

corpus



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For more information, please contact phebert@apla.org.

corpus

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Editors Jaime Cortez and Patrick “Pato” Hebert

Concept George Ayala

Design Patrick “Pato” Hebert

Translation Omar Baños

Copy Editing Ricardo A. Bracho

Publication Support Jeffrey Tse, Manuel Cadenas, Howard Shur

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AIDS Project Los Angeles
The Geffen Center
611 South Kingsley Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90005
www.apla.org

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Foreword

Patrick “Pato” Hebert

“You know what, Otis?

What?

You’re country.

That’s all right.

You straight from the Georgia woods.

That’s good.”

—Otis Redding featuring Carla Thomas,
“Tramp”

“Life ain’t nothin’ but a funny, funny riddle”

—John Denver, “Thank God I’m a Country
Boy”

Long before I dared to discover the delights of other men’s bodies, the country was a place where I could begin to explore my own. One of my favorite rituals was walking out into the peach grove, well beyond the gravel road, comforting house, musty tool sheds, creaking walk-in cooler, abandoned outhouse and weathered barn of my paternal grandparents’ 26-acre fruit farm. Save for the vast rows of Bing cherry trees, the farm was primarily a U-pick orchard with smatterings of pear, apricot, plum, prune, apple and peach trees. On certain, late summer days when fruit-seeking visitors were few, I would wander out among the peaches, pull my shorts down to mid thigh and luxuriate in the strange mystery of my parts exposed privately yet right out in the

Prólogo

Patrick “Pato” Hebert

“¿Sabes qué, Otis?

¿Qué?

Eres campesino.

Eso está bien.

Vienes derecho de los montes de Georgia.

No está mal.”

—Otis Redding, presentando a Carla Thomas,
“Tramp”

“La vida no es más que un divertido, muy divertido acertijo”

—John Denver, “Gracias a Dios soy un chico campesino”

Mucho antes de que yo pudiera descubrir las delicias de los cuerpos de otros hombres, el campo fue el lugar donde yo pude empezar a explorar el mío. Uno de mis rituales favoritos era caminar a los sotos de duraznos, más allá del camino de gravilla, una casa confortable, cobertizos de herramientas con olor a encierro, enormes enfriadores chirriantes, retretes abandonados y graneros curtidados por el tiempo en la finca de 26 acres de mis abuelos paternos. Reservada para la basta hilera de árboles de cerezas, la finca principalmente era un huerto en forma de pico en U con una variedad de árboles de peras, albaricoques, ciruelas, ciruelas pasas, manzanas y duraznos. En determinados días

open. Then, with accelerating excitement, I would drop, and stick my dick in the hot, thin dirt. These were pre-pubescent days, before I had ever ejaculated, yet the layered sense of dirtiness was orgasmic.

I can still locate these sensations within myself, but I do not want to romanticize the country as either an idyllic Eden or pristine getaway. The country was never so simple, nor static, but now it is most certainly changing in profound ways. The rise of agribusiness has altered the course of family farming in communities across the nation over the last three decades. My grandfather was one of the last holdouts in Benton City, Washington, taking pride in those peach trees as plot upon neighboring plot was sold and gobbled up by trailer parks during the 1980s. This was a complex set of shifting priorities for the community. Folks wanted new, affordable housing and fresh income streams. The developer's dollars seemed faster and more reliable than the unpredictable winters and international produce market. Many farmers were pained by their decisions to sell.

This cycle continues, and it changes our relationship to land and space, history and place. It also raises questions about what constitutes the rural. When Wolfie's Burgers first opened in Benton City, it was the only fast food restaurant in town. Its drive-thru window felt like the arrival of thrills and belonging. We were now in the outside world.

de verano, cuando habían pocos buscadores de frutas, yo vagaba entre los duraznos, me bajaba los pantalones cortos a media pierna y me deleitaba en los extraños misterios de mis partes expuestas en lo privado, pero al aire libre. Después, con una excitación acelerada, me tiraba al suelo y metía mi verga en la tierra fina y caliente. Estos días eran pre-pubescentes, antes de tener mi primera eyaculación, pero las diversas capas del sentido de la suciedad eran absolutamente orgásmicos.

Yo todavía puedo localizar estas sensaciones dentro de mí, pero no quiero romantizar al campo como un Edén idílico o como un camino prístino. El campo nunca fue tan simple, ni estático, pero hoy en día está cambiando de manera profunda. El crecimiento de la agroindustria ha alterado el curso de la agricultura familiar en comunidades en toda la nación durante las últimas tres décadas. Mi abuelo fue uno de los últimos que se mantuvo contra viento y marea en Benton City, Washington, y mantuvo su orgullo en los sotos de duraznos mientras que parcela tras parcela era vendida y devorada por los parques de trailers en los ochentas. Este fue un cambio complejo de prioridades para la comunidad. La gente quería nuevas viviendas a costo módico y nuevas fuentes de ingreso. Los dólares de las constructoras parecían más rápidos y más confiables que los impredecibles inviernos y los productos del mercado internacional. A muchos agricultores les dolió tomar la decisión de vender.

Este ciclo continúa, y cambia nuestra relación con la tierra y el espacio, la historia y el lugar.

But when the edges of towns are claimed by strip malls, on the one hand folks alternate between eager anticipation of new jobs, corporate aisles and cost-efficient retail space for mom and pop businesses, and on the other, face the sobering loss of fields, uninterrupted vistas and a life somewhat distinct from suburban America. Satellite television, the internet, cell phones and outlet malls have all changed rural America's sense of simultaneous remoteness and fitting in. When and where does a hamlet become a town become a city become a suburb become a metropolis? At the stop light? Your own high school? Your own zip code? The county line? Or perhaps it is as one friend from New Mexico noted, "We stopped thinking of Las Cruces as country when the Applebee's went in."

My mix of delight and trepidation at the appearance of a drive-thru was one example of what it meant for me to make my childhood home in the middle of somebody else's "nowhere". Both my parents had spent time in Panama City and New York City, but for me cities were some magical place of mystery. In big cities people traveled underground. If they were rich or lucky, they could go to professional basketball games and rock concerts. They didn't grow or raise their own food, and they talked funny, but they seemed fast and maybe dangerous and smart and often better. To me the country was special, but it was also tinged with a kind of inferiority complex and a nagging fear that real life was happening somewhere else. Rural living can be a slippery dance between comfort, calm and anxious restlessness. You

También hace que emerjan preguntas sobre lo que constituye lo rural. Cuando Wolfie's Burgers abrió por primera vez en Benton City, era el único restaurante de comida rápida en la ciudad. La ventanilla de auto-servicio se sentía como la llegada del encanto y pertenencia. Nosotros estábamos en el mundo exterior.

Pero cuando las afueras de los pueblos son tomadas por centros comerciales, por una parte, la gente alterna la ansiosa anticipación de los nuevos trabajos, callejones corporativos y espacios de negocios eficientes en costo para los negocios familiares, y por otra parte enfrenta la grave realidad de la pérdida de la tierra, panoramas interrumpidos y una vida algo distinta de la América suburbana. La televisión por satélite, el Internet, los teléfonos celulares y los centros comerciales han cambiado el sentido simultáneo de la América rural de lejanía y pertenencia. ¿Cuándo y dónde una aldea se convierte en un pueblo, se convierte en una ciudad, se convierte en un suburbio, se convierte en una metrópolis? ¿Y la luz del semáforo? ¿Tu propia escuela? ¿Tu propio código postal? ¿La línea fronteriza de tu condado? O tal vez es como lo notó un amigo de Nuevo México: "Nosotros dejamos de pensar en Las Cruces como algo rural cuando llegó Applebee's".

Mi mezcla de deleite y aprensión cuando aparecieron los auto-servicios fue un ejemplo de lo que significó para mí crear un hogar en mi niñez en medio de lo que para otros era la "nada". Ambos de mis padres habían pasado

can feel concurrently deeply rooted and trapped, independent yet isolated, a special somebody known by everybody in a nowhere.

Though I spent summers in the shadow of the Horse Heaven Hills in Washington's Yakima Valley, my primary home for the first nine years of my life was Idaho Falls, Idaho. To this day many people in my Los Angeles world don't even know where Idaho is. They routinely confuse it for Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, as if all "I" states were lumped into some vague nether region where "those" people live(d). This ignorance is particularly painful for me in my movements and belonging in urban and queer communities of color, where many people's rural roots also exist but are often kept secret for fear of being dismissed as backwater, backwoods, mountain, oakie, corn fed, hillbilly, hick, southern, country, chunty, mojado, campesino, jíbaro, bracero, shitkicker, slow, gullible, naïve, ignorant, redneck or rez. Yet with *Corpus 6* we take the back road around the chauvinist city dweller's conflation of country with

tiempo en la ciudades de Panamá y Nueva York, pero para mi las ciudades eran lugares mágicos y misteriosos. En las ciudades, la gente viajaba debajo de la tierra. Si ellos tenían dinero o suerte, podían ir a juegos de baloncesto profesional o conciertos de rock. Ellos no cultivaban o criaban sus propios alimentos, y ellos caminaban de forma chistosa, pero se veía que eran rápidos y quizá hasta peligrosos, listos y, a menudo, mejores. Para mí el campo era especial, pero también estaba matizado con un tipo de complejo de inferioridad y un miedo fastidioso que la verdadera vida estaba pasando en otro lugar. La vida rural puede ser un baile resbaladizo entre la confortante calma y una inquietante ansiedad. Tú te puedes sentir, de forma concurrente, profundamente arraigado y atrapado, independiente y a la vez aislado, alguien especialmente conocido por todos en la nada.

Aunque yo pasé veranos en las sombras de Horse Heaven Hills en el Valle de Yakima en Washington, mi hogar principal durante mis primeros nueve años de mi vida fue Idaho Falls, Idaho. Hasta la fecha mucha gente en mi mundo en Los Angeles ni siquiera sabe dónde queda Idaho. Rutinariamente ellos lo confunden con Indiana, Illinois y Iowa, como si todos los estados con "I" estuvieran amontonados en una región vagamente inferior donde "esas" personas viven (vivían). Esta ignorancia es particularmente dolorosa para mí en mis movimientos y pertenencias en las comunidades urbanas y queer de color, donde las raíces de mucha gente también existen pero a menudo se mantienen

second-class. Instead we prioritize the experiences and insights of gay men who have manifested their desires, made home, retreated to, fled from, longed for, or changed in the country.

As we attempt to forge viable national (and increasingly international) responses to the epidemic among gay and bisexual men, most official AIDS industry ideas and information emanate from the coasts and large central cities. There are reasons for this, having to do with power and politics, and because gay men and the disease are most highly concentrated in large, urban areas that therefore bear the brunt of the epidemic and serve as contact nodes for transmission. But those of us who operate in the metropolis can sometimes confuse our own needs for those of all gay men. This oversight is problematic and more silencing than any lonely country road, because the disease and the needs of gay men take on particular nuances across the many, diverse rural communities nationwide. The AIDS pandemic is rapidly expanding in the South and on too many Native American reservations. How are rural gay men and their communities responding? Rural life has its own pace, one whose rhythms are dictated not only by development but also by growing seasons, unbuilt and wide-open spaces, and fewer bodies to either compete or connect with. What do these rhythms have to teach us about desire and wellness? A forest's sense of two hundred year growth? A mountain's millennial wisdom regarding survival? A rural, elder homosexual's stoic sense of subtlety? A teen queen's negotiation of family, boyfriend and belonging?

en secreto por miedo a ser descalificados como culturalmente atrasados, del monte, de la montaña, un oakie (de Oklahoma), alimentado con maíz, montañés, aldeano, sureño, campesino, chunty, mojado, jíbaro, bracero, granjero, lento, crédulo, ingenuo, ignorante, campesino blanco del sur o de la reserva. Sin embargo, con *Corpus 6* le damos la vuelta a la fusión chauvinista de la gente de la ciudad sobre el campo y segunda clase. En su lugar, nosotros priorizamos las experiencias y perspicacia de los hombres gay que han manifestado sus deseos, ha construido sus hogares, se han retirado, han huido, añorado o cambiado en el campo.

A medida que forjamos respuestas viables nacionales (y crecientemente internacional) a la epidemia entre hombres gay y bisexuales, la mayoría de las ideas y la información de la industria del SIDA emana de las costas y de las grandes ciudades centrales. Existen razones para esto. Tienen que ver con el poder y la política, y porque los hombres gay y la enfermedad en su mayoría están altamente concentrados en grandes zonas urbanas que por lo tanto llevan el peso de la epidemia y sirven como los nudos de contacto para la transmisión. Pero los que operamos en las metrópolis a veces podemos confundir nuestras propias necesidades con las de todos los hombres gay. Este descuido es problemático y más silencioso que cualquier vereda solitaria en el campo, porque la enfermedad y las necesidades de los hombres gay toman matices particulares a través de las muchas y diversas comunidades rurales en toda la nación. La epidemia del SIDA



Patrick "Pato" Hebert, "Outside I.F.," 2005, digital photograph

Once while playing tennis with a friend, we paused to catch our breath on the courts adjacent to Interstate 5, one of Los Angeles' busiest freeways. The night was uncharacteristically humid and the smell of the park had briefly superceded that of the smog and traffic. "You know what I miss the most about not being back home in Mississippi?" he confided. "I miss the smell of the dirt." Dirt is something I always associate with the country, with a hard day's work or a rambunctious weekend of play, something to be washed away but also perhaps appreciated with pride. To be relegated and reduced to that dirt can be a source of great humiliation. But to have some ownership there, some longing, some substantial and visceral connection can also be deeply moving.

For me there is an inherent tension in this issue of *Corpus* being produced by AIDS Project Los Angeles. Yet just as our rural, urban and suburban communities are linked by history, weather and commerce (Who grew that food we're eating? Where was our favorite TV show produced?), so too are we connected by HIV. AIDS is a disaster. It is also an opportunity. As global trends in the pandemic and the movements in our own personal lives have shown, AIDS continues to require a more comprehensive, inclusive and holistic approach toward prevention and health. Thus this issue of *Corpus* is not about locking down an airtight definition of country queers or creating yet another social service

se está expandiendo rápidamente en el sur y en demasiadas reservas nativo americanas. ¿Cómo están respondiendo los hombres rurales gay y sus comunidades? La vida rural tiene su propio paso, uno cuyo ritmos no solamente son dictados por el desarrollo, sino que también por las temporadas agrarias, los campos abiertos, y con menos cuerpos con los que se compite o se conecta. ¿Qué tienen que enseñarnos estos ritmos sobre deseo y bienestar? ¿El sentido de la foresta con valor de doscientos años? ¿Una montaña de sabiduría milenaria sobre sobrevivencia? ¿El sentido estoico de sutileza de un hombre viejo rural homosexual? ¿La negociación de un adolescente gay en cuanto a familia, novio y pertenencia?

Una vez, cuando jugaba tenis con un amigo, hicimos una pausa para respirar en la cancha justo junto al 5, una de las autopistas más ocupadas de Los Angeles. La noche era atípicamente húmeda y el olor del parque brevemente había suplantado el olor a smog y el tráfico. "¿Sabes lo que más extraño al no estar en casa en Mississippi?", confesó. "Extraño el olor a tierra". La tierra es algo que siempre asocio con el campo, con un día de trabajo duro, o con un fin de semana de juego y alboroto, algo que se puede lavar pero que también, tal vez, se puede apreciar con orgullo. Ser relegado y reducido a esa tierra puede ser una fuente de gran humillación. Pero tener algo de posesión allí, algún anhelo, alguna conexión substancial y visceral también puede ser una cosa profundamente conmovedora.

category. Like all previous issues of the journal, this edition instead seeks meaningful connections between people, places and possibilities. From the Pacific Northwest to the Heartland, Arkansas to Utah, Virginia to the Dakotas, New Mexico to Mississippi, Canada to California's Central Valley, this issue of *Corpus* encourages a strong rural presence in our shared conversations about gay men, HIV and the challenging and cherished moments of living in the country.



Patrick "Pato" Hebert, "Thank You," 2005, digital photograph

Para mí hay una tensión inherente en este número de *Corpus* que ha sido producido por AIDS Project Los Angeles. Al mismo tiempo que nuestras comunidades rurales, urbanas y suburbanas están conectadas por la historia y el comercio (¿quién cultivó los alimentos que comes? ¿En dónde se produjeron nuestros programas favoritos de TV?), también estamos conectados por el VIH. El SIDA es un desastre. También es una oportunidad. Como lo han demostrado las tendencias globales en la pandemia y los movimientos en nuestras vidas personales, el SIDA aún requiere un abordaje más comprensivo, incluyente y holístico para la prevención y la salud. Por lo tanto este número de *Corpus* no trata de cerrar una definición hermética de lo queer campesino o crear otra categoría de servicios sociales. Como todos los otros números de la revista, esta edición busca conexiones significativas entre las personas, los lugares y las posibilidades. Desde el noreste del pacífico hasta el corazón de la nación, de Arkansas a Utah, de Virginia a Los Dakota, de Nuevo México a Mississippi, de Canadá al Valle Central de California, este número de *Corpus* fomenta una presencia rural fuerte en nuestras conversaciones compartidas sobre hombres gay, el VIH y los retos y apreciados momentos de vivir en el campo.

Introduction

Jaime Cortez

My hometown of San Juan Bautista had a long name and a short main street. When I was growing up, it had 900 people scattered across thousands of acres of black-soil valleys and gently rolling hills. Rural migrants from Oklahoma and Mexico blended English, Spanish and lots of gestures to get the day's work done. Families who could afford it had pickup trucks and they were often caked in non-recreational mud. Our sheriff's name was Lonnie and he wore cowboy boots, a ten-gallon hat, and a gunbelt just like in the westerns. Lots of children worked in the fields, harvesting and processing potatoes, plums, pears, and anything else we could be pulled into. With our sun-blasted necks and dusty work boots, we were clearly rural. We saw ourselves that way, and I imagine the tourists who came to town to see the old Catholic mission and caught sight of us in the corner grocery store buying anything cold after work thought we looked pretty rural too.

In the intervening years, the idea of “ruralness” has gotten far murkier because rural life is changing as fast as everything else. For rural queers who have dialup access, the rise of the internet has provided unprecedented access to queer content; whether a country queer wants to learn LGBT history, partake in the global pornocoupia, get laid NOW, or convene a support group for locals living with HIV.

Introducción

Jaime Cortez

Mi pueblo de San Juan Bautista tenía un nombre muy largo y una calle principal muy corta. Cuando yo estaba creciendo, tenía 900 personas regadas en miles de acres de valles de tierra negra y lomas que gentilmente subían y bajaban. Migrantes rurales de Oklahoma y México mezclaban inglés y español y un montón de gestos para terminar el trabajo del día. Las familias que podían pagarlo, tenían pick-ups y a menudo estaban untados de lodo no recreativo. El nombre de nuestro Sheriff era Solitario y llevaba botas de vaquero, un sombrero de diez galones y un cinturón de pistola como en las películas del oeste. Muchos niños trabajaban en el campo, cultivando y procesando patatas, ciruelas, peras, y cualquier otra cosa en la que pudiéramos ayudar. Con nuestros cuellos quemados por el sol y las botas polvorientas, nosotros éramos claramente rurales. Nosotros nos veíamos así a nosotros mismos, y me imagino que los turistas que venían al pueblo a ver la vieja misión Católica y alcanzaban a vernos en la tienda de la esquina comprando cualquier cosa fría después del trabajo, también pensaban que nosotros nos veíamos bastante rurales.

En los años intermediarios, la idea de la “ruralidad” se ha oscurecido más, porque la vida rural está cambiando igual de rápido que todo lo demás. Para los queer rurales que tienen acceso de conexión, el Internet les ha provisto un acceso

All of this makes me wonder, what does “rural” mean these days? Is it the absence of a multiplex in town? Is it the presence of a functional drive-in theater? Does being rural have to do with what zip code you're in? Is it places where you might hear large, wild mammals at night? Is it having more churches than bars in your town? Is it a place where you know your neighbors, and their kids, *and* their grandparents? Is it not being able to even *see* a neighbor's house? Is it the place where you can use the internet to analyze the diversity/perversity/adversity of the wide world without the attendant risks of physically encountering it?

These kinds of questions informed our process as we compiled this issue, dedicated to exploring the lives of queer men living, playing and loving outside of the gay urban centers. I was excited to include the paintings by Joseph De Camillis. Painted in the size of the snapshots on which they are based, they capture the way many people experience the more rural spaces of our country: through the windows of cars at seventy five miles per hour (sixty if there is a highway patrol car nearby). But if you have known, loved, hated, escaped or longed for rural places, those images are loaded with meaning. For any of us who are queer in places such as these, the paintings are especially bittersweet. That openness of the skies which is alternately liberatory and oppressive. The lights of homes and shops glowing in the rural darkness, seeming one day a lonely, desolate outpost, and the next day an inviting refuge.

sin precedente a contenido queer; ya sea que un queer del campo quiera aprender la historia LGBT, interactuar en la pornocopia global, tener sexo YA, u organizar un grupo de apoyo para los locales que viven con VIH.

Todo esto me hace pensar, ¿qué significado tiene lo “rural” en estos tiempos? ¿Es la ausencia de multi complejos en un pueblo? ¿Es la presencia de un cine funcional al aire libre? ¿Ser rural tiene que ver con el código postal en el que estás? ¿Es un lugar donde tú tal vez puedas escuchar a enormes mamíferos salvajes en la noche? ¿Es tener más iglesias que bares en tu pueblo? ¿Es un lugar donde tu conoces a tus vecinos, y sus hijos, y sus abuelos? ¿Es ni siquiera poder ver la casa de un vecino? ¿Es el lugar donde tú puedes utilizar el Internet para analizar la diversidad/perversidad/adversidad del amplio mundo sin los riesgos atentos de encontrarlos físicamente?

Este tipo de preguntas informaron nuestro proceso al compilar esta edición, dedicada a la exploración de las vidas de los hombres queers que viven, se divierten y aman afuera de los centros urbanos gay. Yo estaba emocionado por el hecho de poder incluir las pinturas de Joseph De Camillis. Pintadas en un tamaño de fotografía instantánea en las que se basan y capturan las maneras en que muchas personas experimentan los espacios más rurales de nuestro país: a través de las ventanas de los automóviles que marchan a setenta y cinco millas por hora (sesenta si es que la patrulla de la autopista está cerca). Pero si tú has conocido, amado, odiado, escapado o añorado los espacios

For queers in rural Mississippi seeking a safe place, the LGBT bars featured in the documentary *Small Town Gay Bar* serve as places to unwind and organize a community around leisure pleasures. As we learn in the interview with filmmaker Malcom Ingram, queer folk in Mississippi struggle with many of the same issues as everyone else: relationships, jobs, family drama. But some of their experiences are particular to their setting. The bars he filmed are queer oases where a powerful sense of camaraderie and

rurales, esas imágenes están cargadas de significado. Para aquellos de nosotros que somos queer en esos espacios, las pinturas son especialmente agrídulces. La amplitud de los cielos que es alternamente liberadora y opresiva. Las luces de los hogares y tiendas que se iluminan en la oscuridad rural, que un día parecen solitarias, lugares desolados, y al siguiente día parecen un refugio.

Para los queers en el área rural de Mississippi que buscan un espacio seguro, los bares LGBT que se

acceptance flourishes. For many of the patrons, the bars are the only queer spaces they can regularly access. At the same time, AIDSphobia and racism are also in place. Surveillance, public shaming and the specter of violence dog some of the regulars at the bars.

In Sherman Alexie's story "Toughest Indian in The World," we encounter Native American men who are sexual with men, who embrace men, but not the labels "gay," "bi," or "queer." In a joint interview with Alberto Rangel and Enrique Urueta, we hear of wildly divergent rural childhoods in Iowa and Virginia that point up the extraordinary diversity of rural gayboy experiences. Class, ethnicity, community, religion, and personal choices inform their experiences, whether they had steady sex with another boy throughout adolescence or utter sexual nullification through religious acculturation.

Lest you think this issue is all gloom and doom, I will assure that there is love, sex, community and playfulness in rural queerness. This is demonstrated in Albert J. Winn's photo essay of the Radical Faerie Gatherings (week-long gay male encampments in the woods). In one particularly fetching portrait, a sweetly matronly faerie indulges in woodland genderplay. S/he stands contentedly in a knee-length frock, sandals and hat. A faithful pooch sits at madame's side, and behind them is their camping tent, done up in deliciously campy style, with ribbons and lacy curtains gracing the entrance. The theme of

muestran en el documental *Small Town Gay Bar* sirven como espacios para relajarse y organizar una comunidad alrededor de los placeres. Como aprendemos en la entrevista con el director de cine Malcom Ingram, la gente queer en Mississippi lucha con las muchas de las mismas cosas que todos los demás —relaciones; trabajos; drama familiar. Pero algunas de sus experiencias son particulares por su ambiente rural. Los bares que él filmó son oasis queer donde un poderoso sentido de camaradería y aceptación florecen. Para muchos de los clientes, los bares son los únicos espacios queer a los que tienen acceso de forma regular. Al mismo tiempo, SIDAfobia y el racismo también existen. Vigilancia, vergüenza pública y el espectro de la violencia joden a algunos de los regulares de los bares.

En la historia de Alexie, "Toughest Indian in The World", nos encontramos a hombres indígenas Americanos que tienen sexo con hombres, que acogen a otros hombres, pero no acogen las etiquetas de "gay", "bi" o "queer". En una entrevista con Alberto Rangel y Enrique Urueta, escuchamos sobre la infancia rural salvaje y divergente en Iowa y Virginia que apuntan a la extraordinaria diversidad de las experiencias rurales de los chicos gay. Clase social, etnia, comunidad, religión y opciones personales informan sus experiencias, ya sea que ellos tenían sexo constante con otro chico durante la adolescencia o la absoluta anulación sexual a través de la aculturación religiosa.

Para evitar que pienses que esta edición es completamente deprimente, te aseguraré que hay



Patrick "Pato" Hebert, "WHOA," 2005, digital photograph

gentle acceptance also appears in an inspiring article by Darlene Hudson and the Reverend William Robinson. In it, we learn of how same-gender-loving community activists and a respected church leader worked together to combat homophobia and AIDS stigma within the African-American community in Little Rock, Arkansas.

I love that the pieces in this issue present such a range of tactics for queer negotiation of rural spaces. Country queers survive isolation and vulnerability with humor, family connection, love, sex, courage, DSL, TLC, playfulness and community. We hope you enjoy it.

amor, sexo, comunidad y diversión en el mundo rural. Esto se demuestra en las fotografías de Albert J. Winn de Radical Faerie Gatherings (campamentos de hombres gay en el monte durante una semana). En una imagen atractiva, dulce y maternal Faerie disfruta el juego de género en el bosque. El/ella se para felizmente con una falda hasta las rodillas, con sandalias y un sombrero. Un fiel perro pooch se sienta al lado de la madame, y detrás de ellos está la tienda de campaña, hecha en un estilo extravagantemente llamativo, con cintas y cortinas adornando la entrada. El tema de la aceptación gentil también aparece en un artículo inspirador de Marlene Hudson y el reverendo William Robinson. En él, aprendemos cómo activistas de la comunidad de amor entre personas del mismo sexo y un líder religioso respetado trabajan juntos para combatir la homofobia y el estigma por SIDA dentro de la comunidad Afro-Americana en la comunidad de Little Rock, Arkansas.

Me encanta que las piezas en esta edición presentan una gran variedad de tácticas para la negociación queer de los espacios rurales. Los queers campesinos sobreviven el aislamiento y la vulnerabilidad con humor, conexión familiar, amor, sexo, coraje, DSL, TLC, juegos y comunidad. Esperamos que lo disfrutes.



Pornography

Kirk Read

The day after I got my driver's license, I took my mother's station wagon across the East Lexington bridge. It was close to midnight on a Tuesday, and I'd told my parents that I was going out for Diet Coke. My mother, who shared my habit, understood my late-night errand in a manner befitting a fellow addict.

I pulled into the gas station at the end of the bridge. After school earlier that day, I'd bought candy there, as well as a pack of cigarettes. I wasn't smoking, but I figured that the purchase would boost my believability as an eighteen-year-old when I tried to buy porn magazines later that evening. The man who owned the place was always there late and I'd calculated the shift changes over several visits. I'd heard they sold beer to minors, especially on his shifts, so I figured, even with my baby face, I could get away with buying smut.

I got out of the car and was careful to take money out of my wallet so that if he asked for proof of age, I could say I left my wallet at home. Teenagers plotting their illegalities are every bit as creative as politicians when it comes to inventing the truth. I still didn't have a fake ID, which would be worthless for me anyway. Everyone in town knew my family, and I always looked about four years younger than I was. Friends were using driver's licenses from older siblings or taking beer to the counter and just passing as older. I, on the other hand, had to work the phone, cultivating a network of older friends and acquaintances who would buy me beer and leave it on their back porch for me to retrieve.

I thought of my brother Hunter, who was an excellent role model because he taught me, above all, to remain calm while perpetrating. I closed my eyes and pushed on the door. Nothing. I turned the doorknob. Nothing. *Closed*. The sign read *Closed*.

Relieved but disappointed, I went back to the car and started the engine. Where could I get porn magazines at this hour? The truck stop? Definitely, but they're all behind the counter. Truck stops didn't carry gay porn, I knew, but I would have settled for anything. I could get a trucker to buy them for me. I'd done that with beer once. A trucker would understand the hormonal needs of a teenage boy better than anyone, since the profession involves so much masturbation. Some trucker would take pity on me and buy a magazine for me. The truckers would be there for me.

I turned onto Route 11. I started scheming about how maybe I could offer to buy dinner for the trucker to thank him. Maybe he'd take a liking to me. Maybe he'd call me "kiddo" and give me old magazines he'd been saving in his rig. Maybe he'd send me postcards from all over America. Maybe he'd take me up the coast on a long haul during my spring break.

The cop had to blast his siren at me twice, because the spinning blue lights failed to puncture my daydream. He pulled me over in the Kroger parking lot and asked me if I knew why he'd stopped me. I hate it when cops ask you that, especially when you know damn well why they stopped you. But I honestly didn't. I wasn't speeding, and my mother's Brady wagon would *never* have a taillight missing.

"Because I was about to buy porn?" I thought. "Because I was having impure thoughts about a trucker buying me porn?"

"You don't have your headlights on," he said. The area was well-lit and I'd left that gas station in a state of thrilled terror.

I was shaking visibly as I handed him my license and registration.

"You just got your license, boy."

"Yes, sir," I said.

For my twelfth birthday, I had a slumber party. Ethan Boggs brought me the best birthday present I've ever received — a copy of *Penthouse Letters* that he'd found in a trash can on the W&L campus. The pages were battered even before I got my hands on it. I read each story hundreds of times. The photos included the occasional man, and the text included a man unless it was one of the two "lesbian" stories which portrayed women having sex in a way that catered to straight male fantasy.



Joe DeCamillis, "Pray, Vote, Pray," 2005, oil on copper, 4" x 6"

One of the stories, "Air Force Lieutenant Takes Randy Hunk on a Flight," told the story of two men who meet and blow each other during a fateful drunken evening. Part of the happy ending is that the narrator goes home to his girlfriend and vows never to do it again. He says he's glad he had the experience. I read that story over and over, careful not to ruin the pages with splashes of semen. That magazine was sacred to me. It was the reason I learned to restrict my orgasms, directing my gratification into my palm, so as not to destroy my bible.

Of course, I spent most of my fantasies imagining I was one of the women in the heterosexual stories, which were far hotter to me. No fumbling wannabe bi guys experimenting. The straight couples really went at it. In that long tradition of gay people losing themselves in opposite-sex characters, I was drawn to stories in which I imagined myself beneath cowboys and postal workers. I trained my eyes to glaze over the occasional mention of phrases such as "her breasts."

Looking at magazine porn was a favorite slumber party activity. A friend had stolen several issues of *Hustler* from his father, but I didn't care for them. There were no stories, only pictures, which ruined my ability to see myself in the magazines. Plainly put, *Hustler* had too many pink parts for an aspiring gay boy's brain to peacefully accommodate.

You make do with whatever erotic materials you can get your hands on when you're a teenager. Sometimes it doesn't matter whether it's a man or a woman you're looking at. Sometimes just the fact that you're looking at something that is sexually explicit is enough to give your erotic imagination permission to wander. Teenagers deserve an infinite supply of permission. Everyone does.

The cop shined the flashlight right in my face, then handed my license and registration back to me.

"I'm not gonna write ya, kid, but be careful. Tell your father that Buzz said howdy."

I thanked him profusely, and he walked back to the squad car, his flashlight beam bouncing along the road.

I pulled out onto the highway without turning my headlights on. A truck passed, flashing his lights at me. Finally, well on my way to the truck stop, I turned on my lights.

I'd scoured the Richmond Yellow Pages for possibilities. Nothing under "Gay." *Bookstores*, nope. *Adult Book Stores*, a few entries. Novelties was a euphemism for dildos, but one could never be sure that it



Joe DeCamillis, "XXX - Boonesville, MO," 2005, oil on copper, 4" x 6"

wasn't a warehouse pushing juicemakers and disco hits compilations. Richmond always pops up as the address of those order-by-phone TV ads because it's full of such warehouses.

I'd carefully written out the name, address, and phone number of each listing in case I got lost. I didn't have the nerve to call beforehand and ask if they sold gay porn magazines, fearing that my voice would tip them off and ruin my chances when I actually showed up. I envisioned a bustling sales team behind the counter. As soon as I walked in, they'd whisper "That's the kid" and call the police. Thankfully, this was an instance where my imagination truly was overactive.

The store was tiny. I parked out front after circling the block three times. I'd contemplated parking at Hardee's, as I'm sure many patrons do, but imagined the Hardee's manager would see me walk into the adult bookstore, write down my license plate, and have me towed. Everyone is out to get you when you're buying porn.

As I opened the door, a huge cowbell clunked twice. It was the most mortifying sound of my life up until that point. The three customers whipped around to look at me, and the sales clerk nodded at me. *Nodded* at me. Didn't throw me out. Didn't call the police. Nodded.

I scanned the room. There was an entire wall lined with rubber penises and devices I could neither afford nor comprehend. Still, I stood and took in the spectacle of it all — the blow-up dolls and fifteen-inch dildos, the black butt plugs and vibrating eggs. There were hundreds of items. It was at once overwhelming and comforting. I was both terrified and completely at home.

The entire place smelled of ammonia. I took a deep breath and learned to love that smell. To this day, when I smell ammonia, I think about courage.

I spotted the wall of gay porn magazines and slowly made my way across the room. I didn't want anyone to see how much I desperately wanted to gather up stacks of the magazines and run to my car. That's the game in an adult bookstore. People pretend they don't know what they're looking for. You don't see people making a beeline for the very thing they've been coveting for months. They make like they've just stumbled upon it by accident, like it's a rattlesnake.

All of the magazines were wrapped in cellophane, so I picked out several with men who held the most promise. I selected quickly, worried that I would be ejected for browsing. I cradled two magazines in front of me, the way teachers carry graded tests. I waited until the other customers left and slid the magazines onto the counter. The attendant was smoking a cigarette and watching *All My Children*. He barely looked at me as he rang up the sale. I handed him a twenty and chewed a hangnail. He wet his thumb to count off the ones into my hand. As I turned to go, he looked at me over a pair of reading glasses and said, "Shouldn't do that."

I froze. I had the brown paper bag. I had my change. Surely he wasn't going to bust me *now*.

"Shouldn't bite your nails. Filthy habit." With that, he took a long drag off his cigarette and smiled at me.

I laid the brown bag on the passenger seat, nearly wrecking the car as I continually glanced at it as if to ensure that it still existed. I found a side street and parked the car, then tore open both magazines. The first, titled *Trade*, featured a construction worker on the cover. Inside, the models were very different from the model on the cover — mostly street hustlers with bad teeth and very little body hair. They were

young, dirty, and depraved-looking. One of the headings was "Street Chicken," which was the first time I'd ever heard the word "chicken" in a sexual context. You could see little globs of white lube all over their hands, and some of their tattoos weren't finished. They were probably paid fifty bucks each.

When I looked at those pictures, I could feel a chorus of proverbial dirty old men staring at me. I felt as dirty as the young guys in the magazine. I closed the magazine and never looked at it again.

The second magazine was a black-and-white collection of stills from two 1970s porn movies. It was twelve dollars, printed on thick paper with high-quality photographs. The men were solid, bearded, and hairy. In the first set of pictures, a hiker happens upon a sunbather. The rest you can imagine. The second set of pictures was of a poolside sex scene and was so hot that it ruined me for every perfunctory pretty boy poolside romp that Falcon Studios has ever released. I'd glimpsed my future, and it was full of burly fortysomething men, bathed in the forgiving yellow light of seventies photography.

I jerked off in the car, keeping vigilant watch on the street and sidewalk. I carefully wiped up and returned the magazine, unsullied, to the brown paper bag.

I tried the next store on the list but it had closed. I found the third store, which looked like a converted garage. I walked in and started to browse the triple-wrapped bundles of back issue porn magazines. The man behind the counter asked me if I was eighteen. I said "Yes," and he asked to see my driver's license. I pretended to pat my pockets for my wallet, then told him I'd left it at home. He shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyebrows, which was the nicest way possible to kick me out.

When I was twenty-five, a friend loaned me a video. He promised it was my favorite sort of video, made in the 1970s with actors who were men, not overshaved boys. I popped it in the VCR. Thirty minutes later I hadn't hit fast forward even once, which says a lot in and of itself. I was transfixed. It was the movie that those stills had come from — the stills that nursed me through adolescence, and midwived hundreds of orgasms. Those photos were alive before me. What had once been thirty black-and-white photos was now sixty minutes of moving color pictures. I heard their voices, I saw their celebratory smiles, I saw their faces scrunch as they approached orgasm. These men who'd been the brothers, strangers, daddies of my fantasies — they'd returned to me.

Home for La Navidad

Mario Sixto

I took these pictures to show the important things in my life: family, friends, pets, culture, and pride.
In who I am and in who I will become.

"Christmas Mexican-American Style," 2004, digital photograph



"Going Home to Wine Country," 2004, digital photograph



"Untitled," 2004, digital photograph



"Cuddles: Future Love," 2007, digital photograph



"Untitled," 2004, digital photograph



"Fred R.I.P.," 2004, digital photograph



"La Chica Quemada," 2004, digital photograph



"Untitled," 2004, digital photograph



"Untitled," 2004, digital photograph

Small Town Gay Bar: An Interview with Documentary Filmmaker Malcom Ingram

Jaime Cortez

Malcom Ingram's new documentary, "Small Town Gay Bar," has been drawing audiences at film festivals across the country. Five years in the making, the film documents the courageous, outrageous regulars of Crossroads and Rumors, two bars in rural Mississippi. I caught up with Malcom by phone in Seattle, where he was screening his film at a film festival.

Jaime Cortez: Do you come from a rural background?

Malcom Ingram: No. I'm from the suburbs of Toronto. But it might as well have been rural in the way they thought. There was a small-town mentality to it. I learned that being gay was the worst thing in the world. There was no gay representation for me to identify with. I felt badly about being gay until my late twenties.

JC: How did you end up doing a film about small town gay bars in Mississippi?

MI: It started off with an interest in doing a documentary on small town gay bars in general. I did research on them. I originally wanted to do ten bars, but then I realized that would have been a travelogue. So to have more time to interview patrons, I went regional. I asked, "What is the place that has everything I'm looking for?" and I settled on these bars in rural Mississippi. It was significant to me that it was in the south because that region is not particularly gay-friendly. It was important that they were in really small towns. The one bar called Rumors was in a town with a population of 1,500.

JC: Given that you are not from that world originally, what did you do to prepare yourself to enter that world and make a documentary?

MI: I didn't have a set agenda. I just wanted to talk to people and discuss their experiences. I never even had a set of questions for the interviews. It was conversational. I think it made people comfortable and open that way. The movie is observational. I just wanted to talk to people. I'd talk to people, roll the camera and film the conversation.

JC: What kind of reception did you receive as you started filming?

MI: People were very quickly comfortable in being interviewed. I interviewed Butch, the bar owner, early on. When he did it, he felt comfortable, he told patrons. When they found out I was gay too, they were anxious to share their stories. They also saw I was not trying to paint this town as a bunch of hicks.

I met some incredible people. They will be my friends till the day I die. I connected with these people much more than I ever did with people I met in an urban setting. I found people more genuine. In urban centers, we are privileged. We lose sight of people. We lose track of how fortunate we are not to have to deal with some of the things rural people have to deal with.

JC: Sounds like you had a major experience creating this film.

MI: Yes. Doing this film turned into an extension of my own coming out. It was a five-year process, and I ended up coming out to my parents a month before the movie premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. My earliest gay experiences weren't nice. I'm a fat, hairy guy. I came out when I was thirty years old. The gay community is catty, in my experience. It found it very exclusionary. I was certainly not given any access to the gay community when I tried, except for the bear community. That was my only entry point into gayness.

JC: As we planned this issue of *Corpus*, we realized that the definition of "rural" was actually a lot more slippery than we had originally imagined. I'm curious, what do you think it means to be rural?

MI: We bandy the word "community" around a lot in our world. My experience is that in urban centers, the gay "community" is a bunch of little villages. There's the dyke bar there, the gay guy bar there, the dance bar over there. In rural areas, the gay bar is the only option. Everyone goes and it is very much a community. I think that urban centers could learn from this. When did you last go to an urban male gay bar and see a bunch of lesbians hanging around? In these towns, they are just happy to have a place to go, and it is a place with what I would call true community.

JC: What are the distinctive characteristics you saw in small town gay life?

MI: Truck stops. Truck stops are important sex places in rural settings. I don't know if they exist in urban centers. Cruising the truck stops is very particular. It is its own sexual community. The truck stops are baby steps for some men, for closeted people who don't want to go to gay bars or are afraid to go. Everyone knows the truck stops are cruising areas.

JC: Are these bars known to be gay bars, or is it more of a secret society?

MI: These are small towns. Everybody knows the gay bar. I'd say that 90 percent of the people I interviewed in these towns knew they were gay bars. But one queer person lived 40 minutes away from one of them, and she didn't know about it. We actually filmed her on her first visit to the gay bar. They are well known. They are infamous, really. In these areas, when you move a gay bar in, people notice. One of the things that interested me, was someone taking their life savings, their names, and putting up the rainbow flag on their door, instantly alienating everyone around them. Putting a rainbow flag in front of your business in Shannon, Mississippi is the equivalent of flying a southern rebel flag in San Francisco.

JC: Where were the bars located? Downtown? Off highways? In strip malls?

MI: There are no strip malls in rural Mississippi. The one in Meridian is off a highway and is hidden away by a patch of trees. Both bars are located rather discreetly. The bar Rumors, you wouldn't know it was a gay bar unless you were looking for a gay bar. You couldn't come from out of town and just find the gay bar in these towns.



Photo courtesy of Malcom Ingram

JC: When you mention that discreet quality, it makes me think of risk. Did folks seem cautious or skittish about going?

MI: They know there is risk involved in their lifestyle. I'd say the vast majority of people in these bars do not rock the boat. They maintain a straight lifestyle. It was very rare to find someone living as an out queer. Anyone living as an out person had a lot of respect in the community. There was one drag queen who was out. She had died years before I did the film, but people still remembered her and talked about her and the whole town respected her.

JC: I saw online that a torture/murder had taken place in the area.

MI: Yes. Scotty Joe Weaver was his name. It happened in Bayminette, Alabama. He was butchered by three people. It took place while I was researching the film, right before I went to shoot the film. It is a big case that hasn't gotten much press coverage. Fred Phelps went and protested at his funeral.

JC: What happened?

MI: I'd really prefer it if you would look it up online. I had a situation where I was accused of capitalizing on his murder, and one write-up made it seem like the murder was the focus of the film. It's not. It's in the film, but it is not the focus. The way his story is used in the film is to show the consequences of a world without any kind of gay support. There was no community of gays at all where he was from.

JC: What segments of the gay community frequent these bars?

MI: Every small town gay bar has a drag element. It is a very big part of it. I have a theory. Nobody in the South is gay. Everybody identifies as bi. Well, not everybody, but a large segment of people. I think it helps people to have a feminine element in the bar. It makes some people, especially the guys on the down-low in the bar, feel more comfortable there.

JC: And how did gender relations look in the bars?

MI: I found it interesting that male or female, gender was never an issue. It was one bar, and everyone got along. It was really nice and refreshing to see. There was no real division that I saw. There were no walls.

- JC: Were men and women just in each other's proximity, or were they interacting?
- MI: Once they were inside, men and women were intermingling. No division at all. It was great to see.
- JC: With lots of different elements attending the bars, I wonder, what is the music like?
- MI: I'd say that it was dance music. House. Disco. Rock. Hip hop.
- JC: How did race relations in the bars look to you?
- MI: The south is a place where racism is still kind of allowed. There are straight bars I went to that black people were not allowed.
- JC: How did you know that black people weren't allowed?
- MI: Because the owners and the patrons said black people weren't allowed. It was a known fact. It wasn't a secret. That is a part of what the south is. Race relations have always been a problem there.
- JC: Was that racism equally prevalent in the gay bars?
- MI: Was racism as rampant as it was in straight bars? No. Was it present? Absolutely. Just from the way people talked about each other. I spent a lot of time, as they got more comfortable, their words were peppered with language that made me go, "Oh."
- JC: What did they say?
- MI: Racial epithets.
- JC: Like what?
- MI: I don't want to say them in print. But they were racial epithets. You can imagine.

- JC: Fair enough. Were there things you saw that made you feel hopeful?
- MI: While I was in Shannon, Mississippi, they had a gay-positive night at Doctor Love's, a local teen bar. And straight girls would show up with their friends. It gives me hope for the next generation. The gay thing seems to be more accepted. It was great going and watching the kids dancing, girls dancing with drag queens, just everyone dancing and having a good time. There was a level of entry to a secret society that made them wide-eyed and incredulous. They appreciated it. Everyone has had the feeling of being a misfit. Everyone feels shy. If we throw down our arrogance, we really just want to be accepted. In these bars it felt like "we're all in this together."
- JC: Did you see any signs of HIV prevention information in the bars?
- MI: Yes. I saw it. One fellow, Butch, who ran the bar Crossroads, was one of the first HIV activists in the area. He ran programs. He got arrested for handing out condoms. It was mentioned in the movie. He did outreach in high schools, and gave out condoms and was arrested for contributing to the delinquency of minors. HIV prevention information is not as present as it could be. But someone like Butch was definitely a trailblazer in Mississippi. There are condoms, pamphlets and other materials at Crossroads. There weren't that I saw at Rumors.
- JC: So there was some kind of foregrounding of HIV in one of the bars. Did people talk about HIV one-on-one?
- MI: No. Not at all. It was very off-the-record when it came to discussing HIV.
- JC: Are you saying people would disclose their HIV status off the record?
- MI: They would disclose other people's HIV status! Not everyone, of course, but there was an element of that. I think there is a real problem. Where there are certain basic freedoms, you don't have to hide things like HIV. But even in large urban centers, people have fear of communication on HIV, when you put it into a rural setting, people talk about it even less. A lot of the conversations that I had were eye opening. HIV was never discussed on camera. It was not in the open, so it was hard to deal with it. They felt that nothing could be done. There is no education. In places like Rumors, there was no outreach.

JC: One of the bars is closed down in the movie. Why did that happen?

MI: It was a wild and crazy bar run by Butch. He was kind of trailblazer, an eccentric gay redneck, self-proclaimed. He was opening gay bars in Mississippi in the seventies. He is a very strong, controversial figure in the area. Some people take issue with Butch. He allowed underage people into the bar, and that left him open to accusations. He wanted to create a place for people to meet. When you create that environment with the underage, you can create a predatory scene. That was the downfall of Crossroads. It turned into an underage bar, then the drugs followed and the predators, then it kind of crashed into itself.

JC: Is there one person in particular who will stay with you?

MI: Three people. Laurie, who opened the bar Different Seasons. Alicia, who is a drag queen working at Rumors. Butch. Their voices were strong. They were three people fighting the fight in a way that I instantly respected them. They were strong in keeping community, and in insuring that situations like Scotty Joe Weaver's don't happen so frequently. I wish I had a Crossroads when I was growing up. We talk about acceptance. What I saw in these rural bars was acceptance. Real acceptance. To film that was a privilege.

JC: Thank you, Malcom Ingram.

MI: Thank you. It's a privilege to get to talk about my work.



Photo courtesy of Malcom Ingram



Radical Faeries

Albert J. Winn

The Radical Faeries are one of the many outgrowths of the divergent lifestyles of the 1960's and '70's. They are closely related to the civil rights, freedom and self expression, and back to the land movements. A community of gay men, the Faeries turn away from urban life and define themselves as descendents of an ancient heritage of pagan mythology and cross-gender identity. Not to be confused with transsexuals or transvestites, Faeries could be more appropriately identified as pan-gender, using drag as a means to express the feminine aspects of their male gender, challenging traditional views of masculinity and homosexuality. Popularly this has sometimes been called "gender fuck," and as such, drag is also used humorously and often with a camp sensibility.

The Faeries gather at solstices and equinoxes in remote areas to mark the change in seasons, celebrate their sexuality and to partake in sacred rituals. Known as Gatherings, the often week-long encampments are ephemeral communities established virtually overnight with cooking, eating, bathing and entertainment provided by the assembled group. Shrines of assorted talisman, sexual objects, and/or memorabilia are erected and the Gathering convenes at the Circle, where each member of the community is given an equal voice. Leaderless, and depending on volunteerism, the Faeries place great importance in not establishing a hierarchy in any circumstance. Faeries spend most of the time "playing" and often use normally pejorative terms such as "sissy" and "fag" to describe themselves and others. At Gatherings, the men take on faerie or fantasy names and dress in a manner that portray roles connected to their sense of true inner self.



"Man with a Tire Swing and Jesus," Oregon, 1995



"Two Men Dancing," Catskill Mtns., NY, 1985



"Spree," Catskill Mtns., NY 1984

Facing Page: "Man with a Tulle Tent," Oregon, 1995

All photographs these pages and following: 11" x 11" black & white gelatin-silver prints reproduced with the express permission of the artist.

The faeries challenge the notion that men, particularly gay men, can only exist in competitive roles. They believe they are not only the purveyors of an archaic mythical tradition, but also enable gay men to reclaim their true identity.

I became interested in the Radical Faeries after reading an article in RFD, a journal about rural gay life. I was intrigued to read about gay men who wove their own clothes, lived on farms, and had opted for an alternative from the normative life that most gay men sought out in major metropolitan areas. At the time I was living in New York, and before that in Miami. It was the late 1970's and early '80's, and like so many other gay men, I responded to the notion that gay life could be lived most completely and fulfillingly in an urban environment. After a few years, however, I found that life limiting. I loved New York and all that the city had to offer, but bar and disco culture left me feeling lonely and alienated, and I found it rather conventional. Certainly there had to be more to gay life than what I was finding. I had grown up in a small community in Pennsylvania, had lived for several years on a kibbutz in Israel, missed the intimacy of close neighbors, friends and relatives, so when I read the article about the Faeries, something resonated within me. I remembered that a rural life seemed ideal, but abandoned the idea because it seemed far from possible for me as a gay man.

I immediately began searching the Oscar Wilde bookstore for any book I could find on the Radical Faeries and soon made contact with the northeast Faeries. That fall, I attended my first gathering at a former summer camp in the Catskill Mountains. I was unprepared for the drag and the ceremonial rituals, for the goddess worship, and some of the unvarnished sexual activity. As it turned out, few of the attendees actually lived in the country. Most were from cities and the Gatherings were an alternative to their everyday lives. I didn't like everyone, but I loved the anarchy of the event and the free spirits of the men I met. And it was lovely to see so many men embracing and sharing intimate aspects of their lives openly. I saw quite quickly that the Faeries were not an ideal either, but they added to the complexity of gay life.

I always travel with my camera, and immediately saw the possibility for a photography project. I was not interested in a documentary project or a photo essay, so I set out to make a series of portraits which I hoped would be illuminating, fun and revealing. In the years since I attended my first Faerie Gathering, many of the men I photographed have died from AIDS. In the beginning, the mysterious illness was merely a cloud on the horizon, and some in the Faerie community naively believed that their emphasis on natural and healthful living, would spare them from getting sick. Sadly, today we know differently. The photographs presented here are a small sample of that project which began in 1984 and continued into the mid-nineties. They are from several areas across the country and I believe a testament to a Queer Culture which continues to thrive.

Facing Page: "Blow Job & White Face," New York State, 1988

Following Pages: "The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian," Oregon, 1995
 "Tom & Shevic," Catskill Mtns., NY, 1985





"Man with in an Indian Print Skirt on the Bumper of a Truck,"
New York State, 1989



"Man with a Talisman," Catskill Mtns., NY, 1986



"Buddah on a Front Porch," Oregon, 1995



"Don and Wayne," New York State, 1989



"David and David on their Farm," Odessa, NY, 1996



"Men Dancing," Catskill Mtns., NY, 1986

Fathers and Sons

Keith M. Harris

Editor's Note: The following five narrative poems are from Keith M. Harris' "Fathers and Sons."

The Neighbor's Son

We began with music. In retrospect,
I didn't expect seduction.

I was barely sixteen. He was only fourteen.

We had known each other all our lives.

We were both sweating and afraid, but he was eager and said,
"We have to hurry before my parents come home."

We undressed, faced each other, and awkwardly embraced. Then the world went silent,

but only for a moment.

There was a full length mirror nailed to the back of the bedroom door.
His glistening, naked backside and my arms were reflected.
I leaned forward to kiss him. His eyes were closed. As I noticed
the reflection of our embrace slowly move to the side, I thought:
there's no where to hide in this room.

I was the first one to see his father. He shouted:

"Boy, what are you doing to my son!"

Before I could speak –

and I tried to speak –

his mother was at the door. His father slapped me and then his son.

His mother stood between the two of them. She began to shout and cry.

I grabbed my clothes. It was suddenly so loud. I ran for the door. When I last saw him, he was standing there, staring at his father, with his fists clenched. He was still naked, his body sweaty and tense. I went running down the stairs.

As I put my clothes on in their living room, I could hear shouting, screaming and breaking glass. I understood few words – I was getting dressed as best I could – but I did hear his mother say: “Not my son, no you will not, not my son.”

I never thought it would happen this way.



Photo courtesy of Hendricks Family Archive

The End

We had been in the house for only five minutes. My husband had gone to place a new clock in our son’s bedroom. I had stopped on the landing to remove my coat. When I heard him shout, I dropped everything and ran upstairs.

As I entered the bedroom, I saw my husband slap the boy from next door. The boy was naked and searching for words. Then my husband turned to slap my son, who was also naked, but searching for nothing. He was radiant and indignant. I knew when my husband raised his hands, he would try to kill our boy.

The neighbor’s son collected his clothes and ran downstairs. I turned to stop him, to have him explain himself, but as my body moved toward the door, my husband picked up my son and threw him across the room:

My boy.

He was so thin and lanky, his frail, nude body crumpled on the floor.

I tried to calm my husband. He pushed me aside and muttered, “I’m going to kill the boy!”

Then, my son – the youngest one – took his right hand,

and with the speed
and blind decision
of a crazed man,
he raised a lamp and brought it down against the side of his father's face.

And so they began like two men, holding their ground,
entangling their bodies in a mythical rage,
an aged, old battle.
One atop the other.
Each one a stranger to the two
that I had known before.

Company

The parents will speak and keep the sons at a distance. They will render last week's episode as old and foolish as boys being boys, passing through the annals of man.

They will shout and fuss; the mothers will intervene; the fathers will be absolved. By the end of the evening, no sex will have been involved.

After the company leaves, he will apologize for his actions and condescend to mine.
The time will have arrived.

To accept his apology would be to despise myself.
To oblige his condescension would be to accept his despite for me.
Nevertheless,

however casual you make it seem,
I am, Daddy,
and if I am not,
I will not be.

Boyhood Lost

When I looked from my bedroom window,
I saw him hanging in the tree:
I fell to my knees.
I heard a strange sigh pass my lips.
I tried to raise my body,
to see his face,
to call his name again,

but in the end,
I could only lie there,
touching myself,
where he once held me.

A Father's Demise

As I was exiting I-95, on my way home, something in the sky told me that hell was just over the horizon. As I turned down Old Frontage Road, I saw my son running across the field that bordered our backyard. I waved from the window. He paused and gave a hard, uncompromising stare. As I drove the car around the curve, he glanced over his shoulder toward the house and then returned a bolder glare. As I took what was my last look at my second son, I thought: God, what have I done this time?

When I pulled the car into the driveway, I noticed the sound of distant sirens. When I entered the house, my wife was standing with her back to me. I approached her. She turned, said nothing, and walked away. I turned to follow her, but there were two firemen, a paramedic and two policemen at the door.

I should have known from the siren and the quiet of the afternoon, but a father never expects these things, even if they are of his doing. When one of the policemen asked, "Where is the body?" I asked, "What body?" My wife then led the way.

As we passed from the living room through the dining room, I thought about the things that I had wanted years ago: things for myself, things for my wife, my sons, my family. From the living room to the dining room to the kitchen to the backporch, I should have asked for more, I thought, I should have asked for more.

Looking down for the first step from the backporch, I saw my oldest son, sitting cornered between the side of the house and the steps. When he noticed me, he ran away screaming. Everyone, except my wife, stopped and stared at me. I motioned for everyone to go forward with as much authority as I could muster.

My wife continued ahead. Then suddenly, she stopped. Slowly, she turned only her neck and looked at me over her shoulder. With a controlled gesture of her hand, she directed me to see a blue woolen blanket, and then she stepped aside.

As I knelt down, I felt as if I had begun a flight, gliding away, the wind beneath me. As I pulled the blanket from his body, I was rooted to the ground like the tree in front of me.

There he was, ashen skinned, sufflated, dead.

I looked to my wife, to my oldest son. I thought about my second son running into the obscurity of a darkening afternoon. And then, the youngest one, dead at fourteen.

He didn't have to do this, this act of surrender, this act of defeat. I wanted him to get up and take a slap on the face like a man. If I could have placed my angry hands on his body and beat life back into him, I would have done so, just to kill him again. Or so I thought at that moment back then.

Now I think of that day as the day of betrayal, as an act of freedom. He had chosen not to live, if he could not live as he wanted.

After the police, the firemen and the paramedic had left, after the crowd of neighbors had dispersed, after every member of my family was gone, I sat by myself in the house. In the solitude of my now empty home, I sat alone like a man, and I cried.



Photo courtesy of Leonardo Coleman

How African-American Gay Activists in the Rural South Found Community Support

Darlene Hudson and William Robinson

Editor's Note: On May 15, 2006, Newsweek Magazine published a five-page article entitled "Batting a Black Epidemic." Focusing on the impact of AIDS on African-American communities, the article stated that "twenty-five years after the virus was first documented in gay white men, HIV has increasingly become a disease of color, with blacks bearing the heaviest burden by far. African-Americans make up just 13 percent of the U.S. population but account for an astounding 51 percent of new HIV diagnoses. Black men are diagnosed at more than seven times the rate of white men, black females at 20 times the rate of white women." While it is always critical to keep our eyes on such statistics, it is also vital to follow the example of the Newsweek article by recognizing grassroots AIDS organizing in black communities. Originally printed in 2001, the following article offers a rich account of how activists from the black LGBT and SGL (same gender loving) organization Brotha's and Sista's organized themselves to confront HIV/AIDS in Arkansas while engaging questions of sexuality, spirituality and public health. Some of the statistics in the article have changed. Additionally, Brotha's and Sista's is currently on hiatus, but the organization's history is a powerful case study in community organizing for wellness, and is a critical organizing model for us as we move forward in the era of AIDS.

The history of the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic in the white, gay male community in the U.S. has been well documented. In the early years of the epidemic (the 1980s), AIDS was considered a "gay disease" and was attributed to the lifestyle of gay men. Since many people in African-American communities have historically been in denial about the fact that there are black gays; AIDS came to be viewed by some as a disease "only white, gay, men got" and blacks "got it" when they associated too closely with white gays. This made it convenient for homophobic people, including homophobic people in African-American communities, to dismiss the disease and cite it as proof that God was somehow punishing gay people. In response to the new epidemic, the (mainly white) gay community began to mobilize. They challenged the government, the private sector, and the larger community to make the disease a health priority by taking to the streets in demonstrations and in acts of civil disobedience, by founding organizations to assist the sick, and by challenging the homophobic teachings of some religious institutions.

Over a short period of time, AIDS showed it did not discriminate as cases among nonwhite and non-gay people began to emerge. However, many of the "new faces of AIDS" were from other marginalized groups such as injection drug users and Haitian immigrants. Again, it was convenient for many within African-American communities to ignore the epidemic and not view it as a threat to them. Silence about

AIDS from African-American churches was most notable and difficult to comprehend because of the traditional role of black churches in identifying and speaking out against threats to the health and welfare of African American communities. In the past these churches have also helped to mobilize blacks to fight against injustice and have offered spiritual support, especially in times of crisis.

Today the faces of AIDS cases in the U.S. are approximately 50% African-American (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 1999). Among women diagnosed with AIDS, African-Americans comprise 64% of cases, African-American children account for nearly all of the pediatric cases of AIDS while African-Americans represent only 13% of the U.S. population (DHHS, 1999).

There have been countless stories from African-Americans living with AIDS, both gay and straight, of being turned away from their churches because they have AIDS. There have been numerous reports of African-American ministers using their pulpits to attack gay people. These actions on the part of some black churches and silence from others created a situation where many HIV-infected and gay persons have to carry a burden with them into what is supposed to be a space where their burdens can be lifted. In a published discussion about the African-American church and its view on AIDS and gays, clergy people and gay Christians were interviewed (Balm and Gilead, 1997). The 51 clergy people interviewed found many churches stigmatized both substance abusers and gays. Many of the gay men interviewed gave personal accounts of being asked to leave their church after disclosing their gay life or being permitted to remain on the condition they suppress public recognition of their homosexuality and not discuss it. Today, the African-American church is being challenged to respond to the AIDS epidemic. Faith-based HIV/AIDS organizations have been formed in recent years to involve the black church in HIV prevention. Examples of these are the New York-based Balm and Gilead and the Ark of Refuge in California. The Balm and Gilead is endorsed by over ten African-American church denominations and caucuses (Balm and Gilead, 1997).

In a few rare cases, African-American gays and the black church have been brought together by the AIDS epidemic, not in confrontation but in collaboration. Some black churches now view the epidemic as an opportunity to demonstrate unconditional love to the sick and dying based on the teachings of Jesus. In Arkansas, one such collaborative effort between a black church, Theresa Hoover United Methodist

Church, and an African-American gay organization called Brotha's and Sista's, took root a decade ago. It was through this collaboration that the African-American gay community in Arkansas – who prefer the inclusive acronym SGL/LGBT (Same Gender Loving/ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) – was able to build partnerships and find acceptance with organizations and businesses within the greater African-American community.

Arkansas is a mostly rural, southern state located in the so-called “Bible Belt” of the U.S. In 1998, 70% of the population of Arkansas lived outside of urban areas and 40% lived in communities with fewer than 2,500 (Arkansas Department of Health [AR DOH], 1998). The median annual income of \$25,500 in Arkansas is below the national norm and African-Americans are overrepresented in poverty figures for the state (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, 1998). Many young people leave Arkansas for places like Houston, Texas or Atlanta, Georgia where there are greater job opportunities. African-Americans are also overrepresented among AIDS cases in Arkansas, comprising 35% of all cases while only 16% of the population (AR DOH, 1998). Religious traditions and social conservatism run very strong in Arkansas, even in its SGL/ LGBT community. Since many of the communities are “small-town-like” and most families know one another and share conservative values, many SGL/LGBT people living in Arkansas cope with internalized homophobia and lead “closeted” lives to shield themselves from homophobic attitudes. It is believed by many members of Brotha's and Sista's, as well as some behaviorists, that internalized homophobia can contribute to depression, suicide, and substance abuse. These behaviors may indirectly put a person at risk of developing AIDS (Williamson, 2000).

Brotha's and Sista's, Inc., was founded in 1990 by a group of African-American lesbians who began meeting informally because they were concerned about a number of health and social issues the African-American community in general, and the SGL/LGBT community specifically, were being challenged with. Also of concern was the lack of meaningful cultural/social activities for African-American SGL/LGBT in Arkansas. The only social outlets that existed for years were the bars and homes of individual gay people. The founding women of Brotha's and Sista's identified a lack of information and gaps in services around domestic violence, substance abuse, STDs, cervical cancer and internalized homophobia as some of the most pressing health challenges facing the community at that time. The organization's objectives from the beginning have been to bridge gaps in health and social services; promote a sense of cultural, political, and spiritual awareness and pride among African-American SGL/LGBT people; and enhance the development of the entire African-American community. Brotha's and Sista's defines itself as an HIV/AIDS prevention and community enhancement organization.



Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church of Little Rock, AK
Photo courtesy of Theresa Hoover, UMC

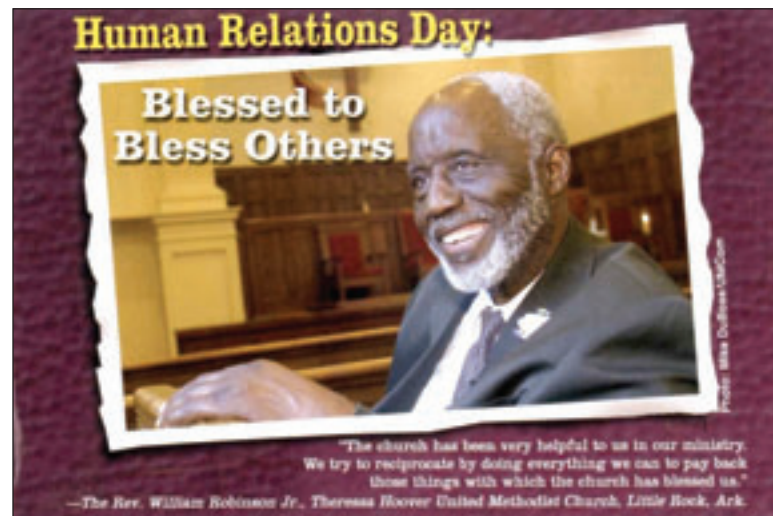
Realizing the challenges facing the African-American SGL/LGBT community and larger African-American community are similar but also too numerous and complex for one group to tackle alone, Brotha's and Sista's has sought to form a partnership with the African-American community in Arkansas to address these challenges. The organization recognizes that African-American SGL/ LGBT identify strongly with the larger African-American community and its traditions, and are just as likely to be discriminated against for being black as they are for being gay. For these reasons, Brotha's and Sista's believes the African-American community is a natural ally of SGL/ LGBT African-Americans, in spite of the homophobia that still exists today in the greater community. Also, the organization's members believe that by working together on common problems, barriers can be broken down.

Brotha's and Sista's first developed ties with the Women's Project in Arkansas, since one of the founding women worked for the project. The Women's Project is an organization of progressive women who assist women of all races and socio-economic backgrounds in obtaining information and resources. It is perceived by many in the African-American community to be a white organization and is therefore unfamiliar to many of them. Brotha's and Sista's was able to obtain from The Women's Project educational materials on cervical cancer, STDs and other health-related issues. The founding women of Brotha's and Sista's were also concerned about whether they were at risk for HIV, though at that time, transmission of the virus among women was not a health department priority. However, the “sistas” decided not to wait and let AIDS become an epidemic among them and decided to educate themselves about HIV. One of the founding women of the organization worked for the health department which made it possible to access public health information. With the new information the women of Brotha's and Sista's developed “playshops” that promoted safer sex for women and were very popular, educational, and portable to spaces where women gather. They designed “playshops” as opposed to “workshops” because they did not want their audience to interpret safer sex practices as work.

In just a few short years AIDS cases sharply increased in Arkansas and Brotha's and Sista's was affected in a personal way as friends began to die. The group then shifted its focus to AIDS prevention and control. Today 54% of Arkansas's AIDS cases are in homosexual or bisexual males (AR DOH, 1998). Reaching African-American SGL/LGBT males proved a challenge for Brotha's and Sista's for two reasons. One reason was the perception of the group as a gay, women's organization, and the other was the large numbers of men who had sex with other men but did not identify themselves as gay. After extensive discussions with many gay men it was decided that the best way to reach SGL/LGBT men was in the bars where they gather. This would require establishing a trusting relationship with the owners of gay bars. As it turned out, the local, black, gay bar was owned by an African-American lesbian who not only allowed Brotha's and Sista's to do HIV prevention work in her bar, but soon became an active member of the organization.

Hearing about the HIV prevention work of the organization, a local, African-American physician, Dr. Henry Masters, approached Brotha's and Sista's about working together to educate the community about AIDS. Dr. Masters provided all the resources and incentives for the work. However, gay men were slow to present themselves for HIV testing and counseling. Once again, the organization held a series of discussions with some of the men. The idea emerged to create a campaign to increase testing by offering a free T-shirt with a catchy phrase ("I do, do you practice safer sex?") as an incentive. This was a huge success as many men came forward for testing and, of course, a T-shirt.

After these two successes Brotha's and Sista's knew it was time to become more formally established within the community in order to expand its work. In 1994, the organization developed its Articles of Incorporation, and in March of 1995 received its 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt, non-profit status. The organization then brought its agenda to the larger African-American community; with the knowledge that almost every African-American home has been touched by someone infected or affected by AIDS, they presented their issues as issues that have an impact on the entire community. To help make the voices of the SGL/ LGBT community heard and forge new partnerships with local agencies and other groups, Brotha's and Sista's staff also participated in the Community Planning Board and Minority AIDS Education Task Force. Through numerous discussions with the health department and by participating in community planning, it was decided that outreach at bars was critical to controlling the epidemic and funding should be sought. At that time the chairperson of the Minority AIDS Education Task Force was Rev. William Robinson, a progressive minister who played an instrumental role in helping Brotha's and Sista's apply for funding for HIV prevention and outreach activities.



Flyer featuring Reverend William Robinson, An Ally of Brotha's and Sista's
Courtesy of Theresa Hoover, UMC

Rev. William Robinson came into AIDS prevention work the way he came into Civil Rights activism in the 1960s. He sees it as God's work to minister to the disenfranchised and believes all humans deserve dignity and respect. Rev. Robinson asserts that AIDS is a human and health issue, and that the epidemic is not about homosexuality but a virus which infects individuals and 'affects the entire community. Rev. Robinson also maintains that it is the job of the church to love humans, and that the epidemic has given the church an opportunity to affirm they are in the business of love. He has been the pastor of Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church for decades, running a social activist ministry which includes a recovery program, a shelter for the homeless, a community daycare center, a youth activity center, and a program for young entrepreneurs.

Today, Rev. Robinson is one of two straight members who sit on the board of Brotha's and Sista's. He has given the organization space from which to run its operations and has been a spiritual support to its members. Rev. Robinson's philosophy regarding partnerships is that it makes good sense for people to work together on the things they agree on, and to agree to disagree when their opinions differ but not let that interfere with the work. He points out that collaboration should not be confused with manipulation (i.e., using underhanded methods to achieve one's goals), that collaboration means bringing all issues to the table so the merits and drawbacks of those issues can be discussed.

Another African-American minister, Rev. C.W. Garrett formerly of Pineal Church, also broke the silence and exclusionary policies of many black churches by welcoming members of Brotha's and Sista's to join his church. It was through community work of individual members of the organization that Brotha's and Sista's came to know Rev. Garrett.

Brotha's and Sista's decided as a matter of strategy that the best way to reach more SGL/LGBT African-American people would be to hold informal, social events since it was widely known that the community would come out in large numbers for fun. Once people were in attendance, AIDS prevention messages could be softly pushed. The first of the events was a picnic where the organization held a barbecue with music and provided AIDS educational materials and condoms. The picnic, now in its 9th year, was later named Suisse Mocha in memory of a transgender person who died alone of AIDS. In paying tribute to Suisse Mocha, the members of Brotha's and Sista's wanted to convey to SGL/LGBT people with AIDS that they do not have to die alone because the organization exists for them. In addition, the organization's members have made it possible for 150-200 people to be tested for HIV and referred hundreds of others for testing, and handed out more than 30,000 condoms, 2,000 safe sex kits for men, and 500 for women. Brotha's and



Darlene Hudson
Photo courtesy of Darlene Hudson

Sista's was one of the first organizations to introduce the use of OraSure testing, a non-invasive HIV test. In 1998 the Bert Meyer Foundation awarded the organization funds to do voter registration which has now become a part of the organization's community outreach activities. Today, Brotha's and Sista's is the only African-American SGL/ LGBT organization in Arkansas.

As the annual picnic became a successful way of organizing and educating the community about AIDS, there was a need to find vendors to supply materials (e.g, food, T-shirts) for the picnic. Brotha's and Sista's made a conscious decision to support small, black businesses as part of its community enhancement objective and has been able to successfully partner with several of them over the years. Most of these businesses are owned by straight people who now welcome and look forward

to the organization's patronage. One example of a collaborative effort between the local business community and Brotha's and Sista's occurred in 1995, when a black bookstore worked in cooperation with the organization to bring gay writer E. Lynn Harris to Arkansas.

Brotha's and Sista's has learned that African-American SGL/LGBT people do have allies in the greater African-American community and must be creative in finding those allies. Sometimes allies are in places people do not think to look or are individuals who are only waiting to be asked. The organization believes that SGL/LGBT must first view themselves as resources in their communities, contributing valuable work and creativity. It was because of the personal contacts through their jobs and community work that individual members of the organization were able to tap into resources within the African-American community. Today in 2001, Brotha's and Sista's continues the work of bringing HIV prevention education to the African-American SGL/LGBT community by targeting men who have sex with other men and their sexual partners regardless of their sexual identification. Additionally, the organization, in cooperation with Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church, is in the process of becoming an HIV testing site. Brotha's and Sista's is also expanding by developing an interactive website.

There is still a great deal of homophobia and fear of AIDS in the African-American community and churches. However, the African-American gay and greater African-American community are inextricably linked and their best interests are served when they come together.

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I Have Something to Tell You

Adrain Chesser

“for beauty is nothing but the onset of terror we’re still just able to bear.” – Rilke

I believe that one of photography’s greatest allies is memory, whether it is personal or collective, real or imagined. The illusion of the realism of photography has the potential to access emotions bound to memories, sometimes causing extreme physical reactions, at other times a nagging unease or the warm sensation of pleasure.

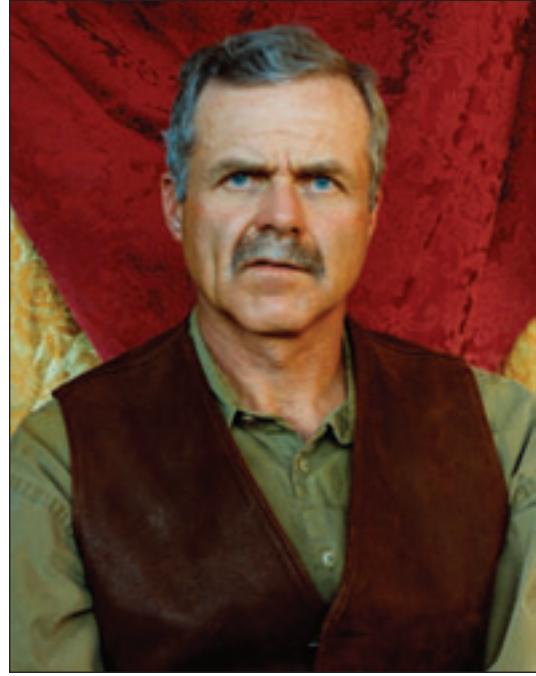
When I tested positive for HIV and was diagnosed with AIDS, I had an extreme physical reaction whenever I thought about having to tell my friends and family. Looking at this reaction more closely, I realized that it was the same reaction I had as a kid whenever I had to disclose something uncomfortable to my parents, fearing rejection or even abandonment if larger secrets were revealed.

It occurred to me that it might be possible to overcome this paralyzing fear by photographing my friends as I told them about my diagnosis. I invited each friend to come to my studio to have their picture taken, a simple head shot for a new project. They weren’t given any other information. For a backdrop I used the curtains from the living room of the house I grew up in. I put everyone through the same routine, creating a formal process that proved to be transformative. At the beginning of each shoot I would start by saying, “I have something to tell you.”

Each sitter’s reaction was unique depending upon their own experience of loss, illness and death, creating a portrait of unguarded, unsettling honesty. As a collective, the body of work speaks to the universal experience. The phrase, “I have something to tell you,” is often the preface for life-altering disclosures: pregnancies, deaths, love affairs, illnesses of all kinds, winning the lottery. The phrase becomes a kind of mile-marker in a life, delineating what came before from what comes after.

I printed the photographs on glossy paper for several different reasons. First because the surface is reflective, often creating a glare that distracts from seeing the actual image, not unlike what we do as humans creating facades to distract from what lies beneath. Also, the surface is extremely fragile. Scratches on the surface are like scars on a human body, speaking to the experiences of life that a photo has as an object.

While these photos are probably the worst pictures ever taken of my friends, they are undoubtedly the most beautiful.









We're a Little Bit Country: An Interview with Alberto Rangel and Enrique Urueta

Jaime Cortez

In the following interview, playwright Enrique Urueta and artist Alberto Rangel discuss their experiences as the queer children of Latino immigrants in small American towns.

Jaime Cortez: How old are you guys and where were you raised?

Enrique Urueta: I'm 27. I was raised primarily in Clover, Virginia, population 180 and the largest nearby town was South Boston, with 5,000 people. I was in Clover from the time I was a baby until I graduated high school and left to William and Mary College. Clover had lots of farmland and woods. The smaller towns would literally have a post office and a general store and that was it.

Alberto Rangel: My family is from Matamoros, Mexico. My dad traveled between Matamoros and Iowa for five years before he could afford to bring all us children. I grew up in Muscatine, Iowa. When we moved there in 1979, the population was about 23,000, a mid-sized town.

Somos un poco campesinos Entrevista con Alberto Rangel y Enrique Urueta

Jaime Cortez

La emigración de países de América Latina a las zonas rurales de los Estados Unidos es un fenómeno constante en los estados sureños de California, Arizona y Texas. En otros estados que nunca fueron parte de México o un destino establecido para los inmigrantes latinoamericanos, la presencia de los inmigrantes es una tendencia nueva. En esta entrevista, el dramaturgo Enrique Urueta y el artista Alberto Rangel discuten sus experiencias como niños queer de inmigrantes latinos en los pequeños pueblos americanos.

Jaime Cortez: ¿Cuántos años tienen y dónde crecieron?

Enrique Urueta: Yo tengo 27. Yo crecí primordialmente en Clover, Virginia, con una población de 180 y el pueblo más grande cercano era South Boston, con cinco mil personas. Yo viví en Clover desde que era un bebé hasta que me gradué de bachillerato y fui a estudiar al colegio William and Mary. Clover tenía mucha tierra de agricultura y bosques. Los pueblos más pequeños,

JC: How many kids were there?

AR: I have four brothers and a sister. My father worked at a tire re-treading factory.

JC: What were the major industries in the area?

AR: There was a lot of soybean and corn, and there were a lot of jobs in food processing. Making corn syrup, and all the stuff soy gets turned into. There were four or five major companies. Monsanto, Bendix, Kent Feed and one of the manufacturers was the rubber retread factory where my dad worked. There were a lot of farms around. We were not farmers, but our neighbors were, and just down the road from us was a pasture with horses. The neighborhood was mixed that way.

JC: So your situation was pretty rural. Were there many other Mexican immigrant families?

AR: Not yet. Shortly after we arrived, Muscatine's local newspaper ran an article about the new influx of Mexican families. It was really new to have Mexicans coming into town. A lot of people, when they hear I was raised there, ask if there was a lot of racism. There wasn't really. People just seemed fascinated that Muscatine was becoming more diverse.

literalmente tenían una oficina de correo postal y una tienda y eso era todo.

Alberto Rangel: Mi familia es de Matamoros, México. Mi papá viajó entre Matamoros y Iowa durante cinco años antes de poder costear los gastos para poder traer a todos los hijos. Yo crecí en Muscatine, Iowa. Cuando nos mudamos en 1979, la población era de aproximadamente 23 mil personas, un pueblo de tamaño mediano.

JC: ¿Cuántos niños eran?

AR: Yo tengo cuatro hermanos y una hermana. Mi padre trabajaba en una fábrica de reparación de llantas.

JC: ¿Cuáles eran las industrias más grandes en el área?

AR: Había mucho de frijoles de soya y maíz, y habían muchos trabajos en el procesamiento de alimentos. Haciendo almíbar de maíz y de todas las cosas en las que se convierte la soya. Habían cuatro o cinco compañías grades. Monsanto, Bendix, Kente Feed y una de las manufacturadotas era la fábrica de retreta de hule en la que trabaja mi papá.



Photo of Enrique Urueta and Alberto Rangel by Jaime Cortez

I feel like they welcomed it. This was the early part of the influx. My brother told me that after I left there was suddenly a lot of racism. A lot of beef processing plants came to the area, and the butchering jobs attracted lots of immigrants. Longtime residents started to feel more threatened and there was a lot more racial stuff. But when I was there it was friendly.

JC: How would you describe the cultural landscape of Muscatine, in terms of religion, race, etc.

AR: There was a small Mexican population, a handful of families, and the majority was white. For the Mexicans, church was a big deal. It was my parents' social outlet. Mom was a stay-at-home mother so Sunday was a big deal for her. But then, when I was 12, my parents converted to the Jehovah's Witness church. My mom started socializing only with other Jehovah's Witnesses, and it shut them off and limited their social outlets. They didn't interact at dances or *quinceañeras** with other Mexicans. It changed my family. The entire Latino Jehovah's Witness community was like fifty people, so it really limited who we could hang out with.

Habían muchas granjas por todos lados. Nosotros no éramos granjeros, pero nuestro vecino sí lo eran y cerca de nuestra casa había un potrero con caballos. El vecindario era mezclado de esa forma.

JC: Así que tu situación era bastante rural. ¿Habían muchas más familias de inmigrantes mexicanos?

AR: Aún no. Al poco tiempo de haber llegado, el periódico local de Muscatine publicó un artículo sobre el nuevo influjo de familias mexicanas. Era verdaderamente nuevo tener la llegada de mexicanos al pueblo. Mucha gente, cuando escuchan que crecí en Muscatine, me preguntan si había mucho racismo. En verdad no había. La gente estaba fascinada porque Muscatine se estaba volviendo más diverso. Siento que nos recibieron bien. Esto fue durante la primera parte del influjo.

Mi hermano me dijo que después de que me fui hubo un repentino incremento de racismo. Muchas plantas procesadoras de carne llegaron al área y los trabajos de carnicero atrajeron a los inmigrantes. Los residentes con más tiempo en el área empezaron a sentirse más amenazados y hubo más situaciones de racismo. Pero cuando yo viví allí todo fue amigable.

JC: ¿Cómo describirías el panorama cultural de Muscatine, en términos de religión, raza, etc.?

JC: It imposed a social isolation.

AR: Yeah. Especially being gay, it was isolating.

JC: How about you, Enrique. Did your family have a long history in Virginia?

EU: My parents moved to the states in 1969 from Colombia. My father was a pathologist doing research on diabetes, and he was recruited by a hospital in Rhode Island. After that, he got a job offer in Virginia and we moved to Clover.

JC: What do you remember of the cultural and political landscape of Clover?

EU: Politics was expressly not discussed. It was impolite. It was a deeply conservative area - Southern Baptist, Church of God, Pentecostal and Republican. Far religious right.

JC: Enrique, did you have religious upbringing?

EU: Catholic.

JC: How would you rate the intensity of your family's Catholicism?

EU: In terms of religiosity and doctrine, I'd say maybe six out of ten. In terms of cultural Catholicism. Maybe eight or

AR: Había una población mexicana pequeña, un puñado de familias, y la mayoría eran blancos. Para los mexicanos, la iglesia era muy importante. Era el escape social de mis padres. Mi mamá era un ama de casa así que para ella los domingos eran muy importantes. Pero cuando yo tenía 12 años, mis padres se convirtieron a la iglesia de Testigos de Jehová. Mi mamá empezó a socializarse sólo con otros Testigos de Jehová; eso les cerró las puertas y los limitó a escapes sociales limitados. Ellos no interactuaban en fiestas o en quinceañeras con otros mexicanos. Cambió a mi familia. Toda la comunidad latina de Testigos de Jehová eran como unas cincuenta personas. Así que verdaderamente limitó con quién podíamos relacionarnos.

JC: Impuso un aislamiento social.

AR: Claro. Especialmente siendo gay, fue aislante.

JC: ¿Qué tal tú, Enrique, tu familia tiene una larga historia en Virginia?

EU: Mis padres se mudaron de Colombia a los Estados en 1969. Mi padre era un patólogo que hacía investigación con diabetes y fue reclutado por un hospital en Rhode Island. Después de eso, recibió una oferta de trabajo en Virginia y nos mudamos a Clover.

nine, especially around Christmas. From the ages of six to twelve, we went to Church every week.

AR: My parents became really fundamentalist Jehovah's Witnesses, and we had church Monday night, Wednesday night, Saturday morning and Sunday all day.

EU: Jesus Christ!

JC: What kind of ministering happens in Jehovah's Witnesses masses?

AR: A lot of threats. Lots of reasons why we were going to hell. Do this, go to hell. Do that, go to hell. Don't trust your family, because they're going to hell too. If you're not one of us, you're going to hell. Also, that we were responsible for saving people's souls, and that was why we went door to door. On the weekends we had to go knocking on people's doors. It was a small town, so

JC: ¿Qué recuerdas del panorama cultural y político de Clover?

EU: La políticas no se discutía. Era de mala educación. Era un área profundamente conservadora –Iglesia de Dios, Baptista sureña, Pentecostal y republicana. Extrema derecha religiosa.

JC: Enrique, ¿tuviste una crianza religiosa?

EU: Católica.

JC: ¿Cómo calificarías la intensidad del catolicismo de tu familia?

EU: En términos de religiosidad y doctrina, yo diría que un seis en una escala de diez. En términos de un catolicismo cultural, tal vez un ocho o diez, especialmente durante la Navidad. De la edad de seis a doce, nosotros íbamos a la iglesia semanalmente.

AR: Mis padres se convirtieron en Testigos de Jehová fundamentalistas; y nosotros íbamos a la iglesia los lunes en la noche, los miércoles en la noche, los sábados en la mañana y el domingo todo el día.

EU; ¡Dios Santo!

JC: ¿Qué tipo de predicación realizan en los sermones de los Testigos de Jehová?

AR: Muchas amenazas. Muchas razones por las que iremos al infierno. Haz esto, vas

sometimes I'd knock on schoolmates' doors. I remember having classmates from school slam the door on my face. It was super humiliating. God. I learned to be so resentful of going to church. It was so constricting to be in Church for two hours four days of the week as a teenager. Now my idea of going to church is being outdoors or being in the park.

EU: For my family, religion was a Sunday thing. I never really felt encumbered by Catholicism in the home.

JC: What early messages did you receive about queerness, Alberto?

AR: In church, they talked about how sick and perverted queerness was, and how it went against God's intention. When I was a kid, I felt this intense sexual energy for men, and there I was getting this message of my evil and corruption. Sodom and Gamorrah, punishment, all that. I struggled with it. I couldn't understand how God could be so loving, and yet condemn and hate me for being gay, when I felt so clearly that it was not a choice.

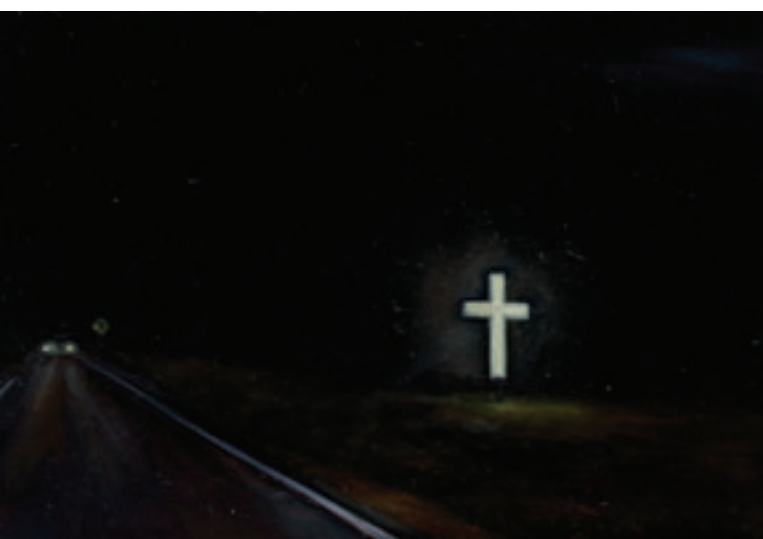
JC: All families choose which church teachings to be emphasized in the home. Were your parents consistent with the Jehovah's Witness' belief that queers were evil and condemned?

al infierno. Haz lo otro, vas al infierno. No confíes en tu familia porque también ellos van al infierno. Si tú no eres uno de nosotros, vas al infierno. También, que nosotros éramos responsables de salvar las almas de las personas y por eso es que íbamos de puerta en puerta. Durante los fines de semanas teníamos que ir a tocar las puertas de las personas. Era un pueblo pequeño, así que algunas veces yo tocaba la puerta de alguien y recuerdo que compañeros de la escuela me tiraban la puerta en mi cara. Era súper humillante. Dios mío. Yo aprendí a tener resentimiento de ir a la iglesia. Como adolescente, para mí era muy sofocante estar en la iglesia durante dos horas, cuatro días de la semana. Ahora, mi idea de ir a la iglesia es de estar al aire libre e ir al parque.

EU: Para mi familia, la religión era un cosa de los domingos. Yo nunca me sentí abrumado por el catolicismo en la casa.

JC: ¿Cuáles fueron los primeros tipos de mensajes que recibiste sobre queerness, Alberto?

AR: En la iglesia, ellos hablaban de qué tan enfermizo y pervertido era lo queer, y cómo iba en contra de las intensiones de Dios. Cuando yo era un niño, yo sentía una intensa energía sexual con los hombres, y allí estaba yo recibiendo este mensaje de mi maldad y corrupción.



AR: Well, even before we were Jehovah's Witnesses, when I was a small boy, I was really effeminate. My dad had these four really macho boys and I was different. He wanted me to be like them, but I just wasn't. He would really get after me and be really aggressive towards me to "toughen me up." I would play Barbies with my sister and my dad would come in and get furious with me. Beat me. It was really horrible. He signed me up for football, for boxing, all these things to try to straighten me out. Religion added to their anxiety about me. Socially, they were embarrassed to have an effeminate son, but the religious dogma made it even worse, so they were hard on me.

JC: Did you rebel against their efforts to make you box and play football or did you try to do it?

AR: I didn't rebel. I was seven or eight. I wanted to please them, make them proud. I wanted to do well at sports. I couldn't. I got really hurt in boxing. Every week I got hurt. I mean I was getting really, really hurt. I had black eyes and broken bones. Eventually, my mom just said, "Take him out of boxing."

JC: What was the feeling of being in a boxing match?

AR: I felt myself letting everybody down by being so effeminate. It felt so awful on my body to be doing these sports. Even

Sodoma y Gomorra, castigo, todo eso. Me complicaba y luchaba con eso. Yo no podía entender cómo Dios podía ser tan adorable, y al mismo tiempo condenarme y odiarme por ser gay, cuando yo sentía que era muy claro que no era una opción.

JC: Todas las familias escogen cuáles enseñanzas de la iglesia enfatizan en la casa. ¿Tus padres eran consistentes con la creencia de los Testigos de Jehová de que los gay eran malos y condenados?

AR: Bueno, antes de que fuéramos Testigos de Jehová, cuando yo era un niño, yo era bastante afeminado. Mi papá tenía estos cuatro chicos bien machos y yo era diferente. El quería que yo fuera como ellos; pero yo no lo era. El siempre estaba detrás de mí y era verdaderamente agresivo conmigo para que yo me "endureciera". Yo jugaba Barbies con mis hermanas y mi papá llegaba y se enfurecía conmigo. Me pegaba. Era verdaderamente horrible. Me inscribió en un equipo de fútbol americano, en boxeo, todas estas cosas para corregirme. La religión les agregaba más ansiedad con respecto a mi persona. Socialmente, ellos estaban avergonzados de tener a un hijo afeminado, pero el dogma religioso lo empeoraba todo, así que eran muy duros conmigo.

JC: ¿Te revelaste en contra de sus esfuerzos de hacerte boxear o jugar fútbol o intentaste hacerlo?

in basketball, guys would chuck the ball at me, and I'd get hit in the face. My younger brother was really sporty and macho and they always compared me to him. He excelled at everything I failed at.

JC: Enrique, were you a teeny weeny queeny too?

EU: I wasn't so much a queeny kid as a nerdy kid.

JC: Nerdy is a lot safer than queeny.

EU: Yeah. I was always bookish. Had no interest in sports, they didn't force me. I was like five or six. But my nerdiness just came naturally. I remember my best friend Kelly and I got selected for



Alberto Rangel, "The Good Fight," 1999, acrylic and collage

JC: Yo no me revelé. Yo tenía como siete u ocho años. Yo quería complacerlos, hacer que se sentieran orgullosos. Yo quería hacer bien en los deportes. No podía. Me lastimé bastante boxeando. Todas las semanas me lastimaba. Digo, me lastimaba en serio. Tuve moretes en los ojos y huesos rotos. Con el tiempo, mi mamá solamente dijo: "Sácalo del boxeo".

JC: ¿Cuál era el sentimiento al estar en una pelea de boxeo?

AR: Yo sentía que estaba defraudando a todos por ser afeminado. Se sentía feo en mi cuerpo estar haciendo estos deportes. Hasta en el baloncesto, los chicos me lanzaban el balón y me golpeaba la cara. Mi hermano menor era muy deportista y macho y ellos siempre me comparaban a él. El sobresalió en todo lo que yo fracasé.

JC: Enrique, ¿también eras un mariquita?

EU: Yo no era un chico muy mariquita, pero sí un chico nerdo.

JC: Ser nerdo es más seguro que ser mariquita.

EU: Sí. Siempre fui muy estudioso. No tenía interés en los deportes, ellos nunca me obligaron. Yo tenía como cinco

this advancement test, and both of us, as second graders, were doing math at a sixth grade level and reading at a high school level. They gave us the option of skipping grades or going to a school big enough to have a gifted student class.

We both switched schools. I spent my entire elementary school years in the gifted class. I was the county spelling bee champ from 3rd grade to 7th grade. I went to nationals once. I was always really good at math and science, so I escaped a lot of taunting. I got some fag taunting, but mostly the kids thought I was a nerd, not a fag. “Fag” was a generic insult that boys used against boys. But I wasn’t specially singled out because I was not pointedly effeminate. They simply attributed my lack of interest in girls and sports to me being a complete geek.

JC: So your academic skills were a perfect camouflage. A way out.

EU: Also, if I wasn’t liked, I was tolerated, because eventually, they might need an algebra tutor or a lab partner for science class, someone to help them with their work.

JC: So you had some currency.

EU: Extreme currency. Both in terms of my academic standing and in terms of my

o seis años. Pero mi estado estudioso era natural. Yo recuerdo que mi mejor amigo Kelly y yo fuimos elegidos para una prueba avanzada y los dos, en segundo grado, estábamos haciendo matemáticas de sexto grado y lectura al nivel de bachillerato. Ellos nos dieron la opción de saltarnos los grados o de ir a una escuela más grande para recibir clases para estudiantes avanzados.

Los dos nos cambiamos de escuela. Yo pasé todos mis primeros años de primaria en las clases avanzadas. Yo fui el campeón de la competición de deletreo del condado desde tercer grado hasta el séptimo. Yo fui a la competición nacional una vez. Yo siempre fui bueno con las matemáticas y las ciencias, así que me libré de mucha burla. Experimenté algo de burla gay, pero en general, los chicos pensaban que yo era un estudioso, no un marica. “Marica” era un insulto genérico que los chicos usaban en contra de otros chicos. Pero a mí no me señalan porque yo no era muy afeminado. Ellos simplemente atribuyeron mi falta de interés en las chicas y los deportes al hecho de que yo era un completo estudioso.

JC: Tus habilidades académicas fueron un camuflaje perfecto. Una salida.

EU: También, si no les caía bien, yo era tolerado, porque, con el tiempo, ellos tal

family. Because it was a small enough community that if they didn’t know me directly, they knew of me via my family. Let me put it this way. There were kids who didn’t like me who wouldn’t be mean to me because their older siblings were friends with my older siblings.

JC: I see. Two degrees of separation. Your older siblings knew the older siblings of your potential tormentors.

EU: Yeah. I had that protection of my sisters. I had five older sisters. Monica. Maria. Mercedes. Marina. Marta.

JC: So you were the baby sister? *(laughter)*

AR: I was just the opposite. I have only one sister but four macho brothers, so even when I got singled as a sissy by my schoolmates, they knew not to mess with me because I had tough older brothers. They always defended me against older kids or bullies. Ironically, at home, my protective brothers let me have it for being a sissy.

JC: If anyone was going to terrorize you, it was going to be them!

AR: Yup.

EU: Enrique had academics and family protection as a refuge. Did you have an

vez necesitarían un tutor en álgebra, o un compañero en los laboratorios de las clases de ciencia, alguien que les ayudara con su trabajo.

JC: Así que tu tenías algo de efectivo.

EU: Mucho efectivo. En ambas situaciones, tanto en mi reputación académica como en términos de mi familia. Era una comunidad lo suficientemente pequeña que si no me conocían directamente, ellos sabían de mí a través de mi familia. Te lo explico de esta manera. Habían chicos a los que no les caía bien y que no eran malos conmigo porque sus hermanos mayores eran amigos de mis hermanas mayores.

JC: Ya veo. Dos grados de separación. Tus hermanas mayores conocían a los hermanos mayores de tus posibles tormentos.

EU: Sí. Yo tenía esa protección de mis hermanas. Yo tenía cinco hermanas mayores. Mónica. María. Mercedes. Marina. Marta.

JC: Entonces ¿tú eras la hermanita pequeña? *(risas)*

AR: Yo era justamente lo opuesto. Yo solamente tengo una hermana pero

- escape from the stress of the situation of being a queer kid?
- AR: You know, in a weird way, my dad was responsible for me being an artist. He prohibited me from playing with Barbies and my sister's toys, so I started to make paper dolls. Because I could make the dolls myself, I didn't need to ask for them or go to a store to buy them. I just made them myself. And I became a good drawer from drawing Barbie and other characters.
- JC: Did your parents like that you took up drawing?
- AR: Yeah. Art was a great camouflage in the home setting. Way better than having me play with dolls.
- JC: Yeah. Your parents could now say "Alberto's artistic" to explain why you did not get "the eye of the tiger" when you laced up the boxing gloves. When did you guys begin having sexual experiences with other boys?
- EU: I was sexual from a very early age. I remember being in the first grade and doing the whole "you show me yours, I'll show you mine" thing with a boy in my class. And we would sneak off during recess to play with each other's dicks. We would go off into the woods, there

cuatro hermanos mayores machos, así que cuando mis compañeros de escuela me señalaban como mariquita, ellos sabían que no tenían que meterse conmigo porque yo tenía hermanos mayores fuertes. Ellos siempre me defendían de los chicos más grandes o los rufianes. Irónicamente, en la casa, mis hermanos protectores me regañaban por ser un mariquita.

- JC: Si alguien te iba a aterrorizar, ¡iban a ser ellos!
- AR: Ajá.
- EU: Enrique tuvo la academia y protección familiar como refugio. ¿Tenía escape del estrés de la situación de ser un chico gay?
- AR: Sabes, de una forma rara, mi papá es el responsable de que yo sea un artista. El me prohibió que jugara con las Barbies y con los juguetes de mis hermanas, así que empecé a hacer muñecas de papel. Ya que yo podía hacer las muñecas, no tenía que pedir las o no tenía que ir a la tienda a comprarlas. Yo mismo las hacía. Y me hice un buen dibujante al dibujar Barbies y otros personajes.

- JC: ¿Les gustó a tus padres que escogiste el dibujo?
- AR: Sí. El arte fue un gran camuflaje en la casa. Mucho mejor que tenerme a mí jugando con muñecas.

were places to hide. I lucked out. I found sexual outlets from a very early age, and it carried me all the way to college.

- JC: At a certain point, that sexual play gets riskier for boys. Did you experience that, Enrique?
- EU: Yeah. It started around the fifth grade. I was frustrated. At a certain point, it stopped being natural for boys, but it still felt totally natural to me. But like I said, I lucked out. Whenever I needed to find a new sex partner, I did. They would just appear. I had a first grade jerk off buddy. In second too. From the ages of eight to twelve, this other neighborhood kid and I would mess around, suck each other off. In my house. In his house. In my pool. We'd take turns going down on each other underwater. I was a very sexual child. Then he got freaked out by it. It was around like fifth grade.
- JC: Were you messing around with your age peers, or with older boys?
- EU: Both. It was never with younger boys. It was always my peer group or older. From the ages of around five to thirteen I was consistently messing around with my best friend's older brother. He was seven years older. Then in high school it continued. I was in a public bathroom, totally naïve about what the hole in the stall wall was for.

JC: Sí. Ahora tus padres podían decir: "Alberto es un artista" para explicar porqué tú no te hiciste "el ojo del tigre" cuando usabas los guantes de boxeo. ¿Cuándo empezaron a tener experiencias sexuales con otros chicos?

EU: Yo fui muy sexual desde temprana edad. Recuerdo que en primer grado hicimos la cosa de "me muestra la tuya y yo te muestro la mía" con otro chico en mi clase. Y nos escapábamos durante el receso para jugar con nuestras vergas. Nos íbamos entre los árboles; habían lugares donde esconderse. Tuve suerte. Encontré desahogos sexuales a muy temprana edad, y me sostuvo hasta llegar al colegio.

JC: Llega un momento en que el juego sexual se vuelve un poco más riesgoso para los muchachos. ¿Experimentaste eso Enrique?

EU: Sí. Empezó cuando estaba en quinto grado. Yo estaba frustrado. Llegó un momento en el que dejó de ser natural para los chicos, pero para mí seguía siento totalmente natural. Pero como dije, tuve suerte. Cuando necesitaba encontrar a alguna pareja sexual, la encontraba. Ellos sencillamente aparecían. Tuve un



JC: You were doing toilet sex at your high school?

EU: Not in school. I had noticed there was a glory hole in the men's restroom of the Hardee's. I remember discovering what it was. I was in the bathroom. On the crapper. I saw a hole in the wall. There was this eyeball and I got kind of freaked out. He stuck his finger in and gestured with it for me to come. I was so naïve, I stuck my finger back into the hole and imitated his gesture. Then he said, "Let me touch your dick." I got all freaked out and did nothing and left. But I got more and more curious. The Hardee's was near a small town, but it was at the intersection of two highways and two interstates. It was a truck stop. There were a lot of truckers I was sucking off between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.

JC: Was all that sex in the bathroom?

EU: Some of it was in the trucks or in guys cars. There was a JC Penneys cruise bathroom in Danville, the next town. That was where I learned how to cruise.

JC: So this action all took place at a truck stop. It speaks to me of how rural geographies affect sexual possibilities. These truckers might come through there one time or maybe once every couple of months, so there would be little or

amigo de masturbación en primer grado. También en segundo grado. Desde los ocho hasta los 12 años, un chico del vecindario y yo hacíamos cositas, nos mamábamos. En mi casa. En su casa. En mi alberca. Nos turnábamos y nos sumergíamos debajo de agua. Yo era un niño bastante sexual. Después se asustó. Parece que fue en quinto grado.

JC: ¿Estabas haciendo cositas con chicos de tu edad o de más edad?

EU: Ambos. Nunca lo hice con chicos menores que yo. Siempre fue con chicos de mi edad o mayores. Desde la edad de los cinco años hasta los doce, consistentemente hacía cositas con el hermano mayor de mi mejor amigo. El era siete años mayor. Esto continuó en bachillerato. Yo estaba en un baño público, totalmente ingenuo sobre lo que significaba el hoyo en la pared del baño.

JC: ¿Estabas teniendo sexo de baño en tu bachillerato?

EU: No era en la escuela. Yo me había dado cuenta de que había un "hoyo de gloria" en un cuarto de baño de Hardee's. Recuerdo el descubrimiento de lo que era. Yo estaba en el cuarto de baño. En el cagadero. Vi un hoyo en la pared. Allí estaba un ojo y me asusté.

no repercussions for their behaviors because they'd be gone tomorrow. They might never pass through again. The truckers almost seem like these transient figures of possibility in a rural setting.

EU: My sister's best friend growing up was gay. So I knew what gay was at age six.

JC: How did people discuss him, identify him?

EU: They identified him as gay. My mom explained very directly what gay was to me. "Gays are boys that like boys." When she explained that, I thought "gay - that's what I am." I never told her, though. My parents were very direct and non-judgmental. That gay boy was always welcome in our house. But I remember how that gay boy was treated and talked about by everyone

El metió su dedo e hizo el gesto para que me acercara. Yo era tan ingenuo. Metí mi dedo en el hoyo e imité su gesto. Entonces él dijo: "Déjame tocar tu verga". Yo me asusté, no hice nada y me fui. Pero me puse más curioso. El Hardee's estaba cerca de un pequeño pueblo, pero estaba en la intersección de dos autopistas y dos interestatales. Era un paradero de camiones. Había un montón de camioneros a los que les estaba mamando entre la edad de catorce y quince.

JC: ¿Todo el sexo fue en el cuarto de baño?

EU: Algunas veces fue en los camiones o en los carros de los tipos. Había un cuarto de baño de ligue en JC Penneys en Danville, en el siguiente pueblo. Allí fue donde aprendí a ligar.

JC: Así que toda esta acción tomó lugar en un paradero de camiones. Esto a mí me indica cómo la geografía rural afecta las posibilidades sexuales. Estos camioneros pueden pasar por allí una vez o una vez cada par de meses, así que no habrían repercusiones por su comportamiento ya que al siguiente día desaparecen. Ellos tal vez nunca vuelvan a pasar otra vez. Los camioneros casi parecen como figuras transeúntes de posibilidad en el ambiente rural.

- else, because it was a small town. Everyone knew. I did not want to be singled out and talked about that way.
- JC: So he was noticeably queer?
- EU: Yes. Very effeminate. Very, very effeminate. He's still in my hometown. Went to college, came back to town, opened up a business. So, yeah, it was very non-judgemental, the language my parents used.
- JC: So you were active in trucker sex and bathroom sex in the early to mid-nineties. What kind of HIV prevention messages were you getting back then?
- EU: None. It was not discussed.
- JC: What about condom use?
- EU: I never fucked or got fucked. It was strictly oral. Not that oral sex is totally risk-free, but I wasn't getting fucked or fucking so I didn't feel I needed condoms.
- JC: So it sounds like you knew some HIV prevention basics. Beyond the truck stops, were there any HIV-related messages at all?
- EU: No. Not really. You would hear about it on the news. But you'd almost

- EU: El mejor amigo de infancia de mi hermana era gay. Así que a la edad de seis años ya sabía lo que era.
- JC: ¿Cómo lo discutía la gente, cómo lo identificaban?
- EU: Ellos lo identificaban como gay. Mi mamá me explicó muy directamente lo que era gay. "Los gays son los chicos a los que les gustan los chicos". Cuando ella me explicó eso, yo pensé: "Gay, eso es lo que soy". Yo nunca le dije. Mis padres eran bien directos y sin prejuicios. El chico gay siempre fue bienvenido en nuestra casa. Pero recuerdo como ese chico gay era tratado y lo que hablaban de él los demás, porque era un pueblo pequeño. Todos lo sabían. Yo no quería ser señalado ni que hablaran de mi de esa manera.
- JC: ¿Así que él era notablemente gay?
- EU: Sí. Muy afeminado. Muy, muy afeminado. El todavía vive en mi pueblo. Fue al colegio, regresó al pueblo, abrió su negocio. Pues sí, fue sin prejuicio el lenguaje que usaron mis padres.
- JC: Así que tu fuiste muy activo teniendo sexo con camioneros y en los cuartos de baño a principio y mediados de los noventa. ¿Qué tipo de mensajes de prevención del VIH recibías entonces?

- never hear about it in schools. It was never really talked about. It was not until 1994, in my sophomore year of high school that my school even broached the subject of HIV. And it was never in the context of homosexuality, but generically explained as an STD. They were so uncomfortable talking about STDs that they condensed the entire STD lecture into like one class and stressed abstinence. Not even condoms. Just abstinence. "Don't have sex, you'll die, or you'll get pregnant and wish you'd died."
- It's funny. I was with the same guy from seventh grade till the end of high school. We didn't identify as boyfriends or anything, but for those six years, we visited every weekend and it was hardcore steady fucking.
- AR: Did he self-identify as a queer person?
- EU: No. Our senior year of high school we grew apart. I was the honors AP kid and he was like the general studies slacker stoner kid, so we were never in the same classes. He fell into this whole punk/skater/slacker crowd and I was übernerd. He wouldn't allow me to be friends during the days, but we could be friends nights and weekends.
- He developed some kind of crisis of identity around our fucking. I asked him,

- EU: Nada. No se discutía.
- JC: ¿Qué del uso de condones?
- EU: Yo nunca cogí ni me cogieron. Era estrictamente oral. No es que el sexo oral sea completamente sin riesgo, pero a mi no me cogían y yo tampoco cogía, así que yo no vi la necesidad de usar condones.
- JC: Bueno, parece que tú conocías alguna información básica sobre la prevención del VIH. Más allá de los paraderos de camiones, ¿habían mensajes relacionados al VIH?
- EU: No. En realidad no. Tú lo escuchabas en las noticias. Pero tú nunca lo escuchabas en la escuela. En realidad nunca se hablaba de ello. No fue hasta 1994, en mi segundo años de bachillerato, cuando mi escuela mencionó el tema del VIH. Y nunca fue en el contexto de la homosexualidad, sino que generalmente explicado como una ITS. Ellos estaban tan incómodos cuando hablaban de las ITS hasta el punto de condensar la clase de ITS en una sesión y se estresó la abstinencia. Ni siquiera condones. Solamente abstinencia. "No tengan sexo, morirán, o quedarán embarazadas y desearán la muerte".
- Era chistoso. Yo estuve con el mismo tipo desde el séptimo grado hasta terminar el bachillerato. Nosotros no

“What’s up with this? We’ve been having sex since seventh grade.” He just kept saying, “I’m not gay, I’m not gay, I’m not gay.” He stopped coming to school for like a week. I got concerned, so I got his assignments, went to his house and tried to take his stuff to him. At his house, I just let myself in. I went up to his room, and knocked as I went in and I caught him fucking one of the cheerleaders. I wiggled out. She wiggled out. He wiggled out. I dropped everything and ran downstairs. It was this total “90210 Meets Dukes of Hazard” moment. *(laughter)* She’s all freaked out on the deck of his house. I’m all pissed off crying and flustered, and he was angry, saying, “what the fuck you doing coming into my fucking house!” And I said “what are you doing fucking her?!” He just kept repeating, “I’m not a fag, I’m not a fag!”

She’s standing there in the doorway with a sheet around her, totally confused about what is happening. He just keeps repeating, “Get out of my house, you fucking fag. Don’t ever come back, you fucking faggot!” After one too many “fucking faggots,” I turned and said “Was I a fucking faggot when my dick was in your mouth last week?” And the next thing I know, I’m laid out on the ground and he is punching me and punching me and taking out all this anger

nos identificábamos como novios ni nada así, pero durante esos seis años, nos visitábamos cada fin de semana y la cogedera era pesada.

AR: ¿El se identificaba como una persona queer?

EU: No. Nosotros nos fuimos separando durante nuestro último año de bachillerato. Yo era el chico en las clases de honores y AP y él era de los chicos perezosos marihuano en las clases generales, así que nunca estábamos en las mismas clases. Él se metió en la onda punk-patinador-perezoso y yo era übernerd. El no me permitía que fuéramos amigos durante el día. Pero sí podíamos ser amigos en la noche y los fines de semana.

El desarrolló algún tipo de crisis de identidad en torno a nuestras cogidas. Yo le pregunté: “¿Qué onda con esto? Hemos estado teniendo sexo desde el séptimo grado”. El solamente decía: “Yo no soy gay, yo no soy gay, yo no soy gay”. El dejó de ir a la escuela como por una semana. Yo me preocupé y conseguí sus tareas, fui a su casa e intenté llevarle sus cosas. En su casa, solamente entré. Subí a su cuarto, y toqué la puerta. Al momento en el que entraba lo caché cogiéndose a una de las porristas. Yo estaba histérico. Ella estaba histérica.

on me. He gets up, doesn’t say a word and goes inside. She’s just standing in the doorway then she goes inside too and walks away.

JC: Wow. Dramatic.

EU: Very dramatic. Also, when I went home from college in 2001, I worked in a restaurant waiting tables, and my manager was a girl from high school who I used to tutor in high school, which was ironic, but more ironic still was that she was dating my ex-fuck buddy of six years.

JC: That’s some small-town shit right there.

AR: A lot of my friends have stories of sex like Enrique’s, sexual play with boys at age six or seven, beautiful stories of sex with boy friends in adolescence, but I was the epitome of the late bloomer . . . I didn’t have sex with a guy till I was like 24, so I feel like I’ve only been sexual for seven years. Prior to that, I felt like I was in a shell, psychologically and physically. Growing up I was really overweight, and had big buck teeth, so I had braces and headgear all through high school, so I was like pretty asexual, the sexual fantasies I had were fleeting.

JC: Was there a particular guy you sexually fixated on?

El estaba histérico. Yo dejé todo y corrí hacia abajo. Fue un momento de “90210 se encuentra con Dukes of Hazard”. *(Risas)*. Ella estaba toda asustada en la entrada de la casa. Yo estaba súper enojado, llorando, y él estaba enojado, diciendo: “¡¿Qué putas haces al venir a mi puta casa?!” Y yo le dije: “¿Qué haces cogiéndotela?” El solamente seguía repitiendo: “Yo no soy maricón, yo no soy maricón”.

Ella estaba allí, en la puerta, cubierta con una sábana, totalmente confundida por lo que estaba pasando. El seguía repitiendo: “Sal de mi casa, maricón de mierda. Nunca regreses, maricón de mierda.” Después de demasiado “maricón de mierda”, me di la vuelta y dije: “¿Yo era un maricón de mierda cuando mi verga estaba en tu boca la semana pasada?” De repente, estoy en el suelo y él me está dando puñetazo tras puñetazo y está descargando toda su rabia.

El se levanta, no dice ni una palabra y entra. Ella está allí parada en la puerta, luego entra también y se va.

JC: Wow. Dramático.

EU: Muy dramático. También, cuando regresé del colegio a casa en el 2001, trabajé en un restaurante, como mesero y mi supervisora era una chica de la misma escuela a la que yo fui, lo que era irónico; pero lo más irónico fue que ella estaba saliendo con mi ex pareja sexual de seis años.

AR: Ummmm. Who was it? Burt Reynolds. *(laughter)* Eric Estrada. Aquaman. I thought Aquaman was the sexiest guy I'd ever seen.

JC: I was way into Aquaman too. And then he had that boy sidekick in those tiny blue speedos. I envied that kid sidekick. I kept thinking, "I want *that* job!" *(laughter)* Ride those dolphins!

AR: Yeah.

JC: So it was a really profound repression you were raised with. You didn't even allow yourself a fantasy life. So what allowed you to begin having sex with men, Alberto?

AR: I hated sports, but in college I took dance classes. Modern. Ballet. I thought, "Wow, I can do that. I can't do swimming or ball or field hockey or whatever, but I like dance." Then all of a sudden, I was in classes with all these gay guys. Oh my god, I found my community.

A lot happened during that phase of my life. I came out to my younger brother when I was eighteen and he was seventeen. He said, "if this is going to make you happy, great, but just be careful." He was really mature about it. I told my mom when I was 25, when I

JC: Esa es mierda de pueblo pequeño.

AR: Muchos de mis amigos tienen historias de sexo como las de Enrique, juego sexual con chicos a la edad de los seis años o siete, historias hermosas de sexo con amigos en la adolescencia, pero yo era esencia del tardío despertar... Yo no tuve sexo con un hombre hasta los 24 años, así que yo siento que solamente he sido sexualmente activo durante los últimos siete años. Antes de eso, yo sentía que estaba como en un cascarón, psicológica y físicamente. Yo tuve sobre peso durante mi crecimiento, y tenía dientes enormes, así que tenía frenillos y aparato en la cabeza durante mis años de bachillerato, así que yo era bastante asexual, las fantasías sexuales que tenía eran muy breves.

JC: ¿Tenías algún tipo en particular en que tenía una fijación sexual?

AR: Ummmm. ¿Quién era? Burt Reynolds. *(risas)* Eric Estrada. Aquaman. Yo pensaba que Aquaman era el tipo más sexy que había visto.

JC: Yo también estaba encantado con Aquaman. Y luego él tenía al chico a su lado en esos pequeños speedos azules. Yo envidiaba a ese chico. Yo pensaba: "¡Yo quiero ese trabajo!" *(risas)* ¡Montar esos delfines!

finished school and was graduating from college. They'd been so disappointed with how I was as a kid, and it took my departure to college to make them appreciate me, and in my twenties we were finally developing a more positive adult relationship, but then I came out to them. They took it very poorly. My mom told me, "Never come home again. You're going to hell."

JC: Your mother told you that you were going to hell?

AR: She said, "Our faith is very clear about what happens to homosexuals." She asked me to never have further contact with my brothers and to never tell my father. To make her feel better, I agreed. Eventually she chilled out ... When my parents came to visit me in San Francisco and my dad realized I was gay, we didn't talk for five years.

JC: What changed that silence?

AR: Well, I was visiting my sister in Iowa five years later, and I was staying with my sister. And he showed up there and said, "You're my son. I want you to come home." So I drove home with my dad. He was crying. He said

AR: Sí.

JC: Así que tu creciste con una represión profunda. Tú ni siquiera te permitiste una vida de fantasías. Albero, ¿Qué te permitió comenzar a tener sexo con hombres?

AR: Yo odiaba los deportes, pero en la universidad tomé clases de baile. Moderno. Ballet. Pensé: "Wow, yo puedo hacer eso. No puedo hacer natación, o la pelota, o jockey o lo que fuera, pero me gusta bailar". Luego, de pronto, yo estaba en clases con todos estos tipos gay. Dios mío, encontré mi comunidad.

Mucho pasó durante esa etapa de mi vida. Yo salí del closet con mi hermano menor, cuando yo tenía dieciocho y él tenía diecisiete. El dijo: "si esto va a hacerte feliz, bueno, pero sólo ten cuidado". El fue muy maduro al respecto.

Yo se lo dije a mi mamá cuando tenía 25, cuando terminé mis estudios universitarios y me estaba graduando. Ellos se habían sentido defraudados de cómo yo era cuando niño que tuve que irme al colegio para que ellos me apreciaran, y durante mis veintes, finalmente estábamos desarrollando una

he really missed me. When we arrived at the house, my mom was really upset. She didn't want me in the house. She said, "What are you doing here, Alberto?" It was crazy. She got upset, but my dad wanted me home. It took several years for my mom to come around. She was the last holdout. My dad accepted me. My siblings accepted me. She hung on to her religious ideas long after the rest of the family left the Jehovah's Witness church.

JC: So Enrique, when you go back to your hometown, what does it feel like to return after college and life as a queer city dweller?

EU: ... I don't dress like anyone else in my hometown. I don't sound like anyone else. When they hear I'm from San Francisco, they say, "there are a lot of gays in San Francisco, aren't there?" I say, "Yup. My boyfriend and I are two of them." Then they go "Ooh, my bad," and they immediately change the subject.

JC: They veer away from the topic.

EU: It is more than that. The very potential of gayness being discussed means that there is the potential that it will be allowed, so people want to avoid it at all costs. There are only certain types of people that it is allowed for. People don't know how to treat me when I go back

relación adulta más positiva, pero luego salí del closet. Ellos lo tomaron muy mal. Mi mamá me dijo: "Nunca regreses a casa. Tú te vas a ir al infierno".

JC: ¿Tú madre te dijo que tú te ibas a ir al infierno?

AR: Ella dijo: "Nuestra fe es muy clara con respecto a lo que les pasa a los homosexuales". Ella me pidió que nunca más tuviera contacto con mis hermanos y que nunca le dijera a mi padre. Para hacerla sentir bien, yo acepté. Con el tiempo se calmó... Cuando mis padres vinieron a visitarme a San Francisco, y mi papá se dio cuenta que yo era gay, no hablamos por cinco años.

JC: ¿Qué cambió ese silencio?

AR: Bueno, yo estaba visitando a mi hermana en Iowa cinco años después, yo me estaba quedando con mi hermana. Y él se apareció allí y dijo: "Tú eres mi hijo. Quiero que vengas a casa". Así que manejé a casa con mi papá. El estaba llorando. El dijo que en realidad me extrañaba. Cuando llegamos a casa, mi mamá estaba muy molesta. Ella no quería que yo estuviera en la casa. Ella dijo: "¿Qué estás haciendo aquí Alberto?" Era una locura. Ella se molestó, pero mi papá quería que yo estuviera en casa. A mamá le tomó muchos años darle vuelta al asunto. Ella fue la última resistencia. Mi papá

home, I am not overly effeminate, as compared to the town queers, your antiques dealers and the florists and the hairstylists. So they don't really understand, "You're not as girly as them, how can you be gay?" They know how to deal with people in specific contexts. They can handle the swishy hairstylists. The florists. But not me so easily.

JC: Alberto, when you go back home to your family in Iowa as an HIV-positive person, how does that affect your family interactions?

AR: My family is not aware that I'm HIV-positive.

JC: So you haven't told anyone in the family yet?

AR: Not exactly. I'm close to my youngest brother . . . When I told him, he freaked out. He said, "How could you let this happen?!? I can't believe you would do this to the family!" He was the most liberal of my family, the one I was closest to, and his reaction was so strong that it sort of set the standard for me and made me feel I couldn't tell my family.

JC: And then what happened with your brother?

AR: He said, "There you are, telling me I have to use a condom all those years, and all the while, you weren't using one. You're a hypocrite." Then I couldn't talk anymore. I was upset. A few days later, we talked and he said, "I've been thinking about it. I'm sorry. Whatever happens, I'm going to take care of you. We're

me aceptó. Mis hermanos y hermanas me aceptaron. Ella se aferró a sus ideas religiosas mucho más tiempo después que el resto de la familia había dejado la iglesia de Testigos de Jehová.

JC: Bueno Enrique, cuando tú regresas a tu pueblo, ¿cómo se siente regresar después de la universidad y una vida de queer de la ciudad?

EU: ... Yo no me visto como la demás gente del pueblo. Yo no sueno como los demás. Cuando ellos se enteran que soy de San Francisco, ellos dicen: "Allá hay muchos gays en San Francisco, ¿verdad?" Yo digo: "Sip. Mi novio y yo somos dos de ellos". Luego dicen: "Ah, perdón" y ellos inmediatamente cambia de tema.



Alberto Rangel, "Untitled," 2005, acrylic on watercolor paper

going to get through it, no matter what.” Then two weeks later he wrote me a letter, saying, “I can’t handle this. As far as I’m concerned, we never had this talk about HIV, you are perfectly healthy and we won’t talk about it again.” I was in shock. He made a 180, then he made another 180.

JC: How did it feel to go through this with your brother, your closest ally and confidant in the family?

AR: When I got the letter, it was hard. It is also what I expected, what I had always been afraid of – that they couldn’t take it. You have to meet people where they’re at. That is where he is at. I had just seroconverted, so I was just trying to deal with it too. Fortunately, I had great support from friends, but I felt I lost his. We’re not as close since that happened. I understand that it is really frightening for him. He has no experience with HIV, and it was too close to home to have his brother come out as HIV positive ... but he’s very loving. I have no doubt that if I said I was really sick, or had no place to go, he would not bat an eyelash before saying, “Come home now.” That is more important to me, to be able to count on him, than to have him constantly aware of my t-cell count or viral load.

JC: Ellos se alejan del tema.

EU: Es más que eso. El mero potencial de que lo gay sea discutido significa que existe la posibilidad que será permitida, así que la gente quiere evadirlo a cualquier costo. Existe solamente cierto tipo de personas a quienes se les permite. La gente no sabe como tratarme cuando regreso a casa, no soy muy afeminado, comparado a los gays del pueblo, el vendedor de antigüedades, los floristas y los estilistas. Así que ellos en realidad no entienden: “Tú no eres tan mujercita como ellos, ¿cómo es que eres gay? Ellos saben cómo lidiar con gente en contextos específicos. Ellos pueden lidiar con el estilista femenino. Los floristas. Pero no tan fácilmente conmigo.

JC: Alberto, cuando tú regresas a casa con tu familia en Iowa como una personas VIH positiva, ¿Cómo eso afecta las interacciones familiares?

AR: Mi familia no sabe que yo soy VIH positivo.

JC: ¿Entonces no le has dicho a nadie en tu familia?

AR: No exactamente. Yo tengo mucha cercanía con mi hermano menor ... cuando le dije, él se asustó. El dijo: “¿Cómo pudiste dejar que pasará esto?! ¡No puedo



Alberto Rangel, “Undetectable,” 2004, acrylic on watercolor paper

JC: When you go home, do you find yourself wrapped in this silence again?

AR: No, not really. I feel like HIV is a big part of my life, but not the central part of my life. I’m developing a new relationship with my parents, and I’ve been working on re-establishing my relationship with them. When I first came out as gay, they said, “Oh, you’re going to get HIV.” And that is what happened. Do I feel like I’m in the closet? Not really. I’m just so grateful to be in communication with them again that it feels like a moot point.

JC: What other experiences jump out at you when you go back home, Alberto?

AR: ... This past summer I took my partner Stuart to visit family in Iowa. Everybody loved him. I have this

creer que le hagas esto a la familia!” El era el más liberal de mi familia, con el que tenía más cercanía, y su reacción fue tan fuerte que, más o menos, estableció el estándar para mí y me hizo sentir que no podía decírselo a mi familia.

JC: ¿Y luego que pasó con tu hermano?

AR: El dijo: “Allí estabas tú diciéndome que yo tenía que usar condón todos estos años, y mientras tanto, tú no estabas usando uno. Tú eres un hipócrita”. Después yo no pude hablar más. Yo estaba molesto. Unos días después, nosotros hablamos y el dijo: “Yo he estado pensando sobre el tema. Lo siento. No importa qué pase, yo voy a cuidarte. Vamos a salir de esto, sin importar qué pase”. Dos semanas después él me escribió una carta que decía: “No puedo lidiar con esto. En cuanto a mi concierne, nosotros nunca tuvimos esta conversación sobre el VIH, tú estás perfectamente saludable y nosotros no vamos a hablar sobre el tema otra vez”. Yo estaba en shock. El dio un giro de 180, y después otro de 180.

JC: ¿Cómo se sintió tener esta experiencia con tu hermano, tu aliado más cercano y confidente en la familia?

AR: Cuando recibí la carta, fue difícil. También fue lo que esperaba, de lo que siempre tuve

7 year old nephew who was following Stuart around everywhere. Stuart left a couple of days before me to return to San Francisco. I ended up going with my nephew to school and I was his subject for “show and tell.” He said I was his uncle and told the kids my partner Stuart couldn’t be there because he had to go back to San Francisco. This seven year old kid had no qualms saying I was partnered with Stuart.



Alberto Rangel, “Los padres i el hijo,” 2003, acrylic on watercolor paper

miedo, que ellos no podrían sobrellevarlo. Tú tienes que llegarle a las personas al nivel que están. Él está en ese nivel. Yo me acababa de seroconvertir, así que yo también solamente estaba tratando de lidiar con ello. Afortunadamente, yo tenía apoyo de mis amigos, pero sentí que había perdido el suyo. Nosotros ya no somos tan cercanos desde que pasó eso. Yo entiendo que esto es verdaderamente aterrador para él. El no tiene experiencia con el VIH, y fue demasiado íntimo tener que saber que su hermano tiene VIH. Pero él es muy cariñoso. Yo no tengo ninguna duda que si le digo que estoy verdaderamente enfermo, o que no tengo un lugar a donde ir, él no va a pestañear antes de decir: “Ven a casa ahora”. Eso es más importante para mí, poder contar con él, que constantemente tenerlo al tanto de mi conteo de células T o carga viral.

JC: Cuando regresas a casa, ¿te encuentras envuelto en este silencio otra vez?

AR: No, en realidad no. Yo siento que el VIH es una gran parte de mi vida, pero no la parte central de mi vida. Yo estoy desarrollando una nueva relación con mis padres y he estado trabajando en re-establecer mi relación con ellos. La primera vez que salí del closet, ellos dijeron: “Oh, te vas a infectar con el VIH”. Y eso es lo que pasó. ¿Siento que estoy en el closet? No, en realidad no.

EU: Rock. Bringing your fag uncle to show and tell. That is awesome.

JC: Indeed. And that is as fine a closing statement as I can imagine. Thank you gentlemen.

Footnotes

* A *quinceanera* is a 15 year old girl’s coming-to-womanhood Catholic rite and blowout party practiced throughout Latin America and the Latino U.S..

Solamente que estoy tan agradecido de estar en comunicación con ellos otra vez que siento que es un punto mudo.

JC: ¿Qué otras experiencias resaltan en ti cuando regresas a casa, Alberto?

AR: Este verano pasado, llevé a mi pareja Stuart a visitar a mi familia en Iowa. Todos lo adoraron. Tengo un sobrino de siete años de edad que siguió a Stuart por todos lados. Stuart regresó a San Francisco unos días antes que yo. Yo terminé yendo con mi sobrino a su escuela y yo fui su sujeto para “Mostar y decir”. El dijo que yo era su tío y le dijo a los otros niños que mi pareja Stuart no pudo estar allí porque tuvo que regresar a San Francisco. Este niño de siete años no tuvo ninguna duda al decir que yo era pareja de Stuart.

EU: Chévere. Traer a tu tío maricón a “mostrar y decir”. Eso es chévere.

JC: En efecto. Y ese es el mejor cierre que me puedo imaginar. Gracias caballeros.

Imitations of Bruce Springsteen

Rane Arroyo

for my lost compañeros

I drove like Magellan
on reds in a maze of ripe
curves, my darkness
more constant than sunrise
and less of an expensive
date. Driving nowhere and
praying to God we'd never
arrive there, Jorge often
rolled down his window
to scream: *There is no Utah.*
Springsteen's "Badlands"
spurred us to own *something*.
We sang along off-key while
throwing our clothes out of
the fast car as if corn silk.



Patrick "Pato" Hebert, "Buzzed," 2005, digital photograph

Back to lost Provo, I marvel that
the Saints sleep with their doors
unlocked. The stoned and stunned
still cruise Main Street, just chasing
their own tales. This is my America,
at last, the Mother Lode (*con su
permiso, Señora*), the Big Enchilada.
We race in the street while blasting
"Racing In The Streets." Postmodern
car locos. At secret parties, we are
truths: cowboys seeking straw beds
in which to yield to invisible forces.

The newness of my body over yours
isn't yet a spiritual crisis. As Deidre
points out, drama is dangerous. Ask
the angel Moroni: "Nothing sadder than
empires without forwarding addresses."

What's left of the Spanish conquest of
the Rockies is *True Taco*, where the illegal
and the immoral sit next to each other
after the Utah bars have squeezed sweat
from us, we who may never know mermen.
Back into the temple of the truck, we drive
without fear on confluent canyon roads.
We loop "Darkness On The Edge of Town"
while burning for the miracle of a city,
ending up far from God and nearer
to motels with morticians on call. Sí,
pull me to you, but understand: to be
stoned alive just takes found stones.



"iMira!," 2000, oil on panels, 96" x 52" x 2"
 Courtesy of the collection of Marty and Nancy Melzer

Interruptions

Eugene Rodriguez

Interruptions is a series of paintings exploring the fantasies and fears that become manifest when Chicano/Latino gay men seek relationships. The paintings interrogate the specific markers of class, nation, location and sexuality in an attempt to examine their roles in the make up of our identities.

The series juxtaposes, contrasts, and superimposes family photographs, staged fictional narratives, and photographic stills taken from my video work. In painting in this manner – joining fact with fiction – my intention is to represent the dilemma of being caught in non-linear historical narratives and unconscious ancestral realities. I am striving to revisit and reconnect with conflicting realities on personal, political, spiritual, and artistic levels.

This exploration comes out of my own frustration of not having role models as we, Chicano/Latino gay men, attempt to redefine family. Far too often we have been limited to viewing ourselves within the frame of a traditional Latino family



"(La) Futura," 2000, oil on panels, 40" x 60" x 2"

structure with its defined roles of masculinity and femininity. Alternatively, representations of Chicano/Latino queers are filtered through the lens of the dominant media with its stereotypical portrayals: the sad loner, the alcoholic, the queen, the Latin Lover or the closet case, which are equally confining in their depictions and as damaging. During the seventies, when we were involved in relationships we sometimes found ourselves at odds with fraught cultural perspectives of intimacy. Aside from negotiating a Latino arena with its predetermined codes, we were often marginalized by a largely white queer subculture with its own set of rules and values. With these paintings I am attempting to represent the difficulties Chicano/Latino gay men encounter as we negotiate, create, and develop relationships that honor our community histories but, at the same time allow us to “re-member differently; that is, to establish counter-memories of the past and construct a reconfigured narrative.”¹



"Hombres 2," 2000, oil on panels, 48" x 32" x 2"

Aesthetically, this body of work questions the superficial and disinterested form of postmodern appropriation and instead aims to inspire a revitalized look at the ability of narrative and realism to generate dialogue about the content of the art, as well as the political stakes of self-representation. It is one of my hopes that this work can act as a catalyst for transforming the way we, as Chicano/Latino gay men, see and portray ourselves in connection to our families and the world.

¹ Ricky T. Rodriguez, "Photographic Counter Memories: Reframing Family Scenes," Paper delivered at the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies at Portland, Oregon, March 26, 2000.



"Intimacies," 2000, oil on panels, 30" x 50" x 2"
Courtesy of the collection of Marty and Nancy Melzer



"He Looked Back," 2000, oil on panels, 96" x 52" x 2"
Courtesy of the collection of Marty and Nancy Melzer



"Inescapable," 2000, oil on panels, 40" x 60" x 2"

Homo on the Range

Walt Dudley

“Kiss, me.”

“Well, get your ass over here and I’ll lay one on you.”

“But, I just got comfortable on my brand-new sofa . . .”

“Jesus H., Walt, do I have to do everything for you? You’re not that disabled. Don’t be another whiney crip?”

“Oooh, Busdriver Bill, I knew you weren’t one of those tight-ass politico correctos. Speaking of asses, how about getting that handsome heinie over here!”

In fact, Busdriver Bill had already hauled his derriere 100 miles just to get here for our annual “Thanksmas,” a Thanksgiving-Christmas feast, a little get-together for a few dozen friends, gay and lesbian, from all across the state. We even had some friends of Dorothy from as far away as Fargo, way out at the other end of nowhere. Either this Thanksmas shindig was very, very special, or said gay and lesbian friends were very, very desperate.

You may have heard that the Dakota prairie can be a desolate place—especially for queer folk, but maybe I should fill you in on the peculiarities of this peculiar locale. The small college town of Dickinson, ND (pop. 18,000), lies two hours straight west of Bismarck, the state Capitol (pop 50,000). The journey takes you over the grassy, rolling hills identical to the beautiful, Dakota panorama seen just beyond young Lieutenant Dunbar’s naked buns in the movie “Dances with Wolves,” filmed a mere eighty miles to the south. Do I mean to imply that Prairie Men are prone to have good-looking posteriors? Damn right I do.

A couple of hours out of Bismarck, after passing by several sad, depopulating villages, you’ll happen on the next hint of civilization: Dickinson sports a state university populated by about 2000 students; presumably it’s got its statistically-correct share of gays and lesbians, but both town and college have closets in abundance, all tightly locked. Homophobia, denial, and malice are abundant, too. Relations between us queer types are always covert out here on the prairie, socially and certainly physically.

Homo en la Cordillera

Walt Dudley

“Bésame”.

“Bien, trae tu tracero acá y te daré uno”.

“Pero me acabo de quedar cómodamente en mi nuevo sofá...”

“Caramba H. Walt, ¿Tengo que hacer todo para ti? Tú no estás tan discapacitado. No seas otro cojo quejoso”.

“Aaah, Busdriver Bill, yo sabía que tú no eras de esos culo apretado que son políticamente correctos. Hablando de culos, ¡tráeme ese lindo culito!”

De hecho, Busdriver Bill ya había arrastrado su tracero 100 millas para llegar hasta aquí para nuestra *Thanksmas* anual, una festividad de Acción de Gracias y Navidad, una pequeña reunión de una docena de amigos, gays y lesbianas de todo el estado. Hasta tuvimos amigos de Dorotea de lugares distantes como Fargo, del otro lado de la nada. Esta fiesta de *Thanksmas* era muy, pero muy especial, o los susodichos amigos gays y lesbianas estaban muy, pero muy desesperados.

Tú habrás escuchado que la llanura de Dakota puede ser un lugar desolado, especialmente para gente queer, pero tal vez yo debería de informarte sobre las peculiaridades de este lugar peculiar. El pequeño pueblo universitario de Dickinson, ND (población de 18.000) está a dos horas directamente al oeste de Bismarck, la capital del estado (población de 50.000). La jornada te lleva por las colinas pastosas, idénticas al hermoso panorama de Dakota que se ve más allá de las pompis desnudas del joven Lieutenant Dunbar en la película “Dances with Wolves”, filmada a unas ochenta millas al sur. ¿Quiero implicar que los Hombres de la Pradera son propensos a tener buenos tracers? Por supuesto que sí.

A un par de horas de Bismarck, después de pasar por unos tristes y desolados pueblos, llegarás al próximo rastro de civilización: Dickinson tiene una universidad estatal poblada con aproximadamente 2.000 estudiantes. Presuntamente, tiene su porción estadísticamente correcta de gays y lesbianas, pero tanto

This particular Thanksmas, Bill accepted an invitation to be my house guest—enthusiastically accepted. We had met two years earlier at Thanksmas. Even then I was in my new super-deluxe titanium wheelchair. I'd of course pretended to be proud of it—but a wheelchair is a wheelchair. Still, the lean, Hollywood-handsome Bill must have liked something he saw. Or was he playing some kind of game?

Without prompting, he told me that my multiple sclerosis didn't bother him; he'd worked at a nursing home, he was “accustomed to disabilities.” Being mature forty-somethings, we made our first order of business a discussion of procedure and protocol. Honestly, though somewhat coyly, we talked of mustaches, which good-looking newscaster was the “most likely to be,” the fine art of fellatio and, of course, the subject of responsible intimacy.

But back to the sofa: finally, Bill moseyed on over and we got down to the other business at hand. It seemed that our lighthearted banter was sufficient to raise interest in our respective shorts. We quickly transferred our feverish cuddling on the cushy sofa to a close investigation of the plush new carpet below. And wouldn't you know it, my spastic legs decided to join the party. Although distracted by my inability to participate gracefully, Bill achieved satisfaction. At least Bill did. Before I knew it, we were hunkered down under a blanket and watching a movie.

The following day we set off for the Thanksmas feast a mere seven blocks away—in separate cars. That night Bill did not return home. When I saw him at a poetry reading the next afternoon, I learned from friends that Busdriver Bill had got mightily drunk and ended up at the local Holiday Inn with a stranger who had wandered in from the other side of the state. The next day when Bill came to collect his belongings, we had another discussion, this one neither coy nor honest: “But, I just got really, really drunk. I don't know where I stayed . . .”

What does all this have to do with our investigating, or more specifically, not investigating, my new carpet? Who could know? What does a titanium wheelchair have to do with just another one-night stand? One may never know—only be suspicious. And, of course, what I suspect, what I fear, is that the cripple in the chair is good enough for a quickie at best, but nothing more. I get tired of the game called, “Who can do the handsome dude in the wheelchair?” This here dude longs for something more than a masturbatory roll on the cut-pile carpeting. I yearn for a real Kemosahbee, an honest soul-to-soul, mind-to-mind, 'stache-to-'stache, and maybe-more, connection. But out here in the Great Plains, the Buffalo Commons? Who am I kidding?

el pueblo como la universidad tienen armarios en abundancia, todos bien cerraditos. La homofobia, la negación y la malicia también abundan. Las relaciones entre nosotros, los queers, siempre están encubiertas allá afuera en la pradera, socialmente y, desde luego, físicamente.

Para este *Thanksmas* en particular, Bill aceptó ser mi huésped; aceptó entusiasmado. Nosotros nos habíamos conocido dos años antes en *Thanksmas*. Para entonces ya estaba en la súper silla de ruedas de titanio lujosa. Por supuesto que yo había pretendido estar orgulloso de ello; pero una silla de ruedas es una silla de ruedas. No obstante, hermoso-delgado hollywoodense Bill tuvo que haber visto algo que le gustó. ¿O estaba jugando algún juego?

Sin iniciarlo, él me dijo que mi esclerosis múltiple no le molestaba. El había trabajado en un hogar de convalecientes, él estaba “acostumbrado a las discapacidades”. Al ser unos cuarentones maduros, nosotros hicimos nuestras diligencias sobre las discusiones de procedimiento y protocolo. Honestamente, aunque algo reservado, nosotros hablamos de bigotes, cuál presentador guapo de noticias era el “más probable que fuera”, el arte de la felación y, por supuesto, el tema de la intimidad responsable.

Pero de nuevo al sofá: finalmente, Bill se movió sigilosamente y nos entretuvimos en nuestro asunto. Nuestra ligera broma pareció ser suficiente para crear interés en nuestras respectivas pantalonetas. Nosotros rápidamente transferimos nuestras fervientes caricias en el cómodo sofá a una investigación más cercana de la nueva alfombra de felpa. Y quién lo iba a saber, mis piernas espáticas decidieron unirse a la fiesta. Aunque distraído por mi inhabilidad para participar agradadamente, Bill logró la satisfacción. Por lo menos Bill lo logró. Sin darme cuenta, ya estábamos enrollados debajo de una sábana y veíamos una película.

El día siguiente fuimos al festín de *Thanksmas*, que estaba a penas a siete manzanas; fuimos en carros separados. Esa noche Bill no regresó a casa. Cuando lo vi el siguiente día en la tarde en una lectura de poesía, me enteré por unos amigos que Busdriver Bill se había dado una enorme borrachera y terminó en el Holiday Inn de la localidad con un extraño que había llegado de vago del otro lado del estado. El siguiente día que Bill llegó por sus cosas, tuvimos otra discusión; esta no fue ni reservada ni honesta: “Pero, me puse muy, pero muy borracho. No sé en dónde me quedé...”

¿Qué tiene que ver esto con nuestra investigación o, más específico, la no investigación de mi alfombra nueva? ¿Quién podría saberlo? ¿Qué tiene que ver una silla de ruedas de titanio con un lígüe más de una noche? Uno nunca puede saberlo; solamente se sospecha. Y, por supuesto, lo que yo sospecho, lo que yo temo, es que el inválido en la silla es lo suficientemente bueno para un polvito, si acaso, pero nada más.

This tale of a passing fancy hardly gives a complete picture of romance in the Dakotas for boys of like mind and heart, much less similar boys of disability. Pre-wheelchair in Dakota, I had fallen in love, done some heartbreaking and had my own heart broken. But that was pre-wheelchair. Even then, homosexual contacts, social, much less physical, were few and far between. Is there something about Dakota, this particular sector of the great American outback, that leads to a gay-population vacuum? Could it be the general population void, plus the not-so-coincidental out-migration of any gay population to greener, friendlier pastures?

To complicate matters further, while North Dakota may be predominantly Lutheran and Roman Catholic, it certainly behaves Puritan, as does much of the Midwest—as does much of America, come to think of it. You won't find many Metropolitan Community Churches in this neck of the prairie, which is why gays and lesbians travel from across the state to Thanksmas—to find community.

When I was younger, I remember my mother offering that All-American maternal pitch aimed at every son determined to conquer the world: “Grow where you are planted.” Years later I would write: “Nord Dakodah’ – as most old-country locals called it – land of my birth, land of endless, mindless prairies littered with buffalo memories, chaw-chewing cowboys and husky maidens, land I'd vowed never to return to, land of my rebirth.”

My own piece of socio/psycho malarkey makes me wonder if “self-prophecy fulfilling itself” is more than just a clever axiom. Maybe all this vacant territory and fresh air really do something to the brain. After all, I did spend years running around the world singing for Jesus, herding the millions into the kingdom (okay, okay ... I was a gospel-rock prima donna), finding the bright lights and back alleys of Hollywood, then adopting hometowns the likes of Los Angeles, Amsterdam, Honolulu and Seattle. But now I'm back in little ol' Dickinson, North Dakota, thirty-five miles from the village where I grew up. No doubt about it, with all my arrogance, insecurities, talents, loneliness, doubts and fears, along with my new titanium wheelchair, I'm – home. With so few distractions at hand, maybe it's time to find answers to those questions about loneliness, disability, self-acceptance, time to find self-reconciliation.

And yet, all is not as melodramatic as it might sound. Just like with our annual Thanksmas, every Valentine's Day many of the same gays and lesbians gather for a public dance in the state capital, that city a hundred miles to the east where Busdriver Bill lives. I found that wheelchairs move very well on dance floors; lord knows, dancers always give a wheelchair dude wide berth. But Bill does not attend the Valentine's dances in Bismarck. He drives a school bus there, you see. Maybe he worries that

Yo me canso del jueguito conocido como: “¿quién puede coger al tipo guapo en silla de ruedas?” Este tipo acá añora para algo más que un momento masturbatorio en la alfombra de tejido plano. Yo anhele un Kemosahbee real, una conexión honesta de alma a alma, mente a mente, bigote a bigote, y tal vez algo más. ¿Pero aquí, en las Grandes Planicies de los búfalos comunes? ¿A quién engaño?

Este cuento de fantasía pasajera a penas ofrece una visión completa de romance en las Dakotas para los chicos del mismo pensar y sentimiento, sobre todo para chicos parecidos con sus discapacidades. Antes de mi silla de ruedas en Dakota, yo me había enamorado, había roto corazones y me habían roto el mío. Pero eso fue antes de la silla de ruedas. Hasta en ese tiempo, los contactos homosexuales, sociales y mucho menos los físicos, fueron pocos y esporádicos. ¿Hay algo en Dakota, este sector particular de los grandes área remotas americanas, que lleva a un vacío de la población gay? ¿Podría ser el vacío de la población general, además de la emigración no tan coincidental de la población gay a pastos más verdes y amigables?

Para complicar más las cosas, mientras que Dakota del Norte puede ser predominantemente Luterana y Católica Romana, ciertamente se comporta Puritana, como lo hace gran parte del oeste medio del país; al pensarlo bien, como lo hace gran parte de América. Tú no vas a encontrar muchas Iglesias Metropolitanas Comunitarias por estos rumbos y praderas, por lo que los gay y lesbianas viajan desde el otro lado del estado para *Thanksmas*; para encontrar comunidad.

Cuando era joven, recuerdo que mi madre ofrecía su discurso maternal americano dirigido a cada uno de sus hijos determinado a conquistar el mundo: “Crece donde has sido sembrado”. Años después yo escribiría: “Nord Dakodah’, como lo dicen la mayoría de los viejos en el campo, tierra de mi nacimiento, tierra de planicies interminables y sin sentido ensuciadas con memorias de búfalos, vaqueros mascando tabaco, robustas doncellas, tierra a la que prometí nunca regresar, tierra de mi renacimiento”.

Mi propia parte de charlatan me hace pensar si “la realización de la auto profecía” es más que una ingeniosa axioma. Quizá todo este territorio vacío y aire fresco en realidad causa algún efecto en el cerebro. Después de todo, pasé muchos años recorriendo el mundo cantando para Jesucristo, pastoreando millones hacía el Reino (bueno, bueno... era un rockero prima donna del evangelio), encontrando las luces brillantes y los callejones oscuros de Hollywood, y después adoptaba ciudades como Los Angeles, Ámsterdam, Honolulu y Seattle. Pero ahora estoy de regreso en el pequeño pueblo de Dickinson, Dakota del Norte, a treinta millas del pueblo donde crecí. Sin duda, con toda mi arrogancia, inseguridades, talentos, soledad, dudas y miedos, además de mi nueva silla de ruedas de titanio, estoy en casa. Con pocas distracciones a la mano, tal vez ya es hora de encontrar respuestas a las preguntas sobre la soledad, discapacidad, auto aceptación, tiempo para encontrar la auto reconciliación.

the Lutheran/Roman Catholic/Puritan school board members might frown on one of their bus drivers tripping-the-light-fantastic with friends of Dorothy – a reference said school board members undoubtedly would not comprehend.

I haven't seen Busdriver Bill for the better part of two years. In fact, the sofa-to-carpet episode with Bill was the last time I fondled, nuzzled and/or etceteraed with another man. However, last holiday season at Thanksmas, I suddenly found a cute nurse parked on my lap, begging for a birthday kiss. What could a wheelchair cowboy do? It was his birthday – and it was just a kiss.



Photo courtesy of Walt Dudley

Y sin embargo, no todo es tan melodramático, como podría sonar. Al igual que nuestra *Thanksmas* anual, cada día de San Valentín, muchos de los mismos gays y lesbianas se reúnen en un baile público en la capital del estado, esa ciudad a cien millas al este donde vive Busdriver Bill. Descubrí que las sillas de rueda se mueven bien en la pista de baile; Dios sabe que los bailarines siempre dan suficiente espacio a un tipo en silla de ruedas. Pero Bill no asiste a los bailes de San Valentín en Bismarck. El conduce un autobús escolar, ves. Tal vez él se preocupa que los miembros de la junta directiva de la escuela Luterana/Católica Romana/Puritana desapruében que uno de sus conductores de autobús ande bailando al ritmo de música disco con los amigos de Dorothy –una referencia que dichos miembros de la junta directiva sin duda alguna no comprenderían.

Yo no he visto a Bushdriver Bill por unos buenos dos años. De hecho, el episodio del sofá a la alfombra con Bill fue la última vez que acaricié, y me arropé y/o etcétera con otro hombre. Sin embargo, para las festividades más recientes de *Thanksmas*, de pronto me encontré con un enfermero bonito en mis piernas, suplicándome por un beso de cumpleaños. ¿Qué podía hacer un vaquero en silla de ruedas? Era su cumpleaños; y solamente era un beso.

I Return

Elton Naswood

As I travel back to *Dine bi keyah* – Navajoland – I often think of the people who inhabited the lands prior to European arrival – the *Gabrielino/Tongva, Cabuillas, Mohave, Hualapai, Hopi* and *Navajo*. Along the Interstate 40 highway – Barstow, Needles, Kingman, Flagstaff, Holbrook, Window Rock – the migration of a people across non-existent borders.



I am originally from Whitehorse Lake, New Mexico, the lands of my maternal grandparents just east of the Chaco Canyon near the *Anasazi* – ancestors of the Pueblo people. I grew up near Window Rock, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation in Fort Defiance. This community was formerly a Fort for U.S. Army occupation of Navajoland—the irony of the government’s attempt at assimilation. I am history.

I see the Earth, Sky Clouds and Rain differently. The land feels sacred. Life is slower with one main highway that leads into town. I am greeted by a hitchhiker waving \$1. A pack of local rez-dogs racing along the California license-plated car. I stay with my family – mom, aunt, sisters, brothers, nephews and niece. We greet with hugs and speak and joke in Navajo and eat home cooking of tortillas, ground beef & potatoes, and soda pop. I am home.

All photographs these pages and following by Elton Naswood, 2005. digital photographs.





I visit with a close friend – a Navajo T-girl – *nadlbee*. I occasionally keep in contact with her to know the news of our peers and other gossip – *ji'ni*. A trip to Gallup, NM – a border town of the rez—is always necessary to get food and supplies at the local Super Wal-Mart. But stigma and racism are still alive. I am different.

My returns to the reservation are limited due to time, money and work. Regardless, I feel that my journey is to re-juvenate, re-balance, re-live. As I leave again back to Los Angeles to the endless traffic of people and life, my mother – *shi ma*— signifies my safe return with a blessing of lit cedar and prayer to guide and protect my being. I am spiritual.

I return. *Hozho*.



Iowa
Trebor Healy

In Iowa
the corn stiffens and thickens like great virile cocks
above the deep muddy rivers
lolling like teenage boys walking home from school

In Iowa the smokestacks and the swollen silos
were ready to get on with it
The whistling trains were as unstoppable,
as iron-hard and determined
as that secret something that called me to get naked with a man

In Iowa
I tried to run away
but they were everywhere:
The scarecrows with broom handles running through their guts
My male classmates who unknowingly and erotically, and so carelessly tortured me
with their veined forearms, lithe shins and protruding adam's apples
Oh the dick is everywhere in the man

In Iowa
even way out in the fields where I cried
the grasshoppers,
scattered everywhere
like a million penises poised –
and all of them ready
to jump
again and again



Photo courtesy of Hendricks Family Archive

In Iowa
hot and steamy, sweaty and feverish –
it was an enormous locker room of no escape –
the air was like skin
and the earth and all its plants like hair
And at night the trains and cats would screech
– and grip

In Iowa
one day
the twister came
And all the earth rose up to meet it
And it was full of all the boys I ever knew –
their forearms and shins, adam's apples and scrotums –
howling with the spiraling phalluses of catlove
swirling with silos and corncobs, scarecrows, smokestacks and locomotives
I breathed deep
The breath of god
And I let the entire continent fuck me hard
sucked it right up my asshole
cryin': *Auntie Em, Auntie Em*

It's a good day to get fucked up the ass!



Edward J. Luce, "Erotic Compromise (Dominant Diner)," 2003, hat and iron-on transfers

Leaving the Ghetto

Michael Rowe

In 1987, my partner Brian and I, packed up the contents of a townhouse in the Cabbagetown section of Toronto, a golden retriever named Valentine, and every expectation of ever again being anonymous "just folks." We loaded all of these into a small convoy of vans and cars, and together moved to Milton, Ontario, a small town an hour from Toronto, about as far from urban gay life as east is from west. Riding the real estate boom of the late eighties, we had been able to buy a rambling, beautifully restored southern Ontario red brick Victorian for less than the sale price of our Toronto house. The house was a grand romance. It sat on a tree shaded street, and on the day we moved in, the air was heavy with the scent of freshly cut grass and flowers from the neighbours shrubs. Somewhere in the distance a lawnmower purred. As accustomed as we were to the constant backbeat of city life, this small town silence soared. In the cool shadows of the living room, our feet echoed against the polished parquet floors. Our dream of moving out of the city and making a life for ourselves in a small town had become a reality. I imagined freelancing for the local paper and, in time, local politics. Our plan was for me to write the great Canadian novel while Brian commuted to the city and his medical practice. We dreamed of gardens and dogs, raking leaves in the fall, winter nights in front of the fireplace. It was easy to be flippant at that moment, and we joked about how terribly we would miss cocktail parties and smart brunches. The truth was, after three years together we were tired of city living, and we had guiltily begun to question one of the carved-in-stone truisms cherished by both gay and straight society: if you were gay and out, the city was the only place to flourish. "Small towns are for rednecks and bigots," we were told by our gay friends who were appalled by our arrogance and heresy in planning the move. We laughed about the well meaning friend who had sounded so incredibly stupid when he expressed horror that we were giving up the city, and who asked us – in complete mystification – if we weren't going to miss "the gay lifestyle." We told him we'd always wanted a gay lifestyle but, being totally unstylish, we had given up on ever getting one. He laughed, a trifle uneasily, and dropped the topic.

As our years in Milton unfolded we realized that what we had given up were the options of complete anonymity and the attendant security available to us as urban gay men. This loss manifested itself in situations that were either irritating or humorous, depending on the day.

Brian and I were highly conspicuous amidst the families and young married couples. We were initially the subject of a stunning amount of gossip, but surprisingly little hostility. I wrote frequently for the local paper, *The Canadian Champion*. In spite of my tendency to attack conservative local politicians and religious

bigots in print (and a burgeoning profile as the town faggot – these things are never actually said to one’s face in a rural Ontario town where gossip is circuitous and always comes back via a well meaning fiend or two who “just thought you should know”) with time we were absorbed into the fabric of the town. Neither did we miss gay life—it came to us. Friends and family from the city visited us in “the country” for Christmas and Thanksgiving. Our summer house parties became legendary, and there was always someone in the local Golden Griddle on Sunday morning to offer commentary on the number of “fancy cars” in our driveway the night before.

When we moved back to the city after six years, we shed more than one tear, and left behind many good friends. When I go back to Milton to sign books at the local Smithbooks I am thought of as a local author, and referred to in the *Champion* as “Michael Rowe, formerly of Milton.” I adore this, and have long since stopped trying to explain to city friends exactly why it means more to me than a glowing review in *The Village Voice* or *Men’s Style*. They either get it or they don’t. Most often they don’t.

To speak of a gay migration out of the city to a rural or suburban setting is to address a fractious issue which pits the accepted politics of gay life against the cultural memory that many gay men share of growing up as part of a larger, non-gay community. The illiberal notion that we “belong” in the city is one that is shared by the heterosexual communities that don’t want an influx of well groomed men taking up residence in a split level house on Elm Street, and the rabidly anti-assimilationist faction of the gay community. The irony of this unnatural coupling is likely to be lost on both of these groups, as neither one has traditionally evidenced much of an ability to laugh at themselves. Within the gay community, few issues, with the possible exception of gay marriage, seem to excite as much division as whether or not gay exurbanites are pioneers, or traitors to their urban brothers.

The fact that most gay exurbanites tend to move in couples only seems to exacerbate the issue, levelling charges of an elitism that – again, like gay marriage – elevates couples to an inappropriate prominence.



Joe DeCamillis, “Westward Ho,” 2005, oil on copper, 4” x 6”

“It’s easy to talk about gay men leaving the city if they’re just like fucking Ozzie and Harriet,” growled an acquaintance of mine when asked whether he would ever leave the city for somewhere less populated, “but a lot of gay men are single and they like to be among other gay men. A lot of us aren’t interested in being just like straight people, or living with them.”

In his landmark 1996 book *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country*, Canadian author and 1970’s firebrand gay political journalist Michael Riordon writes: “When mainstream culture notices gay and lesbian folk, it tends to see us as urban. And our own media makers have their hands full transmitting the stories of gay and lesbian downtowners. But more and more of us are choosing to live wherever it suits us. This is a free country, no? As one gay man in Northern Ontario said, ‘It’s my goddamn country too.’”

When gay men first come out, they frequently leave home to face the world on its own terms. Often, but not always, this involves moving to a large city and a search for other gay men. Most cities tend to have clusters of downtown streets unofficially designated as “the gay ghetto” or “the gay village.” In Toronto, it is the Church and Wellesley area. In Vancouver, the moniker extends to the west end of downtown, the streets on either side of Denman Street sloping towards English Bay. It’s worth noting that the west end encompasses one of the most beautiful sections of Vancouver, facing as it does the ocean and the distant vista of fog-shrouded mountains.

The word “ghetto” is loaded with negative historical imagery. It implies a rigidly-bordered urban enclave that is the only place where any given people are truly tolerated. To the just out gay man, this can seem more like a haven than a ghetto. After a time, he either decides that he has found Oz, or he begins to look out towards the larger world and begins to wonder whether he could make a life there. Sometimes it is the appearance of a lover in his life that prompts this questioning.

“We wondered if it wouldn’t be better for our relationship to get out of the city for awhile,” says one man who moved out of a large Ontario city to a small town a year ago. “It wasn’t that our relationship was shaky, it’s just that we had begun to find that the ghetto wasn’t a very nurturing place. People didn’t respect us as a couple, and somebody was always trying to sabotage the relationship in some way. Every time we questioned the values around us, we got accused of having internal homophobia or something.”

In some cases, it has to do with a desire to connect with the larger world, encompassing relationships that cross age, gender, and sexual orientation boundaries. Barnaby Ellis-Perry and his partner Doug

Brockway left Vancouver's west end last year and bought a small three bedroom bungalow in the Pemberton Heights section of North Vancouver. Brockway lived in the west end for six years, Ellis-Perry for nine.

“On a Saturday in the west end,” says Ellis-Perry dryly, “you get up really late because you’ve been out to the bars the night before. You go to Delany’s (a popular Vancouver coffee house on Denman Street) around eleven-- with your gym bag--and then you’re off to the gym, where you talk to all the same people you just saw at Delany’s whom you also saw the night before. In the evening, it’s a dinner thing, and no one can make up their minds where they want to go. Are you going to accept that dinner party invitation? Yes, if everyone else agrees. Or, you could go to a gay restaurant like Stepho’s or Friends, or a birthday party in which case you leave at eleven p.m. to get to the club on time.” He laughs. Brockway chides him gently for being cynical. “It’s true,” Ellis-Perry insists. “From our door to the door of Delany’s – which is the epicentre of Vancouver’s gay ghetto – it’s about ten minutes by car. And yet, we might as well be on Mars.”

“The day we moved in, we had housewarming gifts from the neighbours on either side,” says Brockway. “They came over and made a point of introducing themselves. It seemed very much to be a moot point that we were gay. Now we’re swapping tools.” Many gay men would be nervous about their acceptance in a neighbourhood like Pemberton Heights, but that has not apparently been the case here, rather it is the community they left behind that seems to be most annoyed.

“There are some people that don’t understand and may possibly feel threatened,” says Brockway of some acquaintances’ reactions to their move. “They’ve taken it personally, as a personal affront. We can’t control that. To some people it seems that we have chosen to negate the way they have chosen to live their lives. But it’s certainly not that way—it’s how we’ve chosen to live ours.”

This hostile reaction was also the experience of Alan Forget, who moved from Vancouver to Galiano Island, B.C. with his partner, the actor Marek Czuma, four years ago.

“I had become conscious that everyone I knew and everything I did revolved around being gay. Which was kind of neat, but I was finding more and more gay men that I had nothing in common with except that we both liked to have sex with men. I began to think that perhaps a more normal picture would be to be the gay part of a community rather than a part of the gay community.” When the couple first left the west end, they moved to the Kitsilano section of Vancouver. “It was kind of difficult to break out of,

but we left the west end and moved to Kits. We began to know more families and kids. And then, after two more years in Kitsilano we decided to leave the city altogether. We weren’t nervous about moving to Galiano. We wanted to be away from the gay community, but that didn’t mean that we wanted to be any less gay or any less out about it.” Of the reaction this move engendered, Forget says, “The common comment was, ‘These are your kind, and this is where you should be.’ We didn’t lose any friends over it, but there was some lack of understanding and a distance that we hadn’t thought would occur.”

Galiano Island (pop. 1,000) a fifty minute ferry ride from Vancouver is best known as the home of the legendary Canadian lesbian author Jane Rule, who has herself written extensively about the value of community and the importance of people – both gay and straight – being active members.

“I feel more natural here,” says Alan Forget. “There are other gay men on the island, but we’re all just another part of the community. The complaint that I had about the city was that everything was gay or straight – everything was divided into two camps. You went to a gay restaurant or a straight restaurant. On Galiano there is a restaurant and a dance.”

One explanation for these men’s comfort level within their newly adopted hometowns might be the fact that their out-ness, and their refusal to mask it, has elicited an answering response from their neighbours who have taken their cue.

“Our neighbours acceptance of us is perhaps due to the assertiveness with which Barney and I live,” says Doug Brockway. “If we represented ourselves as ashamed and shy, it would communicate a sense of guilt about being gay that we don’t feel. We don’t beg, or ask permission to live here.”

“There are some rednecks here, sure,” concedes Alan Forget, “But I think we’re good members of the community. We’re seen as good citizens and nice people. And secondary to that, we’re seen as a gay couple. A lot of our gay friends ask what we do for our social life. We find we’re more social here, because in the city we were always pressured and finally stopped going out much. Here, there are town dances and a lot of in-house entertaining which is almost always mixed.”

“With my family,” says Ellis-Perry, “there was almost a shift in their perception of our relationship when we moved here. We had met them on their own turf, so to speak. If there is a movement, we’re part of it. Now that we’re more secure culturally as gays, and now that we have more legislated protection, there is more of a willingness to be open when you’re out. And that’s a nice change.”

“Oh, we’re definitely part of a larger demographic of people in middle age exiting the cities because they’re tired of the pressures, and imagining – often romantically – that life in the country is very sweet and simple,” says Michael Riordon. His voice is soft and melodic, the edges of his words shaped by an inexplicable Atlantic Canadian accent that belies his upbringing in Montreal fifty odd years ago. “By being gay and lesbian we aren’t suddenly exempt from the larger trend. I think that gay men who grew up rural, or who grew up urban with certain preconceptions about the country, have begun to wonder if something that they’d written off as impossible, was, in fact, an option.”

The author of *Out Our Way* leans back in his chair, pausing thoughtfully. The fire crackles in the wood stove, and he puts his coffee cup down. An hour before, he had met my train in a battered pickup truck. Together we drove across the frozen eastern Ontario country landscape to the small house in Picton, Ontario he shares with his partner, Brian, a carpenter. On the way, he recounts the story of a friend who owns a gay bed and breakfast in the country. Lesbians, the friend observed, always want to hike and ski. Gay men wonder what on earth they’re going to do.

“There’s this conception among urban gay men that they’re going to be lost and bored,” he observes wryly. Riordon and his partner bought the then-decrepit house on sixty acres for \$30,000 and have been living there ever since. In 1994, he travelled 27,000 kms across Canada and compiled over 300 interviews with gay men and lesbians who, for whatever reason, had decided to live in rural



Patrick “Pato” Hebert. “War On City Prices Here” 2005, digital photograph

settings rather than urban ones. One thing he has noted is that women living together tend to attract less attention than do men.

“Most men who move out to the country do so in couples,” Riordon says, “I think it’s very hard to undertake alone, partly because of the physical challenges. I don’t just mean cutting wood and so on. Life is just generally more complex out here physically. The idea of isolation is very daunting.”

As to the impulse behind the move, Riordon points to many of the codes by which both gays and straights are shaped in childhood. “Even as heterosexuals grow up with the white picket fence ideal, we learn that too. This stuff is inculcated almost subliminally. Even if we don’t want kids or a car, these things are tucked away as desirable.”

One of the criticisms levelled at the exurbanite model is that it is generally touted as a class-based phenomenon enjoyed by the middle or upper-middle classes who can, presumably, “afford” to move. The high cost of living in a downtown core is rarely mentioned when this accusation of classism is being made. While both Ellis-Perry and Brockway, and Riordon and his lover, are homeowners, neither couple is wealthy. They are united only by their desire to be part of a different sort of community. Riordon’s generation of post-Stonewall activists were adamant in their rejection of what they thought of as bourgeois heterosexual values that were antithetical to gay liberation as it was then understood. In those days, little quarter was given to anyone who expressed an interest in bucking the party line by “aping” their oppressors. Even today it isn’t hard for an urban gay man to look towards the ghetto and see an entire prepackaged politically correct ideology available to him, replete with politics, values, codes and even a language.

“I went through probably a decade of believing that we not only needed to remake the world, but we needed to remake ourselves,” says Riordon, “I worked very hard at remaking myself. I never was good as a heterosexual, and I was never much good as a gay militant either, because I never really fit. In the last several years, my life has shifted. I don’t know whether this is backsliding or mellowing or what. This thing about ‘the gay lifestyle’ interests me a lot. What does that mean? There is a desire to have a meaningful life, to love, to be loved. I experience the world differently from a heterosexual, but that doesn’t mean that I necessarily want different things.”

The right to be anything and live anywhere was one of the original tenets of gay liberation. It was necessary in those days to create ghettos, as much for critical mass as anything else. The chain reaction

caused by the presence of gay men and lesbians in these locations created the media borne visibility in society that has made it possible for these men to make new homes for themselves outside the safe ground. In short it helped adjust the tenor of the times. “That’s partly what has been gained in the cities,” says Riordon. “Particularly the long, sometimes impatient demand for equality and recognition. I used to look askance at gay characters on sitcoms, but the regularizing effects have been remarkable.”

Looking out across the frozen fields behind the house, it is easier to imagine having neighbours than not. The common bond here might be the isolation and the interdependence on neighbours and friends. The question of course, is whether or not that would be enough to supersede the matter of sexual orientation. Michael Riordon takes another sip of his coffee.

“I grew up with the idea that country folk were backward and simpleminded. I imagined the *Deliverance* model,” he says, invoking the Burt Reynolds film whose hillbilly rape scene is still too chilling to be considered campy. “That was one of my concerns about moving here—boys in pick up trucks and baseball bats coming around at night. The odd thing is—and I don’t think this is liberal posturing—that Brian and I have been dissolving some of our notions about country folk. It happens by discovery of the other.”

The dog has begun barking at the door to be let in, and Brian will be returning from his workshop across the property for lunch. Riordon companionably asks me if I’d like a sandwich before we drive out to meet my train. In the cozy farmhouse kitchen, he expounds on his point.

“For those of us who are willing to do it,” he says, “whose daily relationships involve heterosexuals, we actually start becoming something that might be called the human family. That is very valuable. It’s at least as important as the ground won in the legislature. If there were Nazis at the door, I doubt very much that our neighbours would participate in our arrest. They might conceivably hide us. Or that may just be faith. Who knows?”

The cold air outside is a bracing tonic. The snow is dappled with blue midday shadows. The tranquil fields behind Michael Riordon’s personal Shangri-la seems to stretch forever, into the woods and into the white winter sun. I mention that from here, the city and its turmoil seems very far away indeed.

“There’s a very strong inclination within all of us to be at peace,” Riordon says, squinting into the wind. “The desire is very strong in me. It’s very quiet here, and uneventful. So you think, ‘Now I’m at peace.’ But you’re not at peace with the world yet— you’re just a little away from it. There’s still a lot of work to be done.”



Joe DeCamillis, “Weather or Not,” 2005, oil on copper, 4” x 6”

Contributors

Sherman J. Alexie, Jr., was born in October, 1966. A Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian, he grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation, about 50 miles northwest of Spokane, WA. His first collection of short stories, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, was published in 1993. Since then, he has published 17 books of prose and poetry. Alexie has received numerous literary awards, including the PEN/Hemingway Award for Best First Book of Fiction, a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award, the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award and the Murray Morgan Prize. His stories have been made into the award-winning films *The Business of Fancy Dancing* and *Smoke Signals*. Alexie is currently working on a young adult novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which will be published in 2007 by Little, Brown.

Rane Arroyo is the author of 5 books of poems, a collection of short stories and performed plays. In other words, he is always curious and likes working. His new poetry manuscript, *Far West Of Eden*, is about his years coming out in the wild west/nuevo west.

Adrian Chesser—I was born on May 19, 1965 in Okeechobee, Florida. I was groomed to be a Pentecostal preacher, studying the bible and taking piano and organ lessons. I spoke in tongues. I learned to cast out demons. I was gay. I left home at the first opportunity.

A friend gave me a camera and I fell in love with light and image. Another friend gave me an enlarger and supplies for a dark room. In a closet under a stairwell, I taught myself how to make a photograph. I made cash for photographic supplies in many ways. I worked in restaurants as a dish washer, busboy, waiter. I wrestled alligators at a Seminole Indian reservation. I was a Santa for charity. I have assisted gardeners, photographers and drug-dealers. I hustled sex for money.

I have lied, cheated and stolen so I could feel the erotic rush of watching an image magically appear on what was a blank piece of paper. I'm learning to cast "in" demons. I've always felt I would do almost anything to know the power of holding a split second in my hands, and look at it as long and as lovingly as I care to – to capture something as elusive as an emotion, and to feel the power of that emotion possess me each time I look at it. To feel the electric jolt of telling a lie convincingly and above all else, to experience the awe-inspiring, god-like power of creating and witnessing a truth.

Jaime Cortez is a San Francisco Bay Area writer and visual artist. His short stories have been published in over a dozen anthologies, and he is the editor of the groundbreaking queer Latino anthology *Virgins, Guerrillas & Locas*, and the noted APLA publications *Turnover*, *Sexile*, and several issues of *Corpus*. Jaime's visual art has been presented throughout the Bay Area at venues that include the UC Berkeley Museum of Art, Oakland Museum of California, Intersection for the Arts, and Galería de la Raza. He is currently working on a new collection of short stories slated for publication in the winter of 2008-2009 from Suspect Thoughts Press.

Joe DeCamillis is the product of an American mobile culture that runs deep and far – back to wagon trains, the boom of paved highways, Route 66, and on to the congested lane-multiplying interstates of today. He explores the manifestation of this in everyday life revealing the poetic side of the mundane. To see more of his work, visit www.joedecamillis.com.

Walt Dudley is a former musician turned disability rights activist and writer, and is originally from North Dakota, via California, Washington State and Amsterdam, NL et North Dakota again. Look for his book, *WE'RE THE PEOPLE, TOO: Tales from America's Largest Minority* in bookstores or online at ChampionPress.com, Amazon.com, and Barnesandnoble.com.

Keith M. Harris is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at U.C. Riverside. His areas of specialization include film, African-American and Africana Cinema, gender studies and queer theory. However, his recent research and writing interests primarily concern masculinity, performance and gender(s) as ethical constructs within performance and cultural production. His recent publications include the manuscript, *Boys, Boyz, Boies: An Ethics of Masculinity in Popular Film, Television and Video* (Routledge 2006) and "'Untitled': D'Angelo and the visualization of the black male body" in *Wide Angle* (2004). Scheduled publications (2006-2007) include "'Stand up, boy!': Sidney Poitier, 'boy' and Filmic Black Masculinity," in *Gender and Sexuality in African Literatures and Film* and "'Clockers (Spike Lee 1995): Adaptation in Black," in *The Spike Lee Reader*.

Trebor Healey is the author of the 2004 Ferro-Grumley and Violet Quill award-winning novel, *Through It Came Bright Colors* (Harrington Park Press). His poetry collection, *Sweet Son of Pan*, was published by Suspect Thoughts in spring 2006, and a short story collection, *Eros and Dust*, was released by Harrington Park Press in early 2007. Trebor lives in Los Angeles where he is at work on his second novel. For more information visit www.treborhealey.com.

Patrick “Pato” Hebert is an artist, educator and cultural worker based in Los Angeles. He currently serves as the Associate Director of Education at AIDS Project Los Angeles and teaches in the Photography and Imaging Department at Art Center College of Design. His art has been featured at El Mueso de las Artes in Guadalajara, Longwood Arts Project in The Bronx, the Japanese American National Museum in LA, The Oakland Museum of California, Galería de la Raza in San Francisco and Voz Alta in San Diego. His writing has appeared in the *Journal of Visual Culture* and *disClosure*, and his images can be seen in the premiere issue of the journal *Encyclopedia*. His work has received support from the Rockefeller Foundation, the California Arts Council, the Creative Work Fund and the Durfee Foundation.

Roshelle Darlene Hudson is a health educator by training and received her Bachelors of Science degree from the University of Central Arkansas in the field of Health Education. She worked for 10 years with the Arkansas state health department in the area of AIDS prevention education, which has also been the focus of her community work for many years. In 1990, she founded and directed for 10 years one of the first Black gay organizations in Arkansas, *Brotba's and Sista's*. The organization addressed AIDS awareness and social change issues. In 2002 she co-authored an article that chronicled her activist work building coalitions within the African-American community to address the AIDS epidemic in her native state of Arkansas. The article, entitled, “How an African American gay activist in the rural south found community support,” was published in the *Journal of Health Studies*.

Ms. Hudson moved from Arkansas to Georgia in 1998 where she continues her community activism and AIDS work. She currently serves as a consultant with “Kupona Consulting LLC”, an agency dedicated to providing capacity development for community-based organizations, and was recently appointed the Executive Director of “In the Life Atlanta,” an African American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community-based project responsible for organizing Black gay pride and related forums in Atlanta. Her other work has included conducting HIV prevention education workshops in the southeast regions of the U.S. and abroad in indigent communities of South Africa. She has presented at national conferences in the areas of HIV/AIDS prevention, advocacy work, capacity building and self-empowerment. Ms. Hudson is a former board member of the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Center, Georgia Community Planning Group, and Ryan White Council. She is an active member of her local neighborhood association,

a member of Zeta Phi Beta, and an active member of her church, Hillside Chapel of Truth. She has been in a committed relationship for seven years with a partner who also shares her passion for AIDS awareness work and community activism. She is currently employed as a Case Manager for the Department of Family & Children Services for the state of Georgia.

Malcolm Ingram is a Canadian independent film director. He is 36 years old and hails from Toronto. He has made *Drawing Flies* under View Askew Productions, which was produced by Scott Mosier and Kevin Smith, *Tail Lights Fade*, and *Small Town Gay Bar*, a documentary which received acclaim at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival.

Ed Luce's drawings, paintings, installations and performances examine the complexities of desire, with a healthy dose of humor. His current labor of love, *Wuvable Oaf*, is a “fairy” tale comic book chronicling one big, scary lookin’ dude’s search for cute little mans in a city that looks suspiciously like San Francisco. Ed received his MFA from the University of California, San Diego and has studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. His work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, store windows and bathrooms from San Diego to Buffalo to Paris. His work can be seen at www.myspace.com/dirtysheets and www.myspace.com/wuvableoaf.

Elton Naswood (Navajo) is of the Near to the Water People Clan, born for the Edge Water People Clan, his maternal grandfather’s clan is of the Mexican People, his paternal grandfather’s clan is of the Tangle People, this is how he is Navajo, *Dine*.

Naswood is the Project Coordinator for the Red Circle Project, a Native American HIV Prevention program at AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) and has served as a member of the Advisory Board for the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center. He is also a member of the Los Angeles American Indian Children’s Council.

Naswood enjoys reading Native American literature and poetry, watching collegiate sports, especially volleyball, and hanging out with close friends.

Alberto Rangel is a queer Latino artist and writer from Matamoros, Tamaulipas Mexico, who was raised in Muscatine, Iowa. Alberto has achieved a Bachelor’s degree in Art/ Art History from The University of Iowa, and a Master’s degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, California. Alberto’s paintings are a mixture of contemporary images narrated in a Mexican Retablo style.

Kirk Read is the author of *How I Learned to Snap*, a memoir about growing up in small town Virginia. He works as an HIV counselor and phlebotomist at St. James Infirmary, a free health care clinic for sex workers. He lives in San Francisco's Mission District with writer and longtime AIDS activist Ed Wolf.

Rev. Dr. William H. Robinson, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, has served as Senior Pastor of Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church for the past 25 years. Spanning over two decades, Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church has become a national icon known for rebuilding lives and restoring faith. Rev. Robinson believes that we are a spiritual people and without spiritual nourishment we grow weary and faint in well doing.

Black Community Developers, Inc., the fruition of a vision inspired by Rev. Robinson 25 years ago, has become a concrete and valuable resource to the community. Black Community Developers, Inc. houses programs that seek to assist people by providing services to eliminate the drug problems running rampant throughout our nation. Whatever drugs have destroyed in the lives of people and their families, Black Community Developers, Inc. seeks to rebuild. Rev. Robinson understands that drug addiction and human suffering of any kind affects all people; therefore, Rev. Robinson reaches out to the needy, regardless of the race, creed, or color of the person in need.

Rev. Robinson preaches that each one should help one. The fight for freedom and justice and substance abuse is a “we” not a “me” battle. Therefore, through his preaching ministry, believers continue to join in the fight to build better and stronger communities. The membership has increased many folds over the past decade. Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church has an intergenerational congregation whom participates in many ministries of the church.

A San Francisco based artist, **Eugene Rodriguez's** work includes painting, photography, film, video, and installation. For the past ten years, his artwork has increasingly become more focused on the intersection of issues of labor, immigration, class, gender, sexuality and the family. His paintings and films have attempted to highlight the struggles, conflicts and accomplishments working class Latinos experience as they attempt to achieve upward mobility on the social ladder, maintain a connection to their ethnic heritage and redefine the notion of family. Aesthetically, all the work questions the superficial and disinterested form of postmodern appropriation and instead aims to inspire a revitalized look at the ability of narrative and realism to generate dialogue about the content of the art, as well as the political stakes of self-representation.

Rodriguez's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Tribes Gallery, Franklin Furnace and Gallery 49 in New York and Encantada Gallery in San Francisco. He has also been included in group exhibitions across the United States and Canada. In addition to exhibiting, he has lectured and curated exhibitions around the Bay Area and has presented at conferences in New York and Los Angeles. His film/video work has been featured in numerous national and international film/video festivals. Most recently his latest video, *WIN*, was awarded first prize by Robert Storr, Dean of Fine Arts at Yale University and director of the 2007 Venice Biennale.

A contributing writer to *The Advocate*, **Michael Rowe** is the Lambda Literary Award-winning author and editor of several books including, most recently, the novella “In October” published in *Triptych of Terror: Chilling Tales By The Masters of Gay Horror* (New York: Alyson Books, 2006) and the forthcoming essay collection *Other Men's Sons* (Toronto: Cormorant Books, 2006.)

Mario Sixto is 22 years old and lives in the small farming community of Lodi, CA. He is a student at San Joaquin Delta College and plans to transfer to C.S.U. Sacramento in the fall of 2007. Having seen the challenges that the Latino community faces on a constant basis, he would like to major in social work. He will try to help out the community by communicating with others and volunteering. He helps his family by teaching them the importance of education, responsibility, and tolerance towards other cultures and minorities.

Enrique Urueta is a playwright and is the author of the plays *The Johnson Administration*, *Learn To Be Latina*, *The Danger of Bleeding Brown*, & ...and roaches shall do the Safety Dance at the end of time. A Virginia native, he enrolled in the MFA playwriting program at Brown University.

Albert J. Winn is a photographer and a writer. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, among other places, at the International Center of Photography, LACMA, SF Camerawork, Houston Center for Photography, and the Jewish Museum (NYC). His work is in the permanent collections of the International Center of Photography, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Library of Congress, the Jewish Museum and the VisualAIDS Archive. He received an NEA/West AF Fellowship for *My Life Until Now* an autobiographic collection of stories and photographs on being a gay Jewish man living with AIDS. He has read his stories on NPR's *Soundprint*, and at Beyond Baroque and the Loft Stage. He has published in *ZYZZYVA*, *The Jewish Quarterly Review* and on [Fresh Yarn.com](http://FreshYarn.com) and been featured in *Don't Leave Me This*

Way: *Art in the Age of AIDS*. He received a fellowship from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for a photographic essay on deserted and abandoned Jewish summer camps and recently published an essay in *Healing and the Jewish Imagination*. He teaches at Cal Arts and Moorpark College. He picked bananas for many years on Kibbutz Ma'anit, has an MFA (Cal Arts), an MA (University of Florida), a BS (Penn State) and lives in L.A. with his spouse, two dogs and a cat. His work can be seen at www.albertjwinn.com and he can be contacted at Winnaj@yahoo.com.



Greg Freeman, "Lac Echo, Morin Heights, Québec," 2005, digital photograph

