



OUTlines

What's IN for those who are OUT (or not) at Penn February 2006 ~ Vol. 16, No. 3

λ Alliance

Last April, the idea of an LGBTQA coalition was born, and soon after a town-hall meeting was called to garner input about the idea from community members. Although nothing concrete happened directly after --

despite an e-mail based effort over the summer -- the meeting laid the foundations for what is now looking to become a reality.

Before students left for winter break in 2005, a group of undergraduate LGBTQA leaders met to draft a constitution for an undergraduate umbrella group following the example of the Latino Coalition, Umoja, and the Asian Pacific Student Coalition. In other words, an organization that would bring all LGBTQA undergraduate groups together to have a united voice on campus. After roughly nine revisions, the new constitution was ready to be presented to the rest of the community.

On January 30, 2006 a second and potentially final town-hall meeting was held. At the meeting, numerous concerns were brought up. Many wondered whether the name of the coalition, the Lambda Alliance, was

appropriate. Would anyone beside insiders understand the significance and the traditions behind the Lambda

symbol? Would non-members feel as though their voice was represented? Should graduate students be involved actively? How does Delta Lambda Phi fit into the coalition?

Although the above questions and concerns are important and shouldn't be ignored, in my opinion we cannot allow them to stand as a blockade to manifesting the umbrella organization. Once a coalition is formed, the LGBTQA undergraduate community will no longer stand divided. We can stand as a unified whole, aspire, and achieve as one.

So, we can continue to argue about the fickle things in life, such as whether people will be confused about a name deeply rooted in history and tradition. We can try to reinvent the wheel when wondering about how to approach and represent the closeted and questioning. What we need to do is get over the initial minute details and lay the foundations for future generations of undergraduate LGBTQA leaders to build upon.

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“Once a coalition is formed, the LGBTQA undergraduate community will no longer stand divided. We can stand as a unified whole, aspire, and achieve as ONE.”

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Diversify the What?

I would like to take a moment and have a little fireside chat with y'all about QPenn. Okay okay, so the fire is just a crummy DVD playing on the plasma screen in the Center's Goodhand Room and I could only find one that plays Christmas carols, but that's not the point. Settle in for a little history and explanation behind this year's QPenn theme.

What is QPenn and why do we have it? Personally, I describe QPenn as Penn's LGBT awareness week where we focus on programming and events highlighting activities within and around Penn's LGBTQ community and in the greater Philadelphia area. We do this by hosting events representing various LGBTQ groups and collaborations with outside organizations supporting our goals. QPenn is one of the most active and focused periods of LGBT activism and awareness on Penn's campus; it is also our time to reach out to the community and show our Philadelphia cohorts what the University LGBTQ community is about.

So what's QPenn about this year and why are we focusing on diversity? Let's start by looking at themes in our recent past:

"Who's in Your Gayborhood?" (2002) is a solid theme and amazing cover for the supplement. Truly inspired and wonderfully tailored to the type of questions we need to ask. This theme questioned not only the make up of the community but also whether you knew and acknowledged their presence.

"Queer. There. Everywhere." (2003) It's a theme, a little tired looking back on it, but

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March 21-28
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still a solid effort. Nothing wrong with it, although I can imagine it might freak some folks out.

"Queer as Apple Pie" (2004) is another normalizing theme that was accompanied by an inspired supplement cover. The year focused on the Penn community and developing ourselves to be especially notable during the townhall meeting.

"Generation Q: Question Everything" (2005), last year's theme was an amalgam. It was a bit of two themes and came together in an interesting harmony highlighting aspects of the community not often questioned especially on

Penn's campus. We started asking questions about who we are and how we are different and the same as everyone else.

Finally, this year's theme, "Diversify the Q." This theme reflects the diversity of the LGBTQ community and takes an active role in exposing the full range of that diversity. To answer a question that came up early in the process, namely "diversify the queer? What does that mean?" The 'Q' is not meant as an acronym for queer, but as a symbol for the Q of QPenn and to interrogate what QPenn is really about and who it represents.

We want to highlight niches and aspects of the community that aren't seen or heard from regularly. We also would like to show communities that are consistently and methodically doing their part to further LGBTQ communities through their political work, health initiatives, and other often neglected yet creative routes. I feel "Diversify the Q" is not limited to the LGBTQ community. It is a theme embracing the commitment of all people to LGBTQ progress — be it for themselves, their family, their friends, or just their commitment to a democratic

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T, B, OR TMI?

Top or bottom? Which are you? I cannot tell you the number of times I have been asked that question. It seems as if it is one of defining aspect of the entire queer male community. It doesn't matter how you identify yourself in terms of sexuality but at some point you will be likely asked that question. Well, I happen to have my own question...why? Why do you need to know? Why is it that before my name comes out of my mouth, you need to know my sexual preferences? I don't think the topic of conversation needs to go there after one sentence. More importantly, a single word should not alter your perception of me. Is it really that important? Sadly, the answer is, yes!

"It's amazing. We have so much in common...but wait you're not a top are you?"

"Ummm, yeah, what does that have to..."

"I'm a top, too. Awww, I don't think this is going to work."

One single word just destroyed a perfectly good conversation. Hi, have you ever heard of being friends? When a conversation is dominated by sex, its no wonder heterosexual people stereotype LGBT people as promiscuous, especially gay men. A choice of sexual position should not be the end all, be all. As previously illustrated, two tops just can't work. The same conversation would occur between two bottoms. Now get a top and a bottom together and

it's all good. Why? Two bottoms can't get along.

I even wonder how people have an idea of their sexual position preference. Do people have a deep internal reflection that ends with, "you know what, after a lot of thought, I really can't be anything other than a bottom." I doubt it. I would wager that more times than not it is a culturally and socially pressured decision. I know I definitely felt the pressure even from some of my straight friends and acquaintances to make a decision. Many times assumptions would be made that placed me in a certain role. Oh, you switch when you walk, I bet you're a bottom. Before I even knew how gay men had sex I was supposed to decide what position I prefer. Why does it have to be so binary? Is that really it? Top or bottom? Wait a moment, there is another category for those lucky individuals who do not prefer one over the other, versatile. Although many times placed in league with top and bottom, versatile does not gain the same credence as a choice. In my experience, I have been given only two choices. Just recently, I realized people could be versatile.

In the end I can't help asking why someone can't just...be. Is it against some great homosexual rule that every queer male must identify his sexual behavior? If I don't make a choice will I never



find a lover? Better yet, will not knowing destroy the foundation of queer male culture? I think quite the opposite. I think it might help. It would get rid of the pressure to fit into one of our culture's defined roles. Please, don't act like you don't know. Certain traits and roles come with the assumption of being a top or bottom. Tops are considered tall and masculine, while bottoms are short and effeminate. So, what happens when you get a five foot top with a lisp? Is he a top or bottom? Oh wait, I just realized I forgot versatile again. But what if that person doesn't like to do every position with every lover he has?

Why don't we just stop; stop putting people into boxes. Isn't it enough that straight people do it to our community? Sexual compatibility is important, but it should not stop two potential friends, or even lovers from talking to one another. Sex is not so defined, it is fluid and changing.

"So, Malek...Top or bottom?"

-Malek "False Alto" Lewis

OUT & IN-FOCUS:

Ancil George CGS'76

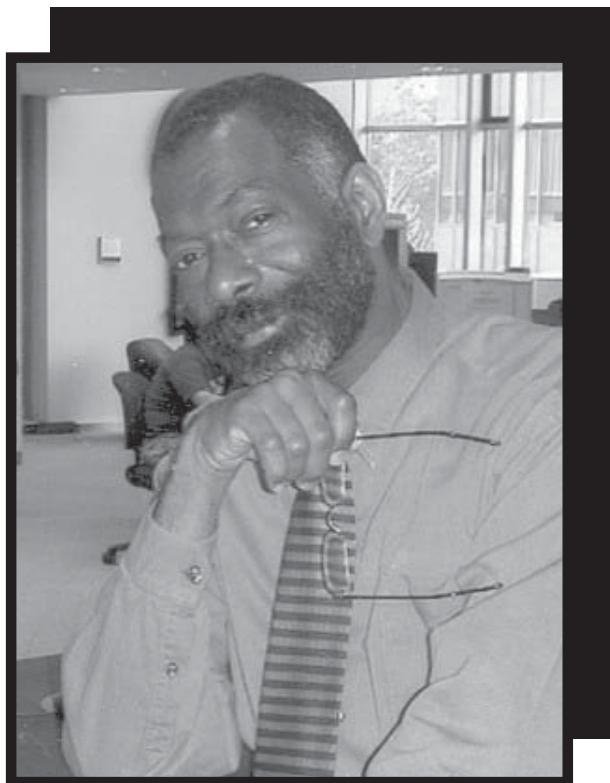
“People often times feel a lil more comfortable with those who are crazy, so I’d rather be considered crazy than sane.”

-Ancil George

Throughout our conversation, Ancil would pause, shake his head, chuckle to himself and then simply state, “people think I’m crazy...crazy because I believe in sharing my home phone number with students (Home #: 215-748-1718), crazy because I simply love my job, crazy because I can honestly look back on my life without regrets.” And I, a social work student and LGBT Center Intern sat in awe and hoped I could reach the day when I felt and believed in all Ancil shared.

Ancil George has been affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania since January 5, 1970. Ancil began his Penn journey in 1969 on a three month vacation from his government job in Trinidad and Tobago when he visited his mother, a nurse, in New York City. Upon arriving in New York, his mother and friends began to plot his life in the US. After initially being offered acting parts

in several television commercials and a soap opera, he declined them based on his shyness. Ancil was then tricked into coming to the University of Pennsylvania by some friends who just wanted to



see if his exam results from Trinidad and Tobago would ‘work’ in terms of college admittance. During his visit he was interviewed by Ambrose Davis, International Recruiter and Head Librarian at Van Pelt Library. Within weeks he simultaneously was accepted as both a full-time librarian and part-time student.

Twenty-six years later, Ancil does not have any regrets — instead

he considers himself lucky. He has experienced incidents of racism, however, as a result of being refused admittance to local Gayborhood night spots based on his race. Initially, he did not share his sexual orientation with others fearing reprisal. Ancil admits, though, that once he came out it was fortunate that he experienced much less hate than other classmates and peers.

His move to the Reference Department shifted his personal level of comfort even more. He vividly recalls attending one of his first staff meetings in which a male colleague stated he was having, “man troubles.” Ancil now refers to this moment as the one in which the burden of hiding his sexual orientation was lifted. It was in that moment he could focus on the priorities

in his life, like the absolute love he has for his job (Home #: 215-748-1718).

Ancil currently feels that although it is unnecessary for him to stand on the roof tops and shout his sexual orientation, it is essential to be a gay-male-of-color role model and display a level of comfort and strength for others who might be struggling. He connects this ‘mission’ to his life in a way that gives others permis-

sion to live theirs. He can not be responsible for how others will react, but instead it is simply a 'must' for Ancil to share any part of his life with those who find themselves on a broken road (Home #: 215-748-1718).

By sharing his personal life one-on-one and via the distribution of his home phone number, Ancil feels he is fulfilling a responsibility. When a student calls at 3am asking for help with a research paper and halfway through the conversation acknowledges her/his/hir personal struggle, Ancil recognizes he may not have all the answers, but he is equipped to refer the student to the appropriate Penn resources. Such situations justify why Ancil is available all hours of the day and night as well as why he is involved in many aspects of the campus in general.

He concluded the interview by stating that he considers himself a little crazy, defiantly lucky, and not an angel — just Ancil. I consider myself all the better for spending an hour with someone who truly lives the life of a humble angel.

-Alex Ernst

If you, or another Penn alumni you know, want to be featured in "Out & In Focus," or if you want to suggest another alumni to be highlighted, please contact the OUTlines staff at <center@dolphin.upenn.edu> or 215-898-5044.

Thank you!

Beautiful Daughters

February 9, 2006 left no shortage of options for those looking for queer programming at Penn. Allies sponsored their annual Freedom to Marry Day event, complete with wedding cake, petition signing, and a presentation by Brenda Crossman (see p. 6). The Queer Student Alliance joined with others to bring the lauded "Fight Apathy Tour," which featured five artists combining their talents to present a socially conscious performance addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The final event of the evening played to a packed room of students, staff, faculty, and community members at the Carriage House. With Penn's 2006 V-Day Committee, the LGBT Center screened the captivating documentary *Beautiful Daughters*, followed by a Q&A session with one of the film's featured performers, Leslie Townsend (*OUTlines*, Dec 2005, p. 5).

Beautiful Daughters is a documentary about the first all transgender production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*. It follows the experience of these women as they came together for the momentous performance and creation of the first transgender piece in *Monologues*. Ensler embraces the complexity, vulnerability, beauty and humanity of trans women and recognizes them in the movement to end violence against women. It was an emotionally riveting experience, evident by the way the audience pulsed and sighed through every unfortunate technical difficulty. They were on the edge of every word and nothing was missed. The room filled with laughter, anger, and tears through each scene and story.

Ultimately we cut the screening short, only seeing thirty minutes of the hour long production due to technical difficulties. The obvious disappointment quickly diminished, however, as Leslie dove right in to the question and answer period, allowing more time for audience members to hear her story. Many of the comments included a thank-you to Leslie for being a role model and inspiration for transgender people.

If you wished you were at this event or just missed the second half of the film, do not fret. As promised, another viewing of *Beautiful Daughters* will be on Wednesday, March 1, 2006 in the Class of '55 Auditorium [Van Pelt Library]. This screening is co-sponsored by Van Pelt Library and the LGBT Center, and will again feature Ms. Townsend.

To become more involved in campus gender issues, there is an active LGBT Center task force that has been instrumental in informing policy around, and the enforcement of, the two year old gender identity clause in Penn's non-discrimination policy. You can contact Erin Cross at <ecross@pobox.upenn.edu> for more information.

-Ninah Harris

After I Do

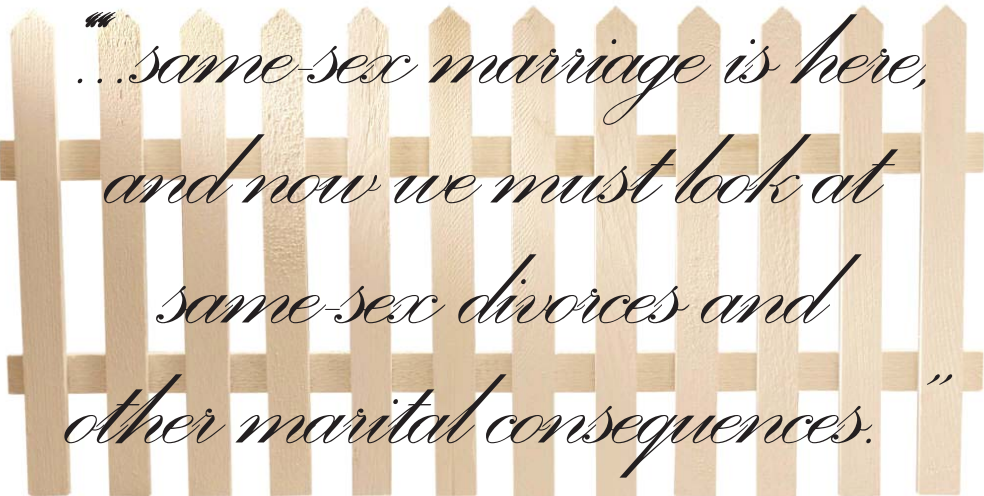
To celebrate Freedom to Marry Day, a bit early, Allies and the Office of the Provost flew in Professor Brenda Cossman on February 9 from University of Toronto's Law School for a lecture entitled, "After I Do: Looking at Same-Sex Marriage in the Present Tense." To most people, specifically Americans, legalized same-sex marriage may still appear to be a futuristic concept.

However, in her lecture Cossman declared same-sex marriage is here already, so we must look at same-sex divorces and other marital issues. She also questioned the motives of individuals who have the right to marry and refuse to do so. On the other hand, she asked us to think about why marriage is such a special and cherished form of a relationship. Finally, she explained what the right to marry has done, and will do, for LGBTQ people today.

While same-sex marriage is legal in the lone American state of Massachusetts, as well as the countries of Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and South Africa by December of 2006, in the majority of the world it is still

illegal. Canada, Professor Cossman's home country is the only nation that currently allows gay marriage and does not have a residency requirement. As such, Canada has made it possible for homosexuals residing outside of

the US who were married in Canada, as you can't get a divorce if you are not legally married. What about the kids? What happens when you have adopted or even biological kids? Instead of



"...same-sex marriage is here, and now we must look at same-sex divorces and other marital consequences."

proposing solutions, Cossman's tried to emphasize the subject's complexity.

Other thought provoking questions during the lecture were: should gay

people be married simply because they have the right? And, is marriage a form of normalizing or "de-gayifying" ourselves? Both of these questions illustrated Cossman's knowledge of the opposition to marriage as well as other views. She explained some people fight for LGBTQ rights simply because they believe all people should have equal rights. They do not necessarily want to get married; they may simply want the partner benefits that come along with marriage. On the other hand, some people are against LGBTQ marriage altogether. Many of them see marriage as a hetero-normative practice and do not want to conform to these

the country, the majority of which are Americans, to marry. However, once they return home, their legal union is no longer recognized. This concept made me wonder whether or not a marriage in Canada could be worth much to me if it means nothing in my homeland. I understand, as Cossman mentioned, that the cultural and symbolic implications of such a marriage would be permanent. Yet, symbolic marriage is not the same as legal marriage providing rights, or is it?

So, once you are married, how can you be divorced? Considering the high divorce rates in the world, this was the next question Cossman proposed. She expressed how the question is most compli-

people be married simply because they have the right? And, is marriage a form of normalizing or "de-gayifying" ourselves? Both of these questions illustrated Cossman's knowledge of the opposition to marriage as well as other views. She explained some people fight for LGBTQ rights simply because they believe all people should have equal rights. They do not necessarily want to get married; they may simply want the partner benefits that come along with marriage. On the other hand, some people are against LGBTQ marriage altogether. Many of them see marriage as a hetero-normative practice and do not want to conform to these

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They Will Know Us by Our Fruits

Recently, our community celebrated Freedom to Marry Day. It is in this light that I wish to examine briefly the arguments of the conservative right. People, like James Dobson of Focus on the Family, attempt to dress marriage up in an idealized Christian frock and ignore fundamental principles of fairness and equality.

The right to marry is sometimes eschewed by our community and allies because it feels too much like seeking a hetero-normative construct. This is not, however, about getting gussied up, hiring your brother to take photographs, running to the cute white church on the corner, and having a drunken reception in the fire hall. This is about civil marriage and basic rights that will strengthen

and support
q u e e r
families.

C e l -

brate in whatever fashion you will and wherever you like, but it is best not to conflate religious marriage with civil marriage to the detriment of our equal rights.

Many on the far right argue marriage is a natural institution between one man and one woman. Who defines natural marriage? In this case, the religious right has taken it upon itself to define marriage for us. The argument is predicated on the idea that marriage has always been one way and should stay that way.

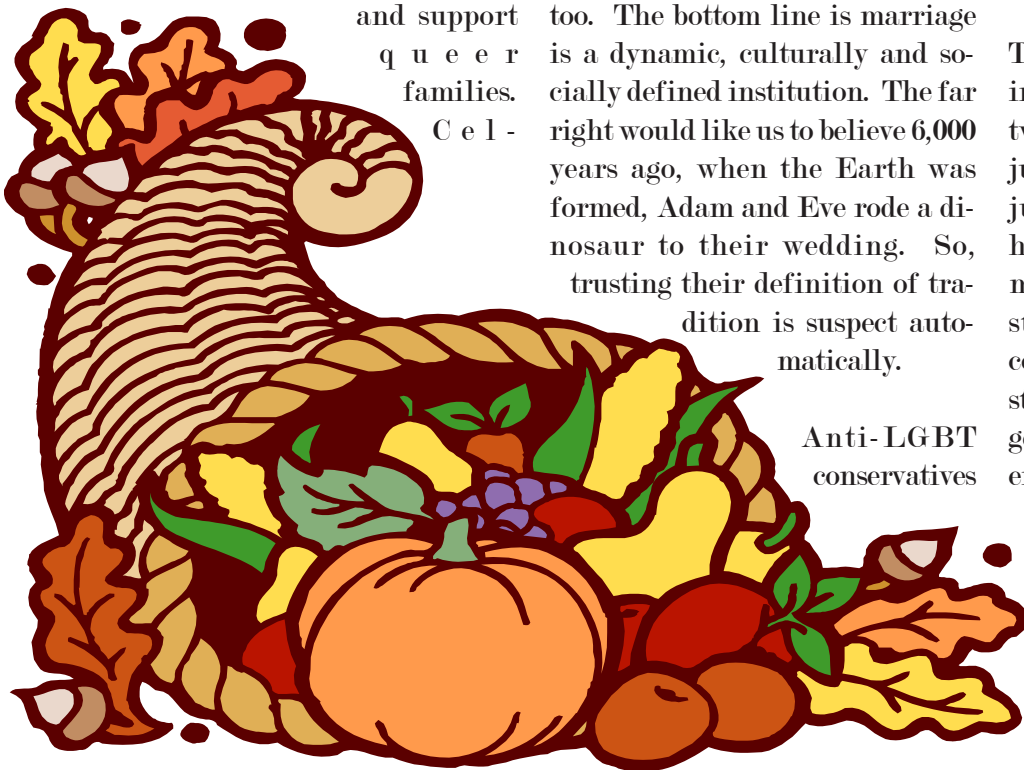
The idea of marriage having anything to do with love is a modern construct. Historically, marriage was about property, economics, and politics. Furthermore, it was not too long ago interracial marriage was illegal and divorce was, too. The bottom line is marriage is a dynamic, culturally and socially defined institution. The far right would like us to believe 6,000 years ago, when the Earth was formed, Adam and Eve rode a dinosaur to their wedding. So, trusting their definition of tradition is suspect automatically.

Anti-LGBT
conservatives

also posit a natural marriage is one open to procreation. Taken to its logical end, marriage should then be denied to all sterile, impotent, and postmenopausal persons. Why are these people allowed loving relationships acknowledged by the state and thus guaranteed certain rights if they are not contributing equally to the procreative national output?

The big heart-tugging argument people seem to buy is this: <cue the lone violin music> would you deny this child the benefits of a mother and father, for just two pennies a day...sorry, I was carried away. This argument is one that sadly, even Middle America seems to accept despite the fact that many people are raising children on their own or in separated or divorced households.

There is plenty of evidence showing children with two mothers or two fathers are just as well adjusted, and sometimes better adjusted, than children with two heterosexual parents. I'll avoid making a blanket statement about straight couples versus LGBT couples raising children and instead offer this: regardless of the gender pairing of parents, the best environments are those in which children are loved and cared for genuinely. It is the denial of marriage that harms children who cannot have survivor benefits or are caught in custody



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Expansion & Contraction of Democracy

I recently had the opportunity to re-meet Suzanne Pharr. My first encounter with her was shortly after reading her book, *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*. She was speaking at a National Association of Social Workers, New Jersey Conference on LGBTQ, intersex, and /questioning people. Inspired by her talk in New Jersey, the LGBT Center decided to bring her to Penn during our annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Symposium on Social Change.

Pharr, a Southern White Lesbian Political Handywoman was invited to speak about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Southern Black Reverend Civil Rights Leader. What would have inspired us to bring Pharr to speak at our event?

Pharr, too, noted this during her talk, but offered an area in which there was prominent similarity: our connection to the debate over the expansion and contraction of democracy. The Civil Rights Movement was the predecessor to all social change movements which followed in the United States and as such, we have been the benefactors of this movement. The Civil Rights Movement

helped spawn the movements for women, Chicano farm workers, people with disabilities, other groups of color, LGBT people, and others. To Pharr, there certainly are commonalities of the teachings of Dr. King and the legacy he leaves with us today.

Social movements have helped to expand society's definition of democracy. What were once considered special rights, are now considered human rights. The philosophy of the expansion of democracy can be achieved in several ways and Pharr left us with a few suggestions:

- (1) politicize our lives – let our issues be ones for public discourse
- (2) resist fear – although the Right would like to convince us there are things to fear (terrorism), we should fight fear as it is used as a mechanism of control
- (3) choose one organization for social change – while we could have many, we should at least invest as much as we can in one
- (4) listen to, or watch one progressive media outlet – hearing a liberal perspective can have an impact on us
- (5) form small progressive groups – the best way to organize is by starting small and building a strong contingency

(6) do one political thing for Katrina victims – this event pulled the wool from our eyes about the racism in the US, and she urged us to do something about it

(7) keep hope alive – even when we are faced with defeat, we should always have hope, for without it we have already lost our battle.

I also had the pleasure of speaking with Pharr one-on-one about my personal struggle as a social worker and community activist. I explained I have felt pulled between the two fields, because social workers deal with disenfranchised communities and populations, we rarely are given the opportunity to do community organizing since much of our time is monopolized by contractual obligations. For social work activists working in human service organizations, she said this was a challenge we would have to figure out. She called social work activists of my generation who had to grapple with this issue, “hybrids.” Social workers, other helping professionals, and community activists will have to figure out a way of providing these services while also doing organizing in and around community.

- Félix Pérez

ëlliance

...from p. 1

[Editor's Note: Undergraduate constituent groups are voting on the ratification of the Lambda Alliance's constitution currently. Elections for Alliance board po-

sitions will be held February 22, 2006.]

-Marianne Mondt


Diversify the What?

...from p. 2

state with equal protections for all people.

How are we doing this? By organizing collaborative events showing as many aspects of the community as possible. Some examples are: "Flying Fish," a film

depicting



...make a difference by 'diversifying the Q' and having your voice heard.

the lives of

Christians who've lived through efforts to nullify their homosexuality; a Chat 'n Chew with Barbara Savage of the History Department and cosponsored by Makuu; another leather and kink demonstration cosponsored by the Office of Health Education with new activities, presenters, and old favorites; and "The History of the Gay World Part I" a show performed by Jade Esteban Estrada and cosponsored by the Latino Coalition.

Finally, I would like to invite people to help us in our final planning for QPenn. Meetings are still occurring and decisions are still being made. Join us and make a difference by "diversifying the Q" and having your voice heard. Please contact Phil Cochetti (cochetti@sas.upenn.edu) for more details.

- Phil Cochetti

After I Do

...from p. 6

norms, but that is another topic altogether.

One of the last subjects Cossman discussed was why two married people should receive more rights over any other two people, for example two sisters, living together and co-dependent upon another. What is the difference between those relationships beside the legality of marriage? Cossman proclaimed that she feels the only difference is sex. This was specifically thought provoking after she introduced the discussion of the television show "Queer as Folk." The show, a series about four gay males and their lives, is a view into gay life. In its first episode, one of the main characters, in describing gay men, explained that, "The thing you need to know, is it's all about sex." The show insinuates gay male life is only about sex. Therefore, if marriage is about sex and gay men are all about sex, why are gay men, and by extension lesbians, not able to marry legally? Is it only about heterosexual sex?

The thought provoking questions, statistics, and examples Cossman provided were refreshing. As a Canadian, she brought a new perspective on the notion of marriage in the present tense. One that given the circumstances in the US is not seen or heard — the overarching theme of the new possibilities marriage may bring to the LGBTQ community.

-KeAndra Dodds

They Will Know Us...

...from p. 7

battles because the only adoptive or birth parent dies and her/his/hir partner has no parental rights.

The list of arguments can go on, but I gather you have been inundated with these arguments and counter arguments. So I'll leave with a concern and a hope. First, my concern: fundamentalists may fall flat on religious arguments, but in terms of whose winning in the court of public opinion, we have much work to do.

It will not be the fundamentalist right that determines our future, but Middle America. I agree with the Human Rights Campaign Vice President for Communications who said: "We're not going to win at the ballot box until we start winning at the water cooler and in the church pews." Although we may be able to gain victory in the courts, it is society we wish to ultimately win over. We must not only write to our lawmakers, but live our lives boldly and beautifully as part of the human family. We must be noticed as people of dignity and character who contribute to society in fundamentally important ways, and we must not let ourselves be stereotyped by the media. As the tide of popular opinion turns, it will become easier to win victories in the legislative halls and courtrooms. In the end, people will look back and they will know us by the fruits...of our labor.

-Jason Lally

The Importance of Being Allied

Being an ally is so much a part of my Penn experience. Without learning about Allies and its mission during New Student Orientation, my freshman experience would not have been the same. At the beginning of the fall semester, I remember stumbling from place to place and being ambushed by crazed student leaders trying to stuff colored flyers in my bag. I ventured from table to table until I reached the Allies' corner. I signed up to be on their listserv, hoping to learn more about the awareness of LGBT issues and its allied communities.

When I came to Allies first meeting, I was greeted by the board, who established a welcoming atmosphere for those new to Penn and/or to the organization. Through their icebreakers and discussion of LGBT issues, I learned more about how we could

inform the whole Penn community about awareness of issues affecting everyone. I subsequently went to their meetings and soon became more involved. I particu-



larly enjoyed the Allies Coffeehouse Event about AIDS awareness this past fall, which featured a wide range of performing arts groups. All proceeds went to Philadelphia FIGHT, an AIDS awareness organization, which helped us acknowledge that disease knows no gender, no ethnicity, and no sexual orientation. The Coffeehouse showed that the LGBTQA community must stand together and shed light on

issues, such as AIDS, affecting Philadelphia, the United States, and the world.

Through Allies, I have learned about a thriving community to which I was not exposed in central New Jersey. This comes to show the LGBT and allied community is the only one in which people of different races, socioeconomic status, genders, sexual orientations, and political views can come together. I will continue to immerse myself in this group and raise awareness around issues of health disparities, civil liberties, and body image within the LBGT community through Allies, as an LGBT Center work-study student, and on campus at-large.

-Sheyla Medina

[For more information about Allies, go to <http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~allies>]

The editorial staff of *OUTlines* seeks submissions from all members of the Penn community. Poetry, stories, essays, artwork, and articles are welcome. Inquiries and/or submissions should be sent to:

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