



The Queer Foundation Scholar

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Meet the 2012 Queer Foundation Scholars

Sophia Deady. Minneapolis MN

“A Woman Like Me: Pink Ink and My Coming Out Story” was Ms. Deady’s award winning essay. Her coming-out story was in some ways typical of many coming-out stories: the sense of relief that followed, the lifting of feelings of guilt and shame. Ms. Deady attributes her decision to stop lying, first and foremost to herself, to a book she came upon in her school library, a book that changed her life for the positive: a book with a lavender spine in a totally disorganized school library.

Like all QF Scholars, Ms. Deady has solid academic credentials. She is also a very accomplished violinist. Her teachers describe her as humorous and compassionate.

Helping to shatter another stereotype, she admits she doesn’t like sports.

In high school, she was very active in the GSA, the school’s Speech & Debate Team, and she also kept busy tutoring 5th grade students.

She spent the summer of 2011 volunteering for the Worldwide Orphanage Relief Organization in Ghana, an experience that apparently will shape her future, as she hopes to earn an M.D. and to work with an organization such as Doctors Without Borders.

Ms. Deady will continue her academic studies at Smith College.

Alan Quinn. Annandale VA

Mr. Quinn begins his award-winning essay, “What I Know Now,” in the form of a very appealing short story, describing an episode that many young queers have faced or feared: that of a bully on the verge of beating him bloody. Although saved by an older student, it was the humiliation that convinced him to stop pretending that he wasn’t what everyone knew he was: a flaming young gay man—one who had been repeatedly picked on and relatively lonely until he decided to stop pretending.

It is not surprising that his teachers describe him as an extraordinary young man, “not because he is openly gay in a conservative school, but because he is always authentic to himself.”

Mr. Quinn’s story, however, is anything but lachrymose nor does he dwell on the negative aspects of his life in Annandale. He devotes his free time to volunteer work. He loves mentoring 2nd graders in a nearby elementary school, especially since they haven’t formed prejudices about queers yet. He also uses aquatics to volunteer his time with individuals with both mental and physical disabilities. His greatest reward, however, has come from volunteering with a Northern Virginia AIDS project. It is there, he says, that he formed his first real friendships.

Inspired in part by Ophra Winfrey, Mr. Quinn major in communications and journalism at NYU.

Skailer Qvistgaard. Fairfield CA

Mr. Qvistgaard's award-winning essay, "Now I Am Skailer," describes his journey as a FTM transgender who was once Hannah and now wishes to be called Skailer or, more affectionately, Skai.

Mr. Qvistgaard apparently revealed that he was transgender in his AP English class. His AP English teacher writes that although she still has difficulty using pronouns to describe Skailer, he was so persuasive in asking for tolerance that she and all the students responded positively.

His honesty and integrity were such that he was nominated for Senior Student of the Year in one of California's largest and most diverse high schools. He was likely the first transgender person most students had ever met.

At Rodriguez High School in Fairfield, Skailer played an active role in the GSA, the Literature Club, and the Classics Film Club. He has also studied Japanese language and culture in his free time, and will be spending three weeks in Japan this summer on the Sister City project.

Mr. Qvistgaard also participated actively in the high school band for four years, and as a senior won statewide awards as a drum major.

Later this summer, Qvistgaard will be going east to Boston University where he will major in English and pre-law. His goal is to earn a J.D., and to work for a firm or organization fostering the rights of queers.

You can now read the award-winning essays of all three 2012 QF Scholars at www.queerfoundation.org.

From the Executive Director

At this time of year it is appropriate to acknowledge the contribution of the many members of the Gay Straight Educators' Alliance and the group of published LGBTQ authors who each year act as judges in The QF's annual essay contest. High school seniors participating in the contest have remarked on how satisfying it is to know that these individuals are reading their writings. Thank you to each of you. Without your generosity, the contest simply would not happen.

The QF depends entirely on voluntary contributions of time and money. There are no paid employees. All monies go either to The QF writers' colleges or universities in the form of scholarships or directly into the Scholarship Endowment Fund. Your donation, of whatever size, will help support this effort. You may earmark it for Publication Scholarships or for the general scholarship fund.

To donate, please go to www.GuideStar.org (search on "Queer Scholars"). Or write to me at the Queer Foundation, 3213 W. Wheeler St., #145, Seattle WA 98199. I look forward to hearing from you.

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2012: The Queer Spring

Will historians look back on this past spring and find it to be that point in time when the purveyors of fear and hate against sexual minorities began to lose relevance?

It's too early to celebrate, of course, especially since Mitt Romney has latched his political wagon to homophobes, racists, and xenophobes – or has done nothing to distance himself from them. But isn't the increasingly inflamed rhetoric of the most notorious homophobes proof that they realize that they are becoming irrelevant? Why scream unless your own people are slipping away? How else to maintain the media's attention?

The danger now is that given the mainstream media's practice of giving every kook equal billing based on some morally dubious desire to provide "balance" to stories, a few misguided individuals are going to act on the inflamed rhetoric that their leaders now throw around like confetti.

Sadly and tragically, all revolutions demand sacrificial victims. Sadly and tragically, most of our martyrs today are young, too, too young.

- If the fashion industry has long used homoerotic advertising, and Benetton brought such advertising out of high-end magazines in the

1980s, Abercrombie & Fitch represents the gold standard. It was no surprise, therefore, that A&F released this video in time for Gay Pride month.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5NRWM3FgqA> This spring, however, it was J.C. Penney, Target, Starbucks, and General Mills, among others, that brought us out of their closet, faced pickets and boycotts, and didn't blink. It's no longer just high-end fashion, alcohol, or automobiles but also corporations that appeal to Americans of more modest means that now are being inclusive.

- Several queer activists criticized President Obama for qualifying his support for marriage equality when he said it was a decision to be made at the state level. But Obama (a constitutional lawyer, remember) may have it right in more ways than one.

Sixty years after *Brown vs. Education*, too many of our schools are still separate and unequal. Fifty years after *Roe vs. Wade*, abortion remains perhaps our most divisive issue. The Warren Court also struck down the ban on the manufacture, transportation, and sale of contraceptives, but why was anyone surprised that contraception resurfaced as a campaign issue this year? The Civil Rights Act eliminated Jim Crow laws and they are back again, disguised as laws designed to eliminate non-existent voter fraud.

Americans are impatient. We want instant coffee and instant sex. In some ways our impatience is good. Time and again that impatience has helped the nation wipe away a patina of graft, corruption, and injustice. But history tells us that real change may take centuries. How long did mankind take to eliminate slavery, and has it been eliminated from anywhere on the planet when sex trafficking is common even in the U.S.? The feminist movement, the sexual revolution, the gay liberation movement, and the civil rights movement were already interwoven in 18th century Europe.

No one who has power (or thinks he does) will share rights and privileges (real or imaginary) willingly. The idea that Teddy Roosevelt and his cousin, FDR, supported social and economic justice for common Americans because of some deep-felt religious conviction, an oft-mentioned thesis, reveals the bias of northern liberals capitalists. Both Roosevelts moved left on social and economic issues

in order to prevent the U.S. from going the way of Europe, and in the final analysis, the super-wealthy never did give up their wealth or power, did they? The “Old Boys” have left a few more people into their club, including a few women, a few people of color, and a few queers, but it’s still their club.

Senator Goldwater was only partly wrong when he opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We really cannot legislate morality, nor can we expect the courts to do it. But that shouldn’t keep us from leveling the playing field so that men and women of good will have a chance to change minds at the grassroots level. At the national level, however, even constitutional amendments rarely change behavior or attitudes. Change is most likely to occur at the grassroots level, meaning at the state level, from the bottom up – not the top down. Even then morality isn’t changed in a decade or even two, but victories once won at the state ballot box two or three times are more likely to be etched into stone.

Oregon and Washington, which have two of the most lenient initiative laws in the nation (in terms of signatures needed to get measures on the ballot) have faced recurring anti-gay and anti-abortion ballot measures over the past 20 years. This year efforts by religious extremists to put anti-gay and anti-abortion measures on the Oregon ballot in November failed. Washington voters will face a measure to overturn the legislature-/governor- approved marriage equality law, but another measure to enshrine marriage as between one man and one woman in the state constitution failed to make the ballot. In California efforts by religious reactionaries to overturn California’s Fair Education Act (that requires school districts to develop a curriculum that is LGBT inclusive) have twice failed: both to get a referendum and then an initiative on this fall’s ballot. As several studies have concluded, many voters don’t really change their mind; they just get tired of having to keep voting on issues they thought were already settled.

Maybe that’s what is happening in Iowa. The state GOP candidates are all running on a platform to overturn the state’s marriage equality law, but several polls show a majority of Iowans just want to leave things as they are. This comes less than two years after Iowan voters punished those state Supreme Court judges who declared Iowa’s one man/one woman marriage law was unconstitutional. Several recent polls apparently

suggest that a mere 10% of Iowa’s Republicans consider repeal of marriage equality to be a priority.

But, back to Obama. By insisting that the issue was one for the states to decide, was he reminding the conservatives on the Supreme Court of their states rights convictions when they get around to ruling on the constitutionality of the DOMA? Even conservative George Will predicts the Court will declare the DOMA unconstitutional–this time with Justice Kennedy using his libertarian convictions that the federal government has no Constitutional authority to define marriage any more than the commerce clause could be used to justify the Affordable Health Care Act.

Which one of these three young men is gay? Can’t tell? Neither can anyone else.

● **“No man ever believes what the Bible says. He is always certain that it says what he means.”**
George Bernard Shaw.

- More significant than the support of marriage equality by the President, Vice President, and a number of Democrats in Congress was perhaps that of Board of Directors of the NAACP, La Raza, and The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).

The vote of the NAACP Board, although not unanimous, pits the most venerable civil rights organization in the U.S. against hundreds of Black ministers, many of whom are as virulently opposed to homosexuality as the white supremacists. Several polls taken after the NAACP vote suggest a significant shift in support for marriage equality among African Americans, with roughly 58% now supporting it, in comparison to only 53% of the total population. The vote of the Boards of La Raza and LULAC should also help convince more Latinos to support marriage equality.

Homophobia, of course, has to be taught, and the more the teaching involves repeated indoctrination at home and at church, the more difficult it is to “let go.” As Bertrand Russell argued, people who follow convention see any disagreement with their beliefs as an assault on their person, not on their beliefs. [As an aside, Russell’s comment confirms the belief that would-be tyrants can best be undermined by ridiculing their ideas, not by anger or rage, but also by never mentioning them by name. After all, they seek attention, and negative attention is better than no attention. It reaffirms their self-professed importance, even to their most slavish followers.]

The documentary *Jesus Camp* (2006) is instructive. When the children in the film reach adulthood, it will be nearly impossible for them to give up any of their religious beliefs. But a very few of them may be able to do so if encouraged and supported by other individuals and groups they admire and respect. If we need help to “come out,” religious zealots need help to “let go.” And here, our straight allies may be more important than we are.

A liberal arts education has been the key to the “freeing” of the mind since Socrates, which is why reactionaries hate it. They prefer to indoctrinate their children even if it keeps them ignorant. The Texas GOP does not want schools to teach critical thinking skills. Memorize, regurgitate, obey, and children are less likely to contradict their parents.

- Another documentary worth watching: *This Is What Love in Action Looks Like* (2011). If you were around in 2005, you may remember the gay teen in Memphis who put an SOS on his blog, telling the world that his parents were sending him off to a clinic to cure him of his homosexuality. It was the statement and the daily protests of his gay and straight friends outside the Love in Action clinic that led to a worldwide discussion of reparative therapy and its negative impact on patients. And in California, soon perhaps, to the criminalization of reparative reparative therapy for anyone under the age of eighteen.

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From 2005, Dutch lad Terrence Uphoff sings about life with “Twee Vaders” (Two Fathers):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf0puHJ-KM>

- Country and western music star Richard Hefner recently offended his evangelical fans with “Girls and Boys, and It Gets Better Country Song.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1ZnBq6VOD0> I do like the verse, “We learned to ride/the changing tide.” Reminds me of Darwin’s “survival of the fittest.” The fittest, if you’ve forgotten, are not the physically strongest, but those most capable of

adapting to change.

Then Carrie Underwood came along and stated that she supports marriage equality. What really horrified the leading homophobes was that she said she based her decision on her Christian faith. Heaven help that a pop star so admired by evangelicals should opine that Christianity is about love and acceptance of “others,” not about hate and rejection.

- Dan Savage’s *It Gets Better* Project videos on YouTube continue to increase in number. This video includes clips of several films and TV series: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g08GXZJs5sA&feature=elated> .

The effectiveness of the *It Gets Better* Project can best be measured by the increasingly vulgar vitriol heaped upon Mr. Savage by religious kooks. [“Kooks,” incidentally, is the noun Senator Barry Goldwater, once Mr. Conservative, used to describe the religious zealots who were well on their way to taking over the GOP before he died.]

- Pride Toronto and Google+ joined to create a series of short videos about LGBTIQ people, young and old. This video was the first in the series (*Together: Stories by Pride & Google*):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0M78ue7DAFU> . The sidebar will take you to several others. This series, along with Google’s “Legalize Love” project, launched in Poland and Singapore on July 7th, has led to a boycott of Google by several anti-gay groups. Boycotting Google! That’s really pretty funny.

- Matthew Vines’ video also got posted to YouTube this past spring:

<http://matthewvines.tumblr.com/> Vines is a 21-year-old gay student raised in an evangelical home in Wichita who took two years off from his studies at Harvard to study the issue of “Christianity and Homosexuality.” Vines’ video first came to national attention when Leonard Pitts, Jr., made it the topic of one of his columns.

We need only read some of the comments posted on the video site, however, to realize how difficult it is for religious zealots to “let go.” One of the first posts states categorically, “One cannot be a Christian and a homosexual.” End of discussion.

- Mary Cheney and her long-time partner, Heather

Poe, married recently without any Republican outrage. Although a majority of Republicans still oppose marriage equality, support among Republicans 18 to 35 now polls at 46% and increasing.

- Last year Utah’s LGBT community copied Singapore’s annual Pink Dot event. An estimated 3,000 people were present for the event in Salt Lake City. Here is the video Pink Dot Utah posted on YouTube on July 16, 2012.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CA8DKekewYc&feature=player_embedded .

Since the vast majority of Utahans are conservatives and vote Republican, including a majority of the roughly 40% who are not Mormons, any open support for the LGBTIQ community is significant.

- “In the Life” is another great website. <http://www.itlmedia.org>

- Aside from being A&F’s official promotional song, Carly Rae Jepsen’s “Call Me Maybe” has spawned quite a few video parodies.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE5ggFUx1Ns&feature=relmfu> .

Coming in future issues.

Our October issue will feature poetry by two QF scholars who are also award-winning poets: **Sadie McCarney** (Goddard College) and **Javon Smith** (DePaul University). Our January 2013 issue will highlight a short story by **Brandon Lambert** (Park Point University). The April 2013 issue will feature an epistolary essay by **Anthony Gomez** (Pomona College) and an essay by **Javon Smith**.

These four students will each receive a \$500.00 QF Publication Scholarship. I thank the donors who have made these scholarships possible. I know the students greatly appreciate your generosity.

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