

QNotes

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Mailing Address:

PO Box 221841

Charlotte, NC 28222

Phone: 704-531-9988

Fax: 704-531-1361

E-mail: editor@q-notes.com

Website: http://www.q-notes.com

Publisher & CEO Jim Yarbrough
 Managing Editor Clay Ollis
 Associate Editor Lainey Millen
 Administrative Asst Brian M. Myer
 Advertising Sales Jim Yarbrough

National Advertising Representative
 Rivendell Marketing Company, Inc.
 212-242-6863

Contributing Writers: Elizabeth Birch, David Elliot, Anabel Evora, Deborah Fleischman, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Rachel Gold, Jim Grigg, Robert Marcus James, Pat and Wally Kutteles, Charlene Lichtenstein, Lainey Millen, Mike Mings, Brian M. Myer, Cindy Nardozi, Sam Nixon, Clay Ollis, Cathy Renna, Robert S. Rosen, David Scodras, Ronda Shouse, Randy Siegel, Winnie Stachelberg, Trinity,

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editorial

We've come a long way, baby?



Lainey Millen
Associate Editor

My, how things have changed. Morés and customs have realigned themselves and brought GLBTs into the mainstream. Movies, such as *Tootsie*, *Bird Cage*, *If These Walls Could Talk 2*, *And The Band Played On*, and others have shed a much needed light on societal diversity and encouraged favorable attitudes towards GLBT/straight differences.

I remember a time when there was a great division in the lesbian community between bitches and femmes. Nowadays, there appears to be more of an androgenous attitude among women. As for the guys, it seems that similar attitudes are ingrained there as well. As for the bisexual members of this vast group, the fabric shows no seams. Dressing in drag no longer is considered odd! And, lastly, those in the transgender community have made large strides toward obtaining acceptance, as indicated by HRC's recent addition of "gender identity" to its mission statement. Having a GLBT friend is now in vogue!

There have been too many who have shed their blood for this plateau. The mountain was quite high. Even as recently as 20-25 years ago, it seemed almost insurmountable. Now, we can look back and see how far civil liberties have come.

Yet liberty is not easily won. And there are still great battles to wage. No matter what we have done, we must still fight the "good fight." We seem to be a society that is bent on factionalism. Be we lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, only a handful have bonded together to work as a single unit. It is just fine,

on a more social level, to find comfort with those with whom we find similarity. But when it comes to the big picture, many painters are needed to cover the entire canvas that is pulled tightly across the frame.

The Human Rights Campaign has made great "noise" to push through the Washington slush and mud to gain victories on some initiatives. It appears, with the new administration, that some of the ground that was conquered could be lost, in part or in whole, if we do not stand together. AIDS also brought with it a considerable amount of clamor. Early in the recognition and history of the disease, those infected and affected dodged bullets from family, friends and the community at large. Education assisted in understanding the effects of this dreaded demon. AIDS broke through orientation barricades into the world at large, and thereby lost (at least for many) its label as a "gay" disease.

Heroes, like Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena, died on the battlefield, defending their right to be "just as they were." It created an incredible public awareness of the plight of those in the GLBT family. Hate crimes awareness and legislation became a national passion.

So what now? Have we come a long way on this journey? Or is there still much left to do? The answer is unequivocally: Yes!

To do this we must not think of ourselves in our own small sector of the group. We must band together, to walk as brothers and sisters in the truest sense of the word. Next time there is an election, a referendum, an initiative or someone in need, reach out and lend a helping hand. Write or talk to legislators, register and participate in the election process. We have seen all too well that one vote can really count in the final tallies.

I am asking each of you — along with myself — to pick up a brush, select a color from the rainbow of paints available and help create a masterpiece through which we can share our pride. Do it for yourselves, for your community and for all the worldwide "family."

United, we can make a difference. ▼

viewpoint

Talking about gender diversity

In March, the Human Rights Campaign's Board of Directors and Governors voted to expand the organization's mission statement to include gender expression and identity. This action was taken to memorialize and build upon the organization's growing and substantial work in this area.

HRC recognizes there are organizations and leaders that have been focused on issues related to gender identity as their core mission, and that these leaders and institutions will necessarily be the primary voice on issues that affect the lives of transgender Americans.

Adopted in 1998 as part of HRC's five-year strategic plan the previous mission statement read as follows:

"As America's largest gay and lesbian organization, the Human Rights Campaign provides a national voice on gay and lesbian issues. The Human Rights Campaign effectively lobbies Congress; mobilizes grassroots action in diverse communities; invests strategically to elect a fair-minded Congress; and increases public understanding through innovative education and communication strategies.

"HRC is a bipartisan organization that works to advance equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans to ensure they can be open, honest and

safe at home, at work and in the community."

In the newly amended mission statement the second paragraph has been replaced with:

"HRC is a bipartisan organization that works to advance equality based on sexual orientation and gender expression and identity, to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community."

We at HRC believe that changing our mission is an honest reflection of HRC's work at this moment in the institution's history. Although HRC's primary focus is on issues related to sexual orientation, it also has an important institutional commitment to issues related to gender expression and identity. HRC views this step as honest and proportional.

Through the years HRC has worked to build alliances with transgender organizations and See VIEWPOINT on Page 9



Elizabeth Birch
HRC
Executive Director

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