

# SPECTRUM

## Pride

### Homophobia: Possible Reasons Why It Persists Part 1

by J.

We live in a society that has seen change happen through many avenues, ranging from gender, to employment, to child protection and even sexual orientation. As a response to perceived injustices and subjugation of the particular group, equality has arisen in a hope to balance previous wrongs. Yet, hand-in-hand with acceptance, tolerance and understanding, are their counterparts: bigotry, prejudice and discrimination.

Homophobia, and all of the related misperceptions that go along with it,

is a fairly recent term and, is an ... irrational fear of homosexuals, based on insubstantial ideologies and misperceptions." In the eyes of these people, there is nothing positive about homosexuals and bisexuals. Why does it persist? There are several possibilities, but I will deal with three feasible reasons why some people respond to gays, lesbians and bisexuals in homophobic ways; ignorance/misperceptions, self-hatred and negative life experiences with homosexuals and bisexuals.

Perhaps the major reason for homophobia, stems from sheer ignorance and/or misperceptions of what homosexuality and bisexuality really is. Like heterosexuality,

homosexuality and bisexuality are basic responses to the age old question of who we wish to spend our time with, love, have sexual relations with, and eventually spend our lives with in comfort. Yet society, and especially the media, tend to focus on the negative parts of being gay or bisexual; glorifying, emphasizing and focusing upon them, while the majority of positive things are ignored. This ignorance/misperception may also stem from some fear that one may be homosexual/bisexual; whether through admitting one is tolerant, understanding, accepting of gay/ bisexual men and women, or being in contact with a homosexual/bisexual man/woman. Let's face facts here folks, being gay or bisexual is not contagious,

nor is it a "recruitment" drive. And if other people think that you are gay/bisexual, just because you have a friend who is, or are gay-positive, when you are heterosexual; then it's their problem, not yours.

The progress that the homosexual and bisexual communities all over the world have made, is one way for people to understand that homophobia is not the answer. Teaching people that

homosexuality and bisexuality are a part of life, that gay men/women and bisexuals also lead functional, productive lives, that extreme groups occur in any society, even in the heterosexual group are just a few things that can be done to combat homophobia. Allowing yourself to expand your knowledge about others leads to a greater awareness of what people are like. Next week, Part 2.

## Metanoia by John Valk

### What is Our Story?

North Americans are a people constantly planning for tomorrow, for the future. We do it through education, through our work, even through RRSP's. When the question is put to us, "What must I as an individual, or as a society or community, do?" invariably the response comes back to us — you must plan for tomorrow.

The philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre stated that "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part.'" In other words, what is my history, my past? What story is foundational to me, to the community of which I am part? What story guides my life, my thinking, my today and my tomorrow?

The foundational story for the people of Israel is the Exodus. It was the most extraordinary event in their lives. In the Exodus Israel had their first and foremost encounter with God. It was an encounter that defined them as a people, as a nation. It decisively explained who and what they were. It was also an encounter they would remember again and again throughout their history, to the present day.

The Exodus tells the story of a people in an utterly hopeless situation. The Hebrews, as they were initially called, descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had become slaves in Egypt around 1200 BCE. The Egyptians, a mighty military force, subjected them to hard physical labour. Yet, in spite of their harsh treatment, they gained in strength and number. But as they increased, so did the brutality of their overlords, most evidenced in the later systematic killing of male Hebrew babies.

The dominant ideology of Egypt was one of power and control. The increasing strength of the Hebrews was seen as a threat to that ideology. Yet, against the genocidal actions of the Egyptians they were powerless. Their's became a desperate and helpless situation. And in their helplessness they cried out. But who would hear their cry?

People of the Judeo-Christian faith response without hesitation. God heard their cry, and God acted. The Hebrew book of Exodus records God saying to Moses: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt, I have heard their outcry against their slavemasters. I have taken heed of their sufferings, and have come down to rescue them." (Ex. 3: 7-8).

According to Judeo-Christians, God did the miraculous. God delivered a brutalized and powerless people from the hands of a brutal and powerful Egypt. God intervened in history to rescue a people who were suffering and helpless.

The exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt was an act of God. God became an intimate part of the history

of this people, to the present day. It is their foundational story. It shapes their past, present and future.

Christians identify with this story. They also, however, see further dramatic acts of God in history. Christians affirm that God became one of us, a human, through Jesus Christ. Through his life and teachings humans receive a clearer and deeper glimpse of God. God is not a remote Creator, some mysterious and unknowable entity: "God is the primary source of joy and hope for humans" (Crossing the Threshold of Hope, John Paul II, p. 20).

Christians affirm God's most miraculous act in history. The raising of Jesus from the dead. This is God's most decisive step, enroute to restoring all of the created world to a unique dignity, humans particularly. For humans to attain their true humanity will require renewal by God. No human efforts apart from or in defiance of God will accomplish it. This is the Christian story. It shapes and defines those who identify with it.

Secular historians have great difficulties with the foundational stories of both Jews and Christians. It is not that they do not have their own foundational stories. They do. But their stories preclude, deny or refute a faith in divine intervention in the affairs of human history. Other explanations account for, or even ignore, the Biblical stories.

No surprise then that one generally does not find in history texts accounts of God's definitive acts in history. They are regarded as religious or theological, a secular rationale for disregarding or dismissing them from public contexts. Further, since religious matters have been declared divisive, we hesitate to teach these. We know, and daily experience, that political matters are also divisive, but we do not hesitate to teach them in the schools.

We live in a post-modern world. Gone is the (modern) assertion that the human world is best explained by observation, be that scientific, rational or historical. More are realizing that the spiritual world also defines and shapes our existence. An explanation of our humanity based solely on the scientific or rational has begun to leave a vacuum at the centre or core of human meaning. A secular outlook is even less able to assist us with our moral and ethical dilemmas, as has become increasingly clear.

What, in light of all of this, is then our story? What founds each of us as individuals or communities. As we educate ourselves, think about what we would like to become — plan for tomorrow — what story shapes us? What story will shape your today and tomorrow? Is it a story of individual pleasures and pursuits, of personal power and control, of rational autonomy, of cold scientific facts? Or, is it a story founded in the Judeo-Christian story, a story of love and service, a story of God?

## The Left Jab

### "This Inning Brought to You By..."

by Nik Carrier

Seeking refuge from the stresses of the student world, I enjoy nothing better than putting my tired feet up, taking the phone off the hook, and watching a baseball game.

I try not to be a geek about my favourite sport. I'm not one of the pathetic breed that sees in baseball a symbol of the human condition, or an explanation for the meaning of life. I do find it a pleasant combination of contemplation and action, of individual skill and team strategy. Where other professional sports offer violence, baseball offers subtlety. For me it is the perfect time waster on an early fall evening.

But the best thing about baseball on TV was the fact that, once an inning began, there was no break for commercials. An inning could go on for twenty minutes or more - and any TV junkie will admit that twenty commercial-free minutes is bliss.

But where I saw bliss, the venal hucksters who own the game saw missed opportunity. And, with a vigour conspicuously absent, when it came to fairly negotiating with their employees, they acted.

So it came to pass that virtually every word uttered by the analysts who broadcast the games is "brought to you by" some intrusive corporate entity. Dave Stewart's pitching record is "brought to you by" GM, the folks who are re-inventing the truck. The batting line-ups for each team are "brought to you by" the Bridgestone tire people, who I can only assume are re-inventing the wheel. Scores from other games are "brought to you by" motor oil or mufflers. Scenes of past glories are trotted out by Toyota. My personal favourite is the pitching change, where a hopeful relief pitcher comes out to rescue the faltering starter, which is "brought to you by" Odour Eater stinkfoot remedies.

Beginning last year an even worse form of corporate invasion appeared. In several stadiums backstops were

replaced by rotating billboards so that every shot of the batter at the plate is backed by some obnoxious ad. The billboards change every half inning, so the greed meisters can rope in another 18 (or 17 if the home team wins) sponsors.

So, where I once enjoyed twenty minutes of commercial-free game, now I am forced to stare at an intrusive commercial non-stop.

These obnoxious billboards are as yet only in a few of the parks. But last year one appeared behind the plate at Yankee stadium the game's most tradition-filled yard, the house that (Babe) Ruth built. Perhaps the Babe was named after the famous candy bar after all? At any rate, can the rest of the league be far behind?

I decided to keep track of the "brought to you bys" in a game I watched a year ago. The game: Blue Jays vs. Yankees in New York May 24, 1995. Including the revolving backstop signs, I counted 41 separate corporate "brought to you bys." This is, of course, over and above the 47 commercials that were squeezed in between innings, or the multitude of ads that filled the pre- and post-game blather.

The oddity is that all of these things that are now "brought to you by" used to be there anyway, brought to me only by the statistical nature of the game and the need for the broadcasters to keep yaking about something.

So the way I see it, by buying their way into the middle of the action, these corporate creeps are not bringing me anything at all. In reality, they are taking something precious away from me. So it is that everything that the free-market loving capitalist touches turns to shit.

So why not go whole hog? There are still a few moments of airtime not sold, there are still a few inches on the players' caps and uniforms not filled. I can just imagine the game as it will be a few years into the future....

"Hi fans this is your play-by-play announcer Bobby Blowdry, together with colour commentator Ted Turnstiles, back to bring you the fourth inning. The fourth, the inning that is brought to you by Chrysler. Shucks, if

it weren't for the friendly folks at Chrysler, we'd have to go straight to the fifth inning, right Ted?"

"That's right Bobby. It's a warm night here in the Bronx that's the Bronx, the borough that is brought to you by Smith & Wesson, first name in personal protection. It's so warm I wish I was sitting in my Chrysler Le Baron right now, enjoying my standard air conditioning. Juan Guzman is back on the mound. At 53, Juan was telling me before the game, he really needs to buy Geritol in gallon drums."

"And here comes Dusty Bucky, the slugger, out to face Guzman. You can't miss Dusty, with his Budweiser bat. Imagine, some people still say they miss the old wood bats, but I thank God for the guy who invented the neon bat. Juan is looking to the catcher for the sign and yes, I think it is the sign of the golden arches. There it goes, a swing and a miss."

"Looks like old Dusty was fooled by that Big Mac fastball. I'll bet he was guessing Castrol slider down and away."

"I think you're right Ted. Here comes pitching coach Raunchy Rogers with a fax for Juan. This next pitch is brought to by Minolta, makers of the Sureshot, and it looks like the folks at Minolta want the next pitch to be a breaking ball."

"Oh my God, Ted he's shaking off the fax. I'll bet the coach from Minolta will have a few choice words for Juan when he gets back to the State Farm dugout. He winds up....there's the pitch. . . Dusty Bucky pops up to the second baseman for the out."

You know, those Minolta folks make great cameras, but they've only been baseball sponsors for a few years. They've still got a thing or two to learn about calling pitches."

"Next up is the rookie, Bucky Dusty. Young Dusty still has to prove he belongs here in the majors, eh Bobby?" "You're right there, Ted. That big "Your logo here" sign on his back tells the tale."

. . . Just a fantasy, and a nasty one at that. But it is a fantasy brought to you by capitalism, the makers of misery.