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THE MAGAZINE OF VANCOUVER'S LESBIAN, GAY & BISEXUAL COMMUNITIES

ANGLES

10th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

MARCH 1994

NEWS

Artist outs
lieutenant-governor
in Saskatoon

COMMUNITY

Out loud at
Douglas College

A&E

Women in View

FEATURE

International
Women's Day

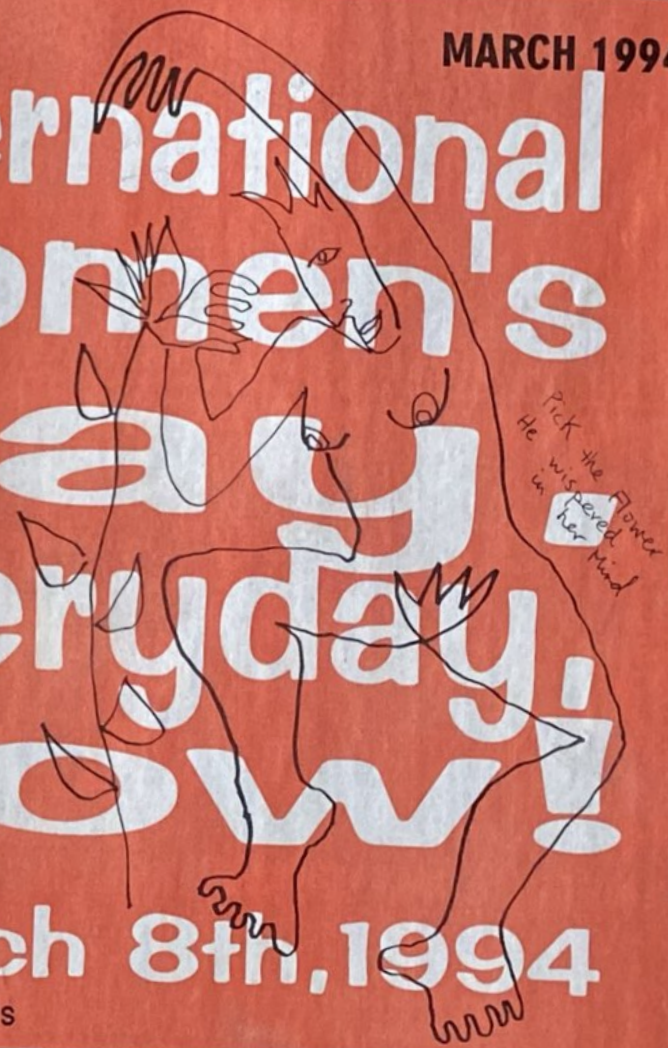
PLUS

Calendar
Wide Angles
Groups & Services
Map

March 8th, 1994

& all those Classifieds

international
Women's
day
everyday!
now!



*Pick the flower
He whispered
in her mind*

Statement of principles

The Angles collective produces a lesbian/gay community magazine which offers a lesbian, gay or bisexual perspective on contemporary events, politics, arts and entertainment.

Angles is committed to the goals of gay, bisexual and lesbian liberation. We aim to make available a range of perspectives on lesbian/gay liberation and information on perspectives hostile to lesbian/gay liberation. We recognize all components of the bisexual, lesbian and gay communities as part of lesbian/gay liberation.

Consistent with these principles and subject to space limitations, Angles accepts articles from all groups in the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities on their plans, policies and activities.

As a collective committed to the international lesbian/gay liberation movement, Angles takes positions on questions of concern to gays, bisexuals and lesbians. Angles' commitment to the goals of lesbian/gay liberation includes a commitment to:

- ▼ the international lesbian/gay liberation movement
- ▼ ending the oppression of bisexuals, lesbians and gays
- ▼ ending women's oppression
- ▼ support for diversity, innovation and experiment in ways of living
- ▼ the right of women to be independent of men
- ▼ support for workers' defence of their economic and political rights
- ▼ the free and unrestricted right to consensual sexual and affectionate expression
- ▼ the right of all people of all ages, colours, physical appearances or abilities to full and equal participation in all aspects including sexual, of the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities, without exploitation
- ▼ the coverage of issues and events of importance and of interest to the gay, bisexual and lesbian communities

Angles is committed to the coverage of issues and events of importance and of interest to the lesbian/gay communities. We celebrate the community's achievements and victories.

Angles publishes articles which describe or assess events of the larger community which are of significance or interest to Vancouver bisexuals, lesbians and gays. In addition to providing information, Angles analyzes the issues, draws conclusions and endorses or sponsors activities.

Angles is published monthly by the Lavender Publishing Society of British Columbia, in the Vancouver Gay and Lesbian Centre, 1170 Bute Street, Vancouver V6E 1Z6.

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Community organizations are invited to contribute up to 300 words per issue on their activities, policies, and plans. We welcome a job application for publication, provided they are double spaced and either typed or handwritten legibly. Please contact one of the people below for more information. Please see below for details.

This month:
 News Co-ordinator: Richard Banner
 Entertainment Administrator: Scott Swan
 Calendar/Community Listings Co-ordinator: Don McQueen
 Community Co-ordinator: Imbaz Popat, Doug Barr
 Photo Co-ordinator: Position vacant
 Production Co-ordinator: Lynne Wanyeki
 Business Co-ordinator: John Stackhouse
 Office Co-ordinator: Stuart Davidson
 Assistant Classified Co-ordinator: Alex Wright
 Display Ad Sales: Dave Yarnell pager 252-4690
 David Myers 253-1258

We need volunteers for distribution & delivery & vehicle would be nice, photography office work and a features co-ordinator. Call during office hours for details.

If you would like to help with production or planning for future issues, you are welcome to join us. Our collective story meeting is Monday, February 28, 7 pm. Our collective business meeting is Monday, March 7, 7 pm. Production for the next issue will begin Friday, March 25, at noon.

DEADLINES:

Content deadline for the next issue is Wednesday, March 16, 5 pm. Advertising and classified deadline is Wednesday, March 23, 8 pm. April issue out March 31.

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MULTICULTURALISM AND AIDS:

Doing the right thing!!

by Francisco Ibañez

Classism, heterosexism, ageism, racism, ableism and many of the "isms" contained in the obsessive mantras of political correctness are intimately linked to HIV and AIDS.



The Pacific AIDS Resource Centre is now home to three AIDS research and support projects initiated by and for three communities not reached by typically eurocentric AIDS organizations. Shown here, from left to right are: Henry Koo of the Asian Support AIDS Project (A-SAP); Al-Quamar Sangar of Atish's HIV/AIDS Project; and Ron Parker of the Black AIDS Network (BAN). Photo by Il Kuzachenko.

Community-based AIDS educators are aware of these subtle connections, but they do not always have the energy and time to follow the threads that seam together these themes. AIDS educators need to work within a flexible definition of multiculturalism that allows the various issues to interplay.

What is culture, anyway? I resist citing one single erudite definition. I think culture is not something that exists out there like a "thing". We do culture the way yuppies do lunch. This is how the African-American phrase, "do the right thing" acquires its complex meaning. We do culture when we share, among other possibilities, a tradition, a language (for example, a way of talking about our world like the highly specialized gay jargon used in their personal columns), a set of oppressive or liberating norms (anti-sodomy laws, censorship laws, non-discrimination policies), a political stance (gay liberation, civil rights movement, feminism), a set of beliefs (Catholicism), a lifestyle (vegetarianism, sadomasochism), a way of living (ethics, morals), and an iconography (a way of representing and seeing ourselves - gay clone, etc). Sharing a culture does not mean thinking alike or being identical or looking alike. In fact, not all Latinos are hot, not all gringos are cold. Some gay men, for example, share fuck buddies, clothing styles, track lighting and viruses. We may share pleasures (a taste for cock, for its touch or at least for its looks) and desires (being fuckers and fuckees). The point is that none of that makes each individual better or worse than the others but an active participant in the social game. This is what makes AIDS work interesting and challenging.

The "safer sex model" of HIV/AIDS prevention education does not carefully consider the issues of multiculturalism. "Safer sex" describes the mechanics of sex as a universal set of easy-to-follow, one-size-fits-all instructions (first negotiate, second put on condom, etc) in a phallogocentric approach (that is, it revolves around the cock). "Safer sex" describes the identities of those involved as static and safe (being lesbian is safe, being a fat is unsafe, by definition). We are not puppets or mannequins; we are models working the social runway... move to the right, now move to the left; ¡¡ he ahí la diferencia !! As an AIDS educator, I need to own my definition of multiculturalism. If you need to own yours, I have one thing to say: "You better work!"

I believe that multiculturalism is an umbrella concept. It means that it is desirable that members of many cultures could "just get along", as Rodney King said in 1993, and live together happily ever after. It also means the struggle to achieve this utopia. Multiculturalism reflects the everyday living of conflicts and struggles between people who are different and who are made different by systematic operations (for example, people on welfare are made to feel or seem themselves as

"inferior"). Popular belief about multiculturalism, supported by government patronizing and manipulatory social marketing, would have us believe that we are cats and dogs living in one blissful kennel. Multiculturalism should reflect the coming out and border-crossing of animals into each other's territories. In AIDS education, it is imperative to work from an inclusive model of multiculturalism. As a gay man living with AIDS, I cannot expect everyone to come to my turf and understand my battles. On more than one occasion, I have had to bite my lips not to shut down a homophobic remark by a participant of an AIDS 101 workshop where I have chosen not to be "out". More than once, I have not expressed my anger when a gay man comes up with a racist comment or joke. My explanation of multiculturalism is strategic. It does not condone racism, sexism or classism, but seeks to understand many realities. I read somewhere some basic strategies to respond to unfair remarks: don't ignore (the remark), engage and explain, don't be afraid of possible tension or conflict, be aware of your own attitudes and limitations, strive toward understanding (not guilt), be a role model, and be non-judgemental (but know the bottom line).

Multiculturalism recognizes the existence of many cultures and looks at their value. Multiculturalism is about "families of origin" (Mom and Dad) and "families of choice" (lovers, friends, allies, enemies, accomplices, etc). However, multiculturalism needs to recognize that not all cultures are of the same value. A friend of mine wrote "some cultures can be called 'better' than others to the extent that they create and sustain conditions for human beings that are more pleasant, more just and more productive than others. In this sense, a culture based on slavery is 'worse' than other social forms." I could not say it any better. This is why most AIDS educators working in a multicultural environment react strongly against the "moral majority", "neo-nazis", "family right groups", "extreme right" and other groups that define themselves as holier-than-thou and advocate for the destruction of homosexuals, the exodus of "foreigners" and other final solutions. One ominous sign of their impact is the growing language of inclusion these "new right" groups have adopted in order to seduce the conservative segments of the "ethno-cultural" population. By doing this, an artificial distance is created between the struggles for "lesbian and gay rights" and the struggles for "civil rights". They are not identical, but their common themes (such as anti-discrimination) and intersections (lesbians of colour) are a source of strength for political action.

AIDS educators understand that no one is essentially and exclusively homosexual, ethnic, good or bad. Unfortunately, connections between HIV, homosexuality, alternative sexual practices, ethnic background are not well

understood yet. We are members of ethnic groups, of coalitions of peoples with disabilities, of labour unions and of management teams. Sometimes living in all these worlds at the same time can be extremely difficult. Thus, border-crossing from being a straight hockey player at noon to being a horny slut at midnight in a sleazy gay tavern might be completely misunderstood. Sometimes, crossing from one country to another puts immigrants at risk. Forms of HIV/AIDS prevention education premised on multiculturalism help us understand that not everyone is totally "gay" or totally "promiscuous" or "racist" but that we do culture and by doing it every day differently, we constantly take risks. I can come up with my own slogan, "Change = Risk". Safer sex fails to tell us this. One simple way of making ourselves aware of our lack of cultural awareness is to follow a simple test: try to write down six names of well known Asian-Canadians, First Nations people, openly lesbian and gay people, and Canadian women or men living (or who lived) with HIV/AIDS. How many can you come up with? What is the meaning of this? Multiculturalism in AIDS education fights prejudice and (homo/xeno) phobias and it also fights invisibility. Take a look around.

One may say that multiculturalism means everything. It might. Most importantly, multiculturalism is a means, not an end. When we get to the end of this road, if we ever get there, we will see something totally different. I don't have those answers. The world will not be multicultural and diverse and tolerant and all those good words. The world will be something we do not know yet and we may not be able to name it before then.

Although multiculturalism may well be another invention to deal with some form of white, middle-class guilt, I believe that AIDS educators must constantly reclaim the term. Let's not get frozen by the labels. When as an AIDS educator I think that my workshops, testimonials, brochures and political work need to be multicultural, I don't target one colour and one language. I find the "black and white" approach to multiculturalism racist and self-defeating in itself. My work needs to be resourceful, flexible and accessible. Its contents have to come from those people I presume to be representing. When I think of multiculturalism, I think of endless intersections of social aspects and in particular I think of those who are left at the margins: homeless white people, Latinas in prison, etc.

When I think "multiculturally", I see that still in Vancouver immigrant women get the run-around if they request that their family physician test them for HIV, men and women who do not speak "good" English do not get the promised "pre- and post-test counselling" (usually used as a metaphor for mere information), Ministry of Social Services and Housing workers do not have the time (or take the time) to inform people living with HIV/AIDS about their options and possibilities, doctors still communicate with "patients" with obscure and threatening jargon such as "T-cells" and "anti-viral drugs", and "safe sex" posters and brochures for gay men still show made-by-Nautilus bodies that do not represent people I know with cellulites, pimples and ugly hairdos. The obsession of "safer sex" to show streamlined, unblemished bodies (of any colour) reflects our consumerist obsession for the "looks" that disregards the quality. AIDS prevention focuses on the biological aspect -- not to "catch" it, not to "show" it. AIDS education goes beyond the body to making the connections between health, mental health, poverty, well-being, ethnic background, etc. Multiculturalism should help us make those connections for us and our communities.

At the personal level, I am not able to live outside the contradiction of multiculturalism even when I turn off the lights and shed my clothes, my lesioned skin and my broken English accent. In the sheltering shadows of my bedroom, in the excellent ride of a good fuck, I am still unavoidably "me". As a gay man, as a man living with AIDS, as Latino, as a Canadian, I exhibit in the map of body the marks of history, migration, treatment and pleasure. My body is the evidence of a journey. Multiculturalism is a tool, a compass, that helps me find my way. When the morning after I face myself and the others, this is one of the few ways I have of understanding my life and the life of others.

Francisco Ibañez is a Latino immigrant living with AIDS. At present, he is working on his PhD at Simon Fraser University. He is a member of VIDA, the Latin American Committee for HIV/AIDS Prevention Education and the BC AIDS Secretariat.