

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Massachusetts

by Eugene Narrett

The Sex Quiz

"Is it possible heterosexuality is a phase you will grow out of? Are you heterosexual because you fear the same sex? If you have never slept with anyone of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer it? Is it possible you merely need a good gay experience?" Far from rhetorical questions and accompanying suggestions that Jesus was gay, Ruth a lesbian, and King David a bisexual, these queries were offered in a "sex quiz" given students last spring by "health educators" at a high school in Framingham, Massachusetts. Principal Bob Flaherty said the questions were not advocacy, just "thoughtful and constructive" lessons in tolerance and the golden rule, but that's backtracking and spin. For one thing, teachers don't give quizzes to homosexual students urging heterosexuality on them. Quite the contrary, youngsters today are urged toward sexual adventurism, with condoms as their coat of arms. Secondly, and despite Flaherty's weak denial, the quiz clearly invites teens to try homosexual acts. This promotional quality alarmed some parents.

The "Living Relationships" part of the sensitivity curriculum presented oral and anal sex as "methods of birth control that preserve the concept of virginity," for students who are open-minded. In a workbook titled *Facing Reality*, a quiz asked students if they found homosexual acts "disgusting." Those who checked they did, lost points, and the lower their score, the more "homophobic" they were told they are. Yet, like Flaherty, the school's Director of Health Education, Jim Carey, insisted "everything was done very positively, with thought and sensitivity."

Similar professions of compassion for children have cleared the way for a photo exhibit which opened in January at schools in Amherst, Massachusetts, and is now touring the nation. Sponsored by

GLSTN (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network) and titled "Love Makes a Family: Living in Gay and Lesbian Families," the exhibit features photographs of homosexual households and is part of current efforts by the Clinton administration, mass media, and advertising industries to reshape and adulterate the meaning of marriage and family.

Commenting on the exhibit, a supportive teacher stated, "We have passed the point of typical families, so why make a big deal of it?" A school committee member agreed, and argued against letting parents excuse children from discussing the exhibit. "That would be a direct insult to lesbians and gays," she said. For some, education today means imposing vice in the name of mercy and good manners.

Thus, in every school it visits, "Love makes a family" is an occasion for mandatory, government-subsidized discussions affirming feminist and gay reconstructions of gender and family. But some resist the agenda. "Could there be an exhibit of Catholic children taking Communion?" one Pioneer Valley parent wondered. Another picked up this point, asking, "Could we have photos of parents and kids hunting deer?" Others moved beyond these observations on GLSTN's partisan redefinition of "diversity" to worry that "the schools are taking on so many social issues, teachers don't have time to treat traditional curricula," a point reflected in many tests showing the ignorance of American students in the core disciplines.

Despite its homey-sounding title, "Love makes a family" is a coy but now familiar polemic subverting the fact that husband, wife, and children make the family in healthy cultures. As one parent bluntly stated, "The exhibit contains glowing descriptions of tangled sexual relationships, artificial insemination, of leaving spouses for homosexual partners, [things] that could frighten and embarrass a child." More than that, the exhibit could undermine any sense of foundational kinship, for if "love makes a family," marriage should be allowed not only for gays and lesbians, but for any two, three, five, or more people seeking a carnal fellowship. Such unions may be transient not only for sensual but for social reasons like no-fault divorce and the

disposable ethos it reflects, but why should incestuous or homosexual bonds be any more durable than the ligature of husband and wife which today is fragile as impulse? And if, like marriage and impulse, gender is only a phase one passes in and out of like an animal in heat, and the nocturnal tropisms of "orientation" its only standard, why not try a new-style marriage? How else will you know, as the quiz asks, whether you might like it?

Framingham's sex education classes indicate the dangerous paths schoolteachers are opening for children in the name of "affirming diverse lifestyles" and "health education." When adults talk dirty to children and encourage them to engage in sex, they would ordinarily be accused of corrupting the innocent. But today such discourse is legitimized on grounds of compassion: if children become intimately familiar with alternative sexual practices, then lesbians and gays will never have their feelings hurt. In the name of compassion, today's sensitivity training creates such wounds by prompting adolescents to doubt and even despise their natural feelings, while offering them attention and solicitude if they confess the new homosexual faith. For example, during "Gay & Lesbian Awareness Month," students at Brookline High School are invited to "Tell Someone" about their homosexual fantasies or experiences, and to wear pink cardboard triangles imprinted with the word "ALLY." These stratagems exploit the adolescent hunger for attention, for having their confusions given a heroic metaphysical dimension.

Along with inviting a new sexual path, teachers also encourage students to mock and despise normalcy. Thus, the sex quiz at Framingham High School suggested to students that marriage between man and woman is unsatisfying and doomed: "Why are there so few good heterosexual marriages?" it queried, arguing there was no intrinsic reason for choosing it rather than homosexual congress, implying they were matters of amoral selection like choosing paper or plastic at the checkout counter, as one clergyman said.

Having posed its questions on the decay of heterosexual marriage, Framingham High School provided no educators to explain how the counterculture's con-

tempt for commitment and unnatural law has undermined health and marriage and helped produce quizzes like the one at hand. Instead, tenth graders sat there while the authorities asked, "Given the problems men and women face, would you want your children to be heterosexual? If they were, would you consider aversion therapy?"

Some parents are fighting back. Consider an ongoing case in which parents Thomas and Jeannine Jenei are suing Brookline High School for promoting the gay agenda and bullying and isolating students, like their daughter, Johanna, who object.

Brookline High School is often visited by the major media interviewing students and staff on their fervent support of Governor William Weld's "Gay-Straight Student Alliance." Students disturbed by this new intramural proselytizing have been "taunted, harassed, mocked and ridiculed for their religious faith, beliefs and heterosexuality," parents report. Lessons have included a social studies teacher, Polly Atwood, coming out as a lesbian in the middle of a class and challenging Johanna Jenei, saying, "I know this will make *someone* here uncomfortable, but now let *her* tell us [the rest of the class] her opinion." Atwood then reportedly mentioned some details of her "partner's" personal life, and told her ninth-grade class in "Ancient History" that "women can thrive without men," that "cavewomen were self-sufficient and let cavemen near them only when they wanted babies." When Johanna suggested men and women were meant to live together, Atwood led the class in mocking her.

After several weeks of this ridicule, in mid-December 1993, Johanna told the school's guidance counselor, Mark Federman, that she felt isolated and vulnerable. Nevertheless, Federman urged her to return to the class, which she did; she then became ill. When the Jeneis requested their daughter be allowed to finish the two-semester course in an independent study, the head of the social studies department, Jonathan Sill, refused permission, even though such arrangements are commonly granted in Brookline and an experienced teacher had already agreed to provide the tutorial. "Go ahead and sue," school and union officials reportedly told the Jeneis' attorney. "We're going to boot you out on a summary judgment."

Boston Globe columnists Derrick Jack-

son and Patricia Smith publicly derided the Jeneis as vengeful and ignorant bigots. Reporter Rachel Layne wrote a story omitting relevant facts she had received from interviewees. But in the meantime, liberal readers had heard the marching orders and chimed in with sallies of their own. Writing in the *Brookline Chronicle*, one thoughtful soul derided the Jeneis as "POOPS (People Offended by Other People's Sexuality)." In addition to POOPS not being very nice, he declared, "POOPS are also not really very bright. Of course, any POOPS who move away from Brookline do us a favor. . . . We don't owe the POOPS a lesson in true Christianity, and we certainly don't owe them any money."

Who are these "POOPS," the Jeneis? Letters from longtime neighbors called them "loving, caring, and compassionate people" with "a strong Christian faith and a strong marriage." As for intelligence, both parents "are outstanding teachers in Cambridge," one resident noted. "For a quarter century, Johanna's father, Tom Jenei, has been organist and choirmaster at St. Paul's Church in Brookline, and his faith and leadership were instrumental in rebuilding the church after a disastrous fire in 1976." A fellow student of Johanna's older brother Tom wrote from the University of Chicago to say, "While I have always disagreed with Tom's and Johanna's views, they have always expressed their opinions intelligently and respectfully. Because their views were opposed to those of the large majority of students, they were confronted, ridiculed and teased much more than the average student [but] both Tom and his sister were able to handle strong, often personally directed opposition to their views." Such testimony from an ideological opponent suggests the quality of the Jeneis' own tolerance and intelligence, and also how fierce the harassment of Johanna must have been before she became ill.

Though Brookline High School finally agreed to give Johanna credit for the semester she had endured, the ostracism and mockery continued. In February 1994, she was committed to Children's Hospital suffering from acute stress and falling blood pressure. Shortly afterward, and at the recommendation of her doctors, she withdrew from Brookline High and enrolled in Lexington Christian Academy, where she remains. Her parents have moved to a town 15 miles away and requested compensatory expenses.

David Turner, Brookline's Town Counsel, says he considers the Jeneis part of the crowd that produced the Scopes "Monkey" Trial. The school, too, remains militantly unrepentant. The Jeneis' attorney Randal Fritz notes that this punitive stance expressly violates Brookline's own school code, which requires that educational administrators "make the well-being of students the fundamental value of all decision-making and actions."

One would like to dismiss these unnatural lessons and fierce proselytizing as aberrant, but they reflect a national problem, a new norm called "diversity" that destroys all norms. Lenore Carlisle, principal of Mark's Meadow School in Amherst, said "teachers will present 'love makes a family' in terms of diversity, not in terms of human sexuality." Elsewhere in the Bay State, similar semantic juggling has led to fourth-graders being coached to role-play homosexual couples seeking to adopt a child. First graders are "counseled" about a classmate's mother's sex-change operation. A parent who lauded Brookline's history of promoting academic freedom in "discussing sexual orientation" in class, called the above-noted scandal at the Runkle School "a series of small discussion groups with first-grade students, outside the classroom [in the guidance counselor's office] about a classmate's parent's sex-change." Small discussion group? With first-graders? About a lesbian sex-change? It is astonishing how a hip term like "discussion group" can sanitize insanity. In a program called "Hot, Sexy and Safer," high school students have been told, in the name of "AIDS education," to "practice their orgasm face," and to lick flavored condoms in the school auditorium. The U.S. First District Court of Appeals ruled parents need not be informed of such programs in advance, nor (echoing GLSTN's argument for mandatory discussion by all students of homosexual curricula) may they stop their children from attending. "The plaintiffs have no right to bar their children from exposure to vulgar and offensive language," the Court commented, adding, "parents cannot dictate what the schools teach." If folks like the Jeneis object to the new agenda, they'll have to move.

Certainly, they cannot expect succor from the office of Governor William Weld. The liberal Republican this spring refused to sign a proclamation affirming,