

# SAPPHO SPEAKS

The Lesbian and Gay Quarterly Journal at UCSD

April 1986

## The San Diego Bathhouse Controversy

Public relations, public health, and civil liberties

by Russell Lewis

Last November, MECLA, the Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles, called for bathhouse owners to voluntarily close during the AIDS crisis. The political action committee, which describes itself as "dedicated to the advancement of human rights for gay men and lesbian and non-lesbian women," said, "Businesses which provide facilities for direct sexual activity on the premises did not create this epidemic, nor will closing them end the health crisis. However, voluntary closure is an additional act of prudence we must advocate."

MECLA also said that closure of the bathhouses is of such symbolic importance that failing any voluntary action on the part of these businesses, "we shall initiate and support further positive measures to accomplish this result." Board member Craig Hume was cited as saying that such measures might include picketing bathhouses, organizing letter-writing campaigns, and advocating government closure of the establishments.

In many parts of the country, the bathhouse battle has been raging since the AIDS epidemic started. Atlanta has seen raids on bathhouses with arrests made under Georgia's sodomy law, San Francisco's Public Health Office closed the baths temporarily last year, and New York's Mayor Ed Koch, proclaiming that "we will not sell death in this city," said that the city would go to court to try to shut down at least some of the bathhouses. In Los Angeles, guidelines for bathhouse operations patterned after those in New York and San Francisco were passed by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors. The guidelines, to be instituted by bathhouses only if health inspectors determine that high risk sexual activity is taking place, require bathhouse owners to:

- Provide employees to observe activity within the bathhouses at a ratio of one monitor for every 20 patrons.
- Expel all patrons observed engaging in high-risk sexual activities.
- Maintain a daily log of expulsions that would be available to health inspectors on demand.
- Prominently display warnings of high-risk sexual activities.
- Increase the lighting throughout the bathhouses.
- Remove all structures or portions of structures that "promote or encourage high-risk sexual activity" or block the view of inspectors.

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In San Diego, the discussion has been relatively low-key and there have been no actions taken against bathhouses by municipal county or Public Health authorities. The MECLA decision has, nevertheless, touched off a discussion of the issue in the gay press, as well as at a San Diego Democratic Club Forum on "Civil Rights vs. Public Health".

The question of bathhouse closure was dealt with by the Mayor's Task Force on AIDS well over a year ago. The Task Force (made up of representatives from various health-care, social service, and mental health sectors dealing with AIDS, the San Diego AIDS Project, gay physicians in private practice, the Hemophilia Society, and the Blood Bank) recommended against closure because it would not significantly reduce the spread of AIDS, and also felt that bathhouses could serve as important points for education on safe sexual practices.

The County Public Health Officer, Dr. Donald Ramras, concurred with the recommendation.

The most vocal proponent of voluntary bathhouse closure locally is Doug Scott, President of the San Diego Democratic Club. His position is based on both public relations and health concerns.

"The gay community is dealing with an incredible public relations problem on this issue. 'Joe Jones' doesn't know the difference between a bathhouse and a brothel. The average person sees a health crisis, and in the middle of it what they see is a brothel in full operation. How we are perceived in this period of crisis is important. If we aren't seen as cooperating and are seen as little children saying 'no, don't take this away', they'll feel perfectly justified in

whatever actions they take. They'll go further than the baths."

Scott supports the MECLA decision on the grounds that it will help to change the public perception of this issue. "By who MECLA is and by virtue of this statement, it says to people, 'We are gay people who care deeply'. Even if not one bathhouse closes down, this position needs to be stated. It will help people understand about our wanting to improve things."

Aside from the symbolic importance of calling for closure, Scott does feel that there is a legitimate health justification. Scott writes in the *San Diego Gayzette* that once inside the bathhouse, the environment not only allows unsafe sexual activity, it virtually encourages it. "...there is no point in providing easy access to places that facilitate and encourage multiple and anonymous sex partners by their very definition. If even a small percentage reduce their unsafe sex with multiple partners, then this action's (voluntary closure) benefits will have outweighed its negatives." (*San Diego Gayzette*, "MECLA's Decision Should be Supported," November 21, 1985, p. 2)

Scott says that he has come to his position after a lot of internal struggling and lengthy consideration, but does not want to see the government step in and set a precedent. "My worst case scenario is us getting to the point of a Japanese-American type internment for gay men. I don't want to see that happen."

Ramon Gutierrez, Professor of History at UCSD, objects to the voluntary closure/public relations approach on the grounds that it constitutes playing to a bigoted moral audience and in the process creates scapegoats.

"Trying to portray the gay community as responsible is certainly of concern to me, too, but the way you're responsible is not to be seeking out witches and whipping boys that you're going to unjustifiably punish when there's no way to punish them. It essentially comes down to seeking out somebody that you're going to point the finger at—'those bad boys at the baths.' That's not the way to deal with it. If the image thing is what's worrying them, then the task of the gay community is to portray AIDS not only as also a heterosexual problem, but also to increasingly point to the intravenous drug use connection. If the image of the gay community is of concern, then the goal should be to portray the disease for what it is, instead of stigmatizing the gay community as the source of it and the most notorious disseminator of it."

Gutierrez said that a public relations attempt to avoid being stigmatized by calling for voluntary closure will fail because we're already stigmatized; additionally, it will do nothing in terms of reducing the spread of the AIDS epidemic. "If you close down the baths," he said, "they'll either go to the park and get arrested, or do it in their homes."

Doug Scott rejects this argument because the bushes do not offer the opportunity for the kind of "rapid fire" contacts that the baths do.

Dr. Ramras, however, said that one of the reasons why County Public Health has not recommended closure is that "it's more important what you do than where you do it."

Terry Cunningham, assistant to the Interim Director at the San Diego AIDS Project, concurs with Dr. Ramras. "When someone hears those bells ringing, it's not going to make any difference whether it's in the roller coaster at Disneyland or the privacy of their own home," Cunningham said.

Responding to the argument that the bathhouse environment especially encourages unsafe sex, Cunningham points out that "so does the environment of most people's bedroom, so does the back seat of a '57 Chevy, so does the bushes at Balboa Park. It all comes down to what the person knows about this epidemic, about the functioning of their own body, and how they go about dealing with their own sexuality. It always comes down to individual choice. I just don't think that closure of the baths is the issue. It's not going to make one bit of difference now. If we can educate those people going to the baths for the first time, and if the AIDS Project can send someone in to do a safe sex seminar and reach those people who don't go to the bars and read the gay newspapers, then we're doing something positive with bathhouses."

Doug Scott, however, contends that the argument opposing closure on the grounds that bathhouses offer education not available from other sources is flawed, because in the months since the Rock Hudson revelation, AIDS has continued on page 3



## Bathhouse Controversy

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become a topic of "national discussion on every level."

Cunningham responds that specific information, for example the physiology of anal intercourse, where capillaries close to the surface in the rectum may rupture easily allowing direct entry of the HTLV-III virus, does not get treated by the mass media because that kind of information is not yet affecting the majority of their audience. In addition, this kind of coverage would offend much of their audience. "They're not offended by Rambo going across the screen and wasting 50,000 troops," said Cunningham, "but they are offended by a discussion of anal intercourse."

The F-Street Health Club offers safe sex seminars administered by a volunteer from the San Diego AIDS Project every Thursday evening at 9 pm. F-Street Operations Manager Tom Wimbish says that attendance varies between 10 and 40 and is open to all members of the gay male community.

The seminars cover issues of AIDS epidemiology, HTLV-III transmission, and the relative risk of various sexual practices. A recent seminar dealt specifically with:

### —How to put on a condom

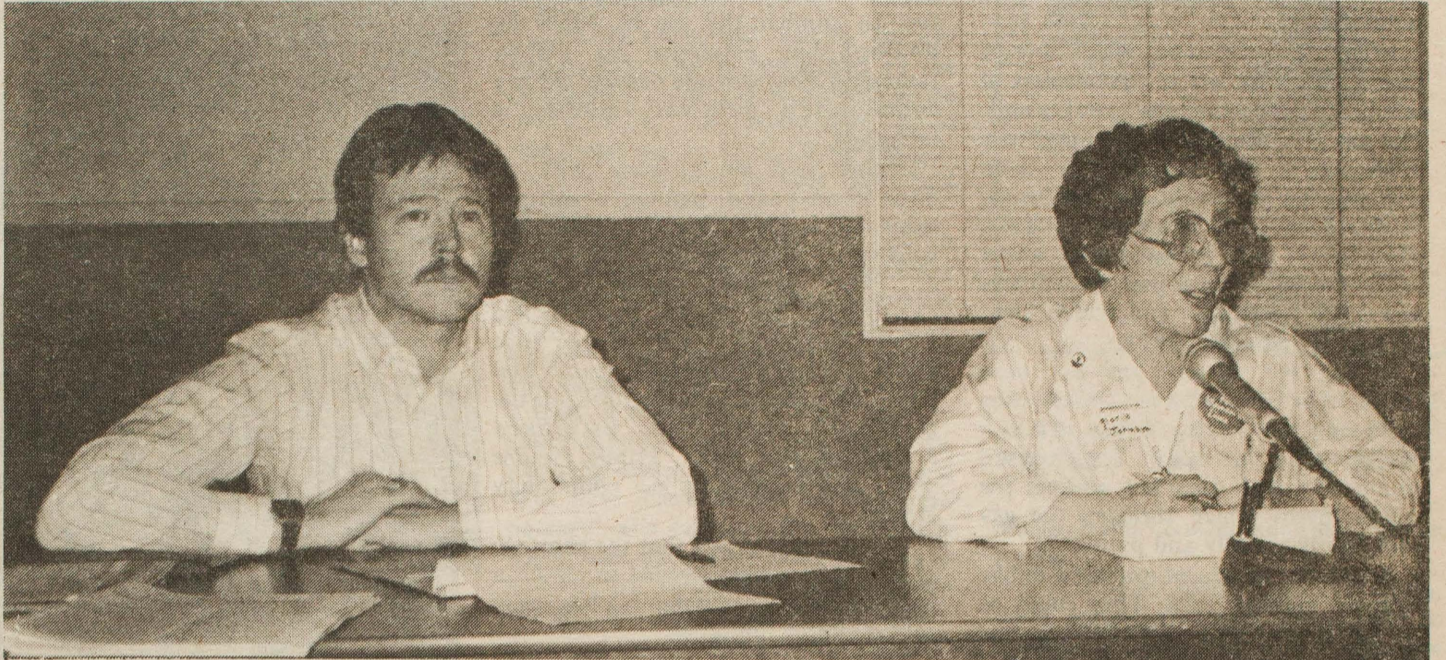
It was recommended that you put a little lubricant on the tip of your penis which will make the condom easier to put on and make it slide back and forth and be more stimulating during intercourse, like a simulated foreskin. Also, make sure that there is no air bubble in the reservoir of the condom (a drop of lubricant in the reservoir can help this situation) or it will be more likely to tear. Make sure as well that the condom is rolled all the way down so that it does

### —What kind of lubricant to use

Water-soluble lubricants are recommended. Oil-based lubricants gum up rubbers, make them brittle, and cause them to dissolve quickly. Oil-based lubricants also trap pathogens next to the skin and inside your body. And, since oil-based lubricants are primarily of the "dip your finger in" variety, they

facilitate spreading germs from person to person. If you do use these types of lubricants the "individual session" size is recommended. Many water-soluble lubricants, such as ForPlay, contain Nonoxynol-9, a substance which has been shown in the test tube to kill gonorrhea, syphilis, yeast, trichomas,

blood. The virus in the saliva was probably due to microscopic amounts of blood that get into the mouth due to gum trauma. At any given time, a person can have blood in his saliva due to damage done by flossing, brushing or eating roughage. It is important to realize that no AIDS cases have been attributed to transmission by saliva and that getting



Gloria Johnson, a past President of the Democratic Club and a social worker whose caseload is made up of people with AIDS, said that it is time to be responsible, to take a position on the bathhouse issue, and make a sacrifice if necessary. Doug Scott, right, current President of the club, said that voluntary closure of the baths is better than having the government step in. If baths close voluntarily, the perception that the gay community is doing nothing to stem the spread of AIDS will change. If the government does it, the gay community will come off looking like irresponsible children who need to be regulated.

the virus directly into the bloodstream of another person remains the surest route of transmission because the AIDS virus is an extremely fragile organism.

Dave's Club and Vulcan, the other two bathhouses in town, do not offer safe sex seminars; all three bathhouses provide condoms and post safe sex

the bathhouses in such a way as to still or other authorities."

Tom Wimbish said that if there were a threat of closure, the F-Street Corporation would oppose it legally. He said that such a fight would rely "on the moral force of our managerial decision to encourage safe sex. We're going out of our way to see that our members understand that they must change their sexual practices."

If they lost such a legal battle, Wimbish said that they could easily convert into another business, perhaps a typical gymnasium.

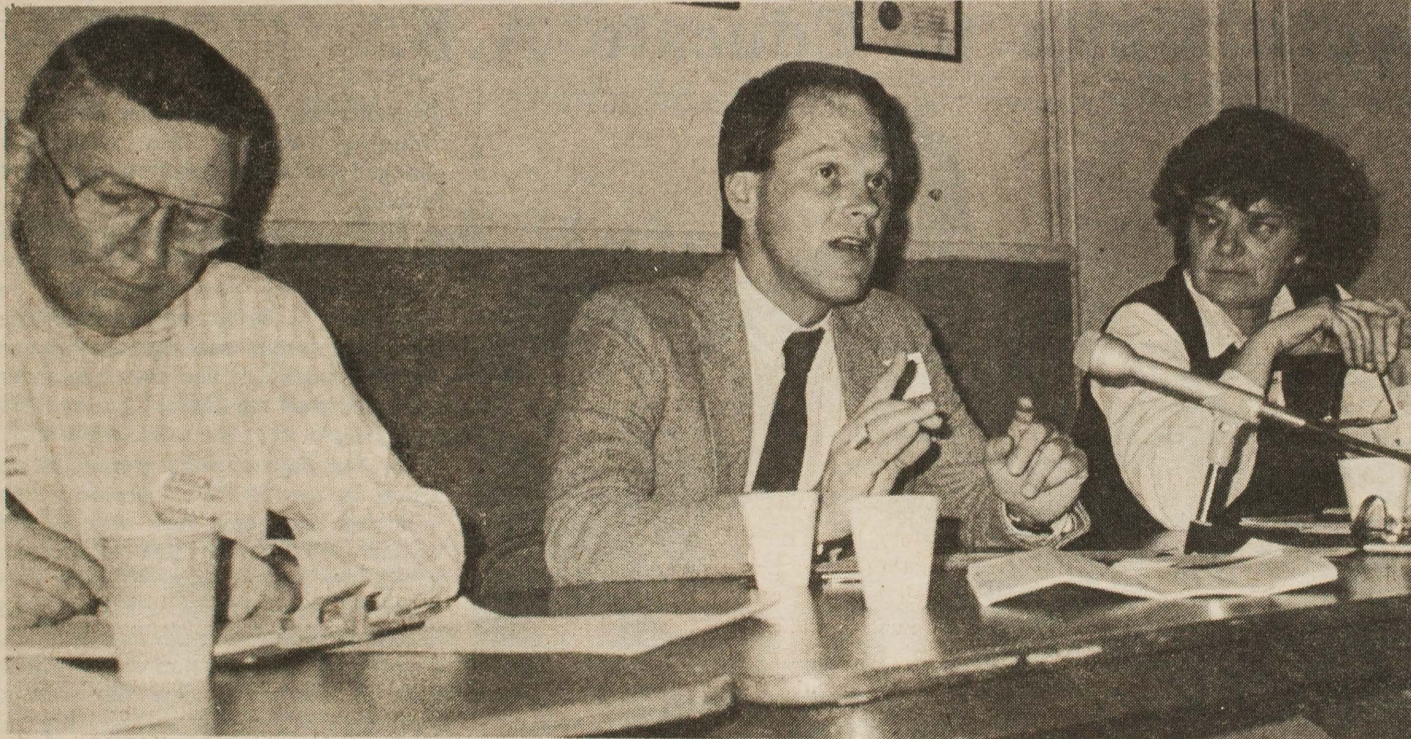
Rex Allen, owner of Dave's Club, also said that he would go to court to stay open. Describing himself as a pioneer in the bathhouse business, he said that he has fought many times in the past and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees.

Allen said that he came out in the '40s and knows what it's like to be beaten up by the police and arrested just for being in an establishment with other homosexuals.

"I would defend a gay 'anything', our right to congregate anywhere. The only way is to fight for your rights. You've got to be out of your mind to think you can preserve your rights any other way," said Allen.

At the February 27 San Diego Democratic Club forum, "Civil Rights vs. Public Health," Tom Homann, attorney for the F-Street Corporation, said that bathhouse closure is dangerous because it constitutes a mini-sodomy law, which opens the door for reinstating sodomy laws in states where they have been repealed. Homann pointed out that it has only been legal for gay people to have sex in California since 1977. He said sodomy laws are a powerful mechanism for discrimination because when they are in place the homophobic notion of the "criminal nature of the homosexual" is used as ammunition against gay people.

Doug Scott reiterated his position that reinstated sodomy laws and revitalized discrimination are precisely the



Keith Vrhel, M.D. said at the San Diego Democratic forum on civil rights vs. public health that gay health professionals have lost the ear of the national health organizations because the gay community is perceived to be obstructionist on the HTLV-III and bathhouse issues. He called for more visible and enforceable educational measures at bathhouses. Vrhel is a member of the American Physicians for Human Rights. Jeri Dilno, at right, said that the bathhouse issue has the potential to rip the gay community apart, and the common goal of avoiding civil liberties losses would be better served by educating the public on AIDS so that groups not at risk will cease to feel that their health is threatened. Dilno is Administrative Vice President of the Democratic Club. Jonathan Dunn-Rankin moderator of the forum is pictured at left.

not get lost in your partner.

### —Anal intercourse without a condom

The Withdrawal Method is extremely dangerous. Pre-ejaculatory fluid will still get into the ruptured capillaries in the rectum of the passive partner, and HTLV-III can pass from the mucous membranes of the passive partner to the mucous membranes of the active partner's penis. "Pulling out" before ejaculation is also problematic because you may not actually pull out all the way before starting to ejaculate.

and HTLV-III (the AIDS virus). But the test tube has a much smoother and more regular surface than does the rectum, so Nonoxynol-9 should be thought of as an extra layer of protection to be used with condoms and *not* as a substitute for condoms.

—Saliva as a transmitter of HTLV-III  
Deep kissing has been placed in the possibly safe, or medium-risk, category for transmission of AIDS. In tests of 71 men with AIDS, one had the virus in his saliva at 1/1000 the concentration in

literature.

Cunningham acknowledged that a lot more work needs to be done to utilize bathhouses for AIDS education. He suggested that all bathhouses sponsor safe sex seminars, and that jack-off groups be formed. He also said that he would like to see one-on-one counselors in the bathhouses on at least a weekly basis, so that people could fine-tune the issues to their own lives. This idea is currently being developed.

"If we can change the complexion of

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## Bathhouse Controversy

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problems that he wants to avoid, but to do that it is necessary to change the public's perception of the bathhouse/AIDS issue.

Another reason to call for voluntary closure, he said, is that the current state of affairs puts gay political groups at a disadvantage when dealing with politicians.

MECLA and the San Diego Democratic Club are in the business of selling the gay community to politicians. The gay constituency is a liability to a politician if our support for them alienates his or her other constituents. Scott argued that if we are perceived as a community that is screaming about losing the bathhouses that we will lose access to politicians and forfeit their support in legislative battles.

Calling for closure has not been criticized because of its goal of avoiding repression; the strategy's flaw is that it divides an already fragmented community and does not address the AIDS myths which threaten the gay community socially and politically.

A number of education-based public relations options exist. They could be exploited to avoid divisiveness and deal with the same misperceptions that gays calling for closure of bathhouses hope to address.

Rick Moore, a local gay media observer, has suggested that by spearheading an educational campaign for the general community, the gay community could combat the perception that gay men are 'irresponsible children' who need regulating. The most productive point to stress would be that AIDS is an extremely difficult disease to

contract, that the HTLV-III virus cannot be passed via drinking glasses or toilet seats, but requires a blood-to-blood or a body fluid-to-blood transmission route.

Another point that has not been exploited is the fact that lesbians are the lowest risk group for contracting the disease. The tremendous potential of this fact to combat the use of AIDS by homophobic elements to justify repressive measures and damage the gay community's political viability is untapped.

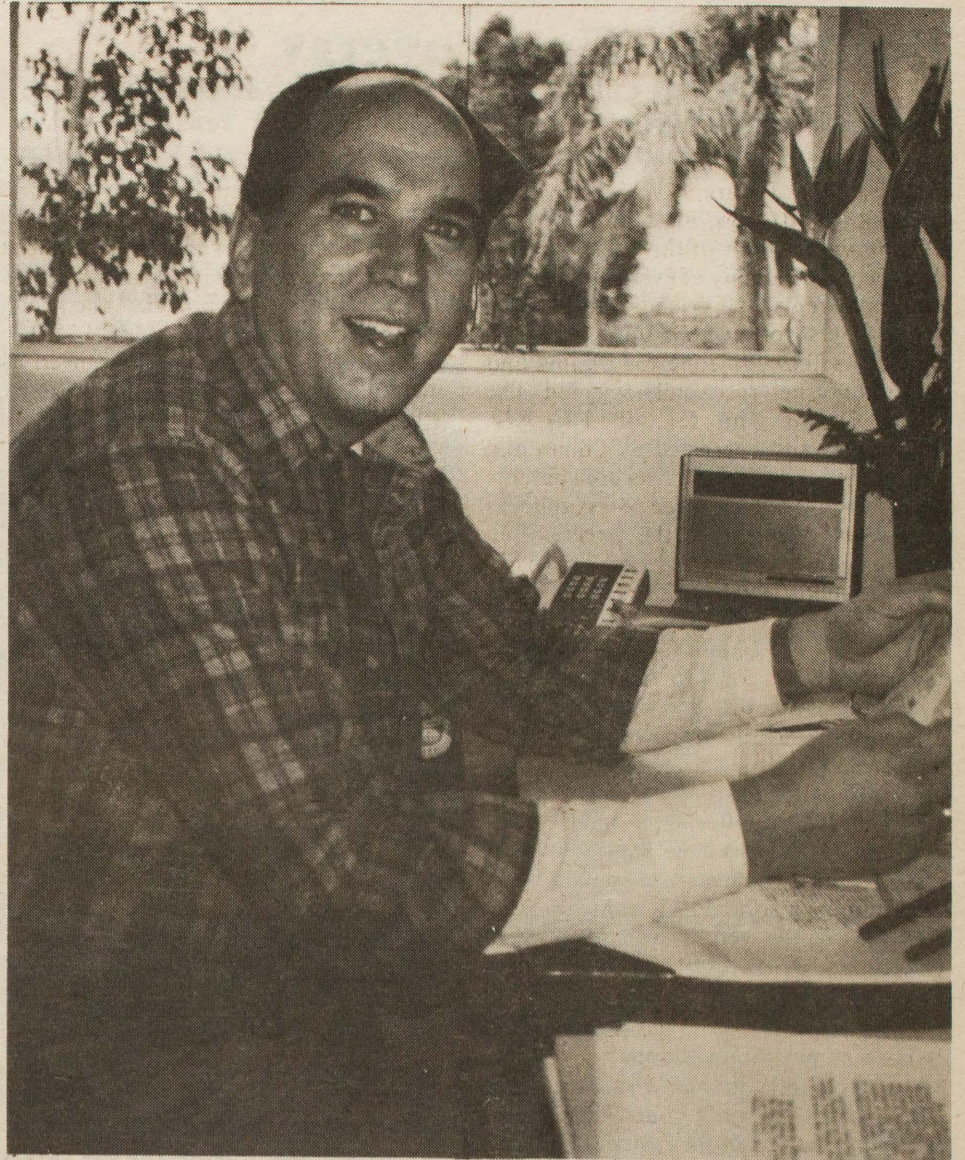
Moore said the problem with an education-based public relations campaign is the difficulty in obtaining substantial media access. Options that do exist, however, have not been exploited. He suggested taking advantage of public service announcements provided by radio and television stations, as well as utilizing the billboard space that billboard companies give away. Public forums could also be held by gay community groups.

Moore pointed out that the shortage of volunteer energy needed to mount a public relations campaign is a less easily surmountable limitation.

"There are a lot of concrete, vital things that need doing in our community, especially now," he said. "Public relations is a relatively esoteric task by comparison. It's a luxury after the necessities, even if it is very basic in some ways."

A broad symbolic gesture like gay political groups calling for bathhouse closure is, by comparison, much easier to pull off. All it takes is a press conference.

But this action does not ultimately



Terry Cunningham, assistant to the Director at the San Diego AIDS Project.

address the root causes of public misperception: inaccurate information about AIDS and homophobia.

The bathhouse issue is a red herring in the struggle to establish that "we" aren't

a health hazard to "them," just as the overidentification of AIDS with "homosexuality" is an obstruction to the gay community's continuing battle for civil rights.

## Alternative Media Unite to Educate A.S.

The following statement has been endorsed by all the Alternative Media, i.e., *The People's Voice*, *The California Review*, *Voz Fronteriza*, *The Koala*, *The new indicator*, *Alternative Visions*, *Sappho Speaks*, *L'Chayim*, and *The Birdcage Review*.

To: A.S. Council

It is our position that the A.S. Subcommittee on Alternative Media is a farce. It is true that on January 22 we urged the A.S. Council to pass John Riley's bill that would have created an ad hoc committee to study Alternative Media funding options. We felt at that time that Riley's proposed committee, which included two representatives of the Alternative Media, was the best option this Council would make available to us. We were willing to participate in good faith in Riley's proposed ad hoc committee in order to formulate a reasonable plan to incorporate any new alternative media into the overall budget.

Unfortunately, the A.S. Council majority, led by Communications Commissioner Michael Fahlbusch and ASUCSD President Mary Rose Alexander, was determined to silence the progressive Alternative Media and was in no mood to negotiate. The Council openly displayed its hostility at the January 22 meeting by overwhelmingly adopting Fahlbusch's controversial budget proposal despite our vehement protests. Fahlbusch had devised his plan without any input whatsoever from the Alternative Media.

The Council then proceeded to mock



Alternative Media funding battle—time is of the essence.

the intent of John Riley's proposal by passing a completely distorted version of his bill. Riley's ad hoc committee was meant as an alternative to Fahlbusch's misguided and drastic proposal. Its purpose was to formulate various Alternative Media funding options and then present them directly to the students for consideration. By first approving Fahlbusch's budget proposal and then stripping Riley's committee of any significance, however, the Council was once again demonstrating its commitment to censor the progressive Alternative Media.

The Council's attack on Riley's bill was led by President Alexander. The Riley bill was amended in the following

ways:

1.) The term "ad hoc committee" was changed to "subcommittee" to ensure the committee's dependence on the Council.

2.) The President then changed its composition by removing both Alternative Media representatives, one of the students at large and one of the media board representatives. In their place she added two A.S. Council members. The subcommittee is now composed of one chair appointed by the President, two A.S. Council members, one representative of the media board and one student at large.

3.) The President next altered the mandate of the subcommittee. Riley had

proposed that the committee formulate "funding" options. But Alexander changed this wording to "funding or not funding."

4.) Finally, the President reworded Riley's language so that "all options formulated by this committee be submitted to the council to determine wording before presenting these options to the students." That is, Alexander reassured that the Council would have total control over the subcommittee.

On Monday we were greeted by an article in the *UCSD Guardian* which indicated that some A.S. officials are unable to condone these totalitarian tactics any longer. Administrative Vice President Ariel Anguiano has resigned in disgust, telling the *Guardian* that, "It's a matter of principle, they don't want to give an alternative view...the student representatives are not representing the students". We could not have said it any better ourselves.

Anguiano had appointed Sergio Chavez to the Alternative Media subcommittee as student at large but the A.S. Council had refused to approve his appointment. Instead, the Council approved Riley's former roommate, Barry Harris, as student at large. Again, we quote Anguiano: "I was disillusioned by the council. We only trust our own people, and if we have an attitude like that you can't be too representative."

Riley and Anguiano agreed, in the *Guardian* article, that the A.S. had gutted Riley's proposal. "It went from a really representative committee to an A.S. committee," said Anguiano. Referring to the fact that the A.S.

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# Coming Around about Coming Out

by Elisa Sobó

PFLAG, or Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, meets in the North Conference Room of the student center on the third Sunday of every month, and offers parents and friends the support that they so often need upon receiving the news that someone they know and love is not heterosexually oriented. The San Diego chapter of PFLAG, organized and energized by Lillian and Hy Rubin, has been serving area parents and friends for over three years, and was the 1984 recipient of the Greater San Diego Business Association's Community Service Award.

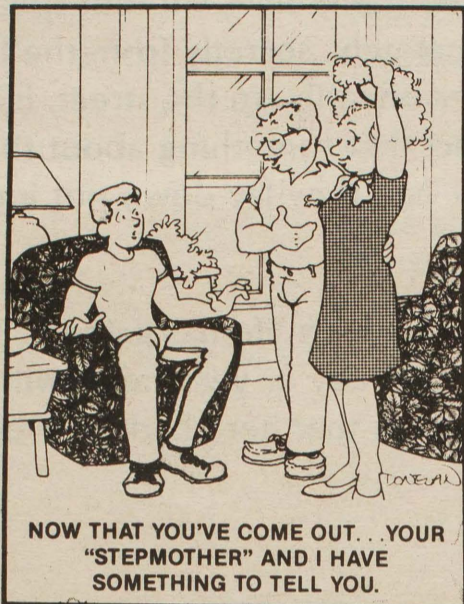
The possibility that a child may be homosexual sometimes terrifies parents, and PFLAG offers the support necessary should such a situation arise—as it so often does: one out of every four families has a gay member. But rather than treating the homosexual individual as a homewrecking pariah, and the parent or friend as a wronged victim, PFLAG's goal is to enlighten through support and education, and to replace negative stereotypes with love and understanding.

One mother, whose fear and superstition were replaced by truth, speaks out: "I am not concerned about my daughter's homosexuality. What does concern me is a generally misinformed, hostile society that may prevent her from achieving her potential."

PFLAG exists primarily to help parents and their gay children to understand, to support, and to love one another. Lillian Rubin refers to the re-education process each distraught parent must go through as "coming around." Of course, not all parents see homosexuality as something negative, but for those who do, the "coming out" of a son or daughter may precipitate feelings of despair, disgust, and

disillusionment. This type of reaction reflects more about the society in which parents are members than it does about them or their gay offspring, and PFLAG offers the type of support necessary for a healthy realignment of values.

In addition to monthly meetings including rap sessions and presentations, PFLAG operates a "hotline" for concerned individuals (619) 439-4421



or (619) 296-6191), and offers peer counseling for parents and offspring, the use of books and educational materials from their lending library, and relief from the pressures of being the parent of a gay or lesbian person in a homophobic society. PFLAG can also arrange for speakers to address other organizations or groups. For example, if your group wants to learn about a specific topic, and is having difficulty finding someone to come and talk PFLAG can help you find someone appropriate, or refer you to someone else who can help.

PFLAG exists to address ignorance and cultural prejudices, and to channel

energies into constructive and positive efforts. There is a certain power in knowledge, and PFLAG aims to spread to the mainstream population the knowledge that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, deserve to live with dignity and respect.

PFLAG works with and for the gay community, and is committed to the struggle for equal rights, as well as the creation of an environment of understanding, in which the people that parents and friends love can lead positive, fulfilling lives.

Getting involved with PFLAG is simple, and new members are welcomed into a warm and supportive atmosphere. Parents are encouraged to bring their children, and gay children are equally encouraged to bring their parents. As Lillian Rubin says, "Come, and be counted and be helped, and then come and help others." Rubin refers to those who have been helped as "seasoned parents", and points to the rap sessions which take place after every meeting as instrumental in dealing effectively with feelings, attitudes, and issues. Parents, friends, lesbians, and gays give voice to emotions such as pain, frustration, and love, and discuss such diverse topics as lesbian mothers, gays and religion, and landlord harassment.

A recent meeting featured Rick Moore and Jeri Dilno of Media Watch, which is sponsored through Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates, as guest speakers. Media Watch monitors and responds to the media's portrayal and coverage of homosexuals, and encourages us to do the same. Moore and Dilno suggested ways of talking back when erroneous or stereotypical presentations of homosexuals are perpetuated by the media. The media powerfully affects public perceptions; inaccurate or inadequate coverage of gay



IF YOUR MOTHER REFERS TO ME JUST ONCE AS YOUR "LITTLE PHASE," I'M OUTTA HERE.

and/or lesbian concerns can and must be fought.

L.A.G.M.A. works with the media, often initiating contact in an effort to familiarize media managers with lesbian and gay issues, and providing information and ideas for good stories. Additionally, L.A.G.M.A. works within the lesbian and gay community, both helping organizations to publicize and working to ensure the professional quality of publicity materials. Dilno and Moore encourage community involvement; for more information call (619) 299-7038, or write L.A.G.M.A. at P.O. Box 3076, San Diego, CA 92103.

For more information of PFLAG, as well as for times and dates of future meetings, write to: P.O. Box 1695, Oceanside, CA 92054. The Rubins, always happy to help, can be reached at (619) 439-4421.

## Alternative Media Unite

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president had eliminated fair media representation on the committee, John Riley said, "Mary Rose kind of eliminated it...Ariel and myself were totally upset with the change."

We have just examined the history of the Alternative Media subcommittee. We supported the ad hoc committee as originally proposed by John Riley. Not only has the Alternative Media voice been eliminated, but in the words of Barry Harris, the subcommittee is "powerless." The A.S. clearly demonstrated its unwillingness to hear constructive alternatives within even its own rigged forum when it rejected Sergio Chavez as student at large. For all these reasons we have concluded that participation in this subcommittee would be nothing but futile.

It is important that you realize that what you have done to the Alternative Media will penalize more than the student population you theoretically represent. Indeed, the impact will extend well into the surrounding communities, too. Our loyal readership includes many community members because we address pertinent issues that are largely ignored by mainstream media. Allow us to cite a few examples of our community support:

From Dr. Herbert Schiller, Professor of Communications at UCSD—

"One of the strengths of UCSD has been the uninterrupted publication for 20 years of the *new indicator* which has taken unorthodox and challenging positions on local academic as well as rational, vital issues of the day. Its longevity attests to the dedication of its staff as well as to the contribution it makes to the intellectual community. I hope no action will be taken that will reduce its capability to continue to perform its invaluable scholarly and community service."

From Susan Orlofsky, President of AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees) Local 3262—

"As president of AFSCME Local 3262 I want to go on record in support of full restoration of funding to the *new indicator* and *Voz Fronteriza*.

Your long history of providing information about labor struggles in San Diego and nationwide, and your strong commitment to defending the rights of working people world wide, makes your newspapers vital resources to the UCSD community—staff as well as students and faculty.

Freedom of the press has two components, the freedom exercised by the media in disseminating information, and just as important, freedom of those served by the media to have access to a full range of information. As part of the university's commitment, our union members deserve access to the kinds of news your publications provide."

From Lola Buie, Professional Services Consultant of the California Teachers Association—

"I think it is important that members of the community have the opportunity to read and digest information from all types of publications whether or not they present a point of view that may be considered different.

The entire structure of the American way of life is built on the ability to choose. Without that ability we become stagnant people. The *new indicator* should be allowed to continue giving its readers information upon which they can base a choice."

We urge other concerned Council members to follow the inspiring lead of Ariel Anguiano.

**PARENTS**

**PFLAG**

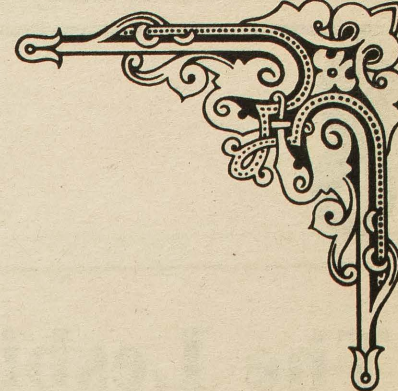
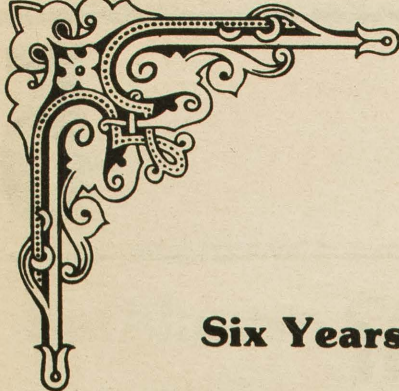
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92646

PFG of San Francisco  
and Bay Area  
P.O. Box 5362  
San Mateo, CA  
94402

PFG Akron  
P.O. Box 6146  
Akron, OH  
44312



## Six Years

A friend calls us  
an old married couple

I flinch  
you don't mind  
on the way home  
you ask why I got upset  
We are something  
like what she said  
you say I say  
No

We aren't married  
No one has blessed  
this union no one  
gave us kitchen gadgets  
We bought our own blender  
We built our common life  
in the space between the laws

Six years  
What drew us together  
a cartographer a magnetic force  
our bodies our speech  
the wind a hunger

Listeners both  
we talked

I wanted: your lean wired energy  
control decisiveness  
honesty your past  
as an athlete

You wanted:  
my 'culture'  
gentleness warmth

Of course that was doomed  
You brought out  
my anger I resist  
your control your energy  
exhausts me my hands  
are too hot for you you gained  
the weight I lost my gentleness  
is dishonest your honesty  
is cruel you hate  
my reading I hate  
your motorcycle

Yet something has changed  
You have become gentler  
I more decisive  
We walk easily  
around our house  
into each other's language  
There is nothing  
we cannot say together

Solid ground  
under our feet  
we know this landscape  
We have no choice  
of destination only the route  
is a mystery every day  
a new map of the same terrain

Alice Bloch



## Their Beginning

The consummation of their lawless pleasure  
Was done. They rose up from the mattress;  
Hurriedly dressed themselves without speaking.  
They go out separately, secretly from the house; and as  
They walk rather uneasily up the street, it seems  
As if they suspect that something about them betrays  
On what sort of bed they lay down not long ago.

But for the artist how his life has gained.  
Tomorrow, the next day or years after will be written  
The lines of strength that here had their beginning.

C. P. Cavafy

## XVI

### (from Twenty-one Love Poems)

Wherever in this city, screens flicker  
with pornography, with science-fiction vampires,  
victimized hirelings bending to the lash,  
we also have to walk...if simply as we walk  
through the rainsoaked garbage, the tabloid cruelties  
of our own neighborhoods.  
We need to grasp our lives inseparable  
from those rancid dreams, that blurt of metal, those disgraces,  
and the red begonia perilously flashing  
from a tenement sill six stories high,  
or the long-legged youth girls playing ball  
in the junior highschool playground.  
No one has imagined us. We want to live like trees,  
sycamores blazing through the sulfuric air,  
dappled with scars, still exuberantly budding,  
our animal passion rooted in the city.

Adrienne Rich



## A History of Lesbianism

How they came into the world,  
the women-loving-women  
came in three by three  
and four by four  
the women-loving-women  
came in ten by ten  
and ten by ten again  
until there were more  
than you could count

they took care of each other  
the best they knew how  
and of each other's children  
if they had any.

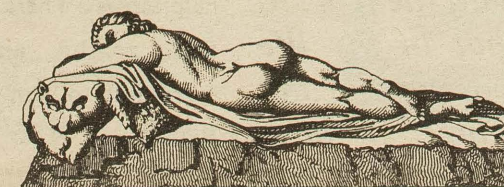
How they lived in the world,  
the women-loving-women  
learned as much as they were allowed  
and walked and wore their clothes  
the way they liked  
whenever they could. They did whatever  
they knew to be happy or free  
and worked and worked and worked.  
The women-loving-women  
in America were called dykes  
and some liked it  
and some did not.

they made love to each other  
the best they knew how  
and for the best reasons

How they went out of the world,  
the women-loving-women  
went out one by one  
having withstood greater and lesser  
trials, and much hatred  
from other people, they went out  
one by one, each having tried  
in her own way to overthrow  
the rule of men over women,  
they tried it one by one  
and hundred by hundred,  
until each came in her own way  
to the end of her life  
and died:

The subject of lesbianism  
is very ordinary; it's the question  
of male domination that makes everybody  
angry.

Judy Grahn



## Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments, love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come,  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom:  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

William Shakespeare

## Four

Ourselves were wed one summer—dear—  
Your Vision—was in June—  
And when Your little Lifetime failed,  
I wearied—too—of mine—

And overtaken in the Dark—  
Where You had put me down—  
By Some one carrying a Light—  
I—too—received The Sign.

'Tis true—Our Futures different lay—  
Your Cottage—faced the sun—  
While Oceans—and the North must be—  
On every side of mine

'Tis true, Your Garden led the Bloom,  
For mine—in Frosts—was sown—  
And yet, one Summer, we were Queens—  
But You—were crowned in June—

Emily Dickinson



## The Lesbian Community and AIDS

by Sarah Slaughter

The AIDS scare. This is how it is labeled, by the media and how it is read by the public. How do we as lesbians feel about AIDS? How has it touched our lives emotionally and politically? I have spoken to some women and our answers are as diverse as we are.

Some of us feel more affected than others. Some of us feel empathy but feel removed from the situation. Some of us are more directly affected because of family and friends and others feel pulled politically. There are those of us who are more concerned because we are or have been bisexual.

*"Women have always been supportive of gay male issues. I feel like there has been a lack of concern, even an animosity for Lesbian issues from Gay men. Here we are supporting AIDS issues. I'm not saying that AIDS is not important and that we shouldn't support Gay men. Of course. But what about Lesbian issues? In the past Gay culture has been dominated by men. I feel women are suffering the consequences not only in the mass media but as well as in the Gay media which focuses on AIDS and puts women's issues on the back burner."*

Regardless of the fact that Lesbians are the lowest risk population for contracting AIDS, they are included in the homophobic feelings that the general population is directing towards the Gay community because of "the scare."

*"I had a heterosexual friend ask me if you could 'catch' AIDS in a Lesbian bar. I struggled not to scream."*

*"I was in a class where we were talking about Lesbian*

*issues. We were talking about Lesbian issues. We started talking about homophobia and then someone brought up AIDS. The discussion halted. Everyone is so*

*Some of us who identify ourselves as*



illustration by Sarah Slaughter

*afraid that it just shut off the whole class."*

*"AIDS is not just a Gay male issue in the community. It is a gay issue."*

We are the lowest risk population for contracting the disease and we tend to socialize in groups separated from men. Because of this we can feel isolated and removed from the situation. However, even if we do not come into contact with the issues of AIDS we can not and do not find ourselves isolated or protected from the homophobic backlash created by AIDS.

*"Asking me how AIDS affects me is like asking me*

*how the rain affects me. It's there. 'You have to deal with it. If it's raining outside, there's going to be mud on the carpet.'"*

*Some of us who identify ourselves as*



illustration by Sarah Slaughter

bisexual experience not only homophobic reactions, but discrimination in the Gay community as well.

*"We not only get shit from heterosexuals but we often get shit from Lesbians too. It's as though AIDS has given everyone another reason to chastise bisexuals."*

*Although some of us feel removed we want to support Gay men.*

*"I don't know, can't imagine what it would be like to live with the fear, to deal with that in my life and with my lovers. I can't truly empathize. I have*

*found myself not knowing how to react, what to say. I have some gay male friends who feel paralyzed by the fear. Who can't talk about it because it is too powerful for them, other friends who continually joke about it in an attempt to make it less weighty. I often times feel helpless."*

The women's caucus of the San Diego Democratic Club has channeled that feeling of helplessness into a very positive resource for Gay men. Since Gay men can not give blood and therefore can not donate for each other or create accounts for themselves, they may be forced to buy blood when it is needed. But blood is expensive. The Blood Sisters was formed in 1982 as an alternative resource for men in the Gay community who need blood, but can't afford it. Each year the Blood Sisters sponsors a drive to credit an account at the San Diego Blood Bank. They have already credited 200 blood units. Women who would like to contribute to this fund can donate at any time by specifying that they want their blood credits to go to the San Diego Democratic Club. The annual blood drive is held in July and is advertised two weeks in advance in the *Gayzette* and *Update*.

Ignorance about AIDS and its transmission has created an atmosphere of fear, animosity, and sometimes apathy. As an oppressed culture it is paramount that we continue to educate ourselves and expand our consciousness. Through knowledge we not only strengthen ourselves, we support and strengthen our brothers and our community as a whole. It is important for us to be strong because we must fight the "epidemic" of negative rhetoric constantly flung at us as a minority. With knowledge we strengthen our understanding, we prepare ourselves to educate, and we constructively focus our anger and alleviate feelings of helplessness. There is nothing to gain in fear, apathy, and ignorance; but everything to gain through knowledge. Expansion.



## SCREENING PROGRAM FOR GAY MALES

The Beach Area Community Clinic provides a screening program for gay males which tests for sexually transmitted diseases. The screening program also incorporates screening questions and examinations designed to uncover any signs of AIDS. The screening session provides an opportunity for discussion of the issue of AIDS and the relative risks of sexual practices. In addition, Gay Male Screening personnel can provide clear explanations of the present state of knowledge on AIDS.

Examinations and tests consist of the following:

1. A genital exam
2. A rectal and prostate exam
3. Urinalysis
4. Gonorrhea cultures
5. Syphilis blood test
6. Hepatitis B Vaccination Screen
7. Complete blood count
8. Medical history
9. Stool culture for ova and parasites
10. Rectal gram stain
11. Lymphadenopathy (enlarged lymph nodes) exam

The cost is \$60. In most medical settings, the lab costs alone would be well over \$100, plus the cost of an office visit. Thus, this is an inexpensive screening program.

The BACC offers its services to help eliminate sexually transmitted diseases within the San Diego gay community. This clinic has had a sexually transmitted disease program in operation for many years, and has seen many gay males. As a result, it has developed an honest and sensitive rapport with the gay male population in this community. The BACC is staffed with a professional group of doctors, nurse practitioners, screeners and counselors experienced in working with gay males.

This is a comprehensive and low cost screening program, conducted by persons sensitive to the needs of the gay male community.

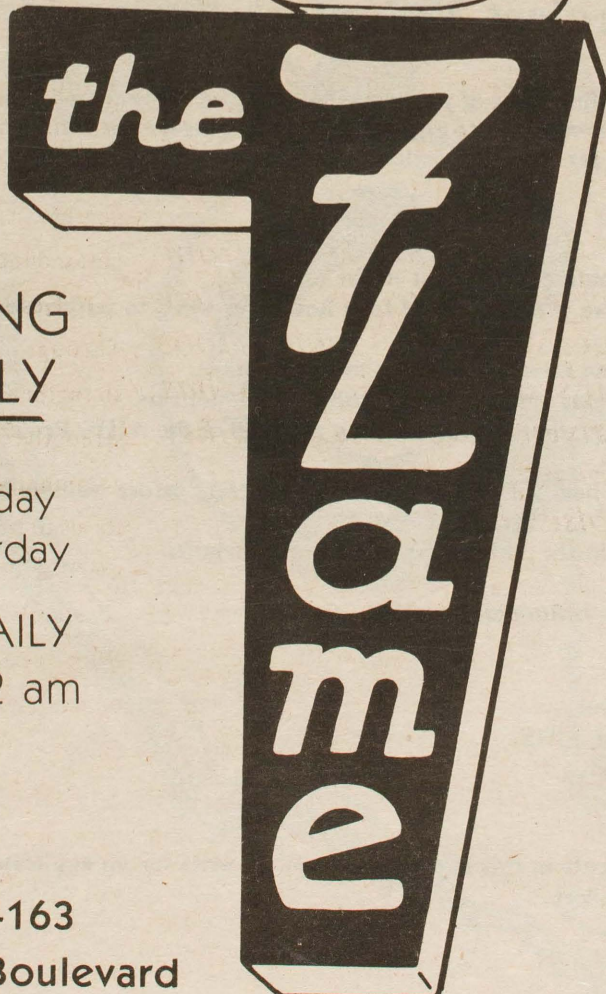
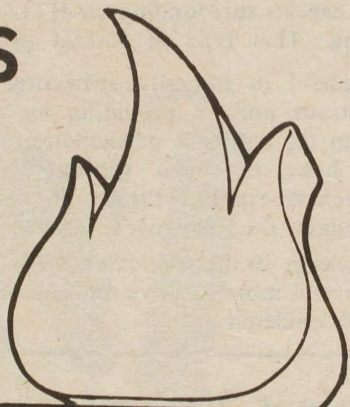
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## To Better Understanding...

by Tom Stubberud

Once again, San Diego State University has been instrumental in presenting the human, compassionate side of the AIDS crisis. Last year, at this time, we were given the chance to see *The AIDS Show* presented by Theatre Rhinoceros of San Francisco. This February, the San Diego State Health Advisory Board, in conjunction with the San Diego AIDS Project, premiered two plays, *Miles To Go* by Mark Fairchild and *As a Matter of Fact* by Robert Stone. The plays are part of a larger program of AIDS awareness through the use of live theatre, which was originated at San Diego State by graduate student Thomas Vegh.

Upon arriving at the door, we were handed our informative program and two questionnaires, which were designed to test the audience's knowledge of AIDS, both before and after the program. The first piece, *As a Matter of Fact*, is a satirical take-off on the game show theme, with the AIDS crisis as the subject matter at hand. This time it is the Pierces versus the Beasleys and neither family is very well informed. They can be seen as caricatures of typical middle Americans in their lack of understanding of the disease and its transmission. The game show host for the evening, Dickie Danson, steps in to relay to us the correct facts, figures, fallacies and demographics of the AIDS epidemic. This one-act play, also directed by Mr. Vegh, very effectively presents the facts in a light-hearted, humorous manner. The humor of the play, in this context, works in a three-fold way. First, it opens the program on a positive note, secondly, it catches the audience's attention and draws them in and lastly, it provides them with the vital information that they need to know concerning how the disease is spread and other important facts. This brief vignette ends in an ironic twist with the host informing the audience that one of the contestants is known to have had sexual relations with a diagnosed AIDS carrier. The virus is no longer just a threat to the "high-risk" groups, but is and should be a major concern of the overall population. The audience is left more informed factually, but that is not enough. This is where *Miles To Go* fits in.

The scenery shifted, exposing a beautiful black and white backdrop, covered with the faces of those who have died from AIDS. Credit for this belongs to Robert Earl, scenic designer for the program. The lights come up, and *Miles To Go*, directed by Susan Leigh of the UCSD drama department, is ready to begin. The play focuses on the lives of the two main characters, Garrett, a gay lawyer and peer counselor, whose life has been drastically changed since he was assigned to work with Jackson, a man who has been diagnosed as having the disease and who has also been left by his family and friends. Through their highly-charged relationship, which wavers from campy humor to petulant bitterness, the audience is allowed to vicariously deal with a variety of issues important to the gay community. These issues include the choice of an alternative lifestyle, the confrontation and response of family members to the disclosure of one's homosexuality, and the general fear and ignorance that shroud both the label "gay" and more importantly the AIDS epidemic. The two men grow deeply attached during the course of the play and are able to help each other deal with many personal dilemmas within their lives. By the end of the play, we feel Jackson's death as a great loss in



Playwright Mark Fairchild and Director Susan Leigh against the backdrop for *Miles To Go*.

photo by Tom Stubberud

Garrett's life. *Miles To Go*, when coupled with *As a Matter of Fact*, work together to present the factual side and also the more personal, emotional side to the AIDS problem. This assists the audience in cultivating more comprehension and certainly more compassion in their understanding of the disease.

After the main portion of the program, a panel discussion was held. The participants were two health-care professionals, the playwright, Mark Fairchild, and the director, Susan Leigh.

Questions ranged from interest in the future of these types of programs to the legal aspects surrounding the HTLV-III testing. This type of format proved

successful in honestly answering any questions and in providing an open forum for audience participation. It is the hope of Vegh through AIDS awareness via live theatre to further stimulate the playgoer's interest and knowledge in the subject of AIDS, and to form a more positive outlook on the AIDS epidemic.

Undoubtedly, more programs like this are desperately needed to correctly inform the population and to allay the fear and ignorance that comes with the territory. It is efforts such as this that lead to better understanding of the epidemic and how to alter all of our lifestyles in response to such a life-threatening disease. Thomas Vegh, San Diego State, and all involved with the program, are to be commended and supported in their future efforts for these compassionate, educational productions.

## AIDS Project Volunteer Program

If you are considering dedicating some of your valuable time and energy to the care of people with AIDS, to helping their families, or to any of the other volunteer efforts of the San Diego AIDS Project, here is some general information to assist you with your decision.

The AIDS Project asks that:

- Volunteers make a six-month commitment to the program.
- Volunteers are able to give a minimum of four hours per week to patient care and/or program support.
- Volunteers participate in an intensive 30 hour training course.
- Volunteers attend a bi-weekly support group with other volunteers.
- Volunteers maintain weekly phone contact with a member of the AIDS Project staff.

Screening interviews will be held with all prospective volunteers before training begins.

Topics that will be covered in the 30 hour training course include:

- AIDS Project philosophy, history and goals
- Communication Skills
- Psycho-social Dynamics
- Pain and Symptom Control
- History and Physiology of AIDS
- Personal Death Awareness
- Ethics of Confidentiality

If you would like to participate in this effort, please call or write for an application:

San Diego AIDS Project  
P.O. Box 89049  
San Diego, CA 92138

For further information, call (619) 543-0300.

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# Letters Letters Letters Letters Letters Letters Letters

continued from page 2

Women who speak our own language and who become wild and wantonly free exhibit such a wholeness that we frighten the fakers. Such wholeness essentially demands that there is fraud going on. It pokes at the weak foundations of the false god and it requires that we see the most despised beings as ourselves; wholeness knows that equality cannot be reached in a society that does not know the meaning of equality/wholeness. These perceptions and their implications surround the entire aura of a witch and set up a silent demonstration against the warlords and weakbellies, rejecting patriarchy's god the faker, along with "god the stud, and god the wholly hoax." (from Mary Daly). A witch who is anything is a witch while she is anything. Thus she cannot speak social-scientist-ese without the witch shadow there, she cannot speak feminist-ese without the cackling in the background, she cannot speak Marxist-ese without hearing crone's wings beat in her heart. Such continual interferences by the voice of wisdom may very well preclude her speaking any of these dialects of jargon.

In response to your question, 'doesn't she bond as much as men?' the adjective male to the word bond(ing) has been dropped, making the question unclear. Bonding between women can be retrieval and affirmation of an unpopular and obscured truth. However mere conformity among women, or bonding between women reinforcing patriarchal perceptions, are kinds of

weakness. Witch-bonding is woman-bonding of the highest degree. It has to do with the recognition between two individuals of each person's adherence to intuitive wisdom. It often empowers witches to fight the farce of the fathers.

If you mean *male* bonding, then I prefer the term pseudomale bonding as described above when utilized by women. I have engaged in this: I have made mistakes, and I still do. However, as Simone de Beauvoir has said, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Similarly, we are not born capable of acting according to the witch-vision: rather we must *become* increasingly adherent to it. Often by conscious decisions, but more often by subconscious choices, we head out toward our goals: and *my* goal (as that of other witches) is the *Essence*. To reflect it in myself. I may not yet be all that I see, but I *do* see clearly. This works to draw me onward and wayward.

It ought to be mentioned here that witches are often incorrectly accused of "acting like men," or of pseudomale bonding/behaviors. True, witches may lapse, but more often the accusation is based upon the facts of our strength, independence, assertiveness. Our ability to be angry, sad, joyful, ecstatic, wild, weird, wise and free is witchlike in the purity of the emotions: however we possess what has hitherto been known as *male* behavior. It would be well for women to know that these are virtues of originally free *female* behavior. (Men have usurped our powers— but watch

us reclaim them!) We witches represent wholeness, what a woman could become: and just as this frightens faking and sterile fathers who see us uncovering his fraud, it also frightens women who live by this fraud. Many women, even though their behaviors may be plastic and though they may exist as if in a shell, are afraid to break free into they-know-not-what-next. This is a primary cause of female opposition to feminism. It is also why most feminists accept a variety of "plastic feminism" (Daly) rather than the full-strength radical variety. These women continue the illusion that there is no wholeness, that we have "parts" (e.g. my sexual part, my affectionate part, my theatrical part, my political part,...) and that surface changes are all that is needed. Witches grow sad over this while trying to impress upon our misled sisters the depth of the challenge inherent in feminism. Many sisters will remain buried to themselves, but others will discover that beneath what they have called "the foundation" there is yet another foundation—that is the witch in all of us; unconquerable, untamed.

Phyllis Schlafly: As you say, Schlafly is "uniquely involved in the male bonding process...without it, she is lost." As I see it, Schlafly is intimately integral to the patriarchal power structure. This comes from the fact that in a sadosociety there is a sadist and a masochist, and each must play its proper role for the whole bluff to be accepted. Phyllis demands of the men their sadism, and gleefully gloats over her own role in masochism. Donning the dullwitted plastic grin, Phyllis forfeits her soul to the pretenders, becoming a shrill-voiced puppet for the disease. This loss of responsibility for herself, which Phyllis gives over as she thinks masochist-women should to the dominant males, suggests that rather than consider her to be the "least male" implying quite female, she is instead pseudomale or puppetlike. In this way she *does* want to be a man. As Andrea Dworkin says in *Right-Wing Women*, "Phyllis Schlafly, the Right's not-born-again philosopher of the absurd...seems possessed by Machiavelli, not Jesus. It appears that she wants to be The Prince. She...really does see herself as one of the boys, even as she claims to be one of the girls."

Indeed, I propose, in addition, that it would be playing into patriarchal pretense to accept Schlafly as "aggressively feminine" or "the least male women" because in doing so we would be acknowledging the sadosociety's definition of female. This is exactly the trap that pretenders plan for witches: to become confused about the male-female spectrum. They want us to think of ourselves as not belonging at all—they have in fact called us monsters. Their plan is our sadomasism. They want us to doubt ourselves and submit to being taken to the local mental hospital for lobotomies. Although you and I know who we are, we must recognize that many women, especially lesbian ones, *have* been tricked into hating themselves. Self-hatred is actually widespread in women: it manifests itself for example in eating disorders or more generally in a feeling of being trapped in despair. Witches wanting to empower women and bring back the strength of ourselves therefore look for ways to reinterpret what we are given as "fact." Thus we look for another word to describe what Schlafly is. I prefer the adjective "puppetlike" to characterize Phyllislike figurines; "appendage" is a good noun.

Lastly: I do not think that gender

isolation is *necessary*, though a witch desiring to be with other witches may well find herself in a room full of women. She may want this. As many witches have seen, the presence of even a single man in a room can often be quite annoying because the confusion of his heart and aura are clearly visible, and gaudy all over. Lesbians in particular are likely to beat with broomsticks at such a gaudy blob until it bobbles out and away.

Because of the great diversity of witches, our friends cannot however be predicted. We find them through our intuitions. Some lesbian witches will befriend men, whereas others will only scold them or worse. Some witch-women will like a man more than lesbian witches, even using our wildest web of wisdom, can ever comprehend. And although a witch might be a man, this is trivially significant to many witches who grow bored about hearing what *men* can do. It must also be recognized that even though a man might be a witch, witchery is nonetheless the realm of the *woman*, it is *our* wisdom, and therefore men can only figure marginally into it.

I think it is dangerous to draw up rules for our behavior (as in "politically correct" behavior) because this enforces conformity and blind obedience rather than the striving after knowing/acting based on each individual's own wisdom. And it is such conformity, after all, upon which the patriarchal pretense is based: too many obedient men believing too many other obedient men. A woman would be wise to learn this danger, and to find her future not by any feminist normality or theory, but by acting according to her own weird vision.

Sincerely,  
Debbie Mikuteit

**Editor's Note:** If you would like copies of *Bitchy Witch Power* and the letters to which its author is responding, please write to *Sappho Speaks* and we will send you them. The address is listed below.

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