

University of Oregon establishes task force on lesbian and gay concerns

President Myles Brand has a strong commitment to affirmative action and to change the campus and its problems of heterosexism, racism and sexism

BY SARAH DOUGLAS

In May 1989, the then President of the University, Paul Olum, promised to establish a task force to investigate the eruption of overt harassment of lesbian and gay students on the campus. This was in response to death threats, shoving matches, verbal assaults and abusive posters experienced by openly gay Tim Hughes who was running for ASUO student body president. Hughes was not the first openly gay or lesbian person to run for president. Three previous ASUO presidents had been lesbian and subjected also to both sexual harassment and sexual orientation harassment. Hughes lost the election but blatant aggressive harassment of him, his running mate and lesbian and gay students has continued.

After Olum retired as President in July 1989, the new President, Myles Brand, took office with a strong commitment to affirmative action and to change the campus and its problems of heterosexism, racism and sexism. He made good Olum's promise to form a Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Concerns with the following charge:

[To] analyze the degree to which discrimination based on sexual orientation exists on the University campus and consequently negatively affects the academic or professional lives of students, faculty and staff [and] advise on ways the University can combat sexual orientation discrimination and create a more accepting environment for gays and lesbians.

To summarize its findings, the Task Force will produce a report for President Brand on

June 16, 1990.

After some initial problems in constituting the membership (specifically the lack of representation of people of color and a perceived underrepresentation of lesbian and gay people), the group began meeting weekly in January. During the third week of January members of the Task Force participated in a day long homophobia workshop led by Mary Li and Greg Asher from the Portland lesbian and gay community. The Task Force now has 24 active, committed members representing students, faculty, staff and administration. The co-chairs are faculty members Cheyney Ryan and me, Sarah Douglas.

In addition to a climate of acceptable harassment, the Task Force has found that although the University has a high level policy affirming the right of all individuals regardless of sexual orientation to equal opportunity in education and employment, it has never implemented it into detailed policies and daily operations. To begin to gather information, as well as increase community participation, the Task Force has split itself into six specialized sub-committees: Employment, Student Life/Services, Academic Curriculum, Harassment and Violence, Diversity and Campus Education.

Current or previous members of the University who would like to participate in this process or have been subject to harassment, violence, or discrimination based on sexual identity, contact GALA at 346-3360. (Confidentiality, if necessary, will be maintained.)

Iran begins homosexual genocide

"The religious punishment for the despicable act of homosexuality is death for both parties. . ."

— Iranian Chief Justice Morteza Moghtadai

BY REX WOCKNER

Iran on New Year's Day began an official extermination campaign against homosexuals, according to syndicated U.S. newspaper columnist Jack Anderson and broadcasts from Iran Radio.

Anderson reported that "three accused homosexual men were publicly beheaded in one of the city squares of Nahavand, and two accused lesbians were stoned to death in the city of Langrood."

"The new policy toward homosexuals" was announced on New Year's Eve in private meetings between Iranian Chief Justice Morteza Moghtadai and lower judges and court officials, Anderson said.

Moghtadai reportedly told the officials that "the religious punishment for the despicable act of homosexuality is death for both parties," and detailed five execution options: "beheaded by a sword," "stoned to death," "thrown down from a height such as a mountain or tall building," "die under the rubble of a wall demolished on their head," or "burned alive."

Anderson's managing editor, Daryl Gibson, said January 28 that sources for the column included contacts inside Iran.

Attempts to confirm Anderson's report, however, were met with shock by diplomatic officials reached by telephone in Teheran January 29 by this [US-based] journalist. The United States does not have diplomats in Iran but maintains an "interests section" at the Swiss embassy.

"Let me interrupt you," said Swiss embassy press attaché, Jean Daniel Bieler. "If

this is not an administrative or practical matter, it is not possible to discuss it by telephone. I am sorry for you, but we cannot speak about anything political on the telephone. You must understand our situation."

Asked about the news reports, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department in Washington said January 28, that "if they're bragging about [the anti-gay campaign] on radio, then it's probably true.

"Those people have committed so many grievous offenses against common decency, you shouldn't be surprised that this is just one more group of people who have been chosen for the regime's ire," said George Malleck, deputy public affairs advisor for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.

"They kill lots of people for lots of reasons, none of which make lots of sense."

Malleck ordered two computer searches through the State Department's Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "but nothing turned up, at least nothing that had been translated."

The 1989 edition of the *Spartacus International Gay Guide* reports that "sexual relationships between men are punishable by death" in Iran.

"However, this barbarous legal practice cannot change the fact," the book continued, "that homosexual sex is traditionally anything but uncommon in Iran, and this also goes for the Shiite clergy."

The book did not publish addresses for gay meeting places in Iran "because of the current mortal danger."

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