

Take the Religion Out of Marriage and What Do You Get? Civil Union! **Chadwick Puterbaugh, BGSU Student**

As the state of Massachusetts deliberates on its stance in the gay marriage debate, America's homosexual population waits in uneasy anticipation. The outcome of Massachusetts' decision will impact the futures of thousands across the country, and millions indirectly.

While I admittedly lot myself with the sentiment of the homosexual community, I would like to propose an alternative to marriage.

Generally speaking, I think that having a way to secure a legal partner is a good idea. For whatever reason, many in our society have decided to attack life in pairs, and I think that they should be afforded the right to do so. I also think that this right should be given to homosexuals, heterosexuals, and all of those in the unpublicized hinterlands.

However, the movement to extend these rights to homosexuals may not be pursuing the best course of action. Allow me to explain.

First of all, let's consider pragmatism, i.e. feasibility. If any of you has ever argued with a religious zealot, surely you know that gay marriage is probably one of the last things they'll tolerate.

But who can argue with them? All three of the major religions in the world seem to have made stark traditions that are anti homosexual. In and of itself, the voice and concentration of religious people in America make gay marriage an unlikely scenario.

Second, let's consider the reaction from churches. Churches receive benefits from the state similar to government institutions; therefore, by analogy, they would legally forbidden from being discriminatory. Thus, if gay marriage were to be a lawful act, churches would be required to grant marriages to homosexuals.

This may not seem like a bad thing if you support gay marriage, but what about the backlash? Almost certainly, America's Bible belt will tie itself into a knot. While I rarely support the pursuit of tradition, I do not think that it should necessarily be taken away.

Again, the reaction from the pulpit, and the threat of potential lawsuits alone would be daunting to anyone seeking gay marriage. This is not an impossible hurdle, but a very weighty one for sure. It is interesting to note how easily this whole issue could be sidestepped if churches were not given state funds, but I'll save that for another column.

The third thing that makes gay marriage a bad direction is the sense carried in the word itself. While the act of marriage is not inherently religious (indeed it was first pagan), the word has become inextricably tied to the church. How do I know? Well, ask any person on the street in what kind of building someone gets married; it won't be too long before you can form a pattern on your own.

The point is that if one wants to label oneself as 'married,' the religious overtones may make any non-religious person feel kind of awkward getting married.

These three reasons all hinder the push for gay marriage. In varying degrees, all three negatively affect anyone interested at all in the debate. But what alternatives are there?

One alternative that has been suggested by both parties is that homosexuals ought to be granted the right of a civil union. Ok, good first step, but aren't we forgetting something?

Those who propose civil unions theoretically are in favor of the legal rights attached to such a bonding. Thus, the right to see one's significant other in a hospital, the right to handle one's partner's posthumous estate etc. would all be granted to the recipients of gay civil unions.

Basically, all of the rights afforded to married folk would also apply to those who have civil unions; only the name would be different. However, this would constitute a distinct separation between how homosexuals are allowed to be espoused, and how heterosexuals are allowed. Even though the rights would be the same, the institutions would be distinct.

See Civil Union | Page 2

It so happens that this was tried before in our country, but overruled in the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*. For all of you unaware, the case decided whether it was fair to segregate black and white children into public schools that were separate, but equal. The Supreme Court put a stop to this by saying that 'separate but equal' was, and is, inherently unequal (read: wrong).

So, to propose that homosexuals should be happy with civil unions is to incite the wrath of legal precedent. The institution of the civil union would be separate from marriage, making it inherently unequal.

However, let's not abandon the prospect of a civil union so easily. There does, after all, seem to be something good about having a partner with legal protection.

Thus, I propose something radical, something outrageous, something so fundamentally intuitive that the alternatives seem silly. Let's make civil unions the status quo.

For emphasis: let's fully embrace the establishment clause and take religion out of government. Let's strike all talk of marriage out of legal documents, and start over again. Two people who wish to be legally bound together, no matter their sexuality, will have to apply for a civil union license, not marriage.

In this way, every word of the law can extend to all peoples. However, once someone gets a civil union, they're free to have a ceremony wherever they choose, whether in a church, a casino, or Timbuktu.

Precedence, after all, has already been set for this type of government-religious separation. Consider, if you will, how congress swears in. In a fresh term, all Congressmen do a group swearing in together. After they've been sworn in, they can place their hand on the religious book of their choice, but it's not part of the actual ceremony.

Regardless of how the civil rights proponents decide to attack the issue, I think it is time that we as a society recognize just how ridiculous the ban on legal homosexual unions actually is. I have shown that there is a reasonable alternative to marriage that does not stifle anyone's traditions, step on anyone's toes, nor insult them. Thus, I now shift the burden of proof to the heterosexist masses. If homosexuals do not deserve the right to be legally joined, what are your reasons, and where is your evidence?

China's homosexuals only slowly emerging from their closets

By: Julia Jaegler By Julia Jaegler,

Beijing- A Guang, a volunteer with China's first telephone hotline for homosexuals, has lost count of how many calls he receives every day.

But together with some 100 colleagues, he offers legal and psychological counseling and answers questions pertaining to AIDS prevention free of charge.

Calls are accepted from both gays and lesbians, something which is far from being an everyday thing in contemporary China.

It was as recently as 2001 that the country abolished legislation that branded all homosexuals as mentally ill.

The demand for the hotline is so enormous that its operator, the Chi Heng Foundation, which finances the service in the eastern seaboard metropolis of Shanghai, was forced to limit each call to no longer than 20 minutes.

"I think that, thanks to the media, nowadays more people know about homosexuality in general and that their attitudes are changing slowly," said A Guang.

But there still remained too much discrimination as only a few homosexuals could openly admit to their sexual preferences, he added.

"To reveal it would trigger many problems even today. For example, a job promotion would become practically impossible," A Guang explained.

Many Chinese acted rather anxious as soon as the subject of homosexuality was brought up.

"It is almost as if they were afraid to contract AIDS through a simple conversation," said A Guang.

With his volunteer work, he wants to contribute to alleviate peoples' anxiousness and curb their discriminatory attitudes.

"The more we talk about something, the more the discrimination will decrease," he said.

His approach seemingly bears fruit, as early April saw the advent of a 12-episode Internet show, produced by Hong Kong's Phoenix TV, whose target demographic are gay and lesbian Chinese.

See China's Homosexual's | Page 3

During each show, homosexual moderators talk online with their guests about the subject.

In the meantime, Shanghai's renowned Fudan University has started promoting a seminar about homosexual culture, and the demand has been enormous.

A business in Beijing recently even established a matchmaking hotline for lesbians.

It is particularly in China's more cosmopolitan cities like Beijing and Shanghai that homosexuals have begun to slowly emerge from their closets in recent years.

Between 2003 and 2006, social scientist Li Yinhe petitioned China's legislative body, the Peoples Congress, three times to legalize same-sex marriages.

Her petition was ignored each time, and this year she declined to attempt yet another try.

"Perhaps it is still too early, but my proposal is in itself at least a way to disseminate the general idea (that homosexuality is not sick)," she said.

While the Peoples Congress so far continually maintained that homosexuality was categorically "wrong," the official government position has somewhat softened with the announcement that it currently was simply "too early" to consider the legalisation of such marriages.

"So, something has indeed changed, there is some progress," Li said.

Although Chi Heng's hotline also offers law and health counseling, most callers had the urge to instead talk about emotional topics, according to A Guang.

Family and society put great pressure on young people to get married. Yielding to that pressure, many homosexuals therefore lived a double life, he said. On the one hand they'd lead a heterosexual marriage, on the other they'd additionally engage in homosexual relationships.

The hotline received numerous calls every day from young people who were pressured by their parents into a heterosexual marriage and didn't know how they should resolve their inner conflict.

"Parents' and society's rejection and ignorance of homosexuality is the gravest problem," said A Guang.

A Guang knows what he is talking about.

"I am gay myself, and my parents know about it. But they still hope that I might change my sexual preference someday," he said.

Taken from: http://rawstory.com/news/dpa/China_s_homosexuals_only_slowly_eme_04062007.html



MR GIBBY'S TOTALLY GAY PET SHOP

Interview with a Drag Queen

By: Dakota Desmond Rose A.K.A. Jim Hood
Uptown Show cast member/ Student

Q: Do people who feel like a gender that does not fit their natural born sex have a mental or psychological disorder? Why or why not?

A: No. Some may have disorders but I think if its just a way they feel inside then they are just doing what comes natural to them.

Q: Have you ever been to a drag show? Did you enjoy it?

A: I am a performer/female illusionist/drag queen/entertainer and yes i love watching shows and being in them

Q : Are drag kings and drag queens the same as transgender individuals? Explain.

A: Some are some are not. Drag queens perform things that many people try to express but cant through some form of expression/outlet. Then there are transgender individuals who live and carry their lives out living as the opposite sex because its how they feel naturally and they also get satisfaction from expressing themselves through drag as well.

For me personally I love being able to express myself through this form of interpretation. There are many different reasons why i do drag and here is a list of some for you:

- stress relief
- keeps my body in shape
- helps me grow my social circle and also network with others
- helps me express myself in ways I otherwise couldn't or don't know how to
- lets me know inside that I have a talent and I want it to grow

Q: Is it okay for someone who has gone through surgery and hormone therapy to date someone without telling them about it?

A: I think that everyone should be honest and real when it comes to relationships. When the time is right that person should tell the other the truth if it really bothers them that much.

Q: What stereotypes are there about drag queens? Drag kings? Trannies?

A: I could go on for days on this one, but the main stereotypes that i know about/have experience with drag queens is that they are:

- too feminine out of drag
- want to change their sex
- have mental issues
- cant find men so they sleep with each other
- are poor and live in poverty
- are uneducated
- have STD's diseases
- are sexually promiscuous

There are more negative than positive things being said in the gay community when it comes to drag and transgender individuals. If you don't have anything nice to say then do not say it at all. Another thing about drag is that it is a very very, very strong repellant towards achieving a date with someone. Its more of a turn off for some, and I think its because those individuals are too ignorant to be more open-minded. Like the old saying goes, "don't judge a book by its cover!"

BGSU Students Learn about Transsexuality and Transformation

By: Stephanie L. Gorse, LGBTQA-Q Resource Center Intern

On Tuesday, March 27th at 2:30PM, students met at the Women's Center in Hanna Hall to learn about transsexuals and the female to male transformation process.

Ryan Sallands, from the LOGO channel documentary *Gender Rebels* spoke to a room full of students about his transition from a female to a male. Sallands spoke about his childhood in Nebraska, his eating disorder, his girlfriend, decision to transform, and the procedures available for transsexuals.

Kylie Marquez, senior and coordinator of the event, said, "I feel that transgender individuals need more exposure to the general public to debunk myths and stereotypes surrounding this sexual minority. Also, as a female-to-male individual, Ryan represents an even larger minority within the community because male-to-females are mostly represented in the media."

Sallands gave BG students a chance to learn more about this minority as he pointed out significant moments in his life that lead to his transformation. Sallands said, as a little girl, he was considered a tomboy and throughout his college years developed an eating disorder. He went to a therapist who encouraged him to read, "The Dark Side of the Light Chasers" by Debbie Ford. Sallands explained how the book has a list of words that a person is supposed to say out loud; whichever word one struggles with is the issue he or she is facing. Sallands' word was 'lesbian'. Once he came to terms with the idea he could be a lesbian, Sallands' eating disorder started to disappear.

Later, he realized that he wanted to transform after finding a book, depicting female to male transformations. Eventually he had a chest surgery and later began to take hormones. Sallands said there are many different ways to take hormones: injection, gel, patch, pill, or insertion. He also explained the different types of lower-part surgeries, which he hasn't had yet.

The students enjoyed Sallands' presentation and had many questions for him afterwards. Most of the audience was comprised of members from VISION, Bowling Green's GLBTQIA organization and other BGSU students.

Ryan Sallands is currently working as a Community Educator and Web Designer. He also is working on a book about trans people in relationships and gives speeches whenever possible.



**Poetry By: Samantha Robertson,
BGSU Student**

Don't wanna taste your lipstick:

Take off that ugly smear
and let me taste them
Naked and
Swollen.
Want to taste that
Taste you
Feel that hotwetmouth
Without that sticky
hideous-ness
Push inside.
Not red because of
Paint
But from my teeth and yours.
Tongueslipsteeth.
Mouth.
Now.

Pixel World:

tonight we were singing a digital lullaby
caressing down metaphorical hips & thighs
because your mouth, as soft as the
cool glass of the computer screen--
mouths pressed tight, layered pixilation
your font, plain & simple,
black & white to mine,
a bruise of purples & blues,
confined to one tiny window
typed in with one hand because the other
imagines
the coasting of skin, skin, skin on skin
theseareyoursandnotmine as I press in hard
& call out the only name you've ever given
me,
a muddled mix of capitals & 1's & 0's

I've-always-wondered-what-it-felt-like
you confess, I can tell you're breathing
hard
just from reading, I am too too & I just
wish I knew the hot feeling of your body
on mine other than this sticky-leather chair
wish I knew your voice rather than the sick
hum of the computer, could see your eyes
as I kiss you rather than these glowing
buttons
and keys worn naked from rough presses
that I
wish was between your legs, your lips,
hands licked clean & breath sharp
your voice feminine & clear
mine soft & whispered
touching shamelessly
our pixel world

Rockstar:

There was something thick about
the way you spoke
a molasses throat trickle chewed
into the microphone.
Staring into your honey almond-
candy eyes
I had my first orgasm
nails dug into graffiti grime
watching you squirm
stick-legs wrapped around the
drummer's waist.
Three letters had be back to
where you drown in sweet sugar
whiskey.
You licked an alcoholic kiss over
my under-bite
and when you brought me past
your teeth I knew what your
music
felt like
Hot and Wet and heavy over
your tongue.
You brought me off for the
second time I had ever known
and I know I fell in love with
you looking down at you
even though you had already
forgotten my name.
But I bought a poster just to
remind me of your mouth.

No:

Walking hand-in-hand I think we
had an epiphany,
Your eyes huge and wide as you
pulled me down to the floor.
You were the eccentric lover of
sorts,
Sweet lips and the temperament
of Pandora
Killing yourself with curiosity
and demanding to be revived
With kiss after kiss.
It was never enough, always a
beg for more
Thighs spread wide, skin
prickling and refusing to let go
Even when it hurt.
You had the eyes of a predator
But the body of a child,
Deprived and secretly carnal at
the worst Of moments
But making me pray just to push
into you.

I don't think the word 'no' was
part of your vocabulary.

**Response to: Faggot, Dyke, Ass Pirate,
Carpet Muncher...etc. etc. etc.**

By: Kiki, Model

I think these terms are ignorant comments
from ignorant people. Its easy to reject and
humiliate the unfamiliar or unknown, which makes
it easier for people to simply say something like the
above mentioned words and walk away to make
themselves feel superior. But how much more
superior can one feel when one doesn't even know
what they've just 'won' against? I think its ridiculous
that someone can be so hateful and so closed
minded to reject and scorn those they know nothing
or at best, little about.

I hear these phrases from Ignorant people
who do not take the time to really see what being
gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or anything else
is about.

These terms live strong with young people
in Middle school and High School because they are
still strongly influenced by their parents, versus the
'real world'. If they hear their parents using those
words or talking poorly about a certain group of
people or even one particular person, it really
shapes their views on that group before they really
even know what that group is about. To make
matters worse, then you put them all together and
leave them to their own devices and to sound
intelligent, they repeat their parent's hateful
outlooks. I've noticed that people begin to be much
more open once they get to college and beyond
because they see that there is so much more to the
world than just a narrow minded outlook. They can
really start to see that there is more than just a word
connected to it.

Most youth are not subjected to a wide gay
or lesbian (etc) community, therefore they begin to
think that they themselves are the outcast or are
wrong for their feelings. It's detrimental to a young
persons social development to be bashed and
tormented about something completely out of their
control. But its not like a red head being criticized
for their hair color. You can change your hair color;
you cannot change whom you love. Nor should you
ever have to. Being criticized and victimized about
something like that can eventually lead to
depression, feelings of inadequacy or even suicidal
tendencies.

We need to change the way we talk to our
younger generation. As college age students, many
of us have younger siblings. We can start there. Our
siblings listen to us, more than they listen to their
parents half of the time. We can have spokespersons
go to schools and speak about the devastating
effects of hatred. We need to have more celebrities
speak out against hatred and condemnation of the
gay community and on acceptance of all persons, no
matter their color or sexual orientation.

Say it Loud! I'm Fat, Queer and Proud: GLBT People of Size
By Joelle Ruby Ryan, BGSU Professor

We live in a society that always preaches life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But this is often far from reality for many social groups in our society. Our society favors white, thin, heterosexual, gender-normative, able-bodied, Christian, wealthy, men. The more you differ from this societal "ideal," the more oppressed you are.

I am a 6'6", 350-pound, queer, non-passing, feminist, genderqueer, MTF trans woman, who is also an economically-challenged graduate student and struggling academic. I come from a rural, working-class, blue-collar and conservative New England family. I struggle with depression, anxiety and social phobia. I am a poet and I sing karaoke. I am a person in recovery who no longer drinks alcohol or smokes cigarettes. I am partnered to a queer female-to-male (FTM) transperson that I love very much. I am also a vegetarian and a chocoholic! I am an activist on behalf of numerous social justice causes and hold progressive and radical political views. My body does not fit the norms of our society for multiple reasons. My gender does not fit, and my height and weight do not fit. Being a misfit is nothing new for me. I do not feel like a victim. But I do battle against society's rules with great fervor and conviction.

The GLBT community has come a long way. From shame and invisibility, we have become much more accepted at all levels of US society. Through activism and sheer willpower, we have fought for a more inclusive, just and egalitarian society. Since the early 1990s, the bi and trans parts of GLBT have fought for inclusion in straight society AND in the gay and lesbian community. We have made strides towards greater acceptance. However, we have a long way to go.

The GLBT Movement has become very mainstream. There are many who see securing gay marriage equality as the final agenda item for gay rights. Once we do that, they argue, we can close up shop and just walk into the sunset of life. I think not! What is happening is that so many groups in the GLBT community are invisible, disenfranchised and suffering disproportionately. We generally do not hear their stories in our mainstream media. There is pressure put forth by many people in the GLBT community to be gender-normative, thin, upwardly mobile and "normal." There is a strong assimilationist stream to contemporary GLBT politics. This tactic leaves a lot of people out in the cold: radical queers of color, trans activists, people with disabilities, GLBT people of size, youth and seniors etc.

Body fascism is particularly virulent in the gay male community. There is a lot of pressure to be thin, muscular, masculine and youthful. More than a few personal ads read: "no fats, no femmes." This is not accidental. To be a fat male is to be automatically seen as also "femme" because fat is feminizing. Fleishy buttocks, hips and "man boobs" are examples of male bodies that become more female-like through gaining fat. Conversely, female-bodied genderqueers may strive to be super-thin in order to lose some of their breast tissue, rounded hips and butts, and gain a more waif-like, boyish figure. The lesbian community has traditionally been much more accepting of women of size. Second-wave feminism was very successful in influencing lesbian communities to reject patriarchal notions of body image, beauty obsession and the tyranny of slenderness. Many lesbian communities made a conscious effort to celebrate sisters of size and to challenge weightism and fatphobia. To this day, some of the biggest leaders in the fat rights movement are self-identified dykes. However, we should not paint a picture that is overly rosy. As the dominant culture has become increasingly anti-fat, this has trickled down into the lesbian community. Many younger dykes are not as influenced by feminism and by radical politics. Shows like The L Word feature feminine, thin, wealthy lesbians as the norm.

In the trans community, there is also a lot of fatphobia. In general, MTFs are more fatphobic than their FTM counterparts. MTFs may see being thin as realizing their ideal notion of femininity. They may make catty remarks about other trans women who they view as masculine, fat or non-conformist. FTMs may strive for thinness and muscularity to live up to cultural ideals of masculinity. Whether coming from the straight, cisgendered world, or from the GLBT community itself, the problem is the same: fat-hatred and body fascism.

All of us must learn to love and accept our bodies. We must fight fatphobia with the same vigor that we fight heterosexism and transphobia. In addition, we must challenge the notion that thinness is synonymous with good health. Many times I have heard people state that they believe fat people should not be discriminated against, but what about health? Well, what about it? Health is an issue for everybody, regardless of size. We should learn about and endorse the Health At Every Size (HAES) Movement. We should reach out to non-queer size acceptance groups, disability groups and others to forward a progressive platform of Bodily Autonomy. Whose body is it, anyways? Does your body belong to your family, your peers, your spouse, the media, the church, the society? Or does it belong to you and ONLY to you? In the words of fat activist Marilyn Wann, life is too short for celery sticks and self-hate. So be f(l)abulous and refuse to apologize for your size. Instead, say it loud: I'm fat, queer and proud!

When Did Sin Become Stale?

By: Bethany Nanamaker, Queer Query Opinion Columnist

I have a confession: I am ready to throw in the rainbow towel. That's right. I am plain tired of being gay. I am tired of strategic pronouns around family members and acquaintances.

Them: "Do you have a boyfriend?"

Me: "well, I am seeing somebody."

Them: "Oh, you understand what I am going through. We've all dated losers like Ethan."

Me: "yeah, my ex used to. . ."

See Sin | Page 7

Sin | Page 6

It's sucks when I have test the waters upon making a new friend:

"So . . . how about that Lance Bass thing?"

"Oh, you are a republican? Interesting. Socially or economically?"

I am tired of laughing at the stereotypes. My choice not to plaster my face with makeup or to shop at designer stores is not intricately tied to the people with whom I want to have sex. And I don't think about the curves and angles of a woman's body when trying to pick out a pair of shoes.

I don't want my own bookstores or bars. And I sure as hell don't want my own magazine. I'd rather open Marie Claire and Cosmo and not feel like an alien.

I don't want to feel betrayed when my lesbian ex-girlfriend decides to fuck men. Or worry that my lover might find some wrathful, homo-hating God. I don't want suspicious stares when I find a man desirable.

Moreover, I want to read the newspaper and not hurt like I do. Every law that affirms family values and traditional marriage feels like a punch in the stomach. It's a personal blow. Every photograph on the New York Times of protestors with angry signs, screaming "Faggot!" and quoting the book of Romans, Ephesians, and Leviticus, leaves me feeling small. Ashamed. Defenseless.

I am sick of not having a good explanation. And citing research on penguins, sheep, and primates. I am sick of needing an explanation.

This exhaustion—this frustration with the fight—it's new for me. I remember my first lesbian kiss. It tasted like sin. In a wonderful way. Deliciously deviant. Like my first cigarette; I delighted in slow, smoky drags of angst in front of my bubbly counterparts. After that kiss, I wanted to make-out in the IHOP of my conservative hometown. During the Sunday after church rush. I wanted to hold hands with high heads across our very hetero campus. I won't lie; I delighted in the political statement. I enjoyed ruffling the feathers of close-minded suburbanites. With every red-necked freshman boy so enamored with his own genitalia that he thought girls couldn't possibly pleasure other girls, I was empowered to prove the contrary.

What changed? I actually fell in love with a woman. And I wanted to tell the whole world. And they didn't want to hear about my politics.

And when she broke my heart, I wanted to run to my mother and cry. But my politics upset her.

So now I am tired of being gay. I'm not tired of delicate collarbones, wisps of hair over impish eyes. I'm not tired of strong feminist spirits.

I just so tired of being the other.

Gays Struggle to Find their Voice at Black Colleges

HAMPTON, Virginia (AP) -- So lured was April Maxwell by the promise of the black college experience, with its distinct traditions and tight-knit campus life that she enrolled at Hampton University in 2001 without even visiting the waterfront campus. A lesbian who is open about her sexual orientation, she arrived eager to join the extended Hampton family.

Instead, "I felt like I was the only gay person on campus -- it seemed like nobody was really out," said the now 24-year-old Maxwell. She channeled her isolation into organizing a gay support group, but a panel of students and faculty denied it a charter. The panel recently denied a second attempt at chartering Students Promoting Equal Action and Knowledge, or SPEAK, headed by underclassmen after Maxwell graduated.

It's a tug-of-war that's emerging at other black schools, where students say outdated rules and homophobia block them from forming the gay campus voice common at majority white institutions. At Hampton, where rules govern everything from overnight guests to student dress, officials insist they don't discriminate against gays. They say they're simply enforcing the regulations on student groups, and there just isn't space for another one. But some students here see more than a conservative approach to the regulations. They, and many others at the nation's more than 100 historically black colleges and universities, say that a broader suspicion of homosexuality keeps gays in the shadows at these tradition-heavy schools.

"You've got to recognize the history of HBCUs," said Larry Curtis, vice president for student affairs at Norfolk State University, where students recently formed a gay-straight alliance. "Most of them were founded by religious organizations." Church leaders are often cited as setting the tone regarding homosexuality across the black community. Nationwide, black pastors have opposed gay marriage and shot down comparisons between the struggles for civil rights and gay rights; others have attacked "down low" bisexual men for contributing to the rising AIDS rates among black women, though the topic is a matter of debate in the public health community.

See Struggle | Page 8

Page 7

BGSU's LGBTQA-Q Resource Center
404 Saddlemire rainbow@bgnet.bgsu.edu 419.372.3244

"You've got to recognize the history of HBCUs," said Larry Curtis, vice president for student affairs at Norfolk State University, where students recently formed a gay-straight alliance. "Most of them were founded by religious organizations." Church leaders are often cited as setting the tone regarding homosexuality across the black community. Nationwide, black pastors have opposed gay marriage and shot down comparisons between the struggles for civil rights and gay rights; others have attacked "down low" bisexual men for contributing to the rising AIDS rates among black women, though the topic is a matter of debate in the public health community.

On historically black campuses, those tensions make life uncomfortable for gay students. "It's kind of hard to be out on campus and still be successful," said Vincent Allen Jr., head of Safe Space at Atlanta's Morehouse College. "As an out gay man, if I wanted to pledge, that door is pretty much shut to me. That's just the way it is." But just as gay students can rightfully request campus inclusion, so too can black college administrators deny it, argued the Rev. William Owens, an HBCU graduate and head of the Coalition of African-American Pastors in Memphis, Tennessee. Those administrators may cite the Bible, or simply personal beliefs - and they don't have to be politically correct, Owens said.

"They can say 'no' and I don't think they have to give a lot of reasons," said Owens, who joined other black pastors worried that, along with dismal marriage rates, socially accepted homosexuality "is a threat to the black family." In 2002, the issue of gays on black campuses grabbed the attention of the Human Rights Campaign, an advocacy group that organizes annual "coming out" days.

"We would send out information to all the colleges and universities about getting national coming out packets, and for some reason the only institutions they were not hearing back from at all were the historically black colleges," said the group's diversity manager Brandon Braud, who began calling campuses. He learned of gay groups at two historically black schools: Washington's Howard University, and Spelman College, in Atlanta. Administrators elsewhere denied having gay students, or said that while gays attended, "they're very underground," Braud said.

He later spoke to students alleging outright hostility. Some were required to find an adviser to form gay groups -- unrealistic on many small campuses, Nashville AIDS educator Dwayne Jenkins said. Through his Brothers United Network, Jenkins mentored upstart groups at Tennessee State and Fisk universities. "Finding an adviser was always hard because nobody wanted to be associated with the gay-straight alliance -- it was the thinking that 'Oh my god, are they going to think I'm gay?'" he said.

Formed mostly across the segregation-era South, historically black colleges emerged as academic training grounds and finishing schools for blacks entering white society. The most esteemed schools earned a reputation for students with impeccable manners and clean-cut behavior. "So much of our campus is focused on this ideal of 'the Hampton man' and 'the Hampton woman,'" said Michael, a transfer student and SPEAK member who, like the group's president, is closeted and refused to let his last name be printed. "Men walk women home -- traditional Southern values."

But students are changing. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network counts more than 3,000 gay-straight alliances at American high schools. Those youth will apply to colleges that can ensure their safety and will provide support, said Kevin Rome, vice president for student services at Morehouse, where a student was beaten in 2002 for an alleged same-sex pass.

"Society is changing," Rome said. "Students aren't coming here experimenting with their sexuality, they're coming here knowing." "Our schools have to accommodate. It's inevitable." Gay students have enjoyed far greater visibility at Virginia's large, majority white institutions. Virginia Tech's gay alliance group hosts support meetings and social outings. The University of Virginia recently hired a coordinator for its gay resource center, a hub for 2,000 gay students at the Charlottesville campus. At historically black schools, change is gradual. Braud has nudged along groups at 20 schools through a special black college-aimed Human Rights Campaign program. At state-supported institutions such as Norfolk State, Curtis said it's easier to prompt change because other state universities in Virginia already have gay support groups.

At private Hampton, April Maxwell said she knew lots of gays and found support among pockets of students, regardless of sexuality. "The people who are in charge, I really don't think they're for it," Maxwell said. But school officials say competition is stiff on campus, where a moratorium has limited the number of student groups to 90 -- and unchartered groups can't meet. New groups are chartered when other groups become inactive. Only four spots were available during the 2006-07 school year. Forty-four organizations have applied for charters over the last two years, and 11 received them.

"No organization is given any type of special treatment," said Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs Barbara Inman. "The university doesn't have a position on gay and lesbian faculty and staff members."

Taken from: <http://cnnfyi.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Gays+struggle+to+find+their+voice%AOat+blac...> 4/9/2007

A Time Limit on Rape By Jeninne Lee-St. John

If a woman consents to having sex with a man but then during intercourse says no, and the man continues, is it rape? The answer depends on where you live. The highest courts of seven states, including Connecticut and Kansas, have ruled that a woman may withdraw her consent at any time, and if the man doesn't stop, he is committing rape. Illinois has become the first state to pass legislation giving a woman that right to change her mind. But in Maryland--as well as in

North Carolina--when a woman says yes, she can't take it back once sex has begun--or, at least, she can't call the act rape. That was the recent ruling by Maryland's Court of Special Appeals in a case that may soon make its way to the state's highest court and that has captured the attention of feminists and legal experts across the country. Advocates for victims' rights insist it's not just a matter of allowing a woman to have a change of heart. If the law doesn't recognize a woman's right to say no during sex, they say, there is no recourse for a woman who begins to feel pain or who learns her partner isn't wearing a condom or has HIV. Those who are wary of these measures say they're not arguing against having a man stop immediately when a woman no longer wants to have sex, but with how to define immediately.

When the California Supreme Court handed down a ruling in 2003 that codified the withdrawal of consent during sex, Justice Janice Rogers Brown, the lone dissenter, raised that very question. "The majority relies heavily on [the defendant's] failure to desist immediately," she wrote in her minority opinion. "But it does not tell us how soon would have been soon enough. Ten seconds? Thirty? A minute?" Mel Feit, executive director of the National Center for Men, a male-advocacy group based in Old Bethpage, N.Y., says biology is a factor. "At a certain point during arousal, we don't have complete control over our ability to stop," he says. "To equate that with brutal, violent rape weakens the whole concept of rape." His group has created a "consensual sex contract" to be signed before intercourse.

Victims' rights activists don't buy the loss-of-control argument. "It's insulting to men to say they can't stop," says Lisae C. Jordan, legislative counsel for the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault. "Any one of us who's had a toddler wal in on them knows that that's not true. Or a teenager who's had a parent walk in--they stop pretty quickly." Still, even advocates concede it's hard to set a time frame in which sex must cease after consent is taken back. "I don't know where that bright line is," says Scott Berkowitz of the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network. "We'll leave that to juries to decide what's reasonable in each case." The murkiness surrounding what's reasonable has deepened further with the Maryland case, which was tried in 2004. The accuser and the defendant agree that after he began to penetrate her and she wanted him to stop, he did so within a matter of seconds and did not climax. Even so, during deliberations, the jury sent a note to the judge asking if it was rape if a female changed her mind during the sex to which she consented and the man continued until climax.

The judge said it was for them to decide. They convicted the defendant of first-degree rape, among other sex offenses. But the appellate court, citing a 1980 rape ruling based on the English common-law idea of "the initial de-flowering of the woman as the real harm," unanimously ordered a new trial, essentially stating that how fast was not the issue, nor was whether the accuser had said no during intercourse.

In Maryland, rape is determined at the beginning of the sex act and therefore consent is officially given at that point. The court wrote, "It was the act of penetration that was the essence of the crime of rape; after this initial infringement upon the responsible male's interest in a woman's sexual and reproductive functions, any further injury was considered to be less consequential. The damage was done."

This logic has inflamed feminists and editorial-page writers. "The decision is philosophically from another century, from a time when our rape laws were based on the concept of women being property of men," says Berkowitz, whose organization will push for a legislative remedy if Maryland's highest court doesn't reverse the ruling. In the meantime, the defendant is serving a five-year sentence, and the legal world continues to debate how quickly--if at all--a man must go when a woman says no.

Taken from: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1584786,00.html>

