

Differential treatment of lesbians directly related to concerns of feminism

A double-standard for homosexuals

by Gina Hanlon and Sue Pennypacker

It is important to understand the differential treatment of lesbians in our society as being directly related to the concerns of feminism.

When women complain about the problems they have dealing with reproductive choice, contraception, abusive boyfriends, or living up to the increasingly idealistic and unrealistic concepts of female beauty, a common reaction is: this

The dissent of (wo)man

is your problem, you chose this (i.e.: to have sex with a man or not to have sex with a man, to go on the pill or not, to accept abuse within a relationship, to conform to society's expectations, to have children, etc., etc. . . .) so deal with it. No

one forced you to (have sex with a man or not, and so forth).

However, when a woman steps outside of her role as a man-centred woman, when she rejects her expected role as a girlfriend, mother, lover and attractive sexual object, when a woman is a public (or "out") lesbian, she faces ostracism from her friends, her family, her church. She faces discrimination from prospective landlords (or landlords), employers, and social

agencies. If sexuality is "private" (as many people who begin sentences with "I don't hate homosexuals, but" . . . insist) why is she a target of so much public hatred?

Lesbians and gay men form a counter-culture in order to have what straight people already take for granted: a space where they can be who they are without facing derision and unfocussed hatred.

This space is, and can be only partial, however. Straight sex is sold to us all 24 hours a day, every time we turn on the television or see a glossy mouthwash ad on the subway. Straight people often protest against lesbians and gay men "pushing" their sexuality on them.

In response, we would like to ask you to ask yourself this: have you ever seen a Close-up commercial of two women kissing? Has Levis ever used two women staring at each other to sell blue jeans? Have you ever been forced to introduce yourself, saying "Hi, I'm . . . and I'm straight," in order to avoid possible misunderstandings? Have you ever had a gang of women walk up to you screaming "het" (heterosexual, that is) and start throwing hard objects at you? Have women (or men) ever avoided you after you mentioned you really liked the opposite sex? Guys, have you ever been the target of a whisper campaign because your buddies saw you with a woman?

At the same time, lesbianism is seen by straight society as a form of misguided neurosis, willful perversion and as a dangerous political statement. Look at the myth of lesbian "conversion" (all she needs is a good hard f—k — after all, two

women can't have real sex). The GREAT GOD PHALLUS is assumed to be a common denominator. He is guaranteed to make any woman wilt. A real woman will be unable and unwilling to reject such a spectacular offer. If she does, she must be "hysterical", "frigid", or sexually immature and clitorally-fixated, or any of the other terms straight male psychologists have so gleefully hurled at lesbians throughout the last two decades.

Safety and feelings of security for lesbians and gay men is contingent upon either deceiving the straight community or voluntary isolation within a gay ghetto.

So, my straight reader (and this is what I have been assuming throughout this article, just as heterosexuality is always erroneously assumed), what has this to do with you? Just this—look at this and understand: this is the kind of treatment a woman can expect if she steps seriously out of line. Marriage is supposedly a free choice. Dating is a free choice. Making love to a man is a free choice. Having a baby is a free choice. If a woman makes a wrong choice and winds up a welfare mother, or physically or sexually abused by her male partner, or is date raped, she is partially responsible because, after all, she had a choice.

Or did she?

Look how women who do not marry, who do not date men, who choose not to define themselves as mothers (though many lesbians are mothers) are treated. Being a woman-centred woman is not an option that society is going to allow a woman to take seriously.

The tyranny of homophobia

by LeRoy Ahyye
"Faggot recruiting!"
"Queer initiation!"

These were just two of the murmurings I overheard as passersby inflicted their judgement on the recent forum conducted by the Lesbian and Gay Association at York (LGAY) at Central Square's East Bear Pit. The forum was organised in an attempt to promote an awareness that homosexuals and bisexuals make significant contributions and belong to society, and to consequently stem the tumultuous flow of homophobia within the York community.

My interest arose from the fact that though I'm not a homosexual, one of my closest friends is, and the gay bashing that exists at York is aimed indirectly at him. Hence, I stood by trying to grasp the essence of the forum and the reactions of onlookers and passersby alike. Based on what I observed, I've decided to use that which is 'more mighty than the sword' in an attempt to finally bring to an end this scourge of primitive, immature and immoral prejudice which permeates our so-called *institute of higher learning*.

Accepting gays, lesbians and bisexuals into the community begins with how one perceives the. Often they are viewed as immoral degenerates when one envisions in his or her mind what these people's sexual intimacy involves. But that is, quite frankly, their business. If one insists on evaluating people on their sexual preferences this way, then one is guilty of invading their privacy as well as defaming their character. I may not approve of the homosexual's sexual activity for myself, but who am I to infringe on another's choice of sexuality?

To paraphrase JFK, I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the grave your right to say it. This does not, however, include any rights to promote discrimination.

Many critics would argue that the homosexual is mentally ill or incompetent, yet even if there were an iota of truth to such a ludicrous suggestion, who is more deserving of being embraced by society than those who may be deemed to be less fortunate than ourselves, whether physically or mentally?

Still others turn to the Bible, twisting religion around to placate their bias claiming that God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. They lash out with quotes of, ". . . judge not lest ye will be judged."

My high school math teacher once told me that, like math problems, the first step to solving most problems is identifying them. The problems of racial, gender and, increasingly, homosexual prejudice at York, must be solved. A radical first step would be to identify it in ourselves and our peer groups. The next step, a more courageous one, would be to confront it.

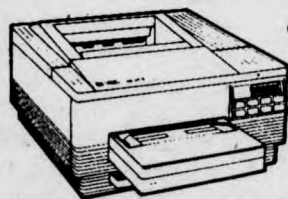
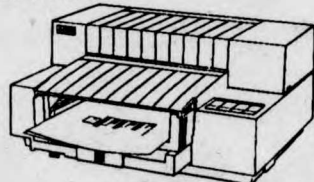
But that courage cannot compare to that which my friend needs to tell his father that he is gay. He is too embroiled in the uncertainty created by homophobia.

If we do not end the gay bashing then we are doing a great disservice to our community and our school, where we are taught to respect every aspect of human rights. Indeed, if gays, lesbians and bisexuals are not to be allowed to co-exist in society, then in truth, not all people are created equal.

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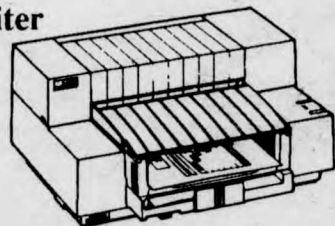


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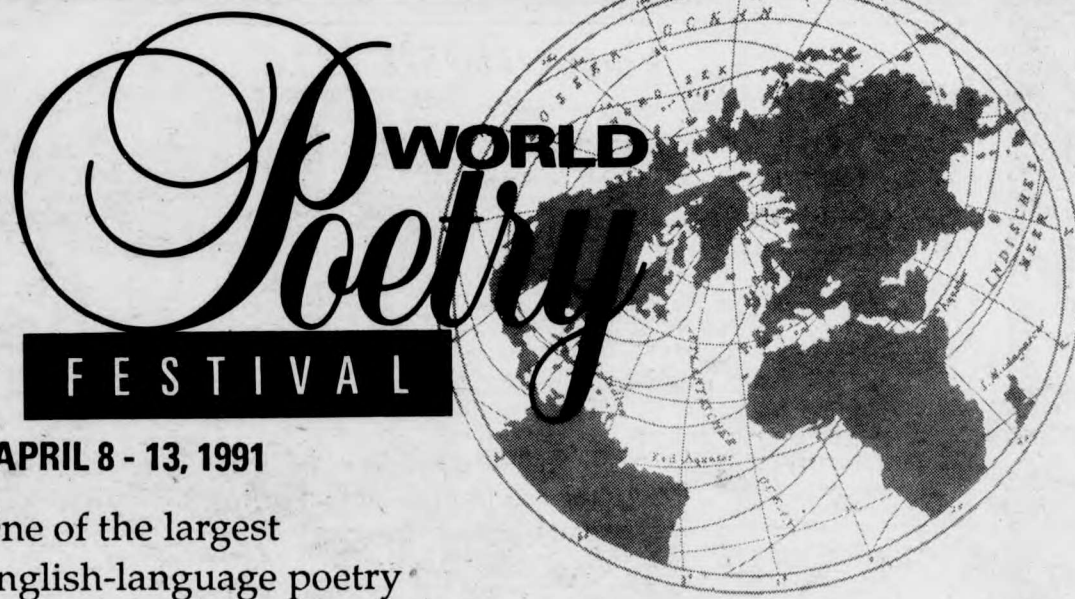
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