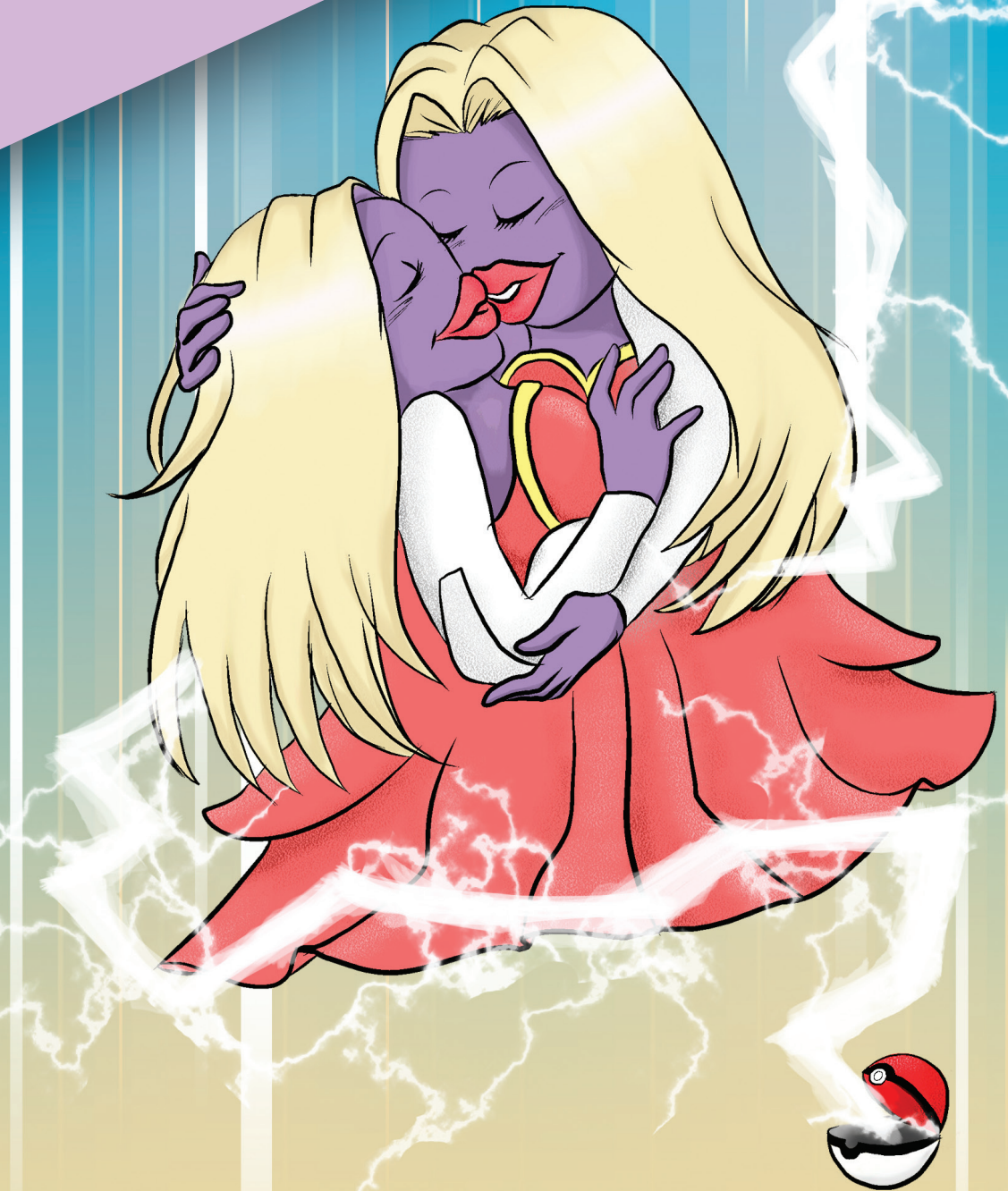


THE TERLOPER

Virginia Tech's LGBT Magazine

Spring 2015, Issue #3



Letter from the Editor

It was a cold, windy day in February when our Managing Editor, Lisa, and I stood outside Turner Place passing out copies of our second issue to students on campus.

“Hey, want a free magazine?” Duh. It’s pretty and has pictures!

We were having a dandy time handing them out. Some people ignored us, some people took them happily, and others were just amused by our existence (Lisa was pretty enthusiastic). One male student, wearing a backwards cap and a VT sweatshirt, took a copy, looked down at it for two seconds and walked straight to a trashcan to dispose of the magazine.



Photo by Alejandro Smith

I can only assume, based on his body language, that he saw the LGBT acronym and thought — “fuck that shit.” (I guess he’ll never be able to answer the question “Which sex toy are you!?”) In that way, *The Interloper* is a publication that is made for everyone, but it’s not exactly *for everyone*.

And you know what? That’s totally OK. That’s the beauty of this magazine. *The Interloper* is a celebration of all things queer, things that push against the heteronormative (and the homonormative, pg. 28) and isn’t afraid to be loud, colorful or push boundaries.

While anyone can pick up a copy and find something of interest inside — whether it’s the eye-catching artwork, one of the profound quizzes we come up with (like “What is your sexual spirit Pokemon?” on pg. 23) or a reflective article on the necessity of queer spaces (pg. 8) — what’s important is that *The Interloper* is an explicitly queer-centered, queer-focused publication, and that’s a rarity on any college campus.

Of course I’d rather not have someone throw away something that dozens of people spent months producing, but let’s be honest — we have other things to worry about. Microaggressions (pg. 44), being gay at the gym (pg. 38), and the Everest-like quest for female condoms (pg. 15). Yeah, we’ve got a lot for you to read about.

But as we continue to publish, continue to highlight queer voices at Virginia Tech, we will continue to exist on campus and proudly proclaim: “We’re here, and we matter,” followed closely by, “Want a free magazine?”

xoxo,
Matty

THE INTERLOPER

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The Other Dream

by Sara Watson

I'm lying in savasana after ninety minutes of superhot yoga
replaying my usual fantasy, which is you and me at brunch,
a table on the sidewalk, a baby in your lap. This time I add
a small dog I feed bites of bread to under the table while you
rub your cheek on the baby's cheek, help her clap her little hands,
steal her nose, whatever. Someone we know walks by, this time
my favorite professor from undergrad, who stops to admire the baby, our
superb health and good looks, our excellent taste in restaurants. And I realize
what I want for us is maybe the common dream
of overeducated middleclass lesbians everywhere. Then I think
What's overeducated? what's middleclass? what's lesbian?
which leads me to the other dream, my favorite, the one where
you read aloud from "I Sing the Body Electric," while I go down on you,
and I have, suddenly at once and finally, everything I've ever wanted.

Transparent

*From Pappa to “Moppa,”
Transparent beautifully
captures one parent’s
coming-out story*

by Lisa Moskowitz

*“No one has ever seen me except me ...
My whole life I have been dressing up as a
man. This is me.” — Maura Pfefferman*

Amazon’s daring 2014 series *Transparent* has been making waves recently in the entertainment industry. Available now for instant streaming, *Transparent* (Season 1) contains 10 binge-worthy episodes that tell a story of shared moments, secrets that simmer just beneath the surface, the struggle to find the right words at the right time and the fragile bond of family. Follow Maura Pfefferman (Jeffrey Tambor) and her coming out story as she struggles to reveal herself to her three children and officially transition into her true self.

The show is simplistically gorgeous, yet heavily loaded with commentary on 20th and 21st century sex, monogamy, marriage, religion, abortion, love, gender and sexuality. *Transparent* strikes the perfect balance of celebrating the glamorous elements of her physical transition and late-life blooming while still addressing the uncomfortable moments and painful reactions to her transition with heartbreaking sincerity.

Filled with flashbacks and queer history commentary on the impossible social stigma surrounding trans individuals in the 1960s and 70s, *Transparent* moves back and forth between the experiences of Maura’s long-maintained masculine persona, Mort, and Maura’s new experiences within the contemporary LGBT community in her new lifestyle.



Watching Maura’s process of self-discovery and her gradual self acceptance, determination and ownership of her identity is both inspiring and heartbreaking. Maura learns to embrace and celebrate her identity as a woman and to defend herself with poise.

“I am sorry about the Mort and Maura and the he and the she. I am just a person and you are just a person and here we are. And baby you need to get in this whirlpool or you need to get out of it.” — Maura Pfefferman

Navigating the different and separate worlds of cross-dressers and trans individuals, the complicated expectations of genders, stereotypes of sexuality and late-life self discovery, *Transparent* ambitiously takes on so many aspects of the LGBT world through the lives of each of the Pfeffermans.

Maura’s coming out begins a series of toppling dominoes of secrets in the family: adultery, abortions, drugs, threesomes, and unrequited and unexpressed love. There’s a little bit of everything in this intensely human drama.

Maura’s daughter Sarah (Amy Landecker) responds candidly and sincerely to Maura’s questions about her new lifestyle and really captures the show’s message: “It’s inspiring. I am so glad you get to be who you are. That’s who we should all be.”

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt

Tina Fey's new Netflix show is worth the binge-watch

by Matty Bennett

How do you create an incredible TV show? Follow these simple steps.

Step one: Start with a ridiculous premise. Kimmy Schmidt has just been rescued from an underground bunker where she spent the last 15 years in a doomsday cult. The series begins with her decision not to return to her home in Indiana, but instead to move to New York City to start anew. Yeah, seems ridiculous enough to me.


Step two: Cast the perfect leading lady. Ellie Kemper (*The Office*, *Bridesmaids*) plays Kimmy Schmidt, the wide-eyed, ever-optimistic heroine. Kemper is a constant blaze of sunshine, and she plays the naïve, innocent character perfectly. Not even for a second does she back down from the bizarre premise of the show or her character.

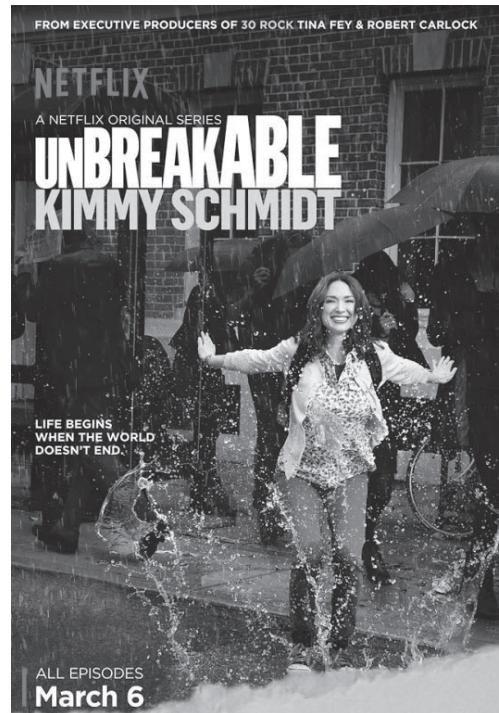
Step three: Cast a slew of hilarious sidekicks. Most notably, Titus Burgess (*Broadway musical actor*) plays Titus Andromedon, Kimmy's gay, black roommate. While Kimmy thinks "the gay" hasn't made it to Indiana yet (there have been rumors in Ohio, but...), Titus teaches her a lot about life in New York in 2015. Burgess shines as an eccentric, aspiring Broadway star desperate for fame. He makes a music video for his original song "Peeno Noir," an ode to black penis that channels the Vogue spirit of Madonna. Yeah, it happens. And yeah, it's amazing.

Step four: Make it fast-paced and funny. The jokes come so quick that it begs for multiple viewings. Since Kimmy has been in a bunker for 15 years, all of her pop culture references, style and knowledge of the world comes from the 90s. Xan, one of the kids Kimmy babysits, calls her out on it: "Hey, Kimmy. 1996 called. It wants its clothes back."

To which Kimmy replies, "Hey, Xan. 2090 called. You're dead and you wasted your time on earth."

Step five: Put on Netflix for binge-watching. I personally watched the show in just a couple of days. I found it weird as hell, witty, heart-warming and just plain funny. But hey, don't just take my word for it. TV Guide named it 2015's best new comedy, and the show received a 96 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

What are you waiting for? Troll the re-spawn, Jeremy! 



CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: Multicultural Programs & Services

BY JONATHAN WALDRON

Advising, Awareness, Advocacy — these three words are at the heart of Virginia Tech's Multicultural Programs and Services (MPS). With its offices in Squires Student Center, MPS works very closely with five University Chartered Student Organizations, including HokiePRIDE. MPS aids HokiePRIDE with the development and implementation of programs geared toward the LGBTQ+ community.

Mark Smiley, Assistant Director of MPS, is in charge of LGBTQ+ coordination. Currently Smiley works with multiple organizations, groups and departments across Virginia Tech's campus to address issues facing the LGBTQ+ community at large.

"We want people to be comfortable navigating the intersectionality of their identity, including in some areas that people don't feel comfortable in historically," Smiley said.

By working with areas of campus like the Corps of Cadets and athletics, MPS strives to make Virginia Tech a welcoming place for the LGBTQ+ community. Smiley has tackled issues of healthcare and faith as well and hopes to continue making strides in those areas.

"One thing we want is more inclusive clinical practices, such as intake forms, for students visiting Schiffert [Health Center]," Smiley said. "We've also reached out to the faith-based communities to help them understand how to welcome gender and sexual minorities."




Photo courtesy of MPS

One of the more well-known programs coordinated by MPS is Safe Zone, which aims to educate the community at large on topics related to LGBTQ+ identified issues. Tricia Smith, Director of MPS, spoke to the significance of the SafeZone program.

"Safe Zone has always been an important piece, but we want to take it beyond what we have. We want content areas that people have not been exposed to," Smith said. "It has historically been dangerous for people to talk [about LGBTQ+ issues]. Now, we want to line up resources and have opportunities for people to analyze their own inclusive practices, including departments."

Both Smiley and Smith noted that MPS seeks to empower student agency so that minority issues can be raised.

"We exist to serve underrepresented students, primarily, but we also want to work with the town," Smiley said. "We function as best as we can to serve as many people as possible." 

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: TransSpace

BY HALEY BURGESS


Established in August of 2014, TransSpace at Virginia Tech provides an important niche for the university's students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members who identify as transgender, non-binary or gender-questioning.

When I began the organization, I was happy to find transgender folks like myself outside the Internet. An overarching tenet of the organization is to be a safe space that recognizes the impact of intersectionality between gender identity and factors such as race, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, birth assignment, disability, social class and religion, among others.

The group focuses on fostering social connection within the local VT, Blacksburg and surrounding trans communities. We also strive to provide peer support and discuss issues such as coming out, transitioning and discrimination. Current activism goals include educational events for the campus LGBTQ+ community like movies and discussion circles.

"Since the first meeting, the members of TransSpace have greatly helped me in navigating the problems I've faced as a transgender person," one first-year member said. "I hope the club continues to grow and expand its reach to help others."

TransSpace seeks to amplify the voices of trans (those whose gender identity is different from the one assigned to them at birth by doctors/society), non-binary (people who identify as something besides strictly male or female), gender questioning (those who are currently unsure of their gender identity) and gender-variant individuals in the Virginia Tech community as we seek out acceptance and inclusion in the varying aspects of life at this university.

We meet bimonthly on the first and third Wednesdays. For more information, email transspacevt@gmail.com or search Facebook for "TransSpace at Virginia Tech" to like our page or join the private group. 



Graphic courtesy of TransSpace

The Necessity ○

How queer & safe spaces empower people to speak their truth

by Jalen Parker

Safe, queer spaces are a necessity. When creating queer spaces at Virginia Tech, a number of ideas and practices must be kept in mind. For instance, how inclusive or exclusive the space is and what ground rules help people navigate and speak their truth. These aspects are both necessary to build a safe environment for individuals who would otherwise need to filter and guard themselves.

Why exactly is it important to feel a sense of openness in public? My recent experiences at the Creating Change conference in Denver, Colorado this year solidified my belief that being your full unfiltered self (sometimes in a vulnerable way) can be a healing process.

What is Vulnerability?

The idea of vulnerability is an extremely personal experience. It varies from person to person and takes on different shapes and forms. For me, vulnerability means being able to let go of my inner guards and protections and allowing people to see who I am, regardless of the implications of how people perceive me. This is an important ingredient in harboring a safe, queer space and should be in the forefront when creating these spaces.

It wasn't until the Creating Change conference that I felt I was able to drop all of the walls surrounding me. I walked from my

hotel room at the conference, where I felt most comfortable being myself, to the hotel lobby, where I continued to be that same comfortable person meeting new people. I felt safe being in a queer and open environment and was able to share things that I've never spoken about before. Being able to speak my truth was an act of healing.

When attending workshops, I tried to remember what facilitators would do to open up and generate a safe space — it's not enough to just have queer people sitting in a closed room! Before most sessions, we collaboratively set ground rules together such as “speak from your own experience” and “take space, make space.” This critical process helped everyone in the room set up a common language and method of communication, which allowed us to speak freely and understand the root of each topic.

Another important aspect of the safe space was ensuring that things discussed in the room did not leave the room, unless given consent from a specific person. Knowing that what I said could be safe-guarded allowed me to be more open and feel safer.

“I see and I am seen by the world as a queer black male.”

Informed by these concepts and experiences, I felt obligated to see if a safe, queer space could be found at Virginia Tech. I >>

f Queer Spaces



Illustration by Brian Craig

began to explore queer spaces at Virginia Tech, such as HokiePRIDE and Queer People of Color at VT (QPOC). When I compare the queer spaces I explored, what is of utmost importance to me is the concept of intersectionality, how people with multiple identities must navigate the interplay between various forms of oppression and domination and how power shapes the perception of their identities.

For example, I see and I am seen by the world as a queer black male. Not only do I see forms of oppression and discrimination against my queer identity, but I also face racism and other forms of oppression as a part of my black identity. When faced with going to a space like HokiePRIDE, an organization with a majority of white leadership and members, I feel less safe and understood based on that. I would feel comfortable that my queer identity is represented by and from people with similar experiences, but I would still feel unsafe in discussing my black identity and how racism affects my intersectionality.

This is why I feel more comfortable going to a space like QPOC, where ideas of navigating race, orientation, and gender are all discussed among the members and where every part of my multiple identities is safe to share. This is not to say one space is better than the other, but rather the idea of a safe space looks and means something different to different people.


How to Improve Safety in Queer Spaces

It's also important to think about ways to improve queer spaces here on campus. As someone who has taken leadership opportunities for QPOC, I think about the idea of

being inclusive and exclusive concurrently. Obviously, a queer space may naturally be more inclusive towards LGBTQ+ individuals and exclusive to heteronormative individuals. Although being in a queer space can be a learning experience, the sense of safety can be removed from people who are used to heteronormativity and feel uncomfortable when confronted with non-heteronormative relationships and experiences.

I know that I and other leaders in these queer spaces on campus can work on being more inclusive within our community. Whether we'd like to admit it or not, we have our own margins where we tend to disregard and invalidate, such as the neglect of transgender, differently-abled, bisexual, asexual and gender nonconforming people.

We need to expand our ideas of being inclusive and intersectional when creating safe, queer spaces. Frankly, it's not enough to generate comfort for the leaders of queer spaces. We need to move beyond that and nurture an open environment that makes everyone feel safer and more protected.

It is often impossible to make everyone feel safe, especially as the community grows and expands. However, it is crucial to open up common communication and establish a method of operating in queer spaces so that everyone has an opportunity to break down their walls and remove the filters that prevent them from feeling safe enough to be vulnerable and heal. 

First Thirsty Thursday in Blacksburg

by Lisa Summe

Right now I'm about seven beers in and dancing with everyone but you. Tonight I'm destroying everything in my body and I blame the \$1 PBRs, the DJ, and especially the hundreds of girls who are not you. I'm drunk enough to feel okay about watching porn on my iPhone in the bathroom stall of a college bar. I'm drunk enough to call you afterwards and tell you on my walk home about my first time masturbating in public. Sometimes I notice things about you in other girls. This girl's racer back tan line, that girl's whiskey on the rocks. But I haven't met a girl with eyebrows like yours. She doesn't exist, and even if she did, I wouldn't notice her eyebrows. If you were here, I'd ask you to slow dance to a rap song. You'd think it was stupid, but you would smile and say yes. You would love it. The whole room would stop.

From History to Queerstory:

Exploring past events in the LGBTQ narrative through an intercultural lens

by Mark Smiley

As a queer identified, cis male who frequently presents as white, I have been thinking a lot about collective memory and the narratives that I have heard on LGBTQ history. At its best, shared history binds communities together — it facilitates connection, forges common understanding, and can help to teach us who we *are* by allowing us to examine who we *have been*. At its worst, history can divide communities by presenting myopic or incomplete narratives, perpetuating oppression, and obscuring truth. History becomes yet another playing field for underrepresented individuals to be marginalized, even within an already marginalized group.

It's easy for me to conjure up the “positive” images that the heterosexual community receives about the LGBTQ movement: a dazzlingly handsome male couple hold hands and grin congenially out to the audience. They're fit and educated and either live in a trendy — gentrified — urban neighborhood or have nested in a non-descript suburban nightmare. They want to get married, maybe raise an equally photogenic family, and generally prove to their straight viewers, that they're *pretty much the same as you*. Yes, it turns out that the sole driving force of the LGBTQ movement is marriage equality ...

But we know that this isn't the case. What about queer people of color? What about trans people? What about the scores of

homeless youth in the United States who identify on the LGBTQ spectrum? What about bisexual and non-monosexual identifying people, including asexual folks? Surely individuals from these segments of our community are as entwined in the events which shaped the LGBTQ movements of the past as much as they are a part of the present. Those histories, however, are not so often heard.

The straight and LGBTQ communities both receive similar sound bites and messages about LGBTQ history. We hear about Harvey Milk, but might never learn the name Bayard Rustin (a gay African-American activist who instructed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other activists in techniques of civil

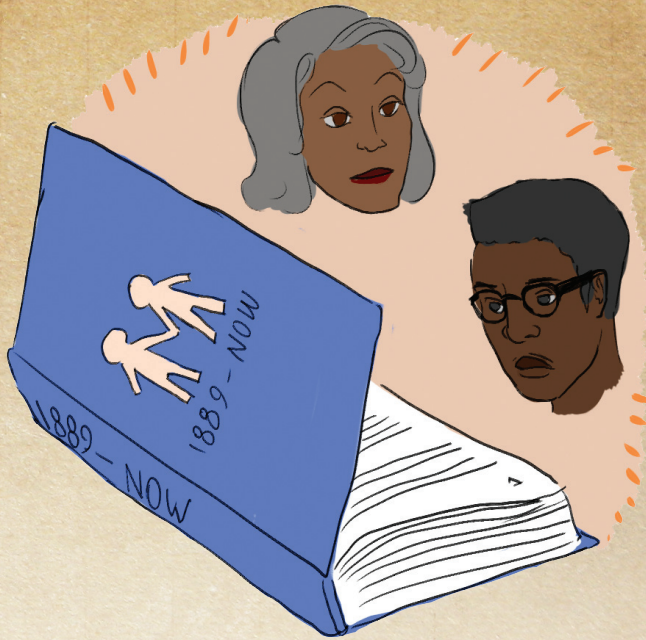


Illustration by Rhitwika Sensharma

disobedience during the Montgomery Bus Boycott). The Stonewall Riot that we read about involves gay, cis, white protesters but makes no mention that the majority of Stonewall Inn patrons who rioted were transgender people of color, or impoverished, homeless youth.

This tendency is represented even in the films we are exposed to, where otherwise healthy looking, white gay men are stricken with “the gay cancer,” without acknowledging the scores of LGBTQ in communities of color who were impacted by the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 1980s, or the rural communities who were ravaged quietly under the radar by the disease. This piece, while by no means an exhaustive recounting of LGBTQ history, attempts to explore events and moments that were no less salient to the larger LGBTQ narrative and include identity groups imbedded within the community.

It will also explore events which may be known, but from an intercultural lens.

Late 1800s - Early 1900s

While not a localized event, in 1889, Jane Addams contributed significantly to the prevalence of the term “Boston marriage,” which referred to two women who cohabitated for a long period of time. This came on the tails of the founding of Hull House in Chicago — the first “settlement house” offering services for the poor in the city. Addams’ work was part of the genesis of what we now understand as “social work.” Chicago would prove to be an early focal point for with the founding of The Society for Human Rights (TSHR) in 1924. TSHR was the first known gay rights organization in the United States. Unfortunately, the prevalence of police raids and media harassment forced the disbandment of the organization in less than a year. >>

1920s

Nonetheless, the Roaring Twenties brought with it a new, more open approach towards LGB issues, with gay artists such as Langston Hughes, Bruce Nugent and Bessie Smith achieving prominence during the Harlem Renaissance. Long understood as a focal point of black intellectual awakening, the Harlem Renaissance was also typified by prominent queer individuals of color, due in part because the bohemian culture that came with the Renaissance was welcoming to gay - identified people.


1930s - 1950s

However, the beatnik culture that emerged in the 1930s, with its more cosmopolitan mores, eventually gave way to significantly more draconic 1940s and 50s, typified by overall fear and distrust of outside influence, including homosexuality. The testing of the first atomic bomb by the Soviets and the Communist takeover of China in 1949 prompted deep hysteria in the United States, crystalizing into the Red Scare and gay witch hunts of the McCarthy era. Despite tightening of social mores, the 1950s also saw renewed representations of homosexuality and bisexuality through the work of black queer novelist James Baldwin in 1956's *Giovanni's Room*.

STONEWALL

One of the hallmarks of the LGBTQ liberation movement, the Stonewall Riots of 1969, is also predominately told from the perspective of white gay men. The story that most are told was that there

was significant mafia involvement in the way that bars like the Stonewall Inn were run, and that this, in addition to the general climate felt by LGBTQ people, greatly impacted the frequency of raids, and what bars were raided and which were not. This narrative largely serves a white male perspective, although queer and trans youth of color were hugely influential in initiating and sustaining the movement that began at Stonewall. Miss Major, a prominent and enduring transgender elder of color, explained that this was largely a function of many of these figures who were often deeply impacted by disproportionate violence and HIV/AIDS, not surviving through the seventies, eighties, and nineties to tell their stories.

Thinking about the narratives that are proliferated in both the LGBTQ community and the straight community, my mind keeps returning to Chimanda Adichie's Ted Talk, entitled *The Danger of the Single Story*. Although Adichie's talk largely deals in stereotype, her central message feels very apt to the topic of this article. Namely, that the danger is not that an LGBTQ historical narrative dominated by white, cis, gay perspective is patently untrue, but rather that it fails to deliver the full scope of that history because it does not include the experiences of our fellow queer brothers, sisters, and gender variant family who do not fit into those boxes. If we are to understand ourselves, where we come from, and where we are going, we must strive to recall all the parts of ourselves. 

THE QUEST FOR FEMALE CONDOMS

(AND OTHER PROPHYLACTIC METHODS)

BY HOA NGUYEN



What are female condoms? A folktale? A myth? Do they even exist? And if they do exist, why are they harder to find than the Loch Ness Monster?



It sure felt that way on my quest for female condoms in small college town Blacksburg. Like any well-intentioned Virginia Tech student, I go to Kroger for all of my grocery and household needs, except this time, I was also there for female condoms and dental dams. My first try at the aisle of condoms in the health section was a failure. No female condoms or dental dams. I went up the counter of the Pharmacy.

“Excuse me, do you sell female condoms or dental dams?”

“Dental dams...?” the pharmacy worker questioned, *“I don’t know what that is, and I don’t think I’ve seen any female condoms.”*

While pondering how come this did not get covered as part of their training, I explained, *“Dental dams are sheets of latex rubber that covers the vulva including the vaginal area. It’s used during oral sex for protection.”*

The worker’s eyes grew big.

“No, I don’t know what that is.”

The confusion was clear on the worker’s face. Now let me get started on how to explain female condoms to the worker...

FEMALE-CONTROLLED PROPHYLACTIC METHODS

In short, *female-controlled prophylactic methods* refers to ways of protecting against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that are used by females. They include both mechanical methods, which female condoms and dental dams fall under, and chemical methods, your usually easily obtainable birth control pills, Plan B, birth control patches, and so on. Many female-controlled methods depend on accessing a doctor for either a prescription or actual procedure. We find it much easier to attain certain chemical and mechanical methods that >>

primarily prevent pregnancy (such as the pill) in comparison to methods that are more successful at protecting against STIs, such as female condoms and dental dams.

SO WHAT KINDS ARE THERE, AND WHY SHOULD I USE THEM?

In comparison to male condoms, the female condom covers more of the vaginal opening which reduces STI transmissions that can infect the outer areas surrounding the vagina. They are made of nitrile, therefore, friendly to people with latex allergies, and can be used with oil-, water-, and silicone-based lubricants. They cost more than male condoms but less than birth control, and you can insert them in hours before the fun times begin. In contrast, dental dams are made of latex rubber, though they are also available in silicone, and used for oral-vaginal or oral-anal sex. They are easy to use and can be paired with water-based lubricants. Though people do not often use protection during oral and anal sex, we know that it is possible to get STIs during fellatio, cunnilingus, and of course, anal sex.

Now, as far as we know, commonly used methods — namely, birth control, plan B pills, spermicides, IUDs, patches, and rings — do not protect against STIs. While dental dams do not prevent against pregnancy and female condoms have a lower rate of effectiveness than male condoms, they are the few female-controlled methods that can actually reduce risk of STIs, including herpes, genital warts (HPV) and HIV for females. The lower effectiveness of female condoms has been attributed to lack of understanding how to correctly use them.

THE QUEST CONTINUES...

After my attempt at Kroger Pharmacy, I tried several other places. I mustered up the energy to call Schiffert Health Center.

*“Hello, Schiffert Health Center.
How can I help you?”*

“Hello, do you sell female condoms?”

“I’m sorry...”

Turns out they do not sell female condoms, but you can get two dozen male condoms for \$5. Dental dams are not sold. Neither female condoms nor dental dams are available at Kroger, Rite Aid, Walgreens, Blacksburg Pharmacy, Food Lion, all of which carry at least five different brands of male condoms. When talking with the associate at Blacksburg Pharmacy, they stated that their supplier does not carry dental dams or female condoms. If they did, they would be willing to order them on my behalf.

It wasn’t until I asked Megan Nguyen, president of Queer People of Color (QPOC), who kindly asked Ethan Poole, president of HokiePRIDE, that I had some luck. I approached Megan after remembering dental dams being given out at a HokiePRIDE event before. My beliefs were confirmed. Within a day, they sent me a link where I could buy (in bulk) dental dams, female condoms, and many other forms of barrier methods (link provided at end). I suppose looking to the Internet is the only way to get female condoms and dental dams when living in Blacksburg.

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING USE OF FEMALE CONDOMS


In 2013, Tracie Egan Morrissey wrote “Stop Trying to Make Female Condoms Happen,” arguing that the idea of female condoms holds women accountable for safe sex practices instead of men. Interesting point, but I find that her proposition is a little misguided. First of all, one partner’s decision to keep contraceptives on hand for themselves does not decrease the responsibility of the other partner(s). In this day and age, we are all responsible for educating ourselves on various contraceptives and taking the best measures to practice sex safe.



Illustration by Katherine Flores

Second, her argument is based on the heteronormative assumption that female condoms are used only for male-female sexual intercourse for the purpose of birth control. They aren't. Female condoms can be used when passing or sharing dildos and strap-on harnesses, and not to forget, for anal sex as well — all of which can occur between gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer folks of any gender or genders.

Prioritizing birth control over protection against STI highlights the needs of opposite

sex couples and neglects a universal need in relationships with partners of any sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual health is not just about preventing pregnancy. It is about feeling **safe**, keeping our bodies **healthy**, and having **options**. This is important because giving people more options in the realm of sexual health empowers us to take charge and protect our sexual health and ultimately improve our sexual lives. 

LINK TO SAFER SEX MATERIALS:
<http://www.totalaccessgroup.com/>



WORD OF THE GAY

Origins of Modern Gay and Lesbian Words

by Abraham Martinez | layout by Phim Her

1600s

- ▶ The term **“lesbian”** is derived from the Greek island Lesbos where the poet Sappho was born because much of her poetry centered on love and attraction toward women, though a few of her works also spoke of love toward men.
- ▶ **“Gay”** has a more nebulous etymology. The original meaning of “joyful and carefree” is well known, but the word “gay” evolved around the 1600s to describe people who were addicted to pleasures, moral or immoral. This soon shifted to describe homosexual individuals. Like “gay” and “lesbian,” most of the phrases associated with gays and lesbians evolved from different roots and meanings.

1900s

WHERE DID COMING OUT COME FROM?

- ▶ **“Coming out”** is one of the most common phrases associated with the LGBTQ+ community. In the simplest explanation, coming out describes the process when a person discloses their sexual orientation to others in their life. This phrase seems fitting to the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, but it was adapted from a completely different set of experiences. When southern debutantes of the early 1900s were of marrying age, they hosted a coming out party to present themselves to society. At that time, gays who made their sexuality known were similarly presenting themselves to the gay culture that existed.
- ▶ Around mid-century of the 1900s, the focus shifted, and the phrase **“coming out of the closet”** emerged. Now, instead of representing a person entering into an open and hopeful community, it was more focused on the person leaving the oppression of the denial and secrecy from their “skeleton in the closet.” This oppression peaked in the 50s and 60s when institutionalized discrimination against LGBTQ+ citizens began to spiral out of control. Many in the homosexual community felt (and still feel) the need to remain “closeted.” This feeling has been reinforced with the evolution of disparaging and hurtful verbage that is still prevalent today.

Contrary to the belief that homosexuality is a recent, significant cultural phenomenon, LGBTQ+ individuals have been present throughout numerous cultures in history: the Greek warriors in the Band of Thebes who were also lovers, the two-spirit Native Americans who had opportunities to fulfill revered roles and positions in their society, and royalty across various European cultures who maintained favorites of both sexes. Historical subjects like these contributed to the evolution of the labels and words that we used today when referring to homosexuality.

1900s, CONT.


RECLAIMED TERMS

- ▶ Some of the modern words, commonly used as insults, have etymologies that follow similar trends to other LGBTQ+ words. Gay males are commonly referred to as faggots and lesbians as dykes. **"Faggot"** is thought to have come from a negative term "faggot-gatherer" that was used to describe older women who made minimal earnings gathering and selling firewood. Homosexual men frequently were dubbed with womanly titles and this insult followed that trend.
- ▶ **"Dyke"**, on the other hand, is believed to be a shortening of the term "buildyker," which has an obscure origin. It is thought to be a combination of the prefix "bull" for masculinity with the suffix "dyke" meaning ditch, a reference to the vulva. Thus, buildyker was used negatively to describe women who were masculine. The modern day "dyke" has actually been embraced by many lesbians, gradually dissolving its derogatory roots.
- ▶ This has also been the case for one of the most common disparaging remarks to hear: **"queer."** Older definitions of queer are "differing in some odd way" and "not quite well." This term has historically been used to describe effeminate gay men, suggesting that

MODERN DAY (2015)

they are abnormal and/or ill. Recently, however, the term has been reclaimed as a proud moniker and an umbrella term referring to those individuals inadequately represented by the LGBT acronym.

WHY THE MEANING BEHIND THE WORD MATTERS

- ▶ Although the fight for LGBT rights hit its stride in the last few decades, LGBTQ+ individuals have been present for millennia and were referred to in a variety of ways. There were many challenges for the community as they battled the oppressive origins of some labels, creating words that expanded and empowered their identities. The etymologies described here are only a microcosm of the slew of terms that sprouted. Many of these words have been given a positive twist and used to propel the LGBTQ+ community forward. It is a testament that the path toward equality and acceptance will not be impeded. Some of these words can hurt, but ultimately, this hurt motivates the growth and strength of the movement. In the end, they are just words. It is the meaning behind them that matters. 

JUST ANOTHER FREAKSHOW?

Examining American Horror Story's progressive view on the queer and disabled

by Kenna Day

Known for its cult-status popularity, American Horror Story also produces strong socio-critical commentary. Each self-contained season can be aligned with a particular social concern. Season 1 (Murder House) deals in the problems of family dysfunction, and Season 2 (Asylum) tackles mental illness, while Season 3 (Coven) speaks volumes about feminism and the way powerful women are pitted against each other — and even hunted — by a patriarchal society.

From the first episode of Freak Show last October, we quickly realized that the show was going to comment on social perception, ostracism and punishment of people who are physically disabled. As the season progressed, the show's emphasis developed to include the non-heteronormative, including a special appearance from none other than Neil Patrick Harris (as Chester Creb). However, by the finale, many of us were left questioning the portrayal of sexuality and disability. While we were sympathetic to each of the freaks' sorrows and struggles, we were also frequently disgusted or horrified by their behavior.

Historically, freak shows have conflated sexual abnormality with disability. The physically and mentally disabled were exhibited alongside people born with malformed sexual organs. For many

of these people, traveling freak shows were a refuge and the only form of paying work, though the freaks often suffered abuse, neglect and humiliation.

Many of the characters in AHS Freak Show are actually based on famous freaks of the past. The inspiration for Ethel Darling/the Bearded Lady (Kathy Bates) most likely came from Grace Gilbert, better known as the Redheaded Bearded Lady. Pepper and Salty/the Pinheads (Naomi Grossman and Christopher Neiman) are most likely based on Pip and Flip Snow, and Bette and Dot Tattler (Sarah Paulson) are probably inspired by Daisy and Violet Hilton.

Other characters — like Paul the Illustrated Seal (Matt Fraser), Ma Petit (Jyoti Amge), Legless Suzi (Rose Siggins) and Toulouse (Drew Rin Varick) — are portrayed by >>



Illustration by Brian Craig

real people with physical disabilities. And some of the recurring cast are played by openly out Hollywood figures, like Amazon Eve (portrayed by the transgender fitness trainer and model of the same name) and Stanley (Denis O'Hare). By acknowledging the historical legacy of freak shows and by using actors with real physical disabilities, the show has a certain emotional authenticity that could not be achieved by special effects makeup, good acting and fully abled, heterosexual actors alone.

The first episode opens on the edge of small town Jupiter, Florida in 1952, where Elsa Mars (Jessica Lange) and her financially struggling Cabinet of Curiosities have decided to settle permanently now that they are the last freak show in the country. The townspeople make it clear that the freaks aren't welcome. But we soon find that physical differences aren't their only concern.

Each character is, in some form or another, sexually "abnormal." Ethel Darling has a beard and maintains a pseudo-lesbian relationship with Elsa. In the episode titled "Blood Bath," we learn that, before WWII, Elsa was a German dominatrix whose legs were sawn off by Nazis attempting to use her in a pornographic snuff film. Being conjoined at the torso and forced to share a single vagina, Bette and Dot must make polyamorous arrangements between themselves so they can finally lose their virginity.

Desiree Dupree (Angela Bassett) has always believed she was an intersex person but discovers that her supposed penis is actually just an extremely enlarged clitoris. In the same episode, Dell/the Strong Man (Michael Chiklis) — who is Desiree's

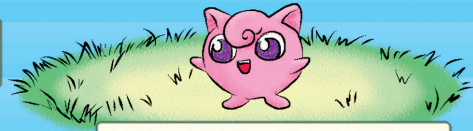
husband and Jimmy Darling's (Evan Peters) father by Ethel — turns out to be very, very gay, and we finally understand that Desiree, with her clitoral penis, and Ethel, with her wispy beard, were apparently...well, beards.

Over the course of the season, each character struggles not only to understand and embrace their physical abnormalities but also their sexualities. Yet each time the freaks come close to finding happiness, there seems to be someone standing in their way, ready to re-closet them.

Unfortunately, and maybe because AHS is a horror program, the repression of physical disability and non-heteronormative sexuality always ends in bloodshed. Under Jimmy's leadership, the freaks kill and dismember a police officer who threatens to arrest the twins for murdering their abusive mother in "Monsters Among Us." Dell is blackmailed into smothering Ma Petit so Stanley can sell her body to a morbidity museum. And Elsa, the supposed protector of the freaks, murders Ethel when she thinks her shot at Hollywood is in jeopardy.

So how do we reconcile our revulsion with our sympathy towards these characters? By producing physically and sexually "abnormal" characters who commit gratuitous acts of violence, is Freak Show encouraging audiences to see violence as a side effect of being gay, trans or physically disabled? To put it simply: I think not. The freaks act in self-defense, protecting themselves against an outside person's attempts to repress their strangeness. Freak Show takes the danger of intolerance to its extreme, forcing us to ask ourselves who the real monsters among us are. ■■■

Quiz by
Matty Bennett



Art & Layout by
Mariana Sierra

WHAT IS YOUR SEXUAL SPIRIT POKÉMON?

1. IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT. WHAT ARE YOU MOST LIKELY DOING?

- A. EATING AT A RESTAURANT WITH GREAT FOOD.
- B. PROBABLY HANGING WITH FRIENDS. I GO WITH THE FLOW!
- C. HITTING UP THE GYM - GOTTA WORK ON THAT BEACH BOO!
- D. GOING OUT DANCING. NO QUESTION.
- E. BINGE-WATCHING NETFLIX AND EATING JUNK FOOD.
- F. SPENDING TIME WITH MY SIGNIFICANT OTHER.

2. WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD LOVE RIGHT NOW?

- A. I'M FOCUSED MORE ON SEX, NOT LOVE.
- B. DON'T THINK ABOUT IT MUCH, GOOD THINGS WILL HAPPEN.
- C. LOOK GOOD. FEEL GOOD. GET LAID.
- D. LOVE IS A PERFORMANCE ART I HAVE YET TO MASTER.
- E. I'M PRETTY CONTENT RIGHT NOW.
- F. I'VE FOUND TRUE LOVE: WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR THEM!

3. YOU'RE GETTING INTIMATE. WHAT'S YOUR GO-TO PHRASE?

- A. MORE TONGUE!
- B. YAAAAASSSSSS.
- C. [GRUNTING]
- D. [INDISCERNIBLE COOING/MOANING]
- E. ZZZZZZZZ
- F. I LOVE YOU.

4. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR SEX LIFE CURRENTLY?

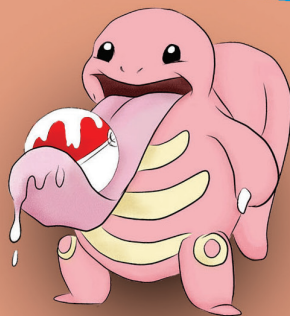
- A. KINKY.
- B. IT'S AN ADVENTURE!
- C. HOT A.F.!
- D. BEAUTIFUL, ENIGMATIC, LIKE A CONTEMPORARY DANCE.
- E. I'M FOCUSED ON ME RIGHT NOW.
- F. PERFECT.

>>

If you answered mostly A's...

You are LICKITUNG!

Not that this needs to be explained, but you're into oral everything. Touch and taste are most important to you. Like Lickitung, you remember things by their texture and sweetness—or bitterness—and you're ready to explore. Your tongue is essentially magical—it's powerful, mesmerizing, and 6'5" long. Wait, sorry, that last one is just Lickitung.



FAVORITE MOVES:
LICK
WRAP
POWER WHIP
ME FIRST

If you answered mostly B's...

You are PIKACHU!

You are mostly docile, sweet, and friendly, but you also have a wild side. Just as Pikachu stores up electrical energy and eventually must discharge, you too store up sexual energy that must be released. Depending on how things go, the burst can range from a small Thundershock release to an enormous Thunder explosion.

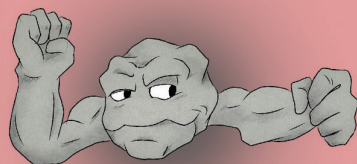


FAVORITE MOVES:
NUZZLE
TAIL WHIP
ELECTRO BALL
PLAY NICE

If you answered mostly C's...

You are GEODUDE!

You're proud of your sturdy body and not afraid to show it off. Like Geodude, when it comes to getting down and dirty, you don't mind things getting rough. For you, sex isn't about the cuddling afterward—it's about the rock-hard physicality. And hey, if no one can help you get off, you can just use a quick Self-Destruct.

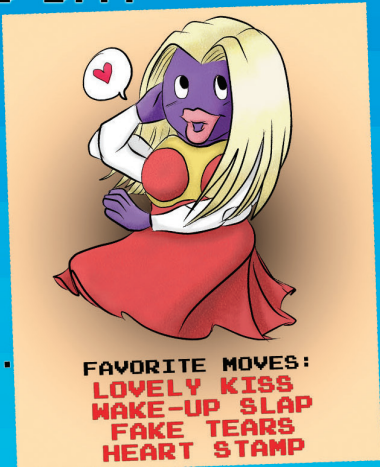


FAVORITE MOVES:
MUD SPORT
SELF-DESTRUCT
SMACK DOWN
EXPLOSION

If you answered mostly D's...

You are JYNX!

You are a performer. Your rhythmic movements are sensual, and you communicate best with your body through dance. Sex for you is about intimacy, closeness, and connection. Like Jynx, you're most invigorated by urban environments, where the hustle and bustle makes you feel alive.



If you answered mostly E's...

You are SNORLAX!



You are the ultimate relaxer. Set you up with some snacks, Netflix, and a comfy bed, and nothing can stop you from enjoying yourself. You're extremely easy-going. Like Snorlax, you're docile, chill, and pretty content with yourself right now. Maybe someday you'll find someone good enough to make room for on the couch, but you're in no rush.

If you answered mostly F's...

You are DRAGONITE!

You are a truly loyal lover. Just as Dragonite altruistically saves humans from floods and leads ships to safety in storms, you too are kind-hearted and would do anything for your significant other. Whether it be performing a Dragon Dance for them, or rocking them like a Hurricane, your partner comes first. You're intelligent, wise, and extremely rare—there's no one quite like you out there.



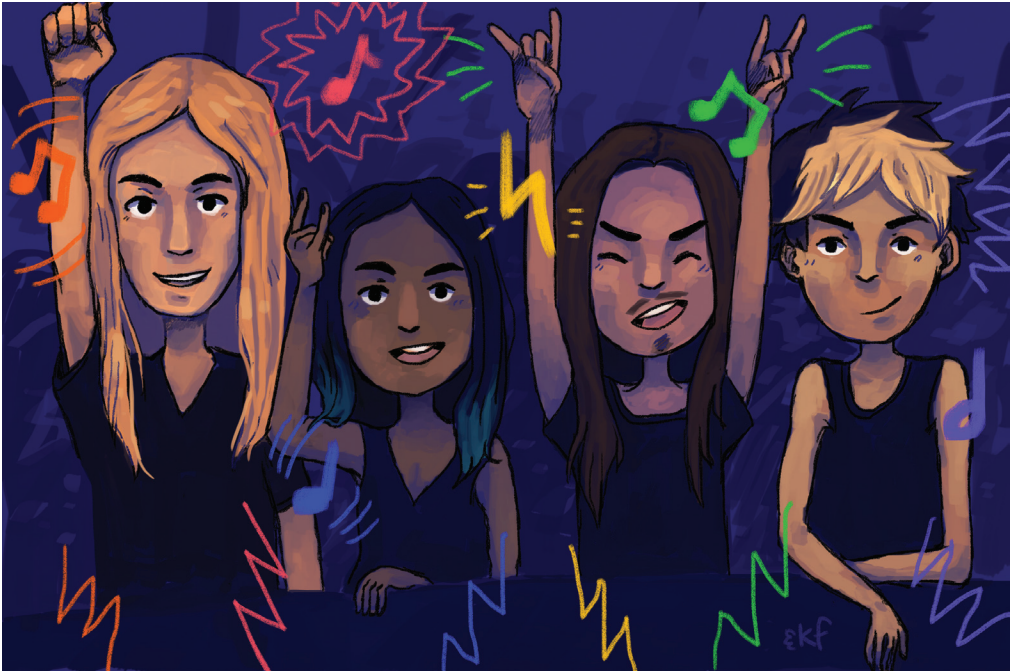


Illustration by Katherine Flores

HOMO SCREAMO

Forward momentum for LGBT tolerance in the metal genre

by Emma Briscoe

Hypermasculine, violent, aggressive, and dark — the metal genre is not often conceptualized outside of these terms. Thanks to metal icons like Kerry King of Slayer and Dave Mustaine of Megadeth spewing forth messages of disapproval and hatred toward the LGBT community, the entire genre (and subsequently the fan base) gets unfairly associated with bigotry and social knuckle-dragging.

Despite idiot front men and its severe, sometimes unwelcoming outer shell, metal has a great deal to offer the LGBT community. This genre is notorious for its diversity, sense of rebellion, and close-knit, protective community. Metal has slowly become the voice of the disenfranchised, a genre not afraid to make political and social statements that fly in the face of authority and oppression. Metalheads the world over are mocked, stigmatized and shunned for being members of a severely misunderstood subculture; LGBT metal fans feel this stigmatization doubly because they are made to feel like interlopers in two socially disdained worlds.

Thankfully, metal (unlike Mustaine) has evolved into a community which champions tolerance, inclusiveness and equality and openly mocks those that engage in hateful rhetoric and bigotry. The following four bands are worth a listen whether you're gay, straight, bisexual, transgender or even a boring Radiohead fan, as long as you're down for some badass riffs, guttural growls, deafening screams and brutal blast beats sans stupidity and homophobia.

GAY FOR JOHNNY DEPP (2004-2011)

While GfJD is no longer together (or touring the UK in the winter wearing nothing but socks on their genitals), this Queercore/Hardcore/Spazzcore foursome from New York is notorious for its blatantly homoerotic lyrics about Johnny Depp. Check out their 2005 album *Blood: The Natural Lubricant* (An Apocalyptic Adventure Beyond Sodom and Gomorrah) for profane, edgy, spastic tracks like "Shh, Put The Shiv To My Throat" and "Fucking Isn't Cheating."

CYNIC (1987-PRESENT)

The LGBT metal community was quiet for a few years after Rob Halford of Judas Priest came out publicly in 1998. However, fifteen years later, Sean Reinert and Paul Masvidal of American progressive/technical death metal trio Cynic came out, and the reaction by fans and industry giants was unexpectedly and overwhelmingly positive. Fans shared messages of support and admiration via social media and defended these metalheads as part of their tribe. After having hidden such a large facet of their identity for decades, Reinert and Masvidal offered that they hope to start challenging old stereotypes about sexuality and metal through their music.

IWRESTLEDABEARONCE (2007-PRESENT)

This Louisiana-based metalcore/grindcore/mathcore band responsible for irresistibly catchy tracks like "Tastes Like Kevin Bacon" and "Ulrich Firelord: Breaker of Mountains" forges the path to tolerance in the metal community with an axe. Their most memorable contribution to the LGBT community occurred in 2013 when they released their infamous "Metal Just Got Gay" shirts. 100 percent of the sales profits from this campaign are donated to GLAAD, The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Guitarist Stephen Bradley stated that Iwrestledabearonce "has one simple message to spread: keep an open mind and be accepting of people and ideas which might seem different to you." He furthered this by saying that "homophobia belongs on the same list as other vile concepts like racism and sexism, and we need to do all we can to eradicate them from our world."

I DECLARE WAR (2005-PRESENT)

While the lineup of Seattle death metal band I Declare War might be unpredictable and quick to change, the central focus of their music certainly remains steadfast. Guitarist Evan Hughes explains that their "lyrics are based on a lot of what [they] think is corrupt in the world today — government, religion and the self-inflicted downfall of humanity." In a similar vein to Iwrestledabearonce's "Metal Just Got Gay" shirts, I Declare War released a shirt in early 2015 to demonstrate their support for the LGBT community. It features the band's logo with two men kissing beneath it; the phrase "Who Fucking Cares?" is stamped in bold, block letters all the way down the back. A cocktail of "shocking and offensive" imagery and profanity, this shirt is simultaneously a demonstration of support and a rebellious challenge to homophobes and haters. 



Illustration by Brian Craig

HOMONORMATIVITY

The “right way” to be gay

by Miles Le

Who is Normal?

“Normal” is a loaded term. It’s often used by liberals as a suffocating blanket — depriving us of breath while they offer soft coos of comfort — releasing their grasp only when we, too, can be like them, until we can imitate the ideal family: 2.5 white kids living in a fenced neighborhood. This supposed goal of normalcy cements the status quo as human, making all of us who are unable to achieve that Richard Sherman pastel-shaded lifestyle less than human.

Such is “homonormativity,” an enforcement of white heteronormative patriarchal values and images within queer spaces and culture for the sake of assimilation. Images of the queer movement now reflect a movement toward homonormativity. Capitalist and imperialist movements are swallowing our fight for humanity, throwing around Gay Rights™ like a dog bone to those of us who are hungry for outside recognition of our humanity.

So is society becoming more accepting of us, or are we being seduced by the picket-fence suburbs that are so often embodied in corporate images? “They’re just like us, they just like people of the same gender,” is frequently the modus operandi of liberal allies. By ignoring the problematic aspects of reducing the entirety of LGBTQIA identities to the single definition of “they just like people of the same gender,” liberals pressure us into assimilation using a white, heteronormative, patriarchal ideology. This concept of assimilation, although seemingly innocuous, reflects a dangerous narrative that divides queer identities into acceptable/assimilated vs. unacceptable/rejected. Often, the lines between acceptable and unacceptable reflect those already in place, pushing marginalized identities further to the side in the name of respectability politics.

Respectable Queers

Respectability politics is a dangerous construct, claiming a path of acceptance by way of absorption into a white, heteronormative, patriarchal society. The divisions created regarding who is acceptable or not, allow the “respectable queers” (usually white) to co-opt the movements of marginalized queer and trans people of color (QTPoC) under their own names. Take, for instance, the Stonewall riots. Long considered the starting point of the modern gay rights movement, most searchable articles online refer to the riot as a “gay riot,” ignoring the influence of trans women of color such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera.

Rivera herself echoes this sentiment; she felt marginalized within the community that originally claimed to be fighting alongside her. She risked arrest on the front lines of political demonstrations, yet when the press released their

statements, the words of the more acceptable “straight-appearing” leadership were on the front page. She was used to head up the movements, but when it came time to put a face onto the words and the noise, the white middle class took credit. Rivera also warned about the inclusion of certain identities (usually the LG part of the LGBTQIA) in the institutions of marriage and military as a form of assimilating to the heterosexuals, tellingly foreshadowing more recent developments in Gay Rights™.

Gay Rights™

Marriage as an institution in the West is not one of love, but rather one of economy. By tying properties to what is essentially a patriarchal claim of ownership, marriage has become the de facto way in which humanity becomes property in the West. So it’s no surprise that those who parrot Gay Rights™ have taken marriage as a calling card. Marriage is not the end-all of the fight for our right to exist; rather, it is an assuagement for heterosexuals that, yes (again), we can be like them. Marriage offers up a pathway to acceptance under the idea that we can assume the white picket fence lifestyle because to live otherwise would be a stain on their conceptions of personhood.

The repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell in 2010 can be looked at as a victory for us queer folk, yet it only serves to justify our personhood by way of inclusion in the United States’ imperial regime. This act of graciousness by the U.S. government allows itself to champion itself as a leader in Gay Rights™ while continuing to exploit and kill people in the name of US-branded equality. Similar to the use of marriage to justify our personhood, inclusion in the U.S. military serves to center the life of those perpetuating colonial occupation while making invisible the lives of those living under U.S. >>

rule. Otherwise known as pinkwashing, the use of the normalization of Gay Rights™ to justify the death of the Other is nothing new to sustaining imperial powers.

For example, Israel itself positions its standings on Gay Rights™ as a “relief to gays” worldwide, insidiously comparing itself to Palestine and the Arab world. Many in the United States trumpet praises of this “progressive” stance, ignoring the thousands of deaths of the Palestinian people and by extension queer Palestinians. Furthermore, the state of Israel is heavily supported by the U.S.’s corporate power, so much that our direct donations further their colonization of historic Palestine.

Among the companies that fund the illegal settlement foisted by the Israelis are some that have famously come out in support of Gay Rights™: Coca Cola, who ran an ad featuring a “diverse” crowd including a white gay couple (wow), and HP who “expressed their support” following the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage in 2013. We cannot allow ourselves to fall prey to the concept that any country or company supporting LGBTQIA is doing so out of the goodness of their hearts; rather, we should consider why the recognition of our humanity is something to be praised at all.

Losing Our Queerness

Homonormativity is not our humanity. If we are “normal,” then our movements are no longer our own. Our queerness has been partially reclaimed as a shared experience of ostracization; once we lose that experience through assimilation to “normal” then we will have lost our queerness. When we see ourselves as “normal,” we fail as humans to recognize the destruction and exploitation done in our names. Liberalism has clouded our eyes, it has left us cozy in our blankets of aspirations to whiteness and wealth (supported by our allies), who insist that we are just like them. Companies and governments will appeal to us, finally recognizing us as new revenue to promote bumper stickers that read “It Gets Better” or “FCKH8.” In the words of the Sylvia Rivera, “I’m tired of sitting on the back of a bumper.” We cannot be championed for by oppressive powers to win humanity, because what good is humanity if we are not ALL free? 

**We cannot be championed for
by oppressive powers
to win humanity, because
what good is humanity if
we are not ALL free?**

LGBTQ Youth & Young Adults Wanted for Research Project

VT researchers are seeking lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth and young adults ages 13-21 to participate in a project exploring the decision to come out to family as gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer. The questionnaire and in-depth interview take approximately 2-2.5 hours and participants will receive a \$20 gift card. The PI is in the process of developing a program to help youth make safe and successful disclosure decisions to family; this research will help inform that project. Participation is voluntary and all information associated with this IRB-approved study will remain strictly confidential. If you have questions or would like to

discuss eligibility, please contact the project office by email at VTProjectSMYLE@gmail.com or call (540)-231-4235. You can also check out our Facebook page for more information: <https://www.facebook.com/VTProjectSMYLE>



ACROSSBORDERS@VT Invites International LGBTQ Students

Do you identify yourself as international and LGBTQ? Do you need a safe space to talk about issues related to being international and identifying as LGBTQ? AcrossBorders@VT is an informal group that addresses the needs and concerns of international LGBTQ people at Virginia Tech. Privacy and confidentiality of members is encouraged. If you are interested or have questions, please contact acrossborders.vt@gmail.com. In addition, email us to join the closed Facebook group to connect with other international

LGBTQ people. Want more information? Check us out our page on QGPA's site: <http://www.qgpavt.wix.com/qgpavt>



GAY @ GILLIES

PHOTOS BY ALEJANDRO SMITH





And the Golden Globe Goes to ...

Matt Bomer's award for *The Normal Heart* highlights a milestone in gay visibility

by Josh Kim, additional reporting by Josh Thompson


Director Ryan Murphy's 2014 film adaptation of Larry Kramer's 1985 play *The Normal Heart* serves as a melting pot of things witnessed, experienced, and felt during the HIV/AIDS crisis in New York and by its gay community. The film stars Mark Ruffalo, Jonathan Groff, Taylor Kitsch, Joe Mantello, Julia Roberts, Jim Parsons and Matt Bomer, who together tell the story of the onset of the HIV/AIDS crisis in New York City in the early 1980s.

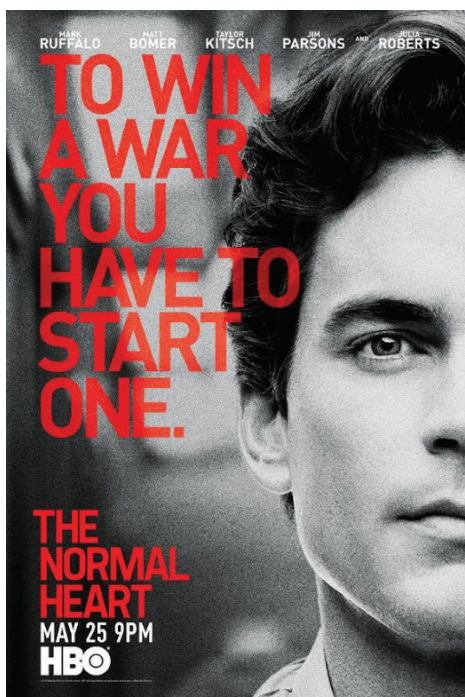
The Normal Heart takes an unwavering look at the nation's sexual politics as gay activists work with allies in the medical community in a fight to raise awareness about the growing epidemic to a society in denial. The film also marks a milestone in that, for the first time, an openly gay man won an award for playing a gay role. Bomer took home the Golden Globe for best supporting actor in a TV movie or miniseries for his portrayal of Felix Turner, the lover of the writer/activist Ned Weeks (Ruffalo), the film's protagonist.

Bomer's award draws our attention to the contrast between the world depicted in the film and our world today. In the film, the gay community is limited, restrained and even ignored. Government officials delay or refuse appointments with representatives of the gay community while hundreds of men die from HIV/AIDS. Weeks and Dr. Emma Brookner (Roberts) lash out in frustration at institutional callousness resulting from the false comfort that as long as HIV/AIDS is a "gay cancer," it is not a legitimate public health crisis. This all happens amid personal tragedy when Turner contracts HIV/AIDS, bringing together the political and personal elements of the film.

Comparing the 1980s of the film with life today, we see that much has changed: an openly gay, prominent director creates a film in which gay actors play gay characters, one that is well received by critics and the general public.

However, despite the progress shown by these achievements, we have yet to reach full equality. In many ways, HIV/AIDS is still thought of as a disease affecting only gay men. Despite recent changes, the ban on giving blood is still in place for men who have had sex with other men, even though a person of any gender or sexual orientation can contract the disease by multiple, non-sexual means. Still, though, progress has been made. *The Normal Heart* reminds us that no event occurs in a vacuum; the past influences the present and the future.

As Bomer says in the conclusion to his Golden Globe acceptance speech: "To the generation that we lost and the people that we continue to lose to this disease, I just want to say, 'We love you, and we remember you.'" 



Blood Ban Update

Despite proposed changes by FDA, discriminatory donation policy remains

by Katie Ayers

On December 23, 2014, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) voted to end a lifetime ban on blood donations from some gay and bisexual men, opting to reject only those men who have sex with other men in the last year.

The policy will go through a period of public comment this year before any changes are made final.

For sexually active gay and bisexual men on Virginia Tech's campus, this means they are still ineligible to donate at any of the on- or off-campus blood drives.

The ban was enacted in 1983 during the early years of the AIDS epidemic in America. According to the FDA's official policy, this is because men who have sex with men (MSM) "are, as a group, at increased risk for HIV, Hepatitis B and certain other infections that can be transmitted by transfusion."

The FDA does not explain why heterosexuals with multiple partners or those who injected illegal drugs may still be eligible to donate, focusing instead only on gay men. Their research indicates that from 2007 to 2010, the number of new HIV cases attributed to MSM sex increased, while it decreased in other risk categories like heterosexuals with multiple partners or those who were intravenous drug users.

In written remarks on the change, the agency said the year-long deferral is still necessary because "compelling scientific evidence is not available at this time to support a change to a deferral period



Photo by Katie Ayers

less than one year while still ensuring the safety of the blood supply."

While this change represents a step forward, some groups do not feel it is enough. The organizers of the National Gay Blood Drive issued a statement on the ruling:

"(We) support the FDA for taking this huge first step in the right direction and fully embrace this initial policy change that will allow eligible gay and bisexual men to donate for the first time in 31 years," organizers said. "While this is a big success, there is still a long road ahead and a lot of work to do. We will continue to encourage the FDA to consider all the evidence until they arrive at a non-discriminatory policy and discrimination based on sexual orientation is eliminated from the blood deferral process altogether."

The nationwide drive was held July 10, 2014 and encouraged gay and bisexual men to bring eligible donors to give in their place to call attention to the ban.


People can make their voice heard at www.regulations.gov as soon as the FDA sets a date for public comment. 



Photo by L.S. King

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: JEFF MANN BY MATTY BENNETT

*Jeff Mann currently serves as the program director of the creative writing MFA program at Virginia Tech. His work, which spans from poetry to fiction to creative nonfiction, has appeared in numerous anthologies and publications. Most recently, his work *Salvation*, a sequel to his Civil War novel *Purgatory*, has been nominated for a Lambda Literary Award.*

Jeff Mann started writing poetry when he was a young boy. Inspired by his environmentalist father, the first poem he ever wrote was about a flower being able to burst through concrete and environmental destruction. Mann said that it was a decent poem, but it wasn't until high school that he started to write about another passion — *men*.

"I had all these crushes on boys in high school," Mann said, "and of course they were straight. When I went to college, I

fell in love with more men. These were gay, but they still weren't interested. They were my fuel for creativity."

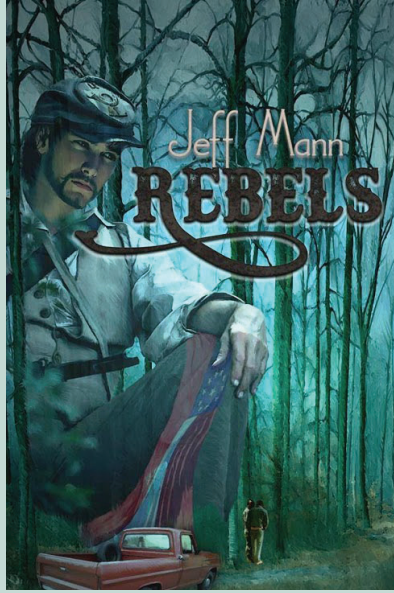
Mann's writing spans a wide spectrum, from the Civil War, to gay male sexuality, to Appalachia, to country music, and they often combine to create incredibly unique stories and poetry. His upcoming book of fiction, *Insatiable*, due out this fall, is about mountaintop removal and stars a gay Appalachian vampire.

“On the one hand, this little niche is something I was able to grab. I’m very identifiable. I may not get the recognition, but by God I am unique,” Mann said. “On the other hand, I’m sort of stuck between worlds. It’s harder and harder for any writer to get recognition.”

Luckily for Mann, he was able to find a community of writers at the Saints and Sinners Literary Festival that helped him flourish and find success in the writing world. Saints and Sinners, held annually in New Orleans, was formed to bring LGBT writers together to create a community that celebrates the literary arts. There, Mann was able to find writers who not only enthusiastically supported his endeavors but understood the struggles that gay writers face.

“Having that sense of hostility and being marginalized and being attacked makes you constantly ready to fight,” Mann said. “The good thing about that is that there’s a strong sense of camaraderie. It’s been wonderful to have the community of the Saints and Sinners writers.”

Despite having that community, however, Mann has faced many setbacks, including the lack of validation



Cover artwork by Elizabeth Leggit,
Lettering by Matt Cresswell

as a writer at the mainstream level.


“I feel dismissed as a writer anywhere else. I don’t think people take my work seriously because it’s very queer, very explicitly erotic, about mountain people, small towns without much money, and country living,” he said.

But even with Mann’s writing topics not exactly being mainstream, he has been able to consistently get published,

which is a testament to his hard work and the community of writers he has found at Saints and Sinners.

“You’ve got to be stubborn,” Mann said. “The fact that I have been able to do what I damn well please, despite the lack of affirmation and acclaim, is a big fuck you to the mainstream.”

For any writer, breaking onto the literary scene can feel like an impossible accomplishment. However, Mann says it’s important to follow your passions and write the work that you want to write.

“Every LGBT writer must continue writing no matter what — no matter how disheartening it may be. If we fall silent, that’s when the bastards have won.” 

GAY AT THE GYM

BY AARON HORST

I walked along the narrow corridor between the cardio and ab machines towards the water fountain and locker room entrance, and that's when we locked eyes — probably late thirties, Latino, baseball cap and t-shirt soaked through as he scaled the endless staircase on a Stairmaster. The look that flickered briefly between us was a knowing and electric one, free of ambiguity and immediately disorienting as thoughts of an illicit hook-up began playing in my head. We exchanged a few more glances, an awkward smile, and then I headed to the locker room, 90 percent sure I'd be followed.

He joined me in the sauna, the two of us waiting out the other occupants until, alone, he sidled up to me on the bench, inches away and staring intensely. A few quick touches, one on the leg, one along my chest, his own hand grabbing his crotch, and somewhere in there me deciding that this is a bad idea. I stood up and so did he. We looked at each other briefly and I leaned in and kissed him full on the mouth, pushing him lightly away as I stepped back and out of the sauna.



Illustration by Rhitwika Sensharma

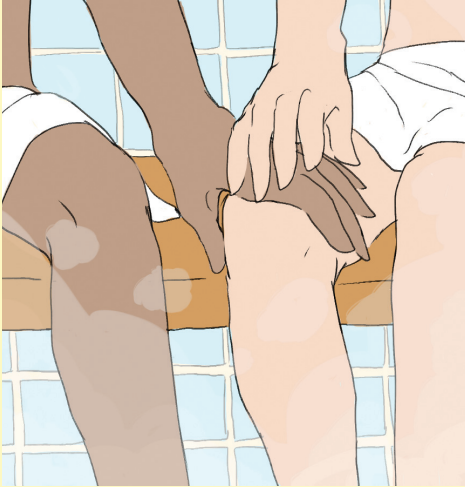


Illustration by Rhitwika Sensharma

Gay life, up until fairly recently in modern history, has been largely forced underground and out of sight. The irony and perverse effect of this obfuscation has led to the creation of the ample framework that services illicit encounters.

For one, gender-segregated spaces (bathrooms, locker rooms, sports teams) operate on the supposition that opposite-sex attraction is the only form of attraction and as such must be policed socially and publicly. Chaste assumptions of what men do in the presence of other men are often hopelessly antiquated, as any survivor of summer camp, boarding school or the U.S. Army might tell you. Further, masculinity of the highly sexualized and eroticized sort seen in an all-male locker room serves, for gay

men, not the purpose of maintaining traditional masculinity but often, instead, the opening of a space for lurid, nameless sexual encounters with the added bonus of being indoors.

The gym represents a traditionally macho social realm inhabited and perhaps now transformed by queer people interested in feeling the burn. Rather than feeling alienated or implicitly discouraged from attending the gym, many friends with whom I spoke framed it instead as a socially non-threatening source of inspiration:

“I don’t think my being a gay man adversely affects my time at the gym. It gives me motivation, and makes me yearn to go as often as I can. Seeing other physically-fit men ... is very enjoyable and inspiring to me. Seeing older fit men also inspire[s] me, as I see what I hope to be (physically) when I reach their age.”

Asked whether or not they felt any sense of conflict about hitting on men/women at the gym, one friend stated: “I don’t feel any conflict, because [the gym] is a ‘safe’ space with no expectations of any interaction or physical and/or sexual contact.” This very sense of anonymity is key to understanding how the gym has transformed as a favored social space for gay men and women. Some gay bath houses even contain gym equipment, according to another respondent, providing perhaps the same loose atmosphere as the paper-thin plotlines of pornography. >>

Experiencing the gym as a meat market at its base comes with both troubling and titillating consequences. For starters, bothersome to me in my own sexual(ized) encounters at the gym is the way in which the male gaze goes entirely unquestioned when its target is another male. As an ardent feminist since the days of Dan Quayle vs. Murphy Brown, I had a moment of intense discomfort at the gym recently while watching a straight (I assume) man hitting on and obviously bothering a woman during her workout and repeatedly refusing to take the hint until he finally and relievedly left.

Eavesdropping on experiences of this sort is enough to give pause when considering one's own behavior — as in, I might come to the gym with aspirations of both a successful workout and the mining of material for present or future orgasms, but what about the men I occasionally lock eyes with, flirt with, or expressly come on to? Am I “that guy,” clueless and unable to see what's problematic about his own behavior? Furthermore, are we as queer men perhaps giving ourselves too much leeway in the arena of sexual encounter and using past and present disenfranchisements for cover?

Aggressively sexual come-ons are, of course, celebrated in some sense by, well, me, when I'm at the other end of it and highly attracted to the aggressor. The double edge of sexuality arises in the difference between the kind of

behavior and approach we favor for our own pleasure versus the loose but present social guidelines governing respect for others' personal space and boundaries. The Pointer Sisters usefully advise one to “move in care-full-lyyyy,” but that advice is about three decades old and utterly steamrolled by modern fantasy and sexual expectations. Besides which, mutual respect and admiration, though they can certainly be hot, often ring dull in the arena of will, strength, performance and showing-off that is the gym.

He and I had spoken several times before, only it didn't occur to me until later how much of our small talk happened in the steam room. It seems almost funny to have had more detailed, more extended conversations in the locker and steam rooms rather than on the floor of the actual gym. I convinced myself that he was only being friendly, against the other, subtler instincts that told me otherwise. When I knew definitively that he wanted me and I wanted him, it seemed as if the attraction between us were destined to cycle endlessly through the locker room, showers and sauna, as no portion of either readily lent itself to illicit, semi-public sex. It never occurred to me to see him outside of the gym. ■■

CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: HERO BY OLIVER HOUGHTLING

The following article was written by Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets member Oliver Houghtling. He is a member of HERO (Helping to Educate Regarding Orientation), a support group for LGBTQ+ corps members. The group was started this February and its primary purpose is to educate the Corps of Cadets about the LGBTQ+ community in an attempt to make it more inclusive, as well as to provide a system of support and encouragement for LGBTQ+ cadets. The group meets weekly in Squires. For more information, contact Corps member and group president Austin Dickey.


Imagine going on with life normal as always, whether that be going to classes or to work. Now, imagine doing the same thing hiding a part of you so people would be comfortable around you and make you feel comfortable. This is the everyday life of a gay man in the Corps, always hiding who I am and pretending to be something that I am not.



Photo from Virginia Tech News Office

I remember getting ready to drive 20 hours to come to Tech as a freshman in the Corps, anticipating the suspense for the next month of New Cadet Week along with the start of classes. My mom came into my room and asked me with worry in her voice if I was ready for this and whether I was willing to hide the fact that I am gay, at least for a little bit of time. It had been about three years since I came out of the closet, and I was not too excited about having to go back into that dark and secluded space. Nevertheless, it unfortunately does have to be done sometimes to ensure a smooth ride through life.

My story in the Corps hasn't been so bad, not as bad as it could have been or might even be in the future. Although there isn't hate happening at this very moment, that doesn't mean there isn't going to be some eventually. You know where most of the hate comes from? Ignorance. People who hate and shun the LGBTQ+ community do it because they think that we are all so different from them. What I have found in my experience is that if someone hates you, just keep calm and ask them what they hate about the fact that you are in the LGBTQ+ community. Do better than them, and don't argue against it. Most of the time they aren't going to change.

Most of all be who you want to be, be who you are. Do not let people bring you down. You are just as good if not better than everyone else is in the world. 

Britney Jean

by Matty Bennett

have you really outgrown your blackout phase?
the most intelligent conversation i've had
on a gay bar dance floor regarded you
it was hard to hear and the fellow was tall
and muscular so i half-caught his words
half-painted him above me in my bedroom
but he said we only loved you as a disaster
probably a severe summer thunderstorm
because it's brilliant and flashy and fills us
with thrill and fear but doesn't destroy us
but i can't remember exactly what he said
you've tried so hard for us time and again
and failed miserably so take my advice: only
an unstable atmosphere produces lightning

Wound

by Mariana Sierra

In the produce section, cucumbers and
zucchini are piled side by side.

I choose zucchini, larger of the two,
for their waxed skin and smooth surface.

I pick up one star-capped fruit after another,
lift them up from their grocery displays.

My fingers close around each green shaft,
Test their weight in the scale of my palm.

Tonight my fingers will give way to green,
I'll feel it pierce all the way to my ribs.

At this age it would terrify him to withdraw
from me and find himself slimed with blood.

Done by my own hand,
this wound will be mine.

“THAT’S SO GAY!”

REFLECTIONS ON MICROAGGRESSIONS

BY MEGAN NANNEY

They’re new. They’re smaller than ever. And they’re everywhere.

Microaggressions: the newest and latest model of discrimination and outward oppression against the LGBTQ community.

No longer is homophobia solely for those Bible-thumping conservatives with in-your-face tactics, but rather microaggressions are the pervasive homophobic verbal faux-pas that anyone can say.

“So what are they and why haven’t I heard of them?” you may be asking yourself. Simply put, microaggressions are small remarks or statements with harmful or discriminatory implications, whether those implications are intended or not. Microaggressions can be directed toward any aspect of an identity, including race, gender, ability, religion, nationality or — the subject of interest — sexual orientation and gender identity. Regardless of whether or not these backhanded comments are well-intended, they still perpetuate negative and problematic ideas about a certain group.

So, let’s break it down. Some microaggressions you may have heard or even said yourself can come in one of six forms:

USE OF HETEROSEXIST OR TRANSPHOBIC TERMINOLOGY:

“That’s so gay,” “No homo,” or “She’s trans, but she’s really pretty.”

ENDORSEMENT OF HETERNORMATIVE CULTURE AND BEHAVIORS:

“Why aren’t you married yet? Do you have a
(insert opposite sexed partner here)?”

ASSUMPTION OF UNIVERSAL LGBTQ EXPERIENCE:

“All you gays are the same!” or “I always knew you were queer!”

DISCOMFORT OR DISAPPROVAL OF LGBTQ EXPERIENCE:

“I’m not being homophobic, you’re just being too sensitive,” or
“Maybe you haven’t found the right (insert opposite sexed partner).”

ASSUMPTION OF SEXUAL PATHOLOGY OR ABNORMALITY:

“I just don’t understand why you’d choose to be gay,” or
“Did you have bad experiences with the opposite sex?”

DENIAL OF BODILY PRIVACY OR PRESENCE OF A PHYSICAL THREAT:


“Can I watch?”

The list of common sayings can go on and on...

While these at first glance may not be so bad, imagine how, day after day, months and years of hearing this from peers, friends, and family, these comments slowly accumulate and wear down on the individual. Kevin Nadal, the researcher who developed the concept of these microaggressions, aptly described microaggressions as “death by a thousand small cuts.”

When you are saying that “I’m acting too gay” and I need to “tone it down,” what you really are saying is that being gay is an act that I can choose to stop and that being gay means that you are always flamboyant. Or my favorite (for a lesbian couple example): “Who is the man in the relationship?” Um, neither of us. That’s what makes us lesbians.

So why does this matter, and what can you do? This matters because studies have shown that people who experience more frequent exposure to microaggressions report elevated symptoms of depressions, distress, and even physical health issues. In other words, microaggressions are just as traumatic as overt forms of oppressions, and perhaps even worse because microaggressions are so subtle.

To minimize the ill effects of this, first of all, think before you speak! If you turned the tables and had someone ask the question toward you, how would you feel? And when you do mess up, because let’s face it, we’re all human and make mistakes, own it and learn from it. What was wrong about you said? Apologize. As my mother would say, “Think with that brain that I gave you.” Finally, call out other clichés! We can all learn together; even I catch myself from time to time. Eventually, these small cuts can turn into either a large scar or we can let them heal. Which would you prefer? 

InclusiveVT tackles issues of diversity and inclusivity with a broad approach

by Katie Ayers

LGBTQ students now have more of a voice in their experience at Virginia Tech thanks to a new diversity and inclusion initiative.

InclusiveVT, launched in the Fall 2014 semester by President Timothy Sands, is a decentralized diversity model that “puts the onus [of inclusion] on everybody,” according to Dannette Gomez Beane, Director of Graduate Recruiting and Diversity.

“It is all of our jobs to be accountable for what does or doesn’t happen on this campus,” she said.

Beane is one of six newly-appointed campus Inclusion and Diversity Coordinators. According to the InclusiveVT website, each coordinator’s job is to advocate for diversity and inclusion in their respective area: Human Resources, Graduate Education, Outreach and International Affairs, Undergraduate Education, Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost, and Student Affairs.

The coordinators act as the middle men, connecting individuals at the bottom of the VT hierarchy with those at the top, Beane said. They are part of the President’s Inclusion and Diversity Executive Council (PIDEC), a group of senior campus leaders tasked with supporting the diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Chad Mandala, co-chair of the LGBT Caucus, said the InclusiveVT initiative is focused on inclusivity more broadly, rather than on naming specific groups.

“As we become a community that affirms people from all backgrounds, that will [naturally] include LGBTQ people,” he said. “We’re looking across the spectrum of diversity. This is the first step on a really positive path.”

As part of InclusiveVT, university deans, vice presidents and other senior leaders were asked in the fall to identify three diversity initiatives within their scope of responsibility. PIDEC reviewed the initiatives and approved 86 of them in Dec. 2014. A mid-term review of progress made on these initiatives is due this month.


To become involved with InclusiveVT, students and faculty are encouraged to visit www.inclusive.vt.edu to review the 86 initiatives, reach out to one of the inclusion coordinators or join an InclusiveVT event happening on campus. 



Photo by Logan Wallace



Photo by Alejandro Smith

THE **I**TERLOPER

Virginia Tech's LGBT Magazine
Spring 2014, Issue #1



THE **I**TERLOPER


Virginia Tech's LGBT Magazine
Fall 2014, Issue #2



ONE YEAR OF THE **I**TERLOPER!

With the release of our third issue, The Interloper celebrates one year of being Virginia Tech's student-run LGBT publication! This would not be possible without all of our amazing sponsors, as well as our writers, illustrators, photographers, and designers that help make the publication successful. Thank you for all of your hard work!

The Interloper's focus is to create a space for advocates of the queer community to voice their perspectives and opinions. We are dedicated to the discussion of queer issues and the presentation of progressive content through a queer lens. Our mission is to provide a reflection of the diverse queer community at Virginia Tech and beyond.

Do you have story ideas? Suggestions on how The Interloper could improve? Want to get involved? Or tell us how much you love us? Email us at TheInterloperVT@gmail.com, or like our Facebook page "The Interloper" and comment or message us! 

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Thank You!

OUT

Kory King



Photo by Alejandro Smith


“Kory, is she more than your best friend?”

My freshman year of college, I became best friends with the girl who lived upstairs.

We initially bonded over the movie *Despicable Me*. On that small similarity, we built a friendship that developed into my first truly happy relationship.

When we transitioned from being friends to girlfriends, I still wasn't thinking in terms of gay or straight; we were happy and trying not to think about what our relationship really meant. But as the “honeymoon phase” ended we had to examine what was happening. We decided to keep it a secret because at different times we were both uncomfortable with our new relationship status being known. I had never acknowledged the trouble we would face until I was asked, “Kory, is she more than your best friend?”

In that moment, I had two options: 1) I could lie about the best relationship I'd ever been in, delaying the inevitable reveal or 2) tell the truth and come out before I was ready. I was not prepared, I was not ready, and I didn't come out on my own terms in a way that was comfortable for me. But my coming out opened up a path for other people. No more than a couple months later, my brother came out as well. We now had each other to help navigate the crazy process of coming out to a huge family. We supported and encouraged each other to find happiness on our own terms. Luckily we have an amazing family, and now that we are both out, everyone has a deeper understanding of what love means.

Many people ask me, “When did you know you were gay?” The truth is, it never crossed my mind that I was particularly gay or straight for most of my childhood. Even as our relationship began, it never crossed my mind that our relationship was particularly “abnormal” in any way. Coming out the way I did was not what I had hoped for, but all dark days end, and there are light ones that follow. 

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*Cover illustration by
Mariana Sierra*