

Blind LGBT Pride The “Inside Out” Newsletter

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The Newsletter of Blind LGBT Pride International is published in March, June, September, and December. Material to be published of interest to the membership is welcome. All material for inclusion must be received prior to the first of the month of publication. Items for publication should be sent to: Connie Torrisi, Editor, LavenderQ@comcast.net

Blind Pride is a Special Interest affiliate of 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.blind-lgbt-pride.org

EDITOR’S NOTE:

You can skip to the next article or section of the newsletter by using your word processor's Find or Search function to find the ## sign.

AUDIO VERSION: The Inside Out Newsletter is now available by phone! BPI’s quarterly publication is now available in an audio version by phone. To listen to the latest edition call 773 -572-7846 and follow the prompts. (Check with your provider to determine if toll charges apply.)

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From The Presidents Desk

By Don Brown

As I sat down to write this column my thoughts were interrupted by the violent shaking of a significant 4.5 earth quake with two rolling after shocks. The quake's epicenter was located less than a mile from my home. I guess it's the price we pay for living in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Now that my nerves and the dust have settled, I will forge ahead with my message.

BPI GETS CHARTERED

During this year's Presidents and Affiliates Mid-year meeting, held in the Washington D.C. area, Blind LGBT Pride International's (BPI) charter was approved by the American Council of the Blind's (ACB) Board of Directors. The new charter was necessitated by the organization's name change. The charter will be officially presented to BPI during the opening ceremony of the ACB conference and convention in Louisville.

I'd like to personally thank the nine BPI members for taking part in the activities surrounding the Mid-Year meeting. This showing represents the largest representation of BPI members at a Mid- Year meeting to date.

CALL FOR LEADERSHIP

Some exciting leadership opportunities await BPI members who have the commitment and interest to guide this one of a kind organization's on-going mission.

While elections will occur during the conference/convention in Louisville, one does not need to be present to run for an office. The only requirement is candidates for any seat on the board must be a member in good standing. To be in good standing, one's membership dues of \$12 must be received in advance of the election.

Elections will be held for the following board positions:

President (2 years)

Vice President (1 year)

Treasurer (2 years)

At-large Board Member (2 years)

Whether you are a seasoned leader or someone who wants to develop leadership skill sets, this opportunity to serve on BPI's Board of Directors and shape the agenda of the only organization in the world addressing issues and concerns of the increasing numbers of LGBT individuals who are blind and vision impaired, provides you an Excellent chance to educate and effect change.

If you are interested in any of these positions, forward a statement of candidacy to me at president@blind-lgbt-pride.org, which will be shared with the Membership. Statements received before May 1, 2012, will appear in the conference/convention edition of this newsletter. You are also welcomed to contact me if you have any questions and/or need additional information.

This is your organization and isn't it time for you to help lead it?

BPI's President Will Not Seek Reelection

For those of you who recall, I served as BPI's President from 2009 – 2010. In 2011 I was elected Vice President. Shortly following the election BPI's President resigned, which then constitutionally catapulted me to the position of President, filling the one remaining year of the President's term. In short, I didn't expect to be President for this year.

I've decided to not pursue reelection for the following two reasons:

I need the time to continue to grow my consultancy business and I believe that an organization is served best by experiencing a variety of leadership styles, which is why I feel strongly about having a range of Members, especially women, shaping this organization.

In my last President's column, I will give my view of BPI's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats going forward.

BPI's Newsletter Up For an Award

BPI's newsletter "Inside Out" has been nominated for the Hollis K. Liggett Award

Congratulations to Editor Connie Torrisi for overseeing the continued evolution of our newsletter. I'm sure the Award Committee will agree with me in that Inside Out far exceeds other Special Affiliates newsletters.

Convention/Conference Planning

The planning committee has met biweekly since the beginning of January. Much of the preliminary work is complete. Visit www.blind-lgbt-pride.org to take a conference/convention – related poll and for program details as they develop.

As always enjoy this edition of Inside Out.

Board of Directors Positions Open

BPI President Don Brown is appealing to our members to consider serving on the Board of Directors. Blind-lgbt-Pride needs volunteers to join the board and help to keep BPI running smoothly. Board positions require attendance via phone at the monthly board meetings and occasional special purpose meetings that often occur around annual convention time. The duties for each position are not overly difficult, but do require attention and follow-through. There are four open positions that will need to be filled this year. The positions are President, Vice President, Treasurer and one At Large Member. Below are brief descriptions of these positions and the responsibilities

each position requires. Please give it some thought over the next few months. Volunteers are an intricate part of any affiliate's survival.

1- President: The President shall preside over meetings of the Board of Directors, issue the call for regular and special meetings; be responsible for conducting regular elections; appoint chairpersons of committees. Committee members shall be appointed by either the committee chairperson or the President at the President's discretion. The President shall be in charge of the management of BPI's daily affairs.

2- Vice-President: In the absence of the President, shall oversee the operation of committees as delegated by the President; performs other duties as assigned by the President.

3- Treasurer: Maintains accurate records of all deposits and withdrawals. All checks are to be signed by the Treasurer, an Officer, or a person designated by the President upon receipt of authorization by the President; responsible for submitting timely information to maintain exempt tax status. The Treasurer shall report the financial position of BPI to the members at each Annual convention and at each regularly scheduled Board meeting.

4- At-Large Board Members: At-Large Board Members serve on BPI's Board of Directors as general representatives of the membership. At-Large positions on the Board of Directors may focus on specific identified priorities or critical issues of the organization as determined by the Board of Directors.

Please contact President Don Brown for more information.

Lesbians Assault Gay Man

Three women identified by their lawyers as lesbians were arraigned in Boston on a hate crime charge for allegedly beating a gay man at the Forest Hills subway station in an unusual case that experts say exposes the law's flawed logic.

"My guess is that no sane jury would convict them under those circumstances, but what this really demonstrates is the idiocy of the

hate-crime legislation,” said civil liberties lawyer Harvey Silverglate. “If you beat someone up, you’re guilty of assault and battery of a human being, period. The idea of trying to break down human beings into categories is doomed to failure.”

Prosecutors and the ACLU of Massachusetts said no matter the defendants’ sexual orientation, they can still face the crime of assault and battery with intent to intimidate, which carries up to a 10-year prison sentence, by using hateful language.

“Someone who is Jewish can be anti-Semitic,” said ACLU staff attorney Sarah Wunsch. “The mere fact that someone is a member of the same class doesn’t mean they could not be motivated by hatred for their very own group.”

But Carolyn Euell, 38, mother of two of the defendants, Erika Stroud, 21, of Dorchester and Felicia Stroud, 18, West Roxbury, told reporters the alleged attack “can’t be hateful” because both her daughters are lesbians.

Prosecutor Lindsey Weinstein said the two sisters and one of their domestic partners, Lydia Sanford, also a defendant, viciously beat the man Sunday, repeatedly punching and kicking him after he bumped them with his backpack on a stairwell.

She said the victim, who suffered a broken nose, told cops he believed the attack was “motivated as a crime because of his sexual orientation” since the three women “called him insulting homophobic slurs.”

But attorney Helene Tomlinson, who represented Sanford, told the judge her client is “openly identified as a lesbian ... so any homophobic (conduct) is unwarranted.” She said the alleged victim was the aggressor and used racial slurs: “He provoked them.”

Prop 8 Overturned

A guide to the landmark gay marriage decision

A federal court rules that California's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, potentially clearing the way for the case to be heard by the Supreme Court

People celebrated outside a San Francisco court after a three-judge panel ruled that a voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage violated the civil rights of gays and lesbians.

A federal appeals court ruled that California's ban on gay marriage is unconstitutional. The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Proposition 8, the 2008 ballot measure that limited marriage in California to one man and one woman, violated the equal protection rights of gays and lesbians. Now, a forthcoming appeal could pave the way for the U.S. Supreme Court to rule on gay marriage as early as next year. Here's what you should know about the "landmark" decision:

What exactly is Proposition 8?

In 2008, a California state court ruled that an existing ban on gay marriage was unconstitutional, allowing same-sex couples to legally marry. Almost immediately, groups that opposed gay marriage began circulating petitions that would eventually put Proposition 8 on that fall's election day ballot. Prop. 8, a proposed amendment to the California Constitution decreeing that marriage was an institution reserved for one man and one woman, was supported that November by 52 percent of California voters. In the brief window between the court ruling and Prop 8's ballot success, 18,000 same-sex couples legally married in California.

Why is the issue in court again?

Judge Vaughn R. Walker, a federal judge in San Francisco, struck down Prop. 8 in 2010, declaring the amendment unconstitutional because it violated the equal protection rights of gay couples. Opponents of same-sex marriage appealed the decision, says Howard Mintz at the San Jose Mercury News, on the grounds that "there is a state interest in preserving the traditional definition of marriage, particularly the importance of procreation in heterosexual marriage." Tuesday's ruling was the result of that appeal.

What exactly did the appeals court rule?

A three-judge panel ruled 2-1 to uphold Walker's decision.

"Proposition 8 served no purpose, and had no effect, other than to

lessen the status and human dignity of gays and lesbians in California," the court said. The Constitution "requires that there be at least a legitimate reason for the passage of a law that treats different classes of people differently. There was no such reason that Proposition 8 could have been enacted."

Will this affect other states?

Not necessarily. Tuesday's decision is not intended to be applied broadly, the court said, and was crafted to apply only to California. The peculiar circumstances of what happened in California — "a right to same-sex marriage withdrawn by a vote of the public" — is what ultimately led to the ruling, says Jeffrey Toobin at CNN, and should have no effect on other states currently weighing the issue.

Can same-sex couples get married in California now?

Not yet. The appeals court said that gay marriages cannot resume until Prop. 8's supporters have the opportunity to appeal to a larger panel of the Ninth Circuit. If and when the appeal is filed, which it inevitably will be, says Peter Henderson and Dan Levine at Reuters, gay marriage will be kept on hold "pending future proceedings." Gay marriage opponents have another option, too, says Adam Nagourney at The New York Times. They can try to take the issue directly to the U.S. Supreme Court. However, says Toobin, the Supreme Court might opt out of weighing in. And even if the nation's highest court does hear the case, it likely won't be until after the election.

How would the Supreme Court rule?

It's anyone's guess. Some gay activists are apprehensive about the case going all the way to the Supreme Court, says Nagourney. They're "fearful that conservative justices could... codify a ban against same-sex marriage." In the end, the Roberts Court will probably be divided, says Maura Dolan at the Los Angeles Times, "and many legal scholars believe Justice Anthony Kennedy will be the deciding vote." Kennedy is a Republican-appointed justice, says Henderson and Levine, but he has written several important pro-gay rights decisions — though he "has not explicitly endorsed gay marriage."

Ellen Stands Up to Right-Wing Gay Bashing Group

"One Million Moms" is angry that JC Penney is sticking by Ellen DeGeneres, their spokesperson.

The conservative Christian group One Million Moms is angry. It's whipped itself into a frenzy of indignation at the not-quite-exclusionary-enough tactics of Macy's, Levi's, Jenny Craig and Oreos in just the past few months. But its outrage at JC Penney, the jeans supplier to at least 800,000 of those million moms, is especially intense.

At issue is the group's contention that by hiring Ellen DeGeneres for a new campaign, the department store is "jumping on the pro-gay bandwagon" and turning away from "traditional families." The organization warns darkly that "Unless JC Penney decides to be neutral in the culture war then their brand transformation will be unsuccessful." There is so much to love in that sentence alone. Culture war! Brand transformation! "The majority of JC Penney shoppers will be offended," they continue, "and choose to no longer shop there."

JC Penney, however, which recently declared that "We share the same fundamental values as Ellen," has remained unmoved from its perch on a "pro-gay bandwagon" in the midst of a "culture war." Also unmoved: the woman at the center of the controversy.

On her daytime talk show, DeGeneres cheerfully opened by talking about Proposition 8 being overturned in California, then segued into a riff about her partnership with Penney's. "Normally I try not to pay attention to my haters," she said, "but this time I'd like to talk about it."

After announcing she was "proud and happy" that JC Penney was sticking by her side, she explained to America that "Being gay or pro-gay is not a bandwagon. You don't get a free ride anywhere. There's no music, and occasionally we'll sing, 'We Are Family,' but that's about it." And she noted that "For a group that calls itself the Million Moms, they have only 40,000 members on their Facebook page. They're rounding to the nearest million." It was a witty retort to a campaign of hate, though frankly, not nearly as hilarious as the Million Moms' depiction of DeGeneres as an "open homosexual spokesperson."

On her show, DeGeneres read some of the hundreds of supportive messages that have been posted on the Million Moms' own Facebook page since their campaign against her launched. DeGeneres has also received public support from, of all people, Bill O'Reilly, who said on his program that the protest was "a witch hunt and shouldn't happen."

One Million Moms describes itself as an organization for people who are "fed up" and "tired," one that devotes itself, seemingly exclusively, to complaining "on behalf of our children." On her program, DeGeneres said, "I stand for honesty, equality, kindness, compassion, treating people the way you want to be treated, and helping those in need. To me, those are traditional values."

Trivia Spot

Most of us know that during the Holocaust, gay men were sent to concentration camps and forced to wear a pink triangle to identify them as homosexual. Lesbians were also sent to concentration camps but instead of a pink triangle, they were forced to wear a black triangle, which identified them as "anti-social."

Portraits Under the Rainbow: Harvey Milk

San Francisco city politician Harvey Milk helped open the door for gays and lesbians in the United States by championing civil rights for homosexuals.. Since Milk's murder in 1978, he has remained a symbol of activism. However, Milk was not a one-issue politician. For him, gay issues were merely one part of an overall human rights vision. During his tragically short political career, Milk battled for a wide range of social changes in such areas as education, public transportation, child care, and low-income housing.

Harvey Bernard Milk was born on May 22, 1930, in Woodmere, New York. His grandfather, an immigrant from Lithuania, was the owner of a respected department store. Milk's father, William, was also involved in the retail clothing trade. By his early teens, Milk was already aware of his homosexuality, but he chose to keep it to himself. In high school, he was active in sports and was considered a

class clown. He developed a passion for opera and would frequently go alone to the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City.

In 1947 Milk entered New York State College for Teachers in Albany, New York. After earning his degree in 1951, Milk joined the navy. He served as a chief petty officer on a submarine rescue ship during the Korean War (1950–53). Eventually he reached the rank of junior lieutenant before his honorable discharge in 1955.

Returning to New York, Milk took a job teaching high school. By this time, Milk was living openly with his lover, Joe Campbell, though he still kept his homosexuality hidden from his family. After a couple of years, Milk left teaching. He tried his hand at a number of other occupations before landing a job with the Wall Street investment firm Bache and Company in 1963. At Bache, Milk discovered that he had a knack for finance and investment, and his rise through the corporate world was swift.

In spite of his lifestyle, Milk's political and social values were conservative through the early 1960s. As the decade progressed, however, his views gradually began to change. Milk's new lover, Jack Galen McKinley, worked in theater, and through him Milk became involved as well. Since the presence of gays in the theater world was very visible, Milk began to come to terms with his homosexual identity.

In 1968 McKinley was hired as stage director for O'Horgan's San Francisco production of the musical *Hair*. Milk decided to move with McKinley to California, where he got a job in finance. Eventually, the conflict between his personal and professional lives became too much for Milk. During a 1970 protest of the American invasion of Cambodia, Milk burned his BankAmericard in front of a crowd of people. He was fired from his job later that day.

With his ties to mainstream life now broken, Milk returned to New York and theater work. By this time he was sporting long hair and a beard, looking more or less like an aging hippie. In 1972 he moved with his new partner, Scott Smith, back to San Francisco, where the pair opened a camera shop on Castro Street, in the heart of what was becoming the city's gay neighborhood.

Milk entered the political arena for the first time in 1973 after being angered by the Watergate scandal. (Named after the building in which a burglary took place, Watergate involved political cover-ups that ultimately led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon [1913–1994].) Hoping to produce change through politics, Milk decided to run for a spot on the Board of Supervisors, San Francisco's city council. Using the gay community as his voting base, Milk sought to develop an alliance with other minorities in the city.

Of the thirty-two candidates in the race, Milk came in tenth. Though he lost the election, he gained enough support to put him on the city's political map. Because of his popularity in his own largely gay district, he became known as "the Mayor of Castro Street." Milk spent much of the next year preparing for his next election campaign, including taking on a more mainstream look. He also revitalized the Castro Village Association as a powerful civic organization and launched the popular Castro Street Fair. In addition, he conducted a voter registration drive that signed up two thousand new voters.

Milk ran for supervisor again in 1975. Although he gained the support of several important labor unions, he lost again, this time placing seventh. In recognition of Milk's growing power base, however, newly elected Mayor George Moscone (1929–1978) appointed Milk to the Board of Permit Appeals. This would become Milk's first public office. After just a few weeks, however, Milk announced his intention to run for the state assembly. That announcement led to his removal from his city post.

Milk ran against the Democratic party on the campaign theme "Harvey Milk versus the Machine." Milk lost yet again, by a mere four thousand votes. By this time, however, he had established a political machine of his own, the San Francisco Gay Democratic Club. In 1977, on his third try, Milk was finally elected to the Board of Supervisors, becoming the first openly gay elected official in the city's history.

Several key themes characterized Milk's successful campaign as well as his short career as a city official. One was his demand that

government respond to the needs of individuals. Another was his ongoing emphasis on gay rights.

As city supervisor, Milk was the driving force behind the passage of a gay-rights law that prohibited discrimination, or unequal treatment, in housing and employment based on sexual orientation. At his urging, the city announced a drive to hire more gay and lesbian police officers. He also started programs that benefited minorities, workers, and the elderly. Milk then gained national attention for his role in defeating a state senate proposal that would have prohibited gays and lesbians from teaching in public schools in California.

On November 27, 1978, Milk and Mayor Moscone were shot to death in City Hall by Dan White (1946–1985), a former city supervisor who had quit the board to protest the passage of the city's gay rights law. In his trial, White's attorneys employed what came to be known as the Twinkie Defense. They claimed that the defendant had eaten so much junk food that his judgment had become impaired and that he had little control over his actions. White was convicted only of voluntary manslaughter, meaning he would receive the lightest sentence possible for a person who had admitted to intentionally killing someone. He served five years in prison before being paroled. On October 21, 1985, White committed suicide.

The outcome outraged gays and lesbians and their supporters across the United States. In San Francisco, riots erupted, resulting in hundreds of injuries, a dozen burned police cars, and about \$250,000 in property damage. The following night, thousands of people flocked to Castro Street to celebrate what would have been Milk's forty-ninth birthday.

Since his death, Milk has become a symbol for the gay community of both what has been achieved and what remains to be done. He has been immortalized in the names of the Harvey Milk Democratic Club (formerly the San Francisco Gay Democratic Club), Harvey Milk High School in New York, and San Francisco's annual Harvey Milk Memorial Parade. In 1985 the film *The Times of Harvey Milk* won the Academy Award for best documentary.

Stem Cell Treatment for Eye Diseases Shows Promise

By Andrew Pollack, (New York Times)

LOS ANGELES: A treatment for eye diseases that is derived from human embryonic stem cells might have improved the vision of two patients, bolstering the beleaguered field, researchers reported Monday.

Monica Almeida/The New York Times

Sue Freeman said her vision improved in a meaningful way after the treatment, which used embryonic stem cells.

The report, published online in the medical journal *The Lancet*, is the first to describe the effect on patients of a therapy involving human embryonic stem cells.

The paper comes two months after the Geron Corporation cast a pall over the field by abruptly halting the world's first clinical trial based on embryonic stem cells — one aimed at treating spinal cord injury. Geron, which has not published results from the aborted trial, also said it would abandon the entire stem cell field.

The results reported Monday could help lift some of that pall. They come from the second clinical trial involving the stem cells, using a therapy developed by Advanced Cell Technology to treat macular degeneration, a leading cause of blindness.

"It's a big step forward for regenerative medicine," said Dr. Steven D. Schwartz, a retina specialist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who treated the two patients.

Both patients, who were legally blind, said in interviews that they had gains in eyesight that were meaningful for them. One said she could see colors better and was able to thread a needle and sew on a button for the first time in years. The other said she was able to navigate a shopping mall by herself.

Still, it is hard to judge much from only two patients, especially when there was no control group.

Indeed, Dr. Schwartz said that the improvement in vision of one of the women might be a placebo effect.

Advanced Cell Technology, which paid for the study, has been criticized in the past for overstating results, in part because it has been desperate to raise money to stay in business.

The company's stock rose 3.4 cents, or 23 percent, to 18 cents on Monday.

Dr. Schwartz conceded that it was "extremely unusual" for researchers to publish a study after treating only two patients out of a planned 24. But he said that was justified by the huge interest in the stem cells.

Human embryonic stem cells can theoretically be turned into any type of cell in the body and might one day be used to treat various diseases. But the field has been controversial because the creation of the stem cells usually entails the destruction of human embryos.

In this case, researchers at Advanced Cell Technology turned embryonic stem cells into retinal pigment epithelial cells. Deterioration of these retinal cells can lead to damage to the macula, the central part of the retina, and to loss of the straight-ahead vision necessary to recognize faces, watch television or read.

Some 50,000 of the cells were implanted last July under the retinas in one eye of each woman in operations that took about 30 minutes.

One woman, Sue Freeman, who is in her 70s, suffered from the dry form of age-related macular degeneration, a leading cause of severe vision loss in the elderly.

The other, who asked that her name not be used to protect her privacy, was a 51-year-old graphic designer in Los Angeles with Stargardt's macular dystrophy, which tends to occur in younger people.

There are no approved drugs for either disease.

One safety concern in using embryonic stem cells is that if any of the cells get into the body, they could form tumors. The researchers reported that this did not happen in the first four months after the surgery and that there were no obvious safety problems.

The two women were given low doses of drugs to suppress the body's immune system and prevent them from rejecting the implanted cells, even though the eye is somewhat shielded from the immune system.

Thomas A. Reh, a professor at the University of Washington who works on retinal regeneration but was not involved in the study, said the results looked encouraging, though the patients needed to be followed for a longer time.

"It definitely looks like the cells are at least sticking around and not causing any trouble," he said.

Before the treatment, the woman with Stargardt's was able to see the motion of a hand being waved in front of her but could not read any letters on an eye chart. Twelve weeks after the treatment, she was able to read five of the biggest letters on the eye chart with the treated eye, corresponding to 20/800 vision, according to the paper.

"I kind of did have a day when I woke up and said there really is a difference here," the woman said in an interview about three months after the surgery.

Ms. Freeman, who lives in Laguna Beach, Calif., went to 20/320 from 20/500 vision six weeks after the treatment.

However, vision in her untreated eye also improved, at least temporarily, and the implanted cells could not be seen in her eye after the first day. That is why Dr. Schwartz said the improvement might have been a placebo effect.

The trial is now expanding beyond U.C.L.A. and to gradually higher doses of cells.

An Answer to the Gay Marriage Debate

The answer to the "Gay Marriage Debate" lies in traditional Roman Catholic doctrine and old-time conservative political ideology.

The Catholic Church teaches that the "ministers" or "celebrants" of the sacrament of Matrimony are the two people who are marrying one another, not the priest. The priest is present simply to witness the marriage (and because it is a legal contract to record it) and to offer the community's blessing on the new life the pair has chosen to share together. The Church doesn't perform the sacrament: the couple does.

The way sacraments work is that they work if the people performing them believe they work. In the condemnation of the early Church heresy of Donatism, theologians held that the moral state of the priest didn't matter (and neither does the priest's approval or opinion of the marriage). The validity of the sacrament is in the belief of the receiver. If people believe they are receiving a valid sacrament, then they are.

I would argue that gay couples who administer the sacrament of Matrimony to one another do--by virtue of their intention to commit themselves before God. After all, the "validity" of the sacrament is up to God, not the Church officials.

It's the state, not the sacramental system or God that is determined by legal rules. BUT the very basis of conservative political ideology is that the state should stay out of the private lives of individuals. Things like God, religion, sacraments--and personal relationships--are none of the government's business.

And they are correct about that.

The government's role is to witness and record the contract. And that's all. Certainly not to tell individuals who they can and can't marry.

So, ironically, according to Catholic teaching and Conservative political theory, gay couples who want to enter into a contractual relationship and concelebrated sacramental union can and do.

And the answer to the question "what does the Bible say about homosexuality?" lies in orthodox Protestant theology.

Central to the Protestant Reformation was the idea of "private interpretation of Scripture," i.e. it wasn't the officials of the Roman Catholic Church who should declare what the Bible says, but rather the Holy Spirit working in the souls of the faithful.

So what the Bible says and means is what it says and means *to me*, and to you, that is, what it means to the individual reader.

Fundamentalist preachers and TV evangelists have no more authority than the Catholic Church in this regard. They have no business telling other people what the Bible says; they can only say what it says to them. The rest of us are on our own also. When we read the Bible, what we get from it is what comes forth from our interior inspiration.

What the Bible says to homosexuals is what homosexuals get from reading the Bible. We naturally see that the taboos and primitive rules and primitive interpretations of biblical times have little meaning for modern, psychologically-sophisticated, rationally-minded, 21st century high-tech culture. And so what the Bible really says about homosexuality is what we, with enlightened minds and good hearts, understand it to say.

Besides, Jesus' advice was to abandon all those old and numerous commandments of the books of the Law. "A new Commandment I give you," he said. "Love one another." Do to others what you'd want done to you. Treat other people as though they were you yourself.

Isn't that simple?

Using Jesus' criteria, how could anyone deny another person love, affection, and sexual fulfillment? Why would anybody think a five thousand year old law for desert dwelling nomads should be used to deny human rights to people in today's world?

Quarterly Quote

It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision. ~ Helen Keller

Myths and Realities of Bisexuality

by Sharon Forman Sumpter

Sexuality runs along a continuum. It is not a static "thing" but rather a process that can flow, changing throughout our lifetime. Bisexuality falls along this continuum. As Boston bisexual activist Robyn Ochs says, bisexuality is the "potential for being sexually and/or romantically involved with members of either gender."

Myth: Bisexuals are promiscuous/swingers.

Truth: Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviors. Some have multiple partners; some go through partner-less periods. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups of people.

Myth: Bisexuals are equally attached to both sexes.

Truth: Bisexuals tend to favor either the same or the opposite sex, while recognizing their attraction to both genders.

Myth: Bisexual means having concurrent lovers of both genders.

Truth: Bisexual simply means the potential for involvement with either gender. This may mean sexually, emotionally, in reality, or in fantasy. Some bisexual people may have concurrent lovers; other may relate to different genders at various time periods. Most bisexuals do not need to see both genders in order to feel fulfilled.

Myth: Bisexuals cannot be monogamous.

Truth: Bisexuality is a sexual orientation. It is independent of a lifestyle of monogamy or non-monogamy. Bisexuals are as capable as anyone of making a long-term monogamous commitment to a partner they love. Bisexuals live a variety of lifestyles as do gays and heterosexuals.

Myth: Bisexuals are denying their lesbianism or gayness.

Truth: Bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation, which incorporates gayness. Most bisexuals consider themselves part of the generic term "gay." Many are quite active in the gay community, both

socially and politically. Some of us use terms such as "bisexual lesbian" to increase our visibility on both issues.

Myth: Bisexuals are in "transition".

Truth: Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian/gay or heterosexual identity. For many others, bisexuality remains a long-term orientation. Indeed, we are finding that homosexuality may be a transitional phase in the coming-out process for bisexual people.

Myth: Bisexuals spread AIDS to the lesbian and heterosexual communities.

Truth: This myth legitimizes discrimination against bisexuals. The label "bisexual" simply refers to sexual orientation. It says nothing about sexual behavior. AIDS occurs in people of all sexual orientations. AIDS is contracted through unsafe sexual practices, shared needles, and contaminated blood transfusions. Sexual orientation does not "cause" AIDS.

Myth: Bisexuals are confused about their sexuality.

Truth: It is natural for both bisexuals and gays to go through a period of confusion in the coming-out process. When you are an oppressed people and are constantly told that you don't exist, confusion is an appropriate reaction until you come out to yourself and find a supportive environment.

Myth: Bisexuals can hide in the heterosexual community when the going gets tough.

Truth: To "pass" for straight and deny your bisexuality is just as painful and damaging for a bisexual as it is for a gay. Bisexuals are not heterosexual and we do not identify as heterosexual.

Myth: Bisexuals are not gay.

Truth: We are part of the generic definition of gay (see Don Clark's Loving Someone Gay.) Non-gays lump us all together. Bisexuals have lost their jobs and suffer the same legal discrimination as other gays.

Myth: Bisexual women will dump you for a man.

Truth: Women who are uncomfortable or confused about their same-sex attraction may use the bisexual label. True bisexuals acknowledge both their same-sex and opposite-sex attraction. Both bisexuals and gays are capable of going back into the closet. People who are unable to make commitments may use a person of either gender to leave a relationship.

It is important to remember that bisexual, gay, lesbian, and heterosexual are labels created by a homophobic, biphobic, heterosexist society to separate and alienate us from each other. We are all unique; we don't fit into neat little categories. We sometimes need to use these labels for political reasons and to increase our visibilities. Our sexual esteem is facilitated by acknowledging and accepting the differences and seeing the beauty in our diversity.

In Review

I Want to Get Married ~ DVD, 2011

Reviewed by Bob Lind

Playing against his usual "type" in gay films, Matthew Montgomery is Paul, a nerdy, fastidious gay man who has friends, a nice home, and his own ad agency, but no partner with whom to share it. After attending a lesbian wedding, and knowing that Prop 8 was on the horizon to stop same-sex marriages, Paul embarks on a misguided, frantic journey through speed dating, meeting guys through the internet (And, no, "FF" does not mean he's into fly fishing!) and trying way too hard to impress.

Meanwhile, Paul's well-to-do parents had a fight, and his mother (who is more than a bit naive and recently donated a large sum of money to the Prop 8 campaign, because the kids in their commercial were cute), gets stranded for a time in a trucker's casino in the desert, where she hangs out with a drag queen. Paul's father goes chasing after his wife, but manages to get carjacked and roams the desert without his pants. And Paul has a big decision to make as to whether to take on a client who is involved in pushing through Prop 8.

I wish I could recommend this, as it does have its cute moments, but it is largely a muddled, overdone and unrealistic slapstick mess.

Montgomery makes the transition from unrecognizable to annoying, with exaggerated facial expressions throughout. Director Billy Clift brings along Matthew Martin, who played the lead in his 2010 "Baby Jane" film, and her drag presence in this film is much overdone. Some minor sound problems and editing snafus are also evident, and this could have been a much better film if he cut about 20 minutes from its 120 minute run time, which would helpfully make it more cohesive. As is, I can give it just three stars out of five.

Around the World in brief

Europe now officially has its second openly gay prime minister with the swearing in of Elio Di Rupo as Belgium's leader.

When Di Rupo was first elected to Parliament, he was asked if he was gay. His answer was, "Yes. So what?" And that's how most news accounts have been treating news of Europe's first gay male prime minister — it isn't being mentioned. Even U.S. press, such as this report from CBS News is ignoring his sexual orientation.

In 2009, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir became Iceland's first woman prime minister and also Europe's first openly gay head of state. In 2010, under Iceland's new law, she legally married her female partner.

##Around the USA in Brief

Maryland:

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley, center, greets supporters and members of the House of Delegates after the House passed a gay marriage bill in Annapolis on Feb. 17.

Gov. Martin O'Malley, a Democrat, signed the bill a week after its final passage in the Legislature. The law is scheduled to take effect in January 2013. However, opponents — backed by many churches — are expected to petition the law to a referendum on the November ballot.

(Editor's Note: Same sex marriage is now legal in Massachusetts, Maryland, Iowa, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Connecticut and the District of Columbia.)

Massachusetts:

Mayor-elect Alex Morse, of Holyoke, is the youngest openly gay elected mayor in the country. The 22-year-old Morse beat out incumbent political fixture Elaine Pluta.

Morse is the youngest mayor ever elected in Holyoke, and one of the youngest elected in the state.

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