



Interweave Connect

May 2013

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The Interweave Continental Board welcomes your articles for *Interweave Connect*. All articles will be given consideration for printing in our newsletter. Please note that members of the *Interweave Connect* staff reserve the right to edit all articles.

Dear Interweave Members and Friends,

Last month our newsletter focused on health issues related to our aging LGBTQ population. The focus of this May issue is our LGBTQ youth. Both groups are important to us because of their individual needs and concerns.

In this issue, you will learn about several LGBTQ youth programs that our congregations have initiated. May they inspire you and provide ideas of what your congregation might be doing. And if your congregation already has programs involving your LGBTQ youth, please send Nisco an article! Let us know what you are doing. We are here to communicate and support each other through this newsletter!

GA in Louisville has been the focus of our board member energies during the past month and more. Here are projects we are working on:

- Annual Interweave Continental Banquet – a fabulous luncheon, noon to 1:30pm on Friday, June 21! Buy your tickets ahead of time, or at our booth in the exhibit hall. More details in our June newsletter.
- LGBTQ Minister's Reception – second annual celebratory reception, co-sponsored with the UUA, 7:00-8:30pm on Saturday, June 22, just before the Ware Lecture!
- 2013 Sermon Contest
- 2013 Mark DeWolfe Award
- Our Transgender Curriculum, to be unveiled at GA Louisville! Come to the Interweave Continental booth and learn more!

We hope to see many of you at GA!

All good wishes,

Maryka Bhattacharyya

Board President

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Annual Interweave Continental Banquet and LGBTQ Minister's Reception

Come Join the 2013 Annual Interweave Continental Banquet and LGBTQ Minister's Reception at GA in Louisville!!

The Interweave Continental GA Banquet will provide a wonderful luncheon on Friday, June 21, at noon – 1:30pm at the Marriott Downtown. Purchase tickets ahead of time via instructions in the June newsletter. At GA, get tickets at the Interweave Continental booth in the Exhibit Hall. Come check us out!!

You are sure to be inspired by Interweave's Award-Winning Sermon, our Mark DeWolfe award winner's exceptional and long-term action in support of the LGBTQ community, and by the great food and great camaraderie of peers from so many different congregations!

The second annual LGBTQ



Interweave Continental GA Banquet 2012



2012 Minister's Reception

Minister's Reception, co-sponsored by the UUA and Interweave Continental, will take place on Saturday evening, June 22, at 7:00 - 8:30pm, just before the Ware Lecture!! Ministers, ministerial students, and allies are welcome to join in conversation and in celebration of each other, as you provide important role models and leadership to the LGBTQ communities both within and outside of our congregations. We honor you and invite you to meet and to exchange ideas and experiences.



2012 Minister's Reception

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Board Member Election to be held at GA Interweave Banquet

Interweave Continental will hold its 2013 annual meeting in Louisville. During the GA Interweave Banquet on Friday, June 21 (noon to 1:30 pm), there will be a board member election! In addition to great food and camaraderie, the banquet will allow us to officially elect board members who joined the board in-between annual meetings of the membership.

On the ballot will be: Tova Vitiello, our newsletter editor; Nisco Junkins, our newsletter production manager, the Rev. Michelle LaGrave, our direct connection to ministerial issues, and Rich Charbonneau, our webmaster and newest member. Go to <http://www.interweaveuu.org/index.php/about/meettheboard> to learn about all but our newest

member. See below for insight into our webmaster, Rich Charbonneau.

In addition to voting for board members, we will also vote to change the by-laws to allow Interweave Continental to conduct business via electronic balloting. This will allow for more participation of our many members.

A BIG THANK YOU to all of our board members who conduct the business of Interweave Continental at the national level, and to you in our congregations who invest so effectively in the LGBTQ community at the grass roots level. We look forward to seeing y'all at GA in Louisville!

Rich Charbonneau has been a member of the Unitarian Society of Hartford for more than 15 years. Previous responsibilities at USH have included serving on a ministerial search committee, and over the past year serving as chair of the local Interweave chapter. A Clinical Psychologist by training, Rich has been leading drug development teams in the



pharmaceutical industry for the last 12+ years. Prior to working in the pharmaceutical industry, Rich practiced in the clinic; treating patients in both in- and out-patient settings. He also served as Director of a Behavioral Health Research at mid-size community hospital for over 5 years. Rich is the proud dad of his 8-year-old son and lives in Connecticut. Outside of

work, some of Rich's interests include: skiing, running, biking, hiking & kayaking.



Tova Vitiello moved from New Jersey to Iowa City, Iowa in order to attend graduate school. She is a retired psychology professor and therapist. She is also a published poet. At age fifty-nine, Tova hiked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. She was a co-founder of Lesbian Alliance, and an active member of New Jewish Agenda and Women Against Racism.

Tova has taught classes on human sexuality and she has conducted anti-oppression workshop across the country. In 2003, she was invited to speak at the 16th World Conference of Sexology in Havana, Cuba where she spoke about lesbian relationships. Recently, she conducted an LGBTQ workshop in Iowa City. Presently, Tova is co-chair of Interweave at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City, and she is the editor of *Interweave Connect*, the Interweave Continental newsletter. Tova enjoys kayaking, tennis, and the children in her life .

Board Member Election to be held at GA Interweave Banquet continued from page 4



Rev Michelle LaGrave

currently serves the First Congregational Parish, Unitarian in Petersham, Massachusetts, as its Developmental Minister; a short-term ministry focused on supporting a small, rural congregation in meeting its developmental goals.

She received a Master of Divinity degree from Andover Newton Theological School in 2010. Prior to pursuing her calling to ministry, Michelle worked in a variety of non-profit early education, museum, and hospice settings. She also holds a MS degree in early childhood education, child development, and leadership from Wheelock College and a BA degree in history and anthropology from Connecticut College. Rev Michelle sees her calling to ministry as a natural culmination of her life's interest in working with and empowering people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Rev Michelle met her lifelong partner in seminary when they found themselves in the same pastoral care for GLBT people class. They remained together through the trials and tribulations of her partner's transition from female to male. Michelle and Micah were married last summer in a joyous celebration on the beach. They now live in Petersham with their FIV+ foster cat, Tommy and their dog, Naomi. Michelle sits on the steering committee of TRUUST (transgender religious UUs together) and is ever-willing to speak out about her experiences in living the queer/transgender life.

Nisco Junkins has been active on the board starting two years ago, when her partner Marilyn Junkins suggested to the board that Nisco join because of her work with the Interweave Chapter at the UU Church of Eugene, OR. Nisco saw the need to have Interweave Continental become as dynamic as it had been in the past. With her software skills and the help of other board members, Nisco generates the *Interweave Connect* monthly newsletter and emails it to all ~1100 UU Congregations. In addition to doing all the layout design for Interweave Connect, Nisco corresponds with our UU congregations and maintains connections with Interweave Connect contributors. She is in contact with the UUA Welcoming Congregations Office, the OWL Program, PFLAG (Parents, Families of Lesbians and Gays), and SAGE (Services & Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Elders), as well as numerous LGBTQA individuals. Nisco will tell you that she never expected to see a Black president of the USA, or the end of "don't ask...." Nor did she envision marriage equality becoming a reality in some states. But, Nisco believes that Interweave Continental's work is not done, and the newsletter is a significant part of



the that work. Nisco's outreach to LGBTQA individuals and their congregations has made it possible for Interweave Continental to grow in individual memberships and in Interweave chapters. Nisco says that her work on *Interweave Connect* is a labor of love.



UUA's Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education

Imagine sitting in a middle school health class on human sexuality. The Teacher uses the following phrases: "While men have a penis and scrotum, women have a vulva and vagina...." "When a boy and girl like each other...." "When a man and woman have intercourse...." "Couples use contraceptives during sex to prevent pregnancy...."

Those statements wouldn't faze heterosexual students whose biological sex as males or females are congruent with their gender identities as young men and women. However, the language discriminates against students who don't fit into strictly defined sexual identity architecture. Youth who are attracted to same-sex partners, who are intersex or transgender, or who identify as queer or by other identities usually don't see themselves reflected in their school health lessons.

The UUA's Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education lifespan curricula is a much-needed solution. It helps participants embody the sexual values of self-worth, sexual health, sexual responsibility, and sexual justice and inclusivity. "Normalizing all gender identities and orientations is enormously important, and OWL accomplishes this goal not only through statements of fact, but also in role plays, readings, language, guest panels, and activities such as practicing how to ask a same-gendered or differently gendered person out. Inclusivity is the norm in OWL settings, creating safe places for participants to explore and express their sexual identity," says Judith Frediani, the UUA's Curriculum Director.

OWL's precursor was the About Your Sexuality (AYS) curriculum, which focused on providing accurate information about sexual development and expression.



In 1999, the UUA and United Church of Christ (UCC) jointly published OWL for grades 7-9 as the first in a series of comprehensive lifespan sexuality education curricula. OWL curricula for grades K-1, 4-6, 10-12, and adults were published in 2000; OWL grades 7-9 was updated in 2005; and in 2008, OWL for young adults was published. The highly anticipated second edition of OWL grades 7-9 will be published in May 2014.



"The second edition of OWL for grades 7-9 will include workshops on bullying and bystander responsibilities; social media and internet use; and body image and self-esteem, among other topics. These subjects are especially important to youth who may be discriminated against due to their sexual identity and to youth who may be questioning their

sexual identity," says Melanie Davis, OWL Program Associate for the UUA.

Although OWL has never been evaluated by researchers (because of the difficulties of measuring the extent to which participants embody sex-positive, justice-oriented values), thousands of OWL graduates illustrate the need for, and popularity of, the program. According to Frediani, "we don't get much youth feedback during or immediately after OWL middle school programs, but when graduates reach high school and college, they start to sing the praises of the OWL workshops they took in middle school when they were thirteen." Some of the most

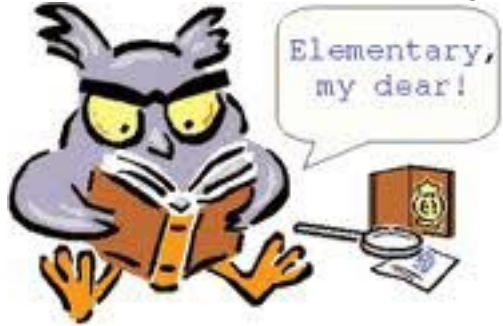
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UUA's Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education continued from page 6

moving comments are from LGBTQ OWL graduates who credit OWL with improving or even saving their lives.

Trained OWL facilitators and supportive congregations are keys to the success of OWL programs. To date, approximately 7,000 facilitators have been trained in at least one level of OWL. More than half of all UU congregations



have adopted one or more grade levels of OWL.

Facilitators report parent feedback regarding conversations that wouldn't have been possible prior to their children's participation in OWL workshops. A 2010 OWL facilitator survey respondent said: "We teach, address, and answer questions that these young folks are not able to ask anywhere else--such critical information for them to make informed choices. They teach their friends and acquaintances, so it has a ripple effect too." Frediani states that

OWL gives congregations a way to express support for LGBTQ members, friends, and youth. In essence, offering OWL is a way of saying, "we acknowledge and accept you."

In addition, says Frediani, "OWL nurtures allies within a dominant culture of people who identify as heterosexual and gender congruent. It builds empathy, provides information, increases compassion, and calls for social justice and action based on UU principles."

OWL Bill of Rights

Program participants have the right to: Space here and then no spaces , for example

Ask any questions they have about sexuality

Receive full and accurate information about sexuality.

Gain the knowledge and values they need to make decisions about sexual matters.

Be supported in sexual expression that is healthy and life affirming.

Be treated with respect by facilitators and other participant.

Melanie Davis

OWL Program Associate

Unitarian Universalist Association



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Coming Out and Keeping the Faith ~ A Community Event

How strong do people have to be to reconcile their GLBTQ identity and their faith in the face of family, religious and community rejection? The short answer is: incredibly strong.

On April 3, 2013, that strength was demonstrated at the “Coming Out and Keeping the Faith” a community event at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, MA. Eighty plus attendees listened to six panelists speak. There were three young adults from the GLBTQ community and three religious leaders from the community.

The event was sponsored by LGBTQ Welcoming Communities of Faith (Welcoming Faiths), a coalition of open and affirming congregations in the Merrimack Valley, MA, and PFLAG Greater Boston. The evening’s discussion addressed one of the biggest and most divisive issues facing the GLBTQ community: bullying in the name of religion.

The three young adult GLBTQ panelists illustrated how religion factored into the anguish and rejection they felt from family, community, and even themselves, as they struggled to reconcile their faith and their sexuality. Kate spoke about her conservative parents who rejected her based on their religion. Carlo talked of being afraid he would “burn in hell” for his growing realization of his sexuality. Zach prayed nightly that God would “make

him straight.” He, also, shared examples of the abuse he experienced from his peers that ultimately lead him to attempt suicide.

In response to these emotional stories, the religious leaders on the panel offered perspectives on how their faiths focus on acceptance, inclusion and understanding. Reverend Lara Hoke of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Andover and Rabbi Karen Landy of Havurat Shalom, Andover talked about their congregations’ long-time acceptance of the GLBTQ community. Bill Henson, founder of “Lead Them Home,” spoke of his evangelical beliefs and his commitment to including all people who want to embrace his faith, regardless of sexual orientation. Personally and professionally, they expressed their own stories and reiterated their belief that all people, no matter who they are, deserve a chance to embrace

a faith. As Reverend Lara Hoke put it, “God loves diversity.”

It is the ongoing mission of Welcoming Faiths to build upon the strength of the open and accepting spirit of their member congregations so that we can be as strong as the people who choose to join us. To find out more about Welcoming Faiths, find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/WelcomingFaiths](https://www.facebook.com/WelcomingFaiths) or email us at welcomingfaiths@gmail.com.

Tad Bickford

UU Congregation in Andover, MA



McVAGLY

McVAGLY is the Merrimack Valley Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth. Allies are welcome. McVAGLY aims to provide Merrimack Valley GLBT youth a safe environment to gather weekly to discuss issues that may not be adequately addressed elsewhere. These issues may include coming out, safe sex, the effectiveness of high school and middle school GSA’s, suicide, and GLBT rights in the community. All meetings are facilitated by high school and college students and chaperoned by adults twenty-five+ yrs.

We Meet: Every Monday evening from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Where: North Parish Unitarian Universalist Church in old North Andover Center.

(If you are at the church looking at the front, we meet in a room on the Great Pond Road side of the church.

Tad Bickford

UU Congregation in Andover, MA

Rainbow Connections

This past March, 2013, "Rainbow Connections" observed its one year anniversary. We have had as few as one kid show up, and as many as twelve. Some might question the success of our program on the days that only one attends. However, as a UU minister, I can strongly relate to the story of Jesus saving that one sheep. Several times, we have helped just one or two kids not feel so alone. We have supported their navigation through their newfound LGBTQ identity. We are convinced that we are saving lives, one kid at a time.

Recently, we have created an additional program offering. We are able to be e-pals to kids who cannot



attend meetings. Through P-Flag (who has monthly meetings at our church), we were told about a teenage girl who was "at the end of her rope." She had come out to her parents as a lesbian, but they did not approve. We immediately connected her with one of our "regulars" at Rainbow Connections, and an e-pal

relationship commenced for which the girl is grateful. Since then, we have been offering our e-pal program on our Facebook page.

Our LGBTQ Task Force is happy to consult with other UU churches. If your congregation would like to establish a Rainbow Connections program, please contact us. We will share our experiences with you.

Even in a place like the Los Angeles area, there is need for Rainbow Connections, and UU churches are well-suited to take this on. It is both rewarding and fun to "own" this project. For example, a Latino boy was driven all the way up from South Central LA by his Catholic mother and grandmother. "There is nowhere else for him to go," they said. He hasn't been back in a while. Perhaps the distance was too far for his mother and grandmother. Perhaps they felt UUism was too different from their concept of Jesus. I am sure of one thing. Rainbow Connections made a difference in that teenager's life. He now knows there are and will be places for him to be himself, as soon as he's able to get there.

Rev. Hannah Petrie, Associate Minister, has served the Neighborhood UU Church of Pasadena for almost six years.





WAGLY's Second Birthday

with Jujubee and Jessica Wild from the second season of RuPaul's Drag Race.



WAGLY is an organization for GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning) and allied high school youth in the MetroWest Area of Boston. As part of the GLBT Youth Group Network of Massachusetts (also known as the "AGLY Network"), we provide weekly social and support opportunities for youth across the region.

WAGLY is a nonprofit organization with the mission of supporting the social, emotional and physical well-being of GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning) high school youth and allies in the MetroWest Boston area by creating and sustaining social and educational programs through peer leadership and adult guidance.

“Silent Lives: How High a Price?” by Sara Boesser

(FREE COPIES of LARGE PRINT BOOK AVAILABLE)

Sara Boesser, a member of PFLAG in Juneau, Alaska, is offering free copies of large print editions of her book, *Silent Lives: How High a Price?* The standard print edition of her book was published in 2004. The large print edition is the first large print book by its publisher, University Press of America, Inc. It is in 20 PT Arial font for optimal readability. (See the book review by Nancy Hardesty in the edition of *Interweave Connect*.)

Silent Lives: How High a Price?

This work combines autobiographical sources, personal interviews, and questions for reflection to explore issues relevant to everyone’s sexual orientation or gender status, be they heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersexual. Very few books address these topics for low-vision readers.

PFLAG Juneau has received a grant to give away FREE copies of this book to those who will enjoy it, and/or who will place copies in locations that meet the goals of the grant. According to the grant, free large print copies of *Silent Lives* will be given to people who will appreciate it, and to organizations who will benefit from it, such as long-term care facilities, retirement homes, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, hospices, AARP chapters, PFLAG chapters, religious leaders, faith organizations libraries, organizations or individuals who provide services to aging LGBTI people, and to those who provide large print books for low-vision people of any age or any orientation.

If you would like one or several copies of the **FREE LARGE PRINT edition**, let Sara know. Email her at bsara.alaska@gci.net and include your mailing address and let her know if it’s a personal use copy for yourself or a gift, or where you hope to place the book. She’ll send books as long as the supply lasts.

And feel free to tell others who may be interested.

PS -- *Silent Lives* is **also available as a Kindle book** at Amazon.com,

and is **also an audio** book available through Learning Ally. Go to the Learning Ally site and search in their Book Catalog with “Boesser.”

To purchase copies of standard and large print editions:

LARGE PRINT edition available at Amazon.com,

ISBN 978-0761856610.

Standard print edition ISBN 0761829687.



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BOOK REVIEW:

Silent Lives: How High a Price?

by Sara L. Boesser

Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, an imprint of University Press of America, 2004

Reviewed by Nancy A. Hardesty, 2005, Professor of Religion at Clemson University, Clemson, SC. and author of many books.

For individuals, congregations, or study groups discussing issues of sexuality, Sara Boesser's book provides a valuable resource. The book is subtitled "For Personal Reflections and Group Discussions about Sexual Orientation."

Boesser, a graduate of the University of Washington, has lived in Alaska for many years, where she has been a tireless advocate for human rights.

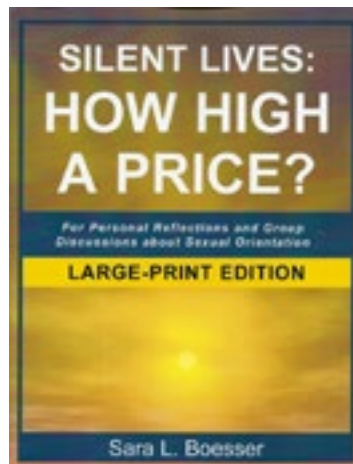
The premise of this book is that when lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons are compelled by social norms to "pass" as heterosexual, everyone in society loses.

Many studies have shown the detrimental health consequences of stress, and certainly hiding one's sexual orientation from family, friends, members of one's church, and colleagues at work takes a serious toll. Boesser also reminds us that straight people lose as well when there is a "veil of silence." Family and friends are not as close and intimate as they would like to be. Prejudices, ignorance, and discrimination are unchallenged and allowed to continue. Society deprives itself of the diversity, creativity, and spiritual energies that gay people could bring to the table if they were allowed to just be themselves. This is also an issue that has a negative impact on young children, tweens, and teens as well, robbing them of diverse role models and making life especially difficult for those who do not fit rigid heterosexist norms, whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or not.



Sara L. Boesser

Boesser offers a useful array of discussion questions and exercises for individual and group learning. Her endnotes include helpful definitions and resources. [NOTE: endnotes are only provided in the Standard Print edition.]



This is a book that can be used by religious, educational, and civic groups. Acknowledging her appreciation for the work of Virginia Ramey Mollenkott and Letha Dawson Scanzoni in *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* Boesser integrates religious issues into this work but does not focus on them. Thus this work brings forward fresh questions and positive points that can be raised in a variety of social and civic arenas where human rights issues remain to be resolved.

Silent Lives: How High a Price? is a new approach and very helpful addition to the national dialog concerning human sexuality.

Dr. Nancy A. Hardesty is Professor of Religion at Clemson University, Clemson, SC. and author of many books.

UU YOUTH ROCK! The Youth at UU Congregation of Atlanta

As a board leader at the UU Congregation of Atlanta (UUCA), I'm always on the look-out for ways to help our congregants experience our faith in new ways. Here's one thing I've learned: if you want a fresh perspective, look to your congregation's youth and they will provide it!

Today's teens are so open-minded, it will amaze you. For the past two years, I have been the facilitator for one of the Youth RE sessions. I discussed LGBTQIQ-related issues with them. During that time, it was most interesting for me to discover how the Youth were already "out front" in their thinking on those LGBTQIQ-related issues.

Every spring, our high school youth take responsibility to plan and lead a Sunday service focused on a specific theme. In 2012, the Youth Service theme was their support for the LGBTQIQ community. Suffice it to say that there was not a dry eye in the house after some youth spoke as allies; some read personal stories; and they sang their powerful messages of inclusion and support to all in attendance. Kudos to the youth, as well as the adult advisors and our RE staff who guide this process each year.

Our current excitement is that eight UUCA youth will be attending the UUA General Assembly in Louisville this year! The youth group has done fundraising within the congregation, and they were able to obtain a grant from the UUA. In addition, the "recruited" adults who will be attending GA to be their sponsors. They did this all in a matter of a couple weeks! I'm looking forward to serving as a GA sponsor for several young men who will be going to their first GA.

The next exciting thing that I hope UUCA will accomplish this year is to model after the UUA by engaging one or more Youth Observers as part of the UUCA Board of Trustees. To learn more about this idea, and to get inspired about the many ways you can engage and involve youth in your congregation, check out this UUA resource:
http://uua.org/documents/yaya/130207_brd_rpt_lead.pdf

Joetta Prost, Interweave member
and President of the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian
Universalist Congregation of Atlanta



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Pride in June and Pride in August

During the month of June, many individuals and organizations gather together to celebrate LGBTQ pride. In August of this year, we have another reason to be proud.

Many people will celebrate the 50th anniversary of "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. August is, also, the twenty-six anniversary of the death of Bayard Rustin.

Bayard Rustin was the man who envisioned and organized the largest nonviolent protest in United States history. Bayard Rustin was the genius behind the March on Washington. Bayard Rustin was a gay man. He died on August 24, 1987.

Because of heterosexism and homophobia, Rustin's dedication to equality and human rights has been silenced for years. However, people are beginning to acknowledge him and his work. Interweave Connect wants to recognize his achievements and his struggles in this issue, so you can consider learning more about him and perhaps organize an event in August to honor Bayard Rustin.

Tova Vitiello

Interweave Connect, Editor



Bayard Rustin (1912-1987)

On August, 28, 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his, now famous, "I Have a Dream" speech during the "The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." This year, 2013, is the 50th anniversary of that event. Unfortunately, few people know about the man who envisioned and organized the largest demonstration in United States history, Bayard Rustin.

Bayard Rustin was born in West Chester, Pennsylvania on March 17, 1912 to an unwed seventeen-year-old. Rustin was raised by his grandparents. His grandmother, Julia Rustin, a Quaker, was a major influence in his life. During his youth, Bayard Rustin, also, became a Quaker and a pacifist and a political activist.

In December, 1955, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. initi-

ated a bus boycott. In February, 1956, Rustin went to Montgomery to help with the protest against bus segregation.. At that time, Martin Luther King, Jr. was not an advocate for nonviolence. It was Rustin who taught him about Gandhi and nonviolent protest. It was Rustin who, also, encouraged other civil rights leaders to use Gandhian techniques in their demonstrations.

However, Rustin and his contributions remained in the background. During the boycott, Rustin was hidden in the trunk of a car and secretly driven from Montgomery. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders in the Black Civil Rights Movement felt that an openly gay man would discredit them and their cause.

Although there was much debate and controversy about whether or not to ask Rustin to continue to advise Martin Luther King, Jr., King argued that Rustin, a brilliant, political strategist, was the only person who

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had the ability to organize a large, nonviolent demonstration. Rustin became the Deputy Director and chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

Because of Rustin's organizational skills, the march gathered people from every state in the nation. Estimates about the size of participation ranged from 250,000 to 400,000. One thing was for sure. It was unprecedented. It was the largest nonviolent protest in United States history.

Due to Bayard Rustin's political strategies, the March on Washington, established the political climate for the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was viewed as a man of peace and nonviolence. However, Rustin's intellectual genius and abilities did not shield him from being called a "homosexual pervert" by those who were against equal rights, and by those who were arguing for equal rights. Bayard Rustin was surrounded by heterosexism and homophobia, and constantly attacked for being a gay man.

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked Rustin to stay in the shadows when Strom Thurmond tried to connect "gay" to the Black civil rights movement. Because Rustin was viewed as an "immoral influence," King

wanted to distance himself.

In 1960 when Representative Adam Clayton Powell challenged King in regard to having a gay man as a member of his staff, Martin Luther King, Jr. publicly severed connections with Rustin. However, Rustin continued to serve as an advisor to Martin Luther King, Jr. until his assassination in 1968.

Bayard Rustin had a ten-year-relationship with Walter Naegle. It ended when Rustin died on August 24, 1987 in New York.

Rustin's biography is not only significant for lesbians, gays and Blacks. It is the story of a man who confronted and worked for social change and human rights.

For more information:
The 2003 documentary, "Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin," by filmmakers Nancy Kates and Bennett Singer authenticates the genius of a political thinker and strategic organizer whose achievements remained in the closet because he was openly

gay. As the film demonstrates, Bayard Rustin was forced into the shadows.

Tova Vitiello

Interweave, Co-chair

Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City

Interweave Connect, Editor

