

HUGS EAST

MAY/JUNE 2000

Volume 2, Issue 3

Gritty in Pink

BEHIND THE SCENES: With Equality Rocks, gay rights hit center stage.

There was a time when anyone lining up a major gay-themed concert would've had to settle for a bill consisting of the Tom Robinson Band, Holly Near and well, maybe a second set by the Tom Robinson Band. What a difference a few years and a few slamming doors makes. On April 29, the night before a huge gay rights march converges on the capital, the Pet Shop Boys, George Michael, k.d. lang, Nathan Lane, and Ellen DeGeneres will share the stage at Washington, D.C.'s RFK Stadium for Equality Rocks, a concert benefiting the Human Rights Campaign Foundation that's as close as the community has come to having its own Gaystock.

Some performers may tailor their sets for the occasion. "I have a large gay following but try not to make my concerts be gay-themed," says Etheridge, who came out in 1993 and was the first to sign up for the event. "I try to be universal in my shows and my work. And maybe this is a chance for me to kind of let it down and be specific and for the community.... Through I can't assume they're all gonna be queer. They may be Garth Brooks fans, going, 'What are we *doin'* here?'"

That's no typo: Brooks will be on the bill too, singing a duet with George Michael on "Freedom," though no one's suggesting the country superstar-cum-minor league ballplayer bats both ways. If he's the odd man-or straight man-out here, Brooks does have some history with the movement: He acknowledged having a lesbian half-sister in 1993, the year after he released a controversial single, "We Shall Be Free," that many took as implicitly condoning gay relationships. But Lisa Sanderson, Equality Rocks' coexecutive producer as well as a partner in Brooks' film production company, says he isn't coming to make a statement about homosexuality. "Garth will always step up for children," she says, alluding to Equality Rocks' overriding hate-crimes-awareness agenda. "Garth's gonna stand on that stage to try to make people hear that the violence with our children in all communities has gone too far."

Not every straight star felt so bold. A few others,

Hugs - Hope * Understanding * Giving * Support
To the Gay & Lesbian Community of Lake, Geauga, and Ash-
tabula Counties.

like Queen Latifah and actor Kristen Johnson, have joined up, but the bill is largely made up of gay talent, which wasn't the intent. When she was booking stars, Sanderson admits "there was resistance felt even in the entertainment business, which is the most liberal of all." Other producers downplay the difficulty of getting nongays to commit. "We've gotten great support from the creative community. I don't think people turned it down because it was a gay event," says coexec producer Hilary Rosen, head of the Recording Industry Association of America. In fact, organizers positioned it more as an anti-hate event: Etheridge plans to sing "Scarecrow" while families of hate-crime victims, including the kin of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr., unite on stage.

One celebrity who wasn't approached to share the love is Dr. Laura Schlessinger. Might she turn up anyway, as a flammable effigy? Possibly, says HRC executive director Elizabeth Birch, "although we're a pretty gentle people. So it'll probably be something more creative, like putting her in a bad dress or something."

Willman, Chris "Gritty in Pink." *Entertainment Weekly*
Apr. 2000: p. 22.

Radio Static

Feud: A proposed Dr. Laura TV show outrages gay activists.

The most shocking thing about the ongoing controversy over Dr. Laura Schlessinger's syndicated radio call-in show isn't her antigay pronouncements that homosexuals are a "biological error" and "sexual deviants." It isn't even her reported assertion that gays are "predatory on young boys" or her comparison of same-sex relationships to adult incest.

No, the most shocking thing is that apparently not a single one of her 18 million daily listeners works for Paramount TV.

In January, when the studio's TV division unveiled its plans for a Dr. Laura syndicated show, it touched off a storm of protests-from gay-rights groups like the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), from gay celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres, even from presidential candidate Bill Bradley (who said that Schlessinger's views made him "sick to my stomach"). Paramount's response-at

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Calendar of Events

May, 2000

- 05/04 Find out about GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight, Education, Network). — Brenda
- 05/11 Gay Music & Open Rap. Bring in your favorite gay artists music and bring in some snacks. — Terry
- 05/18 Hate Crimes. — Rhonda
- 05/25 Show & Tell. Bring in your personal stories, experiences or items that you would like to share. — Terry

June, 2000

- 06/01 Movie "Trick". — Ed
- 06/08 Spirituality. — Terry
- 06/15 Movie "If These Walls Could Talk II". — Rhonda
- 06/22 Planning Meeting & Pride Pep Rally. — Terry
- 06/29 Gay Book Review. — Cheryl

Hugs Social Activities for May & June

- 05/20 6:00 PM Spaghetti Dinner & Dance Fund Raiser. Admission \$12.00. Make checks payable to HUGS. To make your reservation and for directions call Laura at (440) 255-2615. Please make your reservations and have your checks mailed by May 12, 2000. Please bring a dessert and a beverage to share if you would like to.
- 06/03 1:00 PM Rockers Basketball Game. Gund Arena, Cleveland, OH. For ticket information and a meeting location call Terry or Cheryl at (440) 946-8014.
- 06/03 4:00 PM Dinner Flying Burrito. 1410 Hubbard Road, Madison, OH (440) 428-5258

Other Activities for May & June

- 06/24 Cleveland Pride Parade and Festival, parade steps off from Cleveland State University, festival is at Voinovich Park; for info call (216) 371-0214 or visit <http://www.clevelandpride.org> on the web.

06/24 "Touching Hearts, Changing Lives," North Coast Men's Chorus concert, 8 pm, Waetjen Auditorium, Cleveland State University, E. 21st St. at Euclid Ave, Cleveland, (440) 473-8919

For more details regarding any social event or meeting topic please call the information line at (440) 974-8909.

The Thursday evening meeting begins at 7:00 PM and is located at: 8521 East Ave., Mentor, OH 44060

HUGS Flea Market

On June 17, 2000 (rain date of July 8, 2000) HUGS will hold a flea market fund raiser at the Lake County Fairgrounds. If you would like to donate items to the flea market, please have the items priced and drop them off Saturday, June 17, 2000 around 8:30 AM at the fairgrounds. If you are unable to drop off your items Saturday morning you may drop them off Thursday, June 15, 2000 at the HUGS meeting (8521 East Ave., Mentor, OH 44060, between 7 PM and 9 PM).

Volunteers are needed to man the table. Please stop by HUGS some Thursday evening or call the information line ((440) 974-8909) to sign up for a time to man the table.

All unsold items will be donated to Goodwill.

The Fairgrounds are located at 1301 Mentor Ave., Painesville Township, OH 44070.

Forbes House Spring Cleanup

Once again HUGS has volunteered to help Forbes House (battered women's shelter) cleanup their yard after the long winter. If you are would like to help with the cleanup, meet us at the Painesville McDonalds on May 13, 2000 at 7:30 AM. After eating breakfast we will head over to the house and begin the cleanup. It shouldn't take longer than a couple hours to complete the task.

The Painesville McDonalds is located at 95 Richmond Road, Painesville, OH.

Inspirational Quote . . .

"I've learned that God doesn't punish people. I've learned that God doesn't dislike homosexuals, like a lot of Christians think. AIDS isn't their fault, just like it isn't my fault. God loves homosexuals as much as he loves everybody else."

- *Ryan White, Young AIDS Activist, May 30, 1988*

Judell, B. (1997). "The Gay Quote Book" New York: Penguin Group.

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least privately—was to claim ignorance of Schlessinger's polarizing views. It was the Sergeant Schultz defense—I *know nothing*, NOTHING—and it was just about as believable.

"I was told by a couple of Paramount executives that they did not know she was such a hot-button issue for gays," says David Lee, the gay cocreator of Paramount's most successful sitcom, *Frasier*, who diplomatically goes on to forgive the studio. "I believe them. They are decent people who made a mistake."

That Schlessinger, 53, is a lightning rod on other issues was nothing new to Paramount, of course. Her conservative, family-values-driven radio show, which she began in 1994, is the most popular self-help talk program in America (Dr. Laura, whose mantra is "Preach, Teach, and Nag," was satiating the public's hunger for daily whippings long before Judge Judy). Her four books have sold more than 3 million copies. And last month, Hasbro released the Dr. Laura Game, allowing "adults to test their morals, ethics, behavior...at home!"

In other words, Dr. Laura (and the doctorate's in physiology, not psychology) is a household name, and that has already translated into the promise of big syndication bucks for Viacom-owned Paramount: The studio quickly sold its proposed Dr. Laura TV show in 160 markets, representing 90 percent of the country (which according to industry estimates, could equal an annual windfall of more than \$10 million for Paramount). This despite Schlessinger's own brushes with scandal: Twenty-four-year-old nude photos surfaced in 1998, producing a wave of bad press. She's also gotten heat for not practicing what she preaches: Though she's vehemently opposed to divorce, she's on her second marriage. And she reportedly hasn't spoken to her own mother in years.

Schlessinger would not comment for this story, and Paramount continues to hunker down, issuing only a tart statement since the controversy began: "We are pleased to bring Dr. Laura's trademark 'wit, wisdom and no whining' to a national television audience. We respect and believe in her right to have and express her own point of view, just as we respect the individual opinions of all our talent, employees and producers."

There are gay activists who agree with that sentiment; Singer-songwriter Melissa Etheridge has said she doesn't "believe in shutting anybody up." And GLAAD's Scott Seomin says: "Dr. Laura has a right to free speech. We never wanted Paramount to pull or censor her. This is about fair and accurate language and representation."

GLAAD isn't about to let the issue drop, however. The group met with Paramount executives on Feb. 14 to express its outrage and is still waiting for TV chairman Kerry McCluggage to promise that Schlessinger won't use "defamatory vocabulary and terminology" when referring to homosexuals. And once the show airs, if it turns out Dr. Laura isn't any more fair and accurate than she is on her radio show, the group is prepared to act up. "GLAAD will be

forced to ask for her cancellation," Seomin threatens.

Others aren't waiting that long: A website called StopDrLaura.com has become the epicenter of an e-mail campaign against Paramount (a tactic Schlessinger referred to as "terrorism" on her March 6 radio show). "The issue for us is Paramount," says lawyer John Aravosis, one of StopDrLaura's co-founders. "She has the right to defame any minority group she chooses, but Paramount is not obligated to aid and abet in that defamation. Not everyone gets a TV show. [Ex-KKK leader] David Duke ain't getting a TV show. No one would put someone on TV who defames blacks or Jews. But on gay issues, for some reason, we always give one more chance."

Traditional Values Coalition, a lobby of 43,000 churches, announced its own Internet petition drive to counter "the gay goose-steppers" trying to stop Dr. Laura. "We've been seeing an orchestrated effort by the media to go after Dr. Laura," says Andrea Sheldon Lafferty, executive director. "A few people want to silence her. They are acting like Nazis.... Dr. Laura represents the values and beliefs of millions of Americans."

Frasier's Lee, meanwhile, has his own methods for protest: He wrote last season's episode in which Christine Baranski starred as rabid on-air therapist Dr. Nora—although the write insists any similarities between Nora and Laura are coincidental: "It was based on another radio shrink who doesn't have a doctorate in psychology, and who preaches family values while not speaking to her own mother for years."

Rice, Lynette "Radio Static." *Entertainment Weekly* Mar. 2000: p. 22-23.

The State of the Workplace

One of the most stunning gains for gay, lesbian, bisexual and Transgendered workers in the 1990s has been the rapid spread of domestic partner benefits. At the beginning of the decade, fewer than two dozen employers offered these benefits. Today, more than 2,800 private companies, colleges and universities and state and local governments offer domestic partner health coverage.

The Human Rights Campaign's WorkNet project has documented this trend in the new report, "The State of the Workplace for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Workers." Written by HRC Education Director Kim I. Mills with Research Coordinator Daryl Herrschaft, the report found much of the rapid spread of this benefit in the last two years can be attributed to San Francisco's Equal Benefits Ordinance. That law, which went into effect in 1997, was directly responsible for 2,168 of the 2,855 employers offering these benefits that were tracked by HRC as of early August. (HRC counts an employer as having domestic partner benefits if it offers health insurance coverage. Other DP

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benefits can include family and medical leave, tuition assistance, relocation expenses and many other perquisites.)

"Even without the San Francisco law, we were seeing an average of two employers a week instituting domestic partner coverage, up from one a week in the first half of the 1990s," Mills says. "The San Francisco law has led to a rapid acceleration of this trend, and a domino effect across market sectors and industries."

The San Francisco law mandates that any company doing business with the city or county of San Francisco must offer the same benefits to the domestic partners of its employees that it offers to employees' legal spouses.

For example, the report found that the San Francisco law was directly responsible for the spread of DP benefits in the oil industry. First, Chevron – which is based in San Francisco – instituted the benefits. It was quickly followed by Shell, BP Amoco and Mobil, according to the report. Likewise, the announcement of DP benefits by United Airlines last summer was a direct result of the San Francisco law. Within a week of United's announcement, American Airlines and US Airways told their staffs that they would be instituting domestic partner coverage as well.

Governments Get in the Game

In addition, the report found municipal governments across the country are beginning to offer DP benefits to their workers. Six states, seven local government entities (such as libraries and utility commissions) and 60 city and county governments offered domestic partner health benefits as of early August. In 1998, at least eight state or local governments instituted domestic partner benefits for public employees: Eugene, Ore.; Key West, Fla.; New York City; Philadelphia; Santa Barbara, Calif.; Vancouver, Wash.; Westchester County, N.Y.; and the state of Oregon.

In the first half of 1999, at least eight additional governments announced DP benefits for their employees: Gresham, Ore.; Petaluma, Calif.; Pittsburgh; Tempe, Ariz.; Broward County, Fla.; Cook County, Ill.; Dane County, Wisc.; and the state of California.

However, the report noted, there have been some significant losses in many of the same arenas where GLBT workers have won gains. "Most notably, legislative bodies continue to consider almost as many anti-gay measures as legislation aimed at creating parity for GLBT workers. Likewise, many courts continue to find that discrimination based on sexual orientation is perfectly legal in many jurisdictions," the report states. In 1998, for example, religious political extremists succeeded in rolling back a comprehensive Maine law that had barred sexual orientation discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. And at least two well-known anti-gay organizations have mounted court challenges to municipal domestic partner benefits plans, with mixed results.

Among the report's other findings:

- A total of at least 1,558 private corporations, colleges and universities, state and local governments and federal government agencies and departments that include the term "sexual orientation" in their non-discrimination policies.
- Of those, 261 were in the Fortune 500, up slightly from 251 in 1996 when HRC completed the first survey of Fortune 500 companies and non-discrimination policies.
- At least 279 colleges and universities have implemented non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation. These colleges include 44 of the top 50 national universities and 26 of the top 40 national liberal arts colleges according to the 1999 *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings.
- Contrary to the claims of the religious right, domestic partner benefits are not some "special right" given to gays and lesbians. Based on HRC's data, more than two-thirds of employers that have implemented this coverage are also providing it to unmarried opposite-sex couples.

Mills, Kim I. "The State of the Workplace." *HRC Quarterly* Winter 1999: p. 4-5

AIDS WALK '99

Hugs East put together a team this fall for the 1999 Dr. John T. Carey Memorial AIDS Walk. There were over 4000 participants in all and 163 teams. A total of \$300,000 was raised for local AIDS related charities.

The event was a little more walker-friendly in '99. People seemed to like the earlier start time and shorter Walk route (3 miles).

Organizers are already planning this year's event. It will be held **Sunday, September 17th**. Some special things are being planned for the 2000 Walk because of the Millennium and because it will be the 10th anniversary of the Walk.

If you want to be a part of the HUGS East team in 2000, give us a call or stop in on a Thursday night and let us know. If you can't walk, you can always support one of the members who are walking by pledging your support.

By Brenda

Inspirational Quote II...

"It is better to be hated for what one is than to be loved for what one isn't."

- André Gide, Writer

Judell, B. (1997). *"The Gay Quote Book"* New York: Penguin Group

FAVORITE POTLUCK RECIPES

Everyone knows that we Gay & Lesbians love to eat and one of our favorite ways to eat is to have a Potluck Dinner. We have collected a number of our favorite recipes over the last couple of years and will be sharing them with you in this and future issues of our Newsletter.

Our first recipe is from Blanche. It is called **Jefferson Delight!** My only question is this, Blanche moved to Painesville recently, does that make it Painesville Delight and does it still taste the same? I guess we will all have to try it and see.

Jefferson Delight

- Ingredients:** 1 – 3 oz. Box of Apricot Jello
1 – can Mandarin Oranges
1 – can crushed Pineapple
1 –cup (8 Oz.) evaporated milk (regular or lowfat)
- Directions:** Mix Jello in 1 cup of boiling water, stir until dissolved, chill slightly, about 5 – 10 minutes, then add evaporated milk and stir. Add drained mandarin oranges and pineapple, stir, CHILL, and set. (Approximately 6 servings, Double for HUGS Potluck)

Submitted by Blanche

Our second recipe comes from Mary B. One of Mary's favorite restaurants is the Flying Burrito Cantina, so the following recipe should not come as a big surprise.

Two Dip Bean Dip

- Ingredients:** 1) 1 can Refried beans
2) 4 oz. Cream cheese
3) 1 cup Sour cream
4) 2 t. Cumin
5) 1 jar Pace picante sauce
6) 8 oz. Shredded monterey jack cheese
7) Tortilla chips
- Directions:** Mix together 1-4
Layer in 2 qt baking dish: Sauce/beans/cheese then beans/cheese/sauce.
Cover and bake at 425 for 20 minutes.
Uncover and bake a while more until bubbly.
(I think you know now what to do with the Tortilla Chips.)

MUY BUENO!

From a guy Mary B. works with.

By Brenda

You know you're gay when NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS would you ...

- ▲ Parade around the locker room in Fruit of the Loom underwear.
- ▲ Order a pair of Barcaloungers in beige Herculon.
- ▲ Take a passport photo in anything but a timeless outfit.
- ▲ Admit that your "homemade" fish pâté is actually jarred gefilte fish.
- ▲ Leave a copy of *Reader's Digest* on your coffee table.
- ▲ Arrive at a party on time.

You know it's no picnic being gay when ...

- ▲ You're constantly getting paper cuts opening all those fund-raiser requests.
- ▲ Streisand tickets require a second mortgage.
- ▲ Your parents still insist that you and your lover occupy separate bedrooms in their house.
- ▲ Discos operate on the theory that nobody has to go to work in the morning.
- ▲ You fall asleep during phone sex and receive a bill for \$1,000.

You know you're gay when ...

- ▲ You can't boil an egg ... But you *can* whip up a mind-boggling Grand Marnier soufflé.
- ▲ You can't spackle a wall ... But you *can* stencil an ivy border that puts Martha Stewart to shame.
- ▲ You can't sail a boat ... But you *can* lead the conga line on an RSVP Caribbean cruise.
- ▲ You can't pitch a tent ... But you *can* gather the most gorgeous bouquet of wildflowers.
- ▲ You can't drive a stick ... But you *can* drive half of Europe crazy as you try to learn.

You know you're gay when ...

- ▲ Winter finds you bitchin' once again, "I'd rather catch pneumonia than have hat hair!"
- ▲ Spring's sunny glow makes everyone in the park look absolutely scrumptious.
- ▲ Summer means kissing in the dunes and never having a towel when you really need one.
- ▲ Fall makes you nostalgic for macaroni and cheese from the school cafeteria, snapping towels in the locker room, and Mr. Hamilton, who found any excuse to brush against you in his chemistry class.

Cohen, J. (1999). You KNOW you're GAY when..... Chicago: Contemporary Books.

~ POETRY PAGE ~

MUSCLES

I've always been slenderly built -
 Like, with a good wind I might tilt;
 Just imagine my shock, when a jock 'round the block,
 Said, "Let's play 'tug of war' for a bit."

We both held the rope good and tight,
 I held it with all of my might;
 (We both knew that I wasn't eager to try,
 And this shouldn't be much of a fight).

But I pulled the jock over the line!
 (In spite of how hard she'd been tryin');
 She just couldn't believe - she had failed to achieve,
 And was certain she'd win.... The next time.

She demanded a re-match right then.
 (I just wanted to quit with my win);
 But I chose to relent, for the gal was hell-bent,
 So we both started tugging again.

All at once she lunged forward and then,
 She pulled with the strength of ten men;
 She was hoping I'd slip, or might possibly trip -
 But instead I let go of my end.

When she yanked the rope of my hands,
 For an instant she'd taken command;
 But her vict'ry was brief, and it caused her much grief,
 As her head bounced three times off the land.

By Terry V.

Be a part of HUGS EAST

BE A PART OF HUGS EAST

Due to the increased cost of the mailing of our newsletter we can no longer afford to continue our current mailing to non-paying members. This will be the last to those not currently with paid dues or who do not mail their dues prior to the next newsletter mailing in March.

Please send your dues to Hugs East P.O. Box 253, Mentor, Ohio 44060. If your not currently paid and would like to remain on the mailing list, please submit your dues by the next scheduled newsletter. Current newsletters will still be available on Thursday nights at the Mentor site for those who are not on the mailing list.

2000 HUGS EAST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME:_____	<u>Membership</u>	
ADDRESS:_____	Individual:	\$8.00
CITY & STATE_____	Student:	\$5.00
ZIP CODE:_____	Household:	\$10.00
PHONE #(optional)_____	Supporter:	\$25.00
	Contributor:	\$50.00
AMOUNT ENCLOSED:_____	Benefactor:	\$100.00

*Dues run from January thru December.

To update our membership list we ask that you complete the above information. Even if you were a current member, we would like to update our records to show current information. This will ensure your copy of the newsletter. Membership dues are suggested amounts. Please feel free to pay more if you can, less if you cannot. All members share the same privileges. Make check or money order payable to: HUGS EAST P.O. Box 253 Mentor, Ohio 44061-0253, or bring to the Mentor site any Thursday evening (7pm to 9pm).

_____ Do not send HUGS EAST newsletter to my home.

**\$8.00-\$10.00 dues are not tax deductible; amounts paid over said dues are considered contributions and are tax deductible.