



The Queer Foundation Scholar

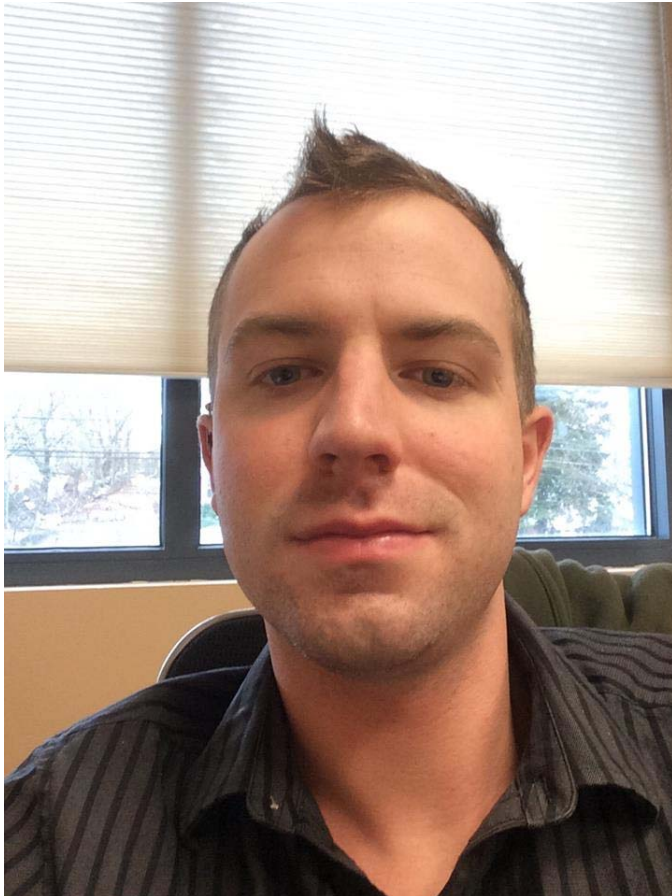
Joe Dial, Ph.D.
Executive Director, The Queer Foundation
Seattle, WA
joedial@queerfoundation.org

Ray Verzasconi, Ph.D.
Editor
Portland, OR
rverzasconi@msn.com

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In this issue

2015 Publication Awards.



Kyle Wholey is from Hull, Massachusetts, “a quaint community where everyone knows your name.” The recipient of Special Mention in the QF English Essay Contest for High School Seniors four years ago, Kyle is now a senior majoring in

English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston campus. Along with listening to music and playing his guitar, he enjoys reading and writing. His favorite authors include Sylvia Plath, Herman Hesse, and Anaïs Nin. After completing his B.A. this spring, Kyle plans to continue for his M.A.T., planning a career as an English teacher and a writer.

His two award-winning pieces, “Boys Keep Swinging” and “Girl Germs Eat Your Little Virus: Why Riot Grrrls Do it Better” (pp. 2-4), both link music and queerness, starting with a fitting tribute to David Bowie.

From the Executive Director (p. 4).

Contemporary Queer Writers Series. The fourth in our series of Contemporary Queer Writers is a selection from the novel, *Like Son* (pp. 5-7), by Felicia Luna Lemus.

From the Editor’s Desk (pp. 8-10).

2016 QF Publication Award Scholarships. We hope to award up to \$4,000 in \$500 or \$1,000 scholarships for the 2016-17 academic year. If you participated in the QF English High School Essay Contest and will be enrolled as a soph., jr., sr, or grad student in an accredited US college or university in 2016-17, see p. 11.

Boys Keep Swinging

By **Kyle Wholey**

University of Massachusetts, Boston

Tuesday, March 17th

I'll never know what it's like to be a "real man." I try to ignore the subtle suggestions from you, an ambivalent man-child; the innuendos that become less covert the more you bring them up. People like to think that hatred is one sided-fueled by "heterosexual" disdain towards "queer" culture - but I felt that disgust for you far before you felt it towards me.

You were the guy that shoved me in dirt for singing like an effeminate angel. Later, you whispered to tell me how sweetly I sang all the hymns I now despise.

You were the older boy, when I was seven, who tickled me too much and always gave me sloppy raspberries on my tummy. It never happened- they say- and I think that must be the root of most of my sad and demented fantasies.

I lost my virginity to every guy like you. We said we'd never tell your girlfriend, but I did anyway. I guess I might be a little stir crazy from all the great men in my life.

And here I am again, mythologizing the Everyman. I know you are not different, just as much as I know that they are all the same. Romance is a foreign, ill-begotten language; I adapt as well as I can. I'll try to ignore you, though you won't do the same. I suppose we'll let each other live the lie a bit longer.

Saturday, May 9th

Not that I was all that queer myself as a child. I felt perfectly normal until roughly the age of seven or eight. But maybe that's because nobody bothers giving you a title at so young an age. It's not until the trophies are given out, and then you start feeling a bit like an outsider.

This must be a gay rendition of the Lolita complex, falling for someone who "plays for a different team." The serpent hisses at you, slithering around a supple and forbidden fruit.

And you try to cast away a demon who has always been at your side; a relentless thorn permanently rooted to a docile rosebush.

You are growing quite fond of shoving me into this Catch 22 cul-de-sac. I ignore the advances and play stupid, as if I have the capacity to be so aloof. Then you flick your serpent tongue, again and again, so that I cannot help but stare at the harrowing of my Garden of Eden.

What's worse is that it's only skimmed the surface of physicality. We think only scholars and authors have the power to puff out or dim down words, but it is really a con man's art we learn at the first vowel screech. "I am," is the first of a lifetime of lies we tell ourselves to feel above our sex- as if we didn't belong to our mothers, or the schools, or the corporations we thought we could resist. Words are the most vile and violent instruments, a detonating device that you've mastered at controlling.

All I have is my precocious taste and pretentious grammar, but I don't think I am ready for such short and convoluted words. It's the smaller words that are by far the most dangerous. There is plenty of room for them to shapeshift and deceive, especially when truncated under the tongue of a simple minded genius. But I am all too aware of it now, and although it has taken too long to realize, the relief and the refuge from your pretty persuasions supersede the need to chastise my own stupidity.

Nothing has happened between us and nothing ever will. These persistent longings seemed so erotic and captivating, when they were ripe as the forbidden fruit. Now, they are wilted; unappealing; and your need to ornament a fleeting fancy makes the whole endeavor all the more pitiful.

Monday, June 1st

I don't think you are attracted to me, as much as you are turned on at the idea of me being turned on by you. So, I told you I'm sick of fueling your narcissism- forever feeding it at the expense of my self-respect.

I'll always be the "crazy, manipulative, sociopath," because I'm always severing these symbiotic ties that are more debilitating for me

than for you or anyone like you. It's easy to catch my attention- cute face, nice body, handsome smile- it's harder for me to push away.

But I have to because I know exactly what I'm looking for. I have spent too many years on self-loathing, cowardice, and doubt; I have no doubts now and I can't waste my time dwelling on persistent uncertainties.

I assume it's not easy in your situation either. Being the "straight" man with a gay best friend; you must be constantly anxious over the second glances and side comments. I've never been one to hide my feelings, but I assume it must be Hell for those who feel it necessary.

Wednesday, June 24th

I try not to stand on the soap box as a relentless gay rights advocate. But our tolerance of queer culture doesn't seem to be progressing if "straight" guys are shame facedly hitting on fags like me. If I could tally up the times closeted "bi-curious," guys flirted with me, I'd have a scroll the size of the Eiffel Tower.

I'm putting all of this in quotation marks because there is really nothing behind their title. If sexuality were viewed as something transient, something impermanent and constantly shifting, then there would be no need to vilify these innate desires. But society injects us with selfishness, so we must brand ourselves with some endearing term in order to display our sense of entitlement.

When I was 10 years old, I was in love with David Bowie. I remember seeing his music video for "Boys Keep Swinging" which was a bizarre video with catchy song lyrics: "boys keep swinging, boys always work it out." He sang about all the privileges that boys have, within a male dominated society, and at the end of the video he walked down a runway in various drag costumes. After each time his new feminine persona reached the end of the runway, he'd remove his wig then smear his lipstick to the right side of his cheek.

It was so brilliant and enlightening! Here was a juxtaposition of masculine and feminine, causing the artist, Bowie, to disparage any sense of gender performance through the process of dressing and undressing. The message seemed so clear: "boys keep swinging," it was almost an

inversion of the platitude "boys will be boys." They will (as Bowie says in the song) let "other boys check you out," even dress as girls. Don't question what they're doing because "boys always work it out."

It's this mentality that needs to emerge into Western society's view on sexuality. Girls will be girls and boys will be boys, let them discover one another's bodies without societal or titular influence. Who knows! Maybe someday these swinging boys will finally have the guts to follow through with a man like me.

Girl Germs Eat Your Little Virus: Why Riot Grrrls Do it Better

Courtney Love exclaims, "I'm not a woman; I'm a fucking force of nature." Most punk chicks aren't self-proclaimed riot grrrls, but rather serendipitous bad asses. That's the beauty of a feminine tour de force, there's no concern for fitting into a societal or even a self-ascribed niche.

I have always adored the femme fatale, a villainess- so described because she doesn't play nicely with the men who try to keep her tame and identical. I fell in love with the cynical Goth-witch, Nancy Downs, played by Fairuza Balk, in *The Craft*, as well as the violently angry, Mallory Knox (Juliette Lewis) in *Natural Born Killers*. They were fierce, unassuming, and utterly tenacious in a world fixated on uniformity and concrete gender roles.

For years I wondered why I was so obsessed with these characters, and then I realized, as Carson McCullers puts it: "they are the we of me." I don't identify myself as transgender or transsexual, but I felt myself so connected to these disenfranchised women. I connected their struggles, being strong women in a man's world, to my struggle as a stubborn queer youth in an androcentric and heteronormative world.

When I first heard Courtney Love, I knew I had acquainted myself with a muse that I would adore till my last dying day. She was loud,

sarcastic, and completely fearless. She endured the harshest of criticism while married to Kurt Cobain, and she continues to endure it decades later. Her lyrics display her quick wit and humorous cynicism, especially lines such as “I don’t really miss God, but I sure miss Santa Claus,” and “like a liar at a witch trial, you look good for your age.” It was then that I realized I would consider myself a riot grrrl for life.

I began to devour all the works of the female greats: The Slits, The Runaways, Lydia Lunch, and Bikini Kill. The punk simplicity and lyrical anguish of Bikini Kill thrilled me, and Kathleen Hannah’s insurgency and idealism inspired me in both music and writing. At 13, I would crank the volume on “Bikini Kill: The CD Version of the First Two Records,” and scream my gay, angry heart out. I thought of all the kids in school who hated my sexuality and chanted along with Kathleen: “don’t need you to say were cute/ don’t need you to say were alright/ don’t need your atti-fucking-tude, boy!” The rebellious anthems brought me out of the shell I had tucked myself in for years.

Fate sometimes has a way of following you at the perfect time. I was looking for girl-punk music with a little more poetry and elements of blues. I had heard of PJ Harvey for quite some time, and then finally had the motivation to pick up her debut album *Dry*. To this day I could kick myself for not buying the album sooner. Here was a skinny Brit with sexy guitar riffs, cryptically singing about love, loss, and everything in between.

Music always has a way of resurrecting memories, whether happy or somber. PJ Harvey always sang to the exact emotion I was going through, as soon as that emotion struck me. I thought about old lovers when she sang “this fruit was bruised/ dropped off and blue/ out of season/ happy and bleeding,” and pondered over new ones while contemplating the words: “I’ve lain with the devil/ cursed God above/ forsaken heaven/ to bring you my love.” After examining the perfect blend of feminism and great music, I finally decided to play the guitar myself and mimic my idols.

Riot Grrrl music saved my life. From madness, to suicide, to drug addiction, to even the simple things, I’ve always had guardian

angels to tune out my worries. Courtney Love, Kathleen Hannah, and PJ Harvey have become my holy trinity. I get angry with Courtney, empowered with Kathleen, and poignantly cynical with PJ. When I think of their enormous impact in my life, I think of the cliché: “behind every great man there is a woman.” I hope, someday, to prove this. When I am successful, and people ask me how I did it, I’m likely to say: “I owe it all to the big three.”

From the Executive Director

Queer Foundation's second decade is off to a great start. The deadline for the Eleventh Annual High School Seniors English Essay Contest is still a couple of weeks away and we already have more entries than in any past year. More teachers, counselors, and students know about the contest than ever before, and this is true in all regions of the United States as well as abroad. As of this writing, we have received submissions from twenty-six states, Germany, and Uganda.

Besides more people knowing about the contest, we see also that teachers and counselors are more willing to encourage students to participate.

A big Thank You goes out to our steadfast volunteers. I had thought they might rebel at the increased workload, but their response has been overwhelmingly positive. The contest could not be successful without their generously giving their time and talents.

The QF looks for writing from both emerging and accomplished young writers and encourages all to enter Pink Ink 2016. Deadline: February 14. Application: on our website, www.queerfoundation.org

Joseph Dial, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Queer Foundation
jdial@queerfoundation.org
(206) 999-8740



Felicia Luna Lemus is the author of the novels *Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003; Seal Press, 2004) and *Like Son* (Akashic Books, 2007). She lives in Los Angeles.

An excerpt from CHAPTER ONE of *Like Son*, a novel by Felicia Luna Lemus, published by Akashic. Reprinted by permission of the author.

<http://www.akashicbooks.com/catalog/like-son>

Forty minutes of cross-town side roads hell later, I pulled my car up to the hospital's main entrance red zone. A man sat on the concrete slab bench near the entrance's automatic sliding glass doors. My father. I hadn't seen him since I was eight, but I would have known him anywhere.

In fact, my father and I looked exactly alike. Rather, we shared nearly identical features. But whereas I was dressed in post-teen skater slop, he was dressed to the nines. Fedora cocked on his pomade sleek head, his brown wool three piece suit slightly wrinkled from a night spent in the hospital, but no worse for the wear, he looked like a Hitchcock flick leading man. Polished wingtip shoes, pocket square, cashmere dress socks--this was the way he had dressed for as long as I could remember.

Case in point:

When I was in kindergarten, there'd been a big weekend carnival at school. It was the most awesome event of the year. There were tons of rides and booths. My favorite booth was the one where kids threw ping-pong balls into fishbowls,

and if a kid got enough balls in, the carnies would give them a little plastic bag filled with water and a goldfish. I didn't win a goldfish, but I did get the consolation prize--a fish-shaped cutout made of thin red plastic paper like a spotlight gel. You were supposed to hold the plastic-paper fish in the palm of your hand and depending on how its tail and head curled, it predicted your fortune. There were instructions on decoding the curls printed on the little white and red envelope the fish came in. My fish's sides kept curling up. I don't remember what that meant. Really, the curling was just a matter of body heat affecting the onion-skin-thin plastic, but to me it was pure magic.

Anyway, the carnival had been on one of my dad's weekends. And that event marked the first time I realized my dad was unlike everyone else's dads. All the other fathers were dressed in totally casual outfits--jeans and trainers, some with turtlenecks and denim jackets, others with v-neck sweaters over tee-shirts. Almost all of them had shaggy hair and sideburns. They simply looked cool. When we got home from the

carnival, I asked my dad why he didn't wear comfortable clothes like theirs, why he went to the barber shop every week and shaved twice a day.

"Don't ever let anyone call you a lazy wetback," he said.

I had no idea how that was an answer to my question. I tried asking my magic fish, but, upon closer inspection, its envelope claimed it could only tell me if I was in love, lucky, or tired.

Fifteen years later, I'd be dealt enough jabs--including one incident in junior high when a group of kids threw handfuls of pennies at me, called me a beaner queer whore, and were only reprimanded by the lunch supervisor to *Sit down and eat*--that I'd come to understand my father's reasons for wanting to present a polished front. His attire and grooming was passive resistance of a most dignified form.

And so, there he sat, on the hospital concrete bench, his manicured hands primly folded on his knees, back straight, clean-shaven face tilting side to side slightly as he listened to the sounds around him. As I approached, his body turned static. I stood directly in front of him. And still he didn't stand. He only adjusted his glasses--as if there was a chance in hell that might help him recognize me any better.

His glasses: Opaque dark brown lenses framed by bulky rectangular solid side panels, an expensive version of the throwaway pairs ophthalmologists give patients after dilation, a more serious version of those many an old man put over the top of regular glasses to filter out all the sun's light--my father was wearing what as a kid I'd so bluntly referred to as his blind man glasses.

"Dad?"

"Francisca, baby girl."

I cringed. But didn't say anything.

He rose to greet me, facing slightly right of where I stood.

"Ready to go?" he asked, as if *he* had come to pick me up.

I put my hand on his left elbow and, after a briefly awkward moment, led him to the car. He'd always said wouldn't ever learn Braille or use a walking stick. It seemed his stubborn pride hadn't subsided one bit in the years since we'd seen each other last.

"Where should we eat?" he asked, as if this was a casual little lunch date we had every week.

"Wherever."

"Canter's?"

"Sure."

I drove east on Sunset and then Santa Monica Boulevard. We'd made it all the way to midtown and were heading south on Fairfax before I got up the nerve to ask what was going on.

"Let's talk while we eat," he said.

Fine. A supposedly dying man should be granted such requests, right?

We arrived at Canter's. I parked in the side parking lot, took a ticket from the attendant, and led my father into the restaurant. Canter's comforting stink of sugar cookies, pastrami, and pickle juice greeted us. So did one of the more craggily of its many venom-spitting charm-haggard waitresses. My father and I sat at a table for two in the main dining room, under the stained glass false ceiling that gave the illusion of a canopy of giant autumnal trees. Why the New England forest motif in a Los Angeles Jewish deli? Don't know, but the resulting effect was simultaneously unsettling and perfect.

The second we sat down I did what I always did when I got to Canter's. I picked up the telephone. Like every other booth, ours came outfitted with an old-fashioned black telephone mounted on the mottled glass that divided the booth into its own little cubicle. You could make local calls for free from your table. I wasn't actually going call anyone, but the gimmick was too good to not be acknowledged each visit. So I picked up the phone. But there was no dial tone. I clicked the receiver hook. Nothing. The line was dead. My dad must have heard me futzing with the phone. He said:

"Your mother didn't say much when I called to get your number. How is she?"

"Don't know, really."

"That bad?"

"Yeah."

I couldn't see behind his glasses, but I was pretty certain two heavy-lidded eyes precisely the same shape as mine went sad in response. My father took off his fedora and placed it on the table next to the napkin dispenser. With hands as

big and boney and slightly freckled as mine, he smoothed his hair into place and sighed.

It was such an uncanny thing to sit across from a person I resembled so exactly, but with whom I'd spent so little of my life. That said, I knew it hadn't been my father's fault we were near strangers. The custody battles that ensued after my mother left him had been extremely messy, to say the least. By the time I was eight, my mother had done all she could--and she did a lot--to end my relationship with my dad. Still, there was no doubt about it, I was his kid.

"Son," our waitress interrupted our silence, "you ready to order?"

Not that my father could see it, but his little girl had become a young man. Starting in junior high, I'd wound Ace bandages tight around my chest to flatten what had remained, thankfully, negligible breasts. Hoping for the healing benefits of a cold compress, I'd initially stored the bandages in the freezer overnight. Over time, I'd acquired less chilling and more sophisticated means for smoothing things out. And by the time I sat across from my dad at Canter's, I'd mastered counterbalancing all physical evidence of ever having been born a girl.

The careful staging our waitress unknowingly tested with her impatient stare: a baggy long-sleeved black tee-shirt over a tight Hanes undershirt over a wife-beater over an extra small binder; boxer shorts peeking out from under low-slung oversized black Dickies cinched with an Army surplus canvas belt; a bulky dark gray hoody sweatshirt, hood off. I pulled the visor of my baseball cap further down over my face, shuffled my skater-sneaker clumsy feet, and cleared my throat to deepen my voice for a response.

"Son?" she repeated.

"I'll just have a coffee," my father answered before I could, oblivious to the way I appeared to the world, flattered by what he'd taken to be a waitress's flirtation directed at him. He was totally clueless. But still, I'd passed in front of my father. I ordered a celery soda to mark the occasion. What other options were there? Sweet fizz celebration was the best I could do.

[END EXCERPT]



www.shareourtomorrow.org Courtesy of Quist the free LGBTQ history app. www.quistapp.org

From the editor's desk

What's a person to do?

How does one decide where to spend or not spend one's money? Some of you may use HRC's Corporate Equality Index as a guide. That Index seems to be what Linda Harvey, one of the Raging Queens of Homophobes, used when advising her readers where and where not to shop.

On her November 24, 2015. blog posting, *Mission: America*, Harvey states that, based on the Index, there are fewer and fewer places where she and her family-value Christians can shop anymore without aiding and abetting the evil homosexuals. Why "even Wal-Mart has gone over to the dark side," she laments.

Eventually she recommends that her readers patronize those companies with very low scores on the Index since they are less supportive of gay rights. She remains puzzled, however, by the fact that some companies with a 100% rating on the HRC Index, e.g., J.C. Penney, Macy's, Target, are also in the top Nice bracket on the American Family Association's Naughty or Nice List. What is a person to do to reconcile the seeming disparity?

Of course, Harvey seems unaware that the lists have very different rating criteria. The American Family Association's Naughty or Nice List rates retailers on the basis of how well they use Christmas in their advertising (including in-store decorations). HRC's Corporate Equality Index, on the other hand, rates corporations on their work environment—which has led to severe criticism by several queer activists. See, <http://www.queerty.com/target-best-buy-prove-hrcs-corporate-scoring-is-wholly-flawed-is-it-also-meaningless-20100730>, as well as http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jordan-krueger/gay-list-of-the-best-plac_b_6358042.html

Corporations, of course, are in business to make a profit, and it's not unusual to find many that contribute campaign funds to politicians on both sides of the aisle. It's called hedging your bets, so few corporations are "white as the driven snow" when it comes to supporting LGBTQ rights.

Logo and Witech Communications recently produced a new study, "Top 25 Trail Blazing Companies of 2015," that supposedly more closely scrutinizes LGBTQ corporate support. See, <http://gibt411.com/?p=14862>. I'll leave it to others to decide if it will be a better rating system than HRC's.



Courtesy of Quist, the free LGBTQ history app.
www.quistapp.org

Personally, I find advertising to be about the most valid criterion to determine whether or not a business establishment supports us or not. Whether or not the company or any of its top employees donates funds to politicians or organizations that oppose us is immaterial. The company's public face is out there. "Queers are here, get used to it." Furthermore, no sane corporate management would appeal to queers without extensive market analyses that strongly suggest that the ads not only will appeal to us but also not turn existing clients away. And the Christianists know this, and that's what riles them. Every new queer corporate ad is proof that the Christianist base is shrinking.

For some time now, for example, Allstate Insurance has been using a series of public pictorial

ads, e.g., on buses, bus shelters, kiosks, and the like, showing young gay, lesbian, and transgender couples holding hands and tying their insurance to the issue of security. These ads definitely are meant to appeal to members of the millennial generation that are far more socially liberal than all previous generations, and who may be shopping for insurance for the first time. There's a subtle underlying message as well. If Allstate is concerned that young LGBTQ individuals are secure in their lives, then the company is surely similarly concerned for everyone's security.

Just before this past Christmas, Allstate released a TV ad that portrayed a middle-aged, married couple with two small children.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXDWqQNg4nw> Notwithstanding the negative posts following the ad, Allstate has used the same approach used by LGBTQ organizations in four states in 2014 to pass pro-gay marriage laws or rescind previously passed anti-gay marriage laws: show queer people in ordinary family situations, surrounded by the loving approval of family and friends. It helps win over the fence sitters.

It's the same technique Famous Footwear used last September and October. The October TV ad shows a young lesbian couple who've made certain that their two children are wearing warm and comfortable boots when they go outside to play in the snow. It's only a 15-second spot so some people may miss the fact that the two successful young women enjoying a cup of cocoa in preparation for Christmas are a couple.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czu-vgIREt4&index=2&list=PLXjfESSIOAQ6gImicOugrhcY7VTcteUs3>

There is no confusion with an ad Famous Footwear released on September 8, 2015. We've two gay dads, one of whom confiscates everyone's cell phone and their daughter's tablet before they start eating. Talk about promoting family values! See

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YCdHrfMnSU>.

That leads me to share a personal story about my family's values. Meals are for communication between family members and guests if any are present. Telephones, tablets, and the like have no place at the table.

I was ten (1948) when my parents could finally afford to install a telephone. Back then they

had to pay to install a line for about 3/4ths of a mile. The phone itself was a large wall-phone made out of beautiful oak wood, with a large mouth-piece and a hand crank used to ring the operator. Since we were 3 1/2 miles from the nearest town, our party line had over 35 customers on it and each had their own distinctive ring (which everyone heard). Ours was one long ring followed by three short rings.

Since lunch was the principal meal on the ranch and could last from one to two hours, not a meal passed without the phone ringing numerous times. At first, we all stopped to see if it was our ring. Never, however, did any of us ever answer the phone during lunch or supper even if it was for us.

It was more difficult continuing the tradition in my own family, especially when my two daughters reached their teens. "But, dad, what if it's important?" "If it's important, they'll call back; besides none of us have life-saving skills." It would take dense father time to understand why not allowing them to answer the phone during lunch or supper was a source of friction between us. Little did I know about the possibility that Mr. Right had finally gotten the nerve to call them for a date, and he might be such a woos as to never call back!



Courtesy of Quist, the free LGBTQ app.

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Still, it's encouraging to know that the rule applies in their homes. Cell phones and tablets don't come to the table, and that includes guests, and anyone who has to answer a call knows not only to leave the table, but the room.

The Spawn of HERO

Nationally there are now 59 anti-gay measures festering in state legislatures or other public bodies. Of those, HRC considers that 27 are the direct response of the overwhelming defeat of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) last November.

Virtually every LGBTQ organization and most bloggers who weighed in on the subject spoke of the defeat of HERO with gloom and doom. We were in grave danger of having the clock turned back more than half a century. The defeat of HERO even became a fund-raising gimmick for some LGBTQ organizations. Wait a minute! On the same day that HERO was defeated, voters in Salt Lake City elected Jackie Biskupski, a lesbian, as their mayor. Salt Lake City!!!

Of course, Christianists are pushing back. We should expect them to. At least three mega-church pastors have called for the execution of all queers, and three GOP presidential candidates attended the National Religious Liberties Conference in Iowa. Huckabee and Jindahl claimed they didn't know its organizer was a "Kill the gays" advocate; Cruz accepted the man's endorsement. U.S. Representative Louie Gohmert from Texas wants the government to round us all up and ship us off to an imaginary island. No, we cannot ignore any of these extremists, more so now that both Donald Trump and Ted Cruz are appealing to the basest of instincts of reactionaries.

But what really happened in Houston? The more I read, the more I come to believe that Annise Parker and her advisors were asleep at Mission Controls. Yes, Houston voters elected and twice re-elected Ms. Parker, a lesbian, as mayor. But Houston (quite unlike Dallas) is not a liberal city. Voters are split almost evenly between Republicans and Democrats. In a run-off election in December, the new mayor, Sylvester Turner, a Democrat, beat his Republican opponent by less than 4,000 votes.

As it turned out, Annise Parker and her advisors counted on the Texas courts to let the city

put HERO on the November 2016 ballot when more Democrats would vote. They won a decision in a lower court, but that decision was over-turned by the Texas Supreme Court. Why was that a surprise? Alas, Ms. Parker and the LGBTQ organizations in Houston had no back-up plan. The lack of a back-up plan, not that Christianists spread lies about transgender people and bathrooms, is what defeated HERO. The city's records show only about a third of registered voters actually went to the polls, and Ms. Parker herself lamented that the average voter was 65 years old. That's not the fault of the Texas Supreme Court.

It was 2015, not 1990. We've learned a great deal since the Christianist push-back was first launched in Oregon in 1988. We've learned we can't assume anything. The Christianists apparently had several thousand people knocking on doors in Houston, making sure their people voted. Hubris, thinking your city is liberal because it has elected and re-elected a lesbian as mayor. Emboldened by the defeat of HERO, yes, the Christianists will try again in as many cities and state legislatures as they can. Dallas, where a majority of voters are Democrats, and which has had a non-discrimination ordinance including sexual orientation and gender identity since 2002, and which strengthened the language of that ordinance last year, may now have to spend time and money fighting the fight all over again.

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TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT
OF OUR MOVEMENT

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This and That

- *Viva* (2015), the Spanish-language Irish film directed by Paddy Breathnach, takes viewers into the heart of Havana and the world of drag queens, and one young man in particular. It was Ireland's entry for Best Foreign Language Feature Film, and although it wasn't among the five nominees, it has already acquired a number of film festival awards. You can watch the trailer, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S097UTL057I>

- **The 519** is a Canadian non-profit that welcomes LGBTQ newcomers and refugees and helps them get settled. I don't know if we have anything comparable in the USA. See, <http://the519.tumblr.com>

- Scott Calonico's short documentary, *When AIDS Was Funny* (2015), is another scathing indictment of the Reagan administration's treatment of gays and the AIDS crisis. You can watch the entire short film here: <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/11/reagan-administration-response-to-aids-crisis> Be forewarned: it is not easy to watch and it will likely increase your blood pressure.

- **Pinkwashing.** Several of our Queer Scholars are involved with campus organizations criticizing the Israeli government for using its better treatment of gays than Muslims as propaganda in its ongoing conflict, specifically with Palestinians. This article briefly outlines the objections of many young American queers to pinkwashing and homonationalism. <http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/211808/6-reasons-pinkwashing-israel-on-gay-rights-is-so-w>

In fact, several of the GOP presidential candidates have engaged in their own form of pinkwashing homonationalism, e.g., *If you don't like how you're treated here, move to Saudi Arabia or Iran and see how they treat homosexuals.* One of those candidates has also stated that "homosexuals and atheists will have no place in my America." He has also never repudiated the endorsement of a certain preacher who wants the federal government to "kill the gays."

- *Beware the Lesbian (Parody)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAYtlhNvcc4>. It's been too many years, but I'm guessing this is a parody of Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*.

- *I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus* Danielle LoPresti, her spouse, and their child star in this new rendition of an old favorite. Add it to your playlist for next Christmas.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pasgHh4gBOI>

- **January 16**, proclaimed Religious Freedom Day by Congress in 1992, is a day Christianists don't want us to know about because it honors a 1786 Virginia proclamation that makes it very clear that the Founders did not intend the U.S.A. to be a nation based on any specific religion or religious beliefs.

<https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2014/12/27/1354381/-The-Christian-Right-Does-Not-Want-You-To-Know-About-This-Day?detail=emailclassic>

- David Bowie certainly deserves all the accolades he has been receiving in the queer media. But we also lost Jeanne Cordova, "Butch Chicana Lesbian Feminist Outlaw" on January 10, 2016.

<http://www.advocate.com/.../jeanne-cordova-remembered-butch-c...> Cordova's activism forms part of a long history of lesbian activism that some have traced back to Mexico in the 17th c., e.g., Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, but is certainly firmly rooted in Mexico and the American Southwest for over a half-century. Her memoir, *When We Were Outlaws: A Memoir of Love and Revolution* (2011) joins the list of significant queer literature.

Best wishes for the New Year to all our readers, and special thanks to the volunteers who serve as jurors for the English Essay Contest for High School Seniors and the Publication Awards, and especially to the increasing number of donors who make QF scholarships possible. Indeed, if you find yourself with an extra \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50 or more, please consider a donation to the QF. 100% of our donations go toward scholarships. See www.queerfoundation.org

Ray Verzasconi, Ph.D.
Editor



2016 Queer Foundation Publication Awards For Former English Essay Contest Participants

For the sixth year the Queer Foundation offers eligible college students an opportunity to compete for an unlimited number of Publication Awards. In addition, up to four Publication Award recipients will receive a scholarship of either \$1,000.00 or \$500.00.

All QF Publication Award recipients will be designated as Queer Foundation Scholars with all rights and privileges bestowed upon QF Scholars, including (1) the right to submit original pieces of creative writing (poetry, short stories, mini-dramas, or essays) in future years for possible publication in *The Queer Foundation Scholar*, and (2) upon request, the services of a mentor during the Scholar's academic career.

To be eligible for a 2016 Publication Award with stipend, a student must:

1. have submitted an essay to the QF's High School English Essay Contest in any year prior to academic year 2015-2016..
2. be enrolled in an accredited American college or university during at least one Quarter or Semester Term, at either the undergraduate, post-graduate or graduate level, between Fall 2016 and Summer 2017.
3. submit a manuscript or manuscripts as described below to the editor of *The Queer Foundation Scholar* by **July 1, 2016**.

N.B. Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements above may still qualify to receive a Publication Award without stipend. Please see page 3 below.

Manuscripts.

1. Students may submit up to three **original** pieces for evaluation and possible publication. **However, a student may not be considered for more than one Publication Award Scholarship in the 2016-17 academic year.**
2. Submission(s) must be unpublished material to which the QF has first refusal rights. [See Question 2 under Q&A on the next page.]
3. Submission(s) may include poetry, short stories, mini-dramas, or literary essays (including op ed articles relating to queer topics), autobiographical pieces dealing with life as a queer student, or a summary of your own **original** research relating to queer themes. It may also be your description of an artistic work you have produced, directed, or painted. We discourage submission of college "term" papers whose purpose is to teach students about the scientific method rather than letting them develop their creative talents.
4. Each submission should generally not exceed 1500 words, although slightly longer submissions will be considered. Shorter submissions are always welcome.

Selection of Publication Award and Scholarship Recipients.

Based on criteria established by the editor, a panel of five or more writers and scholars qualified to judge creative writing shall determine those students who will receive Publication Awards and which will also receive a scholarship stipend. All evaluations are conducted by a blind review, meaning your name, address, name of college/university or any other data that can be used to identify you, where you live or your college/university will be removed before your piece is seen by the jurors.

Publication.

1. The award-winning literary pieces will be published in a 2016-17 issue of *The Queer Foundation Scholar*, the issue to be determined at the discretion of the editor.
2. The editor, working with the authors of the manuscripts selected for publication, may recommend changes. However, except for typographical errors, any changes will be at the discretion of the authors.

Submission.

1. Submit your manuscript(s) using either MS Word or Wordperfect as an email attachment to rverzasconi@msn.com. Please put "QF Scholar" on the email subject line.
2. In the main email, please provide:
 - your name
 - your current email address
 - your current college/university USPS mailing address
 - the college/university in which you will be enrolled in during 2016-17. If you will not be enrolled for the entire academic year, please provide a brief explanation. For example, you will actually graduate in June 2016, but you will need to return during Fall semester to complete licensure requirements; or you graduated two years ago, but you will enroll in a master's program during Summer Session 2017.
 - a brief biographical sketch (50-125 words) that the editor can publish if you receive a Publications Award.
3. Submissions are acknowledged asap. However, if you have not heard from the editor within a week of submission, please contact him again at rverzasconi@msn.com.

Q&A

1. **I participated in the Contest for High School Seniors, but I wasn't a QF scholarship recipient. May I resubmit the essay I previously submitted.** Not unless you revise it substantially. You've been in college one or more years since you submitted that essay, and your writing and critical thinking skills have improved. We do maintain all the original essays on file, so if you do revise your original submission, please be serious.

2. **What do you mean by first refusal rights?** It means your entry has not been previously published with a copyright and is not currently submitted for consideration for publication in copyrighted form elsewhere. However, if the submission has appeared in a publication without a copyright, e.g., maybe a school or class project, it is still eligible. Incidentally, *The Queer Foundation Scholar* is currently not copyrighted, so even if your submission is accepted for publication, you may submit it for consideration for publication elsewhere after it appears in our publication as long as you credit the QF. Several of QF's award-winning submissions have recently been republished in *Chelsea Station* or by Red Dirt Publishing.
3. **I have a literary piece with some very strong language. Would there be a problem?** Not likely unless your intent is solely to titillate. Profanity, vulgarity, and sex have all been part of great literature for over 3,000 years. If the editor has qualms, he'll contact you.
4. **What is the difference between an essay dealing with original research and a term paper?** A few QF Scholars are engaged in "cutting edge" research and may have their research, often co-authored, published in juried professional journals sometimes as undergraduates, sometimes as graduate students. When that research relates to queer issues, QF would certainly like to hear about it if it does not violate the terms of a research grant and the like. In most undergraduate disciplines, however, the "term paper" is designed not to have students present evidence of original research, but to teach them about interpreting the research of others and how to credit them for their work, e.g., how not to plagiarize. Unless you really are engaged in original research, most likely with a professor and other students, opt for the op-ed piece. Essays regurgitating the research of others, replete with your footnotes, are not what we want.
5. **How many Publication Award scholarships may I receive?** No one may receive more than one such scholarship in any academic year, but there is no limit on the number of scholarships you may receive—as long as you owe tuition at an accredited U.S. college or university. I would emphasize that scholarships may only be paid to your account at your institution's financial aid office. Scholarship funds cannot be paid to you directly or to another third party.

If you have further questions, please contact the editor:

Ray Verzasconi
rverzasconi@msn.com

- **Publication Awards for College/University Students Who Didn't Participate in the QF English Essay Contest**

Follow the paragraphs above regarding "Manuscripts" and "Submission." If you are the recipient of a QF Publication Award, your submission will be published in *The Queer Foundation Scholar*. You will also be able to request a mentor, and to submit creative writing pieces in the future.

Questions to rverzasconi@msn.com