

Is the Threat of Death Making Sex Appealing?

The Jan. 31 issue of *The Village Voice* carries an article of great interest and possible importance. The article, written by a homosexual named Michael Warner, an intelligent fellow who is HIV-negative, is called "Why Gay Men Are Having Risky Sex."

Guest
Commentary
**JEFFREY
HART**

pleasure in even ordinary things. I suppose among homosexuals "safe sex" is a psychological equivalent to "draft dodging" among combat men.

Warner says he is skeptical about seemingly common-sensical programs involving condoms, "safe sex" and so forth. They are beside the point. For men living on the edge, and desiring to do so, they can even appear laughable.

Yet Warner has another reflection, going deeper, a reflection that sticks in the mind:

"The appeal of queer sex, for many, lies in its ability to violate the responsabilizing frames of good, right-thinking people." That is, the appeal of homosexuality "for many" lies precisely in its rebelliousness against the norms of human behavior.

Right there, it is possible to see, all the talk that aims to normalize homosexuality, treat it as just another "lifestyle," is as beside the point as are the "safe sex" programs. If the point of homosexuality is a rebellion against what is right and good, what point is there in normalizing it or pretending to do so?

Warner concludes that line of thought with an even more difficult sentence:

"Abjection continues to be our dirty secret."

"Abjection" means abasement, a feeling of unworthiness, of be-

Warner reports that among large numbers of homosexuals, the risk of death is now part of the emotional appeal of sex, as something experienced and shared, and that sex under the threat of death is, well, better sex.

He cites a new San Francisco study that indicates that new human immunodeficiency virus infections are now nearly four times what they were in 1987. He estimates that about half of the homosexual men in his age group in New York City are HIV-positive.

With the odds of a sexual partner being HIV-positive at 50 percent, there is an HIV-colored culture among homosexuals. Warner says that a major motive for deliberately practicing unsafe sex becomes "a deep identification with positive men, ambivalence about survival, and the rejection of ordinary life."

This strikes me as highly plausible. The fact of facing death is undoubtedly a special bond among soldiers. There is plenty of evidence that it increases their



ing low, of being a suitable object of scorn.

Is Warner saying that—some? many? all? — homosexuals in their desire are seeking some external acting-out of a feeling of "abjection"?

If that is true, it goes far beyond the nice "education" pro-

grams, the cheerful distribution of condoms, the grade-school books about "Hank Had Two Daddies" and other well-intentioned stuff.

It would also explain why HIV infections apparently have quadrupled in San Francisco since

1987, and why we now face what some epidemiologists are calling a "second wave" of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

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—Jeffrey Hart is a nationally syndicated columnist for King Features.

Letters to the Editor

Louganis column stirs wide reaction

To the editor:

I was troubled after reading last week's opinion column, "Don't Cry One Tear for Louganis" (Scott Gulbransen, March 2). Though I am a most loyal fan of Greg Louganis and was at first bothered by his bashing, it was the thread of arrogance that, as I read on, wove its way into a quilt of ignorance which compelled me to respond to this insensitive editorial.

It is my optimistic, though perhaps naive, hope that Mr. Gulbransen penned this article on the spur of the moment, without giving much thought to his own mortality. His personal feelings towards Greg Louganis are insignificant; he need not feel touched nor moved by Louganis' particular testimony. He should, however, realize how fortunate he is to be a young person in a decade of such greater awareness, education and openness toward the disease. Those such as Louganis and Magic Johnson, who is also criticized by Gulbransen, came into contact with the virus in the mid-80s, when it was either unknown or virtually unacknowledged by the then prevailing presidential administration.

While reading Gulbransen's editorial, I was daunted that this mentality still flourishes and is being propagandized in a scholastic publication. Today it is, at least in part, thanks to the courage of people like Louganis and Magic that we have been forced to accept that this epidemic can strike even our heroes and champions; in fact, it can even strike us.

I sincerely hope that Gulbransen's sense of immunity to the virus stems from confidence in his own safe practices, and not from the belief that he belongs to some exclusive, untouchable sexual caste. He should also be informed that, although a majority of those affected today are homosexuals or IV-drug users (as he pointed out in his column), the fastest-growing segment of the population being diagnosed as HIV-positive are heterosexual women, and that AIDS-related illnesses are presently the number one killer of women ages twenty-five to forty-two.

These facts alone should stamp out the contempt that was the very fiber of Gulbransen's editorial.

Gulbransen is certainly correct in asserting that we all need to make wise, healthy choices every time we engage in behaviors that might put us at risk. But, as someone who adheres to that prescription, I do not understand the lack of compassion toward our own kind who have not been as strong, as lucky, or as informed. The reality in the 1990s is that being at risk for HIV-infection has nothing to do with "lifestyle," but rather with being human, and being human certainly leaves some margin for error. As someone who has been personally touched by AIDS, my belief is that there is room to be both responsible and forgiving. If we stick together as a race, we might just stand a sporting chance.

Mark Godert
Senior
English Major

To the editor:

I cannot believe you actually printed such a comment regarding Louganis, AIDS and homosexuality. You really should be more careful assuming that every gay person "chooses" to be so. I guess it's okay to assume this among yourself, but to actually print this in a university newspaper? There are literally hundreds of gays and lesbians on campus and for those who are still confused about dealing with being gay, I think you just set them back even more! Thank you so much!

Sean Saunders
Senior
Hotel Management

To the editor:

I am shocked and dismayed over the article written by Scott Gulbransen in regards to Greg Louganis.

Gulbransen said he "won't shed a tear" if Louganis dies of AIDS because the Olympic gold medal diver made a "lifestyle choice" which made him susceptible to the disease.

It appears that Gulbransen is not aware of current HIV statistics which show that heterosexual women and children are contracting the disease at a faster rate than gay men. Did these individuals bring the disease on themselves through a "lifestyle choice"?

Using Gulbransen's logic, the safest lifestyle to choose would be a lesbian lifestyle, since they are the least at-risk group to acquire AIDS.

Gulbransen in his article showed a total lack of sensitivity for human life. He also displayed an incredible ignorance about the AIDS virus and who is at risk. He sends out the wrong message to our youth and gives them a false sense of security.

HIV/AIDS is not interested in sexual orientation. It attacks people who have unprotected sex. If young people do not take the time to find out about past sexual activities of their partners and still continue to have unprotected sex, they are at high-risk for contracting the disease.

People who are sexually active should test every six months for HIV and a negative test does not necessarily mean you are disease free.

The only way to stop the spread of AIDS is through education and funding for research to find a cure. The reason it has spread as far as it has is because people first thought it was limited to only the gay population and they did not give a damn.

Judy Corisiero
Co-chair

Nevadans For Constitutional Equality

Boixo issue still on minds of students

To the editor:

I have been following the Boixo ticket scandal for the past few weeks and feel that our student body president and administrators are corrupt.

I find nothing wrong with giving the student body president a parking space but to excuse parking tickets because someone else was in her space is ludicrous. She could have went and got a parking sticker like the rest of us have. She deserved the tickets because if it were anyone else parking with no sticker, they would have gotten a ticket.

I'm also disappointed because we put trust in administrators to look out for our best interests when in reality they stab us in the back and look out for themselves.

I feel if you do something wrong, you should have to pay. Instead Boixo passed the buck to the students of UNLV.

Jody Conrad
Freshman

Parking Fee Should Guarantee Space

To the editor:

The overall idea of building a new parking structure is very appealing simply because it will mean the making of greatly needed parking spaces on campus. However, having to pay an annual fee of \$30, one might imagine it would guarantee you a parking space. At least that's what I imagined, and that's exactly what I would want my \$30 to do.

Lawrence Golding says that anyone who brings a car to school will have to pay the fee. A better way would be to have only the students who want to park in the new garage pay \$30. I've always parked at the Thomas & Mack where there is always plenty of parking available. Sure, it may take a long walk to get from there to the other side of campus but it's just a matter of getting to school on time, and after all walking is good exercise right? So I don't see the point of paying an obligatory fee if when I decide to park in this new parking garage, there may not be any space available for me.

Liz Carabantes
Freshman
Undecided

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Student Senate Meeting Schedule

The Rebel Yell encourages all students to attend UNLV's Student Senate meetings.

Monday, March 27,
6:30 p.m. MSU 201

Monday, April 3,
6:30 p.m. MSU 201

Monday, April 10,
6:30 p.m. MSU 201