

AFFINITY

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WELCOME to Palm Springs, Home of the 1996 National Affirmation

Have you moved? Are You moving soon? Call (303) 771-7169 or e-mail: AlaninDen@aol.com

Ex-BYU Professor now at UNM

University of New Mexico's newspaper, "The Daily Lobo", had a front page profile covering of Gail Turley Houston, who was recently dismissed from BYU for her feminist ideas. Here's some highlights:

The Daily Lobo
Albuquerque, NM
Vol. 101, No. 15
Sept 13, 1996

HOUSTON PREPARE TO STIR UP UNM by Rebecca Davidson

An English professor who was fired by Brigham Young University because of her feminist activism now hopes to make waves at UNM. Gail Turley Houston, who joined the English faculty in August, said BYU dismissed her because of religious and political differences. The university is run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "Basically they're saying I denied the right of the priesthood to tell women what their roles are," she said.

After teaching at BYU for six years, Houston was up for tenure. She had the approval of the English department and the college, but the university's administration denied her tenure. "Suddenly, instead of being a review and examination of my academic work, it became a religious court in which they examined my spiritual beliefs," she said. "I was expecting them to rigorously analyze my professional work, and they basically ignored that."

The BYU administration questioned her beliefs about the Mormon concept of Mother God, she said, explaining that the Mormon faith believes in a dual god which is both a Mother God and a Father God. She added that Mormon leaders say the Mother God shouldn't be worshiped. "I, along with other feminists, am very interested in the Mother God," she said. Houston said she also believes women should be able to have positions of leadership within the Mormon faith, but her beliefs were not shared. "I was shocked at this kind of violation to one's private self. They dug this all up about me, and that was not their prerogative," she said.

Besides her religious beliefs, political activism also got Houston into trouble. While at BYU, she had several conflicts with the administration.

See BYU on page 3

LETTERS TO OUR READERS

Dear Readers,

Being gay and Mormon is a unique, difficult and dangerous journey. Dying Under Covenant will capture and share some of those stories with its audience. But we know there are many stories.

We invite you to share yours.

We don't have a bulletin board, but we'll index and post your story (within reasonable size limits!)

Tell your story by sending us a video:

Stripling Warrior Films
2118 Wilshire Blvd., #857
Santa Monica, CA 90403-5784

Stripling Home

Dear Readers,

(Darren H)

I am writing in response to Rick's Letter to the Readers in the July/August *Affinity*. Although I agree with much of what was said, I must take exception to several points.

Rick, you state that you feel that Affirmation has become too broad as it "rushes headlong to make everyone comfortable, and be everything to everyone." You then go on to state that you are no longer surprised that our growth is stagnant, and propose a tightening of the restrictions found in the Word of Wisdom. You also advocate that we become an organization more centered around spirituality than friendship and socialization. Rick, do you really think our organization will grow if we narrow our focus?

My personal feeling is that one of the strongest aspects of Affirmation is its willingness to embrace everyone. I have always felt that the diversity within Affirmation (and especially at the annual

conferences) is such that I could find someone to relate to whether I chose to have a deeply spiritual discussion or a wild night of debauchery bar-hopping. We, perhaps more than anyone else, should be tolerant of those who might not agree with our personal philosophy of spirituality or which doctrines of the church we choose to follow.

Personally, I put off attending my first Affirmation meeting for a very long time because I feared that the organization would have too much of a spiritual focus for my taste. That is not what I needed at that point in my coming out process, and thankfully, that is not what I found. You indicate that you no longer need another club to make friends and socialize. I am happy for you, but many of us do. And many of us are exhilarated to have an organization where we can make friends and socialize with those who understand our backgrounds without long definitions or explanations. Many of us don't feel a particular need for the spiritual association, but long for the cultural association with others who fit the relatively small niche of Gay and Lesbian Mormons.

Rick, you point out that certain individuals may throw out everything they were raised to believe during their coming out process, and I agree that this is an unfortunate truth. However, if we change our organization to alienate those individuals, what are the chances that they will come to us later when their lives mellow a bit? And what of those individuals who do not mellow? Should we exclude them because we don't agree with their choices? As the only viable, nation-wide (indeed, world-wide) organization that provides a haven to Gay and Lesbian Mormons, we don't have the luxury to be exclusive.

What we need, and perhaps don't get enough of, is a good mix of the spiritual and the temporal. Some in our organization could benefit greatly from a workshop on moderation of the principles taught in the Word of Wisdom.

Others don't need this and would benefit from other options. And I sincerely hope that there will be workshops concerning spirituality for those such as yourself who are looking for that. The point is that we should provide enough diversity to make everyone feel welcome. Perhaps, as you say, we shouldn't strive to be everything to everyone, but I think we should strive to provide as much as possible to as many as possible so that no one feels that they do not have a place at our table.

Rick, I think I know who you are (what's this new thing about not using last names, anyway?), and I hope that you don't abandon Affirmation. Pull back and take a breather for a bit but please don't go away. Your workshop at a conference several years ago was the best I have attended in my five Affirmation conferences. Your focus helps some of us (that may be a bit less focused) understand that the spiritual parts of ourselves should be given some importance, as well.

Sincerely,
Darren L Holman

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

BYU from page 1

Greetings Affirmation,

I am please to announce the candidates for Executive Director of Affirmation for the 1997 term of office: Rick Fernandez and Rob Killian. The election will be held following the Affirmation Conference in this manner:

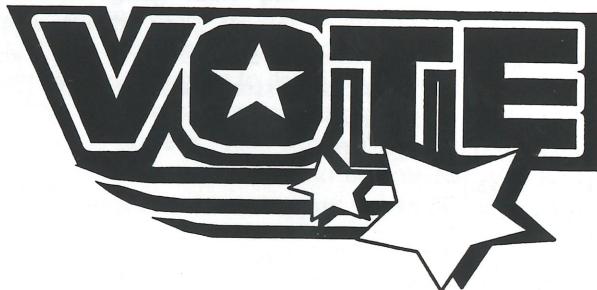
All Affirmation members, who are officially "dues paying members" by 12:01 a.m Monday, October 14th" will receive ballots in the mail shortly thereafter (no later than Wednesday, October 23rd). The membership will have one week to return their ballots (to be counted, a ballot must be postmarked no later than October 30th 1996 and received by the Election committee no later than Tuesday, November 5th.) Faxed ballots from members living outside of North America will be accepted if arrangements are previously made directly with Paul Mortensen, Election Chair.

Ballots will be counted by the Election Committee, headed by Paul Mortensen, and the result submitted to the Executive Director the evening of the 5th of November. The candidates will be informed by phone of the result immediately. Results will be announced on November 6th over q-saints and printed in the next issue of Affinity. The new Executive Director will take office January 1, 1997 and serve for one year.

Two opportunities are being given to the candidates or their representative to speak at the Conference in October. The first opportunity will be a question/answer forum held during the Leadership Meeting (open to all) held Friday between 4:00 and 6:00 PM (the question/answer period will be held between 5:15 and 6:00—5 minute opening statements and the balance made up of questions from those in attendance—moderator: Duane Jennings). The second opportunity will be five minute speeches to be presented by the candidate or a chosen representative to the entire conference body on Saturday evening.

We encourage everyone to get involved!

—Scott MacKay



One incident occurred last year when Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas visited the university. Houston and a few students appeared with signs reading, "Welcome Clarence Thomas, now we'd like to hear from Anita Hill." Houston also led a peaceful protest of the excommunication of five people from the Mormon church and lobbied for a year to get a women's resource center established at BYU. A center was established despite heavy opposition.

Houston said she is hoping to be able to help people at UNM as much as she can. "I always want to be a part of feminist activism and activism for minorities and for children," she said, adding that she has already been asked to be on the Executive Committee of Women's Studies. She also said she would like to become active in the New Mexico Democratic Party to help "get out the vote" and to support New Mexico Democrats, including her first cousin Tom Udall, who is the state attorney general.

Houston said she is impressed with New Mexico. "I'm coming from the most homogeneous state, where all the people are white and all one religion, to the most diverse state," she said. "I love diversity. I love watching different cultures interact and communicate. I think that's what the global village is all about. This is what we should be doing."

She said she also loves Albuquerque's "clean air, cool nights and laid back atmosphere." But she said she doesn't quite feel at home, because here family is still in Utah. Houston's husband, filmmaker Michael Amundsen, and her two daughters, Melissa and Kate, are staying in Utah until their house is sold.

—Rebecca Davidson

SPIRITUALITY

How Does One Measure Success?

Is it a type of job or annual income? The size of a house? The make and model of a car? The ability to fly first class? The latest and trendiest of clothes? To enjoy the finest of restaurants? The number of church or Affirmation callings? A two year supply of food? The number of children you have?

Whether you:

Flip hamburgers at MacDonald's or are the President of the United States,

Live in a tiny studio or a grand mansion,

Take the bus or drive the hottest sports car,

Take a coach train or fly first class,

Wear clothes from Goodwill or the latest New York fashions,

Enjoy the finest restaurants or make your home the finest restaurant,

Rarely attend Church or Affirmation or hold several callings in both organizations,

Shop for food every day or rotate your two year food supply,

Have no children or be the parent of 15 or more children;

God is no respecter of persons and loves us all unconditionally, regardless of our temporal successes. The ability to work and contribute to the community or society, no matter how seemingly insignificant or important it may be, is a gift from God that we should be grateful for.

From *Matthew 5:13*:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost [its] savour, where-with shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

From *Ecclesiastes 3:11-13*:

[God] hath make every-thing beautiful in [God's] time: also [God] set the eternal in their heart with-out which [a person] can-not find out the work that God hath done.

I know there is no good in them, but for a [person] to rejoice, and do good in [their] labor, it is the gift of God.

This includes those who volunteer countless hours to help at local schools and clubs, work for AIDS charities, and do the things necessary to run Affirmation on local, national, and international levels. To all these people, I say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I do not know what would have happened to me if not for Affirmation being there when I came out in 1988.

That which is temporal, comes and goes as the dust of the earth. That which is spiritual and eternal, is more difficult to measure.

The following two poems show success of a more eternal nature:

That [person] is a success,
Who has lived well,
laughed often and loved much;
who has gained the respect
of intelligent [people]
and the love of children.
Who has filled [their] niche
and accomplished [their] task
who leaves the world better
than [they] found it,
whether it be an improved poppy,
a perfect poem
or a rescued soul;
who never lacked appreciation
of earth's beauty
or failed to express it;
Who looked for the best in others
and gave the best [they] had.

—Anonymous

If I can stop one heart from
breaking,
I shall not live in vain.
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again.
I shall not live in vain.

Poem #6,
by Emily Dickinson

As I have expressed in a previous monthly message: The most important things in life aren't things. They are the people we love, and the memories and lessons we learn in this life.

—James Kent

FAMILY ISSUES

GAY PARENTING

On Tue, 24 Sept 1996, Joseph Downing and Aaron wrote:

One comment made on Sunday morning was that we had spent little (well, actually NO) time on the issues of being a gay father. Wow! Really? I find that surprising, and I think disappointing. What does one talk about at a gay Mormon fathers meeting then, if not including fatherhood/parenting? Remove that issue (fatherhood), and aren't you back to just gay Mormons—isn't that Affirmation? I must be oversimplifying something here...

No, Aaron, I don't think you're oversimplifying it. I've been to only two Gamofite retreats—both of them great experiences. Gamofites (for me, at least) was a support group for gay men who share the experience of being a closeted homosexual in a heterosexual Mormon marriage. It is assumed that each participant is a parent, but I don't think that is a requirement. I did not witness any discussions of parenting at the two Gamofite gatherings. The focus was on healing ourselves and supporting each other. The retreats I attended were a very safe environment for married men to deal with and explore their sexuality.

However, I agree it's disappointing that Gamofites (Gay Mormon Fathers) does not invest more time and resources to helping these men deal with issues that actually involve fatherhood. My personal wish list would include 1) co-parenting with a current or ex-spouse, 2) managing the difficult paradigm of children/exwife/current lover, 3) becoming a better father even though you have less time and money to invest in your kids, 4) how to be a great long-distance father, and 5) how to prepare for the legal battles of divorce, custody and visitation rights, if necessary. Some of you may have more things to add to the list.

Being openly gay at Gamofites is great, but I think most of us get to a point where it is no longer an issue of disturbance. We're gay. So what? The challenge is raising our children in an environment that is often hostile to gays and lesbians. This has nothing to do with who we may or may not be; it's about society's perceptions of us as a group—a group which is not even real. Most of us dearly love our children. We want to raise them to become happy healthy people. If Gamofites does not support you in this, look elsewhere.

Steve Dyson

After Marriage—What?

(an excerpt) by Gordon Miller

I was born into the Mormon church. I was well indoctrinated in its teachings by both my parents and the church and have always been a dutiful and obedient member. Very early in my church life, I was given a great deal of responsibility and was made to feel the pressure of fulfilling a mission, marrying and having family, both of which I did. In spite of the fact that I loved children, always had good rapport with them, and always wanted to have children of my own, I put off marriage as long as I could because I knew I was homosexual—I felt no sexual attraction toward women, and feared the prospect of a heterosexual relationship.

Finally at a late age, I married, hoping that might be the step which would "cure" me of my homosexuality. From what I have observed, I was eminently successful in hiding my sexual feelings from everyone, including my wife.

During the course of twelve years of marriage, my wife and I parented four beautiful children. Our marriage went well except in our sexual relations. This was the only matter concerning which we ever argued and had hard feelings. From the outset my wife realized that there was something different about me, but she never suspected that it had anything to do with homosexuality. In spite of a relationship which was relatively smooth functioning, there were a great number of things that bothered me and continuously preyed upon my thinking—things that constantly reminded me that basically I was sexually out of context. Some of them raised guilt feelings in relation to my marriage and were never to be resolved. I was never moved to initiate sexual relations with my wife. She was always dominant in that area, and if she didn't make an issue of it, there were no relations. As time went on sexual relations became much more infrequent, and the last two years of our marriage were void of any sexual relations. This was because I had become very adept at avoiding relations, not because my wife did not desire or press for them. I found from the outset of marriage that I had difficulty spending time alone with my wife. The children provided a great escape in this area of our relations. I could be out of town and not miss my wife but always missed the children immensely.

See Marriage on page 6

Marriage from page 5

I found myself in the situation of constantly having to feign the small but necessary verbal and physical demonstrations of affection which are really vital to a loving relationship. I would more often than not be remiss in that department, and only at the behest of my wife would I revive my feigning hypocrisy. I always wished that I could really demonstrate spontaneously all of the things my wife needed and often asked for, but I couldn't, and it was very painful. Every time we were with another couple or I saw another couple who were spontaneous in their verbal and physical public demonstrations of affection, I felt a great deal of pain. It constantly reminded me of those things I did not feel for a woman and that I was denying my wife—things she wanted, needed, and deserved. My wife's family and other "outsiders" were somewhat aware of this void in our relationship, and I frequently had to endure little verbal barbs from others in this regard. But the best of intentions failed to produce genuine spontaneity, and I always felt guilty and hurt because of it.

Lest I be misunderstood, I would like to make it quite explicit that I loved and still love my ex-wife. However, it was and is an incomplete love for a married heterosexual couple. I loved my wife as best I could, but that was not enough, and to impose such a mold upon a homosexual is unnatural and emotionally suffocating. In the midst of all this I was also attempting to be a good father—which I was. That was one area in which I excelled and which I enjoyed. I am not ashamed to say that I doubt anyone could be a better father to my children than I. In addition, I was trying to maintain a heavy activity in the church, which had always been a large part of my life. But being active in church also raised many guilt complexes within me, and the maintenance

of that activity level sometimes required me to represent myself to others as someone I really was not.

I often pondered my marital relationship. I always ended up at the same point: I could not believe that I would be able to maintain my marriage throughout my whole life. That hurt. Yet, I couldn't talk to anyone about it, and I was petrified at the thought of divorce and the loss of the close day-to-day association with my children. As things eventually developed, I fell in love with another man and carried on a clandestine love affair for some time. It was both wonderful and terribly painful. It was wonderful because for the first time in my life, I experienced the full and spontaneous expression of love. But it also showed me more graphically than ever before just how much I was denying my wife by trying to maintain a heterosexual marriage.

The future haunted me in advance: I knew that if I was able to maintain my marriage until my children were grown and out on their own, I would be unable to sustain a one-to-one solitary relationship with my wife and make it a happy experience for either of us.

In the midst of all this, I broke down one morning, and with intermittent verbal accounting predominated by almost hysterical sobs, I began to tell my wife everything. This explanation went on at various appropriate times for several weeks. My wife was heroically gentle, gallant, and understanding and showed a great deal of concern and compassion for my condition. And although in retrospect I realize that she did not really understand everything I told her at that time, she was nevertheless more than completely forthcoming in attempting to understand and make things as easy as possible. We met with two psychiatrists, and

she conferred with her family and the stake president. A divorce was chosen as the most proper solution. I really did not want a divorce, and had it not been for the strength of my wife, the process would have been much more protracted.

I was relieved. A whole new peace which I had never before experienced enveloped me. I felt good, because for the first time in my life I had confronted my true identity and was open and honest with people. As much as many things hurt and in spite of a great deal of pain still to come, I felt really good—completely whole.

My wife at first believed that I could be helped and changed, and she was willing to go through anything to effect this change. But following our professional consultations, she realized that it would be best to let go. That period in our marriage—the end—was probably the closest we had ever been, because it was at that point that both of us were literally fighting to sustain ourselves and each other. It was a wonderfully moving and loving experience. The whole process was a relief for both of us. For the first time in our marriage, my wife understood just exactly what was different about me: that certain something which set me apart but which she had not been able to identify. Suddenly the many things which earlier had been inexplicable to her began to fall into place, and she understood why certain things had happened the way they had. At last a great burden had been lifted from

See Marriage on page 11

UPCOMING EVENTS

1997 Affirmation Conference— 20 Years of Service

Salt Lake City will show its true colors by living up to that prophetic statement that "This Is The Place" when it hosts the 1997 National Affirmation conference to celebrate 20 years of service to the Lesbian, Gay, Transgender Mormon, and Ex-Mormon population.

The exact date has not been set, but it will be sometime between the last two weekends of August and the first two weekends of October.

Many people have already expressed interest in helping organize a celebration of pride and accomplishment in our community.

The Organizing committee is interested in hearing your ideas. Please contact Duane Jennings at 32 East Bryan Ave, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115-1602.

GAMOFITE Retreats

If you're interested in joining Gamofites, please know that you are welcome to join us. You'll find we offer an opportunity to associate with Gay Mormon Fathers in an environment of unconditional Love and Acceptance. For information please contact Michael Farr at (415) 282-1257 home, (415) 284-8703 work, or Email: SanFran007@aol.com

Thesis on Lesbian Mormons

My name is Kristin Severson and I'm a lesbian Mormon graduate student at the George Washington University in Washington, DC. I am doing my thesis on the ethics of lesbian Mormons. I am planning on doing personal interviews during the months of December and January with Mormon women who identify as lesbian and/or queer. The interviews will last an hour and a half (more or less), doesn't matter if they are active Mormons, lesbians or not, just willing to be interviewed is about the only criteria. I can do a personal interview, email, or phone interview, whichever is more convenient for the interviewee. Anonymity is fine for those who wish for it. Please contact me kristin severson ksever@gwis.circ.gwu.edu
1413 21st. St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-833-3192

AFFIRMATION VS GAMOFITES

As a person who has recently come out, at least to his wife, I find any reference to either group battling for "king on the mountain" completely unnecessary. And as a person just beginning to deal with his gayness I can attest to the need for both in my life.

Affirmation gives me the stability and consistency of a regular resource and support with it's many meetings and activities that I find most invigorating and exciting. Just knowing I have a resource to experience and/or test the waters of my feelings and to dissipate the great turmoil I feel inside is a great comfort to me. I'm not sure what I would have done or if I would be able to accomplish the great sense of direction I feel without having attended Affirmation meetings and have the support of individuals to me personally both married and single.

On the other hand, even though I have not been able to attend a Gamofite retreat, I have been able to converse with a few Gamofite members on situations that I am dealing with on a daily or weekly basis concerning my marriage, family and wife. This has also been a great blessing to me. I need good brethren who have experienced the things I am going through. This is important as I take this journey to complete myself.

Just being in the presence of brethren like myself gives me strength to accomplish things not even dreamed of yet. My life has need of both organizations. Not to compete but to supplement the needs of myself and all gay LDS members. Both groups may be separate in name but not in goals, not in love, not in support for the gay person who has no where to turn.

Devote your time to whatever group satisfies your needs, strengthens your heart, unburdens your soul. And if that takes both groups so be it. If you only need one, great. And if you need none, then I am most impressed with your survival skill. I believe in the need for both groups. Let's not cut ourselves short. May we not divide ourselves, one to another, when all we really want is help, love, and support.

—Ken

AFFIRMATION NEWS

Election 1996

On these next few pages you will find the candidacy letters of the two candidates running for the position of National Executive Director of Affirmation.

Read the statements carefully before voting. Ballots must be postmarked by October 30. Mail all ballots to: Election, Box 46022, Los Angeles, CA 90046



ob Killian

Dear Friends,

I came to Affirmation late in my journey out of the closet. I had avoided this organization because of an incorrect perception that I would not fit in. But, when I finally arrived, I found a home. I found brothers and sisters. I found a family with all its wonders and imperfections. I found people who understood where I came from and what my baggage was all about. I found people who helped me lighten some of the load that I carried. And, I found an opportunity to serve.

The future of Affirmation is bright with possibilities. With the work on our financial and organizational foundation that has been accomplished in the past few years, we are ready to be available to those who need to safely explore issues of healing and spirituality that continue with us outside of those closets of shame we left behind.

The miracle of Affirmation happens on an individual level. It is in the chapter meetings in the cities across this country; it happens behind computer screens when Affirmation members communicate with one another on q-saints or find us via the world wide web. It happens when one reads *AFFINITY* and comes to understand our common journey and feel connected with others throughout the world. The miracle happens here in the workshops of national convention and at Girls Camp and Gamofites. The miracle is the message that I AM NOT ALONE. And, I AM OKAY JUST AS I AM.

The leadership of Affirmation should foster these miracles, to support the activities and innovations across the country. The leader of Affirmation needs to be able to speak the vision and then shine the spotlight on the miracles of healing and growth that we have all needed and will continue to witness.

Affirmation also needs to be visible enough so that those who need us can find us. The leadership needs to speak clearly, to confront bigotry and lies with honesty and compassion. Affirmation can no longer afford to remain silent on the issues concerning discrimination and hatred and brutality that we have come to live with as queer Mormons.

Affirmation should be a safe place for us to explore our belief system in light of our self acceptance and cultural/religious histories. There must be room for doubt and for pain to be shared. We must never tire of hearing such pain expressed or anger acknowledged. There will always be some dissonance over our religious beliefs and spiritual journey, both individually and as a group. It is a mature organization and group of people who can allow for such dissonance to exist openly. It must be acknowledged and talked about.

The message that all are welcome should be frequently repeated.

I look forward to assisting in the growth of Affirmation. I am ready to speak the vision, to tell our stories, to stand proud and to celebrate our healing.

Rob Killian
Tacoma, Wa.



ick Fernández

Dear Affirmation,

After several weeks of discussion, reflection and prayer, I have decided to place my name into candidacy for the position of Executive Director of Affirmation. I do so because I believe that now is the time for Affirmation to move ahead if it is to expand upon the accomplishments that our prior leaders have worked so hard to attain.

Affirmation began, almost twenty years ago, with a simple dream. Many of you will remem-

ber that twenty years ago, no matter how bad we think things might be today, the world and the church were even more hostile to gay and lesbian people than they are today. This was a time when gays and lesbians in the church lived in fear, isolation and shame, when they dared not speak up, let alone speak back. No one was listening to us, and those who even knew we existed loathed and despised us. Too often, we believed that we deserved this mistreatment, because we did not know there was a better way.

Others, however, dreamt of that better way. The first leaders of Affirmation dreamt of a time when gays and lesbians would be able to say "No" to the prejudice, the ignorance and the lies that would separate them from their families, their friends and their God, while boldly proclaiming "Yes" to the truth that they too belonged, that they too were valuable and worthwhile. These early visionaries trusted that one day gay and lesbian Mormons would be able to speak these truths with pride and with conviction, and that through their efforts, and the help of God, they could create a place "where none shall come to hurt or make afraid." Friends, though that day is not yet fully here, their dream has helped to bring it much closer than it ever has been. In that dream, Affirmation was to be the fertile ground where this place would begin to flourish and grow. Our pioneers planted the seeds of this better way, and it is now our turn to ensure that the seed does not die.

Our growth has not been steady, nor always forward. As in any organization, sometimes one step forward requires two steps back. Sometimes we even wondered whether the seed would survive. This comes as no surprise. Such a fragile seed growing in such a hostile environment requires tremendous amounts of attention, care and creativity. It also requires that members and leaders alike have commitment, resourcefulness, courage and patience. It is no easy task being a gay, lesbian or bisexual Mormon! We have had to learn, on our own, how to rise above the tremendous forces pitted against us and speak truth to that power, without fear or apology. But working together, we have grown, and we will continue to grow. Affirmation, though a fragile experiment, is worth the effort. Anyone who once believed they were "the only one," who believed that there was no place for them, knows full well that Affirmation is indeed worth the effort.

Some know that I have been involved in Affirmation leadership at various levels since 1988. I value

my opportunities to serve as tremendous privileges, and I have gained immensely. There have been ups and downs for me as well. I have not been without feelings of ambivalence regarding the future of Affirmation. I have at times wondered whether I should even remain involved in this organization. However, I want to state as clearly as I can that I have become convinced that the answer is not to draw back or pull away. I realize that Affirmation has given too much to me over the years for me to step back now. No, if the goals that inspired our founders have any meaning today, the answer is to recommit myself to helping Affirmation achieve and expand on them. I propose to do this through the following specific plans I commit to achieving during my tenure, with your help:

1. More active solicitation of the needs and interests of Affirmation members throughout our organization. Leadership cannot serve without the ability to listen.
2. Much greater visibility of Affirmation in the wider community. Affirmation needs to become a recognizable voice in the print, television, radio and Internet media. The Executive Committee will help achieve this by issuing regular press releases articulating Affirmation's position on timely issues relating to our organization's needs. We will also actively make ourselves available for radio and television interviews and commentary, and assist local representatives to do the same.
3. Completion of assignments by establishing specific tasks for Affirmation leaders attached to firm deadlines. Responsibility without accountability is meaningless, so I will require leaders to commit to providing regular, detailed progress reports for publication in Affinity and the website.
4. Establishment of a task force that will call upon our members to create new, updated publications that reflect the concerns and issues of the 1990's. Our current publications, while excellent in their time, are in some cases woefully outdated and fail to address many current issues.
5. Increased fund raising efforts, to make possible greater outreach into the wider community. A great start has been made under the current leadership, but this start must be carried forward with vigor.
6. It is time for us to take inventory of where we are and who we are. As executive director, I will help provide impetus for the creation of grassroots discussions at the local level to explore and refine the specific goals of Affirmation. This is a top priority for me as we approach our twentieth year in existence. We cannot be excited about Affirmation unless we first believe in it.

7. Reaching out more directly to individual church members and leaders, focussing on the local level. While recognizing that the official church remains hostile on many of our issues, we also know that personal contacts and familiarity is the single most effective method of overcoming homophobia and opening doors.

8. Expand the variety of educational, spiritual and personal resources that Affirmation makes available to its members. These topics are areas where Affirmation has unique perspectives and contributions to make in the gay community, and we should cultivate them.

9. Targeting Affirmation resources toward youth in the LDS community, who too often feel completely isolated and helpless.

10. Much greater outreach into the worldwide LDS community, particularly in Spanish-speaking countries, where almost half of church members now live.

The Internet provides us with remarkable opportunities to reach out into the global church, and I am committed to Affirmation taking full advantage of them.

In closing, I want to point out that the original name of Affirmation was "Affirmation - Gay Mormons United." There is tremendous significance in that former title. Affirmation was formed to celebrate those things that unite us. This is no simple task. We all come from a variety of backgrounds, beliefs and experiences. Affirmation includes active members, inactive members, former members, members of other beliefs and traditions, men, women, gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight, Democrats and Republicans, Americans and citizens of other countries. Our members remain free as individuals to follow their consciences. What then is it that I believe unites us? I turn to Affirmation's Charter: Affirmation exists to foster spirituality, support, communication, education and personal growth. Our By-laws also recognize that "Mormon cultural, spiritual, and religious heritage is an intrinsic part of Affirmation." What unites us, as I see it, is a common commitment to drawing upon the best in our heritage and using that to strengthen and guide us as we work together toward the fulfillment of the dream that guided our founders. There is much that we have to learn from each other. We need not march in lock-step. I hope only that we march forward, as a light to those now in the darkness of self-hate and fear, as a light that shows the better way. As executive director, I will commit my resources to help us be the light that "attract[s] the [gays] of all the world in latter days."

Rick Fernandez

Getting the Word Out—We Need You

It is the National Leadership's goal to move Affirmation further into the public conscience, thus reaching more of our Mormon gay brothers and lesbian sisters to assist them in their journey and in building an international "Lesbian & Gay Mormon Community. Our current goal in reaching this vision is to place ads in *The Advocate* and *Out Magazine*. As our numbers grow and budget for this type of out reach, other national and international publications will be added.

The ad reads:

Lesbian/Gay Mormons Affirmation: International support network/current, former Mormons. 213-255-7251, P.O. Box 46022, LA CA 90046; <http://ng.netgate.net/~jfirth/affirmation>

To run this ad in *The Advocate* it will cost \$873.12 a year. Affirmation has placed it's ad with *The Advocate* and it will start in issue 720, which will be dated November 12, 1996, and will run for one year. This has been brought about by a donation from one individual. We are now moving ahead to get prices for *Out Magazine*; *Genre* will run \$459.00 and then others will follow. As our numbers grow and budget for this type of out reach, other national and international publications will be added.

Chapters and individuals around the U.S., Canada, and abroad should also be looking at their own local publications, the gay and lesbian press as well as the general press that might be willing to run an on going announcement for free in the community organizations, support groups, or religious groups sections. I'm aware of Salt Lake, Seattle and Las Vegas chapters taking advantage of this—most papers will run a short announcement for free.

Very much needed. You can mail your contributions to Affirmation, P.O. Box 46022, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

A financial report is available to dues paying and contributing members on request. Please distribute this information to all members not on-line or who are not subscribers of *Affinity*, the National Affirmation publication.

Thanks for your consideration and support.
National Executive Committee

CULTURAL HALL

SPECIAL ONLINE GLAADALERT—LET "ELLEN" OUT OF THE CLOSET!

Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation

According to the September 28 TV Guide, Ellen DeGeneres' title character on her hit ABC sitcom "Ellen" will make television history this season by announcing that she's a lesbian. This would be first time in a network sitcom that a lead character would be openly lesbian or gay. Unfortunately, a barrage of negative comments and a threat by radical religious groups to boycott the show have erupted at www.tvplex.com, the Web site for Touchstone and Buena Vista Television. Let Touchstone know that this groundbreaking move has your full support. Additionally, assure Touchstone that the lesbian and gay community has a long history of loyalty to advertisers who support the lesbian and gay community.

The producers of the show, including Ellen herself, reportedly plan for the coming out to be a gradual process over the first nine episodes of the season. Alan Klein, GLAAD's National Communications Director, said that this positive and courageous coming out process "reflects Hollywood's commitment to diversity. This would be a major cultural milestone." Don't let small-minded bigots and homophobes decide what you can see on TV. Your prompt response is critical!

Contact: Dean Valentine, President of Network TV and Television Animation, Walt Disney and Touchstone Television, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, California 91521-0001, phone: (818)560-5000 or go to Touchstone TV's comment page on the World Wide Web at [Finally, copy your comments to ABC Television at \[abc-caudr@ccabc.com\]\(mailto:abc-caudr@ccabc.com\). TO SUBSCRIBE TO GLAAD-Net, GLAAD's electronic mailing list, send e-mail to \[majordomo@vector.casti.com\]\(mailto:majordomo@vector.casti.com\) with the message "Subscribe GLAAD-Net" TO UNSUBSCRIBE, send e-mail to \[majordomo@vector.casti.com\]\(mailto:majordomo@vector.casti.com\) with the message "Unsubscribe GLAAD-Net" TO REPORT DEFAMATION IN THE MEDIA - Call GLAAD's Alertline at 1 \(800\)GAY-MEDIA or go to the GLAAD Web Site at \[www.glaad.org\]\(http://www.glaad.org\) and report through our Alertline Online. GLAAD promotes fair, accurate and inclusive representation as a means of challenging discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity. "GLAAD" and "Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation" are registered trademarks of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Inc.](http://www.tvplex.com>Note.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Marriage from page 6

her. She knew that she was all right. She knew that she was normal and that there was nothing about her that made her unattractive to men. This fear had constantly haunted her throughout our marriage. Now that she has remarried, she will be able to experience the full range of sexual expression open to the heterosexual couple.

My wife and I separated, the process of divorce began, and the children were told what was taking place. During the separation and after the divorce, I spent my spare time every day with the children. Now that she has remarried and lives approximately one hundred miles away, I don't see them that often (about every two weeks) but I am in constant telephone contact with them. We remain very close to each other emotionally.

The pain of separation from the children was and continues to be immense for me. Part of that pain is associated with the fact that now another man, not their real father, has the privilege of that close relationship with my children which I so much desire. While the sharp edge of the pain has since subsided, I doubt that it will ever disappear. It recurs with unpredictable frequency. Yet I am convinced that what happened was best for me and my wife at this time. I have a great deal of work ahead of me in order to maintain the type of relationship I desire with my children. I think it can be done.

As a final apology I must say that I will be eternally grateful for my wife. I regret having caused her pain and I am sure that I will be eternally repentant of that fact. However, I do not regret having been married and having four children with my wife. I do regret that I did not have the courage to be honest earlier in my life. I have always loved the church and the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, I am convinced, based upon my own experience, that the church is ignorant of homosexuality and wrong in its treatment of the homosexual. I have the assurance that God loves and understands me and accepts me as I am. I also know that my being homosexual was not a conscious behavioral choice on my part, but that I was created that way. I do not understand why.

(Gordon Miller contributed this essay to *After Marriage—What?*, a collection of essays published by Affirmation (n.p.), 1980. Mr Miller lived in Los Angeles until his death from AIDS in August 1986.)

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