



IN THIS ISSUE:

We dedicate this issue of the WNPJ Network News to the LGBTQ community. Increasing respect for this community is evident in popular culture, legislation and judicial actions, yet discrimination is still widespread. We also have an update on our Bring Our War Dollars Home campaign, and on a setback in the effort to remove harmful race-based mascots and logos from schools. We'd also like to briefly acknowledge the passing of a longtime local friend of peace and justice, Dr. Gene Farley. For our tribute please see our website, *www.wnpj.org*.

PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgendered, Queer or Questioning is an alphabet that, even ten years ago, would not have been recognized by a large part of the U.S. population. Not so today. Let's review the history of the last few decades.

When our son came out to us at the age of 22, in the mid-eighties, I hate to remember how little I knew, how little could be learned in our libraries and less in the bookstores. Information was "in the closet," along with GLBT persons. AIDS had made its splash in history and the devastation was very visible. However, AIDS also had the effect of liberating knowledge about the numbers of GLBT people, and of making friends, relatives and co-workers aware of the "normalcy" (not the choice) of this group in society.

For me, personally, I had the support of Quakers (my affiliation) and the American Friends Service Committee who took an early stand on gay rights. The religious community in general is still struggling, but great strides have been made in recent years, with more openly gay and lesbian religious leaders and many more open and affirming churches and synagogues.

The American Civil Liberties Union can be proud of its history of defending the LGBT community, having brought its first LGBT rights case in 1936. It was

Joann Elder

1986 when it founded its LGBT project, with the goal of "not just persuading judges and government officials but ultimately changing the way society thinks about GLBT people." We must acknowledge the role of big corporations, too, which have often led in recognizing gay rights. They realized some of their brightest and best were gay, and they had more to gain by keeping such talent. We watched the fight in the military over many years and several presidencies, and lived with the "Don't ask, don't tell" nonsense imposed under a Clinton compromise in 1993, until this was finally repealed by the U.S. Senate in 2010.

2013 saw major advances. The Defense of Marriage Act, DOMA, designed "to define and protect the institution of marriage," and deny all the benefits of marriage held by heterosexuals to homosexuals, was repealed. Married homosexuals now enjoy all these protections and tax benefits. In 2013 also, the U.S. Senate passed an employment nondiscrimination act, ENDA, which provides a framework of protections from workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, though its passage in the House seems unlikely. And LGBTQ workers of color face unique challenges related to their race and ethnicity as well as their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. As a result, they are some of the most disadvantaged workers in the United States, and face extraordinarily high rates of unemployment and poverty.

In 2006, nearly 60% of Wisconsinites voted to amend the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage and legal recognition of similar relationships. In 2013 a poll showed only 19% opposed recognizing such relationships, with 54% supporting gay marriage and an additional 24% endorsing recognition of civil partnerships. Currently, the fate of the state's domestic partner registry is in the hands of the state Supreme Court.

These legislative moves reflect wider cultural changes. Support for the gay community and their families grew with the founding of PFLAG in 1973, when the mother of a gay man marched in New York's Pride Parade to show public support, pride and love of her son. She urged parents to unite in support of their LGBT children. PFLAG nationally now has 500 chapters and more than 200,000 members, and promotes the health and well being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through support, education and advocacy.

PFLAG's Madison chapter, a member of WNPJ, started about 20 years ago. The group, which meets on the third Sunday of the month, September-May, at Friends Meeting House, 1704 Rob-

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Sheila and Heather Spear

Sheila: As I worked on this edition of the newsletter I found myself working with the plethora of letters used to refer to gender-variant people, in fact of the difficulty of finding any single positively-focused term to use. I decided to ask my daughter, who came out many years ago, what term she prefers, and why.

Heather: Transformation and empowerment, of myself and others, is my political struggle to make change happen in the world. My way of creating change is through making community spaces for performance and art, for people to feel empowered to be themselves, to challenge them to think about some things differently, as well as to entertain. My aim is to create and participate in a world where gender, sexuality, thoughtfulness, creativity and fun can co-exist in an open spectrum.



As a cabaret artist, I use drag as a vehicle to challenge social preconceptions and empower people. Drag is transformation; a way of putting disparate elements together to create a different whole; to take a perceived perception of one thing and to show its fallacy or its reality. Within this format, audiences are challenged to question their views and conceptions of gender, both in others as well as in themselves.

In 1999, not knowing where the language was going, I named my cabaret Dykes Do Drag, with the conception that the term dyke would become the inclusive term, encompassing all genders and all sexualities in a common world view of interconnectedness through social good. Instead queer has become the inclusive community word, and today our shows celebrate an ever-expanding continuum of gender expression and performance.

Sheila: So what I take away from this is that there is a search for an inclusive term, one that encompasses a community and asserts a political identity to include all those who do not see the world in gender-binary terms. But I understand that for many the singular identity, of being L or G or B or T is too precious to abandon for an umbrella term. Whatever the language we use, it is my fervent hope that the trend toward wider recognition of the full richness and diversity of humankind will continue its upward arc.

Sheila is a long-time activist and currently editor of the WNPJ Network News. Heather is co-founder and producer of Dykes Do Drag, a community of performance artists of all genders, sexualities, and disciplines, which has pioneered and fostered the queer performance art community in the Twin Cities.

WHITE PRIVILEGE CONFERENCE

WNPJ is proud to join with our member groups Groundwork, a white antiracist collective, and the Sinsinawa Dominicans faith community to co-host the 15th annual White Privilege Conference, which will be held in Madison from March 26 - 29, 2014.

The WPC examines challenging concepts of privilege and oppression, furthering understanding, respect and connections to work towards a more equitable world. This year's theme is "Building relationships, strengthening communities, seeking justice."

For more information about the conference and how you can be involved, visit *www.whiteprivilegeconference.com* or contact lead local host YWCA-Madison at 608-395-2177 or *racialjustice@ywcamadison.org*.



The Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice facilitates activities, cooperation and communication among Wisconsin organizations and individuals working toward the creation of a sustainable world, free from violence and injustice.

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MOMENTUM IS BUILDING FOR WISCONSIN FUTURES COMMISSION

Z! Haukeness, WNPJ Bring Our War Dollars Home Organizer

The Bring Our War Dollars Home campaign has been rolling along at a great pace. One of our main focuses has been economic conversion, or moving from defense contract jobs to more sustainable, long-term jobs. There is a national trend in this direction and we are working to get Wisconsin on board. The state's economy is more dependent on military money than you may realize:

Between 2000 and 2010, Wisconsin saw a huge increase in defense contracts. In 2000, Wisconsin had 975 defense contracts bringing in \$765 million in revenue. These numbers grew every year, until they peaked in 2010 with 7,500 contracts amounting to \$8.8 billion. Since then the contracts have been on a steady decline, reaching 6,950 defense contracts for \$2.9 billion in 2012.

Communities like Oshkosh have been feeling the effects of this decline. Oshkosh Truck is the largest defense contractor in the state, having taken in \$29 billion in defense contracts since 2000. But due to slowed production, Oshkosh Truck has laid off 1,200 workers over the past year, many of whom are UAW Local 578 union members.

Companies that provide parts for Oshkosh Corporation have had to let their workers go, as well. Axel Tech, also in Oshkosh, makes axels for the military vehicles that Oshkosh Truck produces. Between mid-November and the end of December 2013, Axel Tech will lay off 65 of its 155 employees.

These workers join the thousands of other Wisconsinites who are unemployed and often struggling, given the state's 44th in the nation ranking in job creation. These harsh realities impact some communities more than others. For example, the black unemployment rate, at 23%, is more than three times the white unemployment rate of 7%. Employees who once held living-wage paying union jobs at factories such as Oshkosh Truck are now finding themselves amongst the unemployed. Even those who have found employment are often working much lower-paying nonunion jobs in fast food and retail.

You may have heard of the living-wage campaigns that have spread like butter across the country the past few months. Largely catalyzed by fast-food and retail workers, many others are supporting the campaign for a living wage. Recent victories were celebrated in the Seattle suburb SeaTac, which passed a \$15 living wage for airport workers, and in New Jersey, which voted to raise their minimum wage.

Building on this momentum, Wisconsin workers, community leaders and people of faith declared a national day of action against low wages on December 5th. Wisconsin Jobs Now, which spearheaded this day of action, has been doing community organizing in Milwaukee and around the state to put pressure on large corporations such as Wal-Mart and McDonalds to pay their workers a living wage.

"The momentum across the country is swinging towards justice," said Jennifer Epps-Addison, executive director of Wisconsin Jobs Now. "Justice for families forced to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet, and justice for communities who for too long have borne the brunt of the cost of subsidizing the incredibly high cost of these hugely profitable povertywage employers."

The need for sustainable living-wage jobs is on the radar and desperately needed around the country, and across Wisconsin.

To address the rise in layoffs and unemployment related to the slowing of defense contracts in Wisconsin, WNPJ is working with state legislators and partner organizations, such as WI Jobs Now and Peace Action, to establish a Wisconsin Futures Commission. It would mirror Connecticut's Futures Commission and bring together a range of stakeholders and experts to help create lasting living wage jobs that better meet community needs while reducing our reliance on military contracts.

To get involved, contact Z! at *zh@wnpj.org* or call 608-358-9993.



Pastor Ellen Rasmussen and Z! Haukeness at the WNPJ Fall Assembly

Progress from front page

erts Court, Madison, provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diver-(www.pflag-madison.org). sity add "T" **PFLAG** mav for "transgendered" to its name soon, as more and more transgendered children are coming out to their parents who are coming to PFLAG for help and understanding. Lack of information about transgendered people is a new frontier of prejudice.

Some political and social LGBT groups use the term 'queer' to establish community and assert a political identity to include all sexual and gender minorities and their allies who do not see the world in gender-binary terms.

Progress has been made, but there is more work to be done.

Joann is a long-time defender of human rights, who is an activist for world peace and freedom, and a board member of PFLAG-Madison.

LGBTQ NARRATIVES: WHERE WORDS AND ACTION MEET

LGBTQ Narratives is a queer activistwriters' group open to LGBTQ-identified adults interested in creative expression and social justice. The group meets at OutReach, South-Central Wisconsin's LGBTQ Community Center at 600 Williamson Street, Madison, and has over 50 members. Meetings are held the first and third Wednesday of every month from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Attendance averages 10 or more members at each meeting.

During a typical evening, members begin by briefly introducing themselves, including how they self-identify, and how they wish to be addressed by their preferred pronouns. After reading the LGBTQ Narratives Purpose and Agreements, the group makes announcements of upcoming events, community news or calls for submissions. The main focus of the meetings is sharing their writing and collaborating on creative projects, taking turns reading and asking for feedback if they wish. Sometimes a prompt is sent to the members before the meeting. There are occasions when the group will write during the meeting or attend poetry, spoken word or open mic events. Potential members can contact LGBTQ Narratives online and complete a name-based screening.

History

LGBTQ Narratives, a WNPJ member organization, was founded by Kristina "Kiki" Kosnick, then a graduate student, in February 2010 as a project of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for the Humanities, Humanities Exposed program. The group was originally named Reading, Writing and Relating LGBTQ Narratives: Creating Community through Interpersonal and Textual Dialogues, but the name was later changed as the emphasis shifted to writing personal narratives and engaging in community activism. Following are excerpts from Kosnick's original proposal:

Linda Lenzke

"(The group) will develop connections between UW-Madison and the greater Madison community by putting participating UW students and instructors in touch with fellow LGBTQ Madisonians as they engage in discussions of literary texts by LGBTQ writers, in the face-to-face exchange of ideas and in the production of personal narratives...

"Reading, Writing and Relating LGBTQ Narratives aims to create a space that recognizes and honors the diversity within the queer community while foregrounding the importance of maintaining political solidarity for all people of marginalized sexualities and gender identities."

In September 2010, OutReach awarded Kristina "Kiki" Kosnick their Susan Green Memorial Woman of the Year Award, for her volunteer efforts on behalf of our community. In October 2012, she was the inaugural winner of WNPJ's Dennis Bergren LGBTQ Advocacy Award.

LGBTQ Narratives Purpose and Agreements

After the group had been meeting for two years, it became clear that they needed to create a mission and define their intentions. The following purpose and agreements were developed by a core group of founding members:

* We are here because we believe in the personal and political significance of finding and using our unique voices as queers to connect with each other and engage the world.

* We embrace diverse modes of creative expression. By sharing our narratives, we aim to build community solidarity while honoring and better understanding our differences.

* We remain mindful that the purpose of feedback is to focus on how narratives are expressed, rather than the personal experiences and choices they sometimes reveal.

* We are here to nurture both emerging and practiced voices, rather than to critique each other's work.

* We respect each other by ensuring that personal narratives shared in this space stay in this space.

* We encourage and support the efforts of writers who want to reach a larger community.

* We recognize that this group is an evolving collaboration and we welcome input.

* We begin each group with introductions that allow us to express our LGBTQ identifications so that everyone is aware of how we prefer to be acknowledged and addressed.

Community & Collaborative **Projects**

Members of the Narratives group wanted to interact with and reach a larger LGBTQ community and began working on collaborative, educational, performance and outreach projects. Some members had experience and a desire to mentor queer youth, while others wanted to create a space for LGBTQ writers and performers to share their work. Narratives members have spoken on panels and conducted workshops at University of Wisconsin campuses throughout the state and have mentored youth through writing workshops. A number of other collaborative projects are described below, details of which can be found online, at lgbtnarratives.blogspot.com and on facebook.

Queers Read This Too: The first collaborative writing project, Queers Read This Too, was published in 2010 and distributed at the Wisconsin Capitol Pride March in Madison. It was a response to *Queers Read This*, a leaflet published anonymously and handed out at the 1990 Pride March in New York City. The *Queers Read This Too* zine included personal narratives, essays and activist rants. An unintended theme emerged from the collection of work: the dangers of remaining silent and identifying oppressive acts of silencing.

Conceal & Carry: Queers Exposed: Two years later, Audrey Wax, a member of the Theatre Arts Faculty at Edgewood College and now also Artistic Director of Stage Q Theater, came across the selfpublished zine and began sketching adaptations for the stage. She joined LGBTQ Narratives Activist-Writers and a monologue project was born based on the group's work. Wax became the director of *Conceal & Carry: Queers Exposed*, while members of the narratives group contributed original work, produced and acted in the monologue show.

Conceal & Carry: Queers Exposed is a full-length theatrical production featuring original monologues written, directed, and performed by members and allies of *LGBTQ Narratives Activist-Writers'* group. From the producers: "The show is based on the writers' lived experiences, and it aims to make visible the parts of ourselves that might otherwise go unnoticed, to put into words the very things that are most difficult to say and to share with the world the pain, fear, horror, beauty, love and hope of our queer lives."

The grassroots project was designed to interact with the community by continuously integrating new work and by collaborating with social justice, educational and community partners. The debut performances, co-produced by and performed at Broom Street Theater in July 2012, all sold out. Other performances of *Conceal* & *Carry* were held on Coming Out Day on the UW-Madison campus, with support from the LGBT Campus Center, and at Edgewood College, co-sponsored by COR, which explores identity through the lens of theatre. *QueerSpeak:* Founding Narratives member Grey Doolin began QueerSpeak in the spring of 2011 with the help of others from the group. QueerSpeak, a monthly open mic for queer-identified folks and allies was first held at Project Lodge in Madison. It now occurs the fourth Wednesday of every month at Dutch's Auto Service, Inc., a woman-owned and operated car care service center at 202 Regas Road, which is transformed into a performance space. Musicians, poets, storytellers, and spoken word artists sign-up after 7:00 with performances beginning at 7:30.

GLBTQ Teen Pride Arts Festival: Members of LGBTQ Narratives and writers, producers and actors from *Conceal* & *Carry: Queers Exposed* joined Déjà Vu for Two artists Todd Olson and Nicole Bresnick, artist Lon Michels, MFA and Proud Theater for a night of art and performance especially for GLBTQ teens at the Overture Center in January 2013.

Narratives Book Project: Members of Narratives are currently working on an untitled anthology of their work to feature poetry, memoirs, personal narratives, and essays.

Linda Lenzke lives in Madison, Wisconsin and has been writing poetry, personal narratives, comedy and spoken word monologues for the past 30 years. She is a founding member of LGBTQ Narratives Activist-Writers and edits a poetry and prose feature, Our Storytellers, for Our Lives magazine. To read more of Linda's work, visit her blog www.mixedmetaphorsohmy.com.



State Senator Tom Tiffany, who followed up legislation that erodes environmental protections to further an open-pit iron mine proposed for northern Wisconsin's Penokee Hills with a bill restricting public access to Managed Forest Land around that mine site, and another bill that would drastically limit local communities' ability to regulate frac sand mining. State senate district 12, which Tiffany represents, is far from both frac sand and iron mining regions — although he's received \$3,000 in campaign contributions from natural gas and sand mining interests, and nearly \$75,000 from special interests pushing mining deregulation, according to WNPJ member group the WI Democracy Campaign.



Penzeys Spices owner Bill Penzey Jr, who sent free spices and a thoughtful three-page letter to every resident of Mukwonago, explaining why he opposes race-based school mascots and SB317 / AB297, a bill that would decimate the complaint process for such mascots. Objections to changing Mukwonago High School's "Indians" mascot and logo prompted the state bill.



WILL WISCONSIN GO BACK ON CIVIL RIGHTS?

In our Fall 2010 edition, we were pleased to report on the signing of Act 250. This law - passed after more than a decade of advocacy and coalition building - created a desperatelyneeded community process to address and remove harmful race-based mascots and logos from our schools. In 2013, we were saddened that opponents of Act 250 moved to gut this process by amending the bill. In early November, a number of people of color, organizations of color and multi-racial organizations wrote in opposition to these attacks. Here is an excerpt from their letter:

"Race-Based Mascots across the state are not only furthering the entrenchment of systemic and institutionalized racism, but are harming students' abilities to receive accurate and responsible education. Students of color across the state continue be failed by our current education system having much lower graduation rates and disparities across the board in indicator areas. The American Psychological Association issued a statement based on peer-reviewed research that Mascots should be immediately removed from schools 'due to the harm done by creating a hostile environment, the negative impact on the self-esteem of American Indian Children, and the discrimination that violates civil rights.' Similar studies have shown that racebased depictions of native people lead to increased stereotypes of other people of color.

"In addition white students and other non-native students are being taught a

false education and see these race-based stereotypes condoned in their schools.

"The history, culture and current affairs of Native people and other people of color are needed not only to improve the process of self-identity and self-esteem development for students of color, but to give a more comprehensive and honest educational experience to all students. We need to not only remove harmful mascots from our schools, but to continually focus on improving the curriculum, policies, and practices of our schools that support the success of all students and especially students of color."

As allies we need to remain attentive and actively opposed to the continued discrimination faced by so many young people on a daily basis.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Barbara E. Munson, WNPJ Board Co-Chair

I am delighted to serve as member of the WNPJ governing Board. I admire the personhood and vision of all who are serving on the Board, and look forward to helping to move WNPJ's mission into action during my term. I will do my best to do this work in as joyful and appreciative a manner as I possibly can. I love the work of promoting social and environmental justice, peace and sustainability. I think I have found the right group and/or that it has found me.

At 69, the circles of the seasons have led to a long background and practice in standing up for justice from the playgrounds of my childhood to the advocacy circles I move in today. As an Oneida woman, I have more than one cultural perspective to learn from, as I move through life. This brings great joy to me as I rarely feel really stuck. I know there are alternative ways to view most situations. I try to keep my life in balance so that I can move freely as can be in whatever situation I find myself. I love WNPJ and am always talking our organization up among my friends and acquaintances, since most of them love peace, justice and sustainability too.

During my time as a Board member, I will focus on strengthening our alliances with people of color. I will work with groups and individuals toward making ours a world beyond sexism and racism.

My real focus as an Oneida woman is always on the children, so I want to start a WNPJ Youth Peace Initiative. I believe that our children need to develop leadership and coalition-building skills, and need to joyfully prepare for a healthy lifetime of advocacy on behalf of all the children of Earth and for the Earth herself. I have some ideas about how this might look and am asking youth workers for their ideas and time to help give this idea some shape. I hope to grow and reward youth advocacy in each of our focus areas through an annual meaningful project designed by youth, accomplished by youth, documented by youth and awarded by youth throughout the state. I am hopeful that we will be able to accomplish this goal and others as this initiative gains momentum.

I look forward to working with you as we move toward all our goals that promote peace, justice and a sustainable future for and with the children of our beloved state.

Osk^n^su - Barb



Barb Munson, alongside Winona LaDuke

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NEWS FROM THE WNPJ OFFICE

Diane Farsetta, WNPJ Executive Director

Many thanks to all who made WNPJ's member assembly and awards reception, in La Crosse last October, a wonderful gathering! Our deep appreciation goes to new WNPJ Board member Tracy Littlejohn, the Hmong Cultural and Community Center and the Hmong Youth Group for hosting us and preparing a delicious traditional meal.

During the assembly, we heard from Pastor Ellen Rasmussen, with the La Crosse United Methodist Church and Interfaith Justice and Peace Network, about how she sees militarism impacting the community. Z! Haukeness, our Bring Our War Dollars Home organizer, joined Pastor Ellen to share information on a growing effort to establish a state Futures Commission, to plan and help realize sustainable, community-centered economic development.

The assembly unanimously passed our organizational budget and Board slate for 2014 (see *wnpj.org/budgets* and *wnpj.org/board*). In addition to Tracy Littlejohn, who's a community activist and member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, we welcome to our Board Frank Koehn of Ashland, a treaty rights and environmental advocate challenging the proposed open-pit iron mine with the Penokee Hills Education Project. We also passed new Bylaws for WNPJ, slightly amended from our original proposal, following a thoughtful discussion (see *wnpj.org/history-and-mission*).

The awards reception highlighted the power of networking, as our emcee, Ho-Chunk Nation President Jon Greendeer, discussed the Tribe's opposition to frac sand mining with Senior Peacemaker of the Year Pat Popple. Youth Peacemaker Key Jackson was joined by several student organizers, and Adult Peacemaker Babette Grunow challenged us to expand our activism. Sharon Whitney, our Dennis Bergren LGBTQ Advocacy Award winner, was unable to come but was well represented by GSAFE's Brian Juchems and PFLAG-Madison's Joann Elder.

Our Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Al Gedicks, brought many from the La Crosse area and as far away as New York to recognize and thank him for his invaluable research, writing and advocacy on the dangers of mining. It was especially meaningful to honor Al just weeks before the tenth anniversary of the grassroots victory over the Crandon mine. Al's expert knowledge and passion for social justice were evident, as he reminded us that without public approval - referred to in the industry as a social license to operate - GTac will not be able to dig its open-pit iron mine into Wisconsin's Penokee Hills, Following his remarks, members of the UW-La Crosse Native American Students Association presented Al with a beautiful Native Star quilt blanket.



Special thanks to WNPJ's many volunteers. Sheila Spear and Ilana Caplan put together our last newsletter, and Fred Brancel, Kathy Walsh, Judith Klehr, Josh Steward and Steve Books prepared it for mailing. Annie Dutcher, Tom McGrath, Tracy Littlejohn and Carlos Miranda planned our fall events, with Liz Bruno, Barb Munson and Jessie Read making sponsor calls. Thanks to Kathy for her office help; to Annie, Carlos and Josh for volunteering with Community Shares of Wisconsin, on behalf of WNPJ; and to Liz, Janet Parker, Carlos, Juan Gonzales and Grace Milanowski for their help with our peace wreath fundraiser.



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