

Love Letter

Once again, February 14th is rolling around and it is time to send out a Valentine's card. And for the third time in four years I'm spending it in a part of the world away from the one I love. The first two were for work, this one is for school. So I thought I'd write a little love letter and let the world know what my relationship means to me.

For me, it is about knowing that someone cares about me. More than they care about anyone else. It is knowing that anytime I call, I know we will be able to talk, and if I am feeling down there is someone out there who will listen.

It is knowing that someone out there needs me too, needs me to listen to their problems and their joys. Needs me to be there in times of trouble. Needs me to be there when they need a couple of bucks to tide through to pay day.

It is about sharing trips to the zoo, or Vancouver or the laundromat. It is about fighting, and making up, and doing the dishes. It is making decisions that affect more than just one person, and making plans that meet the needs of two people.

It is believing that no matter what happens, there will always be someone there when they are needed. Someone who won't judge.

It is about passion. It is about loving and being loved.

But for me, there are some things that my relationship is not.

It is not the chance to walk down the street holding hands, not unless we want to be stared at. It is not being able to raise children together and call them our own. It is not about going to the courthouse and getting a marriage licence. We are not allowed.

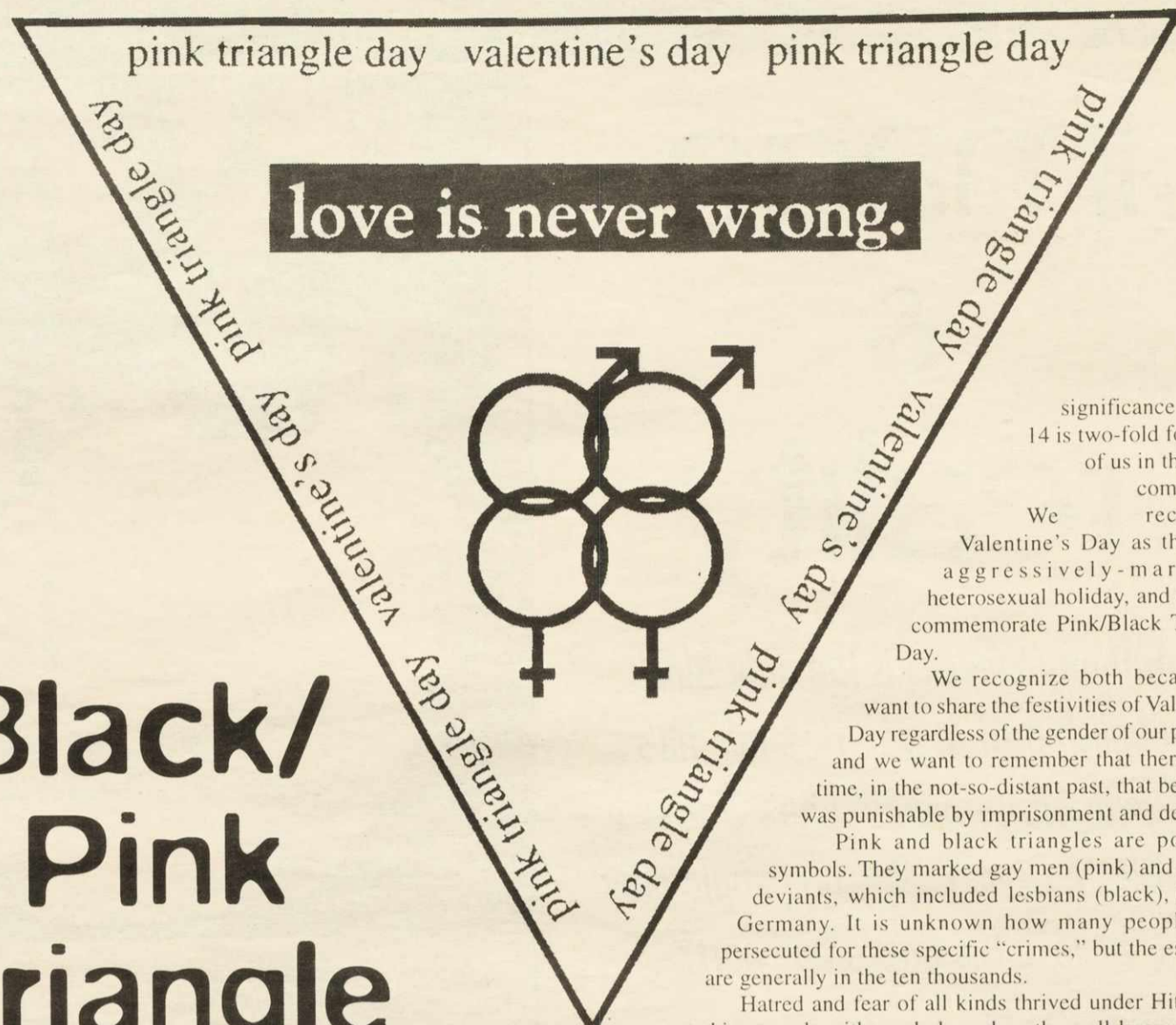
It is not about knowing that no matter what, I will be able to be there at my lover's side when they are sick and in times of trouble. My lover's family can remove me from any decisions. It is not about having financial security in our old age when one of us dies.

All because my lover and I are both male. No matter how much we love each other, and live our lives as any couple does, we just do not have the same freedoms, rights and responsibilities as other Canadians. We are both single under the law.

Valentine's day is a bittersweet time for us. Sure we can celebrate our love, but we cannot celebrate our right to that love.

But maybe someday we will. For now, I'll just keep writing public love letters.

PAT SENSON



Black/ Pink Triangle Day about love — for everyone

The significance of Feb. 14 is two-fold for those of us in the queer community. We recognize Valentine's Day as the most aggressively-marketed heterosexual holiday, and we also commemorate Pink/Black Triangle Day.

We recognize both because we want to share the festivities of Valentine's Day regardless of the gender of our partners, and we want to remember that there was a time, in the not-so-distant past, that being gay was punishable by imprisonment and death.

Pink and black triangles are powerful symbols. They marked gay men (pink) and societal deviants, which included lesbians (black), in Nazi Germany. It is unknown how many people were persecuted for these specific "crimes," but the estimates are generally in the ten thousands.

Hatred and fear of all kinds thrived under Hitler, and marking people with symbols such as the well-known Star of David (Jews) and these triangles was a way of diminishing their status as human beings. It seems obvious here that hatred breeds hatred, and anti-Semitism, racism, sexism and homophobia all go hand in hand.

The appropriation of these triangles as queer symbols is important for us because it takes away the Master's weapons, and puts them in our power. If, one time, membership in these communities meant devastation and condemnation, it can now be a source of pride.

By changing the significance of the signifiers, we gain their power. The correlation of Valentine's Day and Pink/Black Triangle Day is no accident. Feb. 14 should be a time for all of us to think about those we love, no matter what gender they happen to be.

It should be a time when we embrace our lovers and friends in the street without looking over our shoulders to see who's watching. It should be a time of random acts of love, not just random acts of heterosexuality.

The attachment of pink and black triangles to societal deviants (i.e. queers) had a very clear goal under the Third Reich. I wonder how far-off that seems.

I wonder if knowing who's queer is no longer of vital importance to the general population. I wonder if the idea of marginalizing queers and demeaning them is unthinkable. I wonder if dehumanizing queers, and bashing and killing them is really a foreign concept. I wonder if you ever watch the news.

I don't mean to imply that we are living in times that compare even remotely to Nazi Germany. I mean to demonstrate that hatred is hatred, whether you hate Jews or women or queers.

And if you buy into this hatred, not only did you miss the point of a whole lot of history classes, you missed the point of this excessively commercialized holiday.

I believe the point of February 14 is love — for everyone.

KATE GREENAWAY

