

Victory for transgender people seeking new birth certificates

Three transgender people represented by the ACLU of Illinois are now in possession of new, accurate birth certificates, after being unfairly denied them by policies of the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Earlier this decade, the Department's Division of Vital Records started interpreting the Vital Records Act to allow someone to change the gender "marker" on their birth certificate only if the individual had their sex reassignment surgery performed by a United States-licensed physician.

This change in policy created an unnecessary and unfair burden for the growing number of persons who select a surgeon from Europe, South America or Asia, including two women on whose behalf the ACLU of Illinois sued in January 2009. In addition, the Department started in about 2004 to require those female-to-male transgender persons who request an accurate birth certificate to complete surgery for which the vast majority of applicants have no medical need, nor a desire to complete.

In an important reversal, the State of Illinois has now issued new, accurate birth certificates to all three people. As part of a new policy adopted by the Illinois Department of Public Health, transgender individuals in Illinois and across the nation are now permitted to receive a new birth certificate that reflects their accurate gender following sex reassignment surgery overseas. The Department has also announced that it will formulate new standards for determining how much surgery will be required before a transgender person will be provided a birth certificate listing the correct gender marker.

Learn more: visit www.aclu-il.org.

The Santaland Diaries comes to Heartland Theatre

Heartland Theatre Company intends to get us into the holiday spirit with its December production of David Sedaris' The Santaland Diaries at the theater, at 1110 Douglas Street in One Normal Plaza.

Performances of the one-man show are set for Dec. 10, 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19 at 7:30 p.m.; and Dec. 12, 13, 19 and 20 at 2 p.m.

Local acclaimed actor (and ACHR member) Michael Pullin plays the role of a no-longer-young aspiring writer who lands in New York City with dreams of scripting for One Life to Live. But it is not to be. The country is in recession, jobs are scarce, but one temporary, humiliating opportunity arises.

Does he take it? Does he enjoy it? Or does it simply become the fodder for a hilarious, somewhat cynical musing about the crass commercialism of the Santa industry? Plan to come and see for yourself!

Tickets for all performances are \$12 (\$10 for flex pass holders). Reservations can be made by calling 309-452-8709 or e-mailing boxoffice@heartlandtheatre.org.

For more information about this and other Heartland productions go to www.heartlandtheatre.org.

Happy Holidays!

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights wishes you and yours a very happy holiday season!

Out of Mexico A Fantasy

By Gene Naden

A woman comes out of Mexico, a lesbian woman.

She is a prophet - some say she is God.

She gives money to the street people and listens to the crazies and the drunks.

She embraces the prostitutes, the pimps and the drug dealers.

A handful of women and men follow her.

Someone writes about her, then another one, then several more.

There are Internet blogs about her. A year or two passes.

No one is quite sure what happened, but she is gone.

All that remains is a paperback book put out by a doubtful publisher, plus some lingering Web pages.

I weep.

I wait.

The Rainbow Connection

Join us Dec. 12 ... Cruitées with U.S. Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson!

Please join us for some holiday cheer on Saturday, Dec. 12 as we host an LGBTQ fundraiser for our 11th District Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson.

The fundraiser, which will raise funds for Debbie's 2010 re-election campaign, will be from 5 to 7 p.m. The event, sponsored by the Advocacy Council for Human Rights, will be at 207 Woodland Avenue in Bloomington in the home of ACHR board member Elizabeth Anvick and ACHR member Caroline Fox.

Suggested donation levels are \$15 - Friend; \$50 - Sponsor; and \$100 - Co-Host. Anyone who donates at the Co-Host level is welcome to bring three friends to the fundraiser.

The ACHR is excited to support Congresswoman Halvorson who was elected in November 2008 and is now serving her first term in the U.S. House of Representatives on behalf of

the 11th Congressional District of Illinois. She is an experienced legislator who, before her election to Congress, served as the first female State Senate Majority Leader in Illinois' history.

Community LGBTQ leaders met with Halvorson in 2008 and she expressed her support for a variety of issues including hate crimes legislation and the Employment Non Discrimination Act. Halvorson's vote this year was instrumental in the passage of the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Act which President Obama recently signed into law.

Anyone interested in participating in the fundraiser can e-mail the ACHR at info@achr-il.com. ACHR board members will also be on hand at the Dec. 4 First Fridays event at the Bistro to accept donations for the fundraiser.

Come out December 12 and help us help our LGBTQ-friendly

December 2009

ACHR Board of Directors: Dave Bentlin; Peggy Burton; Gary Gletty; Margo Mendoza; Donna O'Crowly

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Congresswoman as she continues to serve us in Washington!

NOTE: Federal Election Law allows individuals to donate up to \$4800 per election cycle: \$2400 designated for the Primary Election and \$2400 designated for the General Election. Federal law prohibits contributions to the campaign from corporations, labor organizations and national banks; from any person contributing another person's funds; from foreign nationals who lack permanent resident status; and from federal government contractors. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and name of employer for the individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in an election cycle. Contributions or gifts to Debbie Halvorson for Congress are not tax deductible.

Rainbow Connection goes green!

The Advocacy Council is trying to be a little greener. Help us achieve this goal by submitting your email address to info@achr-il.com in order to receive your electronic copy of the ACHR newsletter.

This is the last issue that will be mass mailed via the postal service. We are going to cut costs and save a few trees by going electronic. This will leave some extra money

in the coffers so we can continue to do outreach and education in the community.

If you do not have access to the internet, or would rather receive a paper copy of the newsletter, we can arrange to continue mailing the newsletter to you; in return we ask that you consider a donation of \$10 to ACHR to help offset printing and mailing expenses in 2010.

Please know that we NEVER sell or give away our database of e-mail addresses, so you will only receive

newsletters and the occasional announcement from ACHR.

We don't want to lose any of our readers, so please make sure you get your email address to us before Dec 15, 2009 or send your \$10 donation to:

Advocacy Council for Human Rights
PO Box 5048
Bloomington IL 61702-5048

Note: No reader will be turned away due to an inability to donate.

Middle Aged gay Guy On being a dangerous teacher

By Tom O. McCulley

My Ph.D. student-colleagues and I have I've been reading and discussing Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. If you haven't read this book you should seek it out, even if you're not an academic. *Borderlands* is a challenging read in that Anzaldua makes a comment about language in general by interspersing various forms of Spanish with English throughout the book. In other words, if you can't read Spanish (and I can't), you can become frustrated about language in much the same way many of our Spanish speaking sisters and brothers are frustrated when they try to negotiate living in the U.S. Among many important points Anzaldua makes by using Spanish in a book meant for the Anglo market is that if you are "queered" by the world for any reason then you must learn to renegotiate the very language of your existence.

When Anzaldua's book first appeared it was an act of what I might call dangerous teaching. In this sense I use the word dangerous to indicate that the teacher here has provided a space wherein learning might happen, but she has refused to "translate" all the parts of that space so that her students (you and me, if we dare to pick up her book) can learn how to make sense out of the space on our own. She hasn't left us out to dry, there is enough English in the book that a careful reader can make sense out of most of what is happening, but she has put us in a space where most of us are not going to walk away feeling like we "know everything" she is saying in the book.

Anzaldua identifies herself in the book as a queered lesbian who is further queered by the use of a different language in a society that prizes the terms "English," "male," and "heterosexual."

I use one chapter from *Borderlands* in my writing classes—a chapter titled "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." The resistance to this essay is palpable; many of my students write versions of "This pisses me off! Why can't she just write English?!"

It is not hard to make the leap here to, "This pisses me off! Why can't fags just be fags and stop asking to get married?" I make that leap because in some of my writing classes my students are also writing about gay marriage. The intersection of the words "gay" and "marriage" is a learning space that is causing a certain amount of discomfort in many of my students, a discomfort that is meeting with some resistance (that word again!).

My students know from the first day that I am a gay activist. I start each semester by explaining that because I believe the very act of writing is revelatory, and because I will be reading and grading their "revelatory acts," I feel I should reveal something about myself via a written mini-biography. In this biography I explain my long relationship with Ron, the fact that I have a "gay family," and the fact that I am actively political in gay causes. This is why I have held off asking my students to write about gay marriage for many years. I didn't want to create a space where those who had strong anti-gay feelings might feel uncomfortable about how they would receive a grade in the class.

Until this year.

Having students write about something so close to my soul has been and continues to be a dangerous choice. On the one hand, I have students who are naïve in their calls that "everyone should be married!" While the general gist of their ideas warms my heart (how many students fifteen years ago would have advocated so openly for gay marriage?), my job as a teacher is to trouble their enthusiasm. I have to point out that by calling for totally open marriage, they are playing into the hands of the anti-gay marriage crowd by implicitly calling for things like fathers marrying daughters or people marrying their dogs. For this group, a group that in part might be writing to please their activist teacher, it is hard to hear from that teacher that even he believes in certain limits to the use of the term marriage.

On the other hand, I have those students who are so steeped in conservative, fundamentalist beliefs that they can sit right next to me during one-on-one conferences and justify writing how gay marriage will destroy the world as we know it and how being gay in general degrades the body, the soul, and the very fabric of what it means to be an American. For this group, a group that is writing with the full knowledge that their words go against the very grain of what their teacher holds dear, it is shocking, I think, to learn that their teacher will actually help them find ways to make their arguments more academically acceptable and less based on the unquestioned dictates handed down to them by religion of their parents.

In other words, this teacher continually tries to place himself in a queer space, in the borderlands between teaching, learning and knowing, that students occupy in the classroom. This queer, activist, middle-aged gay guy has had to learn to step back from the challenge to "teach" and to let my students "learn" a new language about what it means to be gay, straight, married, and "with family"—on

their own. I have had to learn to trust in the idea that by challenging my students to question their beliefs, by asking them to negotiate new words and feelings, they might come to some deeper understanding about what it means to not have all the answers about gay, or marriage, or what it means to have a family or a faith or a deep desire to be accepted by a hostile world.

The learning has been dangerous for both my students and me this semester. I have been wounded, a possibility I opened myself up to when I chose to let gay marriage enter my classroom as a topic. Some of my students have been wounded in that they have had to face down either naïve beliefs that they can simply wish gay marriage to be, or when they have had to face down equally naïve beliefs that gay marriage will always be a negative term.

What I hope for the future is continuing negotiation along the border of heterosexual and yes, homo-sexist terminologies. What I hope for is that by being a little bruised, my students (and their teacher!) will heal into a new space where learning can happen—where the frontier between gay and straight can be crossed, where they can see themselves open to the possibilities offered by a world that no longer oppresses the queer other in their midst.

Until then...

THE BISTRO

Friends, Family,
Community, Fun & Love.

316 North Main
Bloomington, Illinois 61701
309/829-2278

M-TH: 8p.m.-1a.m.,
FRI: 4:30p.m.-2a.m.
SAT: 8p.m.-2a.m.

Bistro Holiday Show

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Bistro Christmas Show on Sunday, Dec. 13th.

There will be two shows with performances by Amaya Mann, Mahogany Knight, Devin Grabberass, Anita Mann, Seduction, Chanel Carrington, and DeCevia Mann. It will be a great night with lots of holiday cheer to go around!

For more information visit the Bistro's Facebook page!

Connections Community Center

Just a reminder...there are two regularly-scheduled groups meeting at Connections Community Center, 313 N. Main Street in downtown Bloomington.

The Open Door Youth Center continues to meet each Friday evening from 6 to 9:30 p.m. This group is open to all youth ages 13 - 24 who are GLTBQ. The center's goal is to assist the youth in having a proactive life and help with discussions. Some of the topics of discussion may include but are not limited to, safer sex, coming out to your friends and family, being open in the work place. The center's

facilitators try and guide the youth by giving them the tools and knowledge to survive and help overcome any adversity they may encounter.

The Men N2 Men Group is open to any man who would like to socialize and meet others. Activities include, potlucks, movies, watching television, and stimulating conversation. The group meets every Saturday from 6:30 to approximately 10:30 p.m.

For more information about these groups please contact the community center at 309-827-2437.

B/N Dining OUT celebrates the holidays

The B/N Dining OUT group will meet for dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at Logan's Roadhouse, 313 S. Veterans Parkway in Normal.

The group plans to conduct a small gift exchange as a way of celebrating the season. If you want to participate please bring a small gift in the \$5 to \$10 range.

For more information about the group visit its Yahoo Groups web page at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BNDiningOUT/>.

Rainbow Connection is going green!

December 2009 will be the last mass snail mailing of the newsletter to our readers. We are going to cut costs and save a few trees (as well as volunteer spit) by going electronic. This will leave some extra money in the coffers so we can continue to do outreach and education in the community.

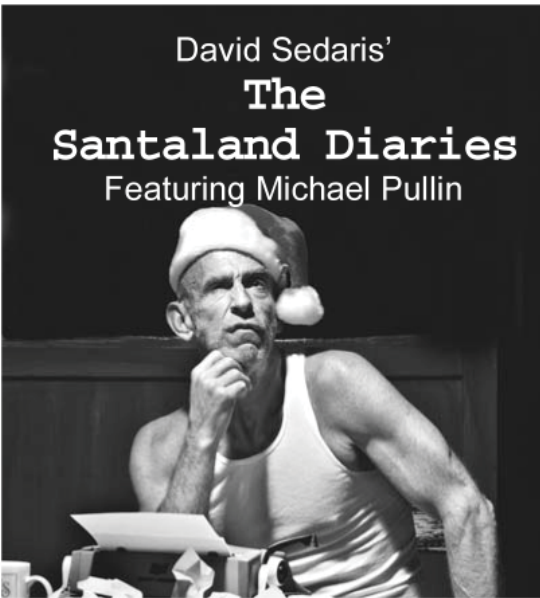
If you do not have access to the internet or would rather receive a paper copy of the newsletter we can arrange to continue mailing the newsletter to you; in return we ask that you consider a donation of \$10 to ACHR to help offset printing and mailing expenses for the calendar year 2010.

We don't want to lose any of our readers, so please make sure you get your email address to us before Dec 15, 2009 or send your \$10 donation to:

Advocacy Council for Human Rights
PO Box 5048
Bloomington IL 61702-5048

HEARTLAND THEATRE COMPANY

David Sedaris'
The
Santaland Diaries
Featuring Michael Pullin



December 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19 at 7:30 p.m.
December 12, 13, 19, 20 at 2:00 p.m. \$12.00
 Reservations: 309 452 8709 or
boxoffice@heartlandtheatre.org

www.heartlandtheatre.org

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	<h2 style="margin: 0;">New Covenant Community</h2> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">An Open and Affirming/More Light congregation which welcomes all persons into full participation in the life of our community, regardless of race, gender, age or sexual orientation.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; margin: 10px 0;">Worship Sundays, 10:30 a.m.</p> <p style="font-size: 8px; text-align: center;">Chapel of the Campus Religious Center 210 W. Mulberry St., Normal, IL 61761 (309) 454-7362 www.nccnormal.org</p>
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Don't miss an issue! Send your e-mail address to :

info@achr-il.com

Past **Rainbow Connection's** are available on the Advocacy Council website: www.achr-il.com