

GLBTA Pride Center Spring 2010 Newsletter

Bridgewater State College—2009-2010

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Some things to think and talk about:

- The election for Governor of Massachusetts is coming this Fall... your thoughts?
- What are your professors' attitudes regarding GLBT people? Are they getting their facts straight?
- Do you feel that BSC is doing everything it should to include GLBT folks on campus? What can we do to improve?

The Case of Proposition 8

By Hannah Johnson, Junior

GLBTA Pride Center Student Ambassador

Proposition 8 appeared on the California ballot in November of 2008. Its purpose was to add the clause "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" to the state constitution. 52% of voters voted in favor of Prop 8, banning same-sex marriage in California.

Now, Proposition 8 is on trial in federal court. In the case of *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, two couples (Kristin Perry and Sandra Steir along with Paul Katami and Jeffrey Zarrillo) are challenging the constitutionality of Proposition 8. They are represented by former U.S. Solicitor General Theodore Olson and lawyer David Boies.

Although Governor Schwarzenegger appears to be the defendant in this case, he is taking a neutral stance. Instead, groups who campaigned to pass Proposition 8, such as *ProtectMarriage.com*, are defending it in his place. They are represented by lawyer Charles Cooper among others.

The case is being heard by the Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, Vaughn R. Walker.

The trial began on January 11, 2010 with testimonies from the plaintiffs. They spoke about their lives and the difficulties they face due to discrimination and prejudice. Perry and Steir shared the experience of having their marriage annulled due to a California Supreme Court ruling in 2004. Katami and Zarrillo spoke about the "Yes on 8" campaign, and how they felt when gay men were portrayed as harmful to children.

Children are a main focus in this trial. Much of the "Yes on 8" campaign was focused on

protecting children from being taught about homosexuality. The defendants of Proposition 8 also claimed that the purpose of marriage is not for the benefit of those getting married, but rather to promote procreation. Professor Nancy Cott, expert witness for the plaintiffs, denied this claim, saying, "There has never been a requirement that a couple produce children. Sterility in men and women has never been a reason to exclude someone from marrying." Also, one of the defense's two witnesses, during cross-examination by David Boies, admitted that gay marriage would benefit children who are already being raised by gay couples.

What the plaintiffs really need to prove, however, is that the "Yes on 8" campaign was fuelled by hate or "anti-gay animus" and that LGBT people are a vulnerable minority who have few, if any, true political allies. The plaintiffs used the "Yes on 8" ads as well as videotaped testimonies and emails from *ProtectMarriage.com* organizers as evidence that this was a campaign of prejudice. However, it is difficult to prove conclusively whether these people truly acted on hate.

As for whether LGBT people have political allies or power, the defense claimed that recent visibility of LGBT people in the media, support from religious organizations, and increased social acceptance translated into political power. The plaintiffs countered, saying that although some religious organizations had stood behind "No on 8," this support was nothing compared to the Catholic Church's support of Proposition 8. They also cited recent setbacks in adoption legislation.

After twelve days of testimonies, Judge Walker is currently taking some time to review the evidence. The closing arguments will be scheduled some time in early March, and the final decision may not come in for several weeks after that.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

By Thomas Gordon, Sophomore

GLBTA Pride Center Student Ambassador

I find that it is with mixed feelings that the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy may be redefined or thrown out within the year. This was a policy under which I served while in the US military, and I've devoted a lot of thought to the spirit of the policy, logistics of the military, what it really means to me, and the impact it is having on our country and the people within it.

The ideal situation, as I see it, is that no soldier, regardless of their orientation needs to bring their personal life with them to work. The military is a machine which specializes in great acts of violence as well as great acts of compassion on behalf of the nation, but all of its moving parts are not simply automatons but human beings to create the greater whole. It would be easier if we could all turn into asexual beings for the duration of our service, with no regard to our friends, families, and loved ones, but it simply is not possible to set aside our emotions, consciences and our connections to each other that make us uniquely human.

My experience with the DADT is an interesting one—throughout my 6 years of service, and more specifically, the year I spent in Iraq. For the last months of deployment I was placed on gate guard and tower guard. These shifts lasted for 14 hours, with no meaningful breaks, seven days a week, and no days off. Another soldier whom I count as one of my greatest friends held this duty with me. Essentially we were separated from our unit, and assigned to another to help out, every single day. 14 hours every day in the blistering Iraqi heat under dangerous circumstances day after day was very taxing. It only came to our attention much later that this duty was to be rotated among other soldiers allowing us days off. This protocol was never followed.

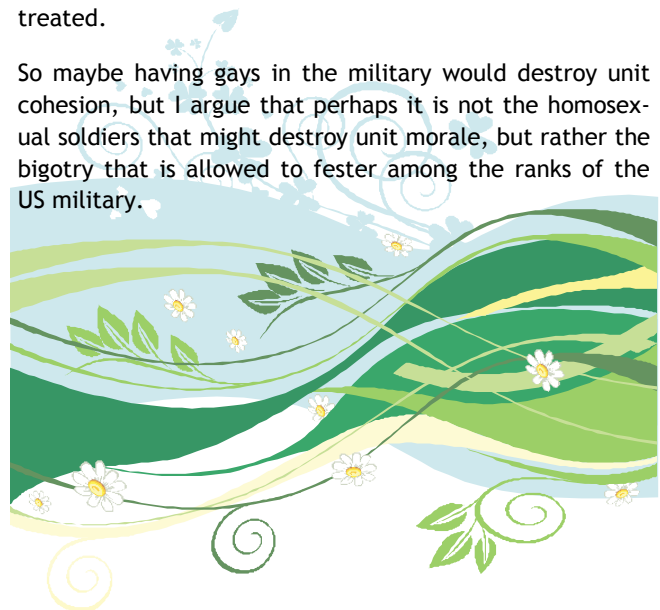
We've tried to rationalize why it was that the two of us were sent to do the most miserable job on the base every single day while those around us had days on and off, rotating through a duty schedule. We wonder if perhaps while we were in the States, because we did not choose to drink with other members of our unit, it was easier for them to send soldiers who they did not necessarily like to stand in towers reporting incoming fire and mortar shells on a weekly basis. Perhaps it was a degree of nepotism that caused this favoritism.

We've tried to understand why this thing happened to us, why we were singled out among two dozen others to do the same duty every day which everyone else had the luxury of rotating in and out of. It's only now that we think the root of this seeming injustice is perhaps they thought my friend and I were gay.

The truth of the matter is that I was and still am a gay male. My friend was not, but he perhaps was “guilty” by association. I remember what it was like to struggle to find time to drop off my sweat soaked laundry, never having a day off. I remember what it was like gathering and servicing my gear at 1:00 AM while everyone else but my friend and I were sleeping. I remember coming back at 3:00 PM to find the rest of my unit playing Halo or some other video game. I remember watching the sun breach that desert sky every morning while I scribbled out letters, not to my friends back home but to my friends on the base I could never see because of the long shift, and the rest it required after. I remember becoming bitter at my circumstance.

Most of all I remember coming home and wanting nothing to do with my unit, except a small cadre of friends. I remember wanting nothing to do with the welcome home ceremonies, and nothing to do with my chain of command who believed in an unnecessary 100 hour work week as being a safe and fair practice. To this day, there is a great deal of anxiety I have when dealing with the military. I don't attend veteran's support groups or gatherings. I am happier having no connection with the Armed Forces. My friend is the same way after how we were treated.

So maybe having gays in the military would destroy unit cohesion, but I argue that perhaps it is not the homosexual soldiers that might destroy unit morale, but rather the bigotry that is allowed to fester among the ranks of the US military.



An Act Relative to Gender-Based Discrimination and Hate Crimes

By Kate Hayes-Huer, Senior

GLBTA Pride Center Ambassador

House Bill #1728 and Senate Bill #1687, collectively called “An Act Relative to Gender-Based Discrimination and Hate Crimes,” if passed, will include protections for gender identity and expression in Massachusetts’ non-discrimination statute and will amend existing hate crime laws to include gender-variant people.

Protected classes in Massachusetts already include race, religion, creed, color, national origin, and sexual orientation. If this bill passes, then discrimination against people on the basis of gender-identity or expression will be illegal.

Nationwide, 13 states and the District of Columbia already have laws on the books protecting people whose gender identity and expression isn’t the norm.

If you would like to read the full text of the House Bill, you can download a .pdf version at www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/186/ht01pdf/ht01728.pdf.

For a list of the bills’ sponsors, visit www.masstpc.org/legislation/sponsors.shtml.

Gender-Variant Caucus: Past and Future

You’ve probably seen the flyers around for the Gender-Variant Caucus... great! You might also be wondering what it is. The “GVC” is an ambassador-run program for gender-variant folks to get together and talk—about anything—in confidence. Gender-variant people include transgender, genderqueer, agender (not identifying as either female or male), intersex, or questioning folks.

In order to better educate the campus on transgender issues, however, we’ve decided to open it up to allies and change the group’s focus to trans issues in the larger world. Even though our focus has changed, you can still talk confidentially with Lisa Forest, the GLBTA Pride Center department head, or any of the ambassadors if you prefer not to share personal items in the group. Transgender issues are also included in the Coming Out Discussion Group, which meets twice monthly on Wednesday evenings, and are another venue for confidential support.

More information about these programs is available at the Pride Center and on our website at www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA. If you have ideas about programming that you’d like to see, feel free to contact the Pride Center or the Student Ambassadors at their blog: <http://bsc-ambassadors.blogspot.com/>. Finally, the GVC is contemplating a name change and we welcome your ideas. We hope to see you at these events!

Join us for a Gender-Neutral Pronoun Workshop

Presented by the GLBTA Pride Center Student Ambassadors

Join the GLBTA Pride Center Ambassadors for a fun yet informative workshop that will begin to address issues facing transgender people, gender neutral pronoun sets such as "ze" and "hir," and how to use these pronouns properly in daily conversation.

Wednesday, March 17

12:00PM—1:00 PM

One Park Ave (next to the Pride Center)

Check us out online at bridgew.edu/GLBTA

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Queer Music Spotlight: Gossip

Kate Hayes-Huer

Gossip (formerly “The Gossip”) has been around since 1999 and gained notoriety in 2006 with their album “Standing in the Way of Control” released on the Kill Rock Stars label. In August 2009, they released another full-length album, “Music for Men,” –this time in the mainstream– on Sony’s new label “Music With a Twist” that concentrates on GLBT music acts.

Gossip is a three person band consisting of openly queer vocalist Beth Ditto, guitarist Brace Paine, and drummer Hannah Blilie, formerly of punk band Shoplifting.



In LezStyle blog, Bevin Branland-ingham of FemmeCast says, “In Beth Ditto... I saw an out, queer fat femme owning her sexuality and hotness and never apologizing for it. Seeing someone else do it who was younger than me only inspired me to hurry up and get through my fat shame and start making something of myself. As she’s gotten more media exposure, I’ve seen Beth challenge notions of ‘cute,’ ‘pretty’ and ‘fashionable’ in really hysterical ways. She’s a brave and amazing artist.”

Their sound has been described as “punk-soul”— a fusion of the band’s roots in the riot-grrl scene and Ditto’s intense, gospel-like voice. Her Arkansas roots are undeniable, and their older work made way for

a new kind of Southern rock.

In an interview with Diva Magazine, Ditto says of her identity, “I identify as a lesbian, I identify as a queer, a dyke, a femme... I don’t feel scared of these things and I’m very happy with how I see myself.”

For music, news, tour dates, and purchasing info, visit Gossip’s official site at www.gossipyouth.com.

Whether you're looking to hang out or come out, the **GLBTA Pride Center** is here for you.

We offer a variety of services and resources to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and ally students to promote student learning and development. The GLBTA Pride Center is also committed to supporting GLBTA faculty, staff, and administrators and fostering a safe and affirming environment in which to work and learn.