

# Q-Notes

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## viewpoint

### Why America must honor ALL veterans

This fight is personal. A year ago, our son Barry was attacked and killed — viciously beaten with a baseball bat — by fellow soldiers in the United States Army. Their reason? They thought Barry was gay, and so they beat him while he was asleep.

Our son was killed on American soil by an American soldier. That is disgraceful.

We are appalled that our military lets cowards like that serve in its ranks, but discharges brave lesbians, gays and bisexuals who wish to serve their country. The Pentagon needs to re-think its priorities.

It is time for "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" to end.

This policy is a lie. It forces service members to lie to their friends about who they are under penalty of expulsion. This policy is also an excuse. It is an excuse to abuse and harass men and women who protect our country.

The Department of Defense, in its own study, found that 80 percent of service members surveyed had seen or witnessed some form of harassment during the past year. We should all, as American citizens, be concerned.

The time has come for accountability in the nation's armed forces. A commander's job is to take care of his or her soldiers. All soldiers. A

commander who does not hold soldiers responsible for their actions is simply not doing his or her job. The Pentagon must learn to play by its own rules. "Do what I say, not what I do" doesn't work in the military. Commanders must set an example for their soldiers to follow.

Just recently, we received Barry's belongings from the Army — a year after his death.

Barry's items were thrown into a cardboard box. A medal he worked so hard to earn was sticking out of the side; it could have easily slipped out while being handled by the post office. The Army did about as good a job caring for his things as they did caring for his life.

Among the things we found in that box was a card from SLDN that lists a service members' rights under the policy. Say nothing. Sign nothing. Get legal help. It was probably the most valuable thing Barry could have had. We just wish he would have called that number.

As a soldier, Barry had few people to turn to for protection. As parents, we thank you for caring, and ask you to help those who are the targets of military intolerance.

This Veteran's Day (November 11), please join us in honoring the memory of Barry and all service members. Write your elected officials, call the Pentagon, and let them know: It is time for this policy to go. Our military must become whole. ▼

— Pat and Wally Kutteles  
Kansas City, MO

[Service members may call Servicemembers Legal Defense Network for free, confidential legal counseling at 202-328 FAIR. For more information, visit SLDN on the web at [www.sldn.org](http://www.sldn.org).]

## letter

### The play's the thing

I'd like to respond to a few observations or criticisms you made in your theater review column regarding *Passing Ceremonies* ["Play issues aren't so black and white," October 28, 2000, page 18]. Also, I would like to answer your post-column inquiries in regards to this wonderful play which I attended on Saturday, October 7.

In your column, you never mention the name of the director with whom you noted several directorial problems.

For me enhancing the set with a more physical environment isn't what connects me to the characters or the plot, it's the story itself and the actors who convey the playwright's words. They could have been on stage in front of a blank screen instead of a café overlooking the river, and this play would have still "moved" me.

I think Mr. Kamtman used what was available and made it work to the advantage of the actors and the audience.

Let's also give credit to the stage manager, Velvet Dockrill for the hard work this play demanded, and the OUTCharlotte committee for their insight allowing this work to be commissioned and to seen by so many.

Now, with regards to the playwright, and a quote in your column about the homogenization of the characters down to "gay artists (who by the way are black)."

You say that the mostly "Caucasian" audience was able to share in the experience of these two dynamic writers, poets, and artists but they are not exposed to the "passion" that made them who they were.

Tom Wirth, the executor for Richard Bruce Nugent, (who was consulted and was present during the play) and Steve would have to dis-

agree with this observation. Although I am not speaking for Steve, I am privy to the fact that I know how hard he researched these two featured men to capture their individuality and passion enough to bring that element across the stage.

Essex was clearly passionate in his poetry and prose, and during the play Essex dialog with Richard was very tense. At one point, Richard does ask if Essex was a preacher because it apparently grates against Richard's nonchalant, easy-going nature. Essex is angry, and audiences feel that anger in Essex's tense and metered tone that he gives off to Richard and Rafael, Richard's love interest in the play. Richard is passionate about his travels to Italy and it is reflected in his writing and drawings. Steve's dialogue between the characters are an accurate depiction exposing each man's personality, what made them human enough to care about.

I'm not quite sure what you meant when you say that Steve can only intellectualize the ideas of bigotry and culturism. Is it because Essex and Richard are no longer alive and he can't actually know how these two subjects affected their works? Does that have anything to do with his being white?

To convey a message or story about a person(s) is to take what you know about the person(s). So, to me, that means research, reading and breaking down the essence of a person by taking an extrapolation of what is factual without the main body present as a resource.

As a playwright, one should have literary license to create a story for the audience to enjoy or to make the intellectual leap. I don't think Steve underestimates his audience, whether they are mostly white or all black. I, being the latter, don't find his contribution coming at the expense of the black or gay communities. If he didn't tell the story about these two men, who would?

Has he treaded on territory best discovered  
See LETTER on page 9

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