

Q-Notes

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It's My Opinion

By Richard Epson-Nelms

I have written many editorials concerning "coming out" to one's self and to others. I firmly believe that people live a more wholesome and beneficial life when living it honestly and openly. I will continue to encourage people to make the decision to come out and be who they are.

However, there is a trend within the gay/lesbian community to forcibly bring people out who otherwise would have preferred to remain closeted. The media has picked up on this trend and in recent weeks the topic has made the talk show circuit and was the subject of an episode of ABC television's series "L.A. Law."

As I reflect on my own life I remember the time when I was a closeted gay person. I was afraid of being found out and because of this fear I spent most of my life hiding. My perception was that I would lose my family, my career, my friends and my good name if it became known that I was gay. I perceived that I had everything to lose and nothing to gain. I had a social life but was very careful not to mix gay acquaintances with other acquaintances.

As you can imagine, life was pretty stressful and demanded a very delicate balancing act to keep myself and my relationships in check.

When I did come out it was because my perception had been changed and I knew it was the right thing for me and the time was right. I made the choice to come out based on my own set of priorities and my own ideas of what was important in my life and I really wonder what my feelings toward the gay/lesbian community would be now had those choices been taken away from me and I had been forced out under someone else's agenda.

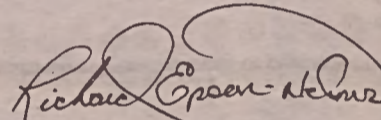
We have fought for years, particularly since Stonewall (1969), for the right "to be left alone." We have never asked much of the larger society — just to be left alone to be who we are. And, in the past, we have been




very mindful of our gay/lesbian brothers' and sisters' need for privacy — even when we disagreed with them.

Each person has his or her own individual journey through life and we all have the right to the "pursuit of life, liberty and happiness." We have fought for the right to individually define for ourselves what that pursuit should look like. When someone is "outed," that right of individual definition is taken away. It is sometimes easy to rationalize this invasion and say that they would be better off being out but no amount of rationalization will change the fact that the right of self-determination is being taken away. And for our community to condone forcibly "outing" a closeted gay/lesbian is to turn our backs on what we said we wanted for ourselves — to be left alone.

The right to privacy is not absolute, however. I am reminded of Congressman Gary Stubbs, who sat in Congress and supported anti-gay legislation while knowing himself to be gay. In a situation like this, where someone who is gay/lesbian, is in a position of power and uses that power to hurt or otherwise limit all gay and lesbian people, the exposure of their hypocrisy is warranted.

I believe that respect is the key to the whole controversy. Respect for one's self and respect for others. When we learn to respect ourselves, individually, there will be no need to "out" people because all gay and lesbian people will stand up and say, "I am what I am." We will also know that respect for our brothers and sisters is only an extension of the respect that we have for ourselves.



Check it out — we've got COMMUNITY here!						
<h1>JUNE</h1>						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<i>June is busting out all over...</i>					1	2
					8P Acceptance AA	4P Gay/Lesbian Overeaters Anonymous 7:30P Mature Gay Men Call 882-1747
<i>with Pride • Pride • Pride!</i>						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11A MCC Charlotte 6:45P New Life MCC 7:30P MCC Charlotte S.A.L.G.A (Asheville)	7P GROW - Wilmington	6P GALA-UNCC Students 7P Closer - Asheville 7:30P FFP/PWA support group (MAP) 8P Acceptance AA 8P First Tuesday Mtg.	4P Women and AIDS Support Group (MAP) 7P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group 7P Gay Parents 7:30P MCC Charlotte Bible Study	11:00A MAP-PWA Support Group 7P ONE VOICE rehearsals 7:30P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group	8P Acceptance AA 9P Tradesmen Club Night 10P Closetbusters on Cablevision Ch. 33	4P Gay/Lesbian Overeaters Anonymous 3P & 10P MENAMORE
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
11A MCC Charlotte 6:45P New Life MCC 7:30P MCC Charlotte 8P Integrity	7P GROW - Wilmington	6P GALA-UNCC Students 7P Closer - Asheville 7:30P MAP - Bereavement Support Group 8P Acceptance AA	4P Women and AIDS Support Group (MAP) 7:00P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group 7:30P MCC Charlotte Bible Study 7:30P Queen City Friends	11:00A MAP-PWA Support Group 7P ONE VOICE rehearsals 7:30P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group 7:30P PFLAG	8P Acceptance AA	4P Gay/Lesbian Overeaters Anonymous 8P Yadkin BWMT, Spencer
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
11A MCC Charlotte 1P WOW Mothers Gp. 6:45P New Life MCC 7:30P MCC Charlotte  FATHER'S DAY	7P GROW - Wilmington	6P GALA-UNCC Students 7P Closer - Asheville 7:30P FFP/PWA support group (MAP) 8P Acceptance AA	4P Women and AIDS Support Group (MAP) 7:00P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group 7:30P MCC Charlotte Bible Study 7:30P WOW Meeting	11:00A MAP-PWA Support Group 7P ONE VOICE rehearsals 7:30P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group SUMMER BEGINS 	8P Acceptance AA 8P ONE VOICE Concert 10P Closetbusters on Cablevision Ch. 33	44P Gay/Lesbian Overeaters Anonymous 7P MCC Charlotte Pot Luck Supper SC PRIDE PARADE
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
11A MCC Charlotte-Concert by WITNESS 1-5P WOW's Pride Picnic 5P Tradesmen 6:45P New Life MCC with WITNESS 7:30P MCC Charlotte 8P Integrity	7P GROW - Wilmington	6P GALA-UNCC Students 7:30P MAP - Bereavement Support Group 8P Acceptance AA	4P Women and AIDS Support Group (MAP) 7:00P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group 7:30P MCC Charlotte Bible Study 7:30P Queen City Friends	11:00A MAP-PWA Support Group 7P ONE VOICE rehearsals 7:30P MAP-HIV-Positive Support Group	8P Acceptance AA	44P Gay/Lesbian Overeaters Anonymous NC PRIDE PARADE