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The Newsletter of Blind, Friends, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People (BFLAG)

BFLAG is affiliated with the American Council of the Blind and is dedicated to facilitating the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information relative to matters of concern to blind people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender Visit us at

www.BFLAGNATIONAL.org

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

by Don Brown

Welcome to this extra edition of InsideOut. Due to popular demand, it was decided to issue an extra edition of the newsletter because you requested it and there's lots of information to share with you and we didn't want it to be completely overshadowed by convention information, which will dominate the annual Convention Edition newsletter, scheduled to be published in mid June.

Speaking of convention, as many of you know by now, BFLAG will hold its convention in conjunction with the American Council of the Blind's 48th annual convention, scheduled for Orlando, Florida from July 3rd through July 12th, 2009, at the Rosen Centre Hotel. You can make reservations by calling (407) 996-9840

I am pleased to report that BFLAG's Convention coordinating committee has managed to significantly scaled back the costs associated with our program and activities for this year. The effort to reduced the costs is directly responsive to a number of concerns raised by our members. It's our intention that the costs reductions will result in more of our members being able to attend convention. Find more details about convention planning activities later in this newsletter.

As announced in the last edition of this newsletter, BFLAG's NEW! Web site and virtual community (www.bflagnational.org) is up and running. I want to thank those nearly 50 members who have already joined the on-line community and those who visit on a regular basis to get up to date information about the organization. We all can be very proud of the fact that BFLAG has created the first worldwide on-line LGBT community center for people who are blind and vision impaired and our allies. Continue to visit routinely as information will be updated regularly.

I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage members to take a leadership role in this organization by running for a seat on BFLAG's Board of directors. During our business meeting in Orlando, we will elect 2 Board members at large and one officer (Secretary). To be considered a viable candidate, one must be a paid member who is willing to donate 3-5 hours per month on board related meetings and activities. One need not be present at the business meeting to run for a open seat. Please contact me if you have an interest in being on a team whose purpose is to realize the mission of this dynamic and evolving organization.

On a personal note, a heartfelt thanks for the kind words from so many of you regarding the passing of my former guide Rex. Since my last message to you, I was accepted and since completed training at Guide dogs for the Blind, San Rafael campus, and was matched with a nearly two-year-old female black lab named Diamond. Aside from her boundless puppy energy and a perpenicity to relocate socks, I'm very pleased with the match and look forward to many adventures with her.

As always, I hope you find this extra edition of InsideOut to be of some interest and I look forward to hearing from each of you.

Hate crimes bill moves THROUGH congress

Congressman Jared Polis hailed the passage of legislation that would expand federal hate crime laws.

The openly gay Democratic congressman from Boulder said last week's conviction of a Greeley man who murdered a transgender woman is proof that there needs to be an expansion of federal hate crimes legislation.

"The recent conviction of Angie Zapata's killer under Colorado's hate crimes law demonstrates exactly why we need strong federal hate crimes legislation," said Polis, who was one of the original cosponsors of the legislation. "Hate crimes are not limited to the GLBT community — they occur every day, in every state, and perpetuate a climate of fear in minority communities."

On a vote of 249-175, the House passed and sent to the Senate a bill backed by the new Democratic White House to broaden such laws by classifying as hate crimes those attacks based on a victim's sexual orientation, gender identity, or mental or physical disability.

The current law, enacted four decades ago, limits federal jurisdiction over hate crimes to assaults based on race, color, religion or national origin.

The bill would lift a requirement that a victim had to be attacked while engaged in a federally protected activity, like attending school, for it to be a federal hate crime.

Allen Andrade was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Zapata. In addition to first-degree murder, he was convicted of a hate crime in the vicious and deadly beating of Zapata. It was the first time in the nation that a state hate crime statute resulted in a conviction of a transgender person's murder.

Democratic lawmakers from Colorado supported the measure yesterday, while Congressman Doug Lamborn, a Republican from Colorado Springs, voted against the measure.

"Our laws criminalize actions, not thoughts or beliefs," said Lamborn. "Criminalizing thoughts sets a dangerous precedent. It turns government into thought police."

Lamborn also expressed concerns that the measure would limit free speech.

Former Republican President George W. Bush had helped stop such a bill in the last Congress, arguing existing state and federal laws were adequate. But President Obama asked Congress to send it to him to sign into law.

Conviction of a hate crime carries stepped-up punishment, above and beyond that meted out for the attack. The bill would allow the federal government to help state and local authorities investigate hate crimes.

Congressman Ed Perlmutter, D-Lakewood, said he “proudly” voted for the legislation.

“Hate crimes have no place in our communities,” he said. “Passage of this legislation sends an important message that Americans will not abide by such violent acts and treatment of others just because of who they are.”

Congresswoman Diana DeGette, D-Denver, echoed similar thoughts.

“Everyone in this country deserves to pursue the American dream free from intimidation and persecution,” said DeGette, who is vice-chair of the LGBT Equality Caucus and co-sponsor of the measure. “Every hate crime is an attack on the liberty and equality valued by every American.”

Polis added that hate crimes are not simply crimes against one individual.

“They are crimes against entire communities and the very values and ideals upon which our country was founded,” he said. “This legislation makes a clear statement that our country has zero tolerance for hate crimes.”

Jury convicts man of hate crime in transgender murder

After four days of testimony and roughly two hours of deliberations, the jury in a transgender murder trial handed down what is being called a precedent-setting guilty verdict.

“I just feel so alone sometimes,” Maria Zapata, Angie's mother, said. “Mr. Andrade, he has the opportunity to have his family, to see him, to write to him. He never gave me that opportunity with my baby.”

The jury found 32-year-old Allen Andrade guilty of both first-degree murder and of a bias motivated crime or hate crime. It is believed to be the first conviction in state history for a hate crime against a transgender person.

Deliberations began in the noon hour and the verdict was reached shortly before 3 p.m.

Andrade was convicted of beating 18-year-old Angie Zapata - a transgender teenager - to death with a fire extinguisher last year in her Greeley apartment. Zapata was born Justin, but was living as a woman.

When the verdict was read in court Andrade looked like he was in shock, while the Zapata family was in tears.

Andrade was also convicted of auto and identity theft. The first-degree murder conviction required a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole.

By his sentencing at 4 p.m., Andrade had already been stripped of the collared shirt he was wearing during the verdict reading, and was clad in an orange prison jumpsuit. His hands were shackled to his waist.

"It's been so hard, so hard for my family and myself," Maria Zapata, Angie's mother, said at the sentencing, her voice quavering. "It's been so very, very hard. I lost something, somebody so precious."

Maria Zapata continued to read from a letter she had prepared.

"I just feel so alone sometimes," Maria Zapata said while crying. "Mr. Andrade, he has the opportunity to have his family, to see him, to write to him. He never gave me that opportunity with my baby."

After Zapata finished speaking, Chief Deputy District Attorney Robb Miller added: "I think it's quite clear that the evidence brought out showed that Mr. Andrade valued Angie Zapata's life less than other lives and I think it's important that the court make that clear when it gives its sentence today."

Andrade's attorney, Annette Kundelius, told the court her client had family at the trial who loved and supported him; family that Andrade cared about as well.

"I think that it's important that everybody know that Mr. Andrade is not some kind of monster that I think has somewhat been portrayed," Kundelius said.

Andrade's sister Christina Cruz said: "Nobody wanted to be in this position, you know. We've sat on this side of the courtroom too. My brother has a family as well. I'm very sorry. This is a very tragic thing that happened, but it was not something that we signed up for. And my brother is human. I love my brother and we're not supporting the outcome, but we do support him as my brother and we love him very much."

Andrade showed emotion while his sister was speaking and wiped away a tear.

When the judge asked Andrade if he had anything he wanted to say, he spoke only one syllable.

"No," Andrade said.

Zapata's family continued to be emotional outside the courtroom.

"A big brother is supposed to protect his little sister. It breaks my hear that there was nothing I could do to protect my little sister," Gonzalo Zapata,

Angie's older brother, said. "Justice was achieved for my sister today. The message was sent loud and clear that targeting LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people will not be tolerated in Colorado."

"We will always love you Angie, and we will always miss you mija," he said.

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization, applauded Weld County District Attorney Ken Buck for pursuing a hate crime conviction in the case.

"We owe the jury a debt of gratitude for seeing through the shameful 'trans panic' defense which attempted to blame the victim for this heinous crime," HRC President Joe Solmonese stated in a news release.

Solmonese called the murder a "tragic reminder of the hate and ignorance that threatens the transgender community every day."

HRC Associate Director of Diversity Allyson Robinson, a transgender woman, said she was grateful for the guilty verdict.

"The sheer brutality of Angie's murder - the way her killer viewed her as less than human simply because of her gender identity and expression – highlights our community's desperate need for hate crimes protection," said Robinson.

9NEWS Legal Analyst Scott Robinson says the verdict may affect cases across the country.

"It's a case that other prosecutors across the country can look to decide whether to charge murder or some lesser charge in a similar case," Robinson said.

"It may deter others from committing similar crimes and encourage prosecutors to prosecute those cases as murder - nothing less."

In its closing arguments, the prosecution argued Andrade knew Zapata was transgender well before the murder and, therefore, applied reason to his actions.

"So if he knew she was a biological male, this is nothing less than first-degree murder," said Robb Miller, chief deputy district attorney in Weld County.

"It's time for this man to be held accountable."

Kundelius told jurors Andrade discovered Zapata was transgender just before the murder.

"When he found out, he lost control ... There was nothing going through his head at that time," Kundelius said.

In trying to convince jurors Andrade is also guilty of a bias motivated crime, Miller pointed to phone calls Andrade made from jail, in which he made statements like, "Gay things must die."

Kundelius stated Andrade showed no signs of homophobia prior to the murder and claims his actions were sparked by "deception" rather than hatred or prejudice.

WATCH OUT ORLANDO HERE WE COME!

Start packing your bags and making reservations to attend BFLAG's annual convention held in conjunction with the 48th annual convention of the American Council of the blind. You will not want to miss this one because we have managed to plan something for everyone.

Do you crave weird science? If so, BFLAG's convention coordinating committee has planned the tour for you. Join us as we make our way to Orlando's Ripley's Believe It Or Not museum. If you're a fan of the bizarre, here's where you'll find lots of oddities. Among the hundreds of exhibits: a two-headed kitten, a five-legged cow, a three-quarter-scale model of a 1907 Rolls-Royce made of 1 million matchsticks, a mosaic of the Mona Lisa created from toast, torture devices from the Spanish Inquisition, a Tibetan flute made of human bones, and Ubangi women with wooden plates in their lips. There are exhibits on Houdini and films of people swallowing coat hangers. Visitors are greeted by a hologram of Robert Ripley. This will be a very popular tour. So, pre-register to reserve a spot.

You are also invited to attend a private screening in the BFLAG suite of "After Stone wall". This 88 minute documentary, narrated by Melissa Etheridge, traces the uglier developments as the gay backlash occurs in the late 1970s.

Are you interested in the National Library Service (NLS) plans for further developing its LGBT collection? You're invited to attend a workshop with a representative from NLS and learn more.

Of course BFLAG will host its annual mixer on Sunday. Come and meet old friends and make new ones. The mixer is an excellent way to kick off the week.

Come join us for Titanic- The Experience.

Take an adventure back in time. Over 2 million visitors have come to stroll through full-scale recreations of Titanic's most famous rooms, including her Grand Staircase, First Class Parlor Suite, Boilers, and Promenade Deck, where you can walk out and feel the chill of the cold Atlantic air as you gaze at the stars.

Exceptionally trained actors in period costume portray famous Titanic notables such as Capt. Smith and Molly Brown, sharing stories of her passengers and crew during an hour-long guided journey aboard the most famous ship in history. The exhibit showcases an

extensive Underwater Room, displaying an 8-foot replica of Titanic as she appears on the bottom of the Atlantic today as well as over 200 artifact and historical treasures, including movie memorabilia from James Cameron's blockbuster film, TITANIC.

Again, please pre-register for this tour, as it is sure to sell out quickly.

BFLAG will make its suite available to members and friends on an extended basis this year. To that end, we are asking volunteers to staff the suite in two-hour increments. You'll find sign up instructions in the Convention edition of this newsletter.

While in Orlando, you won't want to miss the Grab-a-bite group (GAB). The GAB group is an informal gathering of members and friends who are interested in sharing a meal or drink or just hang out inside or outside the hotel. This group organizes its own activities. Look for more details in the Convention edition newsletter.

Need a roommate to defray the costs of convention? Don't worry we got you covered. BFLAG offers its members and friends a roommate service. We'll match you with the perfect person. Contact Mark Hanohano to sign up. His contact information, along with all other board members, can be found at the end of all newsletters and it can also be accessed at <http://www.bflagnational.org>.

And of course we will take ample opportunities to sample the nightlife Orlando has to offer.

Over 300 programs, workshops, tours and other events will pack convention week from July 3-11.

The national convention affords us an opportunity to explore important issues that affect the lives of people who are blind and vision impaired. Discuss transportation, rehabilitation and legislative issues during break out workshops. Develop self-advocacy skills, and see all the latest high- and low-tech products in the exhibit hall. Participate in technology users' groups, learn about career opportunities, and attend special-interest meetings on a variety of topics.

Make your hotel reservations at the Rosen Centre Hotel. Room rates are \$83 plus tax per night, single/double; add \$10 per night for each additional person in the room. Call (407) 996-9840 to make reservations.

Visit <http://www.acb.org/convention> to for pre-registration information and more.

ADVERTISE IN INSIDEOUT

This newsletter welcomes advertisements from businesses, organizations, educational programs, as well as for products, and services.

BFLAG's Board of Directors retains sole discretion to reject ads, which are considered to be offensive or inappropriate for the intended audience of the newsletter.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SHE/HE IS INTERESTED?

This article is reprinted with permission from an un-edited email message written by Tim Noonan in 2008 for the Australian Blind Div email list for blind GLBT/diverse people. ozblinddiv@googlegroups.com

These days - having made it to my 40s - and now being very comfortable with who I am, myself, my sexuality, my physical appearance and also being much clearer about what I need, want, prefer, and like, and I seem to be having more and more positive and enriching social connections and experiences, than ever before.

Ultimately, I aspire to be in a state of comfortable confidence in every social situation, because I've found that gracious confidence is the absolute key to new contact and connections happening in my life.

One way I've learnt to deal with This uncertainty - of whether someone is interested, and in what way - seems far less an issue to me - most of the time, now, as I have come to love the unknown and get excited about the unfolding and revealing of the situation.

I believe that it is almost a fact or a given that there are lots of people out there who may find us attractive, but we don't even realise it, and without eye contact, the rules and conventions all have to change. I've sometimes done a debrief with a guy after we get to know each other and they have said "I liked you as soon as I first saw you, but I didn't know what to do, and didn't know if you were interested in me, so I did nothing. Or guys will later tell me they find me sexy, but until they said that, I never had a clue.

So, I think the trick and certainly the challenge is getting the balance between being too quiet and shy, and being sufficiently out there, charming and expressive in group, so people notice you, are maybe a bit curious about you, know you are reasonably comfortable with who you are, but at the same time, not being too showy, hogging the floor or being too loud. Sometimes I don't get this balance quite right, but doing something to be noticed is likely to get you more connections than being too quiet and shy.

When I'm not confident or I'm tired, or my energy is flat, I hardly seem to be approached by anyone, but when I am relaxed, centred, confident and happy, people seem to gravitate towards me, wanting to share some of what I've got. So, for me it so much depends on where I am energetically, as to what happens.

In the past, though, this question and uncertainty about others was a bit of a preoccupation - are they not connecting because

1. I'm blind and that either scares them, or being superficial gay boys, they are searching perfect and better than themselves;
2. I'm unattractive (to them) or I'm a daggy dresser.
3. my body language is different or they want eye-contact;
4. (happens heaps these days) they never realise I'm blind, just think I won't make eye-contact, etc.

Largely, on reflection, I invested a lot of energy wondering why, focusing on what might have been in the way of the connection. that, of course, causes those barriers to grow and become even more real. Now, I endeavour to release the need to know why, to just let the wondering go.

So then, when someone actually makes some kind of approach, the following options come up:

what is their motivation purpose for making a connection:

1. because I am blind and they think I might want some help;
2. they think I am nice (I do have a very smiley disposition) and they would like to get to know me.
3. they think I'm cute or attractive, so ask if I want some help, as an opener, hoping more might develop. These days I often (playfully) assume this is obviously the reason, as it makes me feel more attractive and good about myself (smile)
4. they are largely curious about a blind person, what's the same and what's different, and have the guts to explore their curiosity - this could be combined with points 2 or three above, which really makes it hard to know what moves to make.

As a side note, on good days (most of the time) I feel incredibly fortunate

that as a side-effect of being blind, most of the people I cross paths with, meet or become friends with, are quite interesting and diverse. I think its that people who live in fear, follow group rules, avoid contact, where possible. People who are more alive, curious and individual are prepared to make an approach, not being too frightened or devaluating someone different to them.

So ... how the hell do you work out which it is:

I sure wish I had worked out some of this when I was younger, but for what its worth, here are some of my approaches:

1. as soon as someone gets my attention, I first do a voice reading - I am really into understanding people through their voices. Its astounding how certain vocal patterns can trigger past memories of people who shared those vocal characteristics, and hence give you a sense of what the new persons might possibly be. This is hunch and possibility territory, not knowing or judging.

2. after first contact I always give them a smile - if I don't get bad vibes from the voice analysis, and most times I now put my hand out to shake, for both men and women.

I used to waste handshake opportunities, or I would consciously cut the shake short, meaning I never allowed or invited a connection, if that is what they were looking for. This was my fear of making a mistake or embarrassing myself.

Being blind there is no eye contact, no classical visual connection. Sure conversation is a connection, but touch - hand to hand (heart chakra to heart chakra) is the closest to eye contact that we have.

the degree of purposefulness, duration, squeeze, pumping, or stillness of the handshake all give clues, that are a starting point. If you want a better understanding of classic handshake analysis, body language books such as by Alan Pease are interesting, but mainly are limited to the context of power and control between people in business.

But more than anything else, I try to be aware of how and what I feel when our hands initially touch and during the shake - excited, anxious, peaceful, unaffected, neutral, valued, sexy, horny, uncomfortable or slimy, or what-ever.

Effectively, this is a direct reading of their energy, which I'm getting better at over time.

Clearly, if they don't break the handshake early, and you don't either, you can get more data, and create more connection. Interestingly, sometimes I will shake a woman's hand, and we just stay connected. Or, someone who is quite spiritual, but not gay, will allow the hold for an extended period also, just gifting exchange of energy and open-heartedness.

Also, on a side note, lately, quite a few straight, but cool guys are wanting connection with me, and friendship. Its kind of exciting and tricky, but probably reflects how comfortable I am becoming with me. I think being blind and gay actually gives me a unique opportunity to positively express healthy gay values to straight folks, because the blindness somehow gives some level of acceptability and openness to gay issues. this is the gift of being a member of two minority groups, the learnings from one can inform the other and vice versa .

So! in short, I don't assume the extended duration of hand-holding is necessarily sexually driven, but in almost all cases it does reflect that the other person respects, honours or values something about you.

3. If I like them, I say something like Hey (smile) I'm Tim. I have learnt from friends and fun-buddies alike, that when I use it I have a killer smile. so if I really like someone, or feel flirty, I give them a very quick fleeting burst of my brilliant smile, that is clearly directed at them! and clearly different to my general relaxed smile.

4. If I'm unsure, I hold back offering my name, and give a more friendly rather than a magical smile, and let them do some of the work. The slow reveal, with little teasers

5. Its important to work out a way of telling them you are interested or curious about them, but not stuffing up by making an unwelcome invitation or move on them.

6. No matter where I am going by foot, no matter how confident I am with the walk, if some cute or interesting sounding person, male or female, makes an offer of assistance, I always consider accepting their offer of a guide across the road or in the direction I am going. I use a cane, I don't have a dog.

Fortunately, the upper arm is the best single data point of the human body for understanding a person's physical self. musculature, height, fat level, gait and energy, even complexion and skin-care.

We don't see eyes, faces, or bodies. we hear voices, we shake hands, and we hold people's arms.

Sometimes its appropriate for us to hug - but for me, hugging someone whose energy isn't very good, can make me feel exposed and quite unsettled. I decide to hug on farewells if I am in a group and hugging is what seems to be happening, but my childhood wasn't very huggy, so its not a natural thing for me to do with people I don't know well.

Overall, though, My approach in life is to be open to welcoming in alternatives to faces and visual assessments of another person's physicality. So if someone asks if I want a hand, often I will accept. I am of the view that there is some purpose, information, message or exchange, in every person we cross paths with in life. Sometimes that purpose is to benefit us, just as often it is to benefit the other.

7. I always have business cards with me - except when I was at the Mardi Gras Underwear party a couple of weeks back (grin) where I had no pockets available.

You don't need to have a business, you can just have a personal card. The key is that you can instantly, no fuss, give a person a way to make future contact with you! keying numbers into phones doesn't have nearly the same energy as a line such as:

"Let me give you my card;, why don't you send me an email, so I have your details also."

My cards have transparent braille stickers on their back side, with my name, mobile phone and email, which is an extra conversation point. It also increases the likelihood that they will keep your card, because its interesting an unique. They will never ever wonder whose card it is. Vision Australia will produce the braille labels, and they are definitely the most convenient braille option, in my view.

What I like about this approach, is that

a. you let them know you are potentially interested in on-going connection;

b. it is up to them to do follow-up, which straight away tells you if they are actually interested or not - the whole start of this discussion.

C. something of you - your card - is now with them, so a soft connection has been made.

So many times I have met a cute sounding guy, but then the opportunity ends, they go on their way, and you are left feeling frustrated - wondering what you were supposed to do.

the card solution fixes this.

So, the only challenge left, is to create some interesting conversation point, so you can create a reason to proffer your card.

I have several:

if they ask what I do for work I decide whether to tell them I am a massage therapist, work in IT, or speak at conferences. Each has potential follow-on questions.

If some general topic comes up where I have resources or information that could be of interest to them, I often say "Why don't I give you my card, and if you send me an email, I'll send you the details of the site, the product, the service, what-ever.

8. Finally, if its clear we are now in conversation, and I like the guy, one of the earliest questions I try to remember to get in is:

So (smile) tell me about you!

As blind folks, or maybe its just me, we get incredibly conditioned to tell about us, about being blind, how we do x, what we thin about Y. We play the role of satisfying their curiosity, but its often more about blindness, than us per se.

Ultimately, connections come from interest in people, not things or concepts, so the sooner we can ensure that topics are boarder than the concept or consequences of blindness, the more likely they other guy starts to appreciate we are more alike, than different to them. Common ground is the baseline for sustainable connections.

The problem is that when we are answering their questions, explaining all the blind stuff, that we find out so little about them, that we don't start sending out the important messages that we are interested in them, what they do, that we honour them as someone we want to hear from.

Ok, They are my 8 strategies and personal experiences of how to draw guys (or girls) to you, and sustain connections with the cute sounding ones.

Happy flirting

About the Author

Tim Noonan lives in Surry Hills, only walking distance from the inner city of Sydney Australia. Single at time of writing, Tim loves the diverse range of connections, cuisines, culture and community events that inner Sydney has to offer. Gym, yoga, beach, music, conversations and reading are just a few of

Tim's eclectic interests.

Tim is Best known in the blindness field for his more than two decades work in the fields of accessibility and the design and usability of phone and other voice-output systems. Since 2006, Tim has been running Visionary Communications(r), his conference keynoting and seminar business where he engagingly speaks on topics ranging from voice, Vocal Consciousness and insightful listening; to Authenticity and celebrating your uniqueness; through to more traditional topics of accessibility and user-centred technology design.

Tim is a trained massage therapist and has a strong interest in aromatherapy, energetic models of healing and holistic medicine.

Also by Tim:

Netporn, Sexuality and the Politics of Disability: A Catalyst for Access, Inclusion and Acceptance? (2005) cut-up.media.magazine. <http://www.cut-up.com/news/detail.php?sid=415>

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IN REVIEW:

'Outrage' takes on closeted gay politicians Film

Kirby Dick hasn't shied from incendiary material in his long career as a documentary filmmaker. He's portrayed a sex surrogate, a "supermasochist" performance artist and a complex French philosopher.

He challenged the fuzzy, hypocritical morality of the Motion Picture Association of America's ratings board in "This Film Is Not Yet Rated," and in 2004 he was nominated for an Oscar for "Twist of Faith," a documentary about a man confronting the pain of his childhood sexual abuse by a Catholic priest.

In "Outrage" Dick exposes the covert lives of closeted gay politicians, many of whom vote against pro-gay legislation to deflect suspicion of their own sexual preference. He looks at former Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, who denies that he is gay despite being arrested on suspicion of lewd behavior in an airport bathroom and other allegations about his sexual conduct reported in the Idaho Statesman; and former U.S. Rep. Edward L. Schrock, R-Va., who retired in 2004 after he was outed by the Advocate.

He interviews former New Jersey Gov. Jim McGreevey, who came out and resigned from office in 2004, and former U.S. Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., who came out in 1996, while still in office, and was re-elected five times.

"Outrage" doesn't pull its punches. "There exists a brilliantly orchestrated conspiracy to keep gay and lesbian politicians as closeted as possible," it states at the onset. "This film is about politicians who live in the closet, those who have escaped it and the people who work to end its tyranny."

Dick, 56, lives in Los Angeles with his wife and has two children, ages 22 and 19. He spoke by phone from New York.

Q: This film is powerful. Were there a lot of people who didn't want it made?

A: I'm sure there are a lot, but I wasn't in contact with them, and they wouldn't be in contact with me. The closeted politicians, of course, stay as far away from me as possible. There were actually a lot of people - within Washington, within the political scene, whether Democrat or Republican - who really wanted this story told. They had seen the damage of the closet for 20 years and more, and they really felt that the mainstream media hadn't covered it.

Q: Are you expecting people to dismiss the allegations in the film as hearsay? Is it possible that someone would try outing a politician to punish him for a personal slight or ideological difference?

A: Well, I think that that may be the case at times. We spent nearly three years making this film, and we had a team of researchers. We made very sure that our cases were very strongly built. So, I'm 100 percent confident in our position.

Q: You spotlight five or six closeted politicians: senators, congressmen and a former New York City mayor. Are there lots of others you didn't include in the film?

A: There are others, in Congress and in politics, that one can strongly suspect are gay. But I didn't have the information to put them in the film. And they may not be. The one thing I didn't want to do with this film was deal in rumors.

Q: You have an impressive list of witnesses: Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts and Rep. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, both of whom are out; Jim McGreevey and Jim Kolbe. Were there a lot of folks in Washington who refused to speak?

A: Washington is a very careful town. And, of course, it has to be. There were a number of people who didn't want to talk, and initially people were concerned that this film might be tabloid. But I think, in the end, we got a phenomenal range of people from both sides of the aisle. Jim McGreevey and Jim Kolbe, who talked about the experience of being closeted from a very personal perspective, really wanted to see this film made.

Q: What was the most surprising thing you came across during the making of the film?

A: I was surprised, first of all, how gay Washington, D.C., is. With the Bush administration and the Republicans controlling Congress, it was hard to imagine that gays would be working in that environment. But, in fact, on both sides of the aisle, it's extremely gay.

Q: Aside from certain elected officials, who are the gay people in Washington?

A: It's people who work within the business. Certainly staffers on the hill, administrative aides, the whole lobbying and support system and everything like that. I repeatedly heard numbers of 30 to 40, even up to 50 percent being gay or lesbian.

Q: What else surprised you?

A: I was surprised at how few people are aware of this issue. For audiences who are outside the political spectrum, if you will, it is just such a revelation. The gay press has been writing about this, and actually demanding the mainstream media cover this, for years. So people are surprised because mainstream media has stayed away from the subject. And by staying away from it, they perpetuate the closet and the damage that the closet causes. One of the objectives of my film is that, in 20 years, the closet will no longer be a factor in American politics.

Q: But if you look at what's happened politically in the past 20 years, it's been regressive in that regard, hasn't it?

A: Right. Barney Frank pointed that out in the film. There are some positive signs certainly, but look at the passage of Proposition 8 in California and Amendment 2 in Florida, which is even more onerous because it banned gay civil unions as well as marriage. In interviewing people in Washington, there was just a confidence that Proposition 8 was going to be defeated, and I think it's a real wake-up call that this struggle hangs in the balance. We're right in the midst of a gay rights struggle which, I believe, is the most important human-rights issue in this country at this time.

Q: Why are you drawn so consistently to sexuality and gender politics as subject matter?

A: I like to delve into subject matter that's complex. And I think when you bring human sexuality into the mix, it just adds to the level of complexity. When you're making a documentary, you're immersed in it for two years, sometimes more. And I want subject matter that is continually challenging to me. And certainly, you know, sexuality brings us there.

NO STRINGS (book)

By Gerri Hill

Used to the busy playground of Winter Park, police chief Reese Daniels is shipped off to sleepy Lake City, Colorado. She takes the job of sheriff seriously, but is clear to one and all: this year is just a blip in her life. When it's done, she's gone.

Forest Ranger M. Z. Morgan has lived in Lake City long enough to be considered a local. The pace, the quiet and the many friends make life there well worth the lack of dating material. A girlfriend would still be nice, and the new sheriff is easy on the eyes. It's entirely natural for Morgan and Reese to be friendly, but Reese's repeated reminders that she's not sticking around makes it impossible for anything more between them.

That is, until they strike a "no strings" bargain. Some guaranteed exchange of heat as the long winter sets in seems just what they need to pass the time. So what if it's the best sex they've ever had?

It's still only temporary. They won't mistake sex for more, even if it only gets better, month after month. After month.

No Strings--it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Golden Crown Literary Award winner Gerri Hill weaves a sensuous, sizzling story against the spectacular backdrop of a year in the high country.

GAY DADS (book)

By David Strah

An evolution has quietly been occurring in the world of parenting. Recent surveys reveal that millions of children have found loving homes either by being born to, or adopted by, gay men. This book is a celebration of these remarkable new families.

Gay Dads includes twenty-five personal accounts from men describing their unique journeys to fatherhood and the struggles and successes they have experienced as they raise their children. This is the first book to provide such an expansive exploration of this extraordinary new family unit. With beautiful black-and-white photographs of each of the families, Gay Dads is a moving tribute to familial love.

About the Author

A full-time father, David Strah lives with his partner and their two children.

The Gay and Lesbian Guide to College Life (College Admissions Guides) (Book))

by Princeton Review

The face and experience of GLBTQ college students is dramatically different than 10—or even 5—years ago, the authors of this latest Princeton Guide argue.

And the wealth of resources they offer appears to prove the point. At the same time, however, they admit that there are still challenges to being out in college, and, indeed, a recurring theme is the need for prudence in an environment that can still turn hostile—and even dangerous. That said, most GLBTQ readers will be delighted by the extraordinary number and range of services, organizations, and enlightened attitudes that await them in the college of their choice (and here they'll find sensible guidance on choosing that college, too). Though prospective college students are the principal audience for this encyclopedic guide, concerned parents and counselors will also find much of interest as well. While some topics are more generic than gay-specific (leisure activities, career planning), most remain focused on the principal readership (coming out, dealing with homophobia, financial assistance for GLBTQ students, etc.). Numerous quotes from those already in college further enhance the immediacy and authenticity of the advice offered. Michael

Featuring advice from students and administrators at more than seventy of the nation's top colleges, the Gay and Lesbian Guide to College Life lets you know how to thrive on campus as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning student. Including tons of student testimonials and dozens of parent tips, the Gay and Lesbian Guide to College Life offers no-nonsense guidance to LGBT students, their families, and allies on how to make the most of their college experience. Learn how you can:

- Find an LGBT-friendly school
- Evaluate administrative policies related to LGBT student life
- Deal with homo/bi/transphobia on campus
- Participate in LGBT student activism
- Get support for your health and safety needs
- Fully integrate yourself into the campus community

TO YOUR HEALTH:

DESK EXERCISES

Not everyone has the time to make it to the gym during their lunch break. But just because you can't get away from the computer (or your cubicle) doesn't mean that you can't get some exercise, or "deskercize" during the day. Here are some suggestions for those who want to get a work out and get their work done at the same time.

1. Buns of steel

Exercise at your desk

No, you don't need a shiny lycra bodysuit or big hair to do this popular glute workout. All you have to do tighten and squeeze your buttocks, hold five to ten seconds, and release. Repeat these squeezes 8-10 times, as many times during the day as you feel up to, and notice your newfound buns of steel in just a few weeks.

2. Upper back stretch

The upper back can be a place where tension accumulates throughout the day. By taking just a few seconds to stretch it out, you can release tension and work your muscles. What you need to do is extend your arms in front of you, grab onto your wrist with the other hand and gently pull your arms forward as you round your upper back. Hold it for twenty seconds and then switch sides.

3. Body lift

This is a really easy one. Just place your hands on the arms of your desk chair and lift yourself up. Repeat (if you can).

4. Chair squats

This is another simple “deskercize” as it simulates a motion we’re all pretty used to: standing up and sitting down. To do the “chair squat”, place a chair behind you and stand in front of it with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bend your knees and squat toward your chair until you’re hovering just over it.

Hold it for a second, then stand back up. You can do this throughout the day, or just try to hover each time you sit down.

5. Cherry picking

This exercise can help release tension in your upper body and looks just like it sounds. Stretch your arms up, one at a time, as high as you can, as if reaching to pick fruit out of a tree. Repeat 10 times, alternating sides as you go along.

6. Neck stretch

All you have to do for this one is relax your shoulders and let your head roll forward. Slowly rotate your head in a circle and repeat five times.

7. Inner thigh squeeze

A great trick for working on your inner thighs while you’re working on that spreadsheet is to stick a full water bottle between your legs and squeeze against it with your thighs. The bottle offers some resistance (and is there for hydration should you over exert yourself!)

8. Use an exercise ball

Here’s a list of ten reasons that you should consider swapping out that uncomfortable office chair for a healthier alternative. Using an exercise ball can improve posture and give you a work out.

9. Side stretch

Eating too many hot pockets for lunch and looking for a way to get rid of those love handles? Here’s an easy stretch you can do to work out your obliques: with your arms raised over your head, lean gently over to each side as far as you can safely go. Just be careful if your chair has wheels!

10. The funky chicken

This is an exercise that can help loosen up your upper body. You just might want to wait until none of your coworkers are looking. Put your fingertips on your shoulders and lift your elbows up and then push them down to your sides, as if you're trying to fly. Repeat 10 times.

Here's some inspiration if you need it.

BODY SHAPE AND MEN

It has always been assumed that, compared with women, men have a much easier time of it when it comes to their bodies. Even in many male magazines the emphasis is still on the perfectly formed female body rather than the man. The critics often point out that the stereotype of, 'men look and women are looked at', are continually reinforced as a result.

More recently research has indicated a change in the way men, and women, are starting to view the male physique. One psychological investigation in the UK found that the average man is feeling a bit intimidated by the images surrounding them. Researchers said the proliferation of male pin-ups advertising products from underwear to aftershave, in the same way that female models have been used for decades, was making ordinary men feel inferior and uncomfortable about their bodies.

The study found that the emphasis on the muscular body had originated in the gay community and transferred into the mainstream over the last 10 years. Women were now being invited to look on men purely for their physical attributes as part of an equally "lookist" or superficial consumer culture. More gay men said they felt the pressure to conform with the images. Others said they believed women did not place as much importance on physical attraction as men.

Three types of body shape

Your body shape will basically fall into one of these three categories:

Ectomorph: characterized as tall and slim/thin.

Endomorph: rounded and with a generous waist size.

Mesomorph: muscular and athletic looking. Body shape and personality

There was a time when personality was thought to be associated with body shape.

Ectomorphs were considered to be quiet and morose individuals, endomorphs rather jolly, and mesomorphs a bit on the crude and vulgar side. Such characteristics figure strongly in the books by Charles Dickens. Of course if looked for these traits can be seen in such individuals but then again they can be seen in all other body shapes as well. Not surprisingly this simple association of body shape with personality type has long been viewed with skepticism at best.

Can body shape be changed?

Dissatisfaction with body shape is one of the main reasons men vary their lifestyle.

Usually this involves diet change and exercise but increasingly may involve cosmetic surgery. Pectoral implants, liposuction and jaw enhancements are becoming more

commonplace. For those more interested in lifestyle change the activities you choose will have some effect on your morphology (morph = shape).

Body shape-The slim look Aerobic exercises that involve all the muscle groups such as running, yoga and swimming are useful. Employing a steady rate of exercise and avoiding rapid bursts of activity are thought to be important.

Body shape-The muscular look

Isolating each muscle group in turn and operating on a principle of short explosive bursts of activity is a basic principle. Weight bearing exercises and repeated cycles within a given muscle group are necessary - as is relaxing after normally no more than seven repetitions.

Body shape-The well rounded look Do neither of the above. Eat too much and exercise as little as possible!

Body shape and aging

As men get older their metabolism slows down. Fat likes to gather around the belly of men and whilst it deposits easily it can be incredibly hard to shift.

The middle age spread can be tackled with a sensible mix of exercise and healthy eating. Over a period of time most men will see fairly dramatic improvements particularly if they also concentrate on posture.

AROUND THE WORLD IN BRIEF:

##Russian lesbian couple denied marriage license

Supporters considered it a historic moment: two radiant women applied for a marriage license in a Moscow government office, claiming to be the first same-sex female couple to try to marry in Russia.

But a flustered-looking official denied their application Tuesday, a move that gay rights activists say symbolizes the refusal of many Russian officials to recognize the rights of the country's gay and lesbian communities. Registry office director Svetlana Potamoshneva, seemingly embarrassed, handed them a written rejection and said Russian law recognizes only marriages between a man and a woman.

Irina Fedotova and Irina Shipitko said they would not give up.

"We won't stop in midstream," Fedotova told journalists later, saying she and her partner plan to get married in Canada. She said Russia recognizes marriages registered abroad, thus allowing the couple to formalize their relationship.

The event was the first of two this week that will put the issue of gay rights — which many Russians regard as controversial — on the public stage in Moscow.

Fedotova and Shepitko sought to marry ahead of a gay pride parade Saturday, scheduled to coincide with the finals of the Eurovision Song Contest. Gay rights activists hope the media covering the event also will focus on their cause.

Radio Netherlands reported Monday that the Dutch singer Gordon would boycott the contest if parade is broken up violently.

Moscow authorities have banned the march, and religious and nationalist groups said Tuesday they have asked for permission to hold a counter-demonstration in central Moscow.

"The gay parade is ... an act of spiritual terrorism," said Mikhail Nalimov, chairman of the Union of Orthodox Christian Youth.

His deputy, Dmitry Terekhov, said the parade was in part aimed at converting people to homosexuality. "This must be stopped by radical methods, but without violence naturally," he said.

In some countries, gays have won increasing acceptance — including the right to marry — but in many nations of the former Communist bloc homophobia remains rampant.

Decades of official persecution of Russian gays ended in 1993 with the decriminalization of homosexuality, but opposition to gay rights remains widespread. Russian spiritual leaders have claimed that homosexuality threatens the country's traditional values.

There are no official estimates of how many gays and lesbians live in Russia, and only a few big cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg have gay nightclubs and gyms.

Russian gay rights movement leader Nikolai Alexeyev said several gay male couples have attempted to wed since the mid-1990s, but officials rejected those efforts.

In 2006, gay activists trying to lay flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier just outside the Kremlin wall were arrested by riot police and harangued by religious and ultranationalist group members.

Last year, at least one gay rights activist was assaulted during a small protest in Moscow while uniformed police officers stood by and watched.

Dancer and singer Boris Moiseyev, one of Russia's few openly gay pop stars, said in March he received death threats from Muslim activists. His extravagant shows have been banned in several Russian cities, and the Orthodox Church condemned him for "propagating sodomy and sin."

Meanwhile, despite their rejection of a marriage license in Moscow on Tuesday, Fedotova and Shepitko — wearing suits and bow ties and holding flowers — held hands and kissed. They said they would continue to fight for recognition of gay rights in Russia.

Fedotova, a 30-year-old public relations consultant, said she has lived through years of threats and intimidation and wants to a marriage equal to that of heterosexual couples.

She said she met Shipitko, a 32-year-old fashion designer, five years ago and they have both "reached marriage age for sure."

##Lebanese gays take fight for their rights public

In the Arab world, where several nations have seen killings of gay men in recent months, it can be startling to see a rainbow flag unfurled in public.

But the region's only overt gay rights organization, based in Lebanon, says it is slowly making progress in preventing discrimination and violence.

Now the group, Helem, is preparing for a campaign to overturn the law that makes homosexuality illegal.

In a dramatic step, Helem organized what may have been the only gay rights protest in the Arab world. In February, nearly two dozen gays and lesbians waved rainbow flags in a downtown Beirut square, carrying banners demanding homosexual rights. They protested what they said was the beating of two gay men by police.

It has been several years since a man was thrown in prison for being gay, said Helem activist Charbel Maydaa. But Lebanon's Article 534, which prohibits having sexual relations that "contradict the laws of nature," remains a threat.

"One of the major problems we face is that some parents threaten their gay children with article 534," he said.

Helem is treading carefully. The group, founded in 2004, is talking with legal experts on how to approach lawmakers and lobby to have Article 534 abolished. Helem members would not comment on how they intend to carry out the campaign.

It's a delicate process, given the deep-seated taboo in Arab countries against even discussing homosexuality. Everyone from religious leaders to family members condemn homosexuality. Human rights groups in other countries, like Egypt, often avoid dealing with issues touching on persecution of gays and lesbians.

The region has seen a recent spike in killings of homosexuals, blamed by some on the influence of Islamic extremists. In Iraq, the bodies of six men believed to be gay were found in the Shiite district of Sadr City in March and April, after a Shiite cleric repeatedly condemned homosexuals during Friday prayer sermons.

A 44-year-old gay man was shot to death in the Yemeni city of al-Hisn in early March — believed to be the ninth homosexual killed in southern Abyan province since late last year. Islamic militants have become strong in the area.

Governments have also conducted occasional crackdowns on gays — including a 2001 sweep in Egypt in which 52 men were arrested in a well-known gay hangout. In 2005, 35 men were arrested in Saudi Arabia for suspected homosexuality, according to international human rights groups.

And almost all countries in the region have laws banning sexual relations "against nature" — used to prosecute gays.

Lebanese lawmaker Ghassan Mokheiber, who is active on human rights issues, says it could take years to annul Article 534.

"We have to try convince some of our colleagues that this (homosexuality) is a normal matter," he told The Associated Press last week. "We have traditions that we have not been able to get beyond."

But Lebanon also has a long tradition of liberalism. That allows some openness for gays and lesbians, particularly in the capital, Beirut, which is home to a number of clubs where gays mingle freely.

Still, harassment occurs. Alexander, a gay man at the February protest, said he was recently beaten up by two men on a motorcycle as he walked in a Beirut suburb. The two attacked the 27-year-old after he ignored them.

"They broke my glasses, bruised my face and caused several injuries in my body," said Alexander, who spoke on condition he be identified by his first name only for fear of further harassment. "People in the street watched without coming to defend me."

Most of Helem's work has been behind the scenes, contacting police, religious leaders, employers, even parents to resolve specific cases of discrimination.

Helem's president, Georges Azzi, said treatment by police has improved in recent years.

But last year, a murdered man was discovered to have been gay, and police rounded up several of his friends for questioning, Azzi said. The men were forced

to undergo rectal exams meant to determine if they were gay, then were "verbally and physically abused," he said.

"It is a very humiliating test," Azzi said. "We intervened and got them out, but they were traumatized."

Helem is funded by local and European non-governmental organizations. The word "Helem" is the Arabic acronym of Lebanese Protection for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders and Queers.

It is also Arabic for "dream."

BLIND CHINESE Forced Abortion Opponent Chen Guangcheng to Mark 1000 Days in Prison

Somewhere in China, blind attorney Chen Guangcheng will soon mark 1,000 days in prison since Chinese officials convicted him on bogus charges in retaliation for him speaking out against forced abortions. The abortions are part of the nation's coercive one-child policy for couples living there.

According to officials, Chen was convicted of "damaging public property and gathering people to block traffic" at an anti-government protest he reportedly never attended.

The real reason Chen is behind bars is because the attorney dared to represent the women and families of his hometown, Linyi, China, in a class action lawsuit against family planning officials for forcing thousands of people to submit to forced abortions or involuntary sterilizations.

Ian Lucas, a British columnist, is helping to organize a new campaign called "Friends of Chen" that is rallying Britons to speak out to the English government to do more to press China to release Chen.

"No matter what people's views on abortion are, surely no-one can believe that forced abortion is acceptable," he said in a new column in the Eastbourne Herald newspaper. "When he became aware of the severity of the one-child policy, and the forced abortions and sterilizations among couples with two children, he knew he had to take action."

"Recent reports talk about Chen being denied access to medical treatment, poorly fed and at times beaten. His wife, Yuan Weijing is also denied access to see her husband, and is under virtual house arrest, even though she has not been convicted of any crime," Lucas explained.

Lucas says that there will be an event on May 20 in London "to recognize Chens' 1000 days detention, and to call again for maximum pressure to be put on the Chinese authorities to release Chen.

THE BEST OF ASK DOTTIE:

Dear Dottie:

I am a 49 year old man who has had a couple of lasting relationships and numerous short lived ones. Generally, I've met potential partners either through on-line or telephone personals. The pattern has been, after one or two dates communication would gradually, and sometimes not so gradually dissipate.

Recently, I met Reggie. He, unlike many of the others, is very interested in establishing a relationship with me. Aside from my being flattered by Reggie's interest in me, I find him to be attentive, loving, and mature far beyond his 19 years. My friends think that I have lost my mind to be seriously considering becoming involved with someone 30 years my junior. What do you think?

Head over heels in Hartford

Dearest Head-over-heels,

First of all get solidly on your feet and assess the situation soberly. Sure, we're all flattered when a much younger person--in this case someone who could almost be your grandson--is attracted to us and all that youthful, explosive heat is in our bed. Even Dottie's loins quiver at the thought. But, what do you talk about over coffee? Aside from grabbing a meal together, what other activities can you share outside of the bedroom? How is that 30-year gap bridged when you're not having a roll in the hay. Do you like the same music, movies, books? do you share the same politics? don't get me wrong, Hun, Dottie isn't say a relationship between a 49-year-old and a much younger man can't work. The younger man may be mature for his age, you may be extraordinarily youthful for yours. but 30 years is 30 years and must be factored into your decision about this. After all, couples who are of an age run into problems owing to differences in opinion, philosophy, out look, etc. How much more at risk would a couple who is separated by a 30-year span be.

Derling, you know Dottie wishes you luck, and this may be the "love of your life", and I would never want to do anything that would prevent you from happiness. But, we have to approach this with both feet solidly on the ground. remember, when you're 60 he'll be

30. will you be able to keep up?

For the latest in legislative and governmental news, call the American Council of the Blind's "Washington Connection" toll-free at (800) 424-8666, 5 p.m. to midnight Eastern time, or visit the Washington Connection online at <http://www.acb.org>.

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