But . . . But . . . But It Isn’t Fair! We Could Get Married in Canada!

By Bethany Nanamaker, Queer Query Opinion Columnist

Rather bizarre, isn’t it? Just an hour and a half north of BGSU and I could marry whoever the hell I wanted to marry. No matter her genitalia or the box she “x’s” when she files her taxes. Mind-boggling concept, don’t cha think? Canada is one of just five countries that has legalized same-sex marriage—oooo! Can you list the other four? 10 . . . 9 . . . 8 . . . 7 . . . 6 . . . (come on! I am counting extra slowly!) 5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . (Don’t worry, this article won’t self-destruct . . .) 2 . . . 1 . . .

Ha. And you call yourself an advocate of LGBT rights! The correct answer: Along with Canada, same-sex couples in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and, most recently, South Africa can marry.

Now each country’s battle was different, and I want to focus particularly on Canada’s. Be careful. Don’t be a naïve victim of the grass-is-greener complex. Canada is not LGBT utopia. Social conservatism still thrives in our neighbor to the north. They have churches that are just as pissed in Canada as their American counterparts when it comes to the homosexual plague. So how did Canadian gays and lesbians receive legal recognition for their committed relationships when U.S. gays and lesbians seem to be fighting a losing battle?

Again, don’t make the mistake of thinking that Canada’s battle was quick or easy. In the 1960s and 1970s, Canadian homosexuals and American homosexuals were in very similar situations. They didn’t have rights. In fact, their act on their sexual orientation could lead to criminal charges. But something important happened in Canada in the 1960s. The Canadian Parliament decriminalized sodomy in 1969. It wasn’t a controversial battle. Canada was modernizing their family law, and decriminalizing sodomy was just one element of the reform. In fact, the press was more upset by law’s new position on divorce than on sodomy.

The U.S. had sodomy laws on the books until 2003, when the Supreme Court of the United States found them unconstitutional in Lawrence v. Texas. Over thirty years later. Why did it take us so long? In the United States, each state has its own criminal law. What is a theft or a first degree murder varies from New York, to Ohio, to Texas. In Canada, criminal law in Ontario is the same as criminal law in the Yukon because the federal government decides what’s theft and murder. Institutionally, congress couldn’t pass a law like Canada’s. It would violate the constitution.

Canada didn’t legalize gay marriage until 2005. So after the 1969 sodomy decriminalization, gays and lesbians still were not socially equal under the law. The next important step in the process was the 1982 addition to the Constitution of Canada. American constitutional law says that people have equal protection under the law. Canada, until 1982, didn’t have the same provision. So women, minorities, the aged, and homosexuals all suffered discrimination without the legal recourse that Americans have because of the 14th amendment. So 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights was added to the Constitution. The charter did not once mention the rights of gays and lesbians. What it did say was “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination.”

Through addition to the Constitution, gays and lesbians finally had a legal recourse to demand equality. But it still took twenty years of legal battles before the Courts acknowledged the inequality of the marriage laws. Now I’ll cut my history lesson short, as I am sure the laws and lawsuits of Canada are an acquired interest. But give me a minute to explain why I am bothering to share with you the Canadian battle for equal rights: First, don’t think the fight is impossible. Don’t think that Americans are just a particularly unwilling and hateful group of people. They aren’t. And thinking thus gives us a facile excuse to give up and to just complain.

It Isn’t Fair | Page 2
Youngest-Ever Sex-Change Patient Sparks Debate

Hormone Injections Are Under Way for 14-Year-Old as He Prepares to Switch Sexes

By DAN CHILDS, ABC News Medical Unit

Jan. 30, 2007 — Two years ago, a 12-year-old German boy became perhaps the youngest-ever patient to embark upon a sex change. Since then, the child, known only as Kim -- and formerly known as Tim -- has begun a course of hormone treatments designed to stop puberty in its tracks, preventing facial hair growth and other secondary sex characteristics experienced by boys of that age.

The hormone treatment will also give Kim breasts. And once Kim turns 18, Kim will likely have the surgery that will complete Kim's transformation into a young woman.

The treatments have sparked debate among many who worry that Kim may be too young to fully understand the ramifications of this unusual decision.

However, Dr. Achim Wüsthof, the pediatric endocrinologist who oversees Kim's treatment, says the child's case was very clear-cut from a young age, suggesting that Kim had been a little girl trapped in a little boy's body for as long as she could remember. "She started when she was 3 or 4 thinking that she was a girl," says Wüsthof, who is affiliated with the Endokrinologikum Center in Hamburg.

"It was always very clear that from her point of view she was a girl. So when she turned 12 and puberty started, there was some anxiety and panic at the prospect of the male puberty process continuing. That was the moment that the family came to see me." But not all experts in the field agree that beginning the transition from male to female is appropriate at such an early age. "Frankly, I find this troubling news," says Dr. Neera Ghaziuddin, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan. Ghaziuddin works with preteens and teens with psychological problems, and she says that although she is not intimately familiar with all the details of Kim's case, the fact that the treatment has started causes her concern. "Most 12-year-olds are still struggling with many aspects of their identity, so a permanent or a semi-permanent procedure to change gender would be undesirable, in my opinion," Ghaziuddin says.

Separating Confusion from Conviction

Kim's therapy, which entails using potent hormones to arrest the changes associated with male puberty, is reversible -- for now. "The breast development, after a certain point, will not be completely reversible unless there is an operation," Wüsthof says. "But if we stop now, within a few months Kim will be a young man."

Regardless, Wüsthof says the decision to allow Kim to go forward with the treatment was not made lightly. In accordance with German law, two independent psychiatrists were consulted on the case -- and they considered Kim's situation so profound that both recommended that treatment should proceed.

Psychological experts say that Kim's conviction could be seen as confirmation that going forward with the treatment was the proper course of action in this case.

International GLBT News

Youngest-Ever Sex-Change Patient Sparks Debate

Hormone Injections Are Under Way for 14-Year-Old as He Prepares to Switch Sexes

By DAN CHILDS, ABC News Medical Unit

Jan. 30, 2007 — Two years ago, a 12-year-old German boy became perhaps the youngest-ever patient to embark upon a sex change. Since then, the child, known only as Kim -- and formerly known as Tim -- has begun a course of hormone treatments designed to stop puberty in its tracks, preventing facial hair growth and other secondary sex characteristics experienced by boys of that age.

The hormone treatment will also give Kim breasts. And once Kim turns 18, Kim will likely have the surgery that will complete Kim's transformation into a young woman.

The treatments have sparked debate among many who worry that Kim may be too young to fully understand the ramifications of this unusual decision.

However, Dr. Achim Wüsthof, the pediatric endocrinologist who oversees Kim's treatment, says the child's case was very clear-cut from a young age, suggesting that Kim had been a little girl trapped in a little boy's body for as long as she could remember. "She started when she was 3 or 4 thinking that she was a girl," says Wüsthof, who is affiliated with the Endokrinologikum Center in Hamburg.

"It was always very clear that from her point of view she was a girl. So when she turned 12 and puberty started, there was some anxiety and panic at the prospect of the male puberty process continuing. That was the moment that the family came to see me." But not all experts in the field agree that beginning the transition from male to female is appropriate at such an early age. "Frankly, I find this troubling news," says Dr. Neera Ghaziuddin, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan. Ghaziuddin works with preteens and teens with psychological problems, and she says that although she is not intimately familiar with all the details of Kim's case, the fact that the treatment has started causes her concern. "Most 12-year-olds are still struggling with many aspects of their identity, so a permanent or a semi-permanent procedure to change gender would be undesirable, in my opinion," Ghaziuddin says.

Separating Confusion from Conviction

Kim's therapy, which entails using potent hormones to arrest the changes associated with male puberty, is reversible -- for now. "The breast development, after a certain point, will not be completely reversible unless there is an operation," Wüsthof says. "But if we stop now, within a few months Kim will be a young man."

Regardless, Wüsthof says the decision to allow Kim to go forward with the treatment was not made lightly. In accordance with German law, two independent psychiatrists were consulted on the case -- and they considered Kim's situation so profound that both recommended that treatment should proceed.

Psychological experts say that Kim's conviction could be seen as confirmation that going forward with the treatment was the proper course of action in this case.

It Isn't Fair

In 2005, when the Canadian Parliament passed the Civil Marriage Act, public opinion polls in Canada ranged from 28% of Canadians being in support of the legislation to 54% of Canadians being in support (the range was attributed to the wording of the question). In the U.S. again depending on the wording of the question, support has ranged as high as 50%.

Secondly, don't be discouraged because the fight isn't easy and hasn't been speedy. Who knew that a bill passed in 20 years ago would be the basis for gay rights in Canada? Wheels are turning even when we think no one’s changing and no one’s listening. Think of the reaction T.R. Knight or Lance Bass would have gotten from the American public 15 years ago. We are always looking to the future. We see how far we need to go. It's a big distance, I know. But don’t forget to step back and see how far we’ve come.

Lastly, don't become enamored with the grass-is-greener complex. Massachusetts is not the Garden of Eden. Neither is our neighbor to north or across the ocean. Like us, they had battles to fight. Like us, they were not easy battles. And just like us, they haven’t stopped fighting.
Youngest Sex-Change

"Two things would need to be seen here: longevity of female identification -- in other words, the individual in question should have identified as a girl since age 5 or 6 without ambiguity -- and no other signs of psychological disturbance," says Jay Reeve, assistant professor at Florida State University's department of psychology.

"It sounds as if both conditions were met in this case."

"If the kid is starting from very early in saying that he or she feels like a boy or a girl, then that's a very decisive moment," Wüsthof says. "Then it becomes very convincing that they do not belong to their biological sex."

The intervention may have also come at a critical time for the child. In most cases, hormone therapy in preparation for sexual reassignment surgery occurs at a much later age. However, there were concerns that the lower voice and facial hair growth that come along with male puberty could have been traumatic for Kim.

"If the family is noticing some extensive concern on the child's part with experiencing secondary sex characteristics, such as a deepening voice and facial hair, then that is a strong sign as well," says Michele Angello, a clinical psychologist who works with adolescents who also experience transgender tendencies.

"It becomes a problem when they are close to puberty and they begin to exhibit anxiety, depression or suicidal ideations."

Biology or Psychology?

Along with igniting a debate over the propriety of beginning the path toward sexual reassignment in such a young patient, Kim's case has also fed the discussion over whether gender preferences are in the mind or in the hormones.

"That's the $64,000 question," Reeve says, adding that recent studies have suggested that biology or genes might play an important role.

"But I'm unaware of any discovery of a clear-cut, uncontested genetic marker, such as an anomaly in brain development, that would account for this," Reeve says. "In other words, there are probably some environmental factors, but it's impossible to say without more information."

It is also likely that on some level, psychology plays an important role.

"The complicated but simple answer is that it is probably an interplay between the two, though certainly the impetus is probably something endocrine," Angello says.

But one thing is certain with regard to the therapy -- medical ethicists and the public will continue to debate whether such treatments should be allowed for young patients.

"I think that there will continue to be a great deal of controversy around this sort of procedure, regardless of the outcome here, for some time to come," Reeve says. "This is just because of the uncertainty within the field regarding the true roots of gender identity."

What's God got to do With It?

By: Frank, Ohio State University Student

Religion was a concern only when I was living in my hometown, and early on. But I guess the thing that really made me feel differently about that was my mother. She was raised Catholic, and did her best to raise me so. I actually have made 4 of 7 sacraments, but mostly it was because my mother had signed a form when she and my father were married, and she agreed to raise us all catholic. After confirmation it was our decision. I chose not to follow Catholicism anymore.

With all the conflicting opinions of religion as to what's acceptable, the best conclusion I could reach is that I don't subscribe to western religion anymore. It's a lot of well-meaning theory that's been perverted over the years for the gains of others. Of course, having a major partially rooted in history hasn't made me bitter at all.

It's actually funny if you look back at how long religion has been speaking on the subject of homosexuality, even though it's never directly forbidden in the Bible. There's a really interesting book by a man called Alain de Lille, The Plant of Nature, and he describes the different ways in which nature itself has been perverted by men. It's really funny to read, but it pissed me off pretty solid.

What’s funnier is all the cases in the past where homosexuality ran rampant. Sappho and Plato are two of the earliest recorded, as well as the story of Gilgamesh. Consider how lonely it must have been fighting wars in Europe. Women weren't plentiful; you know...

Western Religion is a system of control. Basically I take what I like from it. I may never believe in what the priest says in the sanctuary, but I will go back to mass, because it's part of my childhood. I was raised catholic, and it's really what I know. However, if my boyfriend and I have children, then we will have to discuss it. He doesn't really believe in religion, and the closest I come is something similar to Shinto, but probably more towards Taoism or maybe just simply animism. So really, I believe in what makes sense to me.
Outing the Real Woman: Coming Out Stories

Becca Key, Nursing Assistant

I don't think I ever came out to anyone close to me all at once. I'd always feel them out first, and then leave bigger and bigger hints. The more I did this, the more they wondered. When I finally did tell someone that I was a lesbian, they had already figured it out for themselves and seemed relieved that I was telling them. It seemed like everyone I told went through the same stages. They seemed completely fine with it when I first told them. Then the next day or so they would act strange about it. There were subtle differences like not giving me a hug when they gave everybody else one. Not sitting too close to me. Things like that. And in the end they either accepted it or not, or stayed in denial. It seems like the people who I thought would be least likely to accept it did. My dad, my 52 year old female friend, people like that. And those who I thought would be the mostly likely to accept it didn't; my supposedly open-minded friends, my grandma who raised me, my best friend since we were 7. Anyone who doesn't accept "it," doesn't accept me, because it's part of who I am just as much as being straight is part of who they are.

Debbie De Steno, Musician

Coming out for me was pretty easy. I always knew I was a lesbian but never thought I would act upon it. I figured I would marry a man, because that was what I was suppose to do, but have an affair with a woman. Makes sense right? Anyway, the proposal came but after much thought I declined. It really would not be fair to him or me. Then when I was 30 I finally admitted to myself the rumors in my head were true, I'm a lesbian. The minute I admitted it to myself, a huge weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. To tell you the truth, I am happy being a lesbian but it is just a small part of who I am. I am a writer, musician, lesbian, partner, daughter, sister & friend, among a million other things. I am now 40, eek, but I am happy. I have done & seen many things, probably could write a book about it but the main thing is, I am one of the lucky ones & I am comfortable in my skin. Thanks.

Bisexuality: The Best of Both Worlds?

Crystal, BGSU Student

I think that the subject of bisexuality is a tough one to tackle. While I am attracted to women, I have never been with a woman and thus am hesitant to call myself bisexual. I believe that the reason a person is bisexual could be different depending on the person. In my personal opinion, people are just people and should not be ruled out as a possible partner simply because of their sex. A person should be loved for their personality, for what is on the inside, rather than what is on the outside. Some people simply know that they are straight; some people know that they are gay. How do you make sense of the in-between? Some people are not yet sure of their path, some people believe that love is not bound by the notion of sex, and perhaps it is true that some people are just greedy. Really, I believe that everyone has their own reasons behind everything, including sexuality.

I think that I am mostly attracted to females in a physical sense. Thinking about it, I'm not completely sure why this is. In part, I believe it is because every female I have taken time to get to know and attempt to develop a relationship with has fallen through, whether it was because they found someone else or it was just a passing phase. Men have always been more readily available, and so I think I have ousted myself away from the possibility of ever having a serious relationship with another woman. Even thinking of bisexuality in regards to my own sexuality is confusing, so I think it is difficult to discuss some of the questions in a broader sense, judging why other people act or feel the way that they do. As I said before, everyone has their own reasons, different backgrounds, and different life experiences. All of this plays a part in our ideas about many things, including sexuality. There could also be a biological factor involved, so I think it is unfair to generalize and put everyone that is bisexual into one group.

See Bisexuality | Page 5
Bisexuality

Amber, Mother of Four

Well, first off, I am a bisexual and to be completely honest it’s as simple as being attracted to both men and women; just like some men are attracted exclusively to men and some women are exclusively attracted to women. The only thing that’s complicated is we are attracted to both. Personally, I hardly find that complicated to understand. I’ve been bisexual since the day I started exploring. I don’t believe people are born with it. It was more or less a discovery for me. Of course we are enjoying the best of both worlds! That doesn’t mean you have to spend the rest of your life being with both men and women. I am now married to a wonderful man with four children and one on the way. But who ruled out fun, right? As long as your partner in life is ok with that! I think everyone has a bit of bisexuality in them, some just choose to be open about it. This is my theory.

Being Bi: Not a Woman’s Choice

By: Jolene A. Decker-Keres, Motel Manager

I experienced bisexuality for myself when I was twelve years old. I figured at this point it was just a phase but year after year went by and I still found myself being attracted to both men and women. I would think there was something wrong with me at first and try to fight it, but soon I just gave into it. I grew up knowing my mother was bisexual as well and this really played tricks on my mind I mean really how is a twelve year old suppose to handle knowing her mother sleeps with both men and women? I grew up finding myself asking the same question that everyone else did: why can't she just choose one sex and settle with that and be happy? Boy what a prejudice opinion that was! I hate myself so much for thinking that because I know a lot of people sit there and think the same thing about me...

I started to really discover myself more in my teenage years. I would go around telling all my friends I was bisexual, especially the guys. I had this idea in my head that it would make them like me more. Boy was I wrong about that too! I swear as teenagers we come up with some of the oddest ideas that we think makes sense at that point and then in our adult years we look back and say “ok why did I choose to do this?” There is no reason to dwell on our mistakes though. We just need to realize that we learn from them and correct them, which is what I did.

In my adult years I only told the people that needed to know. However, don't think that I hide it because I am very proud of who I am. I didn't have a choice to choose to be bisexual. I was born this way just as I feel a gay man or lesbian woman was born that way.

How does being bisexual affect my daily life? I really don't think it does, because it's not like I walk up to people saying “hey guess what I am bisexual!” However, I have had it affect me in a bad way once or twice. I have gotten turned down by a couple of men because they said they couldn't deal with it. I look at it like this: they couldn't accept me for me. I mean that to me is just like telling someone “I can't date you because you're fat or white.” I can't change those things about me and I can't change the fact that I am bisexual either. Being bisexual is just a small part of my personality. What goes on in my bedroom stays in my bedroom.

Hiding In Shadow

Angelina Michelle Fantino,
Terra State Community College Student

Hiding in shadow
In the dark
Like a caged
And hated lark
But I got tired
And now I fight
Not just for me
But all our right
To live in freedom
Like all the rest
We are still people
Some of the best
And like a bird
I will be free
No more hiding
Not for me

I am Bi, and I will not be silent!
Fight for our right to be treated like human beings!!!

Ode to a Snow Globe

Kylie R. Marquez, Queer Query Editor-In-Chief

Drastic changes whip through me
Like I'm trapped in a glass globe snowstorm
Icy realities whipping me in the face
Leaving behind a harsh windburn of scars
As I morph from this me to that me
In a whirlwind of contradictions
never getting the chance to pinpoint my true self
I gaze past the glass and realize
I am trapped in a vicious cycle of anguish and sheer joy
Never getting to experience anything long enough to immerse myself
Faces peer in at me; shake me up and sit back to enjoy my chaos
They tap on the glass and wonder
Why I never let them in
Bisexual Survey
Answers Provided by:
Tiffany, BGSU Student
Kiki, Model
Crystal, BGSU Student
Jolene A. Decker-Keres, Motel Manager

Are we born bisexual?
“I really don’t know. I think it may be something we’re born with but most parents don’t ask their children if they like boys or girls. Nor do they know at that age most times.” - Kiki
“It’s hard to say about other people, but I know I was born bisexual. I’ve known since I was about 4 or 5 I was different and was about 12 or 13 when I realized I was attracted to both genders.” - Kari
“Yes, just as I believe that someone is born heterosexual or homosexual, you can be born bisexual as well.” - Tiffany
“Yes I believe we are born bisexual just as your born gay or lesbian. We don’t have a choice of who were attracted too.” - Jolene

Are bi people just wanting the best of both worlds?
“Some. The people who are like "I’m bi" just because they occasionally make out with someone of the same sex when they’re drunk make me mad. It’s so easy to just get drunk and make out with someone for attention, but it’s a completely different thing to date someone, especially to come out to ones family and friends, to have a lifestyle that not everyone in the world is accepting of (though seeing as homosexuality has been around since before the biblical times, you'd think that society has had more than adequate time to adjust.)” - Kiki
“Again, I can't say for others but for me it's more of a desire to be with someone; emotionally and physically intimate.” - Kari
“No, I myself am bisexual and I do have my own preferences when it comes to looking for a potential mate. I am not just looking for anything and I most certainly am not just out there for ‘the best of both worlds.’” - Tiffany
“No, I don't believe they are wanting the best of both worlds. It's just who they're attracted to and who they like. No, they're not being greedy; Its just who they are.” - Jolene

Are they lying to themselves and they are really gay/lesbian?
“I don’t think so. I’m not. I am attracted to women as well as men, but I just found someone that was right for me in the shape of a man. I don’t think sex should be a deciding issue when choosing a life mate. But that doesn’t mean that I’m not as attracted to women as I am men.” - Kiki
“I don’t think they’re lying. I think there are some who aren't sure what they are so they call themselves bisexual. I currently have a friend going through that right now.” - Kari
“It could be possible, but not in every case. I believe that many of us start out with the notion that we are heterosexual (depending on ones upbringing) and due to the myths that exist about bisexuals; many bisexuals may claim to be homosexual or heterosexual in order to escape persecution.” - Tiffany
“No they’re not lying to themselves. I am sure they know who they like and who they don't, who they’re attracted too and who they’re not. It's who we are. Again I stress we don’t choose it, we were born this way.” - Jolene

Are you bi or have a friend who is?
“Both.” - Kiki
“I am bisexual.” - Kari
“I am bisexual.” - Tiffany
“Yes I am bi and I have plenty of friends that are as well. I grew up with a bisexual mom. I have never seen or felt anything wrong with this.” - Jolene

How do people react to that?
“My family thought it was weird, but of all people my little brother took it the best. All my friends are fine with it. I went to an all girl’s high school, it is very common. I also have many gay and bi friends.” - Kiki
“I'm not truly sure. My friends support me but I can tell they're uncomfortable when I'm holding hands with another woman.” - Kari
“My family does not know yet (due to fears about family’s reaction), however, I am unafraid to show my sexuality freely with my friends here on campus. I have not experienced any negative feedback except for people asking me why am I still dating a male or if I cheated/am cheating on him.” - Tiffany
“People react by thinking I am just trying to be greedy saying I can't make up my mind. In fact, that is not the case. I am not greedy. I can make up mind. My mind is made up that I am bi.” - Jolene

How does being bi affect your life?
“I don’t think it really affects my life in one way or another. I think it affects other people’s lives more than mine. I’m fine with it; it’s the other people who have a problem.” - Kiki
Bisexual Survey

“Both negatively and positively. I have a greater chance of finding love. But When I'm dating a guy, I'm not sure sometimes if he's dating me because he likes my or if he's just trying to fulfill a three-way fantasy.”-Kari

“I obviously look at all genders and find attractive people. My current boyfriend has expressed his fear to me that he now has twice the competition for losing me. However, he has mostly gotten rid of that fear when I reassured him that being bisexual did not change how I feel about him. Also, when I hear/see negative portrayals of a bisexual, it aggravates me. For example, there is a character on the show Scrubs that is portrayed in a bisexual way, and he is the perverted, horny all the time and disgusting person that everyone else loves to hate. It is media attention like that which gets me upset.”-Tiffany

“Not too much really because I don’t really go around telling people I am. If they find out it's cool, I don’t hide the fact. Personally, I would have to say being overweight effects my life more than being bi.”-Jolene

What do you like about girls?

“Many are easier to talk to, being able to relate to things that happen in a girl’s life. I think women share a stronger bond by nature. Other than that, physically, there is a lot to find attractive about a woman’s body.”-Kiki

“I think girls are better because I can understand them more, know how to treat them, and know what they like.”-Kari

“I like their long, soft, silky, good smelling hair, their sensitivity, their personalities, their eyes; I have also found girls to be better kissers that most of the guys I have kissed.”-Tiffany

“Girls are more sensual soft and know exactly what a girl likes. Knows exactly where to touch me and how to touch me. More emotional and just gentle. Girls will put there neck out there for you more.”-Jolene

What do you like about girls guys?

“Guys have a protection quality that is admirable. It’s nice to think that there is someone there to protect you from the evils of the world. Also, depending upon the guy, they have physical attributes that are very desirable.”-Kiki

“They're very tricky... I just don't get them.”-Kari

“Their ‘masculinity’, their eyes, their personalities, basically I like the same things in both girls and guys. That’s how I knew that I was bisexual: I knew I could have a deep, loving and meaningful relationship with girls and guys and not have it make a difference. I have not dated a girl yet, and at this point I am not looking for a girlfriend because I am satisfied and in love with a wonderful guy. However, it is knowing that if something were to happen I would not look at just one gender for my next significant other.”-Tiffany

“Guys are more dominant, to the point; don’t cry at the drop of a dime, don’t have a problem telling you like it is. Guys don’t let little things bother them.”-Jolene

To Tell or Not to Tell

By: Eric Marquez, Bronx High School History Teacher

When I started teaching history in the Bronx almost three years ago, amid the chaotic whirlwind of moving to a new city and starting a new profession, the last thing on my mind was my sexuality. During those rocky weeks, the question of whether or not I would feel comfortable coming out of the closet to my colleagues let alone to my students had to take a backseat to more practical worries: provisional certification, graduate school, and the ever-dreaded lesson planning. Of course, as the time until my first day of teaching narrowed from weeks into days, the matter of my “outness” was finally pushed to the front of my mind. Clearly I had a dilemma. Whereas popular culture suggests that both educators and New Yorkers are more likely to be politically liberal and hence socially tolerant of “sexual deviants” like myself, the selfsame popular culture also highlights the stereotypical homophobia of economically depressed racial minorities like my students. And this means…? After lengthy mental debate, my estimation was this: as adult, East Coast educators, my colleagues and fellow teachers would have no problem with my gayness; but the kids neither needed to nor should know the specifics of my sexuality. Naturally, cries of “sell-out” and “hypocrite” will abound from some camps. However, I reluctantly hold to the following idea: admitting my homosexuality to the generally intolerant student population of my school would erect social and intellectual barriers to their learning that I, as a responsible educator, must try to avoid at all costs. Yes, even at the cost of full honesty. In short, in the urban environment of my students, any admission of being gay or even affiliated with gayness is a crippling blow to one’s credibility as a teacher, but more importantly as a human being.

Having decided to keep my sexuality on the proverbial “downlow”, the question became less how to hide the fact and more one of how to make it a non-issue. With a considerable background in public speaking and dramatic performance, I initially took great pains to obscure the liveliness of my body language and vitality of my vocal inflection during class lessons. For example, despite my natural inclination when reading aloud to add dialects and accents for variety and flavor, I often found myself intentionally reading in a plainly boring fashion. I also refrained from other goofy teacher behaviors that would be considered “gay” by most of my teens: flamboyantly singing national anthems, bowing to individuals upon entering my class, playing dramatic roles in class role-playing exercises. By my second year, however, I had learned that my students would accept wacky, potentially “gay” behavior from a teacher more readily than they might from a peer or stranger. Slowly, accents began to creep into my presentations and humorous headwear began to find its way onto my head [a crown for Napoleon, a pointed helmet for a German soldier!]. Now, infused with humor, drama, language, and song, my global history class has become a livelier and I daresay more learning-filled place to be. When I think back on my earlier dilemma [to tell or not to tell?] I almost laugh at the absurdity of it all. While a high school kid surely doesn’t need to know whom his teacher sleeps with at night, he has every right to the uncensored entirety of his engaging personality. In the end the answer was simple: if you have to hide it, hide it in plain sight!
Ugly Betty’s New Character  
By: Stephanie Gorse, LGBTA-Q Resource Center Intern

Recently, the LGBT community has been more prevalent on television than before. One new show, Ugly Betty, has started to introduce LGBT characters into its storyline. Ugly Betty first aired in late September of 2006 with a bang as the show’s ratings increased by every episode.

Ugly Betty has had a lot of twists this season: characters confessing to murder, manipulative employees, and love triangles. However, two weeks ago Ugly Betty introduced a new twist—a transgender character.

There was not much publicity done for this episode, but Ugly Betty fans still tuned in to see what the new twist was. Although many viewers were surprised by the new character, Ugly Betty didn’t really play it off as a big deal. Once the reveal was over and done with, the huge hullabaloo was over. None of the previous characters really mentioned much of Alexis’ (the male who transformed into a female) transformation.

Ugly Betty, however, made sure to clearly define a transgender individual through the character’s dialogue in the show. In one episode, Betty, the main character, reads a pamphlet, saying, “Transsexuals have surgery to reassign themselves to the opposite sex”, when explaining to her father the difference between drag and transsexual.

Although one can argue that the few mild jokes made about Alexis’ transformation were wrong, Ugly Betty’s intention was definitely not to hurt anyone in the LGBT community. In fact, Ugly Betty represents Alexis in a positive light and, it appears, that the show is trying to break down boundaries—rather than building them up.

The show was previously known for trying to overcome a stereotype of a ‘beautiful’ woman, and now Ugly Betty is trying to do the same with LGBT individuals.

Ugly Betty airs Thursday nights at 8PM EST.

The Second Childhood  
By: Andy Cook-Feltz, BGSU Student

There are certain gay men, whether knowingly or otherwise, who mature and grow wiser, more accepting, more responsible, more respectable, and less reckless with time. They develop at a consistent pace, gaining knowledge through experience, and coming to terms with their own self, their inner reality as the years continue.

And then there are gay men who neither mature nor change as they age. Their youthful, more care-free, and perhaps ignorant or conceited personalities from the ripe age of 19 never develop further with the passage of time. They do not seek wisdom, do not gain from their experiences, they have no self-curiosity, no moral center, no spiritual journey ahead of them. They do not attempt to recognize social change, they do not engage in committed relationships, and they do not stop thinking about sex. All. Day. Long.

They go to gay bars and clubs, middle-aged, either alone or with boys considerably younger than they are, and they intend to find a really hot, drunk one to take home and screw.

Or maybe they stay in on the weekends, and maybe even some of them have partners. But their lives never change. I believe it’s because they’re re-living their childhoods. Childhoods that were stolen from them because of a non-inclusive society which has no problem controlling “normal” love, straight love, An Institution Between A Man And A Woman love.

Homosexual people don’t have childhoods that they can call Gay, and there are still adult ones that cannot truly call any part of their lives Gay. At very young ages, they start to realize that they are unique. They become self-aware. At that time, however, they don’t understand what homosexual means. And how could they? What child, between the ages of 5-10, truly understands sexuality? (Amber Alert: if you have a child between the ages of 5-10 who truly understands sexuality, and you’re reading this right now, I must inform you of a very serious situation: Your Child is A Freak And Most Likely A Hooker.) That’s why to heterosexuals, the idea of gay people “coming out” is so fascinating. It’s such a mysterious concept to those who haven’t experienced it. Gay people are often asked, “When did you come out? What was it like? How did your family react?” And sometimes the famous, “When did you first realize you were gay?” question is posed. At times, it seems like an interrogation. “Where were you when Kennedy was shot?” would be the next likely inquiry.

“Oh, Kennedy was shot when I was coming out of the closet. It was really quite amusing, when you think about it. There I was, 1963, age 16 in my bedroom one afternoon. I was just on my way out of a closet, when I looked at myself across the room in the mirror. I saw myself emerge from the darkness of that closet, thought it out, and decided, ‘I knew it. I am gay!’ and I was on my way into the kitchen to tell my grandmother the news when she dropped her cherry cobbler all over the floor and screamed, “God almighty! The president’s been shot!”
The Second Childhood

Gay sexual adults today were children during a time either of sexual discrimination, or homosexual discrimination and oppression. Most parents of homosexuals did not openly discuss sexual inclusion and social acceptance of all genders and sexual orientations. Children constantly received messages of disapproval and shame from the rest of the world if they started to believe they had deep, uncontrollable emotions toward members of their own gender. So, to a homosexual, the chance to come forward and announce to the whole world, “I’m gay and I don’t care what you think!” is a brave and exhilarating experience. Soon after, many gay teenagers and young adults began behaving immaturely, doing fun, frivolous activities with other gay people their own age or even younger without considering the short or long-term consequences of such actions. This behavior, for some, is like a second childhood. A gay childhood that they never had. And what’s more, they get to live like children with all of the extra bonuses of technically being an adult! That is the equivalent of a 14-year-old sex maniac having a driver’s license, having an adult job, and being able to purchase and consume alcohol. These “gay teenagers” who are really in their 20’s, 30’s, 40’s and beyond, have credit cards, they have their own place to live. Their homes can become the center of parties, of drug use, of sexual promiscuity, of absolutely anything they want. They are adult on the outside, but they are adolescent within.

I blame George W. Bush; because I find that when in doubt, blame Dubya. The chances are likely that you can find proof of his being attached to any major social dilemma, whether directly or indirectly. No matter what the specific details are, George W. Bush is a screw-up. In fact, his politics are so deeply and utterly screw-ed up that he had to insert his middle initial into his presidency, so as to not confuse his screw-ed up administration with his father’s screw-ed up administration, an administration that was the four year-version of the current idiotic nightmare. Both of the presidents Bush are so screw-ed up that twenty years from now, when the mistakes of the Republicans are finally corrected and dealt with by the liberal parties, people will say,

“Say, which President Bush was it again who made this giant blunder?”
“Oh, it was George Bush.”
“Which George Bush? Father, or son?”
“Well, technically, they’re both fathers and sons.”
“You know what I mean, Maureen.”
“Ethel, don’t tell me what I do or do not know.”
“I mean, was it the first or the second one?”
“You mean first or second term? But he only had one term!”
“I don’t mean term, I mean which administration. The earliest or the one after that?”
“For which president?”
“BUSH!”

“Gee, Ethel, I really wish there was a better way to tell those two apart…”

Gay men- along with their pseudo alter egos, straight women- are all conditioned to be 30 or younger their entire lives. Gay men put as much pressure on themselves to be eternally young and beautiful as they enforce for the rest of the queer community. At age 21, I had a gay friend inform me that I need to purchase firming eye lotion to take care of my crow’s feet. Crow’s feet? At age 21? That’s a priority in someone’s life? What might be the end result of an entire culture of individuals who are striving for a young, sexy, fashionable physical appearance? Can the outer have as strong of an impact on the inner as one would think? Or are all gay men actually pearls with really expensive Prada shells covering their true identity?

My own guess is that the continued acts of gay rights activists will contribute to be a rude-awakening for many members of the queer community. With the inclusion of gay rights in our daily lives, such as adoption, marriage, and anti-discrimination policies, perhaps gay men will start to realize that physical beauty is not nearly as fabulous as being an equal member of society.

What’s Happening in BG

February 24, 2007
2nd Annual LGBT Symposium:
LGBT Families and the American Society (10am-4pm in room 308 of the Bowen-Thompson Student Union)

Rainbow Dayz Events

March 26-March 31, 2007

Monday: Jade Esteban Estrada,
ICONS Vol 3: The Lesbian and Gay History of the World 9PM, Multipurpose room

Tuesday: Ryan Scout, F-M Speaker, Women’s Center, 2:30PM Ally Appreciation Meeting

Wednesday: 6 o’clock series in the Union on Gay Marriage
Queer Movie 9PM Union Theatre

Thursday: Queer Aquarium 11-4PM, Union Oval

Friday: Queer Prom featuring keynote speaker Wes Culwell from Boy Meets Boy, Multipurpose room

Interns Wanted: the LGBTA-Q Resource Center, Fall 2008

Do you need credit for an Academic Internship?
Are you interested in furthering the rights for LGBT Folks at BGSU?
Are you interested in learning skills for your future career?
The LGBTA-Q Resource center is currently looking for Interns for the Fall 2008 Semester. If you are interested, or have any questions, contact the resource center at NickyD@bgnet.bgsu.edu