



An extraordinary contribution

Hateful letter prompts alumnus
to pledge \$100,000 to Bonham Centre

The University of Toronto was a vastly different place when Jack Hallam first studied here in the late 1940s and early '50s. "There could never have been a Sexual Diversity Studies program in the '50s (or '60s or '70s, probably)," he says. "Everyone was firmly in the closet." Hallam was so busy in his honours biology program that he had little time for extracurricular activities. Though he was involved in an anti-racism campaign, he remembers a silence on campus, even in the left-leaning *Varsity*, around issues of sexual diversity. He knew that a couple of his professors were probably gay or lesbian, but at the time, he hadn't accepted his own sexuality.

So it was with pleasure that Hallam read the cover feature, "Out and Proud," in last summer's issue of *U of T Magazine*, which charted the history of queer activism at the University. And he was dismayed when, in the following issue of the magazine, a number of letters appeared from alumni, criticizing the Pride feature and suggesting that it wasn't worth

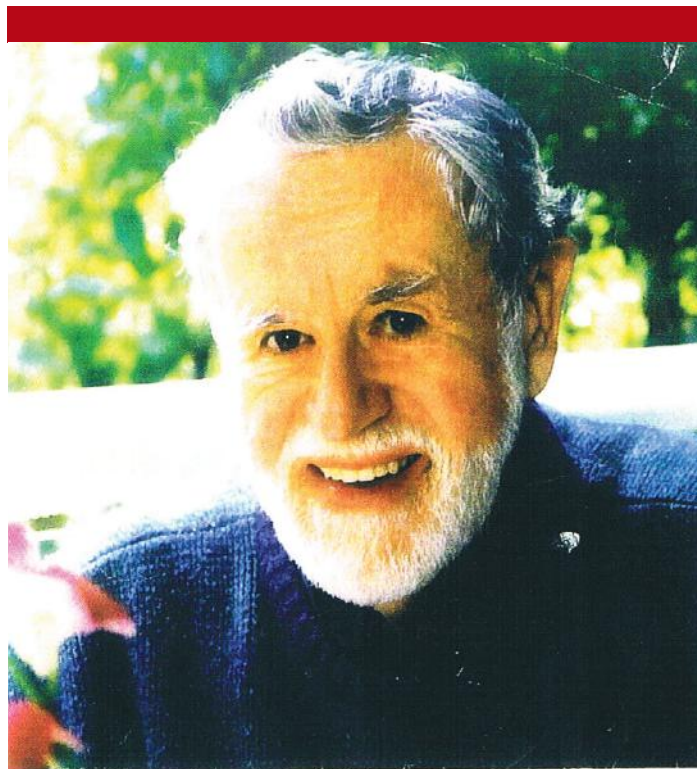
devoting space in the magazine to a discussion of LGBTQ issues. One of the letter-writers, a graduate of the same year as Hallam — 1952 — said that after seeing the magazine's feature on what he called a "fringe population," he'd have second thoughts about contributing money to the University.

Appalled at the homophobia displayed by other alumni, Hallam de-

cidated to talk back, with more than just words. In the fall, he pledged \$100,000 to the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. Hallam, who has also endowed university scholarships for First Nations students and human rights awards for high school students, says his extraordinary contribution was an easy decision. "I tend to be an impulsive person," he cheerfully ad-

mits. "My financial adviser raised her eyebrows."

After finishing his B.Sc. and a master's degree, Hallam had a career as a teacher and researcher in Ontario and Quebec. During a stint teaching abroad in England, he remembers going to a psychiatric clinic to talk about the "illness" of his sexuality. It wasn't until he returned to the University of Toronto in the late '60s to pursue a



Jack Hallam (U.C. '52)

doctorate in zoology that he became involved in the city's nascent gay and lesbian movement. He was an early member of the Community Homophile Association of Toronto. He wrote an article for gay liberation newspaper *The Body Politic* about his experience of being arrested in a police sting in a washroom at the Canadian National Exhibition, and later being acquitted.

Since 1990, Hallam has been living on Salt Spring Island, in British Columbia. He's been active in the island's lesbian and gay association, appearing as a grand marshal in the annual Pride Parade.

Thanks to Hallam's generosity, students will benefit from the creation of two scholarships. The Jack Hallam, UC '52 Undergraduate Scholarship will support students with financial need who are enrolled in the Sexual Diversity Studies program, as well as other LGBTQ students at the University. Meanwhile, the Graduate Student Endowment Fund in Hallam's name will provide financial support for students enrolled in the Bonham Centre's collaborative M.A. and Ph.D. programs.



What a whirlwind! Where did my first academic year as Director of SDS go?

We started, in good SDS fashion, with a welcome-back party. It was my “coming out” party as the new Director. So I figured I should do what I do, which is talk about sex. I gave a little talk called “Talking about Sex.”

Then, on a slightly more serious note, we launched into the Faculty of Arts & Science planning process. Every five years, FAS plans and allocates its funding accordingly. So plan we did. With the help of an SDS Steering Subcommittee, we tried to produce a vision of where we want to be in five years, and make a compelling case to FAS to support our vision. It was quite amazing to sit down and review the remarkable achievements of SDS in the last 10 years, growing from a fledgling program with a minor in Sexual Diversity Studies to simply one of the top programs internationally. To quote from our plan, “A global survey of interdisciplinary centres such as ours reveals that only two



DIRECTOR'S LETTER



other research-intensive universities (NYU and Yale) have undergraduate programs that even approach the scale of SDS, and only one centre (the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at CUNY) has a graduate program in our league.”

But we have no intention of resting on our laurels. Over the next five years, we want to reach new heights, solidifying our international reputation and striving to lead our interdisciplinary field in research and pedagogical innovation. We need to expand our graduate and undergraduate programs and faculty, and develop SDS further as a research

centre. We hope to secure more university support, as well as continuing to build on our highly successful advancement record.

One of my first achievements as Director was to appoint Scott Rayter as Associate Director, in charge of the undergraduate program. Scott, as you probably know, ran SDS last year. He has been absolutely invaluable in my transition, helping me up the steep learning curve. And it is just wonderful to have the undergraduate program in the hands of such an experienced, institutionally wise, and stunningly witty collaborator.

And we are so thankful to our donors. We couldn't do what we do without them. This year, we had the wonderful and unexpected gift from Jack Hallam. Talk about an example of the law of unintended consequences. First, a lovely article in the *U of T Magazine* on 20 years of pride, which produces the awful homophobic letters to the editor, which then lead to the generous donation. I bet the writers of the homophobic letters didn't see that coming!

It has also been a year chockablock full of events, talks, panels and conferences. To name but a few: Sky Gilbert read from his new book of poetry, *A Nice Place to Visit*. Gary Kinsman spoke about his new book, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation*. Artist Jack Butler performed and exhibited his work, *Picturing Genital Embryogenesis*, at the U of T Art Centre. We co-sponsored a film series with the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama entitled *Harsh Light*, curated by Ph.D. collaborative program candidate John Greyson. Our students organized a wonderful conference entitled *Porn Reborn*, which attracted a standing-room-only audience. It's non-stop around this place!

And so it should be. My first year has been a thrilling ride. And next year? Stay tuned. We're not so little a program anymore, and we are on the move.

Brenda Cossman
Director, Bonham Centre

A conversation about Islam

On Jan. 13, SDS joined the LGBTQ Programs & Resources Office and the U of T's Multi-Faith Centre in presenting Islam and Sexual Diversity — a panel discussion at Hart House that filled the Debates Room with 130 people.

Start-off speakers included former SDS undergraduate program director Walid Saleh, an expert on interpretations of the Qur'an, and former Bonham Centre director David Rayside, who moderated.

Also on the panel were Jeevan Chanicka, a school teacher, counsellor, and frequent speaker on social justice is-

sues, and Mohammed Khan, a graduate of law (York) and South Asian Studies (U of T) who has had years of experience in queer organizing within Toronto's Muslim community. A bout of flu forced Farzana Doctor, a Toronto-based author, activist, and social worker, to cancel, though the organizers are hoping she will anchor a woman-focused follow-up in the fall of 2010.

The opening presentations all spoke of the challenges of reconciling faith and LGBT sexuality, but all pointed to the growing visibility of Muslim queers around the world. These openings are more

widely available in Canada and the U.S. than in Europe, and certainly more so than in Muslim-majority countries, but the spread of queer spaces and networks is dramatic even in the most repressive of societies. Saleh and others emphasized the rich poetic tradition of celebrating same-sex love and eroticism in Arab Islamic societies. He challenged the legitimacy of claims by conservatives that they represented the original or authentic interpretations of the Qur'an, arguing that all contemporary interpretations were “modern” constructions, developed within particular social and

political contexts over the last 200 years. Rayside pointed to the relatively conservative views toward homosexuality among North American Muslims, even among populations that were otherwise not very distinct from the rest of the population, though he added that there were significant shifts toward more moderate positions among those who were born in North America.

The audience members who asked questions or made comments were overwhelmingly sympathetic to the notion that Islamic faith should be, and could be, reconciled with sexual diversity.



Porn reborn on campus

Public discussions of pornography are few and far between, and in terms of Canadian discussions, Porn Reborn: New Movements and Markets in Pornography, which took place at the University of Toronto on March 12, was a rare and unique treat. The conference was organized by the Sexual Diversity Studies Student Union, in collaboration with the Bonham Centre and its director, Brenda Cossman. Along with SDSSU chair Sherrie Quinn, conference co-chairs were Nikki Stratigacos and Ali Harrison.

Moderated by Stratigacos, the evening began with remarks by Cossman and Quinn, who both provided helpful academic, legal and social contexts for the current understanding of pornography, and why talking about porn in a university environment is important. I was very excited to hear first-hand about the journey of Tristan Taormino, the keynote speaker. She traced the history of feminist pornographic filmmaking from the 1970s to the present.

Meanwhile, local award-winning “reluctant” pornographer Bruce LaBruce shared his personal journey and the ups and downs in his 20-year film career. Taor-



Keynote speaker
Tristan Taormino.
Photo by Amy Silverberg

mino’s and LaBruce’s paths to becoming porn filmmakers were divergent, but we learned that they had similar goals and visions for their respective works.

Both expressed an unrelenting passion to create sexually explicit content that both challenges and transgresses mainstream conventions of sexual representation.

Taormino accomplishes her goals by working within that mainstream industry in an effort to make a difference, while LaBruce responds to the dominant imagery of the mainstream by working independently. From LaBruce, we learned that zombie porn can indeed be romantic; and from Taormino, we learned that “sex ed” porn can and should inspire us to “go out and do it.”

It is exciting to see SDS engaged in open and critical discussions about a topic that has been extremely divisive and contentious. This conference took place a month before another unique Canadian event: the fifth annual Feminist Porn Awards, hosted by the Toronto sex store Good for Her. Toronto will again be welcoming Tristan Taormino to the city for that event.

Lisa Byers

The Bonham Centre is pleased to congratulate the winners of this year’s student awards:

Patricia and Douglas Dadson Scholarship

Jerome Scully, Rena Hogan, Corina Tudor

Emperor I Sergio Apolloni Memorial Scholarship

Juan Antonio Llamas Rodriguez

Sexual Diversity Studies Scholarship

Merike Andre-Barrett

Mark S. Bonham Scholarship

Caitlin Hersey

Rainbow Triangle Alumni Association Award

Cameron Gedge, Greg Katsoras, Jason Qu

LGBTOUT Student Award

Vash Ebbadi, Sherrie Quinn

Congratulations also to SDS alum Anna Gutmanis on winning a Pride in the Arts award for her song, “I Am Who I Am.”



Farewell, Maureen

This year, Maureen FitzGerald, a past director of Sexual Diversity Studies and one of the program's founders, begins her well-deserved retirement.

Bonham Centre Associate Director Scott Rayter recently paid tribute to Maureen at a party held in her honour. Following is a truncated version of his remarks:

It goes without saying that when Mariana Valverde decided we couldn't let Maureen's retirement go by without some kind of recognition, Maureen didn't want any part of it, preferring instead to slip away unobtrusively, with as little fuss as possible. All of us who know Maureen would agree she's not one who seeks to stand in the spotlight. And it is precisely because Maureen doesn't wish to be the centre of attention that we should be coming together to honour her.

I asked a few former students for their thoughts on Maureen. Nadia Bello, one of our first graduates, now a Toronto school board trustee, had this to say: "Maureen was always an incredibly supportive presence for students and myself during the start-up years of Sexual Diversity Studies. She opened up her heart and home for many of us, and was involved on a community level as well as an academic level. SDS and TYP (Transitional Year Programme) students will miss her warmth, common sense, and support."

From Anna Gutmanis, another SDS alum (and former Advisory Board member): "Maureen was always friendly and approachable. She cared about every single SDS student, getting to know each

one of us and often soliciting our opinions. I thought of her as being the great matriarch of the SDS family! I have no doubt that she will have as glorious and productive a retirement as she did a career."

It comes as no surprise to anyone that Maureen has had a profound effect on the lives of many students during what has been a nearly 40-year career at U of T. Starting as an instructor in the Department of Anthropology in 1971 when she was still a doctoral student, Maureen went on to join the Transitional Year Programme in 1975, later co-teaching with Harriet Rosenberg a course started by Meg Luxton at Innis College on Childhood, Family and the Community. It was in the context of teaching that course that Maureen met her partner, Amy Gottlieb, in 1977. Maureen would go on to teach many more courses, including a lesbian film and literature course in the '90s, and first-year seminars on *The Coming Out Novel*, *Toronto Oral History* and *Community History*.

Maureen also played a key role in helping design and implement the minor and major programs in SDS. She guest-lectured the first couple of times we ran our introductory course, and she coordinated our other core course when we launched the major in 2004.

It was during her years as program director for SDS, from 2000 to 2006, that I really got to know Maureen and develop a profound respect for the knowledge and expertise she brought to the development of our curriculum. But I think it is the kind of commu-



Photo by Amy Gottlieb

nity building she did in SDS that people most recognize. If students from our program walk away with more than just a degree, having learned something about inclusiveness and equity, having made friends for life, it is Maureen who helped lay the groundwork for this other kind of learning.

Maureen, of course, has had a teaching career that is different from what most of us experience. The one-on-one academic advising (and every other kind of advising and support) that Maureen does as a TYP instructor has helped many students earn a degree despite some overwhelming obstacles. For Maureen, teaching is always a collaborative process. She feels a deep satisfaction at other people's successes. As many of us

know, she worked as an editor at *Women's Press* during the 1980s, again helping others do their best work, and therefore making a real contribution to women's and lesbian writing in this country.

I now continue to work with Maureen as a co-editor of a Canadian queer studies reader. Maureen embodies the best of what collaborative teaching, research, and learning can be. Never interested in making it known which part she contributed (or how much), she helps produce something that is more dialectical, something that is more than the sum of its parts. And so Maureen, please step forward today — not just to celebrate all you've achieved for yourself and others, but to take your proper place in the spotlight.



Life after SDS



From left, Nadia Bello, Mike LeSage, Liz Reynolds, Alpen Razi. Photo by Corina Tudor

In February, students gathered at University College for “Life After Sexual Diversity Studies,” a panel which brought together several alumni to talk about the role SDS played in their career choices. All four panellists spoke of how they became aware that the questions raised in their SDS courses could be pursued beyond the classroom. Indeed, several noted they didn’t think they would have stayed in university, or done as well as they had, were it not for SDS. Most significantly, each panellist spoke to the profound sense of community that was created and fostered in the program, helping to establish friendships that are still going strong.

Mike LeSage (now a research analyst with U of T’s Office of Government, Institutional and Community Relations) talked

about how David Rayside’s course taught him about the politics of “who gets to sit at the table,” about “systems of power, of inclusion and exclusion.” That was important, he said, in “making me aware of how the work I do does not reproduce those oppressions.”

All panellists spoke of the need to take advantage of networks as a good way of finding work opportunities. For Liz Reynolds (a diversity generalist with KPMG), this began in David Rayside’s classroom, when he brought in TD Bank employee Gerard Etienne to talk about equity issues in the workplace. This made her realize she could do diversity work within the banks and corporate world. She advised students to be ready for the question of what a degree in SDS has to offer: “Have your elevator speech ready,” she said, noting that people listen when you “sell the business case for diversity.”

Alpen Razi, now a Ph.D. candidate in English and SDS, talked about acquiring the tools necessary to confront “the phobic stuff” he heard in other classes, noting that “U of T is a pretty conservative place when you go outside SDS.” He became interested in the way education can act as a kind of “disciplinary gatekeeping, reproducing normative practices,” whereas SDS students “learned to ask interdisciplinary questions, giving them a competitive edge.” As a graduate student, he testified to the academic mentorship and training offered by SDS, which he said had allowed him to cultivate his own research program and benefit from a diverse group of professors and areas of study.

The panellists all spoke of the importance of combining work experience and volunteering with education, noting that they held down jobs while in school, which provided useful contacts.

The final panellist was Nadia Bello, who was among the first cohort of SDS graduates, and the founder of the SDS Student Union. She is now a Toronto District School Board trustee and a training development coordinator with Planned Parenthood of Toronto, where she began working for an anti-homophobia program, TEACH, during her undergrad years. She described how being involved in SDS and taking up a work-study position provided her with valuable organizational experience. SDS provided “a framework for understanding how sexuality works — its context and history.” More importantly, she said, she had learned the importance of finding “a place to belong,” noting that “school won’t tell you who you are.”

What did she learn from her days as a student activist? “Politics are not worth disrespecting people.”



Profile: Merike Andre-Barrett

Merike Andre-Barrett is a few weeks away from completing a B.Sc. in Psychology and Sexual Diversity Studies. She is also the winner of this year's Sexual Diversity Studies scholarship. This fall, she plans to start a graduate program in counselling psychology, focusing on the narratives of gender and sexual identity development in LGBTQ2 individuals.

How did you first get involved in Sexual Diversity Studies?

I can't emphasize enough how glad I've been to return to school and find the Bonham Centre. Even though I had initially planned on doing a research specialist degree in psychology, as soon as I became aware of the excellent

faculty, the academic rigour, and the well-designed interdisciplinary program in SDS, I was hooked. I learned to fall in love (again) with theory, and I learned that things had changed (a lot) since I was in school as an undergrad the first time, 10 years ago.

What have been some of the highlights of your degree in SDS?

More than any other program that I've been involved in, SDS has faculty who are committed to academic excellence in the classroom, and open to discussion and mentorship outside the classroom. All the classes I took with Elena Basile impressed me and inspired me to incorporate queer theory into my own research interests.

SDS is also unique in its interdisciplinarity, community involvement, and wide range of events. Being a part of the Porn Reborn conference this year has been memorable, creating an opportunity for extending some of the conversations I've had in SDS classrooms out into the community.

What would you tell someone about SDS if they knew nothing about the program? Regardless of the program/degree you want to finish with, take a course in SDS! I've found that the courses in the department have deeply enriched my perspective in my own field. The program is incredibly supportive and continuously evolving.



Profile: Nathan Thompson

Nathan Thompson is graduating in June from the master's program in Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at OISE. He has been a teaching assistant in two SDS undergraduate courses, has sat on SDS committees and helped plan events, and is a student in the Bonham Centre's Collaborative Graduate Program. He plans to start his Ph.D. in the fall.

What attracted you to Sexual Diversity Studies?

I came to U of T from Halifax. To be honest, I was absolutely terrified about moving to Toronto. I was looking into programs across Canada and while searching, I found SDS. I remember the excitement upon realizing that there was an academic centre in Canada that dealt specifically with sexual diversity. As a non-heterosexual kid growing up in rural Atlantic Canada, I often encountered difficulties. The idea that there was a space within U of T where I could explore this "differ-

ence" amidst a community of acceptance and appreciation was a dream come true. It was what facilitated my successful transition from rural Maritimer to urban Torontonian (and graduate student).

What have been the highlights of your work in SDS?

My first day of being a T.A. for UNI 256 (Sexualities: Social, Organizational, and Legal Contexts), realizing that well over 100 students were interested in a program like SDS.

What have you gained from participating in the Collaborative Graduate Program?

Just involving myself with the Bonham Centre has helped in working through and struggling with my own research questions in my graduate work. The Centre offers a perspective that is, often, a bit different than a home department. Because of this, you are forced to re-evaluate your thinking and/or direction. I think for any graduate student, having the

ability to be introduced to alternative theories or methods is always productive.

What would you tell someone about SDS if they knew nothing about the program?

I would explain that it isn't just about LGBTQ2QI studies (although this is very important). Often, the first concept that may jump into one's head around "sexuality" is that of a non-heterosexual identity. However, the Centre is dedicated to the ways in which "sexuality" can and does affect all aspects of life and scholarship (which is why it crosses so many disciplines).

SDS, for me, creates a space within the institution in which graduate students can explore topics around sexuality while receiving support, both academically and in terms of community. I can attest that this sort of space does not yet occur in most other Canadian universities. It is something to be proud of and appreciated.



We need your support!

To make a donation, or to discuss a planned gift to support the Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies and its students, contact

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