



# Out On Campus

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

Volume 1, 2nd Edition

Fall 2002

## “Seeing Queerly”

GLBT Representation in the Media

By Lesley Bogad

Popular cultural representations of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered bring the queer community into the public imagination. Through their presence, and perhaps even more so through their absence, such images — in music, television, film, advertising and the like — offer audiences of all gender identities and sexual orientations a lens through which we come to think about ourselves. While some may dismiss popular culture as mere entertainment — ‘it’s just a movie!’ — the educative value of such cultural texts is evidenced in mainstream ideas about who/what is “normal,” “right,” and “good.” The scarcity of (positive, complex) images of the GLBT community has contributed to the marginalization and alienation of all things queer.

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## A Day To Come Out

An Editorial From The Committee

Created in the wake of the Oct. 11, 1987 March on Washington, National Coming Out Day was developed by Rob Eichberg and Jean O’Leary to commemorate that signal event in the history of American social change and to provide a way for people to renew their commitment to talking about their lives. In the fifteen years since the first National Coming Out Day, many possible perspectives on the day have emerged: it is a day to tell our family members or friends that we are gay; it’s a day to celebrate our rights as citizens; it’s a day for non-gay people to support their gay friends; it’s a day for everyone to acknowledge how important honesty and diversity are to them.

In fact, this multiplicity of meanings for National Coming Out Day -- far from being a flaw -- is perhaps the day’s greatest asset. The day itself points to the complexity and importance of each individual life. How can one day mean so many different things to so many different people? It can because National Coming Out Day takes its shape from every person who celebrates it. How can there be one day for a process that never ends? There can’t.

That’s the point. Coming Out Day only hints at what it is

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## “Doing Her Part”

Jan Park Interviews An Ally, Elizabeth Rowell

My assignment for this newsletter was to interview an “ally,” someone like yourself who is committed to the work of creating change around LGBT issues. I have had the privilege of learning about some of your wonderful work as an educator, and efforts you have made to include diversity concerns in your courses for teachers. Let’s begin by introducing you for those who may not know you.

What is your position?

*Professor, Early Childhood Education in the Elementary Education department.*

What are some of the roles you play at the college?

*I teach a number of graduate and undergraduate early childhood courses, and supervise student teachers. I currently am a member of various committees including: The Committee On Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Concerns, Dialog on Diversity, Academic Standing, FSEHD Professional*

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## Reflections On “Coming Out”

The Committee on LGBT Concerns shares their personal feelings about “Coming Out” throughout this issue of the newsletter. Some members speak to the experience of coming out, others reflect on what the idea of coming out means to them.

Out On Campus Editorial Board:  
**Brian Baker, Mildred Bates, Lesley Bogad, Paola Ferrario, Mike Gorman, Mary Ball Howkins, Jan Park, Liz Rowell, Daniel Scott**

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

# MS. CLAIRE VOYANT RESPONDS...

*Ms. Claire Voyant is a free thinker with a quick wit and open mind. We are glad to welcome her advice column to the "Out On Campus" newsletter. Her responses are from the heart.*

**My older brother is getting married in three weeks and my mother doesn't want me to bring my partner to the wedding so as not to rock the boat with the new in-laws. Should I go along with what she asks for the sake of the family image?**

Parents often want the wedding of their children to be what they the parents wish and not what their sons and daughters are happy and comfortable with. I believe that only your brother and his wife have the right to decide whom to invite or not to invite to their wedding. It's their day... So ignore Mom!

Hopefully your brother knows better than telling you not to bring your partner to the wedding. If your brother had asked you to go to the wedding alone, that would constitute a much more complicated and larger set of problems.

Let's go back to your specific situation: Your in-laws are going to become, for better or worse, your relatives in the very near future, and it is better not to give them the chance to believe that you are or could be heterosexual and single (we don't know if there is a chronic match maker on that side of the family). It is also better not to give them the chance to believe that your family will be closeting one of its members (although this is exactly what your mom is trying to do) or that homophobia is okay in your family. Your future in-laws too are encountering a new family culture; let it be one supportive of people who are LGBT.

Anyway, in this day and age your being gay is not going to dent the family image. Just bring your partner along and follow basic wedding rules: show up on time and be properly dressed, bring a nice present, do not get drunk or

burp at the table, do not engage in political discussion and when the moment comes, toast your brother as the best brother that ever lived. That should endear you to the in-laws and save the family honor, but if your parents still think that you shouldn't have gone to the wedding with your companion, they can take back the dowry and go back to the 19th century!

To conclude, let me say that for your mother's sake, you shouldn't push it, should avoid French kissing and highly choreographed sensual Tangos--most of the heterosexual world is not ready for that yet...and, after all, you want Mom to have a little bit of fun!

**My new suite-mate is really uncomfortable living with a gay person in his residence hall. Any advice on how to make him feel more comfortable?**

I would need to know what your room-mate means by "uncomfortable" and what is the source of his discomfort. I have known people that were uncomfortable around gay people because they erroneously believed they had never met any and therefore they assumed that they wouldn't know how to behave. I have also met people that were uncomfortable around people who are gay because of deeply held religious beliefs or because of prejudice that had been passed on for generations. These different situations require slightly different approaches. Get your room-mate to talk more about his feelings and let me know what he says. I'll be glad to give suggestions then.

**I was really shocked when my professor made an example of me in a class recently, and really put my back to the wall about being gay and not being quiet about it. What should I do? Should I report this to someone?**

Yes you should! I would first speak with a few sympathetic professors, perhaps with the advisor to the Rainbow Alliance, and describe the incident in detail. Sympathetic faculty or staff

will be able to give you advice on how to proceed with a proper complaint up the chain of command. The College's affirmative action officer should also be notified about the incident so that it may be recorded and possible redress found.

It is also appropriate to write a letter of complaint addressed to the chair of the department to which this professor belongs and wait for a reply, but if a reply doesn't come send a copy of the letter to your dean.

Just remember that being in the closet is much more common and, in the long run, much more self-destructive than being out, so, by being outspoken and out, you are doing something that is hard but also healthy and admirable, something that more young gay people should be able and encouraged to do. I would guess that this professor is intimidated or made uncomfortable by your openness and that he/she is trying to tone down your behavior in order to create a "don't ask don't tell" classroom dynamic.

This dynamic, which may work for the army, should not exist in an institution of higher learning, especially one with an affirmative action policy, hence this professor should be educated and sensitized before he or she does more damage. He/she also owes you an apology.

Have a question for Ms. Claire Voyant? Send it to: [OutOnCampus@hotmail.com](mailto:OutOnCampus@hotmail.com)

Ms. Voyant cannot respond to all requests personally but will highlight questions in each issue of the newsletter.

## “Seeing Queerly”, Continued from page 1

### The Culture of Invisibility

Through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, compulsory heterosexuality dominated most of mainstream popular culture. While Vito Russo documents a brilliant history of “homosexuality in the movies” in his 1981 book (and subsequent documentary film) *The Celluloid Closet*, GLBT references in Hollywood film were historically veiled at best, and often shrouded in homophobic contexts. While gay men and lesbian characters found spot appearances on network television throughout the 1980s and 90s (*Golden Girls*, *Cheers*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Thirtysomething*, *Hotel*, *90210*, *Melrose Place* to name a few), they were often caricatures represented as “unbalanced,” “confused,” or even dangerous. Gay and lesbian relations were almost always seen as asexual — few displayed any intimacy with or affection for desired partners. Real intimacy between GLBT partners is still a “big deal” on mainstream television, even today. From Roseanne’s much talked about kiss with Muriel Hemmingway in 1994 (*Roseanne*, ABC), to Ellen’s 1997 coming out party (*Ellen*, ABC), to a primetime kiss between Lucy Liu and Calista Flockhart (*Ally McBeal*, Fox 1999), lesbian intimacy still meets media frenzy, and gay men rarely get to actually lock lips at all (HBO’s *Six Feet Under* and Showtime’s *Queer as Folk* being a rare exceptions).

### Coming into Complexity?

In recent years, advertisers, primetime television and Hollywood film have turned more frequent attention to the development of gay, lesbian and transgendered characters and/or content. In an article for Miami’s *The Weekly News*, syndicated columnist Stephen H. Miller notes that while in 1993, there were “precious few recurring gay roles among the hundreds of characters inhabiting the tube’s dramas and sitcoms,” 1999 prime time television featured 28 gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters in roles that the LA TIMES touted as “richer and more complex.” In 2002 — the age of *Will and Grace*, *Queer as Folk* and leading gay or lesbian characters on shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *ER*, *Spin City*, or *Six Feet Under* to name just a few — some might say that mainstream popular culture is beginning to address the culture of invisibility that has historically surrounded people, places and perspectives labeled gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.

But is *any* representation good for the cause? How do we make sense of these images of gayness and transgenderism? While all of these images help to shatter the culture of invisibility that surrounds the GLBT community, do stereotypes and caricatures do more harm than good?

There are several organizations working to answer this question through the study and analysis of popular culture. GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) conducts an Annual GLAAD Media Awards to bring attention to positive representations of GLBT folks in the media. According to their website ([www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)), “The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate, and inclusive representation of individuals and events in all media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation”.

Les-

Coming out is a nuisance. Who needs a socially constructed (oppressive) door to pass through time and time again? People (heterosexuals) who artificially construct walls and doors around others should be closeted (jailed), as they present a clear and present danger to those around them.

Further, Commercial Closet Association ([www.commercialcloset.org](http://www.commercialcloset.org)) also offers media literacy resources for adults and youth alike. According to their website: “Advertising has the power to change much more than just buying habits – it can also change how we think about each other. Commercial Closet Association is a unique, non-profit journalism and education organization that reaches out to marketers and ad agencies to encourage better representation of the gay community in the most powerful cultural media of our time--mainstream advertising.” Check out these tools for evaluating advertisements around GLBT content, and use them — watch for representations of queer content in popular culture, and talk with friends, family, students, teachers and others about the role these images play in constructing common-sense ideas about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities.

From [www.CommercialCloset.org](http://www.CommercialCloset.org):

#### Positive Representations:

After generations of invisibility, in positive representations of the GLBT community, guys actually get their guys and gals get their gals. Kisses and affectionate displays are enjoyed by same-sex couples in the imagery, transgendered persons are a non-issue, Gay Pride is celebrated and some commercials even seem to sell the idea of being “gay” more than the product.

#### Negative Representations:

Gay or transgendered people are shown as hustlers, queens, pornographers, murderers, pedophiles and greeted with shock, repulsion and occasional violence here. While some in the gay community now accept classic gay stereotypes like queens and leathermen as “diversity” -- others do not. Transgender persons are often shown with the time-worn cliché of “Surprise -- she’s a he!”

#### Neutral Representations:

Gayness or being transgendered is treated as a non-issue in these commercials. Like people of color are now often shown, gays are included in vignettes and sometimes in the mix of a larger campaign. This may be what the future of gays in commercials will look like: part of a larger whole.

#### Gay Vague Representations:

“Gay Vague” is a term coined by Michael Wilke at Advertising Age in 1997, referring to ads that covertly seem to imply gayness -- an intention often denied by the advertiser. Other ads have simply been adopted by a largely invisible gay community as “theirs” to unconsciously feel represented.

**Watch for announcements about Michael Wilkes coming to speak at RIC this year!**

## "Doing Her Part" , Continued From Page 1

*Development, FSEHD Literacy Focus Group, and the Literacy and the Visual Arts Standing Committee. I am a Disability Resource Mentor and this year serve as secretary of Council. Currently I am involved with an art/art education professor writing grants and working to promote the visual arts and literacy.*

How long have you been in these roles?

*Various amounts of time, I have been involved with the LGBT and Diversity committees since they started and other groups just a few years. I have only really delved into grant writing this past year. I am at a stage in my career at RIC where one of my primary goals is to give back to the College in a variety of ways.*

In our first newsletter we talked about some definitions of being an "ally" around LGBT issues. What does being an "ally" mean to you?

*To me being an ally means being there to be helpful and to do what I can do to try to make RIC (and the world really) a more accepting, safer, and happier place for people of all sexual orientations.*

Is there anything about your journey to becoming an LGBT ally you would want to share?

*I greatly respected my very quiet but strong-minded father. He helped to racially integrate the state hospital system in Texas. He did what he felt was right in his own special way.*

*I always loved teaching and taught in nine countries and four states. During those years I was blessed with all kinds of friends and many of my most supportive and interesting ones were those with different sexual orientations. Although we didn't talk about their relationships or mine, we enjoyed our time together at work or socializing. I am grateful for these friends along the way and as I have learned more about the problems many LGBTs encounter, I worry about the scars they must bear.*

*My husband's half brother is gay. I have known him since he was 12 and I will never forget the look on his face when he told me on the day his father had a massive heart attack that this was the worst day of his life because of his dad and also because his mother found out something he wasn't ready to talk about yet. We didn't pressure him and years later he outed himself to us. We of course supported him and his partner and were most upset that his dear friend had to go back to his own country as our government would not recognize their relationship. I have never seen my brother-in-law so happy as when the two of them were studying a map and planning what they would see on a trip to the Cape after leaving our home. Fortunately, after two years, his partner is returning to the states.*

*My children are adopted from Paraguay and I have seen their suffering because of some of the teasing they received.*

*This discrimination roots itself deeply into one's heart and soul and the hurt is there to stay. As a*

**4** *woman, I had to fight many battles to try to promote*

*women's issues. It was demeaning to think that just because I was a girl, I couldn't march in a university band or enter some professions. Even the union contract at RIC used the supposedly generic "he" and "man" when I first came to this college. All of these put-downs and slights leave their marks.*

So it seems like some very personal experiences and connections with your father, friends, and family have touched you in ways that have led you to take on the challenge of fighting for your principles in the professional arena as well. Is this what motivates you?

*Yes, I have memories of my friends in the past and present who have suffered because of homophobia. And there is the love for my brother-in-law. Also, reflecting on the struggles of the civil rights movement reminds me that this is a very important cause that we must work for now.*

Can you tell us some about how you have come to include ally work in your professional life?

*For many years, I have made presentations with my dear colleague from Nigeria, on multicultural and antibias education. We were often asked why we didn't include homosexual issues. So we added token books and activities but this didn't address the issue, as we wanted to. Finally, we started giving workshops on expanding the concept of family to include same sex families and wove in many aspects dealing with homophobia. I now incorporate this into all my classes and have started a relevant picture book collection on reserve under my name and one of my courses in Adam's Library.*

*I am committed to try to do what I can to help children, teachers, and parents respect and value people of other sexual orientations. As prejudice and bias becomes so engrained by the time children are eight or nine, I want to*

**Zora Neale Hurston calls self-revelation "that oldest of human longings." As a student and teacher of literature, I tend to agree with her. Speaking about ourselves, telling the complicated and nuanced stories of who we are, is central to being alive.**

**Now, there's no doubt that saying some things about ourselves is far more important and far more risky than saying other things. And there is no doubt that what we say about desire and how we say it have been and continue to be restricted and directed by forces that attempt to silence the individual. In light of all this, it's clear that coming out is a special, powerful kind of talking about ourselves that replaces the silence with the self-validating human voice.**

**All this is true, and yet just as true for me is the view that coming out is, ultimately, a new name for an old human need: the need to share the stories of ourselves with others.**

**Daniel M. Scott III, Dept. Of English**

challenge educators dealing with young children to feel committed and empowered to do what they can to reach out to same sex parents and make them feel welcomed and have books and activities in their classrooms that deal with all kinds of families and people of different sexual orientations; stick up for students of different sexual orientations; not allow any taunting or teasing; and realize that this is a very real aspect of life that can't be ignored.

Some teachers unfortunately, do not recognize the importance of this and allow young children as young as six to make derogatory remarks even when they don't actually know the meaning of the terms they use. Some children of same sex parents or with homosexual relatives/friends never see a family like theirs in any book in the school or hear a teacher recognize diversity in this area. We must begin with young children to help make the world a more accepting and better place for all.

This kind of work is so important and as a parent I feel hopeful knowing there are people like you doing it. What is rewarding for you about ally work?

The wonderful people who are involved in the LGBT group. The meetings are so interesting and I feel supported as well. I always leave a meeting with something I want to do, look up, read, or a video I need to watch, etc. The work the group is doing is important. I greatly appreciate being included.

What do you find frustrating about the work?  
The teachers who are afraid to include books and any mention of or activities dealing with homosexuals in their classrooms, the librarians who won't order relevant books, the college students who seemed shocked when I include references to same sex parents in my courses, the six page letter of protest my colleague and I received before giving a talk on same sex parents at a conference, the lack of enough really good materials for young children on this topic, the people who just don't think it is appropriate to deal with this issue in any way in their classrooms, and the gay jokes and put-downs that I still run across. Studies show that other students and also their teachers have treated so many homosexual youth inappropriately. My heart goes out to them and to the children who witness or perpetuate these wrong doings and then eventually realize that they are homosexuals and have poor self-images due to these actions. Homophobia hurts us all.

Finally, how do you recharge your batteries?  
The LGBT meetings always give me renewed energy. The people in this group are just an email or phone call away and they have been so supportive. I sometimes vent and share interesting things I have come across with them. They have helped me to get materials and needed information. I also email my brother in law. He often gives me fresh insights.

When I really need a boost I go to the website [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org) (gay lesbian straight educators network) which is a wonderful resource. I read about the problems homosexual youth and teachers have had and this urges me to keep plugging. I get inspired when I read about what others are doing or have done to fight this battle. In addition to being a very compre-

**"To me, "coming out" is about strength, risk, and control. There are three main reasons I choose to come out:**

- (1) When placed in a situation where everyone is assumed to be heterosexual... I come out.**
- (2) When I feel that another member of the LGBT community needs support, solidarity, or a friendly face... I come out.**
- (3) When I'm sick and tired of ignorance, discrimination, and hate... I come out."**

**Mike Gorman, Residence Hall  
Director at RIC**

hensive website, the people at GLSEN have also helped me in so many ways by loaning materials, giving advice, and steering me to other sources. Sometimes I watch a video that shows the struggles we are trying to eradicate and the unjust treatment and pain engulfs me.

During the many years I worked on multicultural and anti-bias education, I ran across a number of quotes that referred to the importance of each person trying to do what he/she could. I think these are ingrained in my being now and when I am really discouraged, I reflect on these messages. We all must do our own small part to make the world a better place and that includes me!

I want to thank-you for sharing some of your story. To me being an ally is an act of bravery and love. I agree with you that it's not about self-sacrifice, rather it's a way of joining others and seeing that we are all affected by oppression, misuses of power-either institutional or personal, and that there are many points around which to struggle for freedom. I only hope as many of us as possible can continue to find the courage to stand up for what we believe makes a just world, and to find more allies to do this.

Interested in finding out more about being an Ally to the LGBT community?

Check out these sites:

[http://www.lgbtcampus.org/faq/safe\\_zone.html](http://www.lgbtcampus.org/faq/safe_zone.html)

<http://www.ohiou.edu/glbtc/allygroup.htm>

# OutSourcing: Your Guide To LGBT Resources On RIC's Campus And Our Surrounding Area



## Same Sex Parent Books and Other "Gay Friendly" Books for Young Children Available at RIC

Review compiled by Elizabeth Rowell

The number of children being raised in families headed by parents who are gays and lesbians is increasing daily and these youngsters, as do all children, need to see their lives reflected in books. Young children in other types of families should also begin to realize that there are many different kinds of loving families. However, there are very few picture books depicting children in households headed by parents who are gays and lesbians or in families with members who are homosexual. Few such resources are available for both straight & gay family members and educators of young children age two through eight. This is unfortunate because youngsters can get so much information and help out of picture books that are read to them and available for them to enjoy on their own as they "read" the pictures. Teachers could also use these books to widen young children's perspectives of families. In the very moving video, *My Moms' Names are Judy*, the children of same sex parented families discuss how they love their two moms or two dads and wish that schools had started talking about their types of families in kindergarten.

A recent article by Sandra Chapman (glsen.org) reviews the most widely discussed 26 books in this field. However, many of these are no longer being published and are not readily available in bookstores. The interesting and slowly growing publication history of gay-friendly picture books for young children features many struggles and much determination. One of the initial same-sex parent books that helped to launch the way for others, *Heather has two mommies* (Newman and Souza, 1989) was first independently published. Most have been marketed often in limited editions by smaller companies such as Alyson Wonderland, Two Lives Publishing, Hundredth Munchy Publications, and Women's Press whose owners

are committed to producing books to help all young children learn about different types of families, people, and love. Hundredth Munchy Publications also believes that "tolerant toddlers become tolerant teens". Unfortunately, some of these books have been censored widely, others have had a limited publication, and many parents and educators do not know about these resources or are hesitant to use them.

Most of these books clearly show that the parents are a loving affectionate couple and unfortunately these illustrations are often the target of disapproval and attempts at censorship. Interestingly, *Daddy's roommate* has also been criticized because Frank is obviously daddy's partner and not just a person with whom he shares a house. Some feel that the title is misleading. In short, one could find something to question or disagree with in many of these materials. It is important to review them as you would any book and select ones that you or the children you know will enjoy.

Many of the first "gay friendly" picture books featured black and white illustrations even though most of the other publications for young children at this time were in color. This made them somewhat less appealing to those who judge a book primarily by its pictures. Most of these initial publications were also written to describe some aspects of life in a gay or lesbian parented family usually from the young child's point of view and are sometimes referred to as issue books. A few

books feature narrative stories that have a plot, action, and usually some humor. Often the fact that some of the characters are homosexuals is evident but not the main part of the story line in books such as *Lucy goes to the country*, (Kennedy, 1998) the story of a cat's trip to the country with her two

"big guys"; *Best best colors* (Hoffman, 1999), a realistic story about a young boy's search for his favorite color; and *Mama eat ant, yuck* (Edmonds, 2000) a story based on realism that takes a humorous slant. Several additional books mention same sex parented families along with descriptions of others such as *Who's in a family* ( Skutch, 1995) and *When grown-ups fall in love* (Edmonds, 1997).

However, very recently some concept books for young children that picture parents who are gay and lesbian without mentioning the type of family structure have been published. One of these is a counting book and the other an ABC book. The colorful illustrations in both of these books are of same sex parented multiracial families involved in all types of events with which most children could readily identify. *1,2,3- A family counting book* (Combs, 2000) features rhyme and even has some homes that do not look like the standard middle class environment of most of the other books featuring same sex parents. The other book, *ABC -A family alphabet book* (Combs, 2000) has a short catchy text and highlights one word on each page. Both show young children doing things such as playing games, going on picnics, and being read to by same sex parents. Most young children would enjoy these two books with the colorful illustrations of families having fun together and enter eagerly in to the repe-

As a professor who often draws upon personal narratives in the classroom, I sometimes have to work hard NOT to come out in the classroom. I steer away from stories about my family. Or I do the dance -- when necessary I refer to "my partner," and I carefully avoid any gender specific pronouns. I am willing to do this work -- closeting my sexuality -- because I think of this silence as a political strategy. You see.... I am straight. And as a person who identifies as heterosexual, I have the taken-for-granted privilege of being able to come out in the world anytime I want to without any hesitation or repercussion. So as an effort to acknowledge my privilege, I try not to come out as straight to my students. It is not always easy, and sometimes I slip, but I think of NOT coming out as a small effort to challenge the heterosexism of our culture.

Unsigned

tition of words and rhyme. At the same time, all children could see families that might differ from their own.

These two books might also be ones that some teachers or family members who read to young children find “less threatening” to use and to request for their libraries as unfortunately many people shy away from these materials. Teachers’ often voice fears that “the other parents won’t like it”, they will “lose their jobs”, etc. Although many librarians have rallied against attempts to remove Heather has two mommies and Daddy’s roommate from circulation, unfortunately, some will not order books featuring same sex parents. Usually the explanation is that they have other priorities or gaps in their collections. Sometimes, after the books are purchased and put out for circulation, they are “lost” on the library shelves never to be found again. The result is that these books that can mean so much to children are in “library limbo land”. The books have been purchased, but as they can not be located are unavailable for library patrons. Teachers who wish to have these books available for their children often have to advocate and seek support from administrators.

Although the number of “gay friendly” books for young children is limited, many are available through the CLAN library loan system in Rhode Island. However, it can often take weeks to obtain more popular ones such as Asha’s Mums (Elwin & Paulse, 1990). Some public schools have a few, but often they are not placed with the other children’s books so they are not easily accessible for browsing by young children. At Rhode Island College these books are only obtainable at the Adams Library in the reserve section under Rowell/ ELED 423, 425, 502, and 509 as previously obtained books were lost in the shelves. Most of these picture books are not readily available at local bookstores but many, even those out of print, can be purchased through GLSEN, Amazon.com, or other online publishers. As the publication history of many is relatively brief, it would be interesting to obtain them all in a special collection so that college students in education, the arts, and other majors could be able to study and use them

with young children.

Each of these publications has attempted to meet a real gap in the vast world of picture books and has something unique and special to offer. However, all have received mixed reviews and none has been awarded the Caldecott medal for outstanding illustrations. It is hoped that in the near future, a “gay friendly” book will receive this prestigious award so that this type of book will be found along with the other winners readily available on the shelves of children’s libraries, schools, homes, and bookstores across the country. In the meantime, there is a need to continue to request that these books are accessible and encourage authors and illustrators to create more of them to help meet this void.

The following is a review of one of the books on reserve under ROWELL. Check some out and enjoy them with young children. Then go to your local library and school and advocate for the ones you liked. If people frequently or strongly request gay-friendly books of this type they might become more readily available.

#### **Selected Titles:**

**Daddy’s roommate**, by Michael Willhoite, (1990, tenth anniversary edition 2000). Hong Kong: Alyson Wonderland

RIC Reserves -- JUV PZ7.W655485 Dad 2000

This first book written specifically for the children of gay men is a story told by a young boy about his time spent with his divorced father and his father’s roommate, Frank. The child discusses some of the things his dad and partner do together and how much he likes Frank. The boy lives with his mom and shares his mother’s explanation that gay is “just one more kind of love and love is the best kind of happiness.”

The book has full-page colorful cartoon like illustrations with single lines of print beneath them which would be helpful for beginning readers who want

Coming out is important, scary, and always something I do in a self-loving way. I suppose I believe in "degrees of outness", a principle which applies to many aspects of who I am, not just whom I love. In my personal life- my neighborhood, with friends and family, with co-workers I like, I am totally out and have been for as long as up to 24 years. I am almost always out when acting in my role as a parent, so as to be more in control of protecting my child from any negative reactions from others. Yet, at RIC, I feel I need to be more cautious so as not to alienate students who would perhaps feel immediately, irreparably, uncomfortable with the knowledge of this single fact about me. That is why I do not sign my name on this day. My general stance is to say to colleagues with whom I have shared my life details, "Out me to whomever you think it might be of assistance". That has worked well for me.

Unsigned.

to join in and read along with the reader. Some of the pictures show the men displaying affection for each other. The young boy appears to be happy and enjoying himself and his family. On the back leaf of the tenth anniversary edition, the author states that he wrote this book to provide a simple, fun book for a previously ignored audience: the children of gay parents. It has been used as a tool to educate children in more traditional families about gay families. Despite censorship, burning, theft, defacement, and campaigns to remove it from libraries, the book is still available.

More individual reviews will appear in the next issue of “Out On Campus”!

### ***Safe Zone Syllabus Redux!***

In our first issue we highlighted courses at RIC that featured some focus on LGBT related topics. The following two courses are additions to that list:

**SW 324: Human Behavior and the Social Environment, Individuals and Families—Fall & Spring**

**SW 472/572: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity—Fall 2002**

## "A Day To Come Out", Continued from Page 1

really about: not one day, but a lifetime. National Coming Out Day is a day set aside for starting and/ or continuing the conversations about ourselves. It is just as much a day for reflection as it is a day for action; just as much a day for looking back and taking stock as it is for new beginnings; just as much for everyone who wants to live in a free and accepting society as it is for any particular group.

When we celebrate National Coming Out Day, we celebrate -- yes -- the brave women and men who have made the world more safe for people to love as they freely choose, and we also celebrate the puzzling, delightful complexity of being human. Coming out isn't an ending; it's a tentative beginning of the conversation we enter if we really want to know someone and make ourselves known. Coming out day is a celebration of the impulse to say "I want to tell you more about who I am."

Throughout this issue you'll find reflections on Coming Out Day from a variety of perspectives that reflect the fact that the day is individual and particular for each person who considers it. And that's what the day is all about!

I was nudged, nagged, and pulled out of my closet to become an open LGBT ally. Although I had been dedicated for years to antibias education, I had focused on racial, ethnic, and eventually age and disability discrimination. However, it was only after being asked by workshop participants and a very persistent student about when I was going to work on fighting homophobia that I began to be even more inclusive in my antibias presentations. Later, I was invited to represent the department of Elementary Education at a discussion following an on-campus showing of *It's Elementary*, an excellent film that clearly illustrates how teachers need to be more involved in the fight against homophobia. I finally grasped that as a heterosexual with many homosexual friends and family members, I needed to do much more than what I had been doing. Once I was out of my closet, I realized that for me being a closet ally was not enough. I became openly active and very appreciative of those who helped me to emerge.

Elizabeth H. Rowell

## Common



## Ground

"Common Ground" is a column exploring definitions and symbols commonly used in the LGBT communities. In our last issue we focused on defining terms and phrases and in this issue we look at some of the visual symbols of LGBT pride. ([http://www.uwstout.edu/student/10percent/l\\_g\\_b\\_t\\_symbols\\_explained.htm](http://www.uwstout.edu/student/10percent/l_g_b_t_symbols_explained.htm))

### The Triangles

The Pink Triangle is a symbol that dates back to World War II. The pink Triangle was used by the Nazi's to identify gay men in Germany. This worked much like the star of David did with the Jewish people in Germany. A yellow star of David with a superimposed pink triangle served to show a gay Jew. In the 1970's, gay rights activists resurrected the pink triangle as a symbol that would be easily recognized. Today the symbol means pride, solidarity, and it serves as a promise never to let the holocaust happen again.

The black triangle was used to represent lesbians during World War II. This was used in a similar manner to the pink triangle. The pink triangle over a blue triangle is the symbol for bisexuality.

### The Rainbow

Rainbows are used to represent the gay community because rainbows include all colors. The colors represent people of all ages, races, religions, and backgrounds. Occasionally, you can find rainbows with an additional stripe, usually black or pink.

Pink stripes are a throwback to early rainbows, in which pink represented sexuality. Black stripes usually represent those who have died of AIDS.



## RI Legislative Update On LGBT Concerns

*Compiled by Mary Ball Howkins*

Domestic partners of varying persuasions can now enjoy health Insurance benefits through their employer, the State of Rhode Island. After years of union requests, Rhode Island granted coverage for domestic partner health benefits last year. Domestic partners, one of whom must be eligible for State paid health insurance benefits, must provide to their personnel office a notarized affidavit attesting to a series of conditions in order to qualify for coverage. These can include certification of joint ownership of property, joint financial accounts and designation as a beneficiary in an employee's will. Children of domestic partners may be declared dependents, hence may also become eligible for health insurance benefits. Relevant application forms are available in State personnel offices.

## SUBMISSIONS WANTED:

Do you have an interest in making a submission to the "Out On Campus" newsletter? Have a suggestion for a new column or topic for us to cover? Send the committee an email at the address below and we will gladly get in touch!

**OUTONCAMPUS@HOTMAIL.COM**