

GLAAD Notes

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children into homosexuality.

Gingrich also joined in the habitual attack on *Heather Has Two Mommies*, a children's storybook that depicts a warm, loving lesbian family. According to the Speaker, such a book is bad for young minds.

On this point, Gingrich is as hypocritical as he is heterosexual. Would the story of his own life be a better allegory for young readers?

Newt served his first wife with divorce papers while she lay seriously ill in a hospital bed. And while Newt has been expounding his narrow-minded bigotry, his sister Candace, and out lesbian, has been lobbying on Capitol Hill to protect AIDS funding and gay and lesbian rights.

Unfortunately, Newt Gingrich is not swayed by facts, logic or his own family. So much for "traditional values."

At his press conference, Gingrich also announced that homosexuality is not a "reasonable lifestyle." Therefore, the pedantic Speaker concluded, the subject simply has no place in the classroom.

What is TRULY unreasonable here is the continued censorship of lesbian and gay history and culture. The facts of our lives are, after all, just that — facts. To insist that these truths be hidden is intellectually dishonest.

Such censorship is morally reprehensible as well. Silence in our schools not only fails to prevent homophobic discrimination, but actively encourages the violent oppression of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Newt Gingrich couldn't be more wrong. Our schools are recruiting grounds for homophobes, not homosexuals.

In fact, Gingrich is a victim of the very ignorance he now intends to perpetuate. He is a homophobe precisely because he never read anything fair or factual (if anything at all) about homosexuality in his high school textbooks.

There's a particularly vicious circle at work here. And for the sake of all youth — and really, for the sake of the nation — it must be broken. The climate of hatred in which we live is sustained by the textbooks our children read. The classroom is where so much bigotry begins, and that is where it must finally be stopped.

Contact Newt Gingrich, Office of the Speaker of the House, H-204 Capitol Building, Washington, DC 20515, tel. (202) 225-4501, fax (202) 225-4656, e-mail georgia6@hr.house.gov. Also contact the editors of your local newspapers and magazines, asking them to denounce this latest round of Gingrich gay-baiting. Remind your elected representatives to do the same, preferably on the floor of the House and Senate.

Hopeful television

A recent episode of *Chicago Hope*, a CBS medical drama series, featured a singular storyline about transphobia and transgender identity. The plot revolved around the relationship between "Billy" and "Annie," two romantically involved characters.

Billy is injured during a hockey game and, accompanied by girlfriend Annie, goes to the hospital for reconstructive surgery. The surgeon, Jeri Enfante, somehow knows Annie and this past relationship leads Billy down a path of speculation.

First, Billy assumes that Annie might have had breast implants. But, as it turns out, Dr. Enfante had actually performed Annie's sex reassignment surgery three years earlier, freeing her from what is later described as "gender dysphoria disorder."

As might be expected, the plot turns on Annie's decision to "tell my boyfriend I used to be a man." Falling deeper in love with Billy, she decides to tell him. Billy comes unglued at the news, ranting that he could have handled it if Annie had told him she had "been married, or had a criminal record...but to tell me that you used to have a PENIS!"

The well-intentioned dialogue attempts to make an important point. Straight boy Billy can perfectly accept that his girlfriend might have had dangerous implant surgery solely to increase her breast size, but reverts to raving

lunacy when Annie tells him she had surgery in order to live completely as the gender she knows is truly hers.

A medical colleague eventually attempts to convince Billy that "love is love." To Billy, however, Annie has now become a "thing" and a "mutant." This scene ends with Dr. Enfante telling Billy that, while she first felt bad for Annie, she now feels sorry for him. Thus, the script manages to bypass the usual contrivance of illicit "pity" for transgendered persons, and instead focuses the disdain where it belongs — on the transphobic individual.

The plot ends on an emotionally powerful, if discouraging note. Though both Annie and Billy tell each other that they want to "try to make it work," Billy recoils from Annie's kiss. "I wish you hadn't told me," he finally says, and the couple parts.

This storyline broaches a subject that many prime time TV viewers still "wish you hadn't told me." As such, it begins to break the enormous silence and challenge the ignorance that surrounds transgender issues.

Send feedback to David E. Kelley, Michael Dinner and John Tinker, Co-Executive Producers, and James C. Hart, Producer, *Chicago Hope*, David E. Kelley Productions, PO Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213, tel. (310) 369-2132. Copy your correspondence to Peter Tortorici, President, CBS Entertainment, 7800 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036, tel. (213) 852-2345.

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