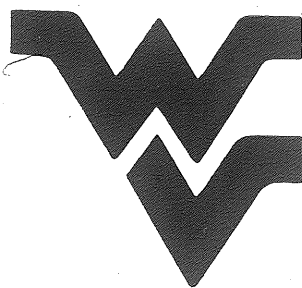


**Gay and Lesbian  
Mountaineers**

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**Report on Homophobia  
at West Virginia  
University**

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6 December 1989

## Introduction

According to the conservative but reliable estimates in the noted Kinsey Report, 10% of the adult American population is gay or lesbian. In spite of this fact, many people are unaware that they deal with gay men and lesbians every day. Gay men and lesbians, unlike other minorities, are able to keep their minority status invisible. By living under assumed heterosexuality, gay men and lesbians are able to function in society without facing as much harassment as they otherwise might. Unfortunately, the effort involved with engineering the illusion of heterosexuality creates great stress for gay men and lesbians, as does the fear of accidental exposure. The invisibility which we use to protect ourselves ironically prevents others from coming to understand us.

We live in a society which is reluctant to deal with issues related to any form of sexuality. Contraception, abortion, and sex education, as sex-related issues, stir great controversy. It is not surprising that people are often particularly reluctant to approach the issue of homosexuality, where sex and diversity intersect.

Because of the invisibility of the gay community, and because of the sexually repressive nature of our society, progress toward equality for gay men and lesbians has not progressed as quickly or satisfactorily as it has for other minorities. Only two states, a number of municipalities, and some corporations and educational institutions have policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. With the risks associated with reporting harassment to the authorities, it is not surprising that many gay men and lesbians continue to quietly tolerate harassment. For example:

- A gay male University student was verbally harassed and physically beaten by student-aged individuals outside Morgantown's gay bar around 2:00 a.m. on 1 March 1989. He did not report the incident to the police, however, since he feared that to do so would damage his career opportunities. He reported the incident to GLM only on the condition that his name never be used.

Because of the understandable failure of gay men and lesbians to report incidents of homophobic harassment, there is little stimulus for authorities to work against homophobia. Obviously, for homophobia to be overcome, gay men and lesbians must come out of the closet, putting the long-term welfare of the gay and lesbian community over personal avoidance of the consequences of honesty. At the same time, concerned heterosexuals must work to promote a greater understanding of gay people and to create an environment where gay people can come out with greater confidence.

The University has done well to include "sexual orientation" in its Equal Opportunity policy, and is to be highly commended for taking this vital step toward equality for gay men and lesbians. GLM hopes that this report will encourage the University to continue with its outreach to the lesbian and gay community.

## Homophobia at West Virginia University

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GLM has difficulty documenting instances of homophobia, partially because of GLM's limited resources, but especially because of the understandable reluctance of gay men and lesbians to come forward with reports of harassment. Nevertheless, GLM is aware of numerous manifestations of homophobia at WVU. For example:

- A member of GLM reported that her one of her law professors made homophobic comments to his class.
- In October 1988, GLM officer Sean Crist wrote a letter to Dr. Glen Carter, Director of Admissions and Records, requesting that GLM be included in the new University View Book. There was no response to the letter, and GLM did not appear in the book. In a 27 July 1989 meeting, Dr. Carter admitted that the atmosphere of homophobia in West Virginia had been a reason for excluding GLM from the View Book.
- During the Spring 1989 semester, GLM documented 238 prank and harrasing telephone calls on its Gay and Lesbian Helpline. The line was advertised primarily on campus. It is probable that this figure has already been well exceeded by the number of harassing calls during the Fall 1989 semester, although the Fall 1989 call log has not yet been studied. *A cassette containing harrasing messages left on the Helpline answering machine accompanies this report.*
- GLM has difficulty advertising because its posters are quickly torn down from bulletin boards. In one case, a Physical Plant worker was seen tearing down a gay-oriented poster.
- GLM received a number of homophobic faculty responses to its recent direct-mail fundraising letter. *The following pages include examples of these responses.*

At WVU, as elsewhere, gay people are often included in laundry lists of the bizarre:

- A WVU student government candidate's advertising poster made reference to a group of "Satan-worshipping lesbian baseball players."
- Former student government president Ray Bauer circulated a flier advertising a fictitious organization, "Gay Alcoholic Overeater's Club."
- A comic strip appearing in the Daily Atheneum and written by a WVU student made reference to an imaginary band, "Gay Bikers on Acid."

The following pages contain some expressions of homophobia by WVU students and faculty.



Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers

**West Virginia University**

\* I'M NOT GIVING ANY CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPORT A BUNCH OF FAGGOTS IN SPREADING AIDS. I HOPE YOU ALL REALIZE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO HELL AND THAT WOULD BE GETTING OFF EASY.

Dear Professor,

We would like to tell you about our organization's services to the University community and to ask for your help. The Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers is a student organization that exists to promote the welfare of gay men and lesbians at West Virginia University. Unlike many student organizations, GLM meets much more than a social need. For many, GLM provides a support mechanism to a group of students who often find isolation and alienation. To successfully meet our goal for a positive and diverse University community, we need the support of faculty and staff.

Our weekly meetings during Fall and Spring semesters feature rap sessions, films, videos, workshops, guest speakers, and socials. In addition to these regular meetings, we are involved with a number of projects, including:

- A Gay and Lesbian Helpline, providing information, peer counseling, and referral for gay men and lesbians at 292-GAY2
- An anti-violence project, including workshops on self-defense and reporting of anti-gay violence
- Production of gay awareness television Public Service Announcements for distribution to stations over a broad geographic area
- A speakers' bureau, making gay/lesbian speakers available for classes and other groups
- A lending library with titles of interest to gay men and lesbians
- A media activism project, including media monitoring and response, positive gay advertising, and media activism workshops.

We welcome your involvement in any of our organization's activities. If you feel that you cannot be involved personally, you can still help. Our organization is dependent on outside funding for the operation of its services. Why not consider making a financial contribution to GLM? A return envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

We hope that you will find this information enlightening. If you have any questions about GLM, especially about how to become involved, please contact us at 292-GAY2 or at our Student Organization Wing address.

Sincerely,

Sean Crist  
President

Marian Jensen  
Advisor

One faculty member's response to GLM's recent fundraising letter. (Reduced)

YES! I would like to contribute to GLM's important work. Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$5                       \$25  
 \$10                      \$50  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to make my contribution with my:

VISA                       MasterCard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name When a heterosexual

Department organization is established

Building (Complete & letterhead stationery)

Phone maybe I'll support this.

All contributions will be kept confidential. All correspondence will be discrete. Give US a break!

It really takes nerve to solicit for this organization →

Front

I'm very disappointed to be asked to be an organization.

Back

Another faculty member's response to GLM's fundraising letter.

Aug. 1989

I found receiving your notice in my mail - an offensive  
move - I do not wish to be on your mailing list

As a WVU faculty member it is of great concern  
to me that in a University Setting - where scholarship  
and the promotion of healthy life style and ideas <sup>are the purpose</sup> - there is a  
group that is promoting this disease-producing unhealthy  
life style that is threatening the lives of many people

I wish to call your attention to this lifestyle as  
preverted and unnatural relationship form. Have you  
read Meninzier's Book entitled - Whatever happened to Sin

This faculty response reads:

I found receiving your notice in my mail—an offensive move—I do not wish to be on your mailing list.

As a WVU faculty member it is of great concern to me that in a University Setting—where scholarship and the promotion of healthy lifestyle and ideas are the purpose—there is a group that is promoting this disease-promoting unhealthy life style that is threatening the lives of many people

I wish to call your attention to this lifestyle as preverted [sic] and unnatural relationship form. Have you read Meninzier's [?] book entitled—Whatever happened to Sin [Punctuation is the writer's.]

(Reduced)

I ALREADY DONATED AT THE SPERM  
BANK.

AND TO SOCIETY TO PROPOGATE AIDS

DOUBTLESS I WILL SEE SOME OF YOU  
THROUGH THE SLITS CUT IN WALLS OF MEN'S  
ROOM AT MAIN LIBRARY - AS YOU PEEK AS I  
GO TO TOILET

This faculty reponse was written on the back of the contribution slip sent with GLM's fundraising letter. (Full size)

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Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers  
**West Virginia University**

Dear Professor,

*I believe homosexual behavior is deviant behavior and ultimately damaging to society. It should not be supported*

We would like to tell you about our organization's services to the University community and to ask for your help. The Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers is a student organization that exists to promote the welfare of gay men and lesbians at West Virginia University. Unlike many student organizations, GLM meets much more than a social need. For many, GLM provides a support mechanism to a group of students who often find isolation and alienation. To successfully meet our goal for a positive and diverse University community, we need the support of faculty and staff.

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Sincerely,

*Sean Crist*      *Marian Jensen*

Sean Crist  
 President

Marian Jensen  
 Advisor

304 292-GAY2 □ Student Organization Wing—Mountaineer □ Morgantown, WV 26506  
 Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Institution

This faculty response reads:

*I believe homosexual behavior is deviant behavior and ultimately damaging to society. It should not be supported*

(Reduced)



3-12-87

DEAR SEAN + MARIAN,

REMEMBER GEN. 1:27-30 WHEN GOD CREATED  
MAN HE CREATED THEM MALE + ~~MALE~~ FEMALE

NOT MALE + MALE OR FEMALE + FEMALE.

THINK ABOUT THIS + READ + STUDY THE  
SACRED SCRIPTURES. LISTEN TO THE CHURCH  
ESP. THE ONE, TRUE, CHURCH THAT CAN  
TRACE ITS ORIGINS BACK TO CHRIST.  
TRY TO SEEK GOD + HIS WILL IN  
YOUR LIFE,

YOUR PRAYERFUL FRIEND  
IN CHRIST

This faculty response was written on the back of GLM's fundraising letter. (Reduced)

It



Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers  
**West Virginia University**

Dear Professor,

Greetings! We are happy to announce that our organization will be sponsoring a film, **Pink Triangles**, to the University community on Monday, October 16, 1989 at 8:00 p.m. This dramatic film deals with anti-gay/lesbian oppression, both historical and contemporary, with a special focus on the Nazi and McCarthy eras and the rise of the New Right. The film is especially appropriate for students in history, sociology and anthropology, psychology, social work, philosophy, religious studies, and journalism courses.

We urge you to recommend the film to your classes, and encourage you to offer extra or alternative credit to students attending the film. We will distribute proof-of-attendance slips to students as necessary.

The film will be presented in the Mountainlair Little Theater. Admission will be \$1.00 per student. A question and answer session will follow the film. If you have any questions about the event, please contact us at 292-GAY2 or at our Student Organization Wing address.

Sincerely,

Sean Crist  
Board of Directors

TO : DYKES, FAIRIES &  
ASSORTED PERVERTS

I OBJECT MOST STRONGLY TO YOU QUEERS USING  
FREE CAMPUS MAIL TO SEND YOUR MATERIALS.  
FAGGOT ACTIVITY IS AGAINST GOD'S LAW AND THE NATURAL  
ORDER AS WELL AS AGAINST W.V. STATE LAW.

A faculty response to a GLM film advertisement.



Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers  
**West Virginia University**

July 21, 1989

Dear Professor,

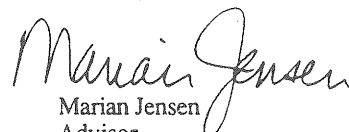
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We urge you to recommend the film to your classes, and encourage you to offer extra or alternative credit to students attending the film. We will distribute proof-of-attendance slips to students as necessary. You may want to incorporate the film into your syllabi.

The film will be presented in the Mountainlair Little Theater. Admission will be \$1.00 per student. A question and answer session will follow the film. If you have any questions about the event, please contact us at 292-GAY2 or at our Student Organization Wing address.

Sincerely,

  
Sean Crist  
President

  
Marian Jensen  
Advisor

*MANY OF US DO NOT WISH TO BE ON YOUR MAILING LIST. HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR IS STILL A CRIME UNDER STATE LAW IN WEST VIRGINIA. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE AN APPROPRIATE TOPIC FOR MASS MAILINGS USING FREE CAMPUS MAILS! AND I WOULD NEVER ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO ATTEND LET ALONE OFFER CREDIT FOR SUCH ATTENDANCE!*

304 292-GAY2 • Student Organization Wing—Mountainlair • Morgantown, WV 26506  
Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Institution

Another faculty response to a GLM film advertisement. West Virginia repealed its sodomy laws in the early 1970's.

MOUNTAINLAIR INFORMATION DESK SURVEY RESULTS  
PAGE 2

5. Helpfulness in finding new information?

Excellent - 12 (44%)  
Good - 13 (48%)  
Poor - 1 (4%)

COMMENTS: Tom Smith is very helpful.

6. Cooperation of workers?

Excellent - 18 (67%)  
Good - 5 (19%)  
Poor - 2 (7%)

COMMENTS: 1. Tom Smith is the man.  
2. Except one worker who is rude consistently.  
3. Except the fag.

7. What services would you suggest be added to this area?

1. Can't think of any.
2. Have access to know who to contact in other areas of college campus.
3. Check cashing system
4. Information
5. More info
6. Phone off campus
7. More info
8. A second phone - several times there is a line.
9. Dial off campus from phone.
10. Intelligence
11. A stamp machine
12. Good looking girls
13. Condom machines
14. Tom Smith Day
15. Plants
16. International student/native student get together
17. Bring back the theatre and music.
18. Another phone
19. Lottery give aways

8. Is there enough information on concerts and other events?

Yes - 15 (56%)  
No - 7 (26%)

FAGS

# Gay and Lesbian Mountaineers

present a film:  
**PINK TRIANGLES**

Public Welcome  
\$1.00 Admission  
8:00 pm Monday, Oct. 10

Lair Little Theater

AUTHORIZED OCT 5 1988

A vandalized GLM poster. Notice the word 'FAGS' faintly written in the upper left corner. This poster is an exceptional case: GLM posters are normally ripped down immediately. In one case, a Physical Plant worker was seen tearing down a gay-related poster. (Reduced)



West Virginia  
University

March 1, 1989

To all History Majors:

There will be a **Mandatory** meeting for all History majors concerning requirements for graduation and fall course schedules for next year. Due to the high freshman enrollment and limited availability of classes, attendance at this meeting is very important.

The meeting will be held Thursday March 2nd at 8 p.m. in room 109, in the Student Services Center next to the Mountainlair book store.

hf/RM

Sincerely,

Robert M. Maxon  
Chairperson  
Department of History

\*\*\*

NOTE: Considerations will be taken into account over individuals NOT attending this conference. Students desiring on-time graduation status must seek advantage of the first-come-first-served opportunities afforded by this meeting.

hf/RM

This forged letter was sent to a University student. The time and place for the fictitious meeting described in this letter were actually those of a GLM meeting. The student inadvertently arrived at the GLM meeting before learning that the letter was a forgery. (Reduced)

## Recommendations

### **Further study of homophobia at West Virginia University**

The evidence presented in this report is largely anecdotal; GLM does not have the resources necessary to conduct a principled, quantitative study of attitudes in the University community toward gay men and lesbians. It is important that the nature and extent of this homophobia at WVU be disclosed so that the University may determine the most appropriate response.

A number of universities, including Rutgers University, Yale University, and the University of Virginia, have made extensive investigations into homophobia on their respective campuses. GLM recommends that West Virginia University commission such a study.

### **Education of faculty, students, and staff on gay/lesbian issues**

Homophobia is a product of ignorance, as is any prejudice. GLM recommends that the University work against this ignorance by establishing a program to educate the University community on gay and lesbian issues. This program could include:

- Inclusion of gay/lesbian topics within the existing curriculum, where appropriate
- Creation of a gay/lesbian studies course or courses after the model of such courses offered at many colleges and universities
- Workshops to educate faculty and staff on gay/lesbian concerns
- Subscription to scholarly publications such as *Journal of Homosexuality* and news-oriented magazines such as *The Advocate*
- Purchase of up-to-date audio-visual materials dealing with homophobia and gay/lesbian issues, superseding the two outdated films now available at the Audio-Visual library
- A study to determine the feasibility and need of hiring a University gay/lesbian concerns educator

### **Establishment of protocols for dealing with homophobic harassment**

Exposure as a gay man or lesbian can have dramatic ramifications: gay men and lesbians risk the loss of employment, housing, and friends, and contact with family members by disclosing their sexual orientation. For this reason, gay men and lesbians often choose not to report homophobic harassment to the authorities. Because of this lack of reporting, there is little stimulus for authorities to work against homophobic harassment.

GLM recommends that the University adopt a set of protocols for dealing with reports of homophobic harassment. These protocols should make particular provision for the importance of confidentiality.

Two University policies, the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code and the Sexual Harrassment Policy, currently make reference to sexual orientation harrassment. Under these policies, members of the university have some recourse for personal harrassment. GLM recommends that the University adopt further policies to proactively address the prevailing atmosphere of homophobia in the University community.

### **Clear communication to the University community**

The success of these recommendations depends on the University's ability not only to implement them but to make them clear to the University community. GLM recommends that the University use brochures, posters, and other imaginative advertising to communicate its response to sexual orientation harassment.

ous meeting  
tly arrived at

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