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Report from the National LGBTQ Students of Color Summit

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spatializing aspects of the Patriot Act, which creates "Patriotic citizenship" (through the "report your neighbor" TIPS program, for example) and concentric networks of surveillance and control. While "the terrorist" may seem to be constructed solely through race, in fact normative sexuality serves to construct a fictional private realm of whiteness which is notionally separate from the "of color" terrorist. Citing Chicago professor Cathy Cohen, Puar argued that heteronormativity is about race and class privilege as well, and (as Foucault suggested) that queer sex must therefore be seen in the realm of biopolitics and state racism.

Many of the questions after the panel focused upon the situation at the Chelsea Piers. One questioner asked what kinds of solutions progressives might propose to the noise problems in the area. While some in the audience noted that there had been a drop-in center in the past, and that the city had promised (yet failed) to rebuild it, many of the panelists challenged the terms of the question. Guzman noted that "noise" is here a coding for non-white racial groups, and wondered how it was that a high-fiving white man is less offensive to white residents than black kids. Rivera-Colon additionally suggested that we should not put ourselves in the position of only cleaning up after neoliberalism's messes. Other questioners asked about the recent election, wondering what kind of a difference, if any, it would have made if Kerry had been successful, and asking how to best organize against the Right in general. Panelists generally conceded that neoliberalism's logic extended through both Bush and Kerry, and that neither would have helped the situation at the piers. Ditmore noted that some measures, such as the Global Gag Rule, affect NGOs operating outside the US, and that Kerry would have made some difference there. Not surprisingly, little consensus was reached regarding an overall direction for organizing, and Puar noted the limits of sexual strategies of liberation, arguing that the logics of public sex, for example, did not necessarily undermine the logic of racism, nor did they seem to much affect the racist structure of the criminal justice system. Rivera-Colon suggested that the only way groups seemed to get any attention within the current moment was essentially to riot or otherwise directly disrupt the functioning of the system. With the recent electoral loss perhaps driving home a sense of urgency, commentators on both the panel and in the audience seemed keen to address the challenges ahead in a more direct rather than indirect manner. ♦

Kerwin Kaye is a Ph.D. student in American Studies at NYU. His dissertation concerns issues of addiction.

Report from the National LGBTQ Students of Color Summit

BY SHAWN TA SMITH

I've always imagined finding a space where gender is not assumed, where women are undeniably and understandably attracted to each other, and where men embrace without fear. I found this space at the National Summit for LGBTQ Students of Color on the day of my 22nd birthday, January 15th, 2005. Over two nights and three days, the United States Student Association hosted a national summit filled with grassroots organizing workshops, "how-tos" for your campus, methods on how to challenge homophobia from other student groups while still building alliances, and late night dialogues on art and freedom of expression.

Upon arrival, I nervously held my breath as I walked into Ohio State University's Multicultural Center fashionably late, realizing the apprehension was weakening my bladder. As I skidded past the chatter of workshop participants in a nearby room and noted the bold black letters "Gender Neutral Bathroom," I recognized I was in a space safer than my usual college environment and let out a sigh as memorable as a lesbian's first kiss.

Who knew that something as simple as a National Summit for LGBTQ Students of Color was so long overdue? Heck, I hadn't even realized this meeting was the first of its kind. Fifty participants from across the US talked about common experiences, shared strategies for resisting racism and homophobia, and came up with tangible resources and strategies to take back to our campuses. Representing Brooklyn College, CUNY, I was relieved to meet students from commuter schools who also experienced antagonism toward queer people and spaces on their campuses, and who, like me, worked to challenge that hostility. I was thrilled to find myself in a space where race is talked about as something more than a paradigm of "non-white." *continued on page 24*



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But much of the real work happened in the evening. Once the formal workshops were over, and our pajamas were on, it seemed we saw each other for the first time. Cliques formed and intimate relationships spawned in the hotel rooms. My most intense moment was with four sisters who shared my sense of exhilaration--and loss--in finding ourselves in a space we could not own forever. After three hours involving many withdrawals from the Kleenex box, we each walked away with a newfound ownership of what we had created. It's difficult to measure the depth of emotion I felt in attending this country's first ever National Queer Student of Color conference and in finding myself in a space with other LGBTQ people of color.

Back in Brooklyn, I intend to bring this space with me wherever I go. This semester the Brooklyn College LGBTA will enforce a system for documenting homophobia on campus. I am also aiming to get this grassroots organizing training for CUNY following this year's Queer CUNY VI conference. Thanks to support from CLAGS, the Brooklyn College Center for Diversity and the Brooklyn College Women's Center, I was able to take part in this rewarding excursion. ♦

Shawnta Smith is a student at Brooklyn College, where she is an officer of the BC LGBT Alliance.