

Gay Humanist Quarterly sexuality, politics, humanism, atheism, liberalism, free thought

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ghq

Pride

Let it show!



About the Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association



GALHA provides a fellowship and voice for the many non-religious in the lesbian and gay community. It aims to promote an awareness and understanding of the Humanist outlook in that community, as well as bringing gay and lesbian rights to the attention of its kindred Humanist organisations.

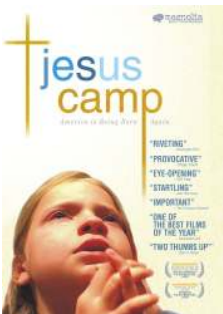
GALHA plays a part in the campaign to combat prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men and to achieve their complete legal equality with heterosexuals. It also takes up issues of concern to Humanists. It lobbies MPs, the media and others; and makes submissions to government committees and responds to consultative documents concerning lesbian/gay and Humanist rights. It takes part in demonstrations and rallies concerning these rights.

GALHA is an integral part of the British Humanist movement and has close links with other organisations in it. These include the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society, which have each consistently backed homosexual law reform and supported making the age of sexual consent for gay men equal to that for heterosexuals. **GALHA** is represented on the Humanist Forum (a liaison committee) and it co-sponsors Humanist functions.

GALHA membership is open to all lesbians, gay men and bisexuals who broadly subscribe to the Humanist outlook and are concerned about lesbian and gay rights. It is also open to any heterosexual Humanists wishing to offer their moral and financial support.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

Each edition, the best letter will be selected by the editorial committee. The writer will receive a prize - compliments of **GHQ**! So do write in, air your views, vent your spleen, or share something interesting with other readers.



ONE LUCKY CORRESPONDENT

will receive a free DVD of the Academy Award-nominated documentary 'Jesus Camp' - which is reviewed in this edition. **Jesus Camp** is a 2006 documentary directed by Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing about a Pentecostal summer camp for children who spend their summers learning and practicing their "prophetic gifts" and being taught that they can "take back America for Christ."



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FROM THE EDITOR

Summer's here and, as the saying goes, the time is right for dancing in the streets... Yes, it's Pride Time again, so welcome to this, the Pride edition of GHQ.

For this issue, we've doubled our print-run, so if you're a first time reader – having had a complimentary copy thrust into your hands at London Pride – WELCOME! We hope you find our magazine a compelling and enjoyable read.

In this issue, we cover the disgraceful events at Moscow Pride (which was banned) and Jerusalem Pride (which religious nutters tried to get banned) so we can be proud of the advances we've fought for and achieved in the UK that allow London Pride, Brighton Pride, Manchester Pride, Edinburgh Pride, Black Pride, Student Pride – to name just a few – to go ahead without the trouble and mayhem that still occurs in some parts of the world. We must also not forget our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex sisters and brothers who are still fighting for basic rights with their first Pride still a long way away.

Also in this issue we take a look at the history of our publishers – The Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association. With increasingly strident attacks on the LGBTI community by religious groups – be it their lobbyists who have the ear of governments, or their shock troops who take bombs to our venues and parades, or their meddling clerics who promote self-loathing among the young and vulnerable in our community – the work of Gay & Lesbian Humanist association is more important than ever.

GALHA stands up to religious bigots and homophobes and offers a positive, religion-free way forward. Unequivocally! Unapologetically!

I love Pride. If nothing else, Pride sticks it to the pious and sanctimonious who think that their values are the only true values, their way of life the only valid one, and their families the only 'true' families.

But, after millennia of invisibility and silence, here we are today: loud and proud! And we're a real family.

Have a **t-r-e-m-e-n-d-o-u-s** Pride 2007

IN THIS ISSUE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GALHA

George Broadhead gives the run-down on the founding of the Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association and its mission 04

THEIR LIVES ARE IMPORTANT

Maryam Namazie's speech for the International Day Against Homophobia 05

IDAHO 2007 ROUNDUP

News of GALHA's involvement to mark IDAHO 06

DISPATCHES

More notes from all over 08

BLOOD ON THE STREETS OF MOSCOW

Peter Tatchell returned to Moscow this year. He writes about his experience at Moscow Pride and his injuries at the hands of fascist thugs 09

NOTES FROM ALL OVER

News and commentary on global events 10

JERUSALEM PRIDE

After efforts to get the parade banned, threats and intimidation, Jerusalem Pride goes ahead 12

GOODBYE FALWELL

Ted Hoover bids farewell to Tinky Winky's arch-nemises 13

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Chris Houston has a surreal experience at the "Simply Botiful" art installation 14

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Warren Allen Smith gives the low-down on what's up across the pond 19

STRONG STUFF

Brian Miller's regular spleen venting 20

GALHA NEWS

News & views from GALHA's perspective 22

TRAVEL

Ian Wilcock follows the footsteps of Darwin in Chile 26

REVIEWS

Reviews of art, books and film 28

HAPPENINGS & EVENTS

What's been seen on the Humanist scene and what's still coming up 30

A brief history of GALHA

*With religious groups launching more and more attacks – sometimes violently – on the gay community and our rights worldwide, the Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association is more relevant than ever. GALHA vice-president **George Broadhead** recalls the group's proud history of standing up to religious homophobia...*



Since 1979, the UK-based Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA) has been promoting an awareness and understanding of the Humanist ethical outlook among lesbian and gay people, bringing lesbian and gay rights issues to the attention of its kindred Humanist organisations, and playing a full part in the campaign for lesbian and gay equality.

Modern Humanism is much misunderstood. Some think it's just another religion. Some relate it to Renaissance Humanism, though "humanists" like Sir Thomas More and Erasmus were committed Christians. Some think it's atheism and nothing else.

Humanists today are atheist or agnostic and they are sceptical about supernatural beliefs, including "God", gods, astrology, New Age, the paranormal, spiritualism, and fairies at the bottom of the garden. They do not prostrate themselves in the worship of any supposed deity or follow the teachings of any guru. Nor do they have an ancient "holy" book like the Bible or the Qur'an on which they base their moral values. What they do have, however, is a great concern for the welfare of their fellow human beings and for human rights, including those of minorities like lesbians and gays. They try to follow the principles on which good human relationships depend, observing the Golden Rule "do as you would be done by" as taught by atheistic philosophers like Confucius who lived hundreds of years before Jesus.

Nothing annoys Humanists more than the belief widely promoted by religionists, and still slavishly accepted by the establishment and much of the media, that religion per se has to be a good thing and that you have to be religious to be moral. Nor is this view uncommon in the lesbian and gay media, despite all the hostility which continues to be directed at gays from religious sources. Gay News, which had to defend itself in 1977 against a prosecution for blasphemous libel by Christian moral crusader Mrs Mary Whitehouse, featured for years a presumptuous column called Our God Too – as if all its readers were

committed Christians! Perhaps no lesbian or gay publication would have the effrontery to do this today, but some still have widespread coverage of religion (until quite recently Gay Times sometimes read like the Church Times) and have uncritically assimilated the gay Christian propaganda that the religions themselves cannot be at fault, only some of their practitioners.

Nothing annoys Humanists more than the belief widely promoted by religionists, and still slavishly accepted by the establishment and much of the media, that religion per se has to be a good thing and that you have to be religious to be moral.

It was the prosecution of Gay News by Mary Whitehouse in 1977 which led to the birth of the Gay Humanist Group (GHG). Whitehouse became the target of vociferous protest, not least from the National Secular Society which had been campaigning for years for the repeal of the blasphemy laws. She began declaring in public that "everything good and true" that "every decent person believes in" was being undermined by "the humanist gay lobby". This was enough to set a few gays in the Humanist movement thinking. Although any formal lobby of this sort was at the time just a figment of Whitehouse's imagination, it seemed like a good idea to set one up.

A launch meeting of GHG was held in August 1979 during the Campaign for Homosexual Equality's annual conference in Brighton – an event which attracted 600 people. A speaker at the meeting sounded a warning that the small gains which the gay movement had made within the previous ten years could quite easily be wiped out as a result of the growing influence of evangelical Christians in the corridors of power. No doubt he had in mind the

Nationwide Festival of Light – later to become Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) which, together with the Christian Institute, is still very active today in lobbying against lesbian and gay rights. It is this sort of malign Christian influence which succeeded in getting Section 28 included in the 1988 Local Government Act, strenuously opposed attempts to get it repealed, and did its utmost to thwart attempts to lower the male gay age of consent to 16.

Before the 1979 CHE conference began, a half-page advertisement appeared in the Brighton Evening Argus. This was sponsored by 22 local Christian clergymen who stated their strong opposition on biblical grounds to the town hosting the conference. The founder members of GHG were in the vanguard of protest at this hostility, taking part in a demonstration outside the church of one of the clergy responsible. And this was to be the first of many such direct actions which the group (later to change its name to the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association – GALHA) became involved in over the following years.

GALHA's activities include lobbying on gay and Humanist issues, making submissions to government bodies on issues such as reform of the criminal law and the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation, arranging monthly public meetings in central London on topics of gay and Humanist concern, and holding annual weekend gatherings in various parts of the country.

GALHA is one of the few national lesbian and gay campaigning groups which is democratically run. It has acquired many loyal members and supporters all over the UK and abroad whose moral and financial support has sustained it. It has no external funding. Its administration is carried out, and its activities organised, on an entirely voluntary basis. It has good reason to be proud of its long and continuing contribution to promoting a rational Humanist approach to lesbian and gay rights.

Their lives are important

GALHA honorary vice-president, Maryam Namazie, delivered a hard-hitting speech in commemoration of International Day against Homophobia on May 17 in London

Tonight, all across the world, there are people facing harassment, arrest, torture, and execution solely because of their sexuality.

Last Sunday, 80 people were arrested at a party in Isfahan, Iran, and beaten and tortured for being gay.

Several weeks ago, on April 29, Hani, a 34 year old nurse was arrested and tortured in Baghdad for being a gay rights activist.

A few months ago, in November 2006, Shahab Darvishi was hanged in a city square in Kermanshah, Iran for 'moral corruption' and 'sodomy'.

Last autumn, two lesbians who ran a Najaf safe house were murdered with their throats slashed by the Iraqi police.

And of course there are the two Iranian youths – Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni – who were pictured sobbing and being publicly hanged in Mashad on July 19, 2005 – a day that has now become an international day of outrage and action.

The list is endless.

What is clear is that these examples are only the tip of the iceberg.

For every report that reaches the international media and organisations, there are thousands of nameless, faceless individuals whose fate goes unreported.

Mostly because states like the Islamic regime in Iran are so repressive and have strict censorship rules.

They don't always announce the full names or real reasons for which they have executed or imprisoned people.

Those put to death are often accused of trumped up charges. A case in point is the two teenagers hanged on July 19.

One outrage after another.

And not just in Iran or Iraq. Homophobia exists everywhere including in countries that do not impose Islamic law. But Islam in power or political Islam has raised homophobia to another level.

Islam is similar to other religions which are just as inherently homophobic and misogynist but there is one important fundamental difference and that is that it is



For every report that reaches the international media and organisations, there are thousands of nameless, faceless individuals whose fate goes unreported.

a religion in power or vying for power in many countries in the 21st century.

In the Koran, homosexuality is condemned as 'indecent', 'lewdness', 'degenerate', 'transgressing beyond bounds' and in need of 'punishment'.

In the Hadith, which are the sayings of the prophet Mohammad and part of Sharia or Islamic laws, it states: 'Kill the one who sodomises and the one who lets it be done to him.'

These ancient religious texts are all the more relevant when they are translated into the laws of countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia and affect real live human beings.

Under Islamic Hudud laws, 'illicit' gay or straight sex are considered offences for which the punishment is mandatory and corporal in nature - including torture, execution and stoning to death.

Those of us who have fled political Islam know full well the level of threats and intimidation those with 'unchaste' and 'perverse' lifestyles have faced and continue to face.

Apologists will say that Islam is in fact 'tolerant' of homosexuals and homosexuality – as if that is enough anyway.

Well then maybe someone should tell the Islamists that.

Seventy-seven countries around the world criminalise same sex relations, but those that punish it by death all have Islamic law.

This abysmal situation has to be looked at within the context of serious rights violations across the board.

In all countries under Islamic rule, sexual 'crimes' are dealt with most severely because of their 'shamefulness' and 'perversity', especially since a religious state is usually most preoccupied with the control of sexuality and sex in order to assert its own 'divine' and 'moral' legitimacy.

Of course gay sex is thriving in many cities in Iran and elsewhere. Despite the serious repercussions, people continue to live their lives, have sex and express their sexuality.

But this does not mean that restrictions and repercussions are exaggerated as some claim. They are not.

It just shows clearly that the restrictions and impositions are not 'people's culture and religion' as the cultural relativists keep regurgitating but rather that of the ruling class.

Not to see this fails to make a distinction between the regime imposing these inhuman and medieval laws and the people forced to live under them.

Now there are Iranian gay rights activists doing very good work who say that they are not concerned with the Islamic regime of Iran.

Even if the government changes to the most democratic in the world, they argue, the problem will remain.

Nonsense.



“The only difference is that the Manchester Imam who has said that the execution of sexually active gay men is justified or the Muslim Council of Britain’s claims that it is ‘unacceptable’ or ‘sinful’ is that for now they cannot mete out their Islamic justice with hangings in Trafalgar Square.”



Get rid of Islamic states in Iran and elsewhere (as is being done by the way in Iran by a magnificent and powerful movement) and you already have an end to some of the worst mass murderers in contemporary history.

A good start I would say.

Also, the battle for rights is often times a battle for changes in the law.

Getting rid of discriminatory Sharia laws will change the situation for lesbians, gays, and others from day one.

But this does not translate into a defence of the US’s attack on Iran.

Opposing Islamic states and defending people’s rights has nothing to do with adding ammunition to the “US’s goal of possibly attacking Iran” as the founders of Queer Iran Alliance have said.

How come criticising western governments is not pooh poohed as adding ammunition to the Islamists’ goal of terrorising people on buses and trains in Europe?

What has one got to do with the other?

Unless of course one identifies with one state over the other as do many in the anti-imperialist, nationalist European Left these days.

Saying a defence of people’s rights living under Islamic rules supports the war on terror or the USA’s militarism or imperialism is like saying sex education promotes promiscuity.

Saying so is more an attempt to defend religion and its political movement than anything else.

Unfortunately, there have been some international gay rights groups like the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission who have accepted this cop out and their responsibility towards the rights of those living in Iran.

The Commission backed out of the July 19 protests asking “how do we avoid reinforcing stereotypes and playing into hostilities prompted by our own government.”

I ask them, why must it reinforce stereotypes unless you believe the Islamic

regime is a representative of the people living and struggling under its rule?

I ask them: what has solidarity amongst people got to do with what governments are doing?

The USA government and political Islam have a lot more in common than with their ‘own people’. In practical terms – notwithstanding the differences – they are two sides of one coin.

They have the same agenda, the same vision, the same infinite capacity for violence and terrorism, the same reliance on religion and reaction, the same need for hegemony and profit-making.

They represent the same new world order for 21st century humanity.

We on the other hand – a vast majority – a third camp – oppose both and can only oppose both if we want to defend humanity, human values like humanism and secularism, and the demand that people live lives worthy of the 21 century.

We mustn’t accept any excuses or apologies for the Islamic regime in Iran and its like – whether in Saudi Arabia or right here in the UK.

They all belong to the same movement and want the same thing.

The only difference is that the Manchester Imam who has said that the execution of sexually active gay men is justified or the Muslim Council of Britain’s claims that it is ‘unacceptable’ or ‘sinful’ is that for now they cannot mete out their Islamic justice with hangings in Trafalgar Square.

This vile movement needs to know that we are watching them, holding them responsible and won’t let them do it whenever they try.

Most importantly, though, those being abused and violated; those resisting; they need to know they are not alone.

That their lives are important.

That they are not just nameless, faceless individuals languishing in prison or facing torture and execution.

They need to know that for us every day is IDAHO.

REPORT BACK:

IDAHO 2007 Launch

George Broadhead files this report...

GALHA members turned up in force for the International Day Against Homophobia UK event in London on 17 May. It was held at the prestigious Rootstein Hopkins Space, the London College of Fashion, which has been described as “a fantastic state of the art venue in the heart of the city”.

The event and drinks reception was jointly organised by Amnesty International, IDAHO, the University of Arts London, LGBT History Month and Westminster City Council which provided the catering.

Among the 200 attending the event were students of the College of Fashion and the University of Arts – not all of them gay, as I discovered.

The speakers were Darren Johnson (member of the Green Party Group in the London Assembly and a GALHA vice president), Derek Lennard (the IDAHO UK co-ordinator and former GALHA chairman), Maryam Namazie (the Iranian human rights campaigner and a GALHA vice-president), Sue Sanders (the LGBT History Month and School’s Out!), and Stephen Williams MP (the Liberal Democrat spokesperson on Higher Education).

Derek Lennard used his speech to give details of the many IDAHO UK events that had been organised in different parts of the UK and abroad and read out a message of greeting from Louis-Georges Tin, the French academic and gay rights activist who founded IDAHO.

In his speech, Darren Johnson cited those on the political left who were reluctant to criticise Islamic homophobia. “Many on the left are perfectly comfortable denouncing homophobia if it comes from the lips of right-wing Christian fundamentalists”, he said, “but get strangely queasy if it is espoused by Muslim fundamentalists. A case in point is London Mayor Ken Livingstone who has a long record of fighting homophobia and indeed sent a message of support to today’s event.

► CONFERENCE REPORT

Yet he decided to invite as an honoured guest Dr Yusuf al Qaradawi to City Hall – a man who has publicly justified the death sentence for homosexuals and even in Britain denounced homosexuality as evil. Celebrating diversity should not be about turning a blind eye to universal human rights.”

“I am also very concerned about this Government’s obsession with faith schools. If we want to promote tolerance and understanding then segregated schools in 21st Century Britain are about as rational as segregated buses were in 1950s America,” he said.

Maryam Namazie, who won the first National Secular Society’s ‘Secularist of the Year’ award in 2005, was highly critical of Islam. Her speech is reported in full in this issue of GHQ.

Both Darren Johnson’s and Maryam Namazie’s speeches were greeted with warm applause.

The winners of the IDAHO and LGBT History Month poster design competition were announced and the prizes presented by Baroness Turner of Camden, a vice-president of the British Humanist Association.

Entertainment was provided by the lesbian comedienne Zoe Lyons.



(Above) One of the winning posters for the IDAHO 2007 poster competition. Students of the University of Arts (London) have designed posters marking LGBT History Month and the International Day Against Homophobia and the 4 winning posters (two in each category) can now be seen on www.idaho.org.uk.



IDAHO London - Polish homophobia condemned

OutRage! News Service

Fifty people picketed the Polish Embassy in London on 17 May in protest at “increased homophobia in Poland and the Polish government’s intensified victimisation of its lesbian and gay citizens.”

The London protest was one of a series of protests in dozens of cities across the world to mark IDAHO – the International Day Against Homophobia.

The Polish Embassy demo was organised by the British Youth Council, and was supported by the LGBTI human rights group OutRage! and by IDAHO.

“The latest homophobic attack is Poland’s new Education Bill. It includes a Section 28-style clause that will outlaw any objective, factual or sympathetic mention of homosexuality in schools. It is feared gay teachers may be sacked. We are urging people to protest to the Polish Embassy” said David Allison of OutRage!

Polish junior education Minister, Miroslaw Orzechowski, told a recent press conference that the new Education Bill will: “punish whoever promotes homosexuality or any other deviance of a sexual nature in educational establishments.”

The IDAHO protest in London was addressed by four keynote speakers: Derek Lennard, UK coordinator of IDAHO, Maeve McGoldrick of the British Youth Council which organised the protest, Peter Tatchell of the gay human rights group OutRage!, and Baroness Sarah Ludford, Liberal Democrat MEP.

Maeve McGoldrick, spokesperson for the protest organisers, the British Youth Council, said: “The UK has strong bi-lateral relations with Poland. We call on the UK government to take action within the EU

and the Council of Europe to challenge Poland’s anti-gay policies. Our Polish Embassy protest united with campaigners internationally; paying tribute to all those who have suffered at the hands of homophobia,” she said.

Derek Lennard, IDAHO UK coordinator added: “It is extremely important to stand up for the human rights of victimised people in a neighbouring European country. We have to ensure that the Polish lesbian and gay community is not discriminated against by its government,” he said.

On the 25 April 2007, Members of European Parliament called on the Polish government to abandon the homophobic clause in the new Education Bill, which outlaws the so-called “promotion” of homosexuality in schools.

In response the European Parliament asked the Polish government to: “publicly condemn and take measures against declarations by public leaders inciting discrimination and hatred based on sexual orientation.”

“Polish government ministers have refused to accept or even consider these criticisms,” said gay human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell of OutRage!

“We are urging the UK and EU to pressure the Polish government to halt its anti-gay repression and to respect international norms of human rights.

“The EU and Council of Europe should threaten Poland with sanctions if it goes ahead with the new anti-gay law.

“We call on the British government, MPs and the gay community to protest to the Polish Ambassador in London,” said Mr Tatchell.

Gay, disabled writer faces eviction

Firdaus Kanga, the acclaimed gay, disabled writer and actor, who wrote and starred in the semi-autobiographical film *Sixth Happiness*, is bringing a legal action to halt his eviction from disabled-adapted housing in Islington, north London.

Film critic, Alexander Walker of the *Evening Standard*, said of *Sixth Happiness*: "Firdaus Kanga's performance has battery pack power ... a remarkable true story."

But now, in what is set to be a landmark legal ruling, with implications for many other disabled people, the Clerkenwell County Court will be required to decide whether Mr Firdaus's landlord, the Community Housing Group, is bound by anti-discrimination laws.

The case hinges on whether the Community Housing Group is deemed in law to be a public body or a private body.

Mr Firdaus's lawyers will be arguing that with a multi-million pound turnover and £785 million worth of housing stock, Community Housing Group are a public body with a duty to protect his rights under the Human Rights Act. As a public body

they would also be liable under disability discrimination laws.

Mr Kanga has been fighting for the past 12 months to keep his home which is specially adapted to his needs as a wheelchair user and is part of a scheme which was built 20 years ago for disabled Islington residents. His landlords now plan to convert it to be used by young people who have been in social services care.

Mr Kanga commented:

"What use are human rights and disability discrimination laws if they cannot protect a disabled man who has lived in his flat peacefully for 10 years? This case is not just about my rights to my home, it highlights the chronic shortage of housing for disabled people in London and our right to respect for home life under the Human Rights Convention."

Mr Kanga's solicitor, Sue Willman, of human rights law firm, Pierce Glynn, added:

"Housing Associations like Community Housing Group have stepped into the shoes of local councils and now provide the majority of social housing. They receive



millions in public money and should have the same responsibilities as any other public body. That means they should not violate the human rights of their tenants. The Disability Rights Commission agrees that social landlords are public bodies and so must comply with the new Disability Equality duty."



South African bands 'rock against religion'

A group of seven South African rock bands are to hold a concert to 'rock against religion'. Organisers say the aim of the event is to warn people against the dangers of religion.

"We have the freedom to choose between religions. Now we want freedom from religion," said Anton Alberts of the band Architects of Aggression and one of the organisers.

"Whether it has been in the name of Ramses, Yaweh, Aries, Allah or Christ, the human rights abuses and all the other acts remain unforgivable and unforgettable," he told Johannesburg newspaper *Beeld*.

Launch of the Council of ex-Muslims of Britain

A British branch of a new Europe-wide phenomenon launched on Thursday 21 June in London. The Council of ex-Muslims of Britain is building on the stunning success of other branches already operating in Germany, Finland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The British Humanist Association and National Secular Society sponsored the launch and support the new organisation.

The Council will provide a voice for those labelled Muslim but who have renounced religion and do not want to be identified by religion.

Human rights activist Maryam Namazie – who is an honorary vice-president of GALHA – will be the voice of the organisation in this country.

She said: "We are establishing the alternative to the likes of the Muslim Council of Britain because we don't think people should be pigeonholed as Muslims or deemed to be represented by regressive organisations like the MCB. Those of us who have come forward with our names and photographs represent countless others who are unable or unwilling to do so because of the threats faced by those

considered 'apostates' – punishable by death in countries under Islamic law. By doing so, we are breaking the taboo that comes with renouncing Islam but also taking a stand for reason, universal rights and values, and secularism. We are quite certain we represent a majority in Europe and a vast secular and humanist protest movement in countries like Iran."

Founder of the movement, Iranian-born Mina Ahadi, 50, who is now resident in Germany explained to *Der Spiegel* magazine that she set up the group to highlight the difficulties of renouncing the Islamic faith which she believes to be misogynist. She wants the group to form a counterweight to Muslim organisations that she says don't adequately represent Germany's secular-minded Muslim immigrants.

Ahadi – who was a speaker at our International Women's Day seminar earlier this year lives under police protection following a series of death threats.

Renouncing Islam can carry the death penalty in a number of countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan,



Blood on the streets of Moscow

***Peter Tatchell** traveled to Moscow at the request of the Moscow Gay Pride organisers to support the event and to show solidarity with the campaign for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender human rights in Russia. But soon he became one of the casualties of Russia's violent and aggressive religious-right...*

Moscow police and the OMON riot squad stood by while neo-Nazis punched me in the face, dragged me to the ground, and kicked me all over my body.

Clutching a bloody eye, I was arrested by the riot police.

They arrested me, but let my attackers walk free.

The Moscow police gave homophobic right-wing extremists a more or less free hand to attack us. Although we were battered left, right and center, the police arrested only a handful of the assailants.

Instead of protecting us from the violence, the police and OMON colluded with the neo-Nazis and ultra-nationalists. I saw some of them fraternising with each other.

There were hundreds of police and OMON on duty. They could have easily kept the right-wing thugs away from us and arrested the attackers. But they didn't.

I observed one police officer talking with the homophobic extremists and pointing to the direction in which some of the Gay Pride participants had fled to get away from the violence. The extremists then stormed off up the street and attacked our people. At times, it looked like the police were encouraging and helping the right-wingers bash us.

It has been suggested to me by Russian activists that some of the attackers may have been plain clothes police officers.

Following my arrest, I was violently dragged by OMON officers to a police bus, where I was put in the intimidating situation of being detained with three neo-Nazis, who had been arrested for other assaults. The police forced me to sit next to them.

While in the bus, I was taunted by members of the riot police. They interrogated me as to whether I was gay. When I answered yes, one of the OMON officers said, "Wait until we get you to the police station. Then we will have some fun with you."

Soon afterwards, the police also brought to the bus the arrested Member of the European Parliament Marco Cappato, of the Italian Radical Party; Ottavio Marzocchi, a Radical Party European Parliament administrator; and two Russian transgender activists.

Despite immediate requests for medical attention it was not until nearly an hour later that I was transferred to an ambulance and a further hour before I was taken under police escort to hospital, where I was treated for injuries to my right eye.

My vision is blurred and my head is very sore. I've got painful bruising all over my body.



My right eye is badly swollen and bloodied, but it is expected to heal in a couple of weeks. My injuries are nothing compared to the severe beatings often meted out to Russian human rights, anti-war and environmental activists.

I was discharged from hospital at approximately 3:30 pm, and then taken to the Tverskaya district police station in Moscow.

I filed a complaint with the Moscow police about the assault, requesting that officers investigate and arrest the assailants.

Despite the appalling behavior of the riot squad and the Moscow police, the officer investigating my complaint was

diligent, fair and professional. But I am not confident that other officers will pursue the investigation and bring my assailants to trial.

At 4:30 pm I was allowed to leave the police station on the condition that I return the next day at 2 pm. At least it appeared that I was being treated as a witness to the attack, rather than as a suspect.

An anti-gay mob had assembled outside the police station, with the intention of beating up Gay Pride participants as they were released from police custody. As I left the police station with several other freed

Gay Pride marchers, we were pelted with eggs. Some of us were violently attacked by a man dressed as a Russian Orthodox priest and by several homophobic right-wingers. The officers in the police station initially did nothing to protect us. They eventually arrested two of the assailants under pressure from independent human rights observers and from journalists who had photos and film footage of the attack.

Long after the Moscow Gay Pride protest at City Hall was over, groups of far right nationalists and neo-Nazis roamed the streets, calling each other on mobile phones to coordinate further attacks on people they suspected of participating in Moscow's Gay Pride. The police made no effort to restrain them.

In contrast to the heavy-handed way the Gay Pride participants were policed, only a handful of far-right extremists were detained.

Despite being arrested on charges of assault, most of them were released very quickly - long before the peaceful Gay Pride participants were allowed to leave the police station.

I have very little confidence that the assailants will be arrested or brought to trial. Too many Moscow police are homophobes and fascist sympathisers.

They failed to protect us against neo-Nazi violence and they failed to arrest the thugs who attacked us.

One day in Kingston, Jamaica...

This shocking and disturbing sequence of photos captures a homophobic attack on a young gay man

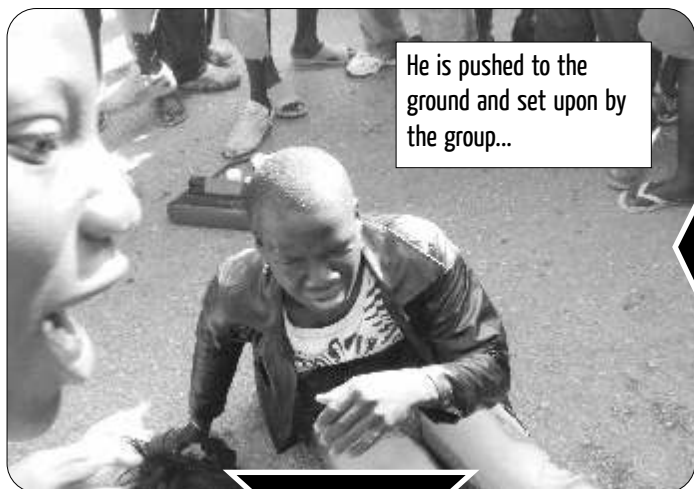
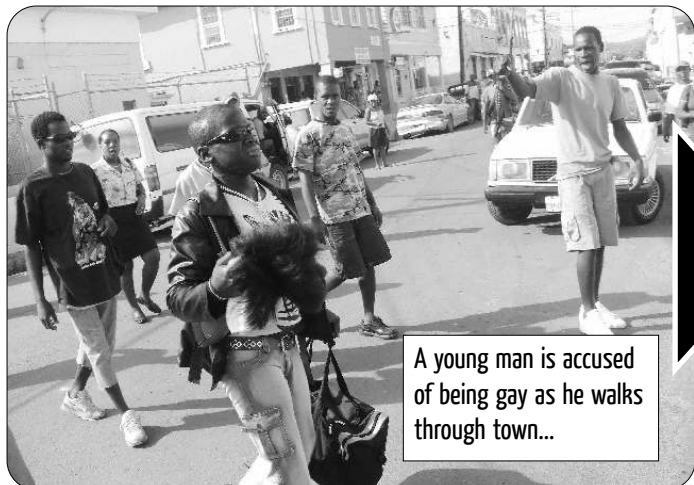


PHOTO: Kyle Cassidy



Renewed calls to kill Rishdie

Salman Rushdie's knighthood has given a fresh excuse to religious lunatics in Islamabad and Tehran to take to the streets, burn effigies and renew calls to carry out the death-fatwa proclaimed by the late Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Pakistani government summoned the British High Commissioner to express its displeasure, while its parliament passed a resolution noting:

"This august house again calls on the British government and its Prime Minister to immediately withdraw the title ... and tender an apology to the Muslim world."

The religious affairs minister even suggested that extremists could justify suicide attacks because the knighthood insulted the Prophet Muhammad.

In the UK, Mohammad Abdul Bari of the Muslim Council of Britain condemned the knighthood, but his colleague Inayat

Bunglawala, assistant secretary general of the MCB, dissented. Writing in *The Guardian*, Mr Bunglawala – recalling demands to ban *The Satanic Verses* in the late 80s – said: "Looking back now on those events I will readily acknowledge that we were wrong to have called for the book to be banned." He said that the freedom to offend is "a necessary freedom".

Liberal Democrat peer, Shirley Williams had a row with pundit Christopher Hitchens on the BBC's *Question Time*. Baroness Williams suggested that knighting Rushdie was insensitive and ill considered. Mr Hitchens – rightfully – called her spineless.

Once again Mr Rushdie has signaled the watershed between religious fanaticism and free speech, and once more it is time to defend those who write books from those who burn them.

We can't change gays, admit Christians

In 1980, less than a third of Americans thought that sexual-orientation was hard-coded into a person's genes, but recent studies have shown that now almost half acknowledge that this is probably the case.

This shift in public attitudes has heralded a dramatic change in the tactics used by churches to address the issue of homosexuality.

The so-called 'ex-gay' movement has received heavy funding and enthusiastic support from evangelical Christians. However, after a series of embarrassing failures – the most famous being the ex-gay poster-boy, John Paulk, being discovered in a gay bar – the movement lost much of whatever small the credibility it had.

In the UK, the Courage Trust – an affiliate of the leading ex-gay 'ministry' Exodus International admitted the game was up about five years ago.

Now researchers at influential American Christian 'universities' are also considering that our sexual orientation is coded in our DNA and questioning the effectiveness of ex-gay 'therapies'.

Recently, US Gay new magazine, *The Advocate*, reported that the Reverend R. Albert Mohler Jr, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, are considering the possible biological basis for homosexuality. Mohler recently shocked many of his constituents by writing that "we

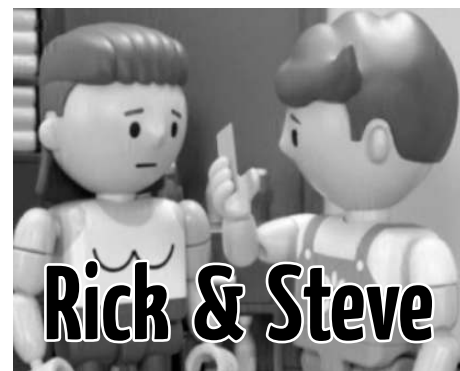
should not be surprised" if homosexuality was not a choice but genetically inscribed in our DNA.

However, we should not rejoice too soon. This change in attitude does not signal a letting up of religious opposition to homosexuality. Quite the contrary. It simply signals a change in tactics.

When the Courage Trust saw the light it switched tack from telling lesbians and gays that they could be 'cured' to promoting a gay lifestyle compatible with scripture. Translated into practical terms, this means persuading gay people not to have sex and to bear the 'burden' of their homosexuality in their hearts, with fortitude, courage, and – we can only imagine – a great deal of frustration and loneliness.

Michael Bussee, another former 'ex-gay' proponent (who left the movement after falling in love with a man), now endorses this new position.

It remains to be seen how effective persuading religious gays that "God made them that way" but that they should deny their sexuality by remaining celibate will be. As insane as it seems to rational people, it is not hard to see the attraction to some of being 'cured' and getting married to a woman and starting a 'normal' family could be. But being told now that there is no 'cure' and that a "managed (gay) lifestyle is the answer? Well, that's a different ballgame!



"Steve is Rick's husband, a gym bunny and complete hottie, who's not very bright but makes a lot of money off his charm by selling shoddy real estate. Steve isn't very bright, but he's really hot, and that's what matters. His patience and temper are short but he's sincere and always acts with the best of intentions. He's dedicated and determined, which allows him to spend two hours a day at the gym. His love for Rick is unquestionable, but his need for spicing up their sex life grows exponentially with each passing weekend."

This is the premise for a new gay-themed TV show – *Rick & Steve* – launching in the US, which may fill the gap left by *Queer As Folk*. If you think the gay world in QAF was plastic, then you ain't seen nothin' yet! *Rick & Steve* is filmed entirely in Lego!

Quite how they'll capture Steve's favourite turn-ons – Three-ways, Not into public displays of affection- but hot sex in parks is a turn on – in the brick universe is something we will have to wait and see.



Jerusalem Pride makes world headlines

Jerusalem Gay Pride defies fundamentalist threats

Israeli Supreme Court rejects bid to ban gay march

OutRage! News Service

"We applaud the decision of the Israeli Supreme Court to reject an application to ban the Jerusalem Gay Pride parade," said Brett Lock, spokesperson for the London-based LGBTI human rights group, OutRage!

He was commenting on the court judgement, ahead of Jerusalem's Gay Pride march on 21 June.

"This is a big victory, not only for gay rights but also for the right to protest of all Israelis - gay and straight, Jew and Arab," added Mr Lock.

"The judges' refusal to succumb to threats of violence by homophobic Jewish fundamentalists is a gain for all Israelis who cherish freedom and liberty.

"The fundamentalists had been given official encouragement by the deplorable vote in the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, which sought to ban Gay Pride marches.

"This bigoted and dangerous restriction on the right to freedom of expression was carried on its first reading in early June by 41 votes to 21. It was backed by a cowardly, bigoted alliance of religious and right-wing parties, led by Shas and the National Religious Party.

Also backing the Gay Pride ban was the President-elect and former Prime Minister, Shimon Peres. The left-wing Meretz party was the only political grouping to robustly oppose the draconian new legislation.

"Fortunately, the legislation was not ratified in time to halt Jerusalem Gay Pride. Following the Supreme Court decision, it is now unlikely to reach the statute books.

"We are troubled that attempts to ban Jerusalem Gay Pride received such widespread, cross-party support in the Israeli parliament. We hope the Supreme

Court decision will put the brakes on these attempts to outlaw gay marches.

"The increased right-wing religious influence in Israel's parliament is extremely bad news for gay rights and for the prospect of peace in the Middle East and justice for the Palestinian people.

"We condemn the recent anti-gay riots by Orthodox Jews and their blood-curdling incitements to attack the Gay Pride marchers," said Mr Lock.

Jerusalem's Gay Pride march went ahead today, Thursday 21 June.

Despite the presence of 7,000 police officers, some Jewish fundamentalist protesters infiltrated the route. A group of ultra-religious teenage girls screamed "disgrace, disgrace" at the 5,000 Gay Pride marchers.

At least 19 Judaist fanatics were arrested during the parade, including one man who poured oil on the march route, and several people who waded in and assaulted several marchers.

Police also arrested an ultra-Orthodox Jew carrying a home-made bomb.

The Israeli Supreme Court rejected three petitions against the Gay Pride march. The petitions argued that the march would offend the sensibilities of religious believers. They were submitted by Trade Minister Eli Yishai of Shas, Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupoliansky, and Hebron Jewish activists Baruch Marzel and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Trade Minister Yishai argued that the homosexual march is a "vulgar event that offends and violates the sanctity of Jerusalem". He said that in approving the parade, the police had not given sufficient weight to the "offence caused to the

sensibilities of the hareidi public".

The Marzel-Ben-Gvir petition submitted that the Gay Pride march "would lead to public disturbances and riots on an unprecedented scale".

Deputy Supreme Court President Eliezer Rivlin, Justice Ayala Procaccia and Supreme Court President Dorit Beinisch wrote in their judgement: "Authorizing the Gay Pride parade allows for the realisation of the right to expression and demonstration ... It allows the marchers to voice their message by virtue of their right for equality and social recognition. Additionally, the permit affords deserving priority to the principle of the rule of law, and to the perception that violence is not to be rewarded nor succumbed to."

In the week before the Gay Pride march took place the Orthodox Righteous Court of Law (Badatz) placed a curse on the parade's organizers and participants and on police officers tasked with protecting the march.

Prominent Orthodox rabbis published a declaration which read: "To all those involved, sinners in spirit, and whoever helps and protects them, may they feel a curse on their souls, may it plague them and may evil pursue them; they will not be acquitted of their transgressions from heavenly judgment."

In previous years, Jerusalem Gay Pride marchers have been violently attacked by both Jewish and Muslim religious fundamentalists.

At the 2005 march, an ultra-Orthodox believer stabbed and wounded three marchers. Last year, fears of violence from fundamentalists led to the march being moved from the city centre to a sports stadium in a distant suburb.



The great thing (well, one of the great things) about being an atheist is knowing I won't burn in hell just because I'm currently celebrating the death of Jerry Falwell.

Yeah, yeah, yeah – I know the drill: As humanists we have a responsibility to show those faith-heads what being humane is all about ... since their “sacred texts” come up so scandalous short on the subject. I know that they see me, a queer heathen, as Satan's handmaiden and so I usually try to put my best non-believing, compassionate foot forward.

But honey, we're talking about Jerry Falwell here.

We're talking about a man who blamed the destruction of the World Trade Center Towers on, among others, gay people. We're talking about a man who once said: “AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals.” And, as a side note, we're talking about someone who also said: “Grown men should not be having sex with prostitutes unless they are married to them.” Which sort of makes you wonder what Mrs. Falwell was doing before she found Jerry and the Lord, doesn't it?

Jerry Falwell will go down (ugh, now there's an image I'd hope to never have) ... Falwell will go down in American history as the man who convinced Jesus Christ to register as a Republican. Before the Right Reverend came on the scene, the Evangelicals in the States avoided politics at all costs – That grubby, corporal world was an earth-bound pursuit and they were too

busy searching the skies for Ezekiel and his flaming wheel to worry about who got elected to sit on the school board.

But then here comes Jerry in 1979 and his merry band “The Moral Majority.” Suddenly all those holy rollers were rolling themselves to the voting booth with Jerry telling them that even though He was all-powerful, the Almighty couldn't be expected to pull all those poll levers by himself. Jesus wasn't just a healer – Jerry turned him into a ward healer.

It's amazing to think that God waited until 1979 to let us know how He felt on the issues, but thanks to Jerry we knew that God hated reproductive freedom, hated high taxes, hated the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States – but, really, He hated homos the most. Just hated them.

Make no mistake, homophobia was the engine that drove Jerry Falwell to the height of his success. It is no coincidence that Falwell's ascendancy occurred at the same time the American Gay & Lesbian Movement began to make real political strides. Falwell used the later to stoke the former and suddenly all those crazy, right-wing nutjobs were worrying if maybe Ezekiel wasn't the flamer they should be on the look out for.

Disgusted by the political and cultural advances in America in the 60's and 70's, these rabid Republicans couldn't say just come out and say that gay people were “icky” so Jerry rushed in to give them the perfect trump card: Jesus. It wasn't just

their right to hate fags and dykes, according to Jesus (and Jerry) it was their moral imperative to do so.

And so, as the song goes in “Evita”, the money kept rolling in. Falwell and his Jesus-come-lately compatriots like Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson and just about every other Southerner with a Bible and a bad hair cut rode their homophobic horse to the top of the charts.

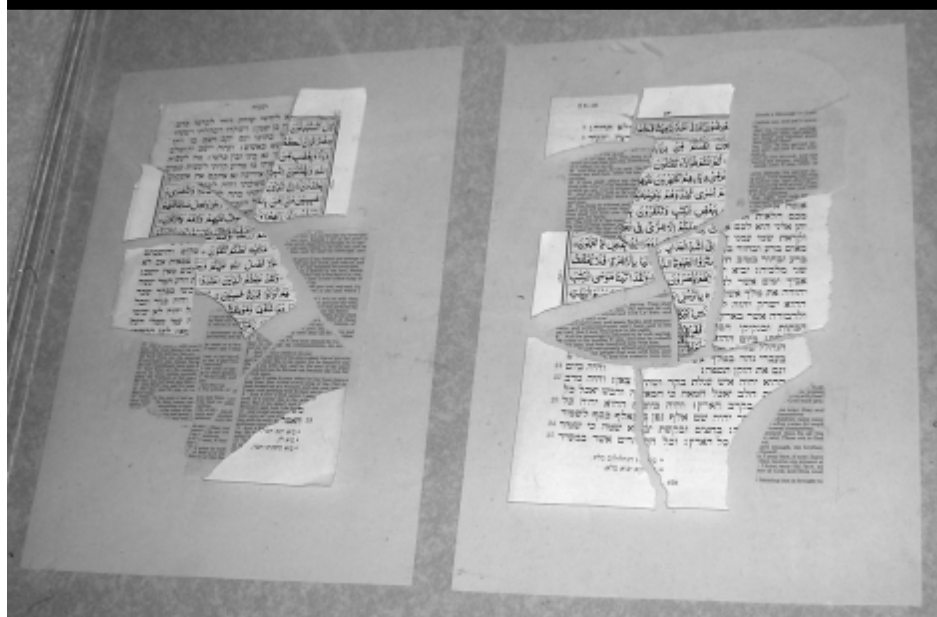
And AIDS only enriched their coffers. Here, finally, was tangible proof that while God may love the sin, he certainly hated the sinner and proved it to everyone by sending down a modern-day plague.

When information about condoms and safe sex and just plain simple compassion could have saved so many hundreds of thousands of lives, Jerry and his boys were standing in the pulpit with scripture in one hand and a bank deposit slip in the other. How many of my friends died just so Jerry Falwell could get a dinner invitation to the White House?

So I hope you'll excuse me for raising a glass in toast to the untimely, or rather way-past-time, death of Jerry Falwell – a man who, in reality, would have been better not to have been born at all.

But maybe, when you think about, I'm not really being that much of a bitch – according to his own belief system, we should all be celebrating because Jerry just got a big promotion and he's in a better place.

He's now with God – who I hope looks just like Tinky Winky.



A nightmarish underworld

*Why are recent editions of Mein Kampf in Arabic readily available in large quantities? Who is manufacturing Persian rugs depicting the attacks on the Twin Towers on 9/11? Where did all the junk come from? How did an art installation in the heart of Bethnal Green to featured ripped-up and desecrated copies of the Torah, the Bible and the Koran not attract the mass protests, threats and hysteria that plagued Jerry Springer: The Opera and Behzti? **Chris Houston** just had to catch the final day of the Simply Botiful exhibition, but he found more questions than answers...*

Down an unassuming street in the East End of London, next to a sad little shop full of second hand fridges, a dingy sign glows "Hotel". It's the sort of place you'd normally walk right past on your way to somewhere livelier, especially with Brick Lane just around the corner. But the growing queue of art students outside, convinced me I'd found the right place.

"Just go," my friends had said, "go in at the Hotel sign, check in, and look around. It's amazing. It's just amazing." The Hotel Exhibition, they'd called it.

The run down reception area of a bed and breakfast that's seen much better days greets me. A man takes my bag and jacket, gets me to sign an indemnity forms, and wishes me a pleasant stay. I head upstairs. And it starts to get weird.

There are beds. Everywhere, there are beds. In the passages, in the kitchen, in the toilets and bathroom, beds everywhere. Unmade beds. These aren't clean sheets.

They've been heavily slept in. Duffel and carrier-bags at the foot of each bed are filled with clothes, books and other personal belongings.

Around the corner, I find something more closely resembling a bedroom. Cigarette butts, a black and white TV, pink duvet and a fluorescent sign on the window that reads "Crissy". There are porn magazines hidden under the mattress. Some pamphlets have arrived in the mail: "Dealing with AIDS."

Edging down the passage past more beds and abandoned personal effects, I come to a back door, which opens onto a sprawling warehouse full of shipping containers, old fridges piled two storeys high and workshops full of electrical components stretching away into the darkness.

I go down a flight of fire escape stairs onto the warehouse floor. To my left, two shipping containers are stacked on top of

each other. The bottom one has been converted into a canteen. A few plates of half-eaten food are on the tables, and a TV in the corner is showing a football match. A set of rickety stairs leads up the outside to the top container, which seems to be being used as a home by a family of obsessive compulsive collectors of kitsch.

Another two containers are stacked on the other side of the warehouse. I can't see stairs to the top one of these two, but the bottom one seems to be full of computers. Once inside, I notice the pervasive smell of pilchards. Someone's been sleeping behind the computers here, and that person was clearly a fan of canned fish. The empty cans are responsible for the smell. I want to leave, but am convinced there must be a way to get into the container above. Ah-ha. A ladder behind a filing cabinet leads to a trapdoor in the roof.

I climb up into this hidden space. This is different. This is organised. At the far end,



of sex, religion and fridges

grey Royal Mail sacks full of paper have been stacked. Tables have waste paper baskets full of torn paper in them. The pieces are being sorted and reassembled. There are police statements regarding robberies. And pieces of the Bible, Koran and Torah have been carefully glued back together according to shape but regardless of content.

I get out of the containers and back onto the warehouse floor. It looks like that's a truck parked over there. The tail gate is open, so I climb inside, where there are about a dozen more beds arranged as bunks. But there's a trapdoor in the floor at the far end. Underneath the truck is a concrete bunker, about half-a-storey high. I have to crouch to get around, which is when I notice that the floor is covered in prayer mats. I follow a dark, narrow passage and come to another room. There are chairs arranged in a circle around the perimeter. There are open bibles on the chairs. And the walls are covered with pages from porn magazines.

I crawl back out of the passage, out of the truck and into the warehouse. A container to my left has a page from a newspaper pasted on the door: "The Sun presents Kylie's bum life size: Simply Botiful!" This container seems to have been

Was it a comment on war and politics? On the mechanisms of propaganda? Was it significant that religion and pornography seemed to be juxtaposed? Was it all just an elaborate joke?

used as a boxing gym. A battered fridge hangs in the middle as a makeshift punching bag, and blocks of concrete with rebar sticking out look like they've been used as dumbbells. The walls are covered with pornography.

A chest freezer in the corner opens up to reveal a ladder leading down through the floor. I climb down and crawl along a gradually descending Great Escape-style tunnel through strata of concrete, pipes and soil. After a while it opens up. I'm in some sort of excavated area, at least a storey below street level. It looks like foundations being dug. I wander around on the wooden

boards at the bottom of these earth trenches, until I find a massive pair of woolly mammoth tusks sticking out of the soil wall.

Back out in the warehouse there's one last place to go that strange Import Export shop I saw from the front. It's almost entirely taken up by fridges, except for a display of books, and one of rugs. The books are all copies of Mein Kampf. In Arabic. And the rugs appear to have images of the World Trade Center and two aeroplanes. "11 Septemde 2001" they say. "The terrors were America."

And that was Simply Botiful, an installation by artist Christoph Büchel at the Hauser & Wirth Coppermill gallery. He aims for his work to be physically demanding, psychologically unsettling and to create feelings of panic and paranoia.

But what does it all mean? Is it meant to provoke the visitors into confronting their own fears and prejudices? Was it a comment on war and politics? On the mechanisms of propaganda? Was it significant that religion and pornography seemed to be juxtaposed? Was it saying something about people trafficking? Was it all just an elaborate joke – "a big pile of rubbish"? Honestly, I don't know.

But was it fun? Oh yes!

Popcorn Pride

Just for Pride - five of the sweetest coming out / coming-of-age movies on DVD



BEAUTIFUL THING is set during a long, hot summer on the Thamesmead Estate in Southeast London, where three teenagers edge towards adulthood. Leah has been thrown out of school and spends her days listening religiously to the music of her idol, Mama Cass. Next door lives Jamie, bright but introverted, who skips school and argues with his pub manager mother. Next door to Jamie lives Ste, popular and good-looking, who seeks refuge with Jamie and his mother from the regular beatings inflicted by his drunken father. During one such night, Ste sleeps head to toe in the same bed as Jamie, and gradually they discover their mutual affection and love.



BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER!

Confident and opinionated, 17-year-old Megan is a high school student who has it all. She's popular, pretty, a model student, dates the captain of the football team and is a cheerleader. But she's also a vegetarian, likes Georgia O'Keefe and hates kissing her boyfriend, leading her horrified parents to conclude that she's... a lesbian! Their solution is to send Megan to True Directions, a "rehabilitation camp" run by homophobic counselor Mary Brown. At first, Megan resists "rehabilitation". Then she meets Graham, a sexy tomboy who shows her exactly what her "true direction" is.



What's a boy to do with his **TRICK**? A trash-talking drag queen, an estranged couple, a horny roommate, and a r'sum-wielding actress - these are a few of the people complicating matters for two young men desperately searching for a place to be alone in Jim Fall's bright romantic comedy trick. As sweet as it is hilarious, trick affirms the possibility of love in the most unlikely of circumstances as it follows its two appealing heroes on their perambulations through the gay demimonde of downtown Manhattan.



An Indian religious TV station is looking for an idol. Not the graven kind, but a devotional song idol. Loosely based in the Pop Idol talent search, the programme will have contestants warbling 'soothing' renditions of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and Jain religious songs in an effort to stop Western influences. By imitating Pop Idol? Riiight!

A church in Memphis Tennessee is convinced they've had a special visitor - Jesus. Jesus has apparently manifest himself in the bark of a tree. So far his holiness hasn't made any effort to communicate, but pictures of the manifestation are spreading over the Internet, begging the question: Is Christ's bark worse than his byte?

Two brothers in California have been charged with grand theft after scamming people with their supposed faith-healing powers. What makes the case extraordinary, however, is that it must assume that faith healing can be practiced in a way that isn't a scam - otherwise why aren't the nation's #1 extortionists - the televangelists - rounded up?



AND FOR PURE FABULOUSNESS! "Hedwig & The Angry Inch"

Featuring a riot of gender-busting rock 'n' roll and the greatest ode to same-sex love ever!



The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love is a touching and comic story of first love between two girls in their senior year of high school. Randy Dean, a rebellious tomboy who lives with her lesbian aunt and her aunt's lover in a working class neighborhood, falls in love with Evie Roy, a smart and beautiful African-American who is one of the most popular girls at their high school. Convinced that something's wrong with her posh Range Rover, Evie meets Randy when she drives into the gas station where Randy has a mind-numbing afterschool job. Intrigued and charmed by each other, the two meet again at school and begin an unlikely romance.

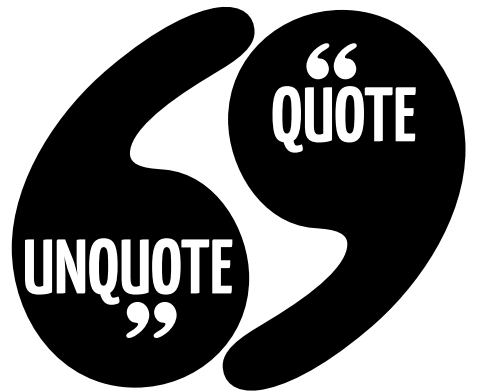


GET REAL follows the fate and fortunes of a group of teenagers as they pick their way through the minefield of adolescence. Sixteen year old Steven Carter is finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile life at school with the pressure of his parents' aspirations and his own inner state of hormonal overdrive. There's one thing Steven is completely reconciled to, however: he's gay and has known it for years. His only confidante in such matters of the heart is Linda, the girl next door, currently on her 48th driving lesson in the hopes of one day getting her way with driving instructor Bob.

A same-sex couple of flamingos in a Bristol reserve have been given the opportunity to adopt a chick after it had been abandoned in a nest. When the chick hatched early, keepers celloaped it into an empty shell to allow the couple to experience the bonding experience triggered at the hatching.

A group of Christians in the US have launched a virtual congregation for internet porn addicts. Calling itself XXXChurch.com, it caters for the many Christians who are apparently addicted to pornography. They also specialise in going to porn-conventions... to distribute Bibles, of course. Wink.

Christian rugby fans in South African are outraged that the captain of 'The Bulls' wore a "Jesus is King" T-shirt after the team's victory over rivals 'The Sharks'. They were outraged because his belief that God helped his team win meant - logically - that God was not with their team. Yep, they're slowly catching on...



This edition, the quotes are taken from the movies featured on this page.

Ste: [reading magazine] You cannot transmit the HIV virus by frottage.

Ste: What's frottage?

Jamie: It's yogurt. It's French.

Randy: I don't want to shock you or anything, but I really want to hold your hand right now. I've been wanting to hold your hand all day.

Evie: I've held hands with a girl before.

Randy: With a girl like me?

Evie: No I guess not. But what's the worst that could happen?

Randy: We could get the shit kicked out of us is all.

Evie: Just for holding hands? I don't believe that.

Randy: God Evie, you are so sheltered.

Evie: [holding out her hand] Then unshelter me.

Andre: Congratulations, liars! You know who you are and you know who you want. Aint nothin' gonna change that, shit!

Steven Carter: I came late to sex. I was nearly ten. That's when my friend Mark Watkins told me how babies were made.

Young Mark: Yeah. Honest. I saw it on one of my dad's videos.

Steven Carter: For over a year after that I thought babies were made when two women tied a man to a bed and covered his willy with ice cream.

Tommy: Oh, God, oh, Hedwig, when Eve was still inside Adam, they were in paradise.

Hedwig: That's right, honey.

Tommy: When she was separated from him, that's when paradise was lost. So when she enters him again, paradise will be regained.

Hedwig: However you want it, honey. Just kiss me while we do it.

Gabriel: i just didn't feel like i fit in with their culture. you suck dick right?



Mental health and older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals

The Goods Facilities and Services part of the Equalities Act came in on April 30th. That is fantastic and very important for us. Now we need to know more about how and whether services work for us at present.

If you or someone you know has used mental health services in the Greater London area in the past 5 years you / they can contribute to our confidential project:

- complete an online, anonymous, questionnaire: www.polarisurveys.org.uk
- contact us for a hard copy questionnaire, return it anonymously
- talk to us in a face-to-face interview or over the phone

Participants are offered

- an assurance of confidentiality
- entry into a small prize draw
- a chance to discuss mental health services with other older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals

Contact Sam on 020 7255 4481 or mentalhealth@polari.org



How organised are you?

You're probably a Humanist - there's 17 million of us in the UK! But unless we organise, we risk having our views and beliefs discounted and ignored. The British Humanist Association exists to promote Humanism and support and represent people who seek to live good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs.

If you count yourself amongst the rapidly growing number of humanists in Britain, or resent the growing influence of unrepresentative 'faith leaders' on Government policy, please join the BHA today!

We need your support to represent your views.

To find out more, join, campaign or attend an event, visit www.humanism.org.uk or contact us at
1 Gower Street, London, WC1E 6HD. Tel: 020 7079 3580
Email: jhooper@humanism.org.uk

Registered Charity 285987



BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION
for the one life we have



When I threw a garbage can toward the police car that had parked in front of the Stonewall Inn in Manhattan's Greenwich Village early Saturday morning, the 28th of June, 1969, this was just a happening as far as I was concerned at that time. A group was making a disturbance at a gay bar, cops were everywhere, and I mischievously thought it would be fun to exacerbate the situation.

Those of us out front yelled obscenities at "the pigs" in uniform who right in front of our eyes were beating the bar's customers as they were exiting. The cop who chased me that morning fortunately stopped when I rounded a nearby corner at the Northern Dispensary. Had I been caught, I'd have been shoved into a paddy wagon, roughed up, fingerprinted, and jailed.

What for the police department had begun as a routine raid on a "fag-bar" quickly escalated into five inconsecutive nights and early morning disturbances during which gays, lesbians, and transgenders decided literally to fight back.

On the first night, employees began being arrested. Some customers were told to leave. Others were detained. But the raid turned ugly around 2 a.m. that Saturday morning when angry gay patrons, several transgenders, and others yelled "GAY POWER!" and threw stones, coins, and bottles.

There are many versions of what happened next. When ultimately the cops barricaded themselves inside on one of the nights, the place was attacked from outside by as many as 300, maybe 400 but not the 1,000 sometimes mentioned. The police, trapped inside, called for reinforcements. Not all onlookers were pleased, and some threw items back at the gays. When police reinforcements arrived, some of the rioters dispersed for a while but regrouped. For the next several evenings, and after the media reported the eye-catching, escalating incident, they and hundreds of others returned. The word spread fast.

In 1969 it was illegal in New York City for men to dance with men, although women could dance with women. To gay teenagers, The Stonewall Inn was a favorite place of refuge, a site where they could dance the Jerk or the Boston Monkey, maybe could even go home with someone who had pot and a warm body. Those who wore hip huggers, Tom Jones shirts, and maybe eye make-up were called Flame Queens. They would tease up their hair and were effeminate, like Emory in "Boys in the Band." A friend, Danny Garvin, and I credit the teenage guys we called Flame Queens, who were not lesbians, for having been the



LETTER FROM AMERICA

Warren Allen Smith

key players in sparking the trouble that led to the rioting.

Most young people's clothes at the time had become asexual. You could not be in full drag at the time. You had to have three articles of men's clothing on or you'd be

arrested for impersonating a woman. Most people were into dressing the new style, unisex. The allegedly Mafia-owned and operated bars in the city were places where possible violence was always present. Gay bars were seedy, their drinks watered, but you could dance until the dimming lights warned that cops were entering. Oh, the danger, the ecstatic thrill of it all!

Since 1969 it has been an uphill struggle for gays to be accorded the rights of other citizens. Before The Stonewall Inn, there were other brave gay, lesbian, and transgenders who courageously fought the system, making in-roads here and there. However, the Stonewall disturbances made the public, and more importantly "us," realize that we are a people, that we must demand our rights as American citizens and as human beings. At long last we symbolically had achieved "minority status."

The last week of June 1969 became known as the time of the Stonewall Rebellion or the Stonewall Riots, later inspiring Gay Pride Week nationwide. What for me had started as a happening now is celebrated far and wide.

This year's gay parade in New York City fell on Saturday, June 24th. Other celebrations included the following. Some lasted an entire week, so for details check the main website: www.interpride.org

As you in London celebrate on June 16th, don't fail to indulge yourself. You'd be amazed at where getting into a little mischief can lead....



It's one of those questions that never fails to pop up in the brains of most everyday average people.

Sometimes, they're slimy in "clever" ways, such as when they confuse basic issues to avoid taking a stance on controversial issues that could "cost them support" that they need to win a particular office. But most of the time, they're just plain stupid in their willingness to assume that you and I are as stupid as their efforts to avoid a particular issue.

Take the Democratic party's candidates for president, for the most part, for instance. Please. (Apologies to Mr. Marx – both of them!)

The US media has been abuzz with the paroxysms of giddy apologists for the donkey-party's "bravery" in the face of "popular criticism" on controversial issues, as of late.

Unfortunately, for the most part, said politicians assume that the average observer of the situation is irredeemably stupid.

Take the Iraq war, for instance. This increasingly catastrophic farce sank an already unpopular president's ratings to sub-30% levels – a truly Nixonian performance. Democrats managed to roar into a majority in both houses by committing to a pull-out from Iraq. It was a simple, clear commitment to voters that virtually every voter could understand – make Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid the power-brokers in Washington, and our boys would be home before you could say "nuke Teheran."

Ah, except that the Democrats, when push comes to shove, have backbones of gelatin. Somehow, the Dems' "brave resolve in the face of the president's perfidy" transformed from bills that mandated an immediate pull-out (or 'defunding' of the entire fiasco, failing that) into a blank cheque for \$120 billion for continuation of the unpopular conflict in continuity.

Unfortunately for the Democrats, even their core supporters got a little miffed at that. Liberal editorial comic artist Tom Tomorrow summed it up with a four panel comic where Henry Reid threatens to "stand up" to a bullying President Bush, only to wimpily capitulate each time. After several capitulations, he repeatedly pledges to do better next time, only to have his companion roll her eyes and say "oh just shut the hell up already."

Americans should be feeling a bit like Harry Reid's erstwhile companion right about now – especially if you're one of those logical Americans who favor equal treatment of LGBT folks.



STRONG STUFF

Brian Miller

The Land of Low Expectations, or why are politicians so slimy?

Yet Another Moronic Spin Job.

There's a crazy thing about politics these days: the old media model of "lie through your teeth and hope and pray the average opponent/citizen/voter won't catch the lie" just doesn't work anymore. Thanks to the Internet and its ability to convey actual Congressional votes to the average citizen in real time, we can now do the research ourselves when the media fails to do so.

Take the issue of gays in the military. While modern military forces from Ottawa to London to Jerusalem have been integrated, effectively, for years, the US military has stubbornly persisted in maintaining a segregation standard that bans out gay military personnel from serving – despite a desperate dearth of personnel in every area that is compromising the already sclerotic Iraq effort.

Now, what would stupid politicians have us do?

If you're a Republican, the answer is rather simple – insist that everything in Iraq is going fine and that the "policy is working" – even if you're on the record as opposing it just a year or two ago. This is the tack that Mitt Romney, the chameleon-esque former governor of Massachusetts, and neo-neocon extraordinaire, is taking. (Romney has even changed his perspective on that most important of Republican issues – when the second coming of Jesus Christ can be expected). Not to mention other mental midgets such as John McCain.

But Democrats are supposed to be better! And better, they were!

At least, that is, if you believe the breathless exhalations of the national American LGBT groups, who, as subsidiaries of the Democratic Party, could barely wait to hit "send" on the e-mails screaming about Democrats' eternal love for the homosexual serviceperson.

"All Democrats strongly support an end to the *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* (DADT) policy!" shouted press releases (and articles unquestioningly based on them).

And support they did!

Senator Joe Biden chided the military for having such a non-visionary policy, recounting his tales of hanging out in foxholes with troops who didn't once try to pinch his posterior. John Edwards fell over himself to explain how unjust the policy was.

Hillary Clinton, the wife of Bill (he who endorsed and signed the existing anti-gay policy) even endorsed the repeal of the policy, making up some laughable claptrap about the law being a "transitional policy" designed to make the country comfortable with gay troops – rather than the effort to appeal to anti-gay animus (and broken campaign promise) that it really was.

Barack Obama, the wanna-be photogenic Boy King of Dem Party politics, murmured some of his trademark clichés about a nation "of service" and that "rewards bravery." (Apparently his vision is to have a country that does what his party steadfastly avoids!)

And so it went. We must vote for these lovely Democrats – only they will repeal the policy!

Except that, well, it's a stupid premise, for the most part. Because there's already an effort underway in the House in order to repeal the bill, brought up by Massachusetts representative Marty Meehan above the objections of Nancy Pelosi (who insists that, you guessed it, "now is not the time" for such matters because they're awfully

STRONG STUFF continued...

controversial – after all, almost 30% of Americans continue to support the ban!)

Most of the Democrats seeking the office are Senators – either former (in the case of Edwards) or current (in the case of Clinton, Obama, Dodd and Biden). And not a single one of them has sponsored or co-sponsored a bill in the Senate – in their entire careers(!) – as a companion to Meehan's bill in the House, or any other way for that matter.

In other words, they think that gays in the military are such a great idea that they're not doing the minimum to make it happen as legislators.

Whoopee.

For some reason, we're supposed to believe that almost a decade-and-a-half of inaction by these clowns is supposed to be suddenly reversed come election time.

The only Democrat to put his money where his mouth is Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich, who has had the gall to either introduce bills that agree with his stance on the issues – or vote for others' bills that reflect his stance. Kucinich has backed Meehan's bill as a cosponsor.

Such "unwise efforts" on Kucinich's part – i.e. supporting actual actions to make his platform come to life – have made him the butt of criticism by "Democratic strategists" who warn that having an actual spine and verifiable position on any issue is "dangerous" and makes one "unelectable."

Such "strategic Democrats" gave the world John "I voted for the bill before I voted against it" Kerry – not to mention a Democratic House of Representatives that has, incredibly, sunk from sky-high 65%+ approval ratings to ratings rivalling George Bush's lows in just months due to inaction on Iraq.

Genius!

Queer American voters (and their Britannic supporters) would do well not to support any of the top-tier Democrats this year as a result. More of the same will be simply disastrous for America.

A Death in the Family (Values)

Some of you have asked about the late Reverend Jerry Falwell, the corpulent "moral majority" preacher recently found keeled over dead of heart failure in his office. And truth be told, I'm going to miss the old codger!

He was an anachronism – the perfect example of how blind religious fervour could be used to support virtually every nasty concept of poor treatment of one's

fellow man. The good reverend cut his teeth as a young preacher in the south, lecturing against the evils of racial integration – insisting that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was a Soviet agent determined to spread the values of "equal treatment" above the "biblical principles of the USA". Thus, he had "no choice" but to support continued segregation – and blast King in the strongest terms.

Every Sunday Falwell had to endure two gay men holding hands and making googly eyes at him from the pews

Such a schtick became tired, rather quickly, as the country's southern tier learned that no, the rest of the country was *not* going to tolerate a two-tiered legal system for its citizens of African descent and, no, Jesus *didn't* command his followers to hate his fellow man. As Falwell's prior views became fodder for less savoury groups, such as the Birchers and KKK, he had to revise the target of the rhetoric – if not the rhetoric itself.

Thus, he restyled himself as the leader of a "moral majority" – establishing a group of the same name – and took aim at "secular humanist" art, as well as abortion and homosexuality.

The high camp of his efforts will be sorely missed.

For instance, Falwell's son wrote in a fundraising letter that "the forces of Satan" have "rained a hail of fiery darts" at his father, after even numerous conservative leaders lashed out at Falwell's popularly broadcast contention that abortionists, gays and the American Civil Liberties Union – more than religious fanatics – were responsible for the World Trade Center attacks in 2001.

Falwell was also the subject of an intense civil lawsuit against *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt, purveyor of all things pornographic and puerile. Flynt recently revealed in an article that he'd befriended the jolly old reverend in old age, as he became a celebrity of camp culture, and that the old guy had never given up attempting to recruit Flynt to the righteous path of godliness.

Mel White, gay religious leader, also

never gave up lobbying Falwell. The former speech-writer for the reverend actually moved, with his partner, to the Virginia hamlet where Falwell's church is, and attended his church services every Sunday.

Time was hard on Jerry Falwell. Segregationism ended despite his opposition, gay marriage roared to life (and survived numerous challenges) in his lifetime, and every Sunday he had to endure two gay men holding hands and making googly eyes at him from the pews. No wonder his ticker couldn't take any more!

Massachusetts Victory; Democrats' Shame

Last but not least, Massachusetts' legislature decisively voted down a proposed referendum to ban gay marriage in the only state in the union that presently offers full and equal treatment to its citizens, regardless of sexual orientation.

The good news? Anti-gay marriage advocates couldn't even get the 25% of legislators' support necessary to get their hate amendment on the ballot.

The bad news? Democrats continue to insist that the vote "proves" that Democrats – and only Democrats – will stand for queer people.

Ignoring the fact that striking down an obvious hate law is hardly a laudable act of courage in and of itself (that designation goes towards laws that actually repeal discriminatory elements of government treatment – a record where the Democrats don't do too well), a quick look at the vote shows that enough Democrats voted **FOR** the anti-gay law that if not for the rebel Republicans of Massachusetts, we'd be facing an anti-gay ballot initiative in Massachusetts in 2008.

Now, it may be true that Massachusetts voters were unlikely to support such an initiative (support for gay marriage runs in the 60% range after 3+ years of legality), but it's also true that Democrats once again assume that we're stupid and are trying to lie in order to benefit from a vote that – if anything – proves that relying on Democrats to protect our rights is pretty tenuous. After all, how pathetic is it that gay Massachusettans were reliant on *Republicans* – conservative, rock-ribbed Rockefeller Republicans in this case, but Republicans nonetheless – to preserve their marriage rights?

Goodness, it makes one want to vote Libertarian or something.

Until next time...



Hope for the Classroom

*There has been a great deal of scare-mongering and misinformation about books aimed at primary-school pupils that deal honestly with gay issues, such as same-sex parents or gay youth. To mark the International Day Against Homophobia, The Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association hosted a panel discussion to find out the truth behind the headlines. Gay parents (and GALHA members) **Gordon Leney & Lee Stacy** went along.*

Actually we're incredibly lucky. Our daughter is in year four at school. She has two gay dads and two lesbian mums and yet she's never encountered the slightest bullying or prejudice due to us. Of course it helps that she goes to school in Islington and that her headteacher made it clear that his school has a zero-tolerance policy regarding any kind of homophobia. Had she been in school in another borough or outside London hers would most likely be a very different story. We were pleased — and proud — therefore when we heard that GALHA had chosen the subject of homophobic bullying in schools as its panel discussion to celebrate IDAHO 2007.

The panel discussion was instigated in part because in March of this year *The Guardian* ran an article highlighting a pilot scheme introducing books covering gay issues to young children. Although the scheme is welcome, it is a very tentative step, being carried out in only 14 schools of one local authority. Not surprisingly the scheme has been criticized by religious groups, both Christian and Muslim. Discussing this brouhaha at the GALHA panel discussion were Sue Sanders of Schools OUT, Mark Jennett of the No Outsiders project and author of *Stand Up for Us*, a government document on

homophobia, and Vanda Carter, Sophie Laws, and Wendy Nicholson of Out for Our Children.

The pilot scheme includes three children's books that seek to give voice to homosexuality in the real world: *And Tango Makes Three*, *King & King*, and *Spacegirl Pukes*. The first is based on a true case in a New York zoo of two male penguins in love with each other who raise a penguin chick named Tango. *King & King* is a fairytale about a prince who is forced by his mother, the queen, to marry and become king. The prince is to choose one of several princesses but he cares for none of them. Instead he falls in love with the brother of one of the princesses. The two princes marry, become king and king, and live happily ever after. The third book, *Spacegirl Pukes*, does pretty much what the title says, except this spacegirl happens to have two mummies. Unlike the other two titles, *Spacegirl Pukes* is produced by Out for Our Children, a London-based group of lesbian parents who are taking an active role breaking down stereotypes and encouraging schools to recognize that not every kid in school has one mummy and one daddy, and was wittily illustrated by Vanda Carter.

During the GALHA event, the panelists paid tribute to the revolutionary *Jenny*

Lives with Eric and Martin. That book, published in the 1980s, about a young girl who lived with her dad and his partner and on one page showed the three of them innocently lounging in bed together, caused a scandal and directly led to the implementation of Section 28, in 1988. That infamous and poorly understood law stopped teachers from even mentioning the words "gay" or "lesbian" in the classroom or librarians having children's books for or about gays and lesbians on their shelves. Section 28 also prevented local authorities from "promoting homosexuality" including gay or lesbian parenting ("pretend family relationships"). It was finally repealed in 2003 — but why did it take the Labour government six years of power to do?

Sadly no one raised that question during the GALHA discussion. However, Sue Sanders and Mark Jennett, both integral to the scheme, gave cautious welcome to the initiative. Schools Out campaigned long and tirelessly for eliminating homophobic bullying in schools, while the No Outsiders project, with which Jennett is affiliated, has received nearly £600,000 from the Economic and Social Research Council and support from the National Union of Teachers and General Teaching Council to further its cause of tackling prejudice in schools. The project points out that recent government directives and changes in law make it imperative that schools tackle homophobia and ensure that children of gay or lesbian parents feel equal to children from other, traditional backgrounds.

Yet all's not quite smooth sailing for the scheme. Even at this very early stage there is already vociferous opposition from some well-known adversaries. Simon Calvert of the Christian Institute says, "The predictions of those who said the repeal of Section 28 would result in the active promotion of homosexuality in schools are coming true. Let's arrange a series of meetings around the country where parents of primary school children can look at these books. The majority would be aghast." And Tahir Alam, education spokesman for the Muslim Council of Britain, "This is not consistent with Islamic teachings and from our point of view many parents would be concerned."

Their predictably negative comments show that the religious may be gearing up for a fight. Let's hope reason prevails because the sooner the books find a place in every primary school in the country the better for all our children.

The sooner the Christians and Muslims accept differences in lifestyle the better for everyone.

Government betrays gay schoolkids to placate the churches

The Government has stabbed gay schoolkids in the back by making clear that "faith schools" can continue to tell pupils that homosexuality is evil, says the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA).

GALHA chair, Jim Herrick, says: "The guidance that has been issued to go with the new Sexual Orientation Regulations effectively gives an opt-out to faith schools which will allow them to continue slandering and insulting gay people. This is extremely bad news for any gay child in those schools – who will be unsupported and isolated – who may now have to cope with hearing their sexuality being branded as unacceptable, undesirable and evil by homophobic teachers."

The new guidelines read: "If a faith school (or indeed any school) teaches that the Christian and Muslim faiths decree that same-sex sexual activity is a sin, then the school will not be acting unlawfully."

Similarly, if a pupil asks a teacher his views on homosexuality and the teacher gives his view, then again, that teacher will not be acting unlawfully."

Mr Herrick said: "Gay children may already be very insecure and worried about their burgeoning sexuality. To have to then go into class and possibly hear the teacher spouting fundamentalist insults to that sexuality is cruel and unacceptable. The Government is leaving exposed the very children this legislation was put in place to protect. It is a shocking reflection on the Government's half-hearted commitment to these Regulations that they are prepared to potentially sacrifice the emotional well-being of a significant number of children in order to placate unreasonable religious demands. Those responsible for these guidelines should be ashamed of themselves, and so should the churches who want these kinds of inhumane let outs."

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Successful year for gay humanist charity

The gay humanist charity the Pink Triangle Trust (PTT) has reported a successful year.

Set up by the Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association in 1992 to pursue the group's charitable aims, the PTT, as GALHA's associated charity, continues to get generous bequests and donations from people wishing to support its educational work concerning all aspects of homosexuality and humanism.

Over the past year, it has appointed three new trustees: Andrew Copson, a classics graduate from Oxford University, a member of the winning team of the 2005 Young Educational Thinker of the Year programme, and Education and Public Affairs Officer for the British Humanist Association; Stuart Draycott, a long-standing member and former chair of the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA); Jim Herrick, a founder member of GALHA, its current chair, and a member of the Council of Management of the

National Secular Society.

George Broadhead, GALHA's former longstanding secretary, continues as the PTT's secretary. He also continues to co-ordinate its nationwide secular humanist ceremony of love and commitment for same sex-couples which the Trust has been arranging for the past 11 years. The Trust relinquished its role as publisher of Gay and Lesbian Humanist magazine at the end of 2005. The magazine was retitled Gay Humanist Quarterly and is published by GALHA. However, the cost of editing and printing it are met by the PTT.

George Broadhead said: "The trustees are very grateful for all the donations and bequests the PTT has received. These, and sound policies, have put its finances in a healthy state at the end of the financial year. The trustees are also very grateful to Brett Humphreys for his dedicated hard work over many years as the Trust's former treasurer."

Terry and Andrew on 'Comment is Free'

Two GALHA committee members now have columns on *The Guardian's* 'Comment is Free' blog: Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society and Andrew

Copson, education officer for the British Humanist Association. The public can join in the spirited debates that follow. Log on to: <http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk>



Moscow violence condemned

GALHA Chair, Jim Herrick, issued a statement on behalf of the organisation in response to the violence at Moscow Pride: "We roundly condemn the brutal attacks on the gay protestors at Moscow Pride and the lack of adequate police protection. We note that though many of the anti-gay demonstrators were clearly fascist thugs, many also carried icons or other insignia of the Russian Orthodox Church and black-clad members of the Russian Orthodox group Gonfalières - named after a banner carried in ecclesiastical ceremonies - were present. The inevitable conclusion is that, as in so many other instances of homophobia worldwide, religion played a major part."

Free information leaflet now available from the Pink Triangle Trust:

Registered charity number 1015629

'Robert G. Ingersoll said ...'
Quotes from the great nineteenth century freethinker about our Humanist aims, ways of understanding our universe, love and death, and how we can be happy.

Please send pre-paid envelope or second class stamp for your free copy, and also donations to the charity, to: PTT, 34 Spring Lane, KENILWORTH, CV8 2HB

HUMANISTS ARE AGNOSTICS AND ATHEISTS WHO APPLY REASON AND GOODWILL TO BUILD HAPPY LIVES

www.pinktriangle.org.uk



GALHA's annual weekend event: **EDINBURGH 2007**

Friday 7th to Monday 10th September

For the first time in its renowned weekend gatherings, GALHA is travelling north of the border. In homage to the birthplace of the Scottish enlightenment and heirs such as philosopher David Hume, we're off to Edinburgh.

Edinburgh is a city that needs no introduction, but we're going to give it one anyway: it's a world heritage site with masses of sites, shops, and things to do. The castle looms over the skyline; the cathedral is of great historical interest; Holyrood is the official Scottish royal residence with fine galleries. The new building for the Scottish Parliament is a must-see impressive work of modern architecture.

The city houses some of the finest galleries in the UK, from the National Gallery of Scotland to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art (showing exhibitions including Warhol and Picasso while we're there).

If your mouth is parched and your feet are still bouncing, there is a great gay scene in the city.

If there is enough demand there will be a coach trip to New Lanark, about an hour outside Edinburgh. It's the site of Robert Owen's ideal community. He was the founder of the Co-operative movement and, as an unbeliever who set up secular groups, had an influence on nineteenth century



Bruntsfield Hotel

The elegant 3-star Best Western Bruntsfield Hotel is our host for the weekend: a charming town house hotel with an AA rosetted restaurant, located around 15 minutes' walk from the city centre.



SATURDAY HIGHLIGHT



Dinner with Patrick Harvie

One of the highlights of the weekend will be dinner on the Saturday evening, where Patrick Harvie will be the after dinner guest speaker. Patrick is a Green Member of Scottish Parliament and is one of GALHA's Vice Presidents. During the recent Scottish elections he met with a campaign from an evangelical Christian group, attacking him for his association with GALHA. He recently appeared on TV criticising Cardinal Keith O'Brian for his reproof of public figures who supported the right of women to choose an abortion.



As usual, GALHA's annual general meeting will take place during the weekend, where you'll have the chance to find out what the organisation has been up to over the past year, and elect the committee.

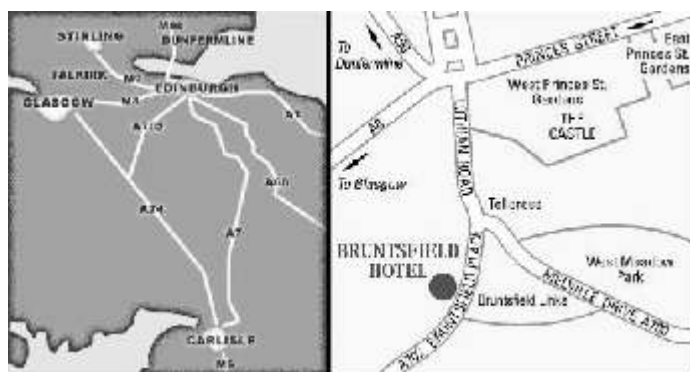
Book Now!

The price covers your stay at The Bruntsfield Hotel, and includes dinner, bed and a full Scottish breakfast. The cost is 56 per person per night if you share a double or twin room. For sole occupancy of a double room, please add 15 per night to the cost.

These are great rates that you won't find elsewhere – a 40% discount compared to the hotel's best rate if booked independently.

The cost of any tours or coach trips will be extra.

GALHA's first foray into Scotland promises to be an excellent one. A number of members have already booked so if you haven't done already, book now!



Getting there

Edinburgh is accessible from all parts of the UK, whether by train, plane, coach or car, and the earlier you book your travel, the cheaper it will be. For example, advance saver return tickets are available for train services, which take a little over four hours from London.

If you fancy flying then Edinburgh's airport is served from most airports across the UK, and when you've touched down, it's a short bus or taxi journey from the airport into the city centre.

According to the hotel's website, Edinburgh International Airport is approximately 9 miles by car or taxi. A taxi to the hotel is around £15.00. Both Edinburgh Waverley and Haymarket stations are very close to the hotel. A taxi to the hotel from one of these stations is around £3.50.

If you're driving, simply key in the hotel's postcode - EH10 4HH - into Multimap.co.uk or Maps.Google.co.uk for directions.

Once you've booked in, numerous and frequent city buses stop within 50m of the hotel for fast and low cost transport to the city centre (10 minutes) and all attractions.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO GALHA MEMBERS

The GALHA AGM is taking place on Saturday 8 September at 5pm at the Bruntsfield Hotel in Edinburgh. To ensure inclusion, all committee nominations and motions for discussion should be submitted to GALHA secretary, Cliff James in good time.

If a booking form isn't enclosed with your magazine, one can be downloaded from:
www.gayhumanist.com/edinburgh2007/

Ascent of Cerro Santa Lucía, Santiago, Chile



*On a recent trip to South America, **Ian Wilcock**, followed the footsteps of Charles Darwin*

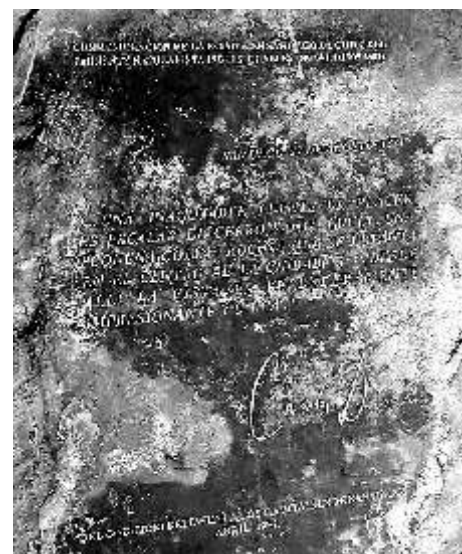
In the days when I was an active mountaineer the ascent of a hill of just 69m (229 feet) would not deserve a mention but Cerro Santa Lucía isn't just any hill.

Santa Lucía is a rocky outcrop right in the centre of the city of Santiago, Chile and although I have been to Santiago several times I have never previously done the ascent. I was prompted to do so recently after reading *The Voyage of the Beagle* by Charles Darwin in the plane over from Buenos Aires. He wrote that in August 1834 during his stay in Santiago "A never-failing source of pleasure was to ascend the little hillock of rock (St Lucia) which projects in the middle of the city." These days there are a choice of paths leading to the top where there is an observation tower. Darwin would obviously not have seen the buildings of modern metropolitan Santiago but he would certainly have seen the hills to the west that separate Santiago from the Pacific

Ocean 120km away and the snow-capped Andes mountains rising over 6000m 20 km to the east (only just visible these days through the summer heat haze and traffic pollution). On a historical note it was from this hill in 1541 that the conquistador Don Pedro de Valdivia planned the layout of the city that was to become Santiago.

In the Darwin Garden half-way up the hill instead of a statue to Darwin there is, disappointingly, one of some higher functionary of the Catholic Church. Just below the observation tower there is a plaque set into the rock marking the visit of Darwin. The plaque was presented in April 1997 by the British government to the people of Santiago.

In South America there are plenty of geographical features named after Darwin but as far as I am aware this is the only spot on the continent where his presence is directly commemorated.



"A never-failing source of pleasure was to ascend the little hillock of rock which projects in the middle of the city. The scenery certainly is most striking, and very peculiar."
- Charles Darwin

A translation of the Spanish inscription on the plaque

Contender for Labour deputy leadership is anti-secularist

Catholic Labour MP and deputy leadership contender Jon Cruddas has said that he is alarmed by the activities and growing influence of what he calls "intolerant secularists in the Labour Party". In an interview with the Catholic newspaper *The Universe*, Mr Cruddas said: "I joined the Labour Party because it was a pluralist body that had room for different classes, people of faith and no faith." He said that some of the debate around faith schools and gay adoption has "exposed a real lack of respect".

"This has even gone as far among some of suggesting that people of faith should not contribute in the public sphere," he said. "I am uncomfortable with these developments and they are certainly at odds with the principles of the pluralist party that I joined." He did not make clear who has made the assertion that "people of faith should not contribute to the public sphere".

Coming from an Irish working class Catholic background, Mr Cruddas is proud that everyone of his extended family went to a Catholic comprehensive school. "The Catholic school is a place where an identity can be forged, religious faith preserved and aspirations realised," he said.

Cruddas is aware that his voting record on some issues will be at odds with some Catholics. Support for the Iraq war and support for nuclear power are two of those

areas. He admits to having got it wrong over the Iraq war.

On pro-life issues Mr Cruddas is keen to see the agenda "expanded so that it is viewed in the holistic cradle-to-grave sense." He says he is "saddened" by those who seek to reduce the pro-life argument to focus only on abortion or euthanasia. "The pro-life argument should not be compartmentalised it relates to life in all its forms from cradle to grave," said Mr Cruddas, who believes that whatever the outcome of the deputy leadership election, the contest has provided a valuable opportunity for debate.

Meanwhile, all the candidates for the deputy leadership have been giving their answers to pertinent questions put to them by the Labour Humanists.

A slight 29 million miscalculation – in the church's favour, of course

Last year our Honorary Associate Graham Allen MP kindly asked a parliamentary question about how much the taxpayer had to fork out to pay for chaplains in the Armed Forces. He was told it was £295,000.

Now Derek Twigg MP, the under-secretary for defence, has written to Mr Allen to clarify that figure. His letter reads: "It has been brought to my attention that an answer I gave to your Parliamentary Question on 14 December 2006, (Official Report, column 1253W) about the numbers of full-time chaplaincy staff and their costs is incorrect. The answer given incorrectly

states that the cost of the 313 full-time chaplaincy staff based on capitation rates as £295,000. I apologise for this error and can confirm, that the correct figure should have been £29,500,000."

Just a bit of small change as far as the Church is concerned.

Religious discrimination in school employment condemned

The right of the Catholic Church in Scotland to select teachers in denominational schools on the basis of their religion was criticised on Thursday by John Quigley, the outgoing president of the Educational Institute of Scotland.

Mr Quigley described the powers as "iniquitous" and said: "How do you measure somebody's religious commitment and moral standing with a view to establishing whether a skilled and qualified teacher should be denied employment on these grounds alone? Yet we have a law which says you can make such judgments and on these grounds alone deny jobs to people in schools which they are funding through their own rates and taxes."

Under the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act, the Catholic Church has the right to veto teachers on grounds of faith. But there are concerns the law conflicts with the European Convention on Human Rights which protects people from discrimination on religious grounds.

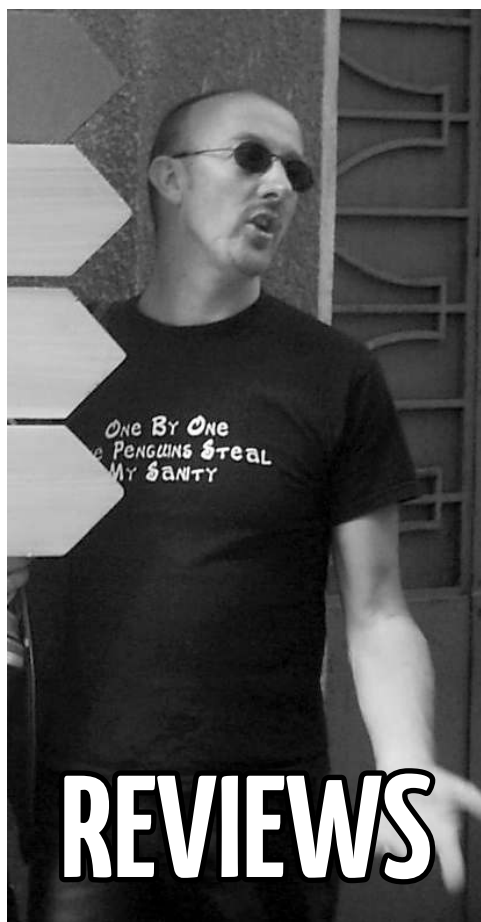
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13:55 Eastern Standard Time
Nick Alexander

BIGfib Books, May 2007
ISBN: 2952489963

After his debut novel was rejected by every publisher in the world, gay author Nick Alexander decided that self-publishing was the only way forward. The release of his first book *50 Reasons to Say Goodbye* in 2004 was followed by *Sottopassaggio* a year later, and *Good Thing, Bad Thing* in 2006. The trilogy has been re-published by BIGfib Books, and is now among the UK's best selling gay literature.

In a departure from his earlier work, Alexander's latest book, *13:55 Eastern Standard Time*, moves beyond the introverted narrative of gay self-discovery, and addresses wider issues relating to the interconnectedness of humankind. Part novel, part collection of short stories, *13:55* provides a series of vignettes about strangers around the world whose lives are subtly linked by the invisible threads of globalisation, modern technology and common humanity.

A factory worker in China secretly rebels against her overbearing floor manager by damaging two iPods that pass by on her conveyor belt. In New York, a lonely newcomer to the city returns her faulty iPod to the store where she bought it and befriends a guy who is doing the same. As a result of this new friendship, the woman telephones her brother on his mobile phone in Berlin as he is crossing a busy bus lane. The consequent road accident affects more lives, sets off more chain reactions, until events lead full circle, back to the factory worker in China.

As easy as it would have been for Nick Alexander to imply, there is no overriding destiny behind these events. Each accidental collision of characters is just that, a random accident in a chaotic universe. There is no essential meaning behind the haphazard hits and misses of lives. The most that can be done, as E. M. Forster, might say, is only connect.

Nick Alexander's writing has matured in *13:55 Eastern Standard Time*. He offers erotic, heartbreaking and inspiring insights into the various tableaux of human conditions, and joins the dots between ever-decreasing degrees of separation. Highly recommended, it's subtly clever and well worth a read.

— **Cliff James**



Londonistan
Melanie Phillips
Gibson Square, May 2007
(New Edition)
ISBN: 1903933900

It's not hard to see why the author is often referred to as 'Mad Mel'. While humanists are justifiably concerned with the increase in violence inspired by religious fundamentalism – particularly by Islam in this post 9/11, post 7/7 world – neither Melanie Phillips's paranoid ranting nor her prescription for remedy are very useful.

Phillips is concerned chiefly with the "cultural capitulation" of the West. A reasonable concern, except Mad Mel thinks the bedrock of Western civilisation is not secular democracy or liberal humanism, but Judeo-Christian 'traditional' values that the Enlightenment brushed aside.

For reasons quite easy to fathom when you regard her Daily Mail day-job, she has a pop at the LGBT community more than once. For some reason, she sees the legal advances we've made as a sign of the cultural rot that will allow Islam to flourish.

In particular, the Gender Recognition Act is a symbol of the reversal of the traditional values that we're apparently helping to undermine to Islam's advantage. The fact that homophobes are fined for hate-speech is further evidence of the "moral and philosophical vacuum" of modern Britain.

But the queer community isn't the only third column. So are secular humanists! She lambastes the Church of England for its capitulation to "the forces of secularism". A return to Judeo-Christian core values, she argues, is the only defence against militant Islam. I don't think so! Alas, it is an increasingly popular belief. But the last thing the world needs is to get stuck between rival theocracies, which – if George W Bush's political advisors is anything to go by – seems increasingly likely. — **Brett Lock**



A gay history of Britain
Matt Cook; Robert Mills;
Randolph Trumbach, et al
Greenwood World, 2007
ISBN: 1846450020

A Gay History of Britain does pretty much what it says on the tin. It is a compelling

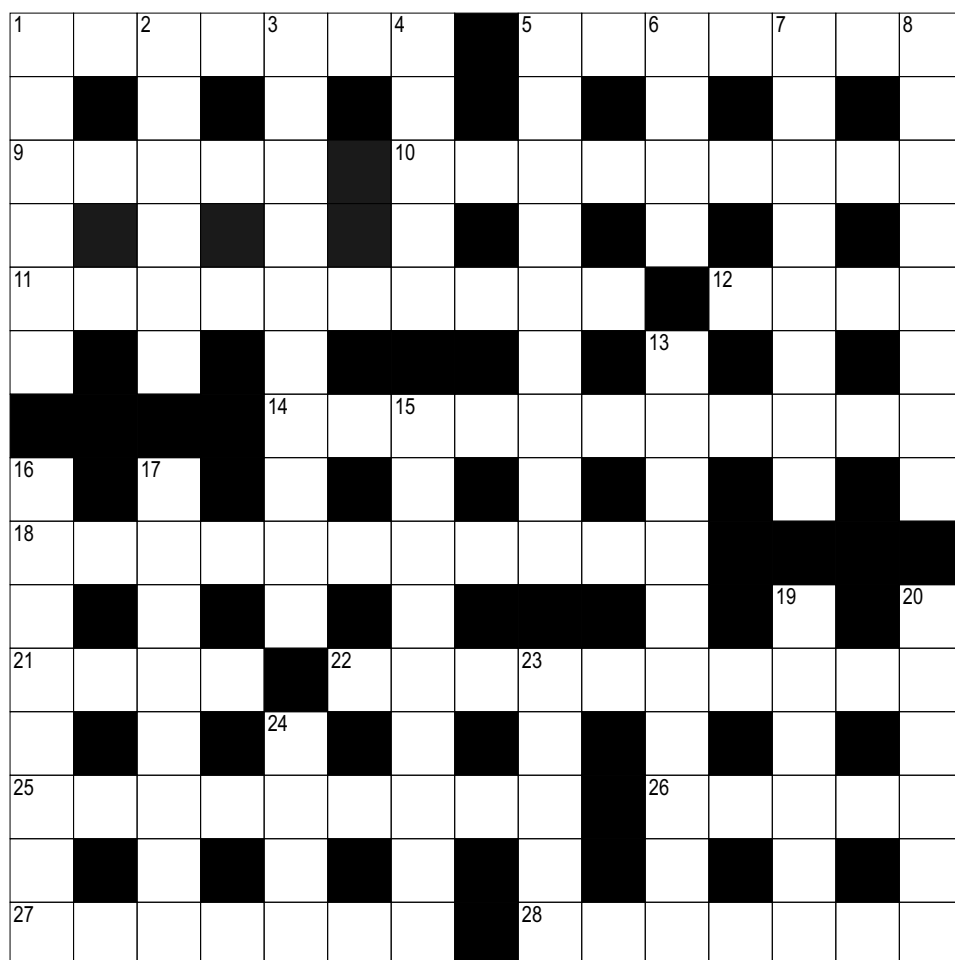
read, packed with information, even if one is sometimes disinclined to support the authors' analysis. The last 150 years is obviously less controversial, but I confess that the constant reminder that earlier stories – such as those of Richard the Lionhearted or Edward II – do not constitute 'proof' of homosexuality become tiresome. The same disclaimer isn't applied quite as insistently to heterosexual histories. Also, while it is quite true to say that the 'gay' identity is a modern construct, I don't think that this extrapolates into a notion that a primarily homosexual orientation isn't an evolutionary fact. If Richard's intimate friendship with the King of France began after a mere 'glance', then I have no trouble accepting and reclaiming him as one of our gay forebears. — **Brett Lock**

Become a reviewer

Have you read a book or seen a film or play that you think will be of interest to a gay or humanist audience? Why not share your views by submitting your review of it to GHQ?

The Great GHQ Crossword

Match your verbal wits against Crossword #1, set exclusively for GHQ by Mendosa



Across

1. Unweave awe in orb (without drug) as 28 5 did? (7)
5. Name sad 6, sadly. (7)
9. Initially the humanists, in neat groups, object. (5)
10. Classic avengers I deem in use? (9)
11. Separatist gives gold to meteorological clarity! (10)
12. Mount ups the ante. (4)
14. 28 5 does gun idol? (3, 8)
18. Feelings she evolved from 28 5? (7, 4)
21. From need troubled 28 5's flower? (4)
22. Climb round benefit for youth. (5)
25. First or returning solider slain horribly. (9)
26. No ring to kinky extremes for it! (5)
27. Increase cubes for Spooner's rodents. (7)
28. Loaded promotion takes religious leader's name. (7)

Down

1. Sides take it (gold) back for service. (6)
2. Creationists theory is taken to back fools. (6)
3. Plead! I cajole a single number to restart. (5, 5)
4. Shellfish swaps thousands for impact. (5)
5. Moment on road-block as church points? (9)
6. Triumph monarch could be tiddly? (4)
7. Autonomous story sounds thorough! (2, 6)
8. Assists first secular states to take model in South. (8)
13. Yank back individual in charge of speed! (10)
15. Of foreign hospital unknown doctor consumed dry... (9)
16. Help round junk store for body. (8)
17. Irish province drops point; French king's return obscured. (8)
19. Over on abode of two gentlemen? (6)
20. Way to agreement. Darwin's first remained. (6)
23. Resolve to return without five. European failure! (5)
24. Land if climbing as one before K2? (4)

WIN A £20 VOUCHER TO SPEND AT GAYS THE WORD

The first correct entry received will win a £20 gift voucher to spend at Gay's The Word bookshop, stockists of a wide variety of LGBT books and DVDs. If no completed entry is received, the nearest correct entry will receive a concessionary £10 voucher. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into, etc... Entries should be sent to The Editor at the usual address. Please include your full name and contact details.



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Book online now!

The Marlene Dietrich Story

Thursday
28 June



The success of our **Marlene Dietrich evening** last year has encouraged us to put it on again as part of the Pride festival this year. If you missed it first time round, now is your chance to catch this engrossing presentation. Presented by Terry Sanderson it explores the personal and public life of one of history's most magnificent gay divas. Marlene Dietrich was a bisexual entertainer who lost her religion during the war, but went on from her fantastic film career to become one of the great cabaret entertainers of all time. In this show, we'll see a generous selection of her best film numbers, take a look at her

war work and then see a full showing of Marlene in concert, in 1963 when she was at the top of her game, accompanied by Burt Bacharach and his orchestra. An evening of fun, nostalgia and camp. Get your tickets early, as they are limited in number. Admission is £10 and tickets can be booked at www.gayhumanist.com/Marlene or send a cheque to Marlene, PO Box 130, London W5 1DQ. **This is part of the Pride Festival and proceeds go to GALHA.**

British Humanist Association seeks volunteers for party conferences

For the first time, the British Humanist Association (BHA) is attending all three Party Conferences this year. We think our attendance at the Party conferences will be an excellent opportunity to publicise the varied and important campaigning work that we do, and to promote Humanism to new and interested audiences. We are expecting there to be a lot of interest at our stand, and so we are appealing for volunteers to help us out at the **Liberal Democrat** (15 - 20 September, Brighton Centre, Brighton) and **Conservative** (30 September - 3 October, Winter Gardens, Blackpool) conferences. We are also hoping that some members will be able to offer accommodation to a BHA staff member for all or part of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative conferences. (No, we haven't forgotten the **Labour** conference - but we already have an enthusiastic band of volunteers.) Contact Andrew Copson - 020 7079 3584 or andrew@humanism.org.uk

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO GALHA MEMBERS

The GALHA AGM is taking place on **Saturday 8 September at 5pm at the Bruntsfield Hotel in Edinburgh**. All committee nominations and motions for discussion should be submitted to GALHA secretary, Cliff James. Any member may submit a motion for discussion, but those submitted in writing prior to the day of the AGM shall have preference, except that, if a majority of the committee are in favour, emergency motions may take priority.

sexuality, politics, humanism, atheism, liberalism, free thought

Missed an issue?

If you've missed an issue of GHQ, don't worry. Back issues can be ordered (while stocks last) from the GHQ website, or by post or email.

Why not subscribe?

GHQ is published quarterly. It is free to members of the Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association, and available to non-members by subscription or from selected outlets. Copies cost £2.50 + P&P each or £10.00 (inc. P&P) for an annual UK subscription. International subscriptions are £16.00 (inc. P&P).



www.gayhumanist.com
editor@gayhumanist.com

CALENDAR

GALHA has a full year of events and activities planned. Here are some of the up-coming highlights. Of course, these are subject to change. The next edition will carry updates and confirmed dates and more information.

Thursday 28 June

"The Marlene Dietrich Story" (see left). 7:30, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn Tube). Discover again the magic of one of the greatest gay icons of all. GALHA will have a stall at London Pride on Saturday 30th.

Saturday 4 August

Brighton Pride. GALHA will be there - come and say hello at our stall.

Saturday 10 November

Annual Lunch with special guest, Polly Toynbee.

Gathering and AGM

GALHA's annual weekend gathering and AGM will be held from **Friday 7th to Monday 10th September** in the beautiful city of Edinburgh. The sights and galleries of Edinburgh are world renowned and not to be missed. The Best Western Bruntsfield is our host for the weekend; a well appointed three star hotel about 15 minutes walk from the city centre, which includes an AA rosetted restaurant and free car parking (amongst other things). What's more, our very special guest speaker after dinner on the Saturday evening is Patrick Harvie, a member of Scottish parliament and also a GALHA vice president.

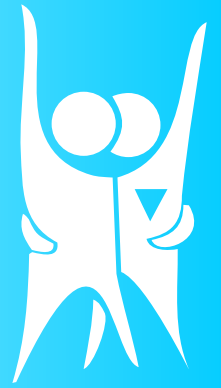
The cost is £56 per night which includes dinner, bed and full Scottish breakfast when sharing a twin/double room, or £15 more for sole occupancy of a double room.

More information will be sent to all members a little closer to the time, but to book now please send a deposit of £40 per person to Jim Herrick, 17 Christmas Pie Avenue, Normandy, Guildford, Surrey, GU3 2EQ. Cheques should be made payable to GALHA.

This is GALHA's first weekend foray to Scotland, and it promises to be a great weekend so book soon!

See special feature on the weekend inside this issue of GHQ.

Does your LGBT, atheist or Humanist group have an event you'd like us to list here? It's free, so why not send us the details by email:
Editor@gayhumanist.com



GALHA SCENE



Two honorary vice presidents:
Maryam Namazie and George Broadhead
at the 2004 IDAHO launch..



GALHA members among the protesters
against the Polish government's
treatment of its LGBT citizens.



Green London Assembly Member and
an honorary GALHA VP Darren Johnson
speaks at IDAHO 2007 event



Sue Sanders of Schools OUT speaks at
GALHA's panel discussion around the
issue of gay-themed children's books.



Chris Houston on a trip to Joburg,
looking down on a Christian bookshop
chain (there's now one in every
shopping mall) hilariously called "CUM"



Brett Lock, Chris Houston and Cliff
James peddle HQ and membership
packs at National Student Pride — held
in Manchester



IMAGINE NO RELIGION

Aren't you sick and tired of the homophobia spouted by religious leaders? It is true to say that almost all antigay groups today are religion-based. When they're not issuing proclamations, fatwas and edicts, they're campaigning against our human rights, peddling their bigotry, telling us we're sick, diseased, perverted and destined for hellfire, or promoting quack therapies to "cure" us. Join GALHA in its fight to curb the influence of religious homophobia!

Stand up to the homophobes who preach hatred, intolerance and discrimination in the name of faith and ancient texts. Join The Gay & Lesbian Humanist Association today!

GALHA
PO Box 130
LONDON
W5 1DQ, UK

TELEPHONE: 0844 800 3067
GALHA ONLINE: www.galha.org
GALHA EMAIL: secretary@galha.org
GHQ ONLINE: www.gayhumanist.com



The Gay & Lesbian
Humanist Association

in the name of the father

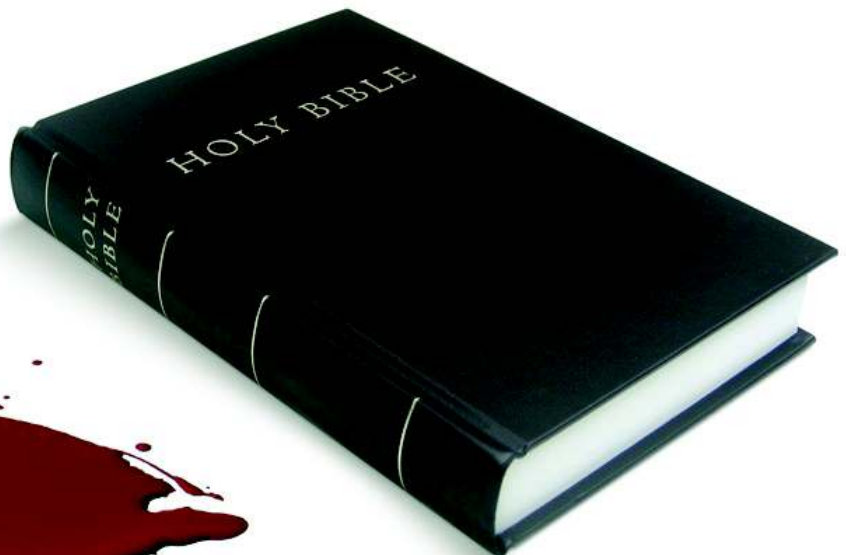
In the last 12 months, the Gay Police Association has recorded a 75% increase in homophobic incidents, where the sole or primary motivating factor was the religious belief of the perpetrator.

Verbal abuse and physical assault against gay men and women is a criminal offence and should always be reported to the police.

Discrimination against gay people in the workplace is also unlawful and should be reported to employers, who have a duty of care to prevent it.

Homophobia can never be justified and must never be tolerated.

www.report-it.org.uk



gay police association

gay police association
in scotland

gay police association
in northern ireland