



Out On Campus

A Publication of The Committee On Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Concerns

Issue #8, Fall 2005

Gay! Fine by Me?

Coinciding with this year's celebration of Diversity Week at RIC and the nationally recognized "Coming Out Day" on October 11th, this semester's Out On Campus Newsletter asks the question, "Gay! Fine by me at RIC?" Is identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender a taboo on our campus and if so, why? We hope that this questioning in conjunction with the "Gay? Fine By Me!" T-shirt project starting on Wednesday, October 5th, will lead to a greater dialogue amongst our campus population about LGBT concerns and issues here at Rhode Island College. Later in the newsletter you will see the answers members of our committee had when posing the question to ourselves. Now what about you?

Do Ask, Do Tell

Jan Park

I am ready to take on the culture wars. It took me almost a year to come back fighting after the last election, but it's better late than never. In this past year, I have become accustomed to answering the question, "Did you get married?" It's a question I never in my life imagined anyone would ever be asking me. I found ways to answer, depending on who was asking, so as to further the cause of same-sex marriage rights. I also found that, unlike earlier, I slipped into more conversations on how many dozen years I'd been in a partnered relationship-my not-so-subtle way of furthering the cause. I did this a lot at a recent family wedding. I have come to recognize that the "same sex marriage issue" backlash is a great opportunity to change minds. And my own mind has been changed. I believe that one does not need the right to marry to be legitimized as an LGBT partnered person; however, with the option open, there is surge in pride and energy I've witnessed in my friends and experienced personally that's worth a lot. One day we will have federal laws that support civil rights for LGBT people. That's the day I'll get married.

Another change that having the right to marry has brought to my psyche is a new fervor about "outness." MTV thinks this is a good idea too. A recent request came across the e-mail that they are organizing a new ad campaign to promote role models of long term gay and lesbian couples, so that young people can see life as normal for lesbian and gay families. Young people are the future bearers of the civil rights standard for LGBT people, so all the pollsters tell us. I say, let's usher in a new era, the faster the better. For too long, the closet has been a necessary safety zone, and remains so for too many people today. Here at RIC, the silence is still deadly. If all people would talk about their positive attitudes about LGBT people, we could change a lot about how those students feel about our campus. The time has come for a new approach, "Do ask, do tell."

This fall we hope to begin a "Gay? fine by me," tee shirt drive. We hope some brave people will wear the shirts and that this will open dialogue about the issues of civil marriage and civil rights; violence against LGBT people; job, housing, and

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Hate-Speak and Hate-Violence a Focus This Fall

By Mary Ball Howkins

RIC alumna Dr. Lelia de Andrade will give the keynote address at the lunch session of this fall's Promising Practices conference here at the College. The theme of this year's conference, on Saturday, November 5th, is How Safe Are We? Preventing Hate Crime in Our Schools. Dr. de Andrade is Associate Director of the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence (CPHV) at the University of Southern Maine. She has a Ph.D. in sociology with a specialization in issues related to race, class, gender and immigration.

In a recent workshop that she co-lead, Dr. de Andrade used interactive exercises to examine the impact of slurs and "jokes" directed at traditionally targeted groups on a campus. Workshop participants were guided in developing practical skills needed for intervening when degrading language, jokes and slurs are being used.

Promising Practices is a conference aimed at supporting public school teachers and students in teacher-training in discovering ways to make their curricula more inclusive of issues and minority populations related to sexuality, race, class, gender, religion and ethnicity, and to present

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- Mz. Direction Speaks!

Out On Campus is produced to further the educational mission of Rhode Island College and support all members of our community. Direct all inquiries to our email address:
OutOnCampus@hotmail.com

The Objectives of the RIC Safe Zone Program

Submitted by Aaron Bruce

- To create a campus culture that is more welcoming and affirming of LGBT students.
- To increase the visibility of LGBT students and their concerns.
- To increase campus awareness of the issues facing LGBT students.
- To provide safe havens for LGBT students.
- To demonstrate support for LGBT issues and students.
- To create a supportive network of allies.

This program is highly recommended and encouraged for:

- Personnel who staff a front office and regularly greet and interact with students.
- Campus Life/Student Affairs staff.
- College Deans, Directors, and Chairs.
- Housing and Residential Life Staff
- Campus Police Staff and Officers.

The proposed RIC Safe Zone process:

1. Interested Faculty, Staff, Administrators and RAs will be able to inquire about obtaining a sticker from the Unity Center.
2. The person will then receive a booklet explaining important vocabulary, resources and support contacts. It is important that each person reviews the material before obtaining a sticker.
3. The person must then return to the Unity Center to briefly discuss the commitment related to being an ally. (confidentiality, support, social implications, etc.)

The In's & Out's Of A "Safe Zone"

Adapted from <http://www.dso.iastate.edu/lgbtss/safezone/howto.html> by Mike Gorman

What May I Expect?

As a result of posting a Safe Zone sticker or window cling:

- ▼ You may find that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, faculty, and staff censor their speech less, providing a more genuine exchange with you.
- ▼ You may find that students, faculty, and staff will be more at ease and will anticipate a non-judgmental atmosphere in your workplace.
- ▼ You may never notice a difference in the interactions you have with students, faculty, and staff, but you will make a difference.
- ▼ You will make a personal contribution to improving RIC's campus environment and the lives of its community members.

How To Be a "Safe Zone"

There are many things that you can do to make you and your workspace feel like a Safe Zone for LGBT students and colleagues.

Here are some of our suggestions:

- ▼ Believe that our campus is enriched and enlivened by the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.
- ▼ Be aware of the presence of LGBT students, faculty, and staff and be willing to engage in genuine dialog and interaction.
- ▼ Be willing to discuss issues impacting LGBT people's lives in a non-judgmental manner.
- ▼ Know LGBT resources and be willing to refer students to support and information resources on campus and in the community.
- ▼ Comfortably use inclusive language, avoid stereotyping, and do not assume everyone is heterosexual.
- ▼ Maintain confidentiality.

What Else Can I Do

- ▼ Acquaint yourself with lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders. Learn more about LGBT culture by reading books, making friends, attending functions, and celebrating!
- ▼ Challenge homophobia and heterosexism (e.g. remarks, jokes, behaviors, cartoons, language, etc.)
- ▼ Continue to educate yourself about the "coming out" process.



**Get Involved
Now!
Get Your
Sticker at
the Unity
Center!**

healthcare concerns; and finally how we are creating safe spaces for students in all our schools to feel supported for who they or their parents or family members are. In a learning environment we have to ask questions, and no question is a dumb question. We have to tell the truth about diversity and work together to create a safe community that supports all our diversity.

those issues and groups in a positive light. As our public and post-secondary students become more diverse, and the pressures of a post 9/11 society and global culture become more emphatic, the conference hopes to examine the persistence of tensions among diverse groups and explore strategies for moving toward achieving greater equity and more effective education for all.

Common Ground

Listed Below are common words and phrases associated with members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community and their supports. (Definitions adapted from listing at <http://www.hrc.org>)

Homosexual: A person who is emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to a person of the same sex.

Gay: A common and acceptable term for male homosexuals, but also used when referring to both men and women.

Lesbian: A common and acceptable term for female homosexuals.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to both men and women.

Transgender: An umbrella term for individuals who blur the lines of traditional gender expression. It sometimes refers to crossdressers and transsexuals. It also reflects recent scholarship which suggests gender to be socially constructed. Transgendered individuals recognize the social construction of their genders and thus do not fit neatly within societally-prescribed gender roles determined by biological sex.

Queer: In the past, this term was a derogatory word for gay men and lesbians. It has been reclaimed by more radical LGBT activists during the 1980s and used in the slogans of ACT UP and Queer Nation (We're here, we're queer, get used to it!). Considered a more inclusive term than gay, queer also sometimes refers to a more radical and confrontational type of activism.

Heterosexual: A person who is emotionally, physically and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex.

Homophobia: The irrational fear of homosexuals, homosexuality or any behavior, belief or attitude of self or others which does not conform to rigid sex and gender-role stereotypes. The extreme behavior of homophobia is violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons.

Heterosexism: Evidenced by the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. The systematic oppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons that is directly linked to sexism.

Internalized Oppression: The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate myths and stereotypes applied to the group.

Ally: Any non-lesbian, non-gay, non-bisexual or non-transgendered person whose attitudes and behavior are both anti-homophobic and anti-heterosexist and who works toward combating homophobia and heterosexism on a personal and professional level.

Coming Out: To publicly declare and affirm one's homosexuality to oneself or to others.

In the Closet: To hide one's homosexuality in order to maintain one's job, housing situation, friends, family or in some other way to survive life in a heterosexist culture. Many LGBT persons are out in some circumstances, but closeted in others.

Making Schools Safer For All – GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educator’s Network)

By Jan Park, Ed.D.

If you are an education student reading this, you know how hard it is preparing to go into the noble profession of teaching. There are many skills you will develop as you prepare for the classroom. GLSEN is a national organization dedicated to creating safe educational environments for all, by addressing anti-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) bias in schools for all age levels. This occurs in many ways, from confronting name calling, to creating student clubs, as well as teaching about LGBT issues for all staff and developing age-appropriate curricula for students.


Below are the assumptions and goals that are included in training materials available for people interested in this work, quoted directly from the training manual. To learn more about the organization or order training materials (GLSEN Lunchbox 2, revised edition, 2004), contact: GLSEN National Headquarters, 121 West 27 Street, Suite 804, New York, NY 10001, (212) 727-0135.

Assumptions

1. Homophobia and heterosexism are pervasive forms of oppression that have devastating consequences for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and all people.
2. Silence and invisibility are insidious perpetrators of homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism. Neutrality about these issues is not a benign act.
3. Homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and all forms of oppression are societal problems for which we are all responsible. Students, families, educators, and all community members have a collective obligation to redress the effects of bigotry.
4. Hatred and prejudice are not predilections or innate tendencies. They are learned behaviors and, as such, can be unlearned through consistent exposure to, and accurate information about LGBT and all people.
5. Academic growth is not the sole tenet of public education. As community agencies, schools are vehicles for social, moral, and ethical learning as well. Curricula that instill democratic values are appropriate and essential.
6. Personal beliefs influence professional behavior and make necessary staff trainings that enable individuals to explore their understandings about LGBT people and the ways in which these understandings impact upon their students and classrooms.
7. Homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism are learned and expressed early on. The early childhood classroom is therefore an appropriate and necessary setting in which to begin the dialogue about LGBT issues.
8. Though largely silenced, the contributions of LGBT people throughout history have made a tremendous impact upon our society and are inseparably interwoven into the fabric of American life.
9. All human beings desire and deserve recognition and validation for themselves and for those about whom they care. This affirmation should be free from judgment driven by categorical or prejudicial thinking.

Goals

1. To provide information and support to actual and perceived LGBT students, families, school staff, and others affected by homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism.
2. To provide strategies for breaking the silence around LGBT issues and a vehicle for becoming more outspoken.
3. To help participants explore the interconnections ,among all forms of oppression and their relationships to these oppressions; to encourage participants to assume an accountable stance within their communities in relation to equity issues.
4. To provide basic and accurate information about the lives and unique needs of LGBT people and their families, which allow participants to move beyond myths and stereotypes and toward truth.
5. To embed anti-bias education within the larger school program and foster the development of curricula and policies that make schools safe and affirming places for LGBT and all students.
6. To provide tools and resources that will allow faculty and staff to become informed and empowered with regard to LGBT issues.
7. To help educators determine age-appropriate and developmentally responsible ways to address LGBT issues at all grade levels.
8. To identify resources that highlight the contributions of LGBT people throughout history and offer strategies for integrating this information into classroom curricula and discussions.
9. To inspire equitable and inclusive practices which acknowledge and affirm all members of the school community.



*No one is free
when others
are oppressed.
(anon)*

A Valued Adam's Library Resource, One Of The Most Challenged Books Of The Last Decade, And An Invitation To Hear A Remarkable Author And Artist!

By Elizabeth H. Rowell

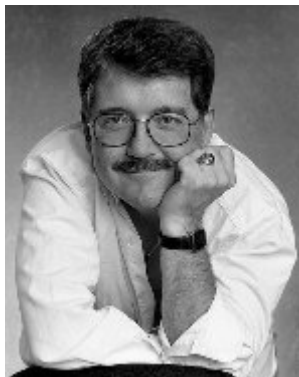
Several years ago Adams library started a collection of "Gay Friendly" picture books for young children along with some additional relevant books for older students, parents, and teachers to be placed in Reserve under my name (Rowell) that would be available for use by students, faculty, and researchers. As there are less than 100 Gay Friendly picture books and the shelf life for most is very limited, accumulating these books has been a challenge for the dedicated Adams Library Staff. Today RIC has one of the most extensive and expanding compilations of these books in the state.

To celebrate the Gay Friendly book collection with the help of funding from the College Lecture Committee, Michael Willhoite who wrote one of the first brightly colored gay friendly picture books and the most controversial picture book for young children, *Daddy's Roommate* (1991), will be coming to RIC to speak about his works. On the back leaf of the tenth anniversary edition, Willhoite states that he created it to provide a simple, fun book for a previously ignored audience: the children of gay parents. This book is the story of a young boy whose dad and mom are still good friends after they divorce and the dad's roommate, Frank, moves in. However, several illustrations which show the two men expressing affection to each other clearly indicate that Frank and Dad are more than just roommates. This book was denounced on the floor of the U. S. Senate and is number two on the ALA list of the 100 most frequently challenged books of the last decade. Despite or perhaps as a result of censorship, burning, theft, defacement, and campaigns to remove it from libraries, this cleverly illustrated book about a youngster's loving family is still readily available. Michael Willhoite's "sequel" to *Daddy's Roommate*, *Daddy Wedding* (1996) was also the first children's picture book that showed a gay couple having a "wedding" ceremony complete with Daddy's young son as the best man. It was written and published before some local, state, and other national governments recognized gay and lesbian weddings. Interestingly, *Daddy's Wedding* which shows the happiness of Frank, Daddy, and their best man and how friends and family including the ex-wife and her new husband attend the joyful ceremony, has not met with as many challenges as *Daddy's Roommate*. However, *Daddy's Wedding* is difficult to locate and currently used copies start at \$50.00.

Michael Willhoite is a talented and recognized artist and author as well as an engaging speaker. Please take advantage of the opportunity to celebrate Adam's library special collection of "gay friendly" picture books and hear this remarkable gentleman speak about his works.

Help celebrate a special Rhode Island College resource and hear **Michael Willhoite** speak about his life and work as an author, illustrator and creator of the second most frequently challenged book of the last decade - his picture book for young children, *Daddy's Roommate!*

DATE: 5pm, 4/6/05



Transgender Author Claudine Griggs to speak at RIC on 10/11

Claudine Griggs, author of *Journal of a Sex Change* and S/he will be speaking to Professor Paley's Gay and Lesbian Literature class (ENGL 350.01) in Craig-Lee 251 on Tuesday, October 11 from 2-3:20 p.m. This event is sponsored by the College Lectures Committee and open to the RIC community.

For more info contact:
Karen Paley
kpaley@ric.edu
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Out On The Web?



Thanks to the support of the Unity Center and their website, Out On Campus has a space on the net! Check out the Unity Center site for more info.
[Http://www.ric.edu/unitycenter/](http://www.ric.edu/unitycenter/)

Straight Talk From Mz. Direction

Mz. Direction is the loving child of a dancing queen and a well known television personality. Her advice is by no means the final word on a topic in any other world but her own. She speaks from her heart and recently collagened lips. Holding a degree from the school of hard knocks, Mz. Direction will do her best to answer your "queeries."



Dear Mz. Direction,

Have you seen all the people wearing the "Gay? Fine by me" T-shirts on campus??? Who knew there were so many gays and lesbians at RIC!!!

Yours truly,
Shirtless Stan

My dear Stan,

Where do I begin? First of all, you seem to have missed the point of the "Gay? Fine by me" T-Shirt project entirely. The individuals wearing the gorgeous shirts, which they got for free by the way (sponsored by the Unity Center & Rainbow Alliance), are showing their support for the members of the LGBT community here at RIC. Are some of them gay themselves? Probably. Are they all gay? Hmm... now what does Mz. Direction say about making assumptions? You make an... well, I am sure you know the saying!

So Stan, as you obviously do support the LGBT community because you have paid enough attention to this newsletter to know who I am, I think you need to march on down to the Unity Center and get yourself a shirt of your own! Don't forget to wear it on National Coming Out Day, October 11th! Mz. Direction is having several of the shirts sewn together into a ball gown by those fun contestants on The Apprentice Martha Stewart. Let's see if Martha's wannabees can meet my high standards!

"Gay! Fine by me" @ RIC : The Editorial Board Responds...

College recruiting practices are not so fine since the Admission's diversity brochure defines diversity narrowly. It presents no administrative policy or efforts to make the campus both safe and welcoming for LGBT people.

Mary Ball Howkins

Gay? Fine by the Unity Center. As the multicultural center at RIC we recognize and support all students, faculty, and staff. Our efforts to support the GLBT community continue to grow each day. I encourage everyone to join in the evolution of a supporting, safe, and culturally enriching campus.

**Aaron Bruce
Director of the Unity Center**

At RIC, fine to be gay? Acceptance of LGBT people and issues at RIC is elusive. As a community we struggle to come together, sometimes focusing on issues of gender, race, ethnicity, LGBT concerns, or disability, precariously one on top of or next to the other. It sometimes feels like a house of cards at risk of being blown down. As a campus we have a significant way to go to become competent about multicultural issues, but my sense is there are people on the journey.

Anonymous staff member.

I think it depends upon who you ask. As in most situations there are levels to privilege on a college campus like RIC. For myself as a staff person, I do feel completely supported as a gay man. Now would a new student with no connections in the community give the same answer? Probably not. I think as administrators, staff and faculty we have a responsibility to truly reach out to and support the LGBT students on campus so that they too can feel comfortable in this, their home. One way to do so is to not shy away from discussing the issues of LGBT acceptance with ALL of our students regardless of whether they have identified themselves as gay or not. Students need that support to become more tolerant members of society.

Mike Gorman

Out On Campus Editorial Board:

**Brian Baker, Mildred Bates, Wendy Becker, Ellen Bigler, Lesley Bogad,
Aaron Bruce, Mike Gorman, Mary Ball Howkins, Diane Martell, Jan
Park, Elizabeth Rowell, Joe Sciuilli, Daniel Scott**

Want to join us?

Email us at Outoncampus@hotmail.com