



yes, I am

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STORIES BY YOUNG QUEER PEOPLE

Foreword by Christos Tsiolkas



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And finally, thanks to the young people whose stories, poetry and images appear in this book.



Healthpact

Foreword

There are three very good reasons to herald the publication of this book. These stories give voice to young queer experience; though we may have Mardi Gras and gay and lesbian characters on TV and in film, and though we may have the pink dollar, for many queer youth, adolescence is still a time in which coming to grips with a non-heterosexual identity is fraught with emotional and sexual pain. These stories attest to the often brave, sometimes comic, sometimes harsh experiences of young people coming out in a contradictory age where pop culture may have embraced queer but where our Prime Minister promotes a regime of 'family values' which silently excommunicates the lesbian or gay members of the family.

A second, and just as important reason for enjoying this book, is that through its voices and characters we can get an understanding of the changed social and cultural landscape of Australia at the beginning of the new millennium. Thirty years on from the birth of the gay civil rights movement, these young people are dealing with a vastly different world. Different struggles, different worldviews and beliefs are being expressed here and it strikes me that there is a dual 'coming out' taking place in these pages. Not only coming out in terms of sexual identity, but also coming out as 'different' to previous generations of queer, mapping out their own territory and their own struggles.

And finally, this is a book of stories from Australia's inland capital, stories from a city just beginning to understand it has its own history and its own unique character. The rich smell of the bush and the bleak arid geography of a stillborn city permeate these stories, and in giving voice to the lives of young people outside the Sydney–Melbourne nexus, this volume of stories assists in counteracting the literary and cultural dominance of those bickering sibling metropolises.

This is a good book. Enjoy it.

Christos Tsiolkas

Introduction

Yes, I am: Stories by young queer people is the final product of a project designed to allow young gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer people to express their own views and feelings in the form of words and pictures. *Yes, I am* forms part of the ACT implementation of the National Young Gay Men's Campaign, coordinated by the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO).

The *Yes, I am* project grew out of the need to create a positive alternative to the negative attitudes young queer people face. Many young people attracted to the same sex report being abused at school, at home and in the street. This abuse ranges from verbal to physical. The feelings of safety that young people should experience are absent for many young queers. For some, this has led to a reduction in self-esteem, and an increase in self-harming behaviours.

Yes, I am has encouraged young queer people to tell, share and give voice to their own stories. It raises the visibility and awareness of the lives of young queer people in the ACT and provides information on where to obtain queer-friendly services and support.

This book will be distributed to service providers, businesses, educational institutions and other venues where queer and non-queer youth, as well as adults, will have access to these stories. In addition, it will be made available on the Internet (<http://stories.webone.com.au>).

It is hoped that through *Yes, I am* young queer people in the ACT will realise they are not alone, but a valuable part of the diversity which makes up the Australian community.

John Guppy
Community Education and Health Promotion Unit
AIDS Action Council of the ACT

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I dreamed of you

JuDA5

I dreamed of you.

A star exploded into your mouth,
Illuminated your face in a saint-like glow.
It begged for me to kiss you,
To take you into arms and
Feel feverish beating inside
Your chest.
It wanted me to share
With you
A molten secret
Of mouth, lips and tongue.

It begged for an us.

It pleaded with me to
Give my loneliness
To the dim-lit moon and
Dance with you to an end.

It wants me to give over
All the secrets of my stony heart
That I keep from the world and
Give them to you,
In small silent whispers
Dead in the crystalline
Night-black.

Now it wants me to share
My dimly lit stars with
Your brightness and
Let you teach me how
To breathe again.

It's forcing me to
Share straightjacket tight
Embraces with you and
I will succumb
To it and you
Willingly,
Abandoning
All fear and self-loathing
For shared mornings and
Nicotine hazes
For you and I.

It wants me to forget
The arrogance of hiding my secrets
In dragonfly jars and
Polaroids.

Note

The image on this page has been deleted from the Electronic Version due to file size and download time considerations.

I want out

Nathan Hannigan

I want out

Do you have a fast car? I want out. I want to get away from all this. I want a new life. I wanna ticket to anywhere; maybe we can make a deal. Perhaps I can cash this one in. Hey buddy, can you spare a life? I'm tired of all these struggles, a fight within myself and in my head. Fighting for love and for happiness. The two inextricably linked. I want to hold someone in my arms, to know they're mine and I theirs. Holding the man. Holding my man. I want to look into this someone's eyes, knowing that I'll never try to hurt them and won't know how not to. When all I ever wanted was to be content and at peace, like an eerie silence across a lake on a misty morning, yet it seems so far off. Nothing's gonna take you away from me.

Sometimes I feel like I'm losing the fight, losing the race to stay afloat. And though sometimes I wish I could end it then and there, lie down and give in, 'cause it's all far too much, something keeps me going. It's the search for that someone who I can share me with, be with forever. I have so much to say and no one to listen. Everyday, I see so many people together, holding hands, hugging like the two of them have meshed into one. And watching them, I ask myself, why I want love so badly, why I think this one thing will fill this emptiness deep inside. But it's something I don't think I will ever be able to answer. Why I'm on the search for someone to love and hold, to protect and have protect me. Everyday I ask myself, why do I want love? But I can't answer myself. All I know is that something deep inside says that it'll all be okay if love comes along. I will be strong, I will be faithful 'cause I'm counting on a new beginning, a reason for living, a deeper meaning.

I wanna be normal. To know I'll wake up in the morning and not feel this emptiness inside, not feel this burning in my chest. To know that I won't be taking another trip to the doctor, letting them prod and poke me, ask inane questions. I wanna be free.

I want to smile again, laugh again, live again, without the pain, hurt or worry. I want mum to be well and everyone around me to be happy. It's an eternal struggle, a search that will never end. All I ever wanted, all I ever hoped for, was to be sure that the people I really love and care for are happy, are safe.

My coming out diary

David Mills

Saturday 22 January, 2000

Coming out to myself

Over the past few weeks I've become happy with my sexuality. I'm now perfectly happy to say to myself that I am gay. Looking back, I've known it for years, but one way or another I've denied it to myself. Until recently I had resigned myself to leading a 'normal' heterosexual life, in part because I've felt that at some stage in my life I would like to have children and it's also something everyone expects me to do. But now I don't feel ashamed. I know that I want the companionship of a partner more than anything.

I feel so good. I think I've finally found my identity. I intend to 'come out' at the end of this year. That way if my friends react badly, it shouldn't matter too much.

Wednesday 26 January

Australia Day

I can't really think of what to write ...

I guess I'm OK. I'm a little nervous about going back to school and all the hard work I'm going to have to put in and the hard decisions I'm going to have to make. I'm really going to work hard this year.

Monday 14 February

Considering coming out

*I've been thinking about a problem I'm going to have to face... Should I come out? Where? What reactions should I or could I expect? Why? How?
ARRRGGGHHHH...*

Saturday 1 April

Deciding to come out

I'm getting a little stressed: I've got so many tests and assignments and my English marks have been kinda low this semester. I think maybe it's because my mind has been elsewhere —thinking about my sexuality. I've decided I'm going to do something about that—I'm going to come out to my friends, I think I have to. It's impossible to keep a secret over so many years.

Sunday 2 April

Planning my coming out

Wet, depressing day today.

I've been stewing over the details of my coming out—stuff like who, when and how?

Here's a list of my closest friends and some thoughts:

—Cam: I think if there's one person I feel I can confide in, it's Cam. He's probably the most able to give me advice. Unfortunately his mind seems to have been elsewhere lately. I don't know what he's thinking about. I hope nothing's wrong. Anyway, while I would have hoped he would be one of the first

I come out to, he probably won't be.

—Stephen: Since I see a lot of Stephen he's a likely candidate to come out to first. On the other hand it could be a problem if he has a problem with it, though I guess I don't really think he will...

—Steven: As a friend for over ten years, I would like to come out to him first, but I think it would be hard to get him alone to talk to him and I don't know if I could bring myself to tell him.

—Brent: Well known for his gay jokes, but I think he might understand. Unfortunately I don't think Brent can keep a secret for more than about 20 seconds.

—Adam: I really don't have a clue how Adam would react. I really don't.

—Tom: I'm not sure.

—Brett and Nhung: I'm fairly sure Brett would be understanding, but I've never had a very close discussion with him before, really. His girlfriend, Nhung, is probably the same.

Plus, there's the whole when and how issue.

Should I drop hints gradually till it's obvious? How? If that made them go off on a witch-hunt wouldn't that be worse?

Should I do it at school? At the shops? At home? Is it best at some neutral location?

When? When? When?

Should I do it one-by-one? As a group? Should I tell a couple of people and let them tell a few others?

Later ...

I came so close to telling mum tonight. I think this a problem (or maybe I should call it a paradox, I'm not sure):

1. You must carefully plan what you say and how you do it.
2. You must do it only when the time is right and you shouldn't assume a person's reaction will be as you predict it.

So, what do you do???

I really want to come out tomorrow, the stress is too much—but am I ready? Is the time appropriate? What will I do if it isn't good?

How on earth can I cope with school work when I'm worrying about problems like these? Maybe I should just get it over and done with.

Telling your family must be the hardest part, I prefer not to think about it too much for the time being.

Oh well, maybe April 3 will be my 'Coming Out Day'!

(Fingers crossed!!)

to be continued ...

Note

The image on this page has been deleted from the Electronic Version due to file size and download time considerations.

innocence

In robes of innocence

Peta

In robes of innocence
You walk into my life
With the walk
Of angels in their understated way
So that I melt into insecurities
As I watch you stumble effortlessly
In and out of my life
Trailing my heart, unknowingly
Behind you

In robes embroidered with kindness
You pave a road of knowledge
I placidly tread with insignificant feet
In your absence, I fear
All those unknown and unexplained
Emotions I endure
In the hope that you will
Once more, as you've once done
Hold me in my fear

In robes sewn with love's thread
You unknown to all
Embellish my heart with desolation
For insecurity has its own regeneration—
Only those who live in pain know
So I love you, though impossible
For I hope for a fear far greater
Of you loving me back

Slowly you slip those robes off
Robes, I've placed my heart in,
You leave them by the roadside
Unloved and unimportant
As you silently and unknowingly
Crush all my hopes
Obliterate my fears,
And in one sensual movement
Punish me with eternal confusion.

Photo by Jenna Taylor, with permission



Please understand?

Chris Reynolds

Well it's always been suspected in my family that I am gay. I would get constantly picked on by my sisters, and in high school and college my friends sort of caught on too.

Don't get me wrong, I don't walk around talking with a lisp or holding my hand funny. People could just tell, and sometimes I tried to make it obvious so it would be easy to let people know later on.

My best friend was the first to know. We were having a joke and something came up about being gay. I'd been having a hard time, thinking it was about time to let people know. I was sick and tired of pretending and just wanted to live my life.

He asked me a fairly simple question while we were driving home: 'If we go out, are you going to be looking to pick up a woman or not?' I thought he was just making a joke and didn't really want an answer, but he was serious, so I told him, 'no I wouldn't be looking to pick up a woman', and he just said 'that's cool'.

None of my other friends, when they found out, said a thing. They talked to me about it but I realised then I had nothing to fear, they were my friends and that made me very relieved.

Telling my family was a different matter, well to start with my sisters said 'about time you admitted it' and wanted to have a 'coming out' party for me!!

Mum was drying her hair in the bathroom when I told her. Mum and I talk all the time, we have a good relationship and talk about everything. That morning, I had been putting off leaving for work because I really wanted to tell her, but I just couldn't find the right moment. We were talking about my sister. Mum was saying she was angry at her for making a comment a few days before that she thought I was gay and that mum should wake up and realise. Mum told her she had no right to speak about me in that way. I thought this was a great opening and said, 'well you can tell her not to worry any more, I *am* gay'. Mum just went silent and kept on drying her hair.

I said, 'did you hear me?'

She said 'yes' but didn't move.

derstand?

Well I left for work because it was obvious she wasn't going to talk to me. I got there about half an hour later and there was a phone call on my mobile, it was her. Crying her eyes out, which she did for three days!! We talked about it, how hard it was going to be for her now, and how hard it was for me all my life. I honestly thought it wouldn't faze her, I thought she knew, everyone else did. My dad was a different story, I thought that he would disown me straight away, he was an ex-cop who hated 'homos' and 'poofs' but, as it turned out, he was the most understanding person I told.

My family is OK now, they have finally accepted me for who I am and they've taken my other half into the family as one of their own.

If anyone wants my advice about coming out, as soon as you start to feel depressed about it all, come out!! Make sure it's to a good friend or a close family member because you need all the support you can get. I beat myself up trying to decide whether to come out or not, and the moment I did, all the pressure lifted and I actually got a life, I started doing all the things I wanted to do, stopped being depressed, fell in love and am quite happy right now. If I'd known what I do now a few years ago, I would have come out in college.

Dreamt I

JuDA5

I met you at some party
A strange but familiar
House
Watching
A woman trapped in a pool
Masturbating
You had strange piercings
And I was slightly scared
Of you
But intrigued, I think
Somehow I fell in love
With you, but still scared
Of you
We had sex of some kind
She was in the next
Room
You put your hand in
My crotch and said
Listen—and then
You went away
But I had your grey
T-shirt
A part of you
I wanted you to come back
Wanted you
I went for a drive
Running in a park with your
Shirt
Trying to find a safe place
Trying to find you

You drove up in a bus
Came to me
We went home, did it
Again
People came to take
You away
You had to go
I was crying, wrenching sobs
You were holding me
I gave you a necklace
Leather entwined with gold
'As long as you have this
I know you will be safe'
We kissed again
And I woke up
And you weren't here
And I was lonely
Still
Am.

Dreamt II

We are floating down the
Rapids

We have taken a pill
To kill all feeling

Mine's not working that
Well

The river has come to
A bend

And now we are flying
Entwined in each other's arms

Each other's legs

I'm trying to get the
Words out

I'm stammering

You're looking on
Perplexed, but loving

Holding me close

Trying to calm me

I manage to get the
Words

Out

But I'm stammering still

'If ...

If you left me

I think ...

I think that I would

Die'

You hold me closer

You kiss me

Soft and sure

I am calm, but crying.

And then it ends

And then I wake.

My coming out diary... continued

Monday 3 April

My first coming out experiences

I DID IT TODAY! Phew! I still haven't calmed down! I actually only got around to telling Stephen, but it doesn't matter—I still told someone.

Basically, I asked him to come outside so we could talk about something and then I apologised for making it seem so dramatic and then, after stalling for a few minutes (that seemed like eternity) while I worked up the courage, I said: 'Basically what I have to say is that I'm gay and I'm telling you this because I don't like keeping secrets between friends.' I can still remember hearing those words come out of my lips, it's like a dream—it didn't seem real. Then he said, 'Well, I have to say that it's alright by me.' I thanked him and told him I really appreciated that and then we joked a bit and stuff.

I feel kinda better all ready but I can't assume it's going to be this smooth all the way. Maybe I'll tell most of the rest of my friends tomorrow.

Later...

I was on the net tonight and opened up ICQ hoping to be able to talk to someone because I was so excited about my day... The only person online was one of my friends from school: Leopald. So I told him I was gay. I had to disconnect before I got his full reaction so all I know is that he was surprised.

Tuesday 4 April

More coming out experiences

Well, it was another big day today. I told Adam this morning over breakfast at McDonalds. I was so nervous I could hardly eat my hotcakes (but I don't like them anyway—who knows why I bought them). Anyway he shrugged and said 'I don't care'. He paused and added, 'My uncle's gay.'

I also told Cameron this afternoon. He said, 'It takes courage... Are you sure?' I told him I was sure!

I also got a message from Leo ... He says I show guts and character ...

So I have to say that so far my experience has been pretty good —if a little nerve-wracking. I guess I don't have much to worry about: if I suspected my friends were bigoted they probably wouldn't have become my friends. I feel bad for not trusting them more than I did.

I'll probably tell Steven tomorrow or Thursday ... I might leave it a while then, before this week spins out of control ...

The next people will probably be Brett and Nhung. Oh well ...

Later ...

This time I haven't come out to anyone else since my last entry but I have a few things I want to write ...

This time of coming out is one of the most important events of my life. I've accepted a life where I am myself and don't pretend to be someone else. It's a life that defies conventions. It is a more dangerous life, it is a life of stereotypes, of bigotry, completely devoid of equality.

Despite all this, it is my life. What's scary is that I've made a decision: it's a virtually irrevocable decision. The acceptance of my friends is, I suppose, what you might call a good omen for this 'new' life.

To my surprise, I really do feel like a different person. Perhaps it is the new perception others have of me reflected back on me. Perhaps it's nothing as complex as that. Perhaps it's because I've released a secret I've held for about five years or almost a third of my life. I think maybe it's an incredible confidence boost. My friends now know who I am and they still accept me. I probably don't feel it as a confidence boost because my anxiety levels are still extremely high (especially since the last weeks of term are approaching along with essays, assignments and tests and stuff). Maybe if I was calm I would also feel incredibly confident?

The fact is, when I'm around the people that know, I feel different — even if I can't work out exactly how. It's a good feeling though, I think ...

I need to try and get some sleep ...

... It appears I was right about one thing as far as Adam was concerned—he was a mystery. I would never have predicted his response. I had been dreading coming out to him, yet for him it seemed like a total non-issue.

Wednesday 5 April

Contemplations

(Morning) I've realised something. This diary is my lifeline. I remember thinking about how writing this diary will help me remember how I managed to persevere through difficult times. It's true. This diary helps me remember the good times and it helps me remember how I've overcome obstacles of depression, school work and stuff. I don't think it's any coincidence I'm writing much more now that I'm experiencing a rush of emotions and having to go through anxiety and fear over and over again ...

(Evening) Phew! I've been working on my chemistry prac for about five straight hours. Considering that I didn't get much sleep last night I'm damn tired.

I'm considering coming out on a much wider scale. I guess in any case I should leave that till next term anyway. The next week and a bit are going to be hectic enough.

Thursday 6 April

Aftermath of coming out

I was going to come out to Steven today, but I just couldn't. He drove me home this afternoon and I decided I wasn't going to come out to him in the car—I read that you should never come out in a moving vehicle! But once we got to my place, I had no time to build up my courage and work out what I was going to say. A few minutes more and maybe I could have. The hard bit is that he's been a close friend for most of my life—he's virtually family.

I guess I've just got to remember that it's a long process because I'm doing this carefully.

How are my friends that I have told now? Well, Stephen really doesn't seem to think it's an issue at all, although he's had a little fun with the whole secret thing—I'm helping him, it's kinda fun, I know I shouldn't treat it like this,

but anyway... I haven't spoken much to Cameron at all but that's not necessarily a change. Adam's a bit quiet too, but that's because Brent's away.

I think that even if only these friends stand by me, I would be happy.

This is kinda weird, but since I've come out I've had absolutely no dreams at all, not even daydreams... I guess my life has suddenly shot forward and my dreams have yet to catch up. It's a very weird feeling. I almost feel lonely without them, in a strange sort of way.

Talking about loneliness, I often wonder where the rest of the ten per cent are. I guess I'm sure now that it's really virtually impossible to tell. I mean I'm considered to be a fairly 'straight acting' person. Even when I say or do queer things, I think people assume it's all just a joke. When I'm asked what I'm going to do when I leave school, I'll reply that I want to be a housewife. Last year I was in a 'pink competition' with Nhung. We were trying to see who could collect the most pink stuff. I ended up with a hot-pink pencil case packed full of pink rulers, pens and pencils. It was fun and everybody had a laugh.

It was a kind of reverse psychology, I guess, on the basis that anyone doing something outrageously queer couldn't be gay. I did those things partly to work that way and I hid behind a smokescreen of humour, but also because, I think, subconsciously I really wanted people to guess so I wouldn't have to 'out myself'.

Friday 7 April

A day off

Today was Kilothon Day, and being a senior, I got the day off. I was going to work on my essay all day but I convinced myself that I deserved a break. Especially seeing that it was such a great day. One of those one-in-a-million perfect days —beautiful bright blue sky, light breeze. Not cold but not burning hot either. Everything was beautiful. Perfect.

So anyway I thought I would go for a walk. So I went down to the local shops. I was hoping to find a new issue of Outrage. Luckily I wasn't disappointed. It turned out that Outrage was the only gay magazine at this particular newsagency. When I saw the cover I didn't think it was quite as tasteful as the previous one. It was pink and had a guy naked on the cover (only seeing his chest and above, of course). I didn't really have anything against it but it did

make it a little awkward when I bought it. The expressions on the faces of the old woman who served me and the old guy who came to redeem his scratchie were nearly enough to make me laugh. I sometimes get the feeling my life is a TV show or something—especially when I feel like the token gay character.

Sunday 9 April

Just tired

I don't have much to write about tonight. I've almost got my essay finished. A couple of hours tomorrow and it ought to be done. I probably should have started earlier but it's too late to be worrying about that now. I don't expect to be doing any coming out tomorrow.

I really need some sleep...

Monday 10 April

Contemplations

Well, I've finally finished my essay. I think it's reasonable, not great.

Unfortunately I don't feel prepared for the maths test tomorrow. Hopefully I'll do all right.

Patrick, one of the people I've met on the Internet, made an interesting point about the responses to my coming out. He said that the fact that they didn't say 'I know' is good because it probably means I don't fit any negative stereotypes. He also said it would be nice to get a response such as 'It's OK, I'm gay too.' It's true—I have been kind of hoping to get a response from someone like that—if only so I won't feel like 'the only one'. Honestly, I can see why society won't accept gay equality and why the gay youth suicide rate is so high—it is so hard to believe that ten per cent of the population is gay. Perhaps that's really why the words 'really? that's OK' can be slightly better than 'that's OK, I know'. It proves that if other people don't think you are gay it means that you can't tell who out there is gay—you just know that they're out there. Otherwise, 'that's OK, I know' is probably a reasonable response—it means they've already come to accept you for who you are, which would probably make coming out easier.

I'm a little bit nervous because tomorrow could be the big day I come out to Steven and Brent. But I guess I shouldn't worry about that though until I've done my maths test.

Wednesday 12 April

Changing attitudes

I'm a bit tired so I wasn't going to write, but I've got some news, so I think I better.

OK so where do I start? Well, I came out to Tom today. In the end I almost did it out of sheer boredom. He said: 'Are you serious? Well, oh, OK.' In the end he was perfectly OK with it and we talked about gay rights and stuff. He also profusely apologised for making gay jokes; he said he felt really bad about it. I told him I had never taken any personal offence.

I think if for no other reason, I should come out to let people know that they do have a gay friend. I can't remember the figures, but I remember there's a huge difference in the number of people that support gay rights between the people who know they have a gay friend or relative and those that don't. Tom and I talked about this. He mentioned that the friends and relatives have a vested interest. Considering ten per cent of people are gay, almost everyone probably has a gay friend or relative, so society should be more accepting...

Thursday 13 April

That's all?

Well, OK, I don't feel like writing much today.

I did come out to Brent today. He said, 'Well, OK, if that's your thing, then fine.'

Well, anyway, holidays soon.

Friday 14 April

Holidays begin

I didn't have a chance to tell Steven today. It's a shame because I probably won't get a chance again till after the holidays. I think it would be a problem if it takes so long, but I probably don't have a choice now. Still no dramas from the other people though.

Sunday 16 April

Reading 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'

I called Virgil tonight. He's one of the guys I've really gotten to know very well and we've been talking on the phone most nights of the week. It was a little awkward tonight because we couldn't think of anything to say but I think it was worth it. I feel kind of stupid, but I think I love him. Shame he lives in Sydney.

I'm really tired and I'm not too happy about these holidays because I have so much to do.

I've been reading 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience' by Henry David Thoreau, for English. Each time I read it I always think of that show on SBS, The Awful Truth, especially the episode with the 'Sodomobile'. Some guys were protesting against anti-gay laws in the US by breaking as many laws as they could. Thoreau said, 'Under any government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.' I wonder how far I would go to fight for justice?

to be continued ...



Photo by Jenna Taylor, with permission

People just don't know

Chris Reynolds

My name is Chris Reynolds, I'm 20 years old and I'm gay. I'm also in love.

In April last year, I fell in love with a very special man. Things were against us from the start, it was a difficult time but we worked hard, we laughed, we cried but we stayed together and helped each other through it all. I plan to spend the rest of my life with him, I want to grow old together, take care of him and let him take care of me. He makes me feel like no one has ever made me feel, I feel loved, I'm happy and believe me, it's been a long time since I've felt any of those things. I have friends, I have family, but he provides something they never could. I can't put words to it because it's beyond words, it's beyond all of us.

Now we enjoy an almost trouble-free life. I flew to the United States at the beginning of this year to meet his family who accepted me into their hearts and homes. I still have regular phone contact with them and we plan to return for Christmas this year.

My family too has welcomed him into their lives with open arms and accepted us for who we are and for the lifestyle we lead.

My partner is originally from the US and now works here on a temporary visa. We wish to relocate back to his home town within the next two years but being a gay couple, we don't seem to have the same rights as heterosexual couples.

In Australia we have progressed a little more than the rest of the Western World. Here we accept and recognise gay relationships but only to a certain extent. We can be seen as a defacto couple and have the rights and benefits that fit that category, but alas, we still cannot get legally married.

Almost from day one, we've lived together as a defacto couple. We have a commitment to each other, we pay the bills together, we do our grocery shopping, we have a little dog that is more like our child than I would have ever believed possible.

We make decisions together, we've made sure that each other would be financially secure should anything drastic happen to either one of us. Is this any different from a heterosexual couple?

Yet in the United States of America—*the land of the free*—we are discriminated against. Gay men and women can still be fired from their job in some States because of their sexual preference, defacto relationships are not recognised at all and, because of all this, my partner cannot support my application for a visa to stay in the US.

My only other option is for an employer to sponsor me. I'm not a highly qualified person with a degree and under US law,

don't know

for an employer to sponsor me, they have to prove that an American citizen could not do the job they want me for. So how do you think that an average person like me could be with his partner, someone that he is willing to pack up his life for, leave his family and friends and move half way around the world? He can't.

The selfishness and discrimination that is still around is amazing. They say they want peace not war and that they will do almost anything to prevent it. Peace needs to start in the home and maybe the politicians should clean up their own backyards first. I only wish that each and everyone of them had a family member that was gay, so they could see their own son or daughter's rights being taken away from them.

My partner was in the US Navy. He is gay now and he was gay when he joined but the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy enabled him to continue in his role to serve and protect that great nation.

The day he joined he pledged his life to protect the freedom and rights of EVERY American citizen, he didn't pledge his life to protect the freedom and rights of every heterosexual citizen, or every white person.

He is now out of the US Navy, because he didn't believe he was allowed to protect the rights of everyone. He let them know he was gay and within a few months he was given an honorable discharge, some money and a handshake.

It was quite ironic that a gay man would willingly give his life to serve and protect the rights of the same people who take his away, he would give his life to save the American Government, and for that, they would take away his rights as to who he could love, who he could be.

That angers me more than anyone can possibly imagine.

It's about time people realize that not everyone fits into one tidy category, that everyone is different and that there is nothing wrong with that. The American Constitution states that everyone—man, woman and child—should be treated equally. Not every white man, woman and child. Not every heterosexual man, woman and child. But everyone.

It's such a shame that our most cherished laws can in time be changed to suit our own ignorance.

I only ask that the governments of America and the world finally do what they talk about so often: unite the people of their countries. To do this they need to stop differentiating between people. We are all essentially the same, we can all love, we can all cry, we should all have the right to be with the one person we love with all our hearts.

A mix-tape

JuDA5

'... Doesn't anybody stay in one place
any more ...'

From that last hug goodbye, I can still
smell you in the air around me. I made
a mix-tape as confused as how I feel for
you, hoping you'll listen to it and see the
fire you give me, see how much I like or
liked you. Hoping you'll read between the
songs, and find some small part of me
hidden between the words and in the
breaths between the words, telling you I
care a lot for you ... and if you ever need
me, you know how to get me.

I would have loved to tell you, you had me
from the word hello, loved to have told you
how happy you made me feel just by
looking at your smile, how just being
around you made me feel better than I
have felt in a long, long time. How the
moment I met you I knew you were
someone I wanted in my life for a long
time, someone I wanted to care for and
protect from the world and all the harm
shitty people in it do to each other.

No matter how cheesy all of it is to say.
Maybe you'll find that in the tape, maybe
you'll have second thoughts about your
position of being 'just friends' after
listening to it. But maybe this is
my obsessive, wishful thinking, and me
lodging too much faith in the power of a
mix-tape. And now you'll be on the
other side of the continent,
and I'll never really know.

I don't want to forget you. I have a
Polaroid, your scent on my jumper, but I'm
scared it's not enough. I don't want to turn
around one day, looking through my
photographs and say to myself 'who the
hell is this guy?'. I don't want to never think
of you, I don't want to forget you now,
even though if you were here I would have
to. So far away from me, in heart and in
locality. That makes me kinda sad.

I want to apologise for being such a
clinging, slightly obsessive fool in semi-love.
I want to apologise for all the times that I
made you feel uncomfortable, all the times I
should have just realised it was another miss
for me, and I should be happy for just being
friends with you.

I guess you've taken a part of me with you,
and I'm glad for that.

All these things and more I long to say to
you, and maybe one day I will. But for now,
I hope the tape can say it for me, and
you'll listen.

Take care, I miss you already. Think of me
when you listen to the tape, and always
remember that I am only ever a phone
call away.

I love you.



Queer as fuck
Valan, 2001

This is my story

This is my story

Tim

I would like to tell you about my story as a gay guy. I want to do this because even though I felt I was alone, I knew I was not. I am sure there are others who feel alone, so I am doing this to tell them that they're not.

I suppose I have always had feelings for other guys ever since I hit puberty, perhaps before. Once I hit puberty, these feelings became really strong. However it wasn't until I was 16 and a half that I really started to think about what I was going to call myself. After I did a little bit of thinking, I decided that I was going to call myself a gay person. However, I was not sure where to go from there.

My first 'action', if you like, was to start telling a few of my friends. I had a very mixed reaction. The first few friends accepted me for what I was, however, soon things started getting a little out of hand.

Some of my 'friends' thought it was OK to tell other people about this, so soon, a whole heap of people knew about it. This made it difficult, because I came up against a whole heap of homophobia in various forms. I encountered name-calling and teasing, mainly, but very occasionally came up against threatening behaviour, especially from one particular person (I will not mention his name).

Soon, however, this homophobia started to settle a bit. I now have very few problems with it compared to what was happening back then. About a year later, when I was 17 (going on 18), I felt I was truly ready for a relationship. Unfortunately, my efforts have worked against me. The other party involved just wasn't able to handle who I was and ended up turning against me. This was hard for me, because nobody had ever taught me how to deal with rejection.

I later found someone who worked with an organisation here in Canberra, where I live, who worked with a lot of gay people. I turned to him for help, and we have since become the closest of friends. (Well, I think we have!) He suggested the Internet and we found a few helpful sites. Unfortunately, this didn't work, because the ads I placed brought attention mainly from people living either interstate or overseas. This, in combination with an unreliable email link, made things very difficult indeed.

I was later told by my friend that he had got in touch with someone my age who was interested in meeting me. Eventually I did end up meeting this person, but this didn't really work out, for a number of reasons.

I have had my eye on a few guys since, but I found out that they are all either not gay, not interested, or taken. It looks like I have still got a bit of looking to do, and I hope that, one day, I will find someone who I can love. My heart goes out to all those people who have no one to love: I know exactly how you feel.

All the time I was doing this, I was wondering how I was going to come out to my parents. I found that every time I tried, I got scared and chickened out. But then, disaster. Well, maybe not disaster, but it could have been. My mum, for some (still unknown) reason, was going through my bedroom and found some of the 'gay literature' that I had. She and dad freaked, and later confronted me with it. I did the difficult thing and I told them that I was gay. They seemed to accept it, but not before I had a lecture on how to behave safely etc etc!

Anyway, this is my story. I doubt whether it will be the same as your story, but at least you can have the confidence that you are not alone, that there are people like you out there just waiting to be found.

mystory

It's not fucking fair

It's not fucking fair

Peta

It's not fucking fair
I'm empty of all life
I'm crying inside
No one knows
Or wants to know
Of the shit smothered on my face
Seeping into my mind
Oozing down my throat
Where tears used to hide
Finally reaching its destination
Shit surrounding my heart
Engulfing and taking my soul
Making me empty—
Yet still you wish not to know

My coming out diary... continued

Monday 24 April

Holidays, uncle's wedding

It's been my first time alone in days. I can't say I've really enjoyed these holidays very much —which is a shame because they're probably the last holidays away that I'm going to spend with my family, oh well. One of the reasons this hasn't been the best holidays ever is because we got stuck in the worst traffic jam in Australia's history, apparently. Wasted an entire day and I'm not looking forward to the return trip.

Anyway, sitting through Uncle Robbie's wedding and the reception, I couldn't help but wonder about my future. I think I would like to get married some day...

Sunday 21 May

Stuff, seeing Get Real

I'm reaching a new level of coming out. I'm ready to let most people know if it comes up in conversation, I think.

Probably the source of this new found enthusiasm to come out stems from watching the movie Get Real yesterday. I don't think a movie has ever had such a profound impact on me before. I must get the video as soon as it comes out.

Oh, and I think I've fallen in love, with Virgil...

Monday 22 May

WHAT A DAY

I was feeling really depressed this morning which was partly because I had a full day with two tests, one of which was at lunchtime. I was also feeling lonely. I found out that a person I had met on the Internet, another gay teenager, committed suicide. I needed to talk to someone. To share everything with. I was also feeling very tired.

Anyway, first thing I did in the morning was to go to Mr M_____ 's office to tell him I didn't feel up to going to the maths day on Friday. I told him I was

having personal problems. He said, "Well, I'm sorry to hear that, you're one of my star students, have you seen your pastoral care advisor?"

Next I went to physics, but halfway through the lesson I felt like I was in a crowd of people, but all alone, and the work we were doing worthless, and I couldn't concentrate anyway. I left the room for a couple of minutes, until I felt a little better, then I returned.

At recess I took Mr M_____ 's advice and went to see Mr W_____. I told him about my sexuality and stuff, and he listened. He suggested that I try to get through the day and see him at the end.

Second period, the bell went but I had to get out. I left the school ground and just wandered around. Apparently Brett and Nhung were worried about me. Brett saw my bag and he tried to find me but couldn't. He took my bag to class. In the classroom Nhung told Mr M_____ that she thought I had her wallet and had to find me and ran out of the classroom. Brett followed her. They searched the school and couldn't find me. I returned to school, my bag wasn't where I left it. I went to class and there it was. Mr M_____ continued teaching and didn't say anything. Poor Mr M_____!

Lunchtime and it was the chemistry test, then third period, religion. At the beginning of fourth period Brett came up and hugged me and said 'I love you man!' I think that by now people must have been wondering what was up.

End of school and I saw Mr W_____. We talked and he said I should see a counsellor and keep talking with him.

When I came outside, Brett was there, waiting for me. He wanted to take me somewhere to eat because I hadn't eaten all day. On the way to the Belconnen Mall I found out that Brett already knew I was gay. Here's the story:

Cameron and Nhung were talking. Cameron said that he was worried there wasn't going to be any 'little Millsys' running around. About a week later, Nhung told Brett (being his girlfriend). My life is a TV show!

I'm sure the people on the bus and the café must have overheard us, they must have. No one said or did anything.

So, what a day, eh? There is no way I could have imagined it would turn out this way. That's what makes life special, I guess.

Wednesday 24 May

Loneliness

Last night I called Virgil. We spoke for nearly two hours. I told him I love him. He said he loves me.

Virgil is going to come to Canberra when my family will be in Sydney for the City to Surf and he'll stay with me!

I want him. I need him. I lie in bed and my arms feel empty. I want to hold him forever. I want to feel his warmth and soft skin. I am so alone. Why do we live so near and yet so far?

Had to put up with a lot of nagging today from Nhung mostly... but also Stephen and Tom, trying to get me to go to the maths day on Friday. I just feel like I can't.

Well, I guess that's all...

Tuesday 30 May

Coming out to the family

I think it was about a week ago that I wrote in my diary that I would probably never tell my family I am gay. Tonight I told them.

Earlier this year I was feeling great. After years, I had finally accepted my sexuality, was feeling OK about myself, had gotten around to telling my closest friends and finally found a really great boyfriend. Then suddenly I had to deal with the attempted suicide of a close gay friend and I felt lonely and isolated. I still didn't feel like I had someone I could really turn to for support. I wanted to drop out of school and I contemplated suicide myself.

I ended up seeing a counsellor, and it really helped. She explained that I was trying to live four lives at once: with my family, with my friends that know I'm gay, with my friends that don't know and with my gay friends. It's no surprise that it all felt like it all crashed, especially since two of the lives, the ones I live in the most, are ones I pretend to be straight in.

I'm trying to bring them together now. My family are becoming (kinda) like my friends that know. I'm slowly bringing my friends closer to my gay friends (I hope) and my friends that don't know are becoming quite small. I guess there will always be some partition in my life but I want it to be as small as possible.

When I told my mum, she was shocked. She was upset that she hadn't been able to be there for me in all the hard times, and was disappointed that it's unlikely I'm going to have any children. She didn't want to believe me at first, I had to emphasise that I'm sure. She is angry that my life is going to be even harder for me than it is for most people.

I was surprised that to my sister and my step-dad it doesn't seem to be an issue at all.

Coming out is the scariest task, and I have found just about every excuse to delay it so many times. Every time I do it though, I feel better. Now I have my friends and family behind me. I don't think I'll come out to everybody, at least not at school, because I don't feel safe enough to do that. I can't predict what I'm going to do. A year ago I thought I would lead a 'normal', 'straight' life. Six months ago I thought I would tell my friends at the end of Year 12, so it wouldn't matter if they didn't approve. A month ago I had told almost all my closest friends but thought I would never tell my parents. Yesterday I thought I would tell my parents in about a month's time, after the end of semester exams. This afternoon I thought I would wait until I had spoken to a gay counsellor first, yet in the end I couldn't do any school work while I left this up in the air. I felt so guilty to leave them in the dark. I felt so distant from them. My life is always being turned upside down. It'll work out in the end. I might as well enjoy everything I can about the present and whatever goes wrong, however big, won't really matter in the long run.

Thursday 6 July

A new level

It's like everybody knows now. I had a copy of XY and I was reading it with Cassie in front of everyone. I know it was kinda cruel or something (at least probably stupid) but it was kinda funny to see the confused expressions on people's faces. I own a mag full of pics of guys kissing and stuff, and most of them didn't seem to be able to put two and two together. Oh well. (Damn it was fun!)

I feel like I'm totally cool with it now. If someone asked me I would tell them the truth.

to be continued ...

Note

The image on this page has been deleted from the Electronic Version due to file size and download time considerations.

Putting us on the map

Simon

It would begin something like this. I'd wake up in the morning to my father banging on the door to my room, which I shared with my older brother, and I'd hear him yell. 'I'm leaving for the footy in half an hour!!!' Yes it was Saturday morning and the tradition of watching footy with my father and brother had arrived once again. Some mornings it was my brother who would play, but on others we would go to AFL games. My whole family were sports mad, most of the women played netball, and the men football, with many becoming successful. The masculine male image and bad language used by my extended family was comfortable, open and normal to me. Topics like sex were regularly spoken and joked about.

However, once I realised the feelings I had about my sexuality, it became a different issue. There weren't any other Aboriginal gay men that I knew, nor had my family dealt with the gay community or even spoken of anyone they knew who was gay. Although my parents had never spoken negatively about the gay community, they hadn't spoken positively either. I sought help through a youth centre in Adelaide, one that a friend told me about, 'yah there seems to be heaps of gay people there', she laughed. The Second Story Youth Health Centre ran young gay men groups. Not knowing any gay men, black or white, I attended. Nervously.

One aspect I knew was on my side when confronting my parents, was the issue of religion. They weren't religious at all and, compared to some of my friends' parents, were quite open minded on many other issues in society. My cultural background had no beliefs or general bias against homosexuality that I had heard of from my parents and extended family. Also there was the fact that my parents knew what it was like to be judged and looked upon as a minority. Although I had a positive mind-frame, confronting my father was a huge task, but he took it very well, and over time this aspect of my life was not controversial or highlighted any more. The rest was easy, but my brother still has problems every now and then, I think it is because he thinks of himself in my place and therefore cannot understand the lifestyle of living and sharing your life with someone of the same sex. The advantage of my family and culture is that it is very supportive and open to its members. It has developed to a stage where gay jokes sit in the same boat as other sarcastic jokes and

themap

remarks, which is a sign for me that they are becoming more comfortable with the issue and my partner.

Since then more important events have occurred in my life, one was graduating from university, which my family attended. It is good to overhear my father talk to my uncles about me going to Mardi Gras. Add to this, the Aboriginal community praising another event that gained much exposure, the crowning of myself as Mr Gay Adelaide in October 1999, during the Adelaide Feast Gay and Lesbian Cultural Festival. This was an event that brought praise not only from my parents, but also the wider community at university, and the gay and lesbian community, with strong reference to my cultural heritage. It also brought a very serious element to my life: a new role as a representative for the AIDS Council of South Australia. This responsibility has meant that apart from all the glamour of the title and meeting well-known comedians and drag queens in Sydney, I learnt much more about those in Australia affected by HIV and AIDS. Being a part of the fundraising that came with the crowning of Mr Gay Australia in Sydney in January was particularly interesting because it incorporated a fun and enjoyable event, as well as raising much needed money for the research and services to those living with HIV and AIDS.

The Adelaide Feast Festival also included an Aboriginal night organised at Tandanya (an Aboriginal Cultural Centre). This brought the Aboriginal community together, gay and straight, as well as the wider gay and lesbian community. A feeling of acceptance and community was one of the highlights of this event, which went for one night every week of the festival. It was a night of black drag, as well as a night of dance, story telling, poetry, instrumental performances and humour. This event meant that the gay Aboriginal community received recognition as part of the wider gay and lesbian community. It also reinforced a sense of inclusion in the wider gay community that Aboriginal people can become active members. Hopefully my title will gain more exposure for the Aboriginal gay community, and put us on the map as prominent figures in both the Aboriginal community and the gay and lesbian community. I think a sense of freedom and pride can be achieved for all gay and lesbian Aboriginals in Australia.

Another queer story

John Boy

College finished in October 1994. I was looking forward to the holidays and waiting to see if I had been accepted into university. I started dating a girl for the first time. I had never been interested in seeing anyone but I felt it was time I started trying what I had been missing out on. As time went on, we used to spend every moment together, we had the same interests and we had fun together. We went to the club and won money and went out for dinner every Friday night and did everything like a married couple.

As the end of 1995 approached, I promised her that if we were still together by the end of the year, we would get engaged.

As February 96 approached, I woke up one morning and felt different. I felt that there was something completely different but I didn't know what it was. As the days slowly passed, I soon realised what it actually was. I had an attraction to guys. At this stage, it was just before my 21st birthday.

My nextdoor neighbour, a bisexual man, used to go to the Meridian. Somehow I found out that it was a gay and lesbian club. I asked if I could go with him. I walked into the place and hung onto him like super glue. This was the first time I had ever entered a club of any kind and I really didn't notice the reception that I received from the crowd itself but it must have been OK as I went back. Then after that, we moved up to Heaven. That was a whole different world to the Meridian. Younger but a lot more intimidating. It was extremely hard to meet people and still is.

As the weeks went on, I went out every Friday and Saturday night and started meeting more people. I didn't speak to older guys because I always had the idea that they were after one thing, so I used to give them the brush.

Until I met one person who seemed to get through to me that not every old man is after just one thing. They are really nice guys, or so he told me. I didn't believe him, anyway, but I still tested the water and stepped very carefully. I got to know him and he has done a lot for me such as give me advice, helped me out car-wise and in any other area where I needed help. He opened a new world for me. I was used to the younger guys that like to use and abuse you and get what they want out of you. It was a good change to be able to trust someone again.

New Years Eve 97, I was introduced to the dance party scene. I went to Pride in Sydney. I was totally amazed by the fact that there were so many people in such a small place. There were so many happy people there and now I know why. That drug called Es and Speed. I left there by 12.30am and went home to the hotel. I guess I was really pissed off that I spent 60 odd dollars for an hour and a half dance party. It was shit, there was no sex to offer me and there were a whole bunch of people that just wanted to dance. How could people just go there to dance? I didn't want to go to another dance party again until Sleaze came around in 98. I went for my first time and had the best time. I was there with a friend and had a little bit of this and a bit of that and danced for the whole night. I met up with a 19-year-old boy in the Men's Only Space who decided he wanted to dance with me all night. I also discovered through friends that there was a little back room with lots of interesting action going on. I went in and it was amazing.

About 100 men in a shoebox like sardines getting their rocks off. Very interesting. There was nothing that tickled my fancy so I decided to go back and dance with Tony. We went home together.

My goal in 99 was to attend every dance party that I could possibly attend. I went to Red Raw in Melbourne, Winterdaze in Melbourne, Pride in Sydney and Mardi Gras in Sydney. I love the dance party scene now because I have learnt to appreciate it for what it is worth. Most people love to go out for one night take their Speed or Es and just have some fun.

Everyone is so friendly and down to earth. They are all out to just have a good time.

I would also like to say that I have tried just about everything.

Travelling to Melbourne and Sydney once a month, my eyes have opened to a lot of the gay scene in a short time. I have done and still do beats on occasions, I have done and still do saunas, SOS (Sex on Site) and have been to most of the different types of clubs here, there and everywhere. I must say that I have learnt quickly about all the wide things the gay scene has to offer whether it be good or bad, at least I have tired it.

One thing I must admit to after being in the scene for approximately two and a half years, is that I can now understand why so many people out there have attitude. The gay scene is extremely hard to fit into. When you're young, if you're not beautiful, slim and muscly, forget it. I have found that I have become very bitter through my lack of experience towards the younger gay guy. I have been used and abused so often by guys that I have set these barriers up to stop people trying to penetrating me. It has worked but I have fallen victim to the gay scene. I am another person that has the attitude problem because of them. I was a nice person and I am still a nice person once you break those walls, but why do I have to hide that just because I am scared of getting hurt?

As the years passed here in Canberra, I got to know more people and felt a little more at home at the Med but the more I went to Heaven, the more uneasy I felt about the scene. I have opened myself up to the scene in Canberra by joining the committee at the Meridian and now, at my current level as Vice President, I feel that I have worked my way up the gay chain very quickly. I am still not out to my family as of yet but they have ideas that I am gay. I still feel uneasy about my sexuality outside any gay venue. This was quite clear to my boyfriend when we were sitting in ICBM's. I just couldn't even look at him just in case I was seen out!!!! Hopefully one day soon it will all pass over me and I will be about to do just that. But I guess I also hope I will get married and have a few kids. I would call at least one, Alexander.

Lost opportunities

Jenni McInnes

I caught the bus to visit my mum the other day. I met an old friend from school on her way to her mum's place. It had been years since we were at school together but the conversation was easy. So much to catch up on. So much changed in our lives. No longer schoolgirls, we had jobs and homes of our own. We reminisced about old times. Our hated maths teacher, this or that friend, the really hideous clothes that some people wore to the Year 10 formal. I sat for a while listening to her way of speech. Memories flooded back. Memories of her at squash or sitting next to me in roll call. Things were different now. I had moved on. We had both moved on. I felt safe but should I tell her? What would she think? I was enjoying the conversation and didn't want to have her run off all embarrassed. Should I? Eventually I plucked up the courage. After all, I am not going to ruin a friendship: I haven't seen her in years.

'I had a crush on you in Year 10,' I said, casually, expecting dead silence.

'Really? I had one on you too. When?' I was taken aback. I giggled, 'Just before the formal. I wanted to go with you.'

'That's when I fancied you. If only we knew.'

If only we knew.

Would it have made a difference?

Would we have had the guts to do anything about it?

It was hard enough to admit to liking a boy, but another girl? It is hard these days but things were very different then. But what if we had known, and had done something about it. What if we'd been out! We would have rocked the school. Would we have lost friends? I have lost friends since coming out, but my real friends have remained true.

What about then? School kids are so conscious of what others think. I'm sure it would have been a nightmare.

'I can't believe we had a crush on each other at the same time and never knew.'

I was brought out of my reverie by her giggle. 'I was too scared to let anyone know. Did you have a crush on anyone else?'

'I liked Warwick after you. Oh this is my stop. I'll see you later.' And she was gone.

Bugger. I should have got her address. Oh well. Lost opportunities then, lost opportunities now.

Just a second ... she liked Warwick?

Ugh.

What does that say about me then?

Volo quod dicam

*Dixi quod vellem**

* 'I meant what I said
And I said what I meant'
(from *Dr Zeus*)

He is my gravity

JuDA5

He looks down from above.

His cerulean eyes can control me like no one else . . . one look tells me what to do, where to place my hands, when to breathe.

I have permitted him into my core. He is the centre of my world—everything revolves around him—where he is, what he is doing, he is what I am. He is my gravity, the weight I am under.

He is the focusing of my eyes.

Only he knows the temperature of my boiling point.

Some nights he guides me into him, slowly at first, then manic-paced. I surrender like a car's engine to the driver's control. His blonde hair turns black with the moisture beading on his perfect pale brow; his face turns into a glorious rendition of an angel's, looking toward the midnight-blue sky, enraptured.

His hands spell out words on my skin, and I savour him like the sweetness of molasses. We cling to each other like newborn progeny. We mirror in each other's eyes faithfully.

I belong to him and him only.

He is the closing of my eyes.

He is the focusing of my thoughts.

I wake with the knowledge that he is near, sleeping silently on our plateau-like bed. I wake with our entangled limbs throwing strange shadows on the walls, and smile from the pit of my stomach. He will stir soon, and we will start again, famished. Some days I wake and start before him, sliding inside as smoothly as a key into a lock. The heat from him sends me into a giddy dance. He will wake and smile, enraptured.

He belongs to me and me only, and I to him.

My coming out diary ... continued

Thursday 5 October

The librarian

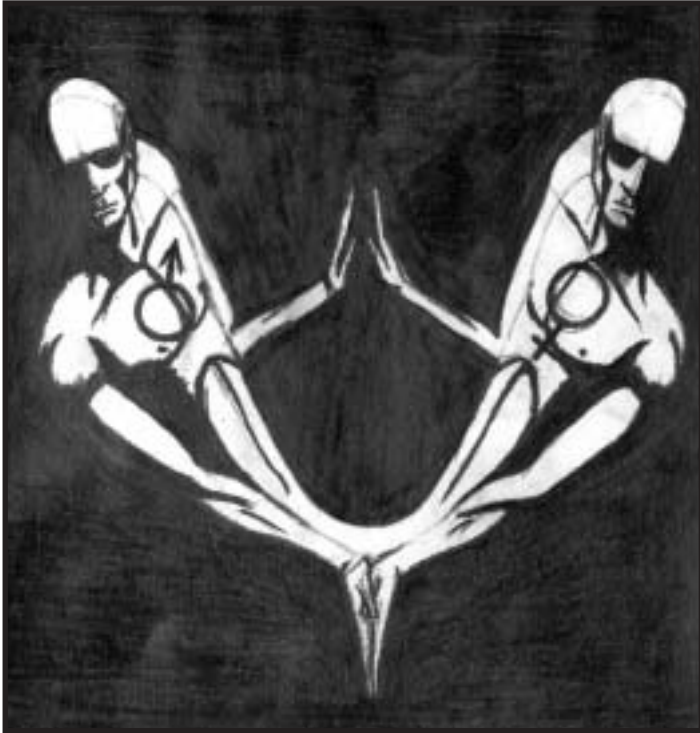
Well, a lot has happened to me since the last time I wrote. I didn't feel like writing it at the time... I broke up with Virgil. We live too far apart and it didn't look like that was going to change soon. I feel kind of bad because he didn't take it well at all. To my surprise, two of my friends came out after me. From what I've heard since, that's not unusual at all, in fact many people have told me after reading my diary that their experiences have been very similar. I've been going out a bit to get a feel of the gay community in Canberra. I've also been surprised a few times about people's responses to my sexuality. For instance, today I got my XY Survival Guide, two copies. I decided it would be good for any gay guy at the school to have a chance to read it so I decided that I'd try to get a copy to put in the school library. I got Nhung and Brett to have a quick look at it to see if the librarians would accept it. Nhung was a bit sceptical. She said, the school 'wouldn't let straight stuff this explicit in the school library, let alone something gay. They wouldn't let it into a public library, so they wouldn't let it into a private, catholic school library!' or something like that...

I decided to give it a go anyway. I approached a librarian and told her I would like to donate a book to the library but I was worried it was a bit edgy. She looked at the book and took it away so the staff could discuss it. When she came back she said, 'our feelings are unanimous, we WANT this book. We were worried that that section of the library was out-of-date and irrelevant.' My name will be inside the cover, stating that I presented this book to the school. She even told me that if I have any other spare copies, they'd like those too. We spoke for ages about heaps of stuff. It was strange... Me sitting there thinking: 'Will they change their mind when they read the sex section?' and then she says something like 'I think a particularly important part is the oral sex section, because there isn't much money being put into safe sex education these days...' I almost fell off my chair! Then I was worried that she might start talking about oral sex, in detail...

Fuck (Breathing)

JuDA5

Breathing.
Your hand slid along
The shape of my thigh.
Gasping
For air.
Giddy.
Your mouth fitted perfectly over mine.
Our sex colliding through our clothes.
Your hands searching, finding mine, clasping
each other in the dark.
My arm encircled your neck, pulling you
closer, deeper into the kiss.
The smell of your skin.
The closeness of you.
I want this.
Give it to me.
I need this.
I need it now.
The drunk feeling again.
I always feel like this with you.
Now your hand is on my thigh again, your
thumb moving slowly, in circles.
I'm getting there now.
Your mouth.
Your tongue.
Your breath.
I want it.
Give it to me.
I need it.
I don't want to be alone again.
I need this.
I need to feel the weight of you
On me.
I need to smell you, to taste you.
I need to know that you know.
Giddy again.
You feel so nice.
Your urgency is a turn on.
The way you tug
At your clothes
At my clothes
At me.
Rolling around
The two of us
Or, should I say,
The one of us.
I never thought
I'd want any of this
Any of you.
And now I need it all.
Give it to me
I gave it to you ...
Giddy again.
I want this.
Give it to me.
I need this.
Breathing.



Untitled
Valan, 2001



Notes on contributors

Chris Reynolds My name is Chris Reynolds, I'm 21 years old now, gay and have always lived in Canberra, although I have great aspirations to live in the US. I have a wonderful partner and two children (our pommeranians!!).

David Mills David is an 18-year-old student who identifies as queer. He 'came out' during Year 12 at a Canberra college. He loves to go out, especially with other queer people.

Jenni McInnes Jennifer Jane McInnes was born at a very young age in Sydney. She escaped to Port Macquarie in 1990 and then escaped, from an abusive relationship, to Canberra to go to ANU in 1997. She now spends her days sitting by a pond on Black Mountain studying dragonfly behaviour and dreaming of the perfect girl and the perfect relationship.

John Boy I am here in Canberra and I have been here all my life. Like quite a few people, I work for the public service in one of the most hated departments. Otherwise, I have been living with my current boyfriend for the last year and at my age that is like a 50-year relationship in hetro terms. I have a new car and am paying off a unit.

JuDA5 JuDA5 is a nom de plume. The boy hiding behind it is 22 and grew up in various places: the south coast, the country and Canberra. He reads Dennis Cooper, Poppy Z. Brite, William S. Burroughs and Rob Hardin's work and is studying to be a mixed-media artist at ANU's Institute of the Arts. JuDA5 is sometimes known as Clinton Hayden.

Peta I go to school and was in Year 10 when I wrote these poems. The homophobic environment I experienced was a pretty tough one and it's that that inspired the poems.

Nathan Hannigan A self-motivated, deep and meaningful individual, who seeks to experience the pure joys in life. Expression is a passion: express yourself now, before it's too late.

Simon International Glamour consultant extraordinaire, and Indigenous sister of the night. Detests Canberra with a true passion to escape. Loves to have a laugh, and feels sorry for people who take their careers too seriously.

Tim Hi! My name is Tim! I'm a 21yo gay male. I love being part of Canberra's Gay Community—it's a wonderful community! *Hugz*!

Valan With an insatiable lust for all things purple and freaky, this queer little creature from the bush is now stationed in the big, scary city. A rather dark and quirky individual, I enjoy letting myself run rampant in a world of fantasy, with various influences. A dark phantasy artist by secondary trade my goal is to be a tattoo artist of the highest order... oh, and I'm 22 ... and a boy.

Queer-friendly services for young people

ACTQueer: Email list for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people; subscribe <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/actqueer>

AIDS Action Council: Support, information, counselling, referral and advocacy on all matters relating to HIV/AIDS; Westlund House, 16 Gordon St, Acton, ACT; phone (02) 6257 2855; email aidsaction@aidsaction.org.au

ANU Sexuality Department: Information, referral and advocacy for queer students and staff at ANU; phone (02) 6125 8514; email sexdep@student.anu.edu.au

AXYS Youth Service: Health information, education and support for young people 12–25 years; phone (02) 6257 1640; email axys@ywca.org.au

Canberra Sexual Health Centre: Confidential testing, treatment, advice, counselling, and support (in relation to HIV/AIDS and other STIs); no Medicare card required; phone (02) 6244 2184

Drug Referral and Information Centre: Confidential counselling for individuals, partners, families and groups; practical assistance about alcohol and other drugs; advocacy, information, referral, community education, home detox kits and needle exchange; gay and lesbian counsellors available by appointment; 35 East Row, Civic, ACT; phone (02) 6248 7677

Jellybabies: A social group run by ANU Students' Association, primarily for 'non heterosexual identifying people', open to everyone, free membership; phone (02) 6125 8514; email jellybabies-owner@egroups.com

Lesbian Line: Community operated phone service for issues relevant to lesbians; phone 0402 168 336

People Living With HIV/AIDS ACT (PLWHA): Advocacy and support (including financial) for people living with HIV/AIDS, their partners, friends, family and carers; social network through the Positive Support Network (PSN) dinners; Westlund House, 16 Gordon St, Acton, ACT; phone (02) 6257 4985 or (02) 6257 2855

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays): Support group for parents and friends of lesbians and gays; meets last Saturday of each month; phone Pat (02) 6242 0590 or 0438 284 697, Glennys on (02) 6231 1052, Margaret on (02) 6251 1599; email pflagact@hotmail.com.au

Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault (SAMSSA): Free and confidential service for men of any age, background and lifestyle; support, information and referral options to men who are survivors of sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse; phone (02) 6232 7166

THROB (Telephone Help Referral and Outreach Bureau): HIV/AIDS information, referral and support, gay and bisexual men's issues, information on sexual health testing, safe sex at beats, injecting drug use; phone (02) 6247 2726

YOUTHLINE: 24–hrs, 7 days a week phone counselling service for young people; phone (02) 6257 2333