

Out Words

Spring 2009

Sport, Sexuality & Culture: An International Gathering at Ithaca College



John Amaechi presents his keynote address in Emerson Suites

It's not everyday that an out, gay former NBA player addresses a crowd of hundreds of people in Emerson Suites. Yet, that was just one of the many highlights of the Ithaca College Sport, Sexuality, and Culture Conference in March.

John Amaechi, whose 2007 book *Man in the Middle* revealed his life and career as a closeted gay man in the NBA, was one of two keynote speakers to give free, public talks at the conference. The conference was an unprecedented international gathering of scholars, students, athletes academics and professionals.

Amaechi's keynote address, "Making Sport More Human and Humane: Thoughts on LGBT Athletes, Coaches, and Sport Industry Professionals" offered one of many opportunities to listen, learn and engage in dialog about the unique intersections of sport, sexuality and culture.

In addition to the public keynote addresses, the conference offered registered attendees and members of the Ithaca College community two-and-a-half days of presentations featuring the work of some 125 scholars from North America, Asia, Europe and South America. Breakout sessions covered topics such as "The Matthew Mitcham Story: New Tolerance and Old Homophobia at the Beijing Games," "The Athletic Training Room as a Safe Space for Gay and Lesbian High School Athletes," and "Women's Sexuality and Surfing: From Gidget to Curl Girls."

The conference also offered panel discussions featuring several prominent people from the world of sports, including Christine Brennan, sports columnist for *USA Today*; Ted Rybka, director of sport media for GLAAD; Helen Carroll from the National Center for Lesbian Rights; and Pat Griffin, director of the Women's Sports Foundation program *It Takes A Team*.

Several Ithaca College students also presented their research and observations on conference themes and a cadre of student volunteers participated in tasks including moderating panels, assisting with registration, and serving as photography and videography crew.

Conference highlights will be posted to the Ithaca College section of iTunesU soon. The conference was a collaborative effort of the LGBT Center, the Department of Sport Management & Media, and Athletics. A HUGE thank you to the vision, insight and hard work of Ellen Staurowsky on this important conference.



Panelists discuss sport, media, sexuality and culture during a plenary session

Inside This Issue

Travel Plans?	2
Unity project	2
Rainbow Reception!	2
Day of Silence	3
Notable LGBT Passings	4

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Travel plans this summer?

You may not be headed off to a formal semester abroad but if you're lucky enough to be planning a jaunt to a faraway place during your summer vacation you may find some useful tips, thoughts and things to consider as an LGBT person traveling abroad in a booklet created by the LGBT Center and the Office of International programs. The booklet, "LGBT Students and Study Abroad," is available for download from the websites of both offices. Not only may this booklet be useful for you, it was also recently featured in the **International Educator** magazine. The article, "Beyond Stereotypes in Education Abroad," is about 'nontraditional students' (the article defines these as gay and lesbian students, ethnic minority students, adults, and people who have disabilities) and study abroad. Lis Maurer from the LGBT Center was interviewed for the article which notes the resource booklet and provides useful insights about the study abroad process and experience.



Campus Celebrates with the Unity Project



Genevieve Labe '09 and SGA hosted the 2nd Annual Unity Project display on the academic quad. Labe got the idea for the project several years ago when she attended the film "Key West: City

of Colors" of the Out of the Closet and Onto the Screen film series. Labe's Unity Project seeks to illustrate the unique character of the campus community and our many common bonds across dimensions of difference.

Members of the campus community joined in the celebration and helped unfurl the 350 yard Unity Banner. Along with the display, Vice President of Student Affairs and Campus Life Brian McAree spoke, followed by a performance by the Amani Gospel Choir.

The Story of the Rainbow Reception

This year marks Ithaca College's seventh Annual Rainbow reception!

Our Rainbow Reception is modeled after an event called "Lavender Graduation," a term coined by Dr. Ronni Sanlo, the LGBT Director at UCLA.

In 1995, while at the University of Michigan, Dr. Sanlo realized that LGBT and Allied students needed and deserved to be recognized for their achievements during their college years. She created the Lavender Graduation as an opportunity to include LGBT and Allied students in the celebratory process.

There were only five graduates and three attendees, a total of eight people, at that first Lavender Graduation in 1995 in Michigan. And over the following years, attendance grew, and other institutions began celebrating their own LGBT graduations as well.

The Ithaca College Rainbow Reception was first celebrated in 2003 as an initiative of the Diversity Awareness Committee. Our Rainbow Reception also has a few traditions unique to Ithaca. Our local PFLAG chapter and other caring members of the campus community serve each year as "stand-in" parents. They attend as alternate/ substitute parents to provide extra support to our graduates whose families cannot or will not attend.

Each year at the Rainbow Reception for Graduates we honor LGBT and Allied seniors and graduate students, and present three distinguished awards. The Harvey Milk Award recognizes a student for outstanding efforts to increase awareness and visibility of LGBT issues at Ithaca College. The Harvey Milk Award is a long-standing recognition that was first instituted on our campus before there was a Rainbow Reception celebration, and before the LGBT Center was established. The Sylvia Rivera Award recognizes a student for providing outstanding service to the LGBT community at Ithaca College. It was established at the 2003 Rainbow Reception, in memory of Sylvia Rivera who had passed away that year. The Ally Award, established in 2002, is given to a member of the campus community for outstanding efforts as an ally to the LGBT community at Ithaca College.

Thank you to the Diversity Awareness Committee for their continued support and to the wonderful staff of the Tower Club who have hosted the reception for these seven years!

Day of Silence: Event Spotlight

The national Day of Silence brings attention to anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment. Each year the event has grown, now with hundreds of thousands of students coming together across the country; Ithaca College has been hosting Day of Silence events for a number of years.

What is a day like this important? The story of the suicide of 11-year-old Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover from earlier this April highlights the importance of awareness building events and days of action like the Day of Silence. From GLSEN's (The Gay Lesbian & Straight Education Network) April 9, 2009 press release:

An 11-year-old Massachusetts boy, Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, hung himself after enduring bullying at school, including daily taunts of being gay, despite his mother's weekly pleas to the school to address the problem.

This is at least the fourth suicide of a middle-school aged child linked to bullying this year. Carl, a junior at New Leadership Charter School in Springfield who did not identify as gay, would have turned 12 on April 17, the same day students at Ithaca College participated in the 13th annual National Day of Silence by taking some form of a vow of silence to bring attention to anti-LGBT bullying and harassment at school.



"Our hearts go out to Carl's mother, Sirdeaner L. Walker, and other members of Carl's family, as well as to the community suffering from this loss," GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard said. "As we mourn yet another tragedy involving bullying at school, we must heed Ms. Walker's urgent call for real, systemic, effective responses to the endemic problem of bullying and harassment. Especially in this time of societal crisis, adults in schools must be alert to the

heightened pressure children face, and take action to create safe learning environments for the students in their care. In order to do that effectively, as this case so tragically illustrates, schools must deal head-on with anti-gay language and behavior."

Two of the top three reasons students said their peers were most often bullied at school were actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender expression, according to *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America*, a 2005 report by GLSEN and Harris Interactive. A follow-up study in 2007 linked this hostile climate to lowered educational aspirations and academic achievement among LGBT youth.

"As was the case with Carl, you do not have to identify as gay to be attacked with anti-LGBT language," Byard said. "From their earliest years on the school playground, students learn to use anti-LGBT language as the ultimate weapon to degrade their peers. In many cases, schools and teachers either ignore the behavior or don't know how to intervene."

Carl's suicide comes about a year after eighth-grader Lawrence King was shot and killed by a fellow student in a California classroom, allegedly because he was gay. Said Walker in the Springfield Republican: "If anything can come of this, it's that another child doesn't have to suffer like this and there can be some justice for some other child. I don't want any other parent to go through this."

To learn more about the Day of Silence or about GLSEN's work,



check out:
www.dayofsilence.org
www.glsen.org



DAY of SILENCE

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Notable LGBT Passings

From the New York Times

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose critical writings on the ambiguities of sexual identity in fiction helped create the discipline known as queer studies, died on April 12th in Manhattan. She was 58. The cause was breast cancer, her husband, Hal Sedgwick, said.



Ms. Sedgwick broke new ground when, drawing on feminist scholarship and the work of the French poststructuralist Michel Foucault, she began teasing out the hidden socio-sexual subplots in writers like Charles Dickens and Henry James.

"It's about trying to understand different kinds of sexual desire and how the culture defines them," she told *The New York Times* in 1998, explaining the function of queer theory. "It's about how you can't understand relations between men and women unless you understand the relationship between people of the same gender, including the possibility of a sexual relationship between them."

Eve Kosofsky was born in Dayton, Ohio, and grew up in Bethesda, Md. After graduating from Cornell with a bachelor's degree in English in 1971, she earned a master's and a doctorate in English at Yale. In 1969, she married Hal Sedgwick, who survives her. The relationship struck some readers of Ms. Sedgwick's work as anomalous: one of the creators of queer theory was straight, although she disliked the term, which ran counter to her notion of sexual orientation as a continuum rather than a category.

The Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Education, Outreach & Services commemorates the

40th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion

a turning point for LGBT equality

Marsha P. Johnson



Sylvia Rivera



The Stonewall Riots were a series of spontaneous, violent conflicts between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and allied (LGBTQA) people and police, that took place for several days beginning in June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. This was one of the first times that LGBTQA people fought back against overt government-sponsored discrimination and violence in the United States.