

DIRECTOR’S WELCOME

Dear Friends-

I hope this Winter 2010 edition of Tufts LGBT News finds you all well. In this issue, we are excited to profile number of students who are active in the LGBT community on campus, as well as an alumni-couple who have been together since their sophomore year at Tufts—in 1978!

As this calendar year comes to a close, it is a perfect time for reflection. This past year the LGBT Center has seen record numbers of students attending events and reaching out for support, as well as allies who have been coming out to support us. While there has been so much ‘positivity’ in the air, we still have students who deal with struggles such as identity reconciliation, families not accepting them, and bias incidents directed towards our community (two more were reported to me this past week). This is why it is so important that we have an LGBT Center—to offer support, advocacy, and education, all while attempting to strengthen the community at Tufts. I have recently been talking with people at Harvard and Northeastern University who are hoping to eventually have an LGBT Center at their schools. They are all so impressed when they learn that Tufts has had an official LGBT Center for almost 20 years!

Every once in a while, someone will ask me how they can support the LGBT Center. Since it is also the time of year for ‘giving,’ I thought I would briefly mention one specific way. We have an outstanding LGBT library—but it could definitely use a ‘facelift.’ If you have any LGBT-related books or DVDs which have been produced in the last 10 years that you would consider donating, we would love to have them. Please feel free to contact me to further discuss a library contribution or other ways of supporting the work of our Center.

As I close, I would like to let you all know just how thankful I am for your support. I feel so blessed to work at an institution which has so many students, faculty, staff, and alumni who truly care about making it a place welcoming to all. Even though the weather is getting quite cold here in Medford, my heart stays warm knowing I am part of such a wonderful community.

Sincerely,
 Tom Bourdon, LGBT Center Director

PS—A big thanks to Graduate Assistant Aaron Hartman for pulling this issue together!

Recent LGBT Events at Tufts

- *Soul Food Ally Dinner*
- *Weekly Discussion Groups*
- *Screening of “8: The Mormon Proposition”*
- *World AIDS Day*
- *Campus-wide Rainbow Flag Distribution*
- *Free HIV Testing*



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Kate Salwen, A'12

A STUDENT SPOTLIGHT BY KATE SALWEN

As students, we are constantly learning. Four or more courses a semester, two semesters a year, for four years, we are constantly learning. And yet, much of this learning does not satiate the hunger of those truly eager to learn. I am a student of Tufts University, but moreover I am a student of life. When Vladimir Nabokov references “other thrills in other domains” besides those gained through great books, he guides his listeners to know their passions and through this enlightenment pull themselves higher, bringing the world with them. As a university student, I learn so as to fulfill requirements and earn a degree. As a student of life, I learn so as to open myself up—to understand and appreciate the many realities of people I have not encountered.

I acknowledge my own ignorance and actively work to chip away at it. And yet, learning is more than a tool used to diminish one’s own ignorance. Knowledge allows one to experience the world through novel eyes and to explore places, physical and intellectual, that one has never traveled. Nabokov asserts that we must find our passions in which we can “experience the tingle” that self-enlightenment elicits. As a member of Tufts University’s queer speakers bureau (Team Q), I tell my story many times, of what it was like for me growing up and coming out, and of what it is like to still be growing in my identity and for people not to understand or appreciate my fluid self identity. Through this I have learned more about myself and learned to appreciate who I am and what I can offer. Yet, I do not experience Nabokov’s “tingle” when I tell my story; rather I feel it when I hear the stories of others. When I hear the

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HOLDING TOGETHER WITHOUT HOLDING BACK

BY SASCHA STRAND

“I’m interested in philosophy and religion. I might want to pursue social work or law, maybe work in a church. I guess I just have a lot more to learn,” I explained during a college interview some time last year. “A church, really?” my undergraduate interviewer asked; he looked skeptical. Until that point he and I had rambled along pleasantly, relating on every topic. We were both gay and interested in civil rights work. We both sang, and had both come from rural, agricultural backgrounds: his in Utah, mine in Kansas. Where he had left his religious past, though (majoring in evolutionary biology out of what seemed to be a sort of apostatical spite), I still found some value in mine. His next question, however, caught me off-guard.

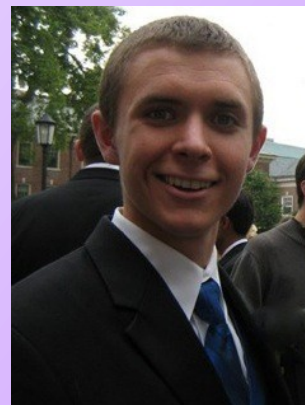
“So you believe religion and homosexuality aren’t mutually exclusive?” he asked. Stunned by the point-blank question I stammered, “Well, no...” I thought of the work the Episcopal Church did to help secure gay marriage rights in Massachusetts. I thought of the friends I’d made through ‘Dignity,’ a national queer, Catholic church. I couldn’t come up with much of an argument, though. My ideas trailed off, and I left the interview still mulling over his question.

“RELIGION CAN KEEP US FROM FLOATING OUT TO SEA, AND IT CAN KEEP US FROM EVER LEAVING THE HARBOR.”

The word ‘religion’ comes from the Latin verb *relegare* meaning ‘to bind.’ It can be used equally in the restrictive sense of borders or boundaries and to describe the more constructive binding of a book—that which holds a series of individual pieces together making them more meaningful as a whole; in a more nuanced way, *relegare* can be used to mean ‘moor’—binding a boat to shore, providing stability and a life-line during times of tumult. Religion can keep us from floating out to sea, and it can keep us from ever leaving the harbor.

Listening to a podcast a few months ago, I found a more articulate answer to my

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Sascha Strand, A'14

BI GROUP IN REVIEW BY DEVYN TAYLOR

Devyn, co-leader of the weekly Bisexual Discussion Group recalls just a few of the topics that came up this semester.



Devyn Taylor A'13

My favorite Bi Group discussion this year was our discussion on the history of bisexuality. We explored different Greek Gods (such as Zeus, Poseidon, Hermes, and Apollo) who practiced bisexuality. We also talked about the Egyptian God, Atum, commonly referred to as “The Great He-She” for his ability to engulf all aspects of sexuality, male and female aspects included. We also discussed the commonality of bisexuality in Ancient Greece among married men. Did you know that Spartan warriors maintained homosexual relationships among each other in order to promote more valiant fighting? They paired up young men with older, more-experienced men because they believed that the young men would fight more bravely in order to impress their older lover. As the young men grew older, the relationships would be officially and formally cut off, but the men still fought in order to impress their past lovers. I don’t remember them mentioning that in 300...

There were not a whole lot of historically bisexual female figures, although the name of one Greek poetess, Sappho, continuously came up in Google searches. Sappho was a poet who lived on the Greek island of Lesbos and wrote extensively about her desire and admiration for women. Because Sappho was the most famous woman from Lesbos, the connotation of a “Lesbian” has come to mirror Sappho’s adoration for women in today’s modern definition. Yay Sappho!

We talked about how Chinese women would often engage in sexual relationships with their female friends due to the extensive separation of the male and female realms in Chinese history. The women even created a language known only amongst themselves that they used to communicate, and possibly plan steamy hookup sessions.

We looked at some erotic art and sculpture from China, Japan, and Greece that depicted bisexual relationships and even yielded a couple of interesting... ahem, positions. We listened to the text of a Greek poem making fun of the need for women to use sexual aids in the absences of their philandering husbands. The poem was about a shoe-maker that would make dildos for the women in his town. Although, the poem did refer the dildos as “pacifiers...”

We discussed our historical findings in depth. We traded stories of different cultures that we had heard of that would engage in homosexual relationships despite their heterosexual marriages. And of course, as always, we went off onto plenty of tangents. One of the most engaging tangents had to do with Jesus’ birth of a virgin and how any one of us women present would react to having to carry a baby without previous consent or previous sexual satisfaction. Judging by the reactions, I seriously doubt that God would have been able to pull that whole “born of a virgin” stunt nowadays. We enjoyed all of this over a package of Chips Ahoy and some Tostitos chips.



STAY CONNECTED WITH THE CENTER

New ways to stay up-to-date on all the goings on around the Center:
“Follow” us on Twitter! <http://twitter.com/tufts-lgbtcenter>

And “Like” us on Facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/tufts-lgbtcenter>



Tufts Alumni

Looking to connect with LGBT Tufts alumni/ae, get career advice, or find out what life is like after Tufts? Look no further than Pride on the Hill (POTH), Tufts' own LGBT alumni/ae organization.

POTH seeks to support and connect LGBTQ alumni, faculty and staff, foster links between the LGBTQ alumni community and the university, and to enrich LGBTQ life at Tufts through academic, cultural and social programming.

To stay informed about POTH events, sign up for our email list at <http://ase.tufts.edu/lgbt/alumni/index.aspx>. You can also check the POTH web site at www.prideonthehill.org, or find the group on [Facebook](#).

ALUMNI NOTES

Eric Pliner (LA '97) lives in New York City, where he works for British business psychology consulting firm Young Samuel Chambers (YSC), Ltd. He met his partner Jonathan in 2007; they're getting married in Connecticut (civil) and then Brooklyn (Jewish) this January.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT BY JANE MARLOWE & SHERRI VICTOR

Jane and Sherri are Tufts alumni (A'81) who now live in New York City.

What were your experiences as students here like, and were you "out"?

We arrived in the Fall of 1977 as freshmen. Jane was 16 years old and already out when she arrived at Tufts. She marched into the Women's Center during orientation and asked where she could find the gay people. Sherri was still dating men for the first year or so of school, but we all hung out together. We were part of a group of friends who took more of a spectral view of sexuality: some were gay, some straight, but many were on a sliding scale, and we all went out to the gay clubs in Boston on Thursday nights and weekends.

By the end of Freshman year Jane was Coordinator of the Women's Center and in subsequent years was Co-Coordinator of TLGC (earlier TGC) for many semesters. TGC had weekly meetings in Anderson Hall which was primarily a social outlet for the attendees but served the important function as a safe haven for students (and an occasional professor) who were questioning their sexualities or afraid to come out.

How did you two meet?

We met initially through Jane's freshman roommate. Jane's first roommate in Miller Hall moved out in the first week of school after Jane told her she was gay. After a few weeks of this the Housing Office was getting a bit stern about the vacancy, and so Jane invited her friend Wendi Shafir to move in. Sherri was Wendi's best friend and lived upstairs in Miller. We became good friends during freshman year, but Sherri thought she was straight at that point so it was strictly platonic. Over winter break sophomore year, Jane invited Sherri and two other friends to visit her house in Florida. It was on New Year's Eve at a club called Copa that we first got together dancing to "Got to be Real", and we celebrate that as our anniversary, which means we'll have been together 32 years this New Years'!

What are your fondest memories of Tufts?

Wish we could say our fondest memories were related to our education, but most of them relate to parties at students' off-campus apartments. Any excuse for a costume party, especially if it was organized by Vance Deare, our treasured friend who died of AIDS several years ago. There was a strong network of recent gay graduates in the Cambridge-Somerville area and we would often hang out with them as well. We had an informal TGC table in MacPhie dining hall where we all knew we could find friends to sit with at mealtimes. We had a lot of really silly but fun dinnertime traditions like table levitations and coffee cup stacking contests. Painting the cannon pink in the middle of the night is another great memory, and

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Jane and Sherri with their children

ALUMNI (CONTINUED)

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just hanging out on the Quad on beautiful Fall and Spring days. Our first winter there was huge blizzard which shut down Tufts for several days and they had to ration milk in the dining halls. There was no transportation and a group of us walked from Tufts to Boston in the snow. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays the TGC kids from the bars. For our TLGC yearbook photo: we all put paper bags over our heads for the photo, including our friend's puppies.

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What have you two been doing since graduation?

We have been in New York City since graduation. Fifteen years ago we made the life-altering decision to have children. We have two great kids who enrich our lives every day. Our daughter, Katie, is almost 15 and is a gifted mathematician and photographer. Our son, Tyler, is 10 and is into sports (proving nature over nurture as we are not exactly sports enthusiasts), music, writing and filmmaking. Both of our kids are passionate skiers as well - must have gotten that from the donor. We hope at least one of them will want to go to Tufts. Sherri is a school psychologist and works in our local public elementary school. Jane was an investment banker specializing in international mergers but gave it up about 3 years ago to spend more time with the kids and is now involved primarily with volunteer activities. She is responsible for communications and fundraising for the PTA at Katie's high school.

How have you kept connected with Tufts since graduating?

We have mostly kept connected through the good friends from Tufts we still stay in touch with. In the early years after graduation there were occasional TGC reunions, formally or informally. In 1984 we had a reunion in Provincetown, in 1986 we all marched together as an alumni group in the NY Pride parade, and in 1987 some of us marched in Washington together.

A NEW KIND OF UNDERGRAD BY CHRIS MASON

Chris Mason A'12 is founder of Phelps-A-Thon.com, The Driving Equality Project, co-founder of Join the Impact MA, and a nationally recognized mobilizer of the LGBT Civil Rights Movement.

You are not the typical college age student, what were you doing before you got to Tufts?

After high school I spent a few years on the road, traveling the country. I've lived everywhere, from the city streets, to the woods of New England, from a coastal beach, to the deserts of the Southwest. I met people from all over the world living in the smallest towns and the biggest cities of the United States. I worked many odd jobs and made friends with all types of people.

I returned home to Massachusetts right before the state's Supreme Judicial Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage and quickly became involved in the fight to preserve marriage equality. The next few years I spent working for MassEquality, the organization leading the legislative efforts to keep same-sex marriage legal, and running campaigns for pro-equality candidates. After finally defeating the anti-gay amendments to our state's constitution, I was hired to work inside the State House for Massachusetts' first female Senate President, Therese Murray. A year later I decided it was time to return to school.

Why did you choose Tufts?

I chose Tufts because of the university's commitment to peace, justice, and equality. The university's values are aligned with my own belief system. Whether it be the admittance of women to Medical School from its founding, Tufts recognition as a top Peace Corps supplier of volunteers, Tufts opening one of the nation's first community health clinics, or the university's adoption of a vigorous set of climate change goals, all are concrete examples of the university's strong commitment to gender equality, global peace, healthcare, and environmental concerns that speak loudly to me.

What has been your favorite memory at Tufts so far?

My favorite memory at Tufts so far was seeing all of the rainbow flags hanging from windows, including the President's window, all across campus in support of the LGBT community. This past September we lost far too many young LGBT people around the country due to anti-LGBT bullying. The Tufts community rallied together at National Coming Out Day



Chris Mason A'12
with Westboro
Baptist Church

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SPOTLIGHT (CONTINUED)*(Continued from page 2)*

story of a transman who struggled with how to come out to his young cousin only for her to instinctively know his identity and accept him for it, I feel Nabokov's tingle. This is not just the tingle of hearing a heartwarming story; rather it is from knowing that we as a nation can get better. When I am working daily to educate others on campus about issues faced by the queer community and I feel resistance even here at a liberal New England university, I tire because I feel I am making little difference in the greater movement. Yet to hear that even children in preschool understand issues of gender identity, not as an intellectual might, but rather as unquestionable fact, I know that I am part of something bigger. I know that the world around me is changing and that I am part of that change.

A month ago, Tufts University had a Coming Out Day rally. A record number of students participated. The participation number did not give me a tingle. The following week at the LGBT Center I saw a letter on the table: it was from a local preschool where the kids had seen all the rainbows around campus, and although they could not come to the rally, that week they all received rainbow flags and had a parade of their own. Many of the children kept these flags to put on their bikes or bring home with them. When I read the thank you note from the preschool teacher to the LGBT Center for the flags they had provided, I not only felt Nabokov's tingle, I teared up. It is not through stale books—as much knowledge as they may hold—that I am spurred forward, rather it is from the living breathing community around me that I feel myself tingling with pride and excitement for my journeys to come.

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RELIGION (CONTINUED)*(Continued from page 2)*

interviewer's question. In a lecture series on Judaic Studies, Professor Michael Satlow of Brown argues, “Ultimately, to study religion is to study how human beings throughout space and time have wrestled with fundamentally human problems.” Unique even amongst other minorities, queer people often experience the “fundamentally human problems” familial rejection, isolation, and the individual persecution that can follow. Religion, Prof. Statlow argues, offers a way of coping with these very personal challenges. But, drawing again on its inherent duality, churches of different faiths can either fuel or ameliorate any prejudice.

Beyond work in social justice and personal counseling, I believe religion is most helpful when building community. As the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead argues in his text *Religion in the Making*, as long as there has existed community, faith of one kind or another has helped to structure it and give it meaning. Forty percent of homeless youth identify as queer (according to the Seattle Commission on Children and Youth) and countless more LGBT adults have lost their families and homes because of their sexual orientation. Religion can play a vital role in establishing and recreating community lost to hate. Ultimately, leadership, place, and time determine whether a religious group holds itself together or holds itself back. And in defining these variables, queer people have more to offer religion and more to gain from it than any other minority of our time.

CHRIS MASON (CONTINUED)*(Continued from page 5)*

and showed their support by flying the flags. It was incredible to walk to class and see rainbow flags in almost every corner of campus. It was a show of support that I had never experience anywhere else before.

What's on the horizon, any post-grad plans?

I plan to continue to fight for LGBT equality across the nation. In most of the United States it is legal to discriminate against someone because they are LGBT. We can be fired and kicked out of our homes for being who we are and we are not able to marry the person we love. This must change. As with any civil rights movement, it will take time, but I plan on continuing to fight until we achieve full equality in every aspect of our lives.

To find out more about Chris's work visit chrismason.org or jointheimpactma.com



TUFTS UNIVERSITY
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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
WWW.ASE.TUFTS.EDU/LGBT

The programs and services of The LGBT Center support the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, faculty, staff and alumni of Tufts University. The Center is available to anyone on campus interested in learning more about LGBT-related subjects or issues of sexual and gender identity. The Center is committed to maintaining LGBT visibility on campus and providing campus-wide education on sexual and gender identity and the effects of homophobia.

Our services include advocacy on behalf of LGBT students; counseling and referrals to students in need; information about resources available to LGBT people on and off-campus; research assistance with topics relating to sexuality; a student outreach and education team (Team Q); a peer-support network (Queer Peers); trainings and workshops for faculty, staff, or student groups; email lists networking people affiliated with Tufts University; and programming that reflects the diversity of students at Tufts.

The LGBT Center works collaboratively with many groups on campus, including the Dean of Students Office, the Women's Center, the Asian American Center, the Latino Center, the Africana Center, the International Center, Greek Life, the Office of Residential Life and Learning, the Hillel Center and the Tufts Chaplaincy.

Drop by the Center and enjoy a comfortable and safe space dedicated to supporting and celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identities.

If you would like to help support the work of the LGBT Center, contact LGBT Center Director Tom Bourdon at tom.bourdon@tufts.edu.

A VIEW OF THE SEMESTER



FROM TOP LEFT:

- STUDENTS GET WORK DONE IN P-TOWN DURING ANNUAL RETREAT
- TEAM Q LOVE
- HUGE AMOUNTS OF SUPPORT AT THIS YEARS COMING OUT DAY RALLY!
- MEMBERS OF THE ENTIRE TUFTS COMMUNITY ENJOYING THE CENTER'S ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER

