



The Queer Foundation Scholar

Publication of The Queer Foundation, Seattle, Washington
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July 2011

Meet the 2011 Queer Foundation Scholars

Sarah Derheim. Huntington Beach, California

Ms. Derheim graduated from Sage Hill School in Newport Beach, CA, where she achieved high honors. During her four years at Sage Hill, she tutored math and English to 3rd to 6th graders in the community and, among other things, made a documentary film designed to raise awareness of Cerebral Palsy and to help the local United Cerebral Palsy nonprofit raise funds.

In her sophomore year Ms. Derheim was selected to be one of Sage Hill's peer counselors. Her work in that capacity, requiring many hours of volunteer time, was highly praised by both the program's founder and by her faculty advisor. As a peer counselor she often helped students find resolution to conflict, worked to resolve personal crises, and served as a positive role model without ever seeking any personal reward or recognition.

After the passage of California's Measure 8, she co-founded a chapter of the National Marriage Boycott at Sage Hill, and with her co-founder convinced over a hundred friends and teachers to purchase equality rings – essentially pledging not to marry until it is legal for everyone.

Ms. Derheim will attend the University of Michigan where she hopes to earn a B.A. in psychology. Subsequently she plans to earn a degree in architecture and eventually to own her own architectural firm that will focus on designing structures that are both psychologically and environmentally beneficial.

Ms. Derheim is also among an increasing number of young queers who refuse to be pigeonholed in terms of her sexuality.

Anthony Gomez. Chula Vista, California.

Mr. Gomez graduated from Eastlake High School in Chula Vista, CA. He was designated an AP Scholar with Honor and Distinction, was a QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship finalist, was elected Senior Class Treasurer, and lettered in Varsity Cross Country.

For his volunteer and organizational skills for Rotary International in San Diego County, especially for informing his community of Rotary International's efforts to eradicate polio in Nigeria and India, and for organizing a book drive, he received a Rotary Youth Leadership Award. He also provided volunteer service as an English tutor at Eastlake Elementary, and with the San Diego Zoo.

Three faculty and staff members at Eastlake High describe Anthony as a survivor, a young man who has learned to turn adversity to advantage. The Dean of Students stated that "Tony is the level-headed voice of reason" on the student council, "one who has everyone's respect." A very modest individual, he never mentioned in our interview that he had been elected Senior Prom King, while attending the prom with his boyfriend. That information came to me from his science teacher.

Mr. Gomez will attend Pomona College with plans to earn degrees in zoology and environmental science. His goal is to go on to earn a Ph.D. and to do research and teach on species preservation.

Long term, Mr. Gomez hopes that the law will eventually allow him to marry, and that he and his partner will have children.

Abbey M. Muzatko. Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Ms. Muzatko attended Preble High School in Green Bay, WI. In addition to her high scholastic record (14th in a class of 547 students), she is an accomplished artist and musician (1st chair cellist in the high school orchestra).

Like her QF Scholar peers, Ms. Muzatko has a solid history of volunteer work in her community, including with a local GLBT Steering Team and Youth Leadership organization. Like her fellow Queer Scholars as well, she is dedicated to social justice for all minorities, not just LGBTQI individuals. All three of her references refer to her “courage, passion, and commitment” to social justice for anyone who “is powerless and without a voice.”

Ms. Muzatko considers herself primarily an artist and her work focuses on environmental issues. After earning a degree in art, she hopes to open her own studio which she intends to operate as a safe haven for queer artists.

She will attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The award-winning essays of our 2011 QF Scholars can now be found at <http://queerfoundation.org>.

I wish to offer all three my very best wishes for success in their careers and in their personal lives.

They are among a growing number of Queer Scholars who have the potential to help make real equality for queer people a reality.

Odds and Ends

<http://blog.seattlepi.com/davidhorsey/2011/05/22/living-with-that-old-time-religion-all-of-it/abomination-5-23-11-color/>

David Horsey, Pulitzer Prize winning political cartoonist at the *Seattle P-I* produced this take on “Old Time Religion” on May 23, 2011. You can find many of Horsey’s cartoons online; just google his name. [N.B.: If the link doesn’t work, your ISP has probably blocked it. Try page 3 or 4 of “David Horsey’s Cartoons and Commentaries,” or if you get the entire page, scroll to the bottom.]

<http://famousgayshirt.com/> An intellectual “What a Difference a Gay Makes” poster. Unfortunately, in any such attempt, too many people must inevitably be left off – still I like the last person on the list, even if that may sound a bit vain. Oh, QF receives no

financial support from the company selling the t-shirts advertised on this website.

Although I am not a sports fanatic (fan), I’ve always admired sportswriter Dave Zirin’s sports articles in *The Progressive* because he delves beyond scores and salaries to focus on cultural issues, including ethics. His recent “Homophobia’s Last Hamlet,” *The Progressive* (July 2011), p. 42, is a very good read, and should offer encouragement to young gay athletes.

Zirin mentions that the San Francisco Giants became the first major professional team to produce a “Things Get Better” YouTube video for the Trevor Project recently. Since Zirin wrote his article, the Boston Red Sox have also produced a “Things Get Better” video.

I read something particularly significant in the fact that two professional baseball teams have been the first among professional teams to make a statement in support of troubled gay youth. For years professional sportswriters and players insisted that gays would not play baseball. After all, if their teammates found out, they would be placing their very lives in danger because a baseball could castrate or kill; in other words, that baseball players were the most homophobic of all sportsmen. Apparently some are definitely not.

Of course, an increasing number of professional athletes have been making public statements in favor of same-sex marriage and equality for queer people, and not a few have criticized athletes who can’t rid themselves of learned homophobia.

Queer activist groups tend to take credit for the change in opinion regarding same-sex marriage, but of course we are also dealing with changing demographics and, in that change, teachers have also

played a role. It's just one more reason the homophobes want to destroy public schools. Most public school teachers are liberals or progressives; even many of those who are Republicans tend to be liberal or at least moderate in their social views.

A majority of likely American voters 55 and older still oppose same-sex marriage; while those between 18 and 35 support it. And not really surprising, a majority of even those who say they approve of gay marriage still think homosexuality is immoral. Both sides know that; they also know that for now, those 55 and older are far more likely to vote than those 18 to 35.

Few people realize that there is a cultural difference between marriage and matrimony. How you ever heard of holy marriage? The Catholic Church, for example, joins a man and a woman in holy matrimony and any religious body may do the same – regardless of what it calls the rite that joins a man and a woman in wedlock. Marriage is not and has never been a religious institution. If a man and woman joined in holy matrimony want the benefits of marriage, they have to obtain a marriage license from the state, and the priest admits his debt to the state, “With the authority vested in me by the State of _____, I pronounce you man and wife.” Likewise, only the State can dissolve a marriage. Since the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize divorce, only a couple who obtains an annulment from the Church can continue to receive Catholic sacraments, including matrimony. The idea that churches will be forced to marry gay couples is just so much horseradish.

That New York now recognizes same-sex marriage is a reason for us to celebrate, but I don't consider that the real news. What is: the number of undocumented immigrants who have come out since – not as queers (they already were out), but out of the illegal immigrant closet. José Antonio Vargas' autobiographical articles, which received national media attention, were among the most inspiring I've read in a long time. People facing great internal conflict do have the power to make great and powerful statements.

Dig into family albums dating back to the late 19th c. when the Kodak box camera became available and you'll likely find one of little Johnny kissing little Annie. In fewer, though still many, you'll likely find one of of little Mary kissing little Susie. No big deal, right? After all, pre-pubescent children are sexless, right? At least, so Freud and other early sexologists believed. But you'll rarely find a photo of little Johnny kissing little Billy!

So what happened in sexually liberated Brazil when the Ministry of Education developed a “kit contra homofobia” (anti-homophobia kit) which it intended to distribute to over 6,000 of the nation's schools and which was to include this photo:



The Brazilian blogosphere is still humming with comments pro and con. This in a society in which adult men often kiss their male friends on the cheeks when they meet. Little boys are apt to imitate their male role models; here, perhaps with a bit more gusto. But what is offensive here? The photo or the caption? The caption, in translation, “No one is born a homophobe. Homophobia is learned. Not sexuality.” does not in itself imply that one is born homosexual. Two little boys kissing. How sweet. As sweet as a little boy and a little girl kissing. Except many generally tolerant Brazilians see the photograph and the caption together as an attempt to turn young boys into gays. It's all about recruitment, not tolerance!!!

Sadly, even activist groups in Brazil seem to expend their energy trying to debunk that notion. As long as we try to define why we are queer, we let the homophobes establish the agenda. The ACT UP slogan was on the mark: “I'm here, I'm queer; get used to it.” No need to explain why I'm queer to anyone, not even to myself. Do heterosexuals ever ponder why they are straight?

I've yet to find out if the Ministry of Education went ahead and included the photo in its “anti-homophobia kit.”

In case you missed this “first”:

http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/43230133/ns/today-today_people/t/transgender-student-makes-history-prom-night/?gt1=43001

The text that accompanied this video is, unfortunately, no longer available.

For those of you who, like me, missed this year's Tony Awards:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6S5caRGpK4>

Ah, yes, Doogie Hauser looks better and better with each passing year, and he really can sing and dance. Of course, I suspect that Neil Patrick Harris is more than a teen idol.

A queer news blog

<http://boyboxrebellion.blogspot.com/>. Not quite as much to my liking as the now defunct Queerty, whose blogger covered queer news from the entire world, who was never quite as repetitive as the BoyBoxRebellion's blogger is. The BoyBoxRebellion blogger also often expresses opinions which he says are based on "facts," but those "facts" are sometimes not facts at all. Still, I find this a better queer blog than the more glossy "gay media" blogs that are heavy on glamor, celebrity and facile "how to" solutions to complex personal issues facing queer individuals.

Franswa Shari! This 14-minute gay film from Australia has been receiving rave reviews from people who've seen it at film festivals in Europe, North America, and Australia. Alas, it's not yet available on the net. At least I can't find more than a trailer.

New Scholarships

Thanks to the generosity of Paul Koenigsberg of New York City, this year we are offering a new \$500.00 scholarship to anyone who has participated in the QF English Essay Contest in the past and is still enrolled at the post-secondary level for a submission sent to the editor by August 15 and is selected for publication in a future issue of *The Queer Foundation Scholar*. I am matching Koenigsberg's donation by offering two \$250.00 scholarships for the same reason. Hopefully, I'll receive enough worthwhile submissions so that I can turn *The QF Scholar* into a quarterly, primarily dependent on student submissions.

Please help spread the word about our Queer Scholars. Share this newsletter with friends.

Ray Verzasconi, editor

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Note from the QF's Executive Director, Joseph Dial

Since its founding in 2004, the Queer Foundation's Effective Writing and Scholarships Program has provided scholarships for high school seniors whose writing demonstrates especially effectively the basic tenets of the QF: Queer Scholars are out, proud, and activist, have a social conscience, will fight discrimination against queers, are committed to social change, believe in organization, and are of good will.

This year, through its Scholarships Program for Former Applicants, the QF offers a new way for donors and potential donors to provide incentives for young queer writers to continue their writing during their college/university years.

These new scholarships will enable queer college students, through their writing, to have a positive effect on their campuses and beyond.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the Queer Foundation's Effective Writing and Scholarships Program. You may specify that your donation benefit either high school seniors for use during their first year in college or former scholarship applicants now in their second or later year of college/university. To donate, go to:

www.queerfoundation.org

Click on "Enter site," click on "Contribute," and then click on the "Donate Now" logo (as seen below).

Donations help promote the best and brightest young queer writers of today.

