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### Queer CUNY V Conference

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other perspectives to the conversation. One audience member noted (to at least one panelist's chagrin) that the panel was comprised of "older and middle aged folks." He contested both the assumption that today's generation of young queers was not as radical and the implication that "in the 70s, we were men and we were glorious."

Audience member Rosamond King addressed the absence of queers of color from the discussion. "If we're talking about who's sitting at the table, the reason that there are no black or Latino men or women or trans folks sitting at [the panelists'] table is not because they're all out getting AIDS." King also contested the panelists' framing of radical queer sexuality. "Whose sex is on your radar screen? You use butch and femme in the past tense. But there are hundreds of women in Brooklyn every weekend, it's entirely a butch-femme scene, it's entirely African American, it's entirely working class. Is that on anybody's radar screen? Are the play parties women are having all over the city and over the country on your radar screen?"

Another audience member remarked on the absence of trans voices in the discussion. She argued that trans bodies should be included in discussions of shame because of the way non-trans people fetishize transgender sexualities and bodies. She also argued against the idea that radical sexual communities were a thing of the past by pointing to new forms of transformative sexual communities—for example, the trans community's practice of surgery fundraisers.

One audience member's comments aptly summed up some of the evening's discussion. "There's a nostalgic yearning to go back to a time when we believed in the repressive hypothesis, when we thought that if we got laid often enough and well enough that somehow the world would change. In some ways it did. Gay and lesbian identities were consolidated through the opportunities that people had to have more sex in free association, to be able to group together in bars and other public spaces without being arrested. Communities did come together, but we know now that that isn't going to free you...In itself, sexual desire is not transformative." ♦

# Queer CUNY V Conference

BY LEONARD VOGT AND J. ELIZABETH CLARK

**T**he date **May 1** means different things to different people. Historically, May 1 is May Day, an international day of solidarity for workers. For Roman Catholics, May 1 is the opening day of the Month of the Virgin Mary. For queers at CUNY, May 1 was the date of the fifth annual Queer CUNY conference.

The previous four Queer CUNY conferences were hosted by the Graduate Center and three senior colleges (Queens, Hunter, Baruch); therefore, the student group SAGA (Straight and Gay Alliance) here at LaGuardia was considerably honored to be asked at the end of last year's conference to be the host and organizer of Queer CUNY V. This was the first time this CUNY-wide event was held on a community college campus.

The conference opened with a welcome from Monica Walters and Leon Chung (president and vice-president of SAGA) who welcomed the participants and expressed their honor and pleasure in hosting Queer CUNY V. Faculty co-mentors Leonard Vogt and Liz Clark from the English Department reviewed the conference program and awarded the 2004 Queer CUNY Award for Courage and Activism to New Paltz Mayor Jason West for his outstanding leadership in Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/ Questioning (LGBTQ) concerns. On February 27, 2004, Mayor West married 25 same-sex couples and now faces 19 misdemeanor counts for solemnizing a marriage without a license. Mayor West stated, "Our Constitution requires equal protection for all New Yorkers. . . . My hope is that someday soon mayors and officials in villages and towns across the country will be able to perform marriage ceremonies for all committed couples, no matter their gender."

The conference featured networking opportunities for queer students, faculty and staff throughout City University with the "Wheel of CUNY," a clever "Wheel of Fortune" type game where campus after campus came to the stage to report on queer concerns on their campuses. John-Wesley Caudill (former SAGA president and a founder of Queer CUNY) moderated this section of the day like a true game show host.

Since LaGuardia is "The World's Community College," SAGA chose as our theme "Celebrating the Global Rainbow," which was reflected in several workshops. "Planet AIDS: The International Impact of HIV/AIDS" reviewed the current global state of AIDS, the political currency of AIDS in the U.S. and the way in which the conservative U. S. agenda is driving national and international policy. In addition, this session included a discussion of international LGBTQ human rights in relation to HIV/AIDS policy. Another workshop, "Queer Planet: International Queer Politics," introduced a panel of distinguished international LGBTQ organizations that explained their work and invited participants to get involved in advocacy for international queer issues.

Other workshops dealt with: the creation of LGBTQ clubs and the need for Safe Zone training across CUNY; the experiences of instructors teaching queer/gay and lesbian texts and the implications of using queer texts with pedagogy and the teaching of writing; the common issues and differences transgender people have with other members of the queer community; experiences of combating homophobia in sports and fitness; the queer youth movement in the U.S. and around the world; themes of queer/gay language to define identity; and health and public policy issues that affect the LGBTQ community.

The formal conference activities of the day concluded with a welcome from President Gail O. Mellow, who introduced the keynote speaker for Queer CUNY V, New York City Commissioner Verna Eggleston. The plenary which followed pulled together the events of the day and precipitated plans for the hosting of next year's Queer CUNY VI. A dinner dance, held in the atrium, celebrated five successful years of Queer CUNY conferences.

The Queer CUNY V organizing committee is immensely grateful to the LaGuardia community which pulled together to make this conference such a success: Student Life and Development, Academic Affairs, The President's Office, Marketing and Communication, The Events Office, Buildings and Grounds, the Print Shop, Media Services, Public Safety, the Theatre Staff, the Women's Center, SAGA, and of course, our amazing Organizing Committee\*. This conference would not have happened without everyone's hospitality and generosity. ♦

*J. Elizabeth Clark and Leonard Vogt are both on the faculty in English at LaGuardia Community College.*

\*Queer CUNY V Organizing Committee: Tony Allicino, Andrew Bailiss, Lenore Beaky, Farrah Benoit, Krista Berry, Phil Botwinick, John-Wesley Caudill, Leon Chung, J. Elizabeth Clark, Mae Dick, Gregory Faulkner, Alexis D. Frazier, Brian Goldstein, Raymond Ho, David A. Housel, Marisa Klages, Alejandro Lopez, Raquel Namuche, Justine Nichols, Peter Nickowitz, Tom Regan, Alan Reiff, Gary Richmond, Diann Slade, Leonard Vogt, Monica Walters, Sei Yoshioka. Queer CUNY V was also co-sponsored by CLAGS.