explains why we are oppressed. Homophobes don't merely hate us because of how we make love. They hate how we make love because it violates our expected gender roles. Really, we are hated for gender transgression. When I was 10 and was taunted for throwing a ball "like a girl," I don't think those school-yard bullies suspected me of actually sleeping with men. They bashed me for not being boy enough. That goes for almost all of us. Whether we face prejudice for being too butch or too femme or for being cross-dressers or androgynes or for being perceived as gay or lesbian, we are all ultimately disliked for the same basic reason: transgressing our expected gender roles. Sexual transgression in the bedroom is just one aspect of that, although a very important one. So just as all gays are in a basic sense transgendered, all homophobes are first and foremost "transphobes."

This new understanding is revolutionizing researchers' conception of sexual orientation as just one aspect of a larger kind of difference. And I believe that if we're smart, it could revolutionize the way we look at ourselves, both as individuals and as a movement. The modern gay world was born out of a 19th-century psychological concept, namely, that some people -- "homosexuals" -- are attracted to members of the same sex. We accepted that limited idea and built our identities and our movement around it. We thought of sexual desire as the basis of our identity a basis that leads to endless fragmentation based upon what, exactly, you desire: Lesbian. Gay. Bi. Trans. Whatever.

Now, however, late-20th-century research has produced a new concept: that the root of our difference is not merely how we make love but the larger fact that we exist between the two genders in a variety of ways, some sexual and some not. This idea has immense implications because if the ultimate cause of our oppression is gender transgression, then shouldn't it also be the focus of our identities and our movement? Shouldn't we stop being the les-bi-gay-trans-whatever movement, with a new syllable added every few years, and simply become the trans movement?

I think we should. And ultimately, I believe we will. Once we stop thinking of ourselves as oppressed by what we do in bed and start thinking of ourselves as oppressed because we occupy a space between genders, the sexual differences between us will fade into unimportance, and our common humanity will emerge into the light. If that's not a higher form of liberation. I don't know what is.

Europerspectives

Daniel Soto Mayorga

Recently, I returned from Europe where I had spent a month traveling around the continent as an envoy of Amnesty International Members for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, U.S.A. We are planning our first-ever meeting of all the A.I.M.L.G.C. groups from around the world for this November in London, and I was doing some of the preliminary leg work. In the process, I met with representatives of GLBT organizations in Finland, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and The Netherlands.

One of the high points of this trip took place in Spain. Amnesty International, España has developed a good working relationship with Fundación Triángulo, a GLBT human rights organization that is not directly associated with A.I. Our latest campaign at Amnesty is called Defending the Defenders. It is a general action to protest the mistreatment of human rights workers within their home countries. Fundación Triángulo has joined A.I. wholeheartedly in this effort.

Among the numerous situations targeted by this campaign are those of Pedro Montenegro and Marcelo Nascimento, two gay activists in Brazil, and Tsitsi Tiripano, a lesbian from Zimbabwe.

Montenegro and Nascimento received death threats in Brazil after calling for police to investigate the murders of two gay men and one transvestite. The activists were protesting widespread ill-treatment and police killings of people considered to be "sexual minorities." Tsitsi Tiripano was arrested in Zimbabwe in connection with the banning of the information table of Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (G.A.L.Z.) at an international human rights book fair in 1996. The G.A.L.Z. table was destroyed by homophobic attendees at the fair who were led by a government official. This incident directly preceded President Robert Mugabe's infamous statement about gays and lesbians being "lower than dog and pigs."

During my visit to Madrid in May, Fundación Triángulo organized a press conference to which members of the local and international press were invited. Representatives from all political factions of the Spanish parliament also made appearances at this press conference to demonstrate their solidarity in condemning violence against gay and

lesbian people the world over. Everyone signed postal cards, addressed to the governments of Brazil and Zimbabwe, protesting the treatment of Montenegro, Nascimento, and Tiripano. In a symbolic gesture, we then all marched together to a nearby street corner and deposited our cards in a mailbox as the cameras of news photographers flashed away.

Two days later a very positive story, about Amnesty International and Fundación Triángulo, appeared in El País, the largest circulating daily newspaper in the Spanish-speaking world!

Our final destination was Amsterdam, gay capital of Europe. There I met with one of the organizers of Gay Games '98, an event that will be hosted by Amsterdam this August. The theme of the games this year is Human Rights. Amnesty, Holland has produced a video version of the book "Breaking the Silence" (a report, first published by Amnesty, U.S.A., about the state of human rights abuses against lesbians and gays around the world). The video will be distributed during the games, and is available in Dutch, German, English and Spanish. The organizers of Gay Games '98 expect some fifty thousand gay and lesbian spectators to visit the city in addition to seven thousand participants. Needless to say, the event promises to be festive.

Amsterdam is a very beautiful place, with its meandering canals and arched bridges, quaintly narrow cobbled streets and majestic Dutch architecture dating from the 15th century. But, it is the sense of near total equality and complete freedom, which gay and lesbian people have there, that makes it the serene mecca of the queer universe.

New Reference Book Available

By Susan Carty

The Chair of NASPA's GLBT Network, Ronni L. Sanlo of the University of California, Los Angeles, has a new book out entitled, *Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender College Students A Handbook for Faculty and Administrators*, available from Greenwood Press (7/98), 488 pages.

NASPA is the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and their GLBT Issues Network's website can be found at <http://www.naspa.org/communities/kc/community.cfm?kcid=7>.

NASPA's press release from their web site is copied below:

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students are on our campuses. They are either discovering their orientations while in our institutions or arriving with full clarity about their sexual identities. It is difficult to provide the attention these students need if we do not understand the issues or how to address them. This handbook is a guide to

providing services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. It is for all faculty and administrators, especially those who may struggle personally with understanding non-heterosexual identities, who wish to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students. Non-heterosexual faculty and staff may also find this work useful as they attempt to discover themselves in academic and educational literature.

Each section of this handbook presents an area in which questions usually arise. Chapters within the sections dissect specific issues and, where appropriate, offer recommendations for change. Some of those areas include: identity development theories; residence halls; career planning; health and counseling centers; HIV/AIDS; students with disabilities; same-sex dating and domestic violence; athletics; fraternities; student leadership; speakers' bureaus and safe zone programs; commuter schools and church-related institutions; and Internet resources.

Landmark Congressional Briefing Addresses Sexual Orientation & Human Rights

compiled by Kathleen Sideli

In a precedent-setting meeting, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and the office of Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA) hosted a briefing on sexual orientation and international human rights on Thursday, August 6, in the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, DC.

Representatives of Amnesty International (AI) and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), as well as other organizations, testified. The briefing also heard testimony from persons who have survived human rights violations inflicted because of their sexual orientation.

Before the hearing Congressman Tom Lantos said that, "This briefing represents the first time that the US Congress will address violations grounded in sexual identity. It is imperative that the US government and human rights activists recognize that these violations fall squarely within the purview of international human rights law." Among members of the US House of Representatives who supported the briefing were Barney Frank (D-MA), William Delahunt (D-MA), and Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

Documentation from around the world, assembled by both Amnesty International and IGLHRC, provides evidence that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people face abuses including arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, rape, torture, extortion and even execution. In many countries, their rights to free expression, free association and assembly are restricted or denied by law.

Cynthia Rothschild, Co-Chair of Amnesty International Members for Lesbian and Gay Concerns stated that “social cleansing through death squad killing, stoning and forced pregnancy are only a few of the myriad violations lesbians, gay men and transgender people face.”

“While women and men are often targeted in different ways because of their different abilities to resist familial and societal discrimination and because of unequal access to public space, human rights violations are frequently directed toward all those who defy societal gender and sexuality ‘norms,’” Rothschild continued. “Governments must be made aware of and held accountable for these abuses taking place within their borders. All of these practices are unacceptable, in violation of international law and must be stopped.”

Rothschild stated that some of the more flagrant human rights violations, gay, bisexual and transgender people face include abuses in the following three general, and sometimes overlapping, categories: 1) rights to physical and mental integrity, 2) freedom of association and expression, 3) discriminatory laws and discriminatory application of laws. She cited a series of horrific examples of these abuses in a number of countries including Afghanistan, Peru, US, Uganda, China and Romania.

Scott Long, Advocacy Coordinator of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), said, “Local gay, lesbian, and transgender communities have faced, fought, and in some cases conquered state repression and government indifference in country after country around the world. Our organization has been there with them. Over the last decade, the international human-rights community has begun to mobilize in response to these abuses. We are gratified that the US Congress has also taken notice.”

“In this fiftieth year after the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” said Long, “it’s time the US recognized persecution based on sexual orientation as an assault on basic liberties.”

In closing Scott Long asked the chairman and members of the Caucus to join him and...

- Insist that the United States Government work for an end to discrimination, persecution, and abuse based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status, around the globe.
- Insist that the US State Department specifically monitor sexual orientation as a category in its yearly review of countries’ human rights records.
- Insist that public officials, in law enforcement and elsewhere, across the United States be trained in human rights and in issues surrounding sexual orientation; and insist that in US programs to promote human rights abroad, sexual orientation be recognized as a category and component.

- Insist that, as one first step toward creating a culture of non-discrimination in this country, states repeal their remaining sodomy laws; and insist that bills before this current Congress which expressly and invidiously target groups based on sexual orientation be defeated, as they deserve.
- Insist that the US ratify human rights covenants it has so far refused to endorse, including the Convention on the Right of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; for it is sheer hypocrisy for us to hold others to noble promises that we have not even made ourselves.

We ask you to speak out, because silence is deadly. I would like to close by quoting the lines of a Hungarian poet, who was gay--and who suffered from that imposed silence, silence about the self, that I have spoken about here. Mr. Lantos will not mind if I cite him first in Hungarian:

Akik a természetet felnek, természetellenesnek neveznek bennünket. De eygedul a hallgastas természetellenes.

'Those who despise nature call us unnatural. But silence is the only unnatural act.'

NOTE: The 11 pages of testimony are available through Thomas Legislative Information on the Internet at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. From the main page select 'Congressional Record Text: 105th (1997-98)', search on "Lantos and Sexual Orientation" and then click on (Intl Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation, August 7, 1998")

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Rainbow Pride and Related Symbols

Compiled By Susan Carty

The rainbow flag has become the easily-recognized colors of pride for the gay community. The multicultural symbolism of the rainbow is nothing new -- Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition also embraces the rainbow as a symbol of that political movement. The rainbow also plays a part in many myths and stories related to gender and sexuality issues in Greek, Native American, African, and other cultures.

Use of the rainbow flag by the gay community began in 1978 when it first appeared in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. Borrowing symbolism from the hippie movement and black civil rights groups, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker d

designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used year after year. Baker and thirty volunteers hand-stitched and hand-dyed two huge prototype flags for the parade. The flags had eight stripes, each color representing a component of the community: hot pink for sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sun, green for nature, turquoise for art, indigo for harmony, and violet for spirit.

The next year Baker approached San Francisco Paramount Flag Company to mass-produce rainbow flags for the 1979 parade. Due to production constraints -- such as the fact that hot pink was not a commercially-available color -- pink and turquoise were removed from the design, and royal blue replaced indigo. This six-color version spread from San Francisco to other cities, and soon became the widely-known symbol of gay pride and diversity it is today. It is even officially recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers. In 1994, a huge 30-foot-wide by one-mile-long rainbow flag was carried by 10,000 people in New York's Stonewall 25 Parade.

The rainbow flag has inspired a wide variety of related symbols, such as freedom rings and other accessories. There are plenty of variations of the flag, including versions with a blue field of stars reminiscent of the American Stars and Stripes and versions with superimposed lambdas, pink triangles, or other symbols.

This information has been reprinted from the Rainbow Icon Archive of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Symbols of Pride and Community web site at www.enqueue.com/ria/.