



alegre



newsletter
by MGRM

Editorial

All animals are equal

The unequal manner in which LGBT people are treated in our society is again out in the open for all to see. Last month, MaltaToday reported that within the past five years, the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) had to intervene a number of times to prevent the termination of employment of four gay teachers working in Church schools. It was reported that parents of students attending the unmentioned Church schools subjected considerable pressure on school authorities to censor the gay teachers, and it is understood that the Church was thinking of giving in to the pressure.

Ironically – but not so much after all: it was quite expected – no cases of misconduct by these gay teachers was reported. It would have been understandable to expect reactions had any teacher, irrespective of his/her orientation, misbehaved at school, but no such improper behaviour took place in these cases. What irked the parents was simply

the teachers' sexual orientation.

The Church's reaction to such protestations was way off-target and indecorous, breaching the Employment and Industrial Relations Act and the spirit of the Maltese Constitution. Most importantly, underlines MaltaToday in its report, the Church's reaction breaches the European Convention of Human Rights, which highlights the standards for the protection of human rights and dignity.

MaltaToday's contribution goes on to remind us that LGBT teachers, like any other worker of whichever profession, are protected by a 2004 legal notice which banned discrimination based on sexual orientation – a late addition to the Employment Relations Act **after MGRM lobbied for the inclusion of sexual orientation in the law** with the then social policy minister Lawrence Gonzi.

In the weeks following the publication of these incidents, reports about

these local cases were found on at least two gay foreign publications online - continuing to remind us and make us 'proud' of how averse and unaccepting some Maltese still are of each other's diversity, even in this day and age.

These unpleasant episodes continue to take place because of the invisibility LGBT individuals keep on experiencing in society. The people around us still don't realize that we are everywhere: **we are not only their teachers, but also their doctors and nurses, their lawyers, their mechanics, their factory-workers, their managers, their priests, their friends, their brothers and sisters, sons and daughters.**

We are not any different from our relatives or co-workers who are straight, but we are subjected to the all-so-common Orwellian reflection on (in)equality – we are all equal, but then, you know, **there are those who are more equal than others.**

Issue 7

September 2007

Malta Gay Rights
Movement
Newsletter

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The US Presidential Elections are round the corner once again. Since it is not possible for a US President to remain in office for more than two consecutive terms, the next elections - to be held on November 4th 2008 - will promote a new face to the helm of one of the most powerful nations of the twenty-first century.

Last Thursday 9th August, The Human Rights Campaign sponsored a landmark forum where the Democratic Presidential candidates discussed their views on LGBT issues. The HRC said it also offered the possibility to the Republican candidates to participate in the forum, but they declined. Of the eight Democratic candidates, six were present on the show.

Alegre is briefing you up on the salient points the six Democratic candidates spoke about.

The three favourites



Clinton, wife of former President Bill Clinton, appeared on the show looking confident and self-assured. She is one of the favourites for the Presidential run, although some still doubt whether the USA is ready for a female

President.

Clinton didn't beat around the bush and flatly said she opposes same-sex marriage, but prefers if she is quoted as being "very positive about civil unions" with full equality of benefits, rights and

privileges.

She emphasized her position in favour of acceptance and said people should be judged on their conduct, not their status. Upon her election as President, Clinton promised to rid the nation of 'Don't Ask Don't Tell', get hate crimes through and fight for ending discrimination in employment for LGBT individuals.

Her closing remarks focused on her wish to be a President who "really does move forward the agenda of progress and equality" in the US.



Another favourite, Obama too faces cynics as to whether the USA is ready to elect a dark-skinned President.

Obama said that LGBT issues are important to him because he got into politics partly because he never liked people looking down on other people. He expressed a strong belief that the government has to treat everybody equally - the rights conferred by the state should be equal to all individuals of that country.

Barack Obama bravely opined

that churches should not be making their individual determinations when it comes to rights conferred by the State. He went on by stating that society has to "disentangle what has historically been the issue with the word 'marriage', which has religious connotations for some people, from civil rights given to a couple, in terms of hospital visitations... or any other social security benefits".

Also looking confident and comfortable when discussing LGBT issues, Obama challenged pastors to point out which (heterosexual) marriage has ever been broken up because of two men or two women holding hands - he strongly asserted he has seen no evidence of such break-ups.

Obama concluded by reminding voters that he had opposed the Defence of Marriage Act, while promising to speak up about these issues not just when he's being applauded, but even when it's hard.



Edwards is trying his luck once again at the coming elections, after having been the Democratic nominee for Vice President in 2004, running hand-in-hand with Presidential nominee John Kerry.

He opened his intervention by relating his touching experience at the LA Gay and Lesbian Centre, which welcomes LGBT youth who have been kicked out of their homes because of their orientation. He affirmed that he can't accept that in 2007, the USA thinks such a practice is ok.

When asked what he thinks about young kids knowing about diverse family forms, Edwards said that he thinks that all kids who attend public schools need to understand that some kids have same-sex parents, and learn to appreciate that these are American families just like every other American family. He also said he would give LGBT couples the same rights to adopt kids.

Edwards also expressed his opposition to same-sex marriages and his commitment to the enactment of powerful anti-discrimination laws and the abolishment of DoMA and 'Don't Ask Don't Tell'.

His intervention concluded with the premise that his campaign for Presidency is about equality across the board, and that he wants to speak "with strength and passion, not quietly and carefully".

Other Presidential hopefuls



Kucinich must be the one that got all LGBT viewers tuned in on the show wish that his utopian (and maybe fantastical) vision of an accepting society suddenly transmuted into reality.

He seemed so all-out-for LGBT issues, that the first question posed to him was whether there was anything at all the LGBT community desired, that he personally opposed. He answered in the negative. He is one of the two Democratic candidates to support same-sex marriage.

His arguments centred around

the idea that what is really being discussed is human love, "and there's no power on this earth greater than human love" - he feels people who love each other must have the opportunity to be able to express that love in a way that is meaningful.



Reactions to Richardson's words after the show focused mostly on a major slip he made when asked whether he thought being gay was a choice. He momentarily did stammer out "It is a choice", but covered it up fast by saying he doesn't see it as an issue, but sees "gays and lesbians as people".

Richardson said that had he to be elected President, he would get rid of 'Don't Ask Don't Tell', and repeal DoMA, which he had voted for and now regrets.

He said he would focus less on marriage and more on what's "achievable" in terms of rights for same-sex couples. What is achievable, he remarked, are "civil unions with full marriage rights".



Gravel is the other candidate, together with Kucinich, who is in favour of same-sex marriages. It was remarked to him by the panel animating the discussion, that he is one of the very few white men his age who accept the idea of same-sex unions.

Continued on page 4



The six Democratic candidates who took part in the forum - from top to bottom: **Hilary Clinton, Barack Obama, John Edwards, Dennis Kucinich, Bill Richardson, Mike Gravel**

He says he resents religions saying that marriage is a religious term, because marriage preceded all forms of religions in civilization - it is a commitment between two loving human beings in love, irrespective of their orientation. Gravel declared that "if there's anything we need in this world, it's more love". Not being able to get married, said Gravel, makes LGBT individuals second class citizens.

He is of the opinion that the issue of same-sex marriage will be a non-issue in the following Presidential elections of 2012.

DADT AND DOMA IN BRIEF

Don't Ask Don't Tell

The common term for the U.S. military policy which prohibits anyone who has sexual contact (bodily or romantic) with a person of the same sex from serving in the armed forces. It also prohibits any gay person from disclosing his or her orientation while serving in the army. The policy also requires that as long as gay people in the military hide their orientation, commanders are not allowed to investigate their sexuality.

It was introduced as a compromise measure in 1993 by President Bill Clinton who, while campaigning for the Presidency, had promised to allow all citizens regardless of orientation to serve openly in the military, a departure from the then complete ban on those who are not heterosexual.

Defence of Marriage Act (DoMA)

The commonly-used term for a federal law of the U.S. which has two effects:

- No state can recognize a marriage between persons of the same sex, even if the marriage was concluded in another state
- The Federal Government cannot recognize same-sex or polygamous marriages for any purpose, even if the marriage was concluded in one of the states

The bill was passed by Congress by a vote of 85-14 in the Senate and a vote of 342-67 in the House of Representatives, and was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1996.

Quotes of the month



As from this month, **Alegre** will start presenting you with the most striking quotations we come across from time to time. These may range from the more wise, thoughtful and philosophic to the more bizarre, hilarious and outright ludicrous. Here's our first selection for the month of August:

"In homosexual behaviour, sexual complementarity is outrightly excluded. The physical anatomy of two men does not complement each other and neither does that of two women. It is like having two electrical sockets on a wall which, no matter how close they are to each other, are unable to generate light."

- **Jacqueline Calleja, The Times, 31st July 2007**

"...a village hypothetically inhabited solely by homosexual couples will eventually disappear while one peopled by heterosexual couples will not."

- **Jacqueline Calleja, The Times, 31st July 2007**

"And I just love that bit about the hypothetical village of homosexuals. There are so many other interesting examples of hypothetical villages that I can come up with, starting with a hypothetical village of interfering busybodies who insist that we all live by their Catechism. Why not round them up and get them all to live together, so that the rest of us can live in peace? Then they could live their lives in bliss, policing each other and reporting the neighbours to the Vatican's Sex Police."

- **Daphne Caruana Galizia, The Malta Independent, 19th August 2007**

"Dear Mrs Calleja, if only the sole depravity of this world was restricted to the love a man can have for another man or a woman can have for another woman, what a wonderful place the world would be. Apart from your hysterically funny argument a few weeks ago that compared men and women to sockets and plugs as if God were some great Electrician in the Sky, you choose to ignore all the terrible things that man has done to his fellow men..."

- **Kenneth Zammit Tabona, The Times, 21st August 2007**

Cartoon appeared on The Times of 28th August, 2007



Żviluppi legali

Wara li l-Kummissjoni Ewropea kienet addottat id-Direttivi 2000/43/KE u 2000/78/KE fis-sena 2000, Malta kellha żmien erba' snin sabiex timplimentahom fil-liġi nazzjonali u għaldaqstant tippoteġi d-drittijiet ta' kulhadd fuq il-bażi ta' l-oriġini razzjali jew etnika, reliġjon jew twemmin, **orjentazzjoni sesswali**, età u diżabbiltà. Sfortunatament il-gvern dak iż-żmien kien implementa dawn id-Direttivi biss parzjalment f'*Kap 452 Att Dwar l-Impjeg u r-Relazzjonijiet Industrijali* u għażel li ma jirreferix għall-orjentazzjoni sesswali direttament, u għaldaqstant ma kinitx ċara jekk din kinitx se tkun protetta daqs il-bażijiet l-oħra.

L-MGRM kienet semmgħet lehinha fuq dan kemm lokalment, kif ukoll internazzjonalment. F'Novembru tas-sena 2004 il-gvern kien allura addotta *Regolamenti* ġodda għas-settur ta' l-impjeg u t-taħriġ li kienu jagħmlu referenza ċara għall-orjentazzjoni sesswali għall-ewwel darba fil-liġi Maltija. Dan kien pass tajjeb 'il quddiem - madanakollu ma kienx biżżejjed għax dawn ir-regolamenti kienu japplikaw biss għas-settur privat.

Matul l-ewwel ffit xhur ta' din is-sena daħlu fis-seħħ ukoll tlett Avviżi Legali ġodda li direttament jew indirettament joffru protezzjoni għal persuni leżbjani, gays u bisesswali (LGB).

Dawn l-Avviżi Legali huma:

A.L. 53 ta' l-2007

Regolamenti ta' l-2007 li jemendaw ir-regolamenti dwar trattament ugwali fl-impiegi

- Dan l-avviż dawwar il-bżonn li jinġiebu provi li ma saritx diskriminazzjoni fuq l-akkużat, fejn jekk dan ma jurix li ma saritx diskriminazzjoni, l-ilment tal-vittma jiġi milqugħ. **Dan ifisser li jekk persuna LGB tkun diskriminata fuq il-post tax-xogħol, huma l-persuni li jkunu għamlu l-allegat diskriminazzjoni li għandhom iġibu l-provi sabiex it-Tribunal Industrijali jaċċetta d-difiża tagħhom**

- Dan l-avviż jagħti wkoll il-possibilità lil organizzazzjonijiet jew enti oħra li għandhom interess legittimu f'xi każ li dawn jidhlu fil-proċeduri li għandhom x'jaqsmu ma' ilment f'isem il-vittma. Dan ifisser li organizzazzjoni bħall-MGRM tista' tippreżenta każ flimkien ma' persuna LGB quddiem it-Tribunal Industrijali

A.L. 54 ta' l-2007

Regolamenti ta' l-2007 li jestendu l-applikabilità ta' dispożizzjonijiet dwar trattament ugwali fl-impiegi għal servizz mal-Gvern

- Dan l-avviż estenda d-drittijiet ta' persuni LGB li jaħdmu fis-settur privat għal dawk li jaħdmu mal-Gvern. Dawn ir-Regolamenti għalhekk għalqu wieħed mill-akbar

lakuni li kienu jeżistu fil-liġi Maltija

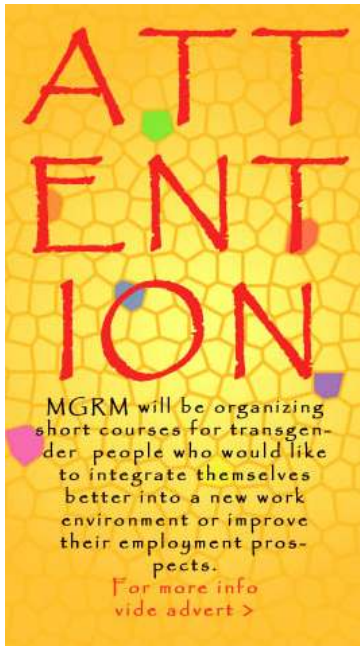
A.L. 86 ta' l-2007

Ordni ta' l-2007 dwar trattament Indaq fil-każ ta' impjeg ta' persuni li jimpjegaw lilhom infushom

- Dan l-avviż finalment estenda d-drittijiet imsemmija ukoll lill-persuni LGB li jimpjegaw lilhom infushom. B'hekk issa huma il-haddiema kollha LGB li huma protetti minn diskriminazzjoni fuq il-post tax-xogħol

Permezz ta' dawn l-Avviżi Legali, issa nistgħu ngħidu li Malta lafġet l-obligi kollha li kellha fir-rigward ta' l-implementazzjoni tad-Direttiva 2000/78/KE ta' l-Unjoni Ewropea.

Dawk il-persuni LGB u anke persuni transġeneru jew transsesswali li jsofru diskriminazzjoni fl-aċċess għal xogħol (inkluż fl-interview jew fil-process ta' selezzjoni), jew waqt ix-xogħol għandhom javviċinaw lill-MGRM għal parir u anke għal assistenza legali li tista' toffri. **Id-dhul tal-liġijiet imsemmija ma jfissru għal xejn jekk ma jkunx hemm persuni kuraġġużi biżżejjed li lesti jieqfu kontra d-diskriminazzjoni u jieħdu azzjoni.** L-ewwel pass, għaldaqstant huwa li wieħed iżomm nota tad-diskriminazzjoni li jkun ġarrab u javviċina ufficjal ta' l-MGRM permezz ta' email fuq mgrm@maltagayrights.org



Espressjoni ta' Interest
ESF 60 Inkluzjoni ta' Persuni Transgender
fis-Suq tax-Xoghol

Opportunita' ta' tahrig' ghall-persuni Transgender

Il-Malta Gay Rights Movement ser torganizza diversi korsijiet ta' tahrig' ghal persuni Transgender fil-lingwi tal-Malti u Ingliz, fl-użu tal-kompjuter, fil-matematika, u fl-lzvilupp Personali mmirati biex itejbu l-prospetti ta' l-impjieg. It-tahrig' ser jinghata b'xejn u jsir fuq bazi individwali jew gruppi zghar skond il-htiega. Ikunu ikkunsidrati wkoll oqsma ohra ta' tahrig' skond l-interest ta' l-applikanti.

Kull min hu interessat ghandu jċempel lil Gabi Calleja fuq 99255559 jew jibghat email fuq mgrm@maltagayrights.org sa mhux aktar tard mill-14 ta' Settembru.

Malta Gay Rights Movement, 32, Triq il-Parroċċa, Mosta MST 2021

Malta Gay Rights Movement

L-MGRM thaddan il-principji ta' Opportunitajiet Indaq

MGRM's presence in the media – 1

Sexuality and relationships

Marisa Xuereb

The Times, 28th August, 2007

Jacqueline Calleja keeps writing letters about "sexual complementarity" (Sexual Complementarity, July 31 and Marriage in Do Minore, August 17). I would like Ms Calleja to define "sexual complementarity".

A tip to Ms Calleja: A search on Google for this term yields as many

as 12,700 results. The big surprise is that an advanced search for pages containing the same term but not containing the word "Catholic" reduces the number of results dramatically to just 570!

"Sexual complementarity" is used freely in Catholic discourse, often in the place of "heterogenital complementarity" as has been the case in Ms Calleja's letters. In an age when it is widely recognised that sexuality is not about genitals but is an integral part of human personality and lies at the heart of human

relationships, the term "sexual complementarity" has much greater appeal than "heterogenital complementarity" and has better chances of securing popular support for an argument, however lame it may be. But the meaning of the two terms is very different, as I hope Ms Calleja will confirm. The fact is, societies are finding it increasingly difficult to dismiss relationships on the basis of lack of "heterogenital complementarity", irrespective of whether Catholicism chooses to embrace modern understanding of sexuality and human relationships or not.

ADAMS HOTEL & BAR is Malta's only Gay Hotel & Bar and is proud to offer both visitors to Malta and local gays and lesbians a venue with a difference. Adams Bar, which is open to locals and holiday visitors, is a relaxing environment where you can meet and converse with friends old and maybe new. The hotel offers guests comfortable rooms at affordable prices and **MGRM Members/Maltese Residents receive a discounted room rate.**

Visit our website at www.adamsmalta.com for more information and directions. We look forward to welcoming you soon.

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www.adamsmalta.com



MGRM welcomed with great pleasure the recent appointment of Silvan Agius as ILGA-Europe's Policy and Programmes Officer. Silvan, an MGRM committee member as from the last AGM held in February 2007, previously worked with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), and served as MGRM's Research and Legal Officer.

ILGA-Europe is the umbrella organization which represents its around 200 member entities all over Europe (including MGRM) in a bid to raise awareness towards LGBT issues, and lobby for improved living conditions in countries where these are needed. A major objective ILGA-Europe firmly believes in is that of acting as a voice at a European level for the rights of those who face discrimination on the

grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. It also strives to strengthen the capacity of the European human rights organizations in their fight against discrimination.

Silvan's work at his new Brussels-based job at ILGA-Europe will focus on lobbying and policy-enacting services in support of ILGA-Europe's advocacy of LGBT rights at European level. He will also help in ILGA-Europe's policy regarding transgender persons. MaltaToday recently featured an article about Silvan's appointment as an ILGA-Europe officer, and also reminded readers that another Maltese activist, Ruth Baldacchino is also active for LGBT issues, in her position as board member both for ILGA and ILGA-Europe.

Yet another Maltese activist working abroad, Darren Vella, is on the IGYLO board, an international gay youth organization - he has been involved in a number of LGBT organizations for the past two years engaging in numerous projects, event coordination, organizational development and research. Moreover, although based in Malta, Colette Farrugia Bennett is also a member of the IGLYO Communications Steering Group.

We may not be performing miracles locally, and we may not be moving in giant steps in our own country yet - but overseas, Malta is now represented in **ILGA** in the board by Ruth and in the administration by Silvan, and in **IGLYO** by Darren and Colette. We wish to thank Silvan, Ruth, Darren and Colette for the hard work they put into MGRM, whilst wishing them all the best in their endeavours with international organizations.

For more info:

www.ilga-europe.org

www.iglyo.com

MGRM's presence in the media – 2

Being gay

Gabi Calleja

The Times, 11th August 2007

Jaqueline Calleja comments on the sexual complementarity of same sex couples.

Sexual attraction and expression differs for each individual. Sexual fulfilment can be achieved in a myriad of ways that do not necessarily involve both male and female genitals. I've often read that the most important sex organ the human being has is the brain.

The complementarity in same sex couples is based on their attraction and love for each other and this includes the desire for sexual intimacy. I can assure Ms Calleja that our ability "to generate light" is not in the least affected. In fact, some studies on sexuality found that orgasm is much more common among lesbians than heterosexual women.

Gay people are not infertile and increasingly, more of us are choosing to be parents. The children of same sex couples are likely to be more loved and cared for because for us, parenthood is not simply an accident

which happens as a consequence of sex, but an event which requires deliberate planning.

Since we are intelligent and creative beings, "a village hypothetically inhabited solely by homosexual couples" would acknowledge the need for sperm banks and surrogate mothers, and is, therefore, as likely to flourish as one populated by heterosexuals.

Since same sex couples generate mostly heterosexual offspring, the village would soon cease to be populated solely by gay people.

Malta Gay Rights Movement

Alegre is
Published by Malta Gay Rights Movement
Designed by Yaoundé