

Lesbian  
Gay  
Bisexual  
Transgender

E D U C A T I O N  
O U T R E A C H  
S E R V I C E S

# Out Words

## Coming Out

As students get ready to pack up and leave for the summer, whether they are going home or heading out into the world, many will be faced with questions, excitement and wonder about coming out. It can be complicated, it's certainly a very personal process and luckily, there are a lot of resources for people who are coming out, those people you come out to and a plethora of resources to make it all a little easier!

true to yourself — in a world where nearly everyone assumes you are straight. It's not about bringing attention to yourself, as some critics like to say, according to Christopher Rice, author and son of well-known novelist Anne Rice (*see book review on page 4!*). "People say, 'But you don't have to advertise or flaunt your sexuality if you're gay,'" says Rice, who is gay. "Well, there's a big difference between being forthright

*The following is an excerpt from "The Resource Guide for Coming Out" from the Human Rights Campaign.*

**Coming out means choosing to live on your own terms. It is a resounding vote of confidence in your own worth.**

*John R. Stowe*

Coming out means identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. The first person you have to reveal this to is yourself. After that, you can deal with friends and family. For many people, the coming out process is difficult. But most people come out because, sooner or later, they can't stand hiding who they are any more.

and 'flaunting' it." Sometimes, the overwhelmingly heterosexual society we live in affects our ability to deal with the possibility of being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

For Rice, the biggest hurdle in coming out was his own fear about being different. "I came to understand that one of the biggest hang-ups was me. I was convinced everybody would have a horrible reaction to my coming out. But my parents were wonderful — as were many others.

Once they've come out, most people acknowledge that it feels much better to be open and honest than to conceal such an integral part of themselves. Coming out is simply about being

Certainly, there was a wide spectrum of reactions — of highly tolerant to not very tolerant. But mostly, I was just projecting onto them my own insecurities." Early on, in fact, Rice

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## Coming Out...continued

believed he was just going through a “phase.” Throughout his teens, he went out with girls, and talked about eventually settling down with a woman. At the same time, he read books — portrayals of gay people leading real lives. And he continued talking with friends and thinking about his same-sex attractions. But when he had his first romantic involvement with a man, everything clicked. “It really felt right — it felt natural. It felt more complete,” recalls Rice. “And most of all, it felt too good to be something that I had to hide.” Understandably, it takes some time for many of us to reach the point where we feel comfortable enough about ourselves to share our discovery with others. But when we do take that step, our lives can change forever — most often, for the better.

Before going away to college, Linda Villarosa was confused and unsure about her sexual orientation. One reason why she did not explore her feelings right away was because, at that time, she was trying to fit into a white neighborhood and didn’t want to do anything others could think of as wrong. Finally, after she left for school, she took the step. “I came out because I couldn’t stand not being myself any more.” After college, she came out to 7 million readers in an *Essence* article she wrote with her mother. The article, called “Coming Out,” remains the most highly responded to article in the history of the magazine. Villarosa later became executive editor of the magazine and is now a contributing writer to *The New York Times* and is the author of “Body & Soul: The Black Women’s Guide to Physical Health and Emotional Well-Being.”

Similarly, many transgender and transsexual people come out to be true to themselves. But it still can be quite dangerous for some people to have their transgender status revealed, says writer/activist Jamison Green. “It’s necessary for transpeople to be comfortable enough about their difference that they can make appropriate disclosures to others.” What is important is your own comfort level — as well as awareness of your own safety in various circumstances, says Green, a transsexual man. “Not all transpeople need to come out all the time.” It’s also important to find your own comfort level about how you want to express your gender. “There is no one way to be transgendered,” he says. “Some of us just want to alleviate our body/gender misalignment and experience life as ‘ordinary’ men or women, whether we are gay, straight or bisexual.” I knew everyone would watch me change from androgynous to masculine, from woman to man, and some people would be disgusted, some frightened and some derisive,” he recalls. “I was amazed how much support I received, and I know it was because I was clear and calm and understanding when others were confused. I had to spend a lot of time answering questions; I was very patient with people, and I know that made a difference for them.”



And remember, you are never too old to come out. Each of us comes out at the age that feels best — as teens or retirees — or somewhere in between. Support networks and sources of information remain the same for all, although coming out at a later age may pose different challenges. Some people come out in middle age as they become more aware about how quickly their lives are passing, and the desire to find self-acceptance and happiness takes on greater urgency. You may have spent the first part of your life living up to other people’s expectations of you. Now is the time to live up to your own expectations of yourself.

Visit [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) to download the complete 43-page booklet for free. This resource includes chapters on: coming out to others, coming out online, telling friends, telling family members, as well as workplace issues, coming out to your doctor and issues of spirituality. **FREE** hard copies are also available in the Resource Room...feel free to pick one—or more—up for your summer reading!

## 2006 Road to Hope Tour visits campus April 27



*What do Ithaca College, George Washington University, North Carolina Central University, Baylor University, University of Nebraska, DePaul University, Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Brandeis University, Brown, and Harvard and just ten other colleges across the nation have in common this year?*

*They were all selected as official stops for the 2006 Road to Hope Tour!*

On Thursday, April 27, the 2006 Road to Hope Tour will visit Ithaca College to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS. An initiative of Hope's Voice, a national organization committed to preventing HIV and AIDS among young adults, the tour will feature five HIV-positive speakers—all under the age of 30—conducting a daylong series of training, planning, and educational events. Highlighting the visit will be a panel discussion that will take place at 7:00 p.m. in Clark Lounge, Campus Center.

"We are very excited that Ithaca College has been selected as one of the 20 stops on this national tour of colleges and universities," says Kimberley Conrad, assistant director of first year programs and orientation and a member of the Ithaca College AIDS Working Group. "This educational event will serve the Ithaca College student population, as well as the Ithaca community."

During the course of the day, the speakers will present information on the global reach of the HIV pandemic and what young people can do to prevent HIV and AIDS.

Speakers slated to visit campus include Marvelyn Brown, 21, who recently appeared on UPN's "America's Next Top Model" to assist the shows' stars to create and produce a public service announcement about HIV/AIDS in young people that will air on the network throughout the year.

The Road to Hope Tour visit is sponsored by several campus and community organizations, including the Ithaca College AIDS Working Group, Health Promotion and Substance Abuse Prevention Program, Diversity Awareness Committee, Department of Health Promotion and Physical Education, and Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Education, Outreach, and Services along with Tri-Fund and the Cayuga Medical Center at Ithaca.



***Information on Hope's Voice is available at [www.hopesvoice.org](http://www.hopesvoice.org).***

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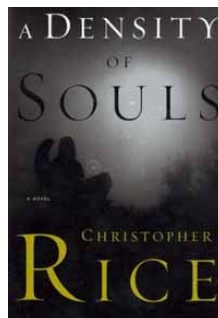
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## Book Notes by Michael Miller '07 & Sarah Cayea '07

### *A Density of Souls* Christopher Rice

Christopher Rice, son of noted author Anne Rice, brings us a thrilling novel set in his hometown of New Orleans. *A Density of Souls* tells us a story of four middle school friends that were inseparable until they entered high school and had their friendships torn apart through their struggles for popularity and for one of them against homophobia. Throughout their high school careers and after they graduate the four once-friends' lives remain intertwined. They journey through their seemingly separate lives until facts about their mutual past show that what was thought to be a tragic accident may have been murder.



Ritch Savin-Williams' *The New Gay Teenager* is a fascinating book about lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. He discusses the notion that queer adolescents are plagued by their sexual orientation, suffering from depression and anxiety, among other things – and argues that this is very seldom the case, especially in present American society.



This book also highlights issues such as clashes between sexual identity and sexual behavior. *The New Gay Teenager* is thought-provoking, and will give you an often unseen perspective on queer adolescent development and the queer community at large.

*Both resources available in the LGBT Resource Room*