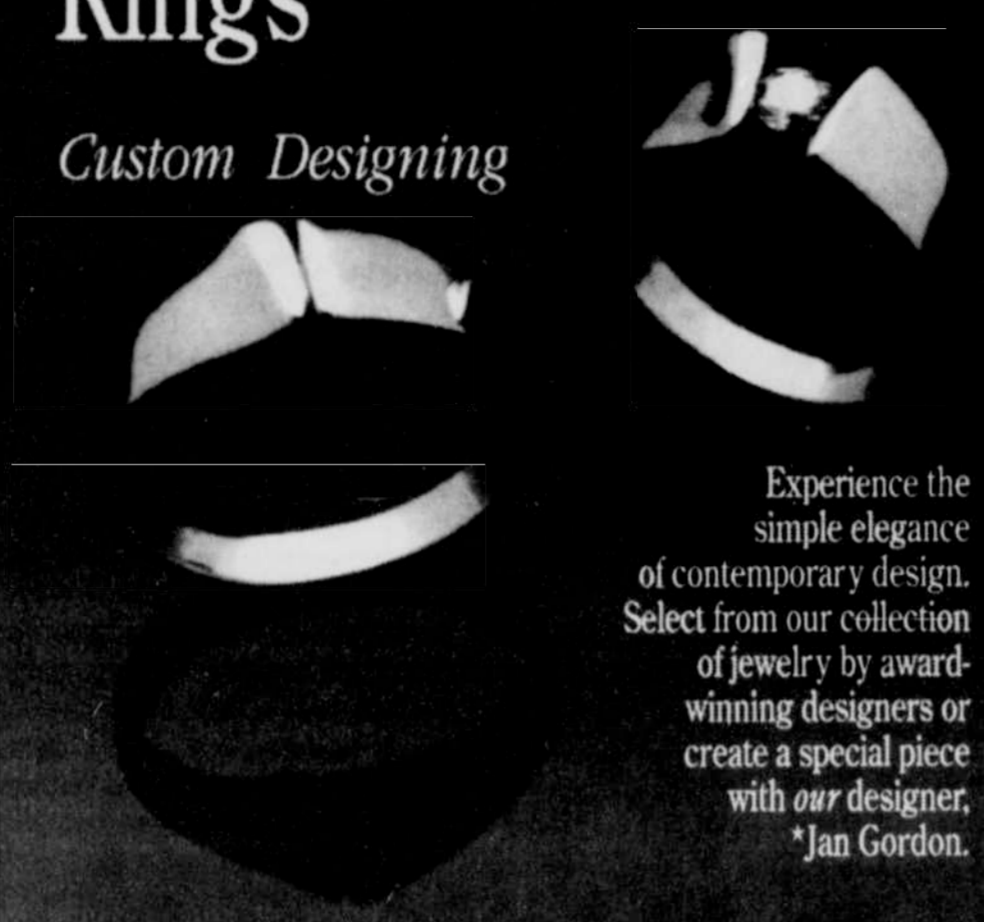


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Donahue's unbalanced act

Recently, Esther Newton—the lesbian author of *Mother Camp*, a book about drag—was asked to be a guest on an episode of Phil Donahue's show. Other guests included a well-known drag queen and the stars of the movie *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Hours before the taping, Newton was informed that Paul Cameron—a defrocked psychologist and noted homophobe—would also be on the panel of guests. Cameron's appearance would provide "balance," Donahue's producers argued.

Media briefs

Before the show was taped, the producers had been provided with ample documentation demonstrating that Cameron conducted fraudulent "research" on homosexuality and had no credibility as an expert on human sexuality. Nonetheless, they insisted on keeping Cameron in the line-up. Adrienne Wheeler—the Donahue producer who booked Cameron—assured Newton that "Phil would handle Cameron" and expose the pseudo-psychologist's disreputable career in hate-mongering.

According to Esther Newton, the talk show host did not "handle" Cameron at all. Instead, Phil's guests were left to fend for themselves. Once again, lesbian, gay and transgendered guests were forced into a debate with a homophobic lunatic—a move that too-often precludes any focused discussion of the issues that are (purportedly) at hand.

Would the producers of the Donahue show require Spike Lee to sit on stage with a member of the KKK, in order to "balance" a discussion of the director's film work? Could they insist that an interview with the cast of *Schindler's List* would be "unfair" unless a neo-Nazi was invited to participate? Journalists routinely include homophobic bigots in the coverage of any lesbian or gay subject. As Larry Gross of the University of Pennsylvania points out, this insidious media bias promotes "a dueling experts circus routine that legitimates homophobes as morally equal to gays."

Certainly, Paul Cameron's homophobic "research" agenda should be discussed on national television. But that discussion should take place in a forum dedicated to examining Cameron's claims. Cameron has published a slew of "research" pamphlets asserting—among other things—that most murderers and child molesters are gay, that lesbians are bad drivers, and that lesbians and gay men are not victims of hate violence but, instead, provoke physical assaults for political purposes. Rather than providing a privileged forum for homophobes to attack lesbians and gay men, talk shows should require Cameron and his ilk to defend their hateful lies.

Direct your comments to Patricia McMillan, Executive Producer, *The Phil Donahue Show*, NBC, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10112, (212) 664-6501, fax: (212) 757-5386.

Here's the story of a dyke named Brady...

For well over a decade, the familiar Brady Bunch refrain has chimed daily from television sets around the globe. Now, the campy '70s hit series is being made into a Hollywood feature film, and one of those "lovely girls" might also be a lovely lesbian.

The Paramount film is currently in production, and writers Jim Berg and Stan Zimmerman (creators of *Roseanne's* infamous "lesbian kiss" episode) have suggested that the character of Marcia Brady will become involved with another woman. In the film, Marcia's best friend is Nicole, an out lesbian. Marcia's friend develops a crush

on the eldest Brady daughter and, according to Zimmerman, "Nicole gets what she's after in the end." *Variety* reports that RuPaul will play a high school guidance counselor in the movie.

People who read *People*

Readers of *People Weekly* have been treated to an improved, more lesbian-positive magazine. Most recently (Sept. 5), the popular magazine's Couples section featured a two-page spread on singer Melissa Etheridge and her lover Julie Cypher. "Her Grammy is nice," the magazine notes, but Etheridge's lover is her "greatest prize."



Melissa Etheridge

"A House in Harmony," written by Peter Castro and John Griffiths, profiles Etheridge and Cypher in both words and photos. The feature deals nonchalantly with the couple's blossoming relationship and peeks—without sensationalism—into the personal histories of each woman.

Stopping the silence

The Oct. 4 broadcast of the NBC news program *Dateline* featured a gay high-school teacher whose career is on the line. After he showed his class a film about the Holocaust, Mehlville High School teacher Rodney Wilson displayed a poster of the various patches worn by those incarcerated in the Nazi concentration camps. The poster included the pink triangle, and Wilson told his class: "As a gay man, I would have been forced to wear the pink triangle." After a period of silence, his students literally applauded Wilson's decision to come out in the classroom.

According to the *Dateline* report, however, school officials have been less enlightened than Wilson's students. Ronald Jones, the principal of Mehlville High School, described Wilson's statement as "inappropriate conduct." School Superintendent Bob Rodgers agreed, and suggested that references to homosexuality have no place in the curriculum.

The *Dateline* report provided Rodney Wilson with a forum to rebut such assertions. He noted that the 800-page history text he used contained no mention of lesbian or gay people and he was only trying to "stop the silence." He said, "I simply stated a historical fact that gays were persecuted by the Nazis. I stated another fact, that I am gay. And I put those two facts together." Wilson added: "If it causes one kid to stop believing that gay people are monsters, then that's a good thing."

The *Dateline* report also noted that, despite four years of "glowing" evaluations, Wilson's job is now in jeopardy. He is up for tenure this spring.

Comments can be sent to *Dateline*, NBC News, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10021, fax: (212) 664-3330, e-mail: dateline@news.nbc.com. Or contact Rodney Wilson or Ronald Jones (principal) at Mehlville High School, 3200 Lemay Ferry Road, St. Louis, MO 63125, (314) 892-5000; or Bob Rodgers (superintendent), 3120 Lemay Ferry Road, St. Louis, MO 63125.

From the "GLAAD Media Watch,"
by Al-Kielwasser