

New videos highlight struggle for lesbian and gay equality

Gay Lives and Cultural Wars, a new video showing "real gays and lesbians and their families," will premiere Oct. 24 at Portland's Clinton Street Theatre. But the video's co-producers say they'd ultimately like to take their project far beyond Oregon's borders.

"What we really hope to do is counter the lies that the right wing is constantly putting out about gays and lesbians—claims like gays recruit children and are all child molesters. We also feature

Video

families who have come to terms with a child's homosexuality," explains co-producer Barbara Bernstein, a journalist who has covered the religious right for years. "Unlike other videos, this one is specifically designed for people who think they don't know anyone who is lesbian or gay. We'd eventually like to distribute hundreds of copies nationally, including to members of Congress."

According to co-producer Elaine Velasquez, the tape runs approximately 30 minutes and includes coverage from Oregon, Florida and California. The video features legal experts, psychologists, ministers and a diverse array of gay men and lesbians, as well as their families.

"A lot of the footage is very moving," says Velasquez. "For instance, we profile Mary Griffith, whose gay son committed suicide back in 1983 by jumping from the Everett Street overpass. At that time, Mary Griffith was a very active fundamentalist Christian who was opposed to homosexuality. Her son, who was struggling with being gay, couldn't take it and killed himself. Because of that, Mary Griffith has become very active in the gay rights movement."

Bernstein and Velasquez are working with groups such as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, People of Faith Against Bigotry, and the Rural Organizing Project to distribute the video. Two years ago, the duo produced

Fighting for Our Lives, which focused specifically on the contentious Ballot Measure 9 campaign. "This is much more broad-based," says Velasquez. "We don't focus on one or two campaigns. We address a number of different issues and talk with people all over the nation."

Gay Lives and Cultural Wars will begin at 7 pm Monday, Oct. 24, at the Clinton Street Theatre, 2522 SE Clinton St. Tickets are \$5-\$10 sliding scale and will benefit the Portland chapter of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and Feather and Fin, Velasquez's production company. Copies of the tape are \$10, and can be obtained by calling (503) 452-6500.

On a related note, *Ballot Measure Nine*, a new video by filmmaker Heather MacDonald, will be shown at 7:30 pm Tuesday, Nov. 1, at the Northwest Film Center, Berg Swann Auditorium, 1219 SW Park Ave. in Portland.

MacDonald and a Portland crew shot hundreds of hours of tape documenting that campaign from both sides. Following the screening, Sweetwater, whose members include singers from the Portland Lesbian Choir and the Portland Gay Men's Cho-

rus, will perform. Admission is \$5-\$10 sliding scale and proceeds will benefit the Film Center and the Rural Organizing Project. The Berg Swann Auditorium is wheelchair accessible.

Inga Sorensen

What is The Straight Agenda?

Filmmakers John Binner and Jacqueline Turnure have produced an answer to the question on everyone's lips: "What is the straight agenda?" It's a blatantly anti-straight propaganda video made to parody *The Gay Agenda*, a video released in 1992 as part of the right wing attack on lesbians and gay men in Oregon. Binner and Turnure turn the tables on the religious right with this video.

It opens with scenes of pollution, desolation, hunger and overpopulation and moves on to link heterosexuality with these evils. Using the same strategy that was used in *The Gay Agenda*, the video delivers former heterosexuals who discuss the degradation of living the straight "lifestyle." A drag queen psychotherapist offers a "cure," and scenes from Mardi Gras and Fort Lauderdale's raunchy spring break festivities reveal the truth behind the myth of the heterosexual nuclear family.



Jackie Beat as Dr. Roberta Yeast in *The Straight Agenda*

In several scenes, Tony (Craig Chester), confesses the emptiness of his sexual conquests of women. He claims no personal aversion to straight people: "There's research to show they're possibly born that way."

One of the more entertaining aspects of the video is that as it begins, fact and fiction are so neatly merged that it takes a while to catch on to the parody. As scenes progress, they become more and more blatant. Heterosexual sex is made to sound like torture. Witness Audrey (San Francisco comedienne Suzy Berger), formerly married and miserable, now happily involved with a woman.

Binner is a Portland native whose work has screened at international film festivals in Berlin, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. Turnure is an award-winning filmmaker from Australia. The two were brought together by a mutual desire to expose the absurdity and inaccuracies of *The Gay Agenda*.

The Straight Agenda will be shown with *Gay Lives and Cultural Wars* on Monday, Oct. 24, at the Clinton Street Theatre.

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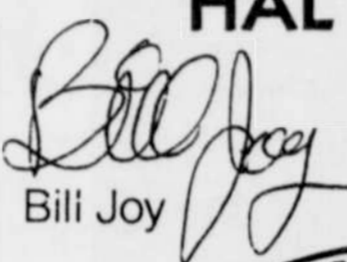
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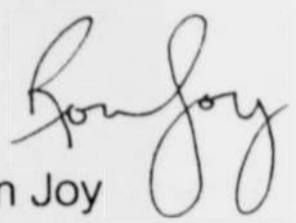


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