Out of The Basement

Gender and Sexuality Center
Basement Scoville

Features
May/June 2008

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On Thursday, May 15th I logged into my Gmail account partway through the afternoon to find a myriad of emails, all with “California” in the subject line. Before reading any of these, I logged into my Facebook account to find that many of my friends had recently changed their statuses to read, “CALIFORNIA”, “I’m moving to Cali!” or “What a great day to be a Californian”. Intrigued, I opened a few emails, clicked on a few links, and stumbled upon the CNN article titled, “California ban on marriage struck down”. I thought it was too good to be true, especially because I had recently finished my comps which highlighted the disadvantages lesbian parents in Minnesota have, most of which stem from the fact that gay marriage, in Minnesota, is still illegal.

After reading a few articles over and over again, in careful detail to avoid misinterpreting any information, I realized that California had, in fact, just legalized same-sex marriage. I was jumping up and down for at least five minutes. Joining Massachusetts, which legalized same-sex marriage in 2004 (Goodridge v. Department of Public Health), California becomes the second state to offer gay and lesbian couples equal protection and recognition under the law. In a groundbreaking case, the California Supreme Court stated,

Our state now recognizes that an individual’s capacity to establish a loving and long-term committed relationship with another person and responsibly to care for and raise children does not depend upon the individual’s sexual orientation, and, more generally, that an individual’s sexual orientation – like a person’s race or gender – does not constitute a legitimate basis upon which to deny or withhold legal rights. We therefore conclude that in view of the substance and significance of the fundamental constitutional right to form a family relationship, the California Constitution properly must be interpreted to guarantee this basic civil right to all Californians, whether gay or heterosexual, and to same-sex couples as well as opposite-sex couples.

This ruling was in response to several law suits filed by gay and lesbian couples in California stating they were victims of discrimination. In 2004, the city of San Francisco began to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. A lower court ruled that this action was unlawful and all the marriage licenses were declared null and void. This ruling represents a victory for Californian gays after four years of fighting to regain their right to marry.

The fight for same-sex marriage throughout the nation has been long and difficult. In May of 1970, two men living in Minnesota by the names of Jack Baker and Mike McConnell became the first same-sex couple to apply for a marriage license in the United States. After being turned down by the licensing clerk because they were both male, Mr. Baker and Mr. McConnell brought their case to the Minnesota Supreme Court (Niemczyk 2005). The court ruled that the clerk was under no obligation to issue a marriage license.

Marriage, in practice, is much more than simply a legal contract. Since 1888, the Supreme Court has defined marriage as something essential to civilization and a fundamental human right (Carlson-Wallrath 2004). For over 30 years, same-sex couples in the U.S. have been seeking this fundamental human right and have attained strikingly few victories. The fight for equal rights and social recognition of the
LGBT community is still present today, exemplified by the continued efforts to legalize same-sex marriage and gain full legal protection.

The marriage issue started out on a local level, with same-sex couples here and there attempting to acquire marriage licenses. In *Baehr v. Lewin* (also called *Baehr v. Miike* and *Baehr v. Anderson*), three couples in Hawaii attempted to obtain marriage licenses and were denied. They sued saying they were denied due process, equal rights, and the right to privacy which were guaranteed in the Hawaii Constitution. The court ruled that same-sex couples do not have the right to enter into a marriage but also ruled that denying same-sex couples a marriage license was discrimination based on sex. The case went to trial in December of 1996 and the judge ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry. Unfortunately, this ruling only held for 24 hours as it sent the nation into a frenzy over the perceived threat to the institution of marriage (Guillerman 1997).

In response to this near victory for LGBT rights and acceptance, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was created. It was signed into law in 1996 by President Clinton. DOMA declares that states are legally allowed to ignore same-sex marriages performed lawfully by another state and also defines marriage at a federal level as a union between a man and a woman (Betlach 1998). Twenty-six states have now passed constitutional bans on same-sex unions.

Challenges of these bans on same-sex marriage have a firm base in the fact that denying gay men and lesbians the right to marry creates second-class citizens, a status that supposedly doesn’t, and shouldn’t exist in America according to our constitution. The California Supreme Court employed this argument in their justification of their ruling. The fight for equal rights for LGBT individuals in Minnesota continues and hopefully the precedents set by California and Massachusetts will influence the decisions of state courts around the nation.

For further reading:
Want to get move involved with the GSC next year?

Start a new student organization.

Limited amounts of funding and ample amounts of support are available for students wishing to create a new student group. Think about it over the summer or contact Kaaren (kwilliam) now for more information or ideas.

Are you releasing your plants into the wild for the summer?
Leaving your mugs in the floor kitchen?

Donate them to the GSC instead! Drop-off anytime.

Write for the newsletter.

See your name published! If you have an interest in lay-out, design or writing for the newsletter, we’d love to have you. No experience or long time commitment necessary, occasional contributions are welcome. Contact Kaaren (kwilliam) for more information at the beginning of next year.

Please return your GSC library books (they’re the ones with this on the spine: ☺️)!

Leave your books in the GSC office or in the GSC library and a Center Associate will check them in.
Our Whole Lives: This Isn’t Your Seventh Grade Sex Ed.

By Elizabeth Nguyen

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is coming to Carleton! Young adult OWL is a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum focused on providing information about issues of sex and sexuality to 18-35 year olds of all sexual and gender identities. It’s based on the idea that knowledge = healthier sexuality and that you have the power to make what ever feels good, feel even better. It’s all about functional relationships (how ever you choose to define that) grounded in communication, mutual pleasure, respect, and consent. Here’s a little blurb about the values and goals of OWL:

“Our Whole Lives helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, Our Whole Lives provides not only facts about anatomy and human development, but helps participants to clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.” (http://www.uua.org/religionseducation/curricula/ourwhole)

OWL workshops created specifically for first year students will occur next fall and workshops open to the entire campus are in the works for the 2008-2009 school year. OWL is just one piece of an effort to change the culture of Carleton from one that allows sexual assault and harassment to one that actively combats it. Curriculums are available in the GSC for your perusal.
Match the Current and Future

A. Leahruth Jemilo
B. Laura Stone
C. Katie Paul
D. Dominic Vendell
E. Justin Smith
F. Temara Holt
G. Sarah King
H. Elizabeth Nguyen
I. Jini Rao
J. Christi Conkling
K. Michael Lane
L. Mal Hoffman
M. Marlene Edelstein
N. Stephen Gee
O. Juliet Dana
P. Jedda Foreman
Q. Sam Ritter
R. Em Harris


Ghana Tanzania Colombia India
GSCAs to Their Summer Plans

1. Internship, Hennepin County Medical Center, Minneapolis, MN.
3. Junior research fellowship, Dehli and Kolkata, India.
4. Internship, Public Finance, Pipar Jaffray & Co., Minneapolis, MN.
5. I’m teaching a MythBusters class and RAing for 13-14 year olds at Explo Summer Camp in Wellesley, MA.
7. Moving to Austin, TX in August.
8. I will be in New Orleans working somewhere.
9. Philadelphia, fellowship, history/archival research on early American history at Penn then also: NORTHFIELD, GSC/Media Relations/Goodbye Blue Monday.
10. Going to Israel for 10 days and then starting my job as a Deputy Finance Director in Chicago, IL.
11. Moving to Bogotá, Colombia to begin my Fulbright Fellowship.
12. Road trip from Minneapolis to home and internship in Oakland, CA.
13. Independent research fellowship on Christopher Street in New York City.
14. I’ll be spending three weeks learning Swahili in Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania and then will be in Moshi, Tanzania teaching English at elementary school for the rest of the summer.
15. I am going to be in NYC working with the Campaign to Save the Environment.
16. I’ll be working as a camp counselor at Farm and Wilderness in Plymouth, Vermont.
17. Leading canoe trips in the boundary waters and north with YMCA camp Widjiwagan, Ely, MN.
18. Working in a Gourmet Cookie Shop and shadowing dentists and oral surgeons on Columbus, OH.

Conflicting, right?
Leahruth Jemilo

It all started Freshmen year when I walked into the GSC and auditioned for the Vagina Monologues. I was given the part of "The Woman Who Liked To Make Vaginas Happy" otherwise known as "the moaner." It was pretty much a life changing role, and an incredibly empowering experience for me as a woman. I enjoyed working on the show so much that when one of my directors suggested that I apply to the GSC I gladly filled out the application. My first choice for a campus job was to be an RA, I really thought I could make a difference on campus working on resident floors. However, I was turned down from that position. I was devastated, until the GSC offered me a position. Little did I know that it was one of the best things that has ever happened to me here at Carleton. At the GSC I have gotten the opportunity to work with creative, talented, passionate people on a wide variety of issues affecting the Carleton campus. It is as a result of the GSC that I discovered my own passion for sexual violence prevention work. I have found my efforts on this issue to be incredibly rewarding, particularly through my work on the PINK PARTY. This event has touched my heart over the past three years as it has shown me the potential that exists among men at Carleton to eradicate sexual violence on this campus. I feel absolutely honored to have had the opportunity to work with such dedicated individuals at the GSC and with those involved in our events over the past four years. And special recognition to Kaaren who saw something in me three years ago that made her want to hire me.

Em Harris

A beautiful afternoon two springs ago, I should’ve been at work in the GSC, but instead ended up sprawled on the chapel lawn with Meghan, soaking up the sun. Productive GSCA that I am, we tried to figure out how our flopping could count as “work”… and the Lesbian Visibility Project was born. The LVP is pretty self-explanatory. Meghan and I reference the LVP whenever we get stares or comments on our PDA, reminding ourselves that our relatively unintentional actions do in fact make a difference. From a friend I’ve known since freshman year recently telling me that I’ve changed her views of the LGBT community to the elderly woman on a Manhattan bus telling me that she would “go my way next time,” I occasionally get glimpses of the people influenced by the LVP. Though I’ve left more tangible changes at Carleton, I’m most pleased by the LVP, and am excited to carry it on in Austin, TX. I hope you carry it on here, too.
Reflections

Katie Paul
Three years ago I began working at the Gender and Sexuality Center as a terrified sophomore. I had no idea what to expect, where I would fit in within the office and if I had any clue what I was doing. Now, I know I had nothing to fear, for I would learn it all eventually, I would make friends, and sometimes I still don’t know what I’m doing.

Working at the GSC has taken me to new levels as an ally and someone who is committed to women’s issues. It has also opened my eyes to new issues, forced me out of my comfort zone, and put me in a position that is very vocal on campus. To work here has been both a great responsibility and a great privilege. I will miss everyone deeply and I will also miss the work we do here, I hope I can find a real person job that is equally incredible. Thanks to everyone in the office, particularly Kaaren, and to the campus for supporting the work that we do. It’s been a blast.

Michael Lane
I have worked in the GSC for two years. The GSC was very important for me in my first two years on campus, so I decided to apply when I realized that I was getting totally out of the gender and sexuality loop and wanted to re-involve myself. My biggest motivator for working for the GLBT community is remembering how good it felt to come out and knowing how good it feels to be out. I want as many people as possible to share this experience, and I know that everything the GSC does is helping people in this process. Because of this, I think that my favorite project/event is the Panel program. I have not been very involved or told my story many times, but I think that coming out panels are a very powerful experience for everyone who participates. I want to keep telling my story. I hope that the GSC will continue to become more and more relevant to the Carleton student body, and that it will continue to strengthen LGBT and feminist communities. I don’t want to leave.
Jedda Foreman
Two years ago, when I applied to work the for GSC, I did so not because I knew a lot about gender or sexuality, or because I thought Kaaren was really cool, or because I knew the people I would get to work with would be hilarious and smart, but because I needed an excuse to walk down to the basement. Now, even though the last thing I need is an excuse to go to the GSC, I find that I did learn a lot, that Kaaren is (really) cool, and I feel incredibly to have worked with inspiring, creative, and forthright people.

Mal Hoffman
I’ve had a good ride. Carleton has helped me grow as an individual and I can only hope that I have given back as much as I have taken away. As a pre-frosh I went backpacking in northern MN, like every good lesbian should. I am not much of an outdoorsy individual (to which many can attest) and therefore had never heard the saying, “leave the campsite better than before you arrived”. This, I think, should be applied to everything in life. While I have made numerous mistakes while here at Carleton, I can only hope that the positive impact I have had on this campus has far outweighed the negative.

My senior year has been the best year I have had at Carleton. Much of the satisfaction I have gleaned from my final terms has been through my work at the GSC. Doing work that not only touches me at a personal level but touches numerous individuals both in the Carleton community and beyond has left me with a warm fuzzy feeling. While this may sound cliché, I cannot think of any other words to describe how I feel.

To my fellow GSCAs, thanks for being my unwavering support system, listening to me when I needed it, and putting up with my sometimes brilliant, sometimes inappropriate sense of humor. To Kaaren, thanks for teaching me to be myself, supporting me through some tough times, and offering me sound advice, always, even when I didn’t want it. To Melissa and Lily, my two best friends in the world, thanks for letting me into your lives. I now know the meaning of unconditional love. To my professores, thanks for sharing your knowledge, for this I will forever be grateful. I would be nothing without my teachers. Finally, to the Carleton community, thank you for opening my eyes. I understand a lot more things now than I did four years ago. I still have a long way to go, but I have had an explosive beginning to my journey.

I am leaving here a better person and I feel comforted by the fact that the Carleton I am leaving is better than the one I originally chose to attend. May this trend continue.

Bye Seniors, we’ll miss you!
Summer Makes the Heart Grow Fonder...

Wondering how to add the words “long distance” to “relationship” for twelve? Here are a few tips to ensure you, your partner and your relationship have the best summer ever!

Set ground rules. Before leaving Carleton sit down and talk about realistic expectations for communication over the summer. If you’re working as an intern with unlimited email access and your partner is going to a remote region of the Middle East, you obviously aren’t going to be able to talk on the phone or on AIM everyday. Discussing frequency and time of phone conversations or emails might be a useful conversation to have.

Go on remote dates. Seeing the same movie on the same night or watching the same TV show is a great way to ensure you have shared experiences and something new to talk about even if you’re eating lobster in Maine and your love interest is surfing in the Pacific. Stargazing and reading the same books are also great activities you can share together.

Be honest. Let your partner know if going on a break or something else is the best thing for you, either before or during the summer. Additionally, if you have feelings for someone else, honesty is the best policy. This is a conversation that should be reserved for the phone, you owe your partner more than an email break-up.

Don’t be paranoid. Though it can be tempting to fret over the small stuff, no one likes a neurotic partner. Worrying about what your partner is doing with whom at every second of the day can be potentially damaging for both your mental health and your relationship.

Care packages!! You love them from your mom, your partner will love them from you. Nothing shows care more than a package. Try filling it with notes (7th grade style is always fun), mixed CDs, drawings, plastic Friday flowers, arts and crafts, anything.

Spend some time on yourself. Distance makes the heart grow fonder, right? Well take some time for yourself, hang out with old friends, don’t worry about coordinating bed times and enjoy yourself during your time away from Carleton and your partner.

“Bye, have a good flight!”
Mark Your Calendars!

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CONTACT INFO AND EDITORIAL POLICY
The Gender and Sexuality Center publishes this newsletter monthly for the campus community and friends. Information in the newsletter is based on the best available information at the time of publication. Items in the newsletter are provided for informational purposes only, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gender and Sexuality Center or its employees, nor do they represent the views of the students, staff, faculty, or administration of Carleton College.

Please submit articles, calendar entries, letters and news to the Gender and Sexuality Center or via e-mail to: conklinc@carleton.edu. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and space.

Newsletter Editor: Christi Conkling

Twin Cities Pride

June 20: Opening Night party, Art Show at Pi Bar
June 21: Pride Boat Cruise
June 22: Pride Picnic in Saint Paul's Como Park at the East Picnic Pavilions
June 28/29: Pride Festival at Minneapolis' Loring Park
June 29: Pride Parade beginning at 11am along Hennepin Avenue in Downtown Minneapolis. This is one of the largest parades in the Upper Midwest and the largest Twin Cities Parade.

The 2007 Pride events had a total of 450,000 attendees, making it the 3rd largest Pride festival in the nation.

If you’re going to be in the Twin Cities and are interested in attending Pride events, we want to hear from you! Contact Kaaren (kwilliam) for information on how you can represent Carleton!