

guest editorial

Telling truths



Kerry Lobel

Like many people, I have found myself moved by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. While it is true that I am a soft touch for determined blonde femmes with strong social convictions, I also appreciate

that Diana sought to provide comfort for others while at the same time looking for love herself. I am glad that the media has focused on Diana as an agent of change and on her work with survivors of land mines, the homeless and people with AIDS.

Few of us come to fame by marrying an heir to the throne. And few have the advantages that come to those with wealth and royal privilege. Yet each of us can make social change in our own way.

I've been reminded recently of two such women who have profoundly changed the world in which we live, Dorothy Hadjys and Adrienne Rich. Dorothy Hadjys is the mother of Allen Schindler, a sailor who was brutally murdered by his shipmates because he was gay. Adrienne Rich is a remarkable writer whose nearly two dozen volumes of poetry and prose have been transformational. Two of her essays, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" and "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying," transformed many in my generation.

Dorothy Hadjys came to her activism because of her son's murder. When the Navy stonewalled Dorothy, she worked tirelessly (with help from the gay, lesbian and bisexual community) to ensure that Allen Schindler's killers would be brought to justice. Dorothy's vigilance can never end.

Now, with the help of the Servicemember's

Legal Defense Network, Dorothy is trying to collect one million signatures to ensure that Allen's killer is never considered for parole. Her story was recently portrayed in the film *Any Mother's Son*. When I met Dorothy this past August, she said there were only two places left where she wanted to tell her story — to Oprah Winfrey and the President of the United States. She understands there is great power in telling her story and the story of her son.

Earlier this summer, Adrienne Rich got word that she had been selected to receive the prestigious National Medal for the Arts. Each year, the award is given to 12 recipients. She turned the Medal down flat because accepting it would be viewed as condoning the Administration's social policies with which she disagrees. She wrote to Jane Alexander, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, "A president cannot meaningfully honor certain token artists while the people at large are so dishonored."

Rich told journalist Laura Flanders, "You know, I really wouldn't mandate what someone else should do in a situation like this and, as I've said, there's no simple formula for the relationship of art to justice. I did what I had to do because of who I am."

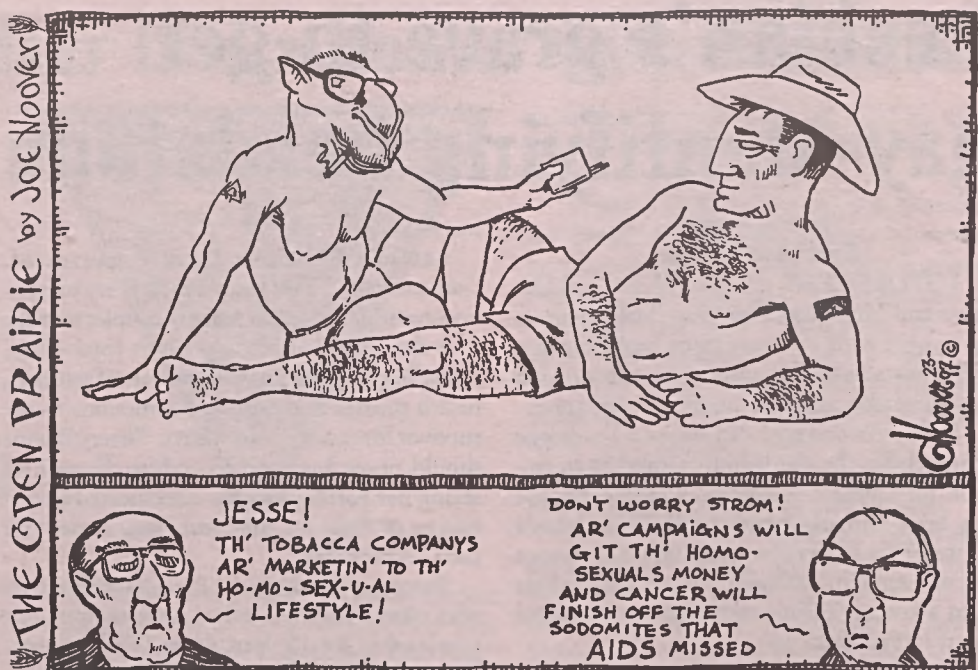
As Rich says in "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying," "Truthfulness anywhere means a heightened complexity...The politics worth having, the relationships worth having, demand that we delve still deeper."

And each of these women has. Each came to their political work from widely divergent starting places. Each was passionately and tirelessly driven to tell the truth in their own way. Each teaches us that truth-telling transforms both the teller and those of us who listen.

Again from Adrienne Rich, "...truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity." The stories each of us tells about our lives and our willingness to dig deep and take risks, transforms not only our own gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community, but the lives of millions around the world. It is this transformation connecting personal to political action each day of our lives that makes social change. ▼

— Kerry Lobel

[Kerry Lobel is the executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.]



letters

The price of impotence

Just a note to say thanks for your article by Dr. Wynn. [September 6 issue] I would like to correct a few notations in the text. I have been very successfully using the injections of Prostaglandin for over a year. Dr. Wynn is in error on his pricing of this method. It costs me about \$18 per raging 4-hour erection. I also differ on his suggestion to stay away from the clinics that advertise in the newspaper. I found Dr. Alan Resnik and the staff at National Mens Health to be very professional and fair-priced.

— Bob Rahilly, Charlotte

Into the lion's den

Mecklenburg County Commissioner Bill James took a giant step into the lion's den on Sunday, September 7. At the request of Ed Williams of the *Charlotte Observer*, James was the first in a series of speakers for an issues-based Sunday School class at Myers Park Baptist Church (MPBC). MPBC, a church with a history of liberalism, was not the most likely choice for James, a member of the Evangelical Calvary Church, to speak. A crowd of almost 100 came to hear him speak and ask questions.

James has, for several months now, been considered one of the buffoons of the County Commission. In fact, were it not for Joel Carter's trademark mustache, James would almost certainly be considered the least articulate and most nonsensical member. His tendency to speak in soundbites and his penchant for confusing answers have given the public this image, which made this Sunday more shocking than expected.

James, sadly, is not an idiot. In fact, he is, when allowed to express his opinions without interruption, an eloquent speaker — frightening news to those predicting an effortless campaign to replace him in Nov. of '98. In addition to his eloquence, James is a zealot. What he proved in his exchange was an unwavering conviction in his correctness, based entirely upon moral grounds, and a resolve to stand firm against what he considers a growing tide of anti-Christian sentiment in Charlotte.

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