

CELEBRATING OUR
12
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY



On left:
The Village People;
Audre Lorde

On right: Martina Navratilova;
Olivia Newton-John and
John Travolta from Grease

At a recent *Just Out* staff meeting there were two things we were trying to make a decision about regarding this issue: how to celebrate our 12th anniversary, and what importance to give C. Jay Wilson Jr.'s interview with Boy George. We dealt with Boy George first. We decided that we would determine the importance of the Boy George interview based partly on the significance of his contribution to the sexual minority community.

We talked about our influences and role models. Langston Hughes, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde and Marlon Riggs were some of the names that came up for us. It seemed that Boy George didn't measure up. But was it fair to compare him to them? As the discussion unfolded, we realized that although we each held Boy George at different levels of esteem, this pop singer had influenced most of us in some way. We also noticed that having the discussion about our personal influences and heroes was a positive experience for us. It was heartwarming to think of and share our thoughts about the events and the people who inspired us.

We still had the question of the 12th anniversary celebration on the table. We knew that we wanted whatever we did to be interactive with our

Significant influences

From Boy George to that special volleyball coach—a few *Just Out* readers reflect on the people who influenced their lives

by Teri Ventura

readers. That's when it came to us to celebrate our 12th anniversary by interweaving the threads of the Boy George interview, the evocative staff meeting discussion about it, and our desire to interact and share something positive with our readers.

We asked a sampling of *Just Out* readers to reflect on the people who influenced their lives. We told them of our discussion and asked them to tell us about the people who influenced them during their initial and ongoing coming-out process.

SUSAN LEO

ACLU office manager, softball player

I came out in 1973. It was like coming out in a vacuum, back then. There weren't many highly visible influences. I remember reading *Lesbian Woman* by Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin shortly after I came out. It was the only lesbian book on the market, as far as I knew. It was very influential for me. Sometime later I found *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita Mae Brown. That book made me

feel less alone.

"I came to Oregon after college, and I lived here for about a year before I met another dyke. Her name was Joy, and she played softball for the Lavender Menace. I would say that Joy was a personal coming out influence. Well, I'm not sure it was exactly coming out by the strictest definition—more like a lot of impassioned groping in the back seat of my '50 Buick."



MICHELLE TRAHAN

Avon Cosmetics, self-employed salesperson

As a transsexual there have not been many positive influences for me. I did get some great makeup tips from watching Boy George. Also, he was the first celebrity I saw who modeled, by his appearance and demeanor, that

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