

Red scare

Bible Belt is a cinch

As a child, I always loved visiting states for the first time. I would keep track of how many I'd traveled to—even if just for a brief layover—by shading in each one on a small map.

So when I received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts to attend the American Dance Festival last month at Duke University, I should've been more excited. I'd never been to North Carolina, but I hadn't set foot in a backward red state since Coup d'Dubya, so I had no clue what to expect. I pictured packs of punk teens sporting GOP tattoos and streets lined with vandalized stop signs like those found in Portland, only instead of hippie messages like "STOP Driving" and "STOP Bush," the Tar Heel State would advertise neocon talking points like "STOP Frivolous Lawsuits" and "STOP Activist Judges."

The day before I left town, I read an amusing/disturbing news item about a spurned wife who filed a lawsuit in Durham Superior Court against a gay man because he began to "willfully and intentionally seduce, entice and alienate the affections" of her husband in January 2002. She seeks compensatory and punitive damages of at least \$10,000 each. Apparently, only a handful of states allow spouses to collect monetary compensation from "the other woman," and North Carolina is one of them.

The state also has a dusty 1805 statute on its books outlawing "lewd and lascivious" cohabitation. The ban is being challenged by an unmarried woman who lost her job with the Pender County Sheriff's Department because she and her boyfriend live together. Now that sodomy is legal, perhaps the state needed another sin to eradicate.

Besides, we all know sodomy's days are numbered thanks to the fine folks at Exodus International, which believes homosexuality can be "cured" through the power of prayer. During my weeklong stay, I learned, the "ex-gay" ministry would be celebrating its 30th anniversary with a Freedom Conference in Asheville. As if Anne "Call Me Crazy" Heche hasn't already done enough damage to our cause, her mother, Nancy, was among the scheduled speakers.

"What the hell have I gotten myself into?" I wondered as I packed my bags. "Is this going to be like visiting a Third World country?"

Thankfully, Duke is located in Durham, which forms a progressive Triangle with nearby Raleigh and Chapel Hill, so I was lucky to be in a blue zone of this red state. The city is even hosting the 10th annual North Carolina Gay and Lesbian Film Festival this month.

The campus was swarming with energetic young dancers taking classes at the festival—where, FYI, Madonna was a student in 1978—and the program included renowned gay choreographers Paul Taylor and Bill T. Jones. Taylor's *Company B* juxtaposed the blissful music of the Andrews Sisters with the harsh reality of World War II: "I Can Dream, Can't I?" depicted a woman longing for the return of her G.I. boyfriend, who was secretly having a foreign affair with a male soldier overseas. Jones' *Continuous Replay* featured more full-frontal nudity than an entire season at Triangle Productions. All this during a government-sponsored fellowship!



Jim's Closet
by Jim Radosta

THE TOP SHELF

Further evidence that Portland rocks: Mayor Tom Potter and Multnomah County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey are taking time out of their busy schedules to hang out with a bunch of queer jocks.

Four teams from the Rose City Softball Association open division will represent Portland in the 2005 Gay Softball World Series this month in San Diego, and they need your financial support to offset travel expenses. The fund-raiser will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Aug. 9 at swanky gay-owned lounge Aura, 1022 W. Burnside St.

Let's take a moment to praise PDX. In what other major U.S. city would you be able to—in the same venue—order a fancy cocktail, flirt with a hunky ballplayer and lobby elected officials?

Cook County couldn't even muster unanimity for a standard ceremonial proclamation welcoming the 2006 Gay Games to Chicago, even though the quadrennial festival will pump up to \$80 million into the local economy. The five Republicans on the 17-member Board of Commissioners withdrew their names after Peter LaBarbera of the Illinois Family Institute complained, "There's a big difference between tolerating and celebrating homosexuality."

Gay Games spokesman Kevin Boyer put it best when Jerry Falwell raised a similar stink in June: "How bad must the right-wing extremists hate gay people to not want us to play softball!"

It quickly became apparent that all of my anticipated animosity was nowhere to be found; in fact, most of the locals greeted me like we were old friends. It's funny how Southerners can treat strangers with equal degrees of hospitality (in their charm) and hostility (in their votes).

Still, I came home with a new-found admiration for North Carolina, or what little I saw of it. As I stepped off MAX near Lloyd Center upon returning from the airport, my first taste of "true blue" Oregon was, ironically, a rally for the "family" organization Kids Need Both Parents.

This just confirmed what I should've known all along: You really can't judge a state by its color. **JM**

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.

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HISTORIC MISSISSIPPI

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Fun festivities on Mississippi Avenue from Fremont to Skidmore.

Mississippi Avenue
Neighborhood Talent Show
Friday, Aug. 12, 7-9pm
Mississippi Rising Ballroom (833 N. Shaver)

Mississippi Avenue
Music Walk
Thursday, Aug. 11, 6-10pm
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