

QUEER OVER HERE

This first column of mine was going to be about Britain and America and the differences in being queer here and across the pond. In some ways it still is, in others it is not.

I am an exchange student over from Britain for one year. I live in Manchester, England, the queer capital of the North.

I wanted to talk about what it's like there, what it's like here, comparing the two.

But a certain group of young men have prevented me from doing what I wanted to do; a group of young men who have really pissed me off big-time.

I've always been of the opinion that every person is entitled to what I call public privacy. So long as no one gets hurt, what should prevent you from doing whatever you like in public? I refer mainly to P.D.A.s — Public Displays of Affection. I have never been annoyed that straight couples kiss and grope in public. I'm

Lucy Sweetman

quite happy to take the live-and-let-live attitude.

I've been out for four years now, and in all that time I too have been afforded that privacy. I could be affectionate with a partner in public. Yes, there would be stares. I can deal with stares.

I think I've been spoiled. Manchester is a queer city. Up in the heart of the North of England, the native Mancunions are used to it. The city is full of queer bars and clubs.

When I came here, my sister said I should watch out for queer-bashers. I scoffed. I said Chapel Hill is known for being a liberal town; I said I won't get abuse there.

Well, to my dismay, I couldn't have been more wrong.

The culprits? Yes, FRAT BOYS. Well, they looked like Frat boys. You can tell, can't you? You know, they're all

jocks, have short hair, Carolina Spirit etc. What? Me? Judgemental?

I was with my girlfriend, returning from the Red Clay Ramblers show last semester. "DYKES!"

I was talking as we walked past. After we'd gotten a safe distance past them, that's what I heard. I double checked that I'd heard right. I had. "DYKES!"

I'd been in this situation once before. Franklin St., Halloween, hand in hand with my girlfriend. That time I was so amazed at what I'd heard, I couldn't speak. This time I could speak. I was angry. I was really pissed off.

"FUCK YOU!" That's it. Fuck you. Nothing witty, nothing argumentative. We were too far away for me to go back and shout at them. That's all I could muster in my exasperated state.

Well, there were a million

and one things I wanted to say. But none of them were there for me. Half of me is happy that I said what I did. The other half is annoyed that I didn't say all the million and one other things I wanted to say. Some might argue that

I'm hanging out with my girlfriend just like they do, but I get the abuse.

just shouting abuse does no good and is just as bad as the original abuse. Well it does me good.

I wanted to shout more and louder, I wanted to kick the living shit out of them. What can I do? I'm hanging out with my girlfriend just like they do, but I get the abuse.

It sucks and next time it happens I will lose my rag. I'll stop being P.C. and thinking "abuse doesn't solve anything, write an article, Lucy."

Next time I will hit back,

louder and stronger. I'm fed up with having to deal with the kind of crap that is being dealt out to me. It is fear of difference that motivates this kind of abuse. No doubt the guy who shouted at us is unaware that perhaps some of his family or friends are queer. Maybe one of the guys in that group had been on the verge of coming out to his friends. What now though? His friend is homophobic. How can he ever come out to him now?

We have to realize that we are all responsible for the community in which we live. We are all responsible for the peacefulness of that community. Regardless of where we fit into that setting, whether we consider ourselves part of a minority or part of the majority, we have to take on the challenges that we all encounter when we co-habitate.

Hopefully one day soon, all the promoters of hate-filled "isms" and phobias will realize they're missing out and we can all get on with the important thing in life: just being.

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as the Conference of Gay and Lesbian Officials have endorsed the boycott, as have celebrities such as Barbra Streisand. The boycott's organizers say it has cost the state as much as \$20 million already.

City councils in Atlanta, Seattle, Boston, Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Austin have joined the boycott. Some have forbidden employees to travel to Colorado on official business, while others have also forbidden any dealings with companies based in Colorado.

Colorado's \$5 billion-a-year tourism industry makes it es-

pecially vulnerable to such a boycott. Streisand's public comments had tourism officials worried that Hollywood celebrities might forsake the ski slopes of Colorado. Leaders in Aspen raised \$50,000 for newspaper ads to point out Aspen's historically progressive record on gay civil rights.

The New Christian Right

The wave of anti-gay efforts in 1992 reflects the growing strength of a new nation-wide network of conservative Christian political organizations. In the past, these groups have mostly focused on quietly electing conservative Christian majorities to local boards and committees. Now

they are turning to state elections and referenda, and toward gaining control of state and local Republican parties.

Working at the grass-roots level through evangelical congregations, these groups have

largely escaped mainstream media attention while they focused on local elections. Since turnout for these elections is usually light, a small but motivated group of voters can often determine the outcome.

In San Diego in 1990, the religious right backed 90 candidates for local offices, two-thirds of whom won. Campaigning quietly through evangelical and fundamentalist churches, they downplayed their religious connections in the media.

The religious right has used similar tactics to gain control of local and state Republican parties by taking over local caucuses that select delegates to state bodies. In 12 states, including Colorado, Washington, Louisiana, Kansas, Michigan and Arizona, the religious right gained control of the state Republican caucus or convention this year.

Christian groups in other states have learned from this year's results. Groups in Ohio, California, Oregon, Idaho, Maine and Missouri have announced their intention to get measures similar to

Colorado's on their ballots. And in 1993?

This year's elections showed a mixed result: two anti-gay ballot measures passed at the same time voters elected the most gay-positive president in history and the number of openly gay or lesbian elected officials jumped from 64 to 75 nationwide.

The passage of Amendment 2 in Colorado sets the stage for right-wing Christian groups to put similar bans on anti-discrimination laws on ballots across the country. Gays and lesbians now face the possibility of having to fight city by city and state by state to retain existing laws, diverting resources that could have been used for expanding civil rights protections.

The changes brought about in Washington by the 1992 election present another opportunity to pre-empt these local battles at the national level. A federal gay and lesbian civil rights law would take precedence over any state or local measures banning anti-discrimination laws. President Clinton has pledged

to sign a gay and lesbian civil rights bill if it meets certain conditions, and the chances of passing such a bill through Congress have never been better. The Human Rights Campaign Fund estimates that the election will increase the number of congressional co-sponsors of the bill by 13, to a total of 116.

The achievements over the past decade are impressive. Seven states and numerous cities and counties across the country now have laws banning anti-gay discrimination. Domestic partner measures are being adopted by many cities, universities and corporations, giving gay and lesbian couples some privileges given to married heterosexual couples. The reality of gay and lesbian families is even being addressed in some school systems.

Right-wing Christians are organizing against homosexuals because they see our society has changed. Their goal is to take the country back. The challenge for the gay and lesbian community is to weather this backlash and carry their agenda forward in the 1990s.

Gay and Lesbian Mental Health Counseling

Individuals and Couples
Some Insurance/Sliding Fee Scale

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